

Gods Good News

BY W. L. EMMERSON

Author of
“The Bible Speaks” and “Bible Certainties”

Containing

Ninety-five Readings on Vital Scripture Topics Systematically Arranged for
Home and Private Devotion, Answering nearly 1,000 Questions.

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PREFACE

THE twentieth century has been called “The Century of Disillusion.” And rightly so, for no other epoch in history has so conclusively demonstrated man's incapacity to rule either himself or his world. Upon a very large majority to-day there is settling an apathy of despair, a feeling that striving is vain, that nothing is worth while, that Nemesis hastens on apace.

But though all man's panaceas for human betterment have come to naught, and his arrogant assurance has changed to abject despair, one great certainty remains. Though man has failed, God will not. The outlook may seem black as night, but the “up look” is bright as the promises of God.

At such a time, therefore, nothing is more needful than to declare as it is revealed in the holy Word. This is the purpose of these pages. In the great prophecies of the Bible, and particularly in the fascinating books of Daniel and the Revelation, is set forth God's program for the redemption of the world and the “restitution of all things!”

In a verse-by-verse study of these books, arranged in the question and answer form, which has been so much appreciated in the companion volume, *The Bible Speaks*, the grand master-plan takes vivid shape, and its thrilling fulfillment is traced step by step through the pageant and pathos of the centuries to our day. The significance of the stupendous events of the age in which we live is seen in the light of God's outworking pattern. Swiftly and irrevocably the divine purpose is seen to be moving toward its declared objective and ultimate goal. And as the realization grows that history's climax is near and that the Savior and King is “at the door” the heart cannot but thrill with expectancy and joy.

As in *The Bible Speaks*, wide counsel has been taken with experienced ministers, Bible teachers, and other Christian workers in the compilation of these pages, and throughout the volume the written word is reinforced and illuminated by the works of the world's great artists. The decisive events of history are sensed more poignantly as they are portrayed by pen and brush, and the appeal of the Gospel becomes more solemn and more sweet as it is mirrored in the works of sacred art.

That there may be born in the hearts of all who prayerfully peruse these pages a stronger faith, a livelier hope, a deeper love for our blessed Redeemer and Lord, and a determination, by God's grace, to be ready to meet Him when He comes is the earnest prayer of

THE AUTHOR.

CONTENTS

PART I. SEEKING THE LOST

1. SEEKING THE LOST
2. GOD'S PURPOSE UNFOLDS
3. UNROLLING THE BLUE-PRINT
4. WHAT OF THE NIGHT?
5. THE "WISE" SHALL UNDERSTAND

PART II. LET DANIEL SPEAK!

6. GOD CHOOSES HIS MAN
7. THE ROYAL DREAMER
8. THE IMAGE WITH THE HEAD OF GOLD
9. NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S FIRST LESSON
10. THE GOLDEN EMPEROR HUMILIATED
11. THE PASSING OF THE GOLDEN EMPIRE
12. THE RISE OF THE SECOND EMPIRE
13. A CLASH OF LOYALTIES
14. THE BRAZEN KINGDOM
15. THE IRON MONARCHY
16. THE ANARCHY OF NATIONS
17. THE COMING KINGDOM
18. THE FOUR EMPIRES AGAIN
19. THE MYSTERY OF THE "LITTLE HORN"
20. MARKS OF THE GREAT APOSTASY
21. MORE MARKS OF THE GREAT APOSTASY
22. THE HEAVENLY ASSIZE
23. THE VISION OF THE RAM AND THE HE-GOAT
24. THE TWO SANCTUARIES
25. THE LONGEST TIME-PROPHECY IN THE BIBLE
26. DID JESUS COME ON TIME?
27. BEHIND THE SCENES IN A ROYAL COURT
28. WORLD POWER MOVES WEST
29. AN AGE-LONG CONFLICT BEGINS
30. ROME TAKES OVER
31. THE TRAGEDY OF THE JEW
32. IDENTIFYING THE GREAT CONSPIRACY
33. FAITH IN DARK DAYS
34. THE GREAT REVOLT
35. THE LAST DRAMA
36. THROUGH TRIBULATION TO TRIUMPH
37. HOW LONG, O LORD?
38. THE MEANING OF OUR AMAZING AGE

PART III. LET THE REVELATION SPEAK!

39. A LETTER FROM HEAVEN
40. BEHOLD, HE COMETH
41. AMONG THE CANDLESTICKS
42. THE CHURCH OF CONQUERING FAITH

43.SUFFERING FOR CHRIST'S SAKE
44.THE FATAL UNION
45.THE DEPTHS OF SATAN
46.THE UNDEFILED REMNANT
47.THE OPEN DOOR
48.THE LAST AGE OF THE CHURCH
49.LOOKING INTO HEAVEN
50.THE SEALED BOOK OPENED
51.THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE
52.HERALDS OF THE DAY OF GOD
53.NO PLACE TO HIDE
54.THE LULL BEFORE THE STORM
55.SEALED FOR ETERNITY
56.HEAVEN'S WELCOME HOME
57.WHILE MERCY PLEADS
58.THE TRUMPETS SOUND
59.SMOKE FROM THE ABYSS
60.THE "TURKISH NIGHT"
61. GOD'S LAST WORD
61.FAITHFUL WITNESSES
62.THE FINAL WOE
63.THE DRAGON'S WRATH
64.HOW THE CONTROVERSY BEGAN
65.THE CHURCH IN THE WILDERNESS
66.THE DRAGON DELEGATES HIS POWER
67.THE HEALING OF THE DEADLY WOUND
68.AMERICA IN BIBLE PROPHECY
69.AN IMAGE TO THE BEAST
70.THE MARK OF THE BEAST
71.GOD'S PEOPLE DELIVERED
72.THE HEAVENLY ASSIZE OPENS
73.MODERN BABYLON EXPOSED
74.THE LAST WARNING
75.MARKS OF THE REMNANT
76.THE HARVEST REAPED
77.WHEN JESUS PLEADS NO MORE
78.VIALS OF WRATH
79.THE RIVER OF DESTINY
80.THE GATHERING OF THE TITANS
81.WHEN GOD STEPS IN
82.THE BEAST FROM THE ABYSS
83.EUROPE'S LAST RULER
84.COME OUT OF HER!
85.BABYLON'S DOOM
86.THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB
87.THE COMING OF THE KING
88.A PRISON SENTENCE FOR SATAN
89.MILLENNIAL GLORY
90.THE LAST STRUGGLE
91.BEFORE THE GREAT WHITE THRONE
92.ALL THINGS NEW
93.METROPOLIS OF THE KINGDOM
94."WHOSOEVER WILL"

1. Seeking the Lost

How glorious was the face of creation as it came forth new from the hand of God?

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.... And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.” Genesis 1: 1, 3 1.

When God created the earth in all its primal glory He beautified and enriched it with every provision His loving heart could conceive. From the greatest to the smallest of His works all was “perfect.” Deuteronomy 32:4. The “goodness of the Lord” (Psalm 33: 5) was stamped upon the heavens, the earth, and the sea, upon every blade of grass, every flower, every beast that roamed the earth, every bird whose wings cleaved the sky. The angel host sang for joy at the delight some scene and God Himself pronounced His handiwork “very good!”

Into the hands of man, created “in His own image,” God gave this wonderful heritage, purposing that it should be for ever a loyal province of His universal kingdom.

BY what double tragedy was the purpose of God grievously marred?

“The serpent beguiled Eve through his subtily.” 2 Corinthians 11: 3. Thy first father ... sinned! Isaiah 43:27.

Sad to say, our first parents proved unworthy of the great trust committed to them. Deceived by the subtlety of the tempter, they withdrew their allegiance from the Creator-King, and surrendered their inheritance into the control of Satan, who thus became the “prince of this world” (John 12: 3 1), and mankind the “servants of sin!” Romans 6:20.

How far-reaching were the effects of Adam's transgression?

“By the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation!” Romans 5:18. “The whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now!” Romans 8:22.

Through the sin of Adam, the tragic heritage of sin, and the death in which it culminates, was communicated to the whole human race. More than that, when men became alienated from the Creator they also became alienated from one another, and their selfish ambition and passions soon began to bear a baneful harvest of misery, oppression, and every other evil.

Man, too, lost his control over the lower creation, and the inferior creatures themselves were set one against another. Alienation, strife, decay, and death became universal throughout the fair creation of God.

How did a loving God feel toward alienated mankind and the world He had made?

“How can I give thee up?” Hosea 11: 8.

It would have been perfectly just for God to have utterly destroyed His mutinous subjects and the instigator of their folly. He might at once have blotted out the rebel race and re-peopled the earth with a new line. But He did not do that. His heart of love yearned to win back the affection and allegiance of His wayward children, and to re-establish His kingdom in the earth. Implacably opposed to sin, He still loves the transgressor, and on almost every page of the sacred record we read the blessed invitation, “Come.”

What plans had He already made to meet the contingency of sin?

“Yet does He devise means, that His banished be not expelled from Him!” 2 Sam. 14:14.

The entrance of sin did not take God by surprise. The eye of Omniscience had foreseen the contingency and had prepared for it. All heaven was to be enlisted in the work of bringing sinful man back to God. (Hebrews 1:14.) The course of history was to reveal man's rebellion held in check by God's providence, and moving ever toward the goal of His choosing.

What announcement did God make immediately after sin entered as to the manner in which this lost province of His kingdom would be recovered?

“I will put enmity between thee [Satan] and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed; It shall bruise thy head, and thou shall bruise His heel.” Genesis 3:15.

No sooner had sin entered, than the final overthrow of the power of evil was foreshadowed. The conflict would be long and fierce and in the struggle the serpent would “bruise” the “heel” of the divine Seed, yet in the end victory would be with the Son of God.

Thus the guilty pair in Eden, weighed down by the consciousness of the bondage to which they had willfully committed themselves, saw, if only dimly, through their affliction to the culmination of the controversy between the serpent and the Seed. The curse would endure for a season, but beyond was liberation. Deliverance from their taskmaster, Satan, would come at last.

True to the divine forewarning, how far did the conflict at first sway in Satan's favor?

“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.... The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted His way upon the earth.” Genesis 6:5,11,12.

The story of mankind following the tragedy of Eden is a grievous record of the rejection of divine love, until at last God could find but eight souls whose hearts were toward Him. The time had come when He could no longer allow such wickedness to continue and He declared, "I will destroy them with the earth!" Genesis 6:13.

Engrossed in their worldly pursuits the wicked went on heedless of the approaching doom. "And knew not until the Flood came, and took them all away." Matthew 24:39.

Were the descendants of Noah after the Flood any more responsive to the purpose of God than the antediluvian world?

"When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things ... who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator!" Romans 1:21-23,25.

The fate of the antediluvians should have impressed upon the survivors the folly of waywardness and indifference to the claims of God. Yet the lesson was soon lost. Noah himself set an evil example to his sons, and it was but a short time before the way of man was again utterly corrupted in the earth.

Where did God now find a responsive heart through which He could continue to work out His plan for the salvation of lost mankind?

"The Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: ... and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed!" Genesis 12:1-3.

Recognizing in Abram of Ur of the Chaldees a man of submissive heart and responsive will, God declared His intention to separate the patriarch's seed from all the peoples of the earth as a treasure unto Himself, and to make of them a model kingdom, a pattern of His ideal for the whole world.

To Isaac and Jacob He confirmed His promise, and under the protecting hand of Providence the children of Israel multiplied until they became a great nation. By the mighty hand of the Lord they were led forth out of Egyptian bondage to Sinai, where they were organized as the nucleus of His kingdom on earth.

Through whom did God make known His gracious purposes to Israel?

"God . . . at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets." Hebrews 1:1

When the chosen nation was settled in Canaan, God called Samuel to be the first of His messengers to keep before the people their high destiny and to exhort them in the way of holiness.

When the people asked of the prophets, "Watchman, what of the night?" in periods of trial and perplexity, they were encouraged with the answer, "If you will inquire, inquire you" (Isaiah 21: 2), indicating that God would graciously vouchsafe an answer to their questionings and guide and guard them through the dark days. In fact, through the prophet Amos He declared that He would "do nothing, but He reveals His secret unto His servants the prophets!" Amos 3:7.

Little wonder, therefore, that the good king Jehoshaphat assured his subjects: "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established; believe His prophets, so shall you prosper!" 2 Chronicles 20:20.

What glorious picture did Isaiah pen of the future which was to have been Israel's? How tragically did they fail God?

"The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up your eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side." Isaiah 60:3,4.

Had Israel fulfilled the divine purpose, they would have been a witness for God to all the peoples of the earth. As other nations saw the prosperity and blessing which attended their national life, they would have been led to renew their allegiance to Jehovah. Thus the kingdom would have progressively expanded until it once more filled the whole earth. In the golden days of Solomon's reign, Israel seemed really to be entering upon her divine mission as mighty nations began to seek her friendship.

The Queen of Sheba, on a visit to the court, was led to exclaim, "Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delights in thee to set thee on His throne, to be king for the Lord thy God." 2 Chronicles 9:8.

But, sad to say, after the death of Solomon the light faded and the witness was not maintained. Ten of the tribes broke away under Jeroboam and sank rapidly to the level of the nations around; the two remaining tribes, failing to learn from the apostasy of their sister kingdom, soon followed in their downward course.

What judgment came first to the northern kingdom?

"In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria!" 2 Kings 17:6.

In the reign of the wicked king Pekah, Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, began his depredations in Israel (2 Kings 15: 29) and her doom drew on apace. Pekah's successor, Hosea, was, for a time, able to appease Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, with gifts. But when, in Hoshea's ninth year, the Assyrian king heard rumors of conspiracy in Israel, he came again into Palestine and laid siege to the capital city, Samaria. Before the city was reduced Shalmaneser died, but King Sargon continued the siege. The city held out for three years more, but at last it fell and with it the northern kingdom came to an end in 722 BC.

Did the remaining tribes profit by the lesson of Israel's fate?

“The Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy.” 2 Chronicles 36:15, 16..

The good kings Hezekiah and Josiah postponed the fate of the southern kingdom for more than a century, but despite all God's manifold providences the remnant of Israel failed utterly to respond to His high purpose. They sinned away their day of grace and at last they, too, were abandoned to the fury of their enemies.

In what circumstances did the first intimation of Judah's end come?

“In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand.” Daniel 1: 1, 2.

Soon after the accession of King Jehoiakim, of Judah the first intimation of approaching doom came. The little kingdom of Judah lay between Egypt and the mighty Assyrian Empire. For many decades Assyria had dominated Mesopotamia, Palestine, and Egypt, and both Israel and Judah were nominally subject to her kings. When Nineveh was overthrown in 612 BC. by the Medes, Scythians, and Babylonians, and the Assyrian Empire went to pieces, the Egyptians proclaimed the independence of the Nile Valley, while Nabopolassar, governor of the province of Babylon, assumed the title of king, overran Assyria, and founded the new Babylonian Empire.

In 606 or 605 BC. Pharaoh-Necho determined to add the land of Syria to his domains. The king of Babylon, hearing of Pharaoh's designs, prepared to resist his incursion into Asia. Nabopolassar, being too old to campaign himself, put his forces under the command of his son, Nebuchadnezzar, who met the Egyptians at Carchemish. Pharaoh Necho's army was routed and Nebuchadnezzar, following up the retreating forces, came to the gates of Jerusalem. Judah, suspected of pro Egyptian leanings, was caught in the clash of the titans. The reigning king, Jehoiakim, capitulated after a short siege and many of its nobles and princes, with much booty, were deported to Babylon.

In the midst of the campaign Nabopolassar died and Nebuchadnezzar hurriedly returned to Babylon to become the second and greatest king of the new empire. Among the captives carried away at the time of Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion was the young Hebrew prince, Daniel, who was to play a wonderful part in the outworking purposes of God.

What further disasters soon overtook the southern kingdom?

“Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign. . . . At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. . . . And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon.” 2 Kings 24:3, 10, 15.

Judah was harassed by the Chaldeans from the time of the rebellion of Jehoiakim to his death in the eleventh year of his reign. Three months after the accession of Jehoiachin, Nebuchadnezzar came in force to Jerusalem, took it, carried off the young king with 10,000 other hostages and much treasure, and left Zedekiah as a puppet ruler.

In what final tragedy did the judgment of Judah culminate?

“And it came to pass in the ninth year of his [Zedekiah's] reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it... And the city was broken up... So Judah was carried away out of their land!” 2 Kings 25:1,4,21.

In his ninth year, Zedekiah too rebelled at the instigation of Pharaoh Hophra of Egypt. Whereupon Nebuchadnezzar came the third time, and after a fearful siege of a year and a half, Jerusalem was utterly destroyed and the kingdom of Judah ceased to exist. (587 or 586 BC.)

To all appearances it seemed as if the plans of God had broken down and that His purpose for the world was never to be accomplished. The one symbol of divine government was dissolved and the visible kingdom of God upon earth was completely suspended.

Had God failed? Was His purpose never to materialize? No, God had not failed. Even before the final crash came, God had begun to declare through His appointed messengers that, though the apostasy of Israel might delay, it could not frustrate His gracious purpose. Despite Israel's failure, in His good time He would work “all things after the counsel of His own will!” Ephesians 1: 11. And within a very short time of Israel's arrival in the land of their captivity, He began to show how this would come about.

2. God's Purpose Unfolds

When the ruin of Israel seemed irrevocable, to what event was the gaze of the faithful prophets projected?

“Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder.... Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.” Isaiah 9: 6, 7. “Behold the days come, says the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.” Jeremiah 23: 5.

As Israel's doom drew nearer and nearer, the faithful remnant were encouraged with many assurances of the ultimate accomplishment of God's great plan. But they were granted no definite indications as to when and how the kingdom would be set up, nor as to the course of the intervening period.

In his indictment of Zedekiah what one hint did Ezekiel give as to the course of future ages?

“And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, thus says the Lord God; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him.” Ezekiel 21:25-27.

According to this declaration, the intervening period was to comprise four definite epochs, marked off by three over turnings. At the close of the fourth epoch the promised king would appear and the kingdom would be re-established; not, however, within the confines of Canaan, but over the whole earth. But this was as far as the divine revelation to the pre-captivity prophets went.

When the judgment of God upon Zedekiah was executed what new era of prophetic revelation began?

“And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams.” Daniel 2: 1. “In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters!” Daniel 7:1.

At this momentous point in the history of the ages God began to unfold through His chosen messengers a succession of panoramic views epitomizing the course of the great “interregnum,” right on to the ultimate re-establishment of the kingdom. And no more appropriate surroundings for the announcement of God's program could have been chosen than the palace of the first of the Gentile world rulers. (Daniel 2: 1.)

Who was the first of the prophets of the new era?

“Now among these [the captives in Babylon were of the children of Judah, Daniel, . . .]” Daniel 1: 6.

To Daniel, the captive Hebrew prince, fell the honor of interpreting the divinely-given dream of his royal master, Nebuchadnezzar. In subsequent years further momentous revelations were given in “visions” to Daniel personally.

How different are these new, panoramic prophecies of the ages from the messages given to the earlier prophets of Israel, and why?

“Thou ... saw, and behold a great image.” Daniel 2:31. “I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, . . . four great beasts came up from the sea.” Daniel 7: 2, 3.

These great panoramic prophecies of the “times of the Gentiles” are quite different from the revelations given during the days of early Israel. Instead of being in plain language, they are frequently couched in highly symbolic terms. There is a very definite reason for this. If the people of God had been shown in full and stark detail all their trials through this long period of waiting, they might have been discouraged at the dark prospect. So, in His omniscient wisdom, God revealed the course of the waiting period in symbolic terms which would be progressively unveiled as the events envisaged became due. Thus, by their gradual unfolding, the prophecies would prevent undue apprehension, while at the same time bringing encouragement to each succeeding generation as they recognized God's hand overruling in the kingdoms of men and the time of the establishment of His kingdom drawing on apace.

As the years and the centuries passed by, the people of God would see the prophetic pictures materialize on the stage of history. They would follow the scenes as they were successively enacted, and their hearts would thrill as the number of fulfilled prophecies grew greater and the specifications still unfulfilled became fewer and fewer.

In the very last days of earth's history, when the last prophetic pictures would be taking shape in the events of history, God's watching people would be raised to the highest pitch of expectancy as they realized that they were on the very verge of the eternal kingdom.

In certain cases the symbolic scenes were associated with symbolic time-periods during which the predicted events would take place. When the time came for these periods to be understood, the people of God would be enabled to determine precisely their position in the stream of time in relation to the consummation of the work of God.

To what, therefore, is the prophetic Word compared?

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the Daystar arise!” 2 Peter 1: 19.

The prophetic Word, if heeded, would thus be to the people of God a “light,” or literally a “lamp,” which would make plain from age to age the path marked out for the people of God, as well as forewarning and forearming them against the pitfalls the evil one would place along the way.

Without this “lamp” men would be at the mercy of “him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness” (2 Thessalonians 2:9,10). But with its aid his machinations and delusions would be revealed in advance and an infallible test provided, whereby his deceptions might be recognized and unmasked.

Besides giving to the people of God down the ages an understanding of the times in which they live, what heart-searching question will the fulfilling prophecies of the last days evoke?

“What manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and basting unto the coming of the day of God?” 2 Peter 3:11, 12.

God's purpose in outlining His program in the prophetic Word is not primarily to satisfy curiosity or merely to give an understanding of the times.” Its supreme purpose is to reinforce God's appeal for reconciliation with men.

Some have presumed to contrast the “Gospel” with Cc prophecy” in regard to their respective evangelical qualities. The “Gospel,” it has been said, has an appeal which is lacking in prophecy. This is quite untrue. Prophecy reveals Jesus as the only Savior of mankind and is as truly evangelical as any other part of Scripture. It is, indeed, indispensable to the “evangel” of Jesus Christ because it supplements the revelation of the slain “Lamb of God” with the vision of Christ triumphant as “King of kings and Lord of lords.”

The foreshadowing of the blessed results of walking in the way of the Lord and the dire consequences of transgression have been in all ages an incentive to righteousness, and in the last days especially, the realization of the approaching end of all things and the close of human probation solemnizes the mind and urges to preparation of heart and life against that day.

John testifies to the influence of the prophetic prospect when he says: “Every man that hath this hope in him purifies himself, even as He is pure.” 1 John 3: 3. Thus it will be realized that prophecy is not impractical, vain, and idle speculation, but as eminently practical as a literal lamp in a dark place, giving an understanding of the plans and purposes of God, forewarning and forearming against the opposition of the enemy of souls, comforting in tribulation, inspiring hope in days of darkness, quickening faith, encouraging to steadfast endurance, provoking to a preparation for the great day of recompense and rewards.

How necessary then that its light be not set aside, and put “under a bushel, but on a candlestick,” that it may give guidance and hope to the whole household of faith. (Matthew 5: 15.)

What attitude, therefore, did Jesus expect believers ever to take to the revelations of the prophetic Word? “And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.” Mark 13: 3 7.

3. Unrolling the Blueprint

In the days just before the first advent of Christ, what evidence have we that the faithful people of God were diligently searching the prophetic blue-print for guidance in their day?

“And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.” Luke 2:25, 26. “And there was one Anna, a prophetess.... which departed not from the temple, but served God with fasting and prayers night and day.” Verses 36, 37.

Simeon and the widow Anna were both students of the prophetic page. They had read and reread the promises of the Messiah. They had noted every detail concerning the time, the place, and the manner of His coming. When, therefore, the infant Jesus was brought by His parents into the temple they saw in Him the long-expected One. (Luke 2:29, 30, 38)

On what occasion did Jesus show familiarity with the prophecies concerning Himself?

“And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. . . . And He began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” Luke 4:16-19, 21.

From His childhood Jesus made Himself acquainted with the prophecies of His advent and when the time came for Him to begin His ministry, He presented as His credentials of office the fulfillment of that which had been written aforetime. By stopping in the middle of this sentence in Isaiah's prophecy and making no reference to the words that followed, Jesus revealed His ability to put His finger upon “the place” which was “present truth” for their day.

It was as if Jesus had said, “You profess to believe the truth. Here is the truth for today. If you believe the truth you will accept the 'present truth.'” “The honest in heart did accept it, but the “make-believers,” who were really resisters of the truth, turned violently against Him and sought to encompass His death.

What rebuke had the risen Jesus to give to His disciples for their failure to acquaint themselves fully with the prophecies concerning Himself?

“O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.” Luke 24:25. -

While the disciples recognized in Christ the coming of the Messiah they still failed to see that His suffering and death were a part of the divine program and steps to His final triumph. The time was fully come for them to understand the prophecies of His passion. Yet their eyes were still blind.

There is a justifiable ignorance, even a beneficent veiling of understanding, to prevent God's people becoming unduly apprehensive of the trials and tribulations of the future: But there is also a culpable ignorance, a failure to understand the message of prophecy when the time has come for it to be known.

Of what did Jesus therefore remind them?

“And He said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.” Luke 24:44, 45. (See also verse 27.)

Once again Jesus “opened the book,” “found the place,” and compared prophecy with history. And as the disciples recognized the correspondence, their hearts “burned within them,” and they were transformed from a group of dejected and disappointed disciples to courageous witnesses to the “present truth” for their day.

What evidence do the recorded sermons of the disciples provide that they had fully grasped the “present truth” for their day?

“Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spoke before concerning Judas.” Acts 1:16. “This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel!” Acts 2:16. “Those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer. He hath so fulfilled!” Acts 3: 18. “God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again.” Acts 13:33.

The disciples clearly took Jesus' rebuke to heart and thereafter were continually searching the Scriptures to find “the place” of their day and generation. In consequence, the profound effects of Christ's preaching in the synagogue at Nazareth were matched by the powerful results of Peter's ministry on the day of Pentecost and subsequently. (Acts 2: 37.)

What remark of Jesus shows that He expected His disciples to read and understand the prophecy of Daniel? In what striking way did they profit by their study?

“When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (who reads let him understand:) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains!” Matthew 24:15,16.

Some forty years after Jesus spoke these words the disciples recognized the fulfillment of the prophecy in the advance of the Roman armies under Titus, and, heeding the injunction, fled to the small village of Pella some miles away so that, as Josephus records, when the city fell and the terrible massacre of the Jews ensued, not a single Christian perished.

What indication is there in the title of the last prophecy of the Bible that it was intended to be understood by the church? What exhortation is repeated again and again in this prophetic book?

“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass.” Revelation 1:1. “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches.” Revelation 2: 7. (See also verses 11, 17, 29; 3: 6, 13, 22)

This book would hardly have been described as a “revelation,” or literally an “unveiling” if it were not intended to be understood, and the prophet John would not have asserted that the people of God would be shown things shortly to come to pass if it was not intended that the church should read and understand the “revelation.”

In what day is special enlightenment and understanding of the prophecies to be vouchsafed?

“But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased... . Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.” Daniel 12:4,9.

Throughout the Christian era God gave appropriate understanding to each generation of the church. And in the very last days He promised that a flood of light would be thrown upon the closing drama of history in order that His people might be prepared for the grand climax of the ages.

That we are living in this long-predicted “time of the end” will be shown when we come to a detailed consideration of this period. We will show, too, that, as He promised, God is now “unsealing” the last pages of His prophetic program for our guidance in time's last hour.

What are these important messages to do for the generation living in the last days?

“But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. You are all children of light, and children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober.” 1 Thessalonians 5:4-6.

Israel went into captivity because they neglected the prophetic truth for their day. The restored Jewish nation by the same neglect knew not the day of their visitation. So likewise will the last generation of men perish in the final catastrophe because they fail to heed that which God has revealed for their time.

But if we will obey the injunction to “watch,” we will not be taken unawares. Instead we will be “looking up” and lifting up” our heads, knowing that our redemption “draws nigh.” Luke 21: 28.

4. What of the Night

Amid the crisis of our time what ancient question is in the hearts and upon the lips of multitudes?

“Watchman, what of the night?” Isaiah 21: 11.

In this vivid phrase is revealed the crisis which came upon the land of Edom and all the surrounding countries in the days of Israel's fall. Threatened by the oncoming wave of the desolating armies of Nebuchadnezzar it seemed to the people of those days that the midnight hour of their world had come, and from their fearful hearts arose the cry, twice repeated in its urgency, “Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?”

If that dire emergency was truly characterized as Edom's night, how much more may it be said that the midnight hour of the world's night is upon us. Two fearful global wars within one generation have devastated areas of the earth's surface, shattered its social, cultural, and economic life, and brought civilization to the brink of ruin. And now, before mankind has had a chance to draw back from the edge of the abyss, another crisis, even more terrible in its possibilities by reason of the unleashing of destructive atomic forces, is looming up, threatening literally complete catastrophe for the human race.

Significantly, the editors of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, who know better than any the imminence of the “approaching” atomic “Headline,” have chosen for the cover design of their journal the hands of a clock pointed to a few minutes before twelve! Without doubt the midnight hour is near!

What other parallel is there between the tragic darkness of our time and the night which descended upon the ancient world?

“Thus says the Lord God concerning Edom; . . . the pride of your heart hath deceived thee, . . . whose habitation is high; that said in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?” Obadiah 1:1.

No thought of calamity or disaster had entered the minds of the proud Edomites. Confident of their resources, secure in their strength, they were self-satisfied and self-sufficient. So catastrophe came as a terrific shock.

The tragedy of our time is likewise heightened by the fact that only a few decades ago glowing pictures were being painted of the prospects of our modern civilization and the golden future before the human race.

With unbounded enthusiasm the prophets of progress declared that science would soon have nature under complete control and that in era of peace and plenty was just round the bend. The conquest of disease would progressively eliminate physical ills. Education would speedily dispose of all social mal-adjustments like immorality and crime. And the extension of reason into the realm of politics would eventually bring about a perfect society in a warless world.

Not only is there a striking parallel between the intellectual pride of the Edomites and that of our time, but also in their spiritual condition. The Edomites came of the same stock as Israel. Their progenitor, Esau, once worshipped the God of Abraham, but the Edomites had turned their backs upon Jehovah and as the nation became established and their strength increased, so they banished God from their thoughts and despised His people. (Obadiah II.)

This same spiritual retrogression has been repeated in the tragic story of our proud, self-satisfied, modern world. As modern man grew in power and resources he began to feel that he did not need God any longer. He was captain of his own salvation and master of his fate. So as he grew in self-importance he banished God further and further from his thinking and his life.

From what heights of self-exaltation were the Edomites cast down?

“Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, says the Lord.” Obadiah 4.

As in ancient Edom so in our time, self-sufficient man has been brought low, For decade after decade modern man sped on his scintillating way through the “Century of Optimism,” as the nineteenth century has been called. There seemed no end to the possibilities of human achievement, no limit to his ingenuity. Man surely was master of his destiny.

True, there were signs and portents for those who had eyes to see, but they were as small as the shadows cast by the sun barely past its zenith, and amid the glory that suffused the age of progress they passed almost unnoticed.

Then, like a bolt from the blue, came the first World War with its fearful devastation and its ten million dead. But the modern Edomites refused to be discouraged, buoying themselves up with the thought that it was the last unpleasant lesson mankind would have to learn.

“After the end of the World War of 1914,” says Mr. Winston Churchill in the opening paragraph of his book, *The Gathering Storm*, “there was a deep conviction and almost universal hope that peace would reign in the world.”

When the League of Nations was organized as part of the peace settlement, they were sure that it marked the inauguration of the “parliament of men, the federation of the world.”

But their hopes were quickly dashed by the rise of the totalitarian states and the catastrophe of the Second World War, which at its ending brought to light a weapon “so ruthless, so indiscriminating, foreshadowing such terrible possibilities for the future that its own authors stand appalled.”

And today, but five decades removed from the end of the so called “Century of Optimism,” scientists, philosophers, and statesmen are uniting to warn mankind that the “end” which they once could not conceive, may be at hand! Man’s wisdom has been proved foolishness. He is impotent to control the forces of which he has become possessed. His scorn and derision of religion has been turned to horror at the collapse of his own vaunted civilization and philosophy.

Little wonder that, out of the present darkness, voices fearful, apprehensive, anxious, urgent, are asking the age-old question, “What tith the night?” They may not express it in just those words, but the heart cry is the same. What is going to happen? Where will it all end? Can any penetrate the darkness and show us what is to be?

As the fearful-hearted in Edom awaited a reply to their despairing cry, what wondrous answer came?

“If you will inquire, inquire you: return, come.” Isaiah 21:12.

From whom did the gracious invitation to return and hear and learn come? It was no human voice. It came from the One whom they hail despised and rejected, yet who was still willing to receive and teach those who would return to Him. And as despairing men to-day strain their ears to hear above the clamor of earth’s chaos and confusion, the gracious invitation is once more heard, “If you will inquire, inquire you: return, come.”

To what have the inquiring ones in every dark age of earth’s history been directed?

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, 1s11111 the day dawn.” 2 Peter 1:19.

In every age God has had a guiding prophetic word for hearing ears and responsive hearts, and He has a word for our day if we will “inquire” of Him and “take heed” to His Word.

What solemn warning had God for Edom?

“Comes. . . the night.” Isaiah 21:12.

Dark as the outlook was, a more terrifying darkness was yet to come. And so also will it be in our time. The testimony of the “sure word” is that the hatreds and animosities, the wars and rumors of the lawlessness and anarchy, of our day will culminate in the most stupendous upheaval of history, involving not one nation or many nations, but the whole world. (Revelation 16: 13, 14.)

With what comforting word, however, did God supplement His warning of the approach of the midnight hour?

“The morning comes.” Isaiah 21:12.

How many hearts became lighter in Edom as the good news broke upon their ears, “The morning comes!”

There is similar good news for us too as the world enters its midnight hour. For the “sure Word” which reveals the climactic crisis of sin, declares also that in the hour that humanity is about to take its last plunge to destruction God will take a hand, and out of ruin and chaos will bring forth a new earth in which all that was lost during the reign of sin will be gloriously restored. The darkness of earth’s long night will be dispelled in the glorious light of God’s new morning.

Could there be more wonderful news for a world which has endured for six thousand years the fearful bondage of sin?

What provision has God made to preserve His people through the darkest hour till the dawning of the world’s new day?

“Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be over past.” Isaiah 26:20.

Many who will go into the darkness will never emerge. The darkness will close in upon them for ever. They will never see the morning. But there will be a remnant which will pass through the darkness unscathed and unafraid, to see the dawning of the golden morning beyond. These are they who avail themselves of the divinely provided ark of safety as did Noah and his companions in the doomed antediluvian world.

Where is this secret place into which they are invited?

“He that dwells in the secret place of the most High shall abide the shadow of the Almighty.” Psalm 91:1.

No man-made shelter will avail when the cities fall and the mountains are moved out of their places, when the whole earth is shaken by the judgments of God. The refuge of the people of God in that day will be in the “secret place of the most High.”

The time has surely come for us to seek that refuge. The omens of are all around. We know not how soon the crash will come, but it cannot be long now. Delay is dangerous.

May we then, in this last hour, find shelter “under the shadow of the Almighty,” so that when the forces of divine wrath mingle with the conflagration of a crashing civilization, we may be kept by the power of God and come forth, to hail the golden dawn of the universal and eternal kingdom of God.

5. The Wise Shall Understand

By what power were the prophets enabled to pen their messages of warning and exhortation?

“Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” 2 Peter, 1: 21.

The unaided human mind is incapable of penetrating the veil enshrouding the future. The past may be recalled through the medium of memory and by written records; the present is experienced through the senses; but the future is all unknown except as it is revealed by Him who only sees “the end from the beginning.”

Is the unaided human mind any more capable of understanding the revelation of God through His inspired messengers?

“The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” 1 Corinthians 2: 14.

The wise of the world are no more able to comprehend the prophetic revelations of God than they are of drawing back the curtain Of the future and showing “things to come.” Indeed, the wisdom of the proud has invariably proved a bar to their apprehension.

The proud antediluvians failed to heed the warning message of God through Noah. The wisdom of this world failed to recognize in Jesus of Nazareth the divine Son of God, and in consequence the Lord of glory was crucified. When the word of the Gospel through the apostle Paul came in contact with the wisdom of Greece it was rejected as “foolishness,” and the one who proclaimed it was scornfully referred to as a “babblor.”

So through the ages the wisdom of this world has failed to recognize God or to perceive His hand in the affairs of mankind.

How does the Revelator distinguish between human wisdom and spiritual discernment which only is capable of apprehending the things of God?

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches. “ Revelation 2: 7. “Let him that hath understanding count. . . .” Rev 13: 18. “Here is the mind which hath wisdom.” Revelation 17:9.

The wisdom needful for the understanding of the prophetic Word is spiritual wisdom. Just as divine aid is necessary to unveil the future, so spiritual understanding is required for a true interpretation of that which has been revealed.

How did Jesus reprove the acknowledged leaders of the Jews in His day?

“You hypocrites, you can discern the face of the sky; but can you not the signs of the times?” Matthew 16:1

The great majority of the religious leaders of Christ's time, puffed up with all their own wisdom and dignity, and confident of their righteousness in the sight of God, were oblivious to the epochal events that were being enacted. They were not moved either by the coming of the wise men or the story of the shepherds. And even when Jesus appeared among men preaching, teaching, and doing His wonderful works, they saw only a rival who threatened to draw away the people after Himself. They had ears but they heard not; eyes had they, but saw they saw not; they had hearts, but dulled as they were by prejudice and sin, they understood not. And many others beside Israel according to the flesh fail to see also because of spiritual incapacity.

For what moral attitude to His truth does the Lord look?

1.A godly fear. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.” Psalm 25:14. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.” Proverbs 9: 10.

2.A readiness to walk in His ways. “Who so is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.” Psalm 107:43. “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.” John 7:17.

This moral preparation is well illustrated in the apprehension of the Messianic prophecies of the first advent. Those who recognized that the time for the coming of the Messiah was at hand were all humble, godly men and women whose hearts and minds were open to the influence of the Spirit of God.

The wise men would not have undertaken so long a journey had not the fear of God filled their hearts. The shepherds hastened to worship the infant Jesus immediately upon hearing of His birth, thereby evidencing their heart response to the message of God. Simeon is spoken of as “just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.” Luke 2:25.

If we seek an understanding of God's Word with a determination to follow where He leads, what divine aid is promised to us?

“When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.” John 16:13.

Jesus told His disciples that this would be one of the functions of the Holy Spirit when He should be given. And here is a direct reference to the understanding of future events in His words: “I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: ... and He will show you things- to come.” John 16: 12, 13.

How will the inhabitants of the earth in the last days be divided?

“The, wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.” Daniel 12: 10.

In the last days, declares the apostle Peter, there will be “scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming?” 2 Peter 3: 3, 4. But in contrast with these “wicked” ones there will be the “wise,” whose hearts are humble before God and in tune with His Spirit. They, by patient observation and holy meditation, will obtain an understanding of the times and a preparation to stand in the day of God.

May we each one be among those who are “wise” unto salvation.

6. God Chooses His Man

What prophetic warning did Nebuchadnezzar fulfil when he took and plundered Jerusalem?

“And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Lord. Behold the days come, that all that is in your house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, says the Lord. And of thy sons that issue from thee, which thou shall beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.” 2 Kings 20:16-18.

When Nebuchadnezzar came the first time into Palestine we read that “the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar.” Daniel 1: 2.

When the king of Babylon plundered the temple the second time in the days of Jehoiachin he carried the prophecy to complete fulfillment for on this occasion he “carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the Lord ... and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the Lord, as the Lord had said.” 2 Kings 24: 13.

Where were the treasures from the temple in Jerusalem deposited?

“And he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god.” Daniel 1: 2.

Nebuchadnezzar's god, and indeed the chief deity of all the later Babylonian kings, was Bel Merodach. Of him Nebuchadnezzar says: “Merodach, the great lord, has appointed me to the empire of the world, and has confided to my care the far-spread people of the earth.” And again: “Merodach, the great lord, the senior of the gods, the most ancient, has given all nations and peoples to my care.”

In the so-called “Standard Inscription” of Nebuchadnezzar, the king records the building of the temple of E-temen-ana-ki for Bel Merodach, and particularly mentions that in it he placed “the treasure house of his kingdom,” depositing there “silver and gold and precious stones.”

In what other way was Isaiah's prophecy fulfilled by Nebuchadnezzar?

“And the king spoke unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and the princes ... to stand in the king's palace.” Daniel 1:3,4.

It was quite a common practice in ancient times to bring up captive nobles and princes in the court of the conquerors, the purpose being to win their loyalty and fit them to be governors of subject provinces. Nebuchadnezzar followed the usual custom and, as Isaiah foretold, placed the royal captives in the charge of the chief of the “eunuchs.”

For what type of youth did Nebuchadnezzar tell Ashpenaz to look?

“Children in whom was no blemish, but well favored, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them.” Daniel 1: 4.

In modern language we would list these qualities as good appearance, intelligence, good education, sound judgment, and high mental capacity. These requirements would suggest that the chosen young people were in their late teens. This would be the normal time for embarking upon the course of advanced education which Nebuchadnezzar had in mind.

How were they to be trained for their future responsibilities?

“Whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.” Daniel 1: 4.

The Chaldeans were the priest-philosophers of the Sacred College of Babylon. Herodotus mentions that they were his guides when he visited the city. He refers to them as “the Chaldeans, the priests of the god!”

In their literary, scientific, and religious studies the Chaldeans used not the Aramaic tongue of the ordinary business life, nor the Assyrian language found in legal documents and on the monuments, but the ancient Accadian language. This was the “tongue of the Chaldeans” in which the young Hebrews were to be instructed to give them access to all the “learning” of the Sacred College.

Who are particularly mentioned as being among the chosen ones?

“Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.” Daniel 1:6.

Of Daniel's ancestry we know nothing save that he was of the royal line. It is interesting, however, that of the three other Daniels mentioned in Scripture, two at least were of Davidic stock. (1 Chronicles 3:1; Ezra 8: 2; Neh. 10: 6.) The names Hananiah and Azariah were very common among the Israelites. Mishael was rarer, but occurs as a Levite name in Exodus 6: 22 and Leviticus 10: 4 and also among the captives who returned from Babylon in the days of Ezra. (Neh. 8: 4.)

What new names did the prince of the eunuchs give to the young Hebrews?

“He gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.” Daniel 1: 7.

When Assurbanipal overthrew Psammetik II of Egypt he changed his name to Nabu-sezib-ani to celebrate the victory Nabu his god had given him. Joseph's name was changed by Pharaoh when he was made vizier of Egypt. (Genesis 41: 45.) Similarly Nebuchadnezzar renamed the young Hebrews in his court after Babylonian deities. Daniel's name, which meant “God my judge,” was changed to Belteshazzar or “prince of Bel” (the sun god); Hananiah, “Beloved of the Lord” or “the Lord is gracious,” was changed to Shadrach, “Servant of Aku” (a moon deity); Mishael, “Who is like God,” needed only to have his name slightly altered to become Meshach, “Who is like Aku.” Azariah, “Whom Jehovah helps,” received the heathen name of Abed-nego, “Servant of Nebo” (or Venus).

How long was their sojourn in the palace to be?

“And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.” Daniel 1: 5.

Evidently the normal length of a university course in Babylon, just as to-day, was three years.

With what problem was, Daniel confronted when he began his new life in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar? How did he relate himself to it?

“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself!” Daniel 1:8.

When Jehoiachin was taken captive to Babylon he ate unquestioningly his daily portion. (2 Kings 25:27-30.) Many of the Israelite captives also defiled themselves with “unclean things” in Assyria. (Hosea 9:3.) But Daniel's conscience would not permit him to do this. He knew that the food served at Nebuchadnezzar's table had been dedicated to his god, and that those who ate at his table were, in consequence, sharers in his idolatry. He knew, too, that some of the dishes which would be served would be “unclean.” He therefore suggested to the prince of the eunuchs that the food of the common people, pulse which included grains, legumes, green herbs, and fruits-should be served instead for himself and the three companions who shared his conscientious scruples.

This consideration would present little difficulty, for in pictures of Assyrian feasts the guests are commonly seated at tables for four. If the four Hebrews had a table to themselves in the royal dining-hall it would be very easy for the servers to bring special dishes to their table instead of the dedicated foods, without it being conspicuous.

Though favorable to Daniel, what made Ashpenaz hesitate?

Now God had brought Daniel into favor. . . with the prince of the eunuchs. And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall you make me endanger my head to the king.” Daniel 1:9,10.

He argued that, in their own interests, it would be wiser to overcome their scruples, and hinted that he, too, would be dangerously involved if the experiment failed. But Daniel's resolve could not be shaken. He must be true to God.

What did Daniel propose by way of a brief test?

“Then said Daniel to Melzar, . . . Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat and water to drink.... So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.” Daniel 1:11-14.

With or without the knowledge of Ashpenaz, Daniel proposed to the chief steward-Melzar is not a personal name but a title, “Amilussur”-a brief experiment. The steward consented, and for ten days he gave them the food for which they asked.

What signal evidence did God give of His blessing upon the four Hebrews?

“And at the end often days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.” Daniel 1: 15.

We need not here assume that any miracle was wrought on behalf of the Hebrews, for their chosen diet was perfectly adequate and not dissimilar to the meals of the common people in the Levant to-day. Their abstention from the king's wine, moreover, would be to their physical, mental, and moral advantage. By contrast with their carousing fellow-students, their temperance produced immediate and happy results.

How ready, therefore, was the chief steward permanently to rearrange their dietary?

“Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse!” Daniel 1: 16.

The expression “took away” indicates that the chief steward continued to requisition the same quantity of food from the king's table. The portions for the four Hebrews probably found their way to the steward's own table. The arrangement may thus have appealed to him as quite attractive.

How did God reward the young Hebrews for their faithfulness?

“As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom.” Daniel 1:17.

Under the blessing of God, Daniel and his companions completed the curriculum of the Sacred College with honors. Far more important, however, than this, they received from God spiritual equipment for the work He had for them to do.

What special wisdom did God give to Daniel?

“And Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.” Daniel 1:17.

Daniel's companions were soon to render a courageous witness for God in ways He had appointed, but Daniel himself was the chosen medium for the momentous “visions and dreams” which were to illuminate the path of the people of God right on to the dawning of the kingdom of heaven.

When the years of training were finished, before whom were the Hebrew princes brought?

Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king communed with them.” Daniel 1:18,19.

Being a man of great ability himself, Nebuchadnezzar took a personal interest in the examination of candidates for state office. When the graduating students appeared before him he questioned them, and his sharp eye quickly picked out those of outstanding ability.

To whom did the king accord the highest honors?

“And among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. . . . And in all matters of wisdom and understanding that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.” “Therefore stood they before the king.” Daniel 1:20,19.

In modern phraseology, they entered the Babylonian civil service. Their remarkable ability no doubt entitled them to a place among the chief advisers of the king, but custom would require that they take their places at first among the junior ministers of the court. Professional jealousy, too, would prevent them receiving more than subordinate positions. This accounts for their not being in the forefront of the crisis with which the next chapter opens.

For how long did Daniel hold high office in Babylon?

“And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.” Daniel 1: 21.

Daniel thus gave the kings of Babylon more than sixty-five years of faithful service, and for several years more after the fall of the Babylonian dynasty he worked for his new Media-Persian masters. That he was able to conduct affairs of state at the great age of over ninety years is a tribute to his temperate mode of life and the peace of heart born of a good conscience and a deep trust in God.

7. The Royal Dreamer

On what occasion did God's purpose in placing Daniel in the royal palace of Babylon begin to be manifest? “And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him.” Daniel 2:1.

Dreams were regarded by the ancients as serious portents, and rulers were often guided in their course of action by the interpretation of their dreams. For God to give a dream to king Nebuchadnezzar was therefore a sure way of gaining his attention. As He had given dreams to Pharaoh of Egypt in the days of Joseph, so now He gives a dream of even greater moment to the king of Babylon.

The time when this dream was given to the king raises a query on which the critics have been quick to seize. If Daniel and his friends came to Babylon in the first year of Nebuchadnezzar and were under instruction for three years how could it now only be Nebuchadnezzar's second year? The answer is that Nebuchadnezzar was co-ruler with his father Nabopolassar for more than a year, so that the fourth year from the beginning of his rule would be the second of his sole reign.

To whom did Nebuchadnezzar first turn?

“Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to show the king his dreams, so they came and stood before the king.” Daniel 2:2.

In order to ensure the recalling of his dream and its interpretation, Nebuchadnezzar summoned four different orders of “wise men,” each skilled in a different branch of the science of interpretation. There were the scribes, expert in the interpretation of enigmatic messages and sacred formula. The astrologers who foretold the future by the supposed influence of heavenly bodies, the sorcerers who specialized in charms, incantations and magical drugs, and who held communication with the dead, and, most important of all, the heads of the Sacred College of the Chaldeans.

How did the king broach the subject of his dream to the wise men? What information did the wise-men request of the king?

“And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream. Then spoke the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation.” Daniel 2:3, 4.

The language in which the wise men addressed the king was not the Chaldean tongue, with which he would hardly be familiar, but Syriac or Aramaic, which was the ordinary language of converse in Babylonia. Actually from this point to the end of the seventh chapter the text of Daniel is in Syriac or Aramaic and not Hebrew like the remainder of the book.

The request of the wise men was a natural one. They had their rules of interpretation for strange happenings, mysterious messages, dreams? Etc., but they needed the facts of the occurrences to work upon.

If the idea of inventing a dream to satisfy the king had occurred to them they would have at once dismissed it as too dangerous, for Nebuchadnezzar's fragmentary remembrance of it might have exposed their deception. So they pleaded their inability to help the king unless he could recall the details of the dream.

Angry at this confession from men in whom he had put absolute reliance, what did the king threaten? At the same time how did he promise to reward them if they could help him?

“The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if you will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. But if you show the dream, and the interpretation thereof, you shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honor: therefore show me the dream, and the interpretation thereof!” Daniel 2: 5, 6.

These ancient monarchs, like some modern ones, were habitually violent in their punishment of those who failed or opposed them. Assurbanipal records that he “cut in pieces” rebel rulers. And to reduce their homes to rubbish would complete their disgrace.

When, terror-stricken, they repeated their request to know at least the nature of the dream, what did the king retort? Of what did he accuse them?

“They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation of it. The king answered and said, I know of certainty that you would gain the time, because you see the thing is gone from me. But if you will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you: for you have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can show me the interpretation thereof.” Daniel 2:7-9.

The king still could not believe that these men, in whom he had unbounded confidence, were unable to make known his dream. He suspected that they already knew it and were treasonably keeping it back from him for their advantage and his hurt.

How unreasonable did the wise men declare Nebuchadnezzar's accusation to be, and why?

“The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon earth that can show the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requires, and there is none other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.” Daniel 2: 10, 11.

The Chaldeans protested that they were not holding anything back. What the king asked was beyond the capacity of court magicians and astrologers and no ruler could legitimately make such demands. True, they were in touch with certain gods, but only subordinate deities maintained contact with men. The higher gods, who only could make the dream known, were, they declared, unapproachable. This significant distinction strikingly revealed the limitations of their knowledge, and provided a wonderful opportunity for Daniel to show how superior were his spiritual connections!

In anger what did the king command?

“The king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain.” Daniel 2:12, 13.

This was the last straw. If the wise men were not traitorously uncommunicative and really could not recover the dream, then they were impostors. They held their privileged position on false pretences. In either case they were worthy only of death. In fury, therefore, he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon.

Though they had not been called, who were inevitably involved in the dictator's decree?

“And they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain.” Daniel 2:13.

Being still only junior members of the Sacred College, Daniel and his friends had not been summoned in the first place to the palace. But as the whole of the “wise men” of Babylon were suspect, their lives too were to be forfeited. Thus Satan sought to kill God's special instruments before He could use them for His own glory, just as previously he had tried to destroy Joseph and Moses, and later Christ Himself. But, as on these other occasions, God protected His own, and His servants were delivered.

How did Daniel tactfully approach the captain of the guard?

“Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon: he answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Why is the decree so hasty from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel.” Daniel 2:14, 15.

As the chief of the wise men had been arrested and had not been able to communicate with the rest of the Sacred College, those who were not there had no knowledge of what had happened. Daniel, voicing the general consternation, asked the reason for this hasty, or literally, “bitter” decree on the part of the king.

When Daniel learned the circumstances, what request did he make of the king?

“Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would show the king the interpretation.” Daniel 2: 16.

Daniel was quick to respond. He did not know the nature of the king's dream any more than the other wise men, but he could not believe that God would leave him and his companions to perish. So he asked for a brief stay of the execution.

To whom did Daniel at once go? In what did he ask them to join?

“Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.” Daniel 2:17, 18.

As the young Hebrews had shared a table in the royal dining hall in their student days, they now no doubt shared an apartment. To it Daniel repaired to find his friends; and having made known the situation to them, he earnestly invited them to seek the Lord with him.

How was the king's dream and its interpretation made known to Daniel?

“Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision.” Daniel 2.19.

Though the wise men had no contact with the divine Revealer of secrets, the young Hebrews received a speedy response to their petitions. Whether the revelation came while they were praying together, or whether it was made known to Daniel after they had prayed and retired to rest is not clear, but during the night watches the dream was reconstructed in the prophet's mind.

How did Daniel express his gratitude to God for the revelation?

“Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. . . and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are His.” “I thank Thee, and praise Thee, O Thou God of my fathers, who has given me wisdom and might, and has made known unto me now what we desired of Thee: for Thou has, now made known unto us the king's matter.” Daniel 2:19, 20, 23.

The prophet's first thought was of thankfulness for the revelation he had received, as also ours should be when we receive guidance and understanding from the Lord.

How did he describe God's omniscience and omnipotence?

“He gives wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He reveals the deep and secret things: He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him.” “He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and sets up kings.” Daniel 2:21, 22.

The God whom Daniel worshipped was no subordinate deity. He was the omniscient One, knowing the “secret things” of both the darkness and the light. He had more than knowledge; He had also power to overrule times and seasons according to His will and purpose.

Hastening to Arioch, the king's captain, what request did Daniel now make?

“Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him; Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will show unto the king the interpretation.” Daniel 2:24.

Though he had little to thank the wise men of Babylon for, and might have been indifferent to their fate, Daniel's first request is that their sentence of execution might be revoked. How often since then have the righteous been responsible for the turning back of judgment from the wicked; yet how little has their intercessory ministry been recognized or appreciated.

With what speed did Arioch bring Daniel before the king?

“Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation.” Daniel 2:25.

Arioch was waiting in the hope that Daniel would succeed in discovering the forgotten dream and save him from having to carry out the repulsive orders. When the prophet returned with the good news that he could make it known to Nebuchadnezzar, he made all speed to bring him to the king. It was an exaggeration for Arioch to claim that he had “found” Daniel, for this would suggest that he had undertaken a search for someone to interpret the king's dream. However, Nebuchadnezzar was too excited to discuss how much credit was due to Arioch, and Daniel had no wish to contradict his considerate captor.

What did Nebuchadnezzar incredulously demand of Daniel?

“The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?” Daniel 2:26.

Not remembering Daniel's brilliance when he had examined him some time before, the king might well question the ability of one so young to do what his superiors had failed to do.

With characteristic modesty what did the prophet disclaim?

“But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou might know the thoughts of thy heart.” Daniel 2:30.

Daniel made no attempt to exalt himself and his wisdom in the eyes of the king as the wise men of Babylon had been wont to do. What he was to tell the king he had received by revelation and Nebuchadnezzar's gratitude would be due not to him but to the divine Revealer.

Who was this divine Revealer with whom the wise men of Babylon had no contact?

“Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, show unto the king; but there is a God in heaven that reveals secrets.” Daniel 2:27,28.

Daniel's studied emphasis on the inability of any of the orders of wise men in Babylon to make known the dream was not to score a personal triumph, but to leave the king in no doubt as to the foolishness of putting his trust in the heathen gods and their priests instead of in the all-wise God whom Daniel served.

What did Daniel inform the astonished monarch as to the nature of his dream?

“And [God] makes known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these: As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and He that reveals secrets makes known to thee what shall come to pass.” Daniel 2:28, 29.

Nebuchadnezzar was a thoughtful monarch, and many a time he must have wondered whether the empire he had built up would endure. Through this dream he received a striking answer to his questionings, for he was not only shown what would become of his empire in the very near future, but also the course of successive world kingdoms right on into the “latter days.”

To the first ruler of the Gentile kingdoms, in fact, was given the beginning of the new series of divinely planned prophetic revelations, which were to cover the history of the nations and the people of God down to the end of time.

Not only was this vision the first in chronological order, but it was also first in importance. For, like a map of the world at the beginning of an atlas, this revelation at the beginning of the new prophetic atlas was to provide, in one comprehensive view, an outline of the whole history of the world. Succeeding visions of Daniel and other prophets would fill in the subsequent pages in the atlas, giving detailed maps of different portions of the period from various viewpoints, but all would be based upon and fit into this first, grand, all-embracing revelation.

8. The Image with the Head of Gold

What was king Nebuchadnezzar shown in his wonderful dream?

“Thou, O king, saw, and behold a great image.” Daniel 2: 3 1.

In these words the prophet Daniel recalled to the heathen king, Nebuchadnezzar, the dream which had so fascinated him, yet which he found himself unable to bring back to mind. In so doing he opened up the first great panoramic prophecy of world history, for under the symbolism of this great image there was to be revealed to the gaze of the astonished king a view of the destiny of the empire which he had built up, and the course of all succeeding empires right on to the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. Surely, to adapt a famous Churchillian phrase, never was so much for so many comprehended in so few words!

It may seem strange at first that a heathen king should be chosen for such an epochal revelation, yet the choice was not without reason or without precedent. When the children of Israel were in captivity in Egypt, God gave warning of approaching famine in a dream to Pharaoh and gave the interpretation to his servant Joseph. (Genesis 41: 1, 5, 25.) Now Israel is again in captivity, and God desires to reveal to His faithful people the course of Gentile supremacy, that they may be assured of His overruling in the affairs of the nations and of the certain re-establishment of His kingdom. What then could be more appropriate than that the first Gentile world-ruler should be 'shown the latter end of his earthly line'?

No symbol could have been more familiar to the king than an image, for his temples and palaces were replete with monster statues of gods, men, and beasts. An image would immediately arrest and hold his attention.

In what form was the great image that the king saw?

It was the image of a man.

That the dream-image should be in the form of a man was particularly appropriate as it was to represent the kingdoms of men as distinct from the kingdom of God, the rule of man in contrast to the rule of God. It symbolized nations and kingdoms which would be built up by human strength, the product of human intellect and human passions. And the period of history it was to cover was “the times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21: 24) or “man's day.” 1 Corinthians 4: 3 (margin).

What two characteristics at once impressed the king?

“This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible.” Daniel 2: 31.

The image's brightness was “excellent,” for in the eyes of men the empires which they built up would be objects of admiration and glory. In a later vision these same empires are seen from God's viewpoint as wild and ravening beasts. (Daniel 7)

Secondly, the form of the image was “terrible.” Its colossal stature, powerful limbs, and threatening features marked it as an object of awe and fear. In this respect, also, it fitly represented the military monarchies of the future, whose foundations would be laid upon the ruins of conquered nations and the bodies of their dead.

Of what diverse materials was the image fashioned?

“This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of Silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.” Daniel 2:32,33.

While the image was one continuous figure revealing the essential unity of spirit in all earthly empires, it was composite in character to illustrate the changes of human government.

These four metals represented four successive world powers which should arise, the transference of rule from one to the other corresponding to the overturning referred to by the prophet Ezekiel. (Ezekiel 21: 27.) These successive powers would be as diverse from one another as gold, silver, brass, and iron, yet all would come “from the earth”; all were to be essentially human governments.

The descending value of the metals in the image indicated that, in spite of outward glory and achievement, there would be a steady degeneration in these kingdoms of men until at last God would sweep them all away. It portrays the “decline and fall” not of one but of all human empires.

Beginning his interpretation of the symbolism of the image, of what did Daniel remind Nebuchadnezzar? “Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And where so ever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath He given into your hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all.” Daniel 2:37, 38.

In his inscriptions Nebuchadnezzar attributes his elevation to “his god” Merodach. Daniel corrects this erroneous idea by telling him that he had received it by the favor of the “God of heaven.” Not merely had he received a kingdom from God, he had been given the kingdom or exclusive dominion as it is more correctly translated in the Revised Version.

From what ancient beginnings had the kingdom of Babylon developed?

“Cush begat Nimrod: . . . and the beginning of his kingdom was Babel (margin 'Babylon'), and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.” Genesis 10: 8-10.

Back in the dawn of history there sprang up along the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates, and their tributaries, a series of city states, sometimes independent, sometimes dominated by one or other of the greater kings. Those enumerated here were important cities in the different regions of the valley as far back as archeology can take us. Erech or Uruk was in Southern Babylonia, some fifty miles up the Euphrates from Ur, Abraham's birthplace, and shares with Tell-el-Obeid, which lay between them, the oldest civilized remains which have been found in the whole valley. Babel or Bab-ilu was 200 miles farther up the river, and Akkad or Agade was still farther to the north, probably very near the confluence of the two rivers. Calneh has not been identified with certitude, but may have been still farther to the north.

The Sumerian kingdom seems to have been the first considerable grouping of city states, based upon Kish, and Ur, and Uruk. Thereafter followed the Akkadian kingdom, founded by Sargon of Akkad or Agade, and a further Sumerian period in which Ur again attained great splendour. A confused epoch then ensued due to invasions from the north and west. This was brought to an end by the establishment of the first Babylonian Empire about the time that Abraham was settling in Canaan. After a century or so, the old Babylonian Empire declined and the Assyrian Empire, based upon Asshur and later Nineveh, arose. Assyria broke up with the fall of Nineveh in 612 BC., Babylon regained its independence under Nabopolassar, and the Neo-Babylonian Empire, with which we are particularly concerned, came into being, reaching its zenith under King Nebuchadnezzar.

What relation had Nebuchadnezzar's great empire to the dream image which he saw?

“Thou art this head of gold.” Daniel 2:38.

While the whole Neo-Babylonian dynasty was included in the golden head, to no Babylonian monarch could it have more correctly been said, “Thou art this head of gold,” for his father Nabopolassar did no more than lay the foundations of Babylon's greatness, and none of the kings who followed him were of his calibre. It was he who made Babylon great and after his passing, it quickly crumbled.

Babylon was literally a golden city. Herodotus, the Greek historian, who visited Babylon some ninety years after the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, describes his astonishment at the amount of gold lavished upon the sacred temples of the city. The hall of E-sag-ila, the great temple of Merodach, was overlaid with shining gold, lapis lazuli, and alabaster. The chapel of Merodach, lined by a former king with silver, was overlaid by Nebuchadnezzar “with fine gold.” The image of the god was of solid gold. It was seated upon a golden throne with a golden base. and in front of it stood a large golden table. The Chaldeans told Herodotus that there were 800

talents' weight of the precious metal in these objects. In a small upper temple was another table of gold and outside the temple was a golden altar. (See Herodotus 1, 181, 183; 111, 1-7)

Pliny mentions the vestments of the priests of Babylon as intermixed with gold, and in one of the Babylonian tablets recently unearthed which associates different metals with the various gods of Babylonia. It is a significant fact that Merodach the patron god of Babylon, was the "golden" god.

Gold not only typified the literal splendors of Babylonia, but as the chief of metals, it appropriately symbolized the greatness of Babylon in other ways. The empire was a monument to the political genius of its founder. Nebuchadnezzar consolidated his conquests and left his successors a great and prosperous empire. Berosus asserts that "he possessed Egypt, Syria, Phoenicia, and Arabia," as well as the whole Mesopotamian valley "and by his deeds he excelled all that ever reigned before him over the Chaldeans and the Babylonians!"-Apud Joseph Contra Apion," 1, 19.

The most precious of metals further, represented the most perfect centralization of human power ever attained, for the word of Nebuchadnezzar was the only law for the whole empire. (Daniel 5: 19)

The Babylonian Empire furthermore represented a golden age of intellectual attainments. Chaldea was synonymous with all that was profound in science and sublime in human wisdom. Centuries later "wise men" came from the land of the Chaldeans to render their homage to the infant Christ. (Matthew 2: 1.)

What rude shock came to Nebuchadnezzar as Daniel continued his interpretation of the image?

"And after thee shall arise another kingdom." Daniel 2:39.

Nebuchadnezzar must have glowed with pride as he was told that the empire he had built up corresponded in the image to the head of gold. The shock must therefore have been all the greater when he learned that after him there should arise "another kingdom."

Perhaps it was to drive from his mind the humiliating knowledge that his kingdom would fall and to delude himself that it would continue for ever, that we find Nebuchadnezzar a little later erecting an image upon the plains of Dura entirely of gold, and commanding all the rulers of the people to resort thither to worship before it. (Daniel 3) This hope was, however, destined to be vain. The divine decree had gone forth and no earthly power could reverse it.

9. Nebuchadnezzar's First Lesson

Not satisfied with being merely the golden head of the great image, what did Nebuchadnezzar have made? "Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits and the breadth thereof six cubits." Daniel 3: 1.

It was common enough for monarchs of those ancient days to set up and dedicate images. In the annals of the Assyrian king Assurakh-bal we read: "I made an image of my majesty ... and in the city of Tsari I fixed it up." The fact, however, that Nebuchadnezzar conceived the idea of erecting this new colossus so soon after his remarkable dream, clearly indicates a connection between the two. In the dream only the head of the image was of gold. He gave orders for the erection of an image all of gold. It may have been a statue of Merodach, "his god," or like Assur-akh-bars, a statue of his own majesty, but in either case it was intended to symbolize the "golden" kingdom of Babylon which he determined should not pass away or give place to another.

The dimensions of the image are significant, for the number six, one short of seven, is associated time and again in Scripture with man's vain efforts to oppose the perfect purposes of God. The giant Goliath's height was "six cubits and a span" and his spear weighed "six hundred shekels of iron." 1 Sam. 17: 7. The number of Antichrist in the book of Revelation is likewise "six hundred threescore and six." Revelation 13: 18.

Where was the golden image erected?

"He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon." Daniel 3:1.

Dura or Duru has not been specifically identified by the archeologists, but there were several districts of Babylon whose names had "Duru" in them. As the word means "wall," the site on which the image was erected must have been an open space or park somewhere near the great outer wall of the city. Such a position would be ideal for the purpose Nebuchadnezzar had in mind. So placed, a statue one hundred feet high would be visible for miles around.

What call did the king send throughout his vast domains?

"Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up!" Daniel 3: 2.

Every governmental authority was to be represented at the dedication service. The princes represented the royal authority in the provinces, and the governors the civil organization. The captains represented the army, the judges the department of justice, the treasurers the office of finance, the counselors the legislature, and the sheriffs and rulers of the provinces the local executive officers.

How immediate was the response to the royal command?

“Then the princes, the governors, the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.” Daniel 3:1

As the three Hebrews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego had been appointed to “stand before the king” their high office would bring them each one a command to attend. They knew that the occasion would be associated with idolatrous worship, but they went with the rest, trusting God to give them courage to witness for Him.

Daniel was certainly no less courageous than his companions. His absence, therefore, suggests either that he was detained by necessary business in some distant part of the realm or that he was ill.

As the young-Hebrews had expected, in what act of worship were all present called upon to participate? “Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that at what time you hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music. You fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up.” Daniel M, 5.

The occasion was colorful and organized to perfection. . Satan enticed his dupes to false worship with ceremonial trappings and seductive music. How often in more modern times also, souls have been deceived by apostasy similarly disguised.

What penalty was threatened in case of refusal to obey the king's order?

“And who falls not down and worships shall the same hour he cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.” Daniel 3: 6.

Here was a further mark of false worship. Truth constrains but never compels. A system of religion which relies on coercion to maintain its authority is branded thereby as of the devil and not of God.

The “fiery furnace” was a common form of punishment in both Assyria and Babylonia. It is mentioned several times in the inscriptions of Assurbanipal, and Jeremiah speaks of the king of Babylon roasting his victims in the fire. (Jeremiah 29: 22.)

According to Rawlinson there were sixty not twenty-four divisions for “hours” in a Babylonian day. Nebuchadnezzar thus threatened death within twenty-four minutes to any who refused to make obeisance.

How complete was the response of the assembly to the royal command?

“Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet ... and all kinds of music, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.” Daniel 3:7.

Not quite “all” the assembly obeyed the command. There in the midst of the sea of prostrate forms stood three upright figures, the young Hebrews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

Whatever gods the officers from the provinces were accustomed to worshipping at home, they had no compunction about bowing down to Nebuchadnezzar's image. They were polytheists anyhow, and the worship of one more god was of little consequence. The young Hebrews, however, regarded the command in a very different light. Believing that there was only one true God who demanded exclusive worship, they could make no concession to idolatry. When all the rest bowed down, therefore, they remained standing just where they were. Their action could not fail to be noticed, and their enemies in the Sacred College of the Chaldeans were quick to seize the opportunity of bringing about their downfall.

Being informed of the Hebrews' action, to whom did the Chaldeans go?

Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews. They spoke and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king live for ever... There are certain Jews whom thou has set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. these men, O king, have not regarded thee; they serve not thy gods. nor worship the golden image which thou has set up.” Daniel 3: 8-12.

If these Chaldeans were among those who had been saved from death by Daniel, it was a poor return meanly to accuse the Hebrews to the king. But they were jealous of the wisdom of the young men, of their evident favor with the king, and of the high office to which they had been appointed. Here was an opportunity to be rid of them, and they were not going to miss it.

Subtly they framed their charge so that it would arouse the full fury of the king. They suggested to him that the refusal to bow down was an act of base ingratitude, a personal insult to the one to whom they owed everything. Then, too, they had flouted his authority in so open a way that if this act of insubordination were allowed to pass, he would find others taking similar liberties. The trick worked. The king was stung to anger at the affront.

Filled with rage, what did the king command?

“Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king.” Daniel 3:13.

Of quick temper, Nebuchadnezzar's first thought was to execute the rebels as he had threatened “within the hour!” While they were being brought the first flush of rage was tempered by his better judgment. These men had served him with scrupulous honesty, which was more than he could say of the Chaldeans. What a shame that they should die over a trifle. He decided that he would hear their defense and offer them another chance.

What did he ask the young Hebrews? What further opportunity did he offer them?

“Nebuchadnezzar spoke and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, do not you serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now if you be ready that at what time you hear the sound of the cornet. . . . you fall down and worship the image which I have made; well!” Daniel 3: 14, 15.

Assuming a sense of personal injury Nebuchadnezzar indicated to them that if they would be sensible he would overlook their disobedience. The dedication services would continue for several days and to-morrow there would be an opportunity to retrieve themselves in the king's favor. If then they would bow down, the king's authority would be restored and he would be saved a painful duty.

What dire punishment would continued refusal bring upon them?

“But if you worship not, you shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?” Daniel 3:15.

As he spoke he thought he saw refusal in their eyes and, stiffening, he added another threat. This time there would be no postponement of the penalty. And in case they were trusting in Jehovah to deliver them, they should understand that Iz-bar, the fire god, was the servant of Merodach, and no other god would be able to deliver from his hands.

Did the three Hebrews weaken before the king's threat?

“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king; that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou has set up.” Daniel 3:16-18.

There is no need, they said, in effect, for us to ponder your words. Our minds were made up before we came here. Nothing you have said will change them.

As to the outcome, God could deliver them; of that they were sure.

Whether it was His purpose to deliver them they did not, as yet, know. But whatever His will was they were ready to submit to it, even if it meant martyrdom. God's approbation was more to them than life itself.

Furious at their defiance, what order did Nebuchadnezzar give the furnace-tenders?

“Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed: ... therefore he spoke, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more, than it was wont to be heated.” Daniel 3:19.

Nebuchadnezzar's order to the furnace-tenders reveals the unrestrained passion which was his fatal weakness. It was an impossible command, and in any case if the fire was fiercer the death of the rebels would be the speedier and more merciful.

Who were then bidden to cast the Hebrew youths into the furnace?

“And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their coats, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.” Daniel 3:20, 21.

The king came in person to officiate at the execution of the young men, and to impress his chief officials with his authority he bade them accompany him. His personal guards were bidden to seize the Hebrews just as they were, bind them, and cast them into the furnace.

The description of a typical Babylonian gentleman accords well with the description of the young Hebrews' apparel. Herodotus says: “For clothing, they wear a linen tunic reaching to the feet; over this the Babylonian puts another tunic, of wool, and wraps himself in a white mantle; he wears the shoes of his country, which are like Boetian sandals. Their hair is worn long and covered by caps; the whole body is perfumed.”-Herodotus, 1, 195.

What calamity befell the soldiers as they cast the young men into the flames?

“Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.” Daniel 3:22,23.

Hastening to obey the king they dragged the Hebrews to the mouth of the furnace to thrust them in, but so great was the out rush of flame as the door was opened that they themselves were overcome, and perished.

As the king peered into the furnace to see the Hebrews perish what was he amazed to behold?

“Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spoke, and said unto his counselors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?... Lo, I see four men loose walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God' Daniel 3:24, 25.

The first feelings of the king and his counselors were of horror as they saw the Babylonian soldiers collapse into the flames, but their horror was turned to astonishment when they gazed through the swinging doors into the glowing interior. For, walking in the midst of the flames, were the three Hebrews-and not only them, but another figure like a “son of the gods.” He expressed himself thus

for he believed in many gods all of whom had sons. Actually, the fourth figure was “the Son of God” Himself, who had come personally to stay the devouring flame and save His faithful servants.

Approaching the mouth of the furnace, what did Nebuchadnezzar cry to the young men?

“Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, you servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither.” Daniel 3:26.

Bewildered as he was, he could not fail to grasp the fact that here was the work of a “God most high,” a “God of gods.” Tremblingly he bade the Hebrews come forth, and as they emerged the figure of the fourth vanished as mysteriously as it had appeared.

Crowding round the Hebrews what did the amazed Babylonians notice?

“And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counselors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.” Daniel 3:27.

The worshippers of Merodach and of the fire god Iz-bar, had been utterly consumed, while the three Hebrews were not only unscathed but there was no evidence of the fire on their persons or their clothing. Their long hair was as neatly braided as when they were cast into the fire. Even the perfume which they, as Babylonian nobles, would use, had not been dispersed by the suffocating smoke and vapors of the furnace.

Could there have been a more convincing demonstration of the impotence of the heathen deities and of the power of Jehovah? Not only was He the Revealer of secrets, but He was also Lord of fire!

How did Nebuchadnezzar acknowledge the power of God?

“Then Nebuchadnezzar spoke, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent His angel, and delivered His servants that trusted in Him. And have changed the king's word and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God' Daniel 3:28.

No longer was the great image of Dura the center of attraction. Hearing of the miracle the crowds had flocked around and to them the king proclaimed the greatness of the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. So once more the wrath of men was turned to His praise.

In his desire to honor God what decree did he promulgate?

“Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.” Daniel 3:29.

The God of the Hebrews, having so signally manifested His power, was henceforth to be accorded equal honor with the great gods of the land. Though the deity of a subject nation, He was clearly no demi-god but rather a “high” god of great power. Therefore, no word was to be spoken against Him on pain of death and the confiscation of all the offender's possessions.

But remarkable as the decree was, it was really negative rather than positive. While the king was compelled to recognize Jehovah, he did not forthwith abandon his false worship. He humbled himself before God from fear of His power, but did not yield to Him his heart. Pride remained and was soon to lead him into more serious rebellion. For the moment, however, his generosity toward the Hebrews knew no bounds.

How were the valiant Hebrews honored?

“Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in the province of Babylon.” Daniel 3:30.

The Chaldeans' plan had indeed gone awry! They had conspired to destroy the Hebrews and banish the hated name of Jehovah from Babylon. Instead, the God of Israel was acclaimed by royal decree, their cowardly mouths were effectively stopped, and the Hebrews were raised to positions of greater trust than ever before. Surely God does work in mysterious ways His wonders to perform!

10. The Golden Emperor Humiliated

At the zenith of Nebuchadnezzar's power, what further warning came to him?

“I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace: I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me.” Daniel 4: 4, 5.

The wars which built up the great empire of Babylon occupied Nebuchadnezzar well into the second half of his reign. Judah was not finally disposed of until his seventeenth year, and the siege of Tyre lasted for no less than thirteen years, from his seventh to his twentieth year. He fought at least three wars against Egypt, and the third was not brought to a successful conclusion until his thirty-

seventh year.. The probability is, therefore, that this time of “rest” and “flourishing” was between the second and third Egyptian wars or even after the end of the third.

At the zenith of his power the king had no doubt forgotten his earlier humiliation and had given way to feelings of false pride at the extent of his conquests and the glory of the empire he had built up. Once more, therefore, he receives a warning dream.

For whom did he send?

“Therefore made I a decree to, bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream.” Daniel 4:6.

It may seem strange that, in spite of their previous failure, the Chaldeans were still the chief advisers to the king in all matters concerning dreams and portents. The reason was that the temple party had powerful political connections, and to have thrust them aside would have spelled ruin to Nebuchadnezzar even as it had done to Pharaoh Akhnaton of Egypt when he attempted to set aside the Amon priesthood of Thebes. Whatever he secretly thought of them, therefore, the king summoned them to his palace.

Although this time the king was able to tell the wise men his dream, how good were they to attempt to interpret it?

Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers: and I told the dream before them; but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof!" Daniel 4:7.

The fact that they “did not” at once venture an interpretation, was not so much that they could not, but that they dared not. The dream was obviously a menacing one, and if they worked up an explanation of it, Nebuchadnezzar would certainly not be ready to shower rewards upon them for their wisdom. So from fear they kept silence.

Who once again came to his aid?

“But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. And before him I told the dream, saying, O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubles thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof.” Daniel 4:8,9.

Unable to get any satisfaction out of the Chaldeans, Nebuchadnezzar called for Daniel. He did not really address him as “master of the magicians” as we have it in the Authorized Version. for Daniel could not conscientiously have held such an office. The title he used was “master of the scribes,” that is chief of the secretariat of the king.

Having made known the dream to Daniel, how did the king express his annoyance at the impotence of the wise men?

“This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now then, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, for as much as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou art able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee.” Daniel 4: 18.

Nebuchadnezzar had by now no sentimental feelings about the wise men, and had no compunction about confessing their failure to Daniel. His confidence in the prophet, however, was unbounded.

Why did not Daniel at once explain the meaning of the dream to Nebuchadnezzar?

“Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him.” Daniel 4:19.

When Daniel heard the dream and at once realized that the interpretation would come as a terrible shock to the king, he remained silent for “one hour.” A Babylonian “hour” was only twenty-four minutes, there being sixty divisions in the day, but even so, one can hardly imagine the prophet sitting mutely in the king's presence for that length of time. The word used does not actually have a specific time value and is translated by Gesenius “a moment.” The expression means that for a brief period Daniel was stunned by the tragic significance of the dream. His hesitation to reveal it, however, was not from fear of the king's anger, as in the case of the Babylonians, but from real sorrow for the fatal weakness in the character of the man who had always treated him with the greatest kindness, and toward whom he was utterly loyal.

Being pressed by the king to speak freely, with what words did he preface his interpretation?

“The king spoke, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to your enemies.” Daniel 4:19.

The king sensed the reason for Daniel's distress and, bracing himself to hear the worst, he bade the prophet speak freely. So Daniel began by declaring that he could wish what he had to tell might come upon the king's enemies rather than upon the king.

What had the king seen in his vision? Whom did Daniel declare it represented?

“Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: the leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all. The beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. The tree that thou saw, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth. Whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was

meat for all. Under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: it is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reaches unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth.” Daniel 4:10-12; 20-22.

A tree was a common symbol in Assyrian and Babylonian sculptures, as it was also with the prophets of Jehovah. Israel had been the Lord's “vine” (Isaiah 5), while Assyria in one of Ezekiel's visions was a “cedar in Lebanon.” Ezekiel 31: 3.

In one of his inscriptions, Nebuchadnezzar testifies of his kingdom in words reminiscent of this dream: “Under her everlasting shadow I gathered all men in peace. A reign of abundance, years of plenty, I caused to be in my land.”-“Wady Brissa Inscription B,” Col. VIII, 34.

As Nebuchadnezzar beheld the tree, whom did he see descending from heaven?

“I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven.” Daniel 4:13.

Nowhere else in the Bible are the angels described as “watchers,” but in many places we are shown that this is one of their most important functions. Zechariah saw angels going “to and fro through the earth” (Zechariah 1: 11), and reporting all that they saw. Malachi refers to a “book of remembrance” (Malachi 3: 16) which they write in heaven, while Daniel (Daniel 7:9, 10), and also John in the New Testament (Revelation 20: 12), both had visions of the opening of the “books” compiled by these heavenly “watchers.”

In his dream Nebuchadnezzar sees the “watcher” who had observed and rebuked his doings returning to execute the decree of God.

What command did the holy watcher give?,

“He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches.” Daniel 4:14.

This tragic command would be very vivid to the king, for in the longest of all his inscriptions in the Wady Brissa in the Lebanon he is actually portrayed as the royal woodcutter. In these rock-cut inscriptions, of which there are two-one in old Babylonian and a duplicate in the later script-he tells how during his Palestine campaigns (probably between 598 and 588 BC.) he cut a road up “the cedar mountains” into the “luxuriant” and “fragrant” forest of Merodach, where, with ceremonially “clean hands” he “cut down ... mighty cedars tall and strong, of costly value” which he needed for the “adornment” of his buildings in Babylon.

On one of the inscriptions the king is pictured grasping a tree with his left hand while he fells it with an axe in his right. Beside the picture are the words, “King Nebuchadnezzar fells with his own hand a cedar of Lebanon.” Elsewhere he prays to Merodach, “May my woodcutting prosper.” Perhaps that great inscription in the heart of the forest of Lebanon came to mind as the “watcher's” decree rang in his ears.

How did the prophet explain the significance of the felling of the great tree?

“And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it. ... This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king. That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen.” Daniel 4:23-25.

In his Lebanon inscription it was he who was triumphantly carrying out the task of felling the great cedars. In Ezekiel's graphic account he was one of those who took part in the felling of the Assyrian “cedar.” But with horror he learned that by the decree of God his might and his glory were now to be abased.

How was God's judgment upon the tree mitigated? What was the significance of the leaving of the stump?

“Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field.” “And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee' after that thou shall have known that the heavens do rule.” Daniel 4:15, 26.

This sore judgment, he learned, was only for a period and would be terminated when he had learned his lesson. In the meantime his kingdom would be safely kept and would eventually be restored to him.

What was to be the duration of the judgment?

“Let his heart be changed from a man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him.” Daniel 4:16. (See also verse 25)

The word iddan, here translated “time,” occurs only in the book of Daniel. It can refer to any “season” or “appointed time,” but it is also used for a specific period of one “year.” This is obviously the significance here. Nebuchadnezzar's judgment was to continue for seven years.

What was the purpose of the judgment?

“This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones. To the intent that the living may know that the most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will, and sets up over it the basest of men.” Daniel 4:17. (See also verse 25.)

Nebuchadnezzar had to learn, and it was a hard lesson, that his greatness was not of his own creation, but by the ordination of God, the real Ruler in the kingdoms of men.

In what way did Daniel suggest that the calamity described in the dream might be postponed?

“Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.” Dan. 4:27.

If the king would humble himself while there. was yet time, the calamity might be turned back and not come upon him. Nineveh had been spared for well-nigh two hundred years when it repented under Jonah's preaching. Hezekiah had his life prolonged fifteen years after his death had been decreed. Nebuchadnezzar likewise, by prompt repentance-“the healing of your error” (margin)-Could avert the judgment delineated in his dream. Thus Daniel pleaded with his royal master. But the king failed to heed the warning of the watcher and the counsel of the prophet of God.

How completely, therefore, was the predicted judgment fulfilled?

“All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar.” Daniel 4:28.

Dismissing the dream from his mind Nebuchadnezzar became more and more proud until, unknown to himself, the period of his probation ended, and the processes of judgment began inexorably to operate.

By what action on the part of the king was the judgment precipitated?

“At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spoke, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?” Daniel 4: 29, 30.

It was just twelve months later that the blow fell. He was walking “in his palace,” or rather “on his palace,” that is on one of the high flat roofs which overlooked the far-spreading city. From one mighty pile to another his eyes traveled, and his heart glowed with pride as he realized how he had transformed the face of the capital.

The palace of his father Nabopolassar, he had restored, and on an adjacent mound he built this New Palace on which he stood. The Hanging Gardens, one of the “seven wonders of the world,” were a part of the New Palace, and were built to satisfy his mountain-bred wife, the daughter of Cyaxares the Mede.

To the south of the New Palace he had completed the great Merodach ziggurat temple of E-temen-ana-ki begun by his father. Nearby was the temple of E-sagila (“house whose top is lofty”) also dedicated to Merodach or Bel.

He had raised and repaved the sacred Processional Way along which the New Year procession of the god passed, and spanned it between his palace and the temple of Ninmakh with the great Ishtar Gate which had a cedar roof and cedar doors plated with copper. Both the gate and the processional way he had decorated with enamelled tiles picturing bulls and dragons in relief.

He had built embankments and quays along the river which flowed through the city and had strengthened the two walls of the city, Inigur Bel and Nimitti-Bel, erecting new citadels along them and digging and lining the great moat between. He had built another wall on the east side of the city, also with bronze-covered cedar-wood doors.

All this was beside the beautifying of Borsippa, Sippar, and other cities throughout the land. Standing on the roof of the New Palace, Nebuchadnezzar could see in every direction mighty buildings and works which he had erected or rebuilt. The city was indeed, as he describes it in the India House inscription, “the delight of my eyes, and which I have glorified,” and in the Wady Brissa inscriptions, “the city of the lifting up of mine eyes.” Nebuchadnezzar's words, “Is not this great Babylon that I have built?” were literally true, though they were spoken with fatal pride.

As he uttered these words what sentence did a heavenly voice pronounce upon him? How quickly was it executed?

“While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers; and his nails like birds' claws.” Daniel 4:31-33.'

Medical opinion differs as to whether Nebuchadnezzar was afflicted with the rare disease lycanthropy, or whether it was some other acute mania. There are records of the former as early as the fourth century AD. In this condition the sufferer believes that he has been changed into a wolf. He howls in imitation of this animal. His hair grows long “like feathers,” and his nails take the appearance of talons. The individual develops ferocious habits, seeks to escape into the woods, and may even descend to cannibalism.

In less serious manias the symptoms are not so pronounced, but the habits are in general, violent and bestial. The medical histories of such cases reveal that recovery is possible after a varying period, as it was with Nebuchadnezzar.

During his period of affliction the king was no doubt kindly cared for in some appropriate retreat, while the affairs of government were in the hands of a regent. One suggestion is that Evil-Merodach (AmelMarduk), the next king, acted on his father's behalf, keeping the throne safe for Nebuchadnezzar and incidentally for himself as the next in succession. As a result Nebuchadnezzar's name continued to be used without interruption in the dating on contract tablets which have been unearthed from the city.

When Nebuchadnezzar recovered his sanity what confession did he make? What praise' did he ascribe to the king of heaven?

“And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed he most High, and I praised and honored Him that lives for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He does according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, what does Thou? . . . Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase.” Daniel 4:34-37.

By public testimony to the greatness and goodness of the “most High,” Nebuchadnezzar gave immediate evidence of his repentance. He acknowledged His power in heaven and earth, the extent and enduring character of His sovereignty, and confessed the impotence of man to oppose His will.

It is hardly to be supposed that on his recovery Nebuchadnezzar completely abandoned the worship of the gods of Babylon. Naaman, it will be remembered, bowed in the temple of Rimmon in Damascus after acknowledging the healing power of the God of Elisha. But though he continued to worship Merodach to the end of his life as the more immediately accessible deity he clearly regarded Jehovah, within the limits of his spiritual insight, as God “most High.”

In what other decree did the king also honor God?

“Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me. How great are His signs! And how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation.” Daniel 4:1-3.

This decree appears at the beginning of chapter four, between the story of the golden image and the account of Nebuchadnezzar's illness. It could have been issued in connection with either one or other of these experiences, as in both God wrought “wonders,” and both were “signs” testifying to His power and pointing to the need of humble obedience to His will. Nebuchadnezzar's pride was difficult to break, and a number of hard lessons were necessary to humble the great king, but the last glimpse we have of him in the sacred record is of a truly repentant man.

How fully was the kingdom restored to Nebuchadnezzar?

“At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honor and brightness returned unto me; and my counselors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.” Daniel 4:36.

How long a time Nebuchadnezzar reigned after his recovery we do not certainly know, but if his illness was after the third Egyptian war it could only have been quite a short period. It was long enough, however, for God to honor His promise and restore the kingdom in undimmed glory to the king, and for Nebuchadnezzar, on his part, to give clear evidence of his repentance. We may well hope that this truly great king found peace with God at his passing.

11. The Passing of the Golden Empire

When the time of Babylon's' end drew near who was on the throne?

“Belshazzar the king.” Daniel 5:1.

In the attacks upon the trustworthiness of the book of Daniel, the “mistake” over which the critics gloated most of all was the statement of the author that the last king of Babylon was Belshazzar. They searched the writings of the Greek and Egyptian historians and none of them mentioned any such name. Instead these histories gave Nabonidus (Nabonaid) as the last king. The case against Daniel seemed irrefutable.

But in coming to this conclusion they made as big a mistake as when they denied the existence of Sargon, king of Assyria, and conqueror of Samaria. Sargon came to light to make the critics eat their words, and so did Belshazzar.

Sir Henry Rawlinson was first to decipher the name on a cylinder from Ur of the Chaldees, which asked divine protection for Nabonaid (Nabonidus) and his son Bil-shar-tizar (Belshazzar), and since then more than five hundred other tablets have been found containing the name of this supposedly non-existent person!

From this very large number of tablets now in our hands, we not only know for a certainty that Belshazzar was a real person, but we can reconstruct his whole life right up to the time when he sat upon the throne of the first world empire in Babylon.'

When Belshazzar was about thirty years old, his father went into retirement at Tema in Arabia, leaving his son in Babylon as the real ruler of the empire. For a number of years Nabonidus never came near Babylon and was not present at any of the New Year feasts. Confirmation of Belshazzar's position at this time comes from a tablet found at Erech by Dr. Pinches, on which the names of Nabonidus and Belshazzar are associated "practically on the same plane." On its evidence Dr. Pinches comes to the conclusion: "Not only for the Hebrews, but also for the Babylonians, Belshazzar held a practically royal position.", -"Expository Times," April, 1915.

As early as the reign of Neriglissar the aggression of the Medes became menacing and Nabonidus allied himself with Croesus, king of Lydia, and with the king of Egypt against them. He made no move from Tema when Croesus was defeated and captured at Sardis, but when he heard that Cyrus was marching on Babylon he did at last bestir himself, interposing an army between the Media-Persians and the capital. But he, too, was defeated and when he attempted to shut himself up in Borsippa, the city gave him up and he was carried away a prisoner to Carmania in Persia before the final assault on Babylon.

The critics were thus perfectly right when they asserted that Nabonidus was not in the capital when it was taken, and that he did not die there. But to their chagrin the Bible was right, too, for the co-ruler of Babylon, Belshazzar, was in Babylon and he did die in the last fatal assault!

Where had Belshazzar established himself and how unconcerned was he about the Media-Persian armies closing in upon him?

"The king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand." Daniel 5:1.

From the historians Berosus, Herodotus, Xenophon, and Josephus, and from the Annalistic Tablet and Cylinder of Cyrus, both found by Rassam in Babylon and now in the British Museum, the full story of the last tragic days of Babylon have been recovered.

After the defeat and capture of Nabonidus, the Median general Gubarti, or Gobryas, advanced on Babylon. Two parties contended for supremacy in the city as the army approached. One, which included many of the Jews and the disaffected priestly party, were for surrendering the city; the other were for opposing the Media-Persians. The former triumphed, opened the gates, and the outer city was peacefully occupied on the sixteenth of Tammuz (June-July).

Belshazzar, with those faithful to him, withdrew into the inner city, dominated by the king's fortified palace, and defied the invaders. For over three months, until October-November, Belshazzar held out in the inner city as is indicated by merchants' tablets dated up to the tenth Marchesvan in the seventeenth year of Nabonidus, the day before Belshazzar was slain.

The king and his supporters were quite confident that the besiegers could never scale the fortress walls, nor break down her massive brazen gates. The food supplies were sufficient to withstand a siege of almost indefinite length. It was in these circumstances that the king and the loyal nobles gathered for a great carousal. The scene of the feast was no doubt the throne room of Nebuchadnezzar's palace, which has been identified by Dr. Koldewey, even to the position of the recessed niche where the king sat opposite the central entrance.

In defiance of God what did he order to be brought into the banqueting-hall?

"Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God that was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them." Daniel 5:2, 3.

Belshazzar was worse for drink when, as a crowning indignity to the gods of the conquered nations other than those he trusted in, he sent for the golden vessels from the temple in Jerusalem.

That the vessels of Jehovah should be singled out is explainable by the fact that the Jews were suspected by the king of being favorable to Cyrus and anxious for his capture of the city. Belshazzar, therefore, wanted to show that he cared neither for the gods of the Medes and Persians, nor for the God of the Jews. Bel would deliver him from them all.

As they feasted what divine visitation occurred?

"They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote." Daniel 5: 4, 5.

In the midst of the drunken revelry, God acted. The king was sitting facing the entrance to the great hall, when suddenly he saw an angelic hand tracing mysterious letters upon the gypsum plaster of the farther wall. The word "wrote," means literally cut or incised, which made the miracle akin to the writing of the finger of God upon the tables of stone on Sinai. When the hand disappeared there were the newly cut letters engraved in the soft lime plaster of the wall and thrown into relief by a nearby candlestick.

At first only the king saw the handwriting. Not until the nobles noticed the consternation upon their monarch's face did they turn round to see for themselves what had transfixed him with horror.

How was the king affected by the apparition? For whom did he call?

“Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers.” Daniel 5: 6, 7.

On recovering somewhat from his initial shock the king tremblingly ordered his wise men to be sent for to interpret the writing. Belshazzar's first thought was, no doubt, that it was a message from Nebo, whose special responsibility was the writing of the decrees of the gods on the tablets of fate. He was known as “the bearer of the fate tablets of the gods, who regulates the totality of heaven and earth. holds the tablet. grasps the stylus, prophesies the days.”

What did he anxiously ask, and what reward did he offer?

“And the king spoke and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and show me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be third ruler in the kingdom.” Daniel 5:7

The rewards which Belshazzar promised were the finery of the Babylonian nobles of the day. On the monuments these rich robes are everywhere to be seen, as also golden necklaces such as the king offered.

The fact that the one who could interpret the writing would be made “third” ruler in the kingdom is further evidence of the joint rule of Belshazzar with his father. Pharaoh was able to make Joseph second in Egypt, but in Babylon there were already two rulers. Consequently, exaltation to a position next to Belshazzar would make the privileged interpreter third in the kingdom.

Were the wise men able to satisfy the king?

“Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof.” Daniel 5: 8.

In spite of the great reward offered, the wise men once more could not offer an interpretation. The letters themselves they would have no difficulty in deciphering, for they must have been either in the cuneiform syllabic script or in Aramaic, but they could make no sensible message out of them.

How widespread did the consternation of the assembly become?

“Then was the king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished.” Daniel 5:9.

The inability of the wise men to produce an intelligible interpretation of the Writing increased the alarm and consternation of the company, and particularly of the king. The conviction now fixed itself in his mind that the message was not from Nebo, but an overriding word from some unknown and menacing god.

Hearing of the tragic happenings in the banqueting hall, who hurried to the scene?

“Now the queen by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banquet house.” Daniel 5:10.

By reason of advanced age, the queen-mother, a daughter of the great Nebuchadnezzar, had not joined in the feast of the thousand nobles. But when she heard of the breaking up of the feast an idea flashed into her mind and she hurried thither.

How did she encourage the king? Of what did she remind him?

“And the queen spoke and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed: there is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. And in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans and soothsayers.” Daniel 5:10,11.

When the usurper Neriglissar wrested the throne from Nebuchadnezzar's son, it is very likely that Daniel, as a faithful servant of the great king, was relieved of his high office and forced into obscurity. He would not be returned to power by Nabonidus, as he also was a usurper, and so could easily have been forgotten by Belshazzar. While forgotten by Belshazzar, however, Daniel came at once to the mind of the queen-mother, who would remember his services on behalf of her father.

It will be noted that the queen-mother refers to Nebuchadnezzar as Belshazzar's father. This does not and obviously could not mean that Belshazzar was a natural son of the great king. Only Evil-Merodach answered to this description. But as the word “son” could mean son or grandson, or even a more remote descendant, it could apply to one whose ancestry had been legitimized by marriage into the family of Nebuchadnezzar. There is therefore complete agreement with Jeremiah's statement that the last king of Babylon would be Nebuchadnezzar's “son's son,” (Jeremiah 27: 7), and the statement in 2 Chronicles 36:20 that the Hebrews were servants to Nebuchadnezzar “and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia.”

In what did she say Daniel had excelled, and what did she suggest?

“Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and showing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation.” Daniel 5:12.

The queen-mother's description reminds one of the proverb, “wiser than Daniel” which had become current among the exiles. (Ezekiel 28: 3)

Being called before the king what did Belshazzar inquire of Daniel? What did the prophet assure the king he would do?

“Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king spoke and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry? I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee. And now the wise men, and astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not show the interpretation of the thing. And I have heard of thee, that thou can make interpretations and dissolve doubts. Now if thou can read the writing and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation.” Daniel 5:13-17.

It is significant that in his reply to Belshazzar, Daniel did not first wish his dread tidings could be upon the king's enemies as he had expressed himself to Nebuchadnezzar. The prophet had admired, and even loved his old master, but he had no respect at all for Belshazzar whose father had connived in the murder of Evil-Merodach, and who had probably himself had a hand in the killing of Labasi-Marduk (Laborosoarchod). The usurper's approaching end aroused no regrets or sorrow in the heart of the prophet.

What did Daniel first recall to the king?

“O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honor. And for the majesty that He gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down. But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like the oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven. Till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that He appoints over it whomsoever He will. And thou his son, O Belshazzar, has not humbled your heart, though thou knew all this. But has lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them. And thou has praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, has thou not glorified.” Daniel 5:18-23.

Nebuchadnezzar's affliction had brought repentance and reformation in the life of the great king, but his experience had been forgotten by those who followed after. None had recognized nor sought after the “most high God” of Daniel.

From whom did Daniel declare the handwriting on the wall had come? What words were written upon the wall?

“Then was the part of the hand sent from Him; and this writing was written. And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.” Daniel 5:24-25.

If the words were read as nouns they comprised a list of three Aramaic weights mina, tequal, an peres. If the words were read not as nouns, the verbs they spelled out, “numbered, numbered, weighed, divided.” But whichever way the wise men looked at the words they could make no intelligible message out of them.

What did Daniel declare the first word signified?

“This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it!” Daniel 5:26.

Read as a verb “mene” meant “numbered,” “counted out,” or “allotted.” This word was used by God of Judah in Isaiah 65: 12 when He decreed: “Therefore will I number you to the sword.” Daniel, interpreting it to Belshazzar, declared that God had decreed the duration of his kingdom and had written it not upon Nebo's tablets, but upon the true “tablets of fate.” The number of his days had run out and his kingdom had come to its end.

How did Daniel interpret the second word?

“TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.” Daniel 5:27.

In the Egyptian underworld the souls of men were weighed by the scribe-god Thoth against the feather of truth, called “maat.” Doubtless the Babylonians had a similar idea of judgment. Daniel therefore announced to Belshazzar that the balances of judgment were unfavorable to him. He was “weighed” and found “wanting.”

What did the last word indicate?

“PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.” Daniel 5:28.

“Peres” and its plural “upharsin” means “divided”; they also meant “Persian,” the two providing Daniel with a double interpretation. The kingdom of Babylon was to be rent in twain and the power to which it would be given would be the Medes and Persians, and ultimately the Persians.

In spite of the dread character of the message, how did Belshazzar keep his promise to Daniel?

“Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.” Daniel 5:29.

Ahab promptly put Micaiah behind prison bars when that prophet declared his fate, but Belshazzar, true to his word, solemnly invested the now old man with ceremonial robe and necklace and reinstated him as chief in the kingdom next to himself.

How swiftly did the predicted judgment come?

“In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.” Daniel 5: 30.

When the handwriting appeared it was already night, for the lamps were burning. It must have been approaching midnight when Daniel reached the banqueting hall. Before the morning of the twelfth Marchesvan, Belshazzar was dead. Swift indeed were the arrows of fate!

How did it come about? Just over a week before, on the third Marchesvan, after the siege of the inner city had been in progress for more than three months, Cyrus himself had arrived in Babylon to confer with his general, Gobryas. At this conference, the plans were laid for the final reduction of the palace fortress. They went into effect on the night of the eleventh Marchesvan as Belshazzar's feast was reaching its climax.

By an ingenious ruse Gobryas diverted the waters of the river which ran through the center of the city. At an appointed signal the Media-Persian forces passed under the river gates defending its entrance and exit and made for the palace. Confident of the strength of the city, the Babylonian guards had failed to close the quay gates leading up from the river into the palace, and the guards, taken by surprise, were quickly overcome. The inner city was soon in the hands of the enemy and Belshazzar himself was killed.

“The son of the king died,” says the Annalistic Tablet, and “from the twenty-seventh day of the month Adar to the third of the month Nisan, there was weeping in Akkad, all the people bowed their heads.”

Neither the Annalistic Tablet nor the cylinder of Cyrus mention the stratagem by which the inner city was taken. As both were prepared by Babylonian scribes, they no doubt intentionally suppressed the ignominious climax in order to give the impression that the city had honorably capitulated.

In the events of this historic day, we clearly see the transition in the great image from the head of gold to the breast and arms of silver. With the fall of Babylon, the empire, of which it had for some seventy years been the proud capital, went down to rise no more, and Media-Persia succeeded to world supremacy.

On the cylinder of Cyrus the king gives praise to Marduk or Merodach for having chosen him to receive the kingdom. “Marduk sought me out a righteous prince and a man after his own heart, whom he could take by the hand. He proclaimed my name 'Cyrus, king of Anshan,' and declared my name for sovereignty over the whole world.” The Bible, reveals that it was not Merodach but Jehovah who appointed Cyrus to bring to naught the mighty empire of Babylon.

Who was given control of the province of Babylon after the death of Belshazzar?

“And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.” Daniel 5:31.

The expression “Darius ... took the kingdom,” should literally be translated “Darius ... received the kingdom,” which makes it clear that Darius was appointed ruler of the sub-kingdom of Babylon by Cyrus. Over his vast dominions Cyrus was the “Great King” or “King of the Countries,” while the rulers or satraps of the other provinces such as Darius were lesser “kings.” Actually there are five Babylonian words for “king” which were used according to the importance of the position they occupied, from the monarch of the empire to the governors of the minor provinces.

A great deal has been written about the identity of King Darius the Median, the chief claimants being Cyaxares II, the supposed son of Astyages named by Xenophon and the Jewish historian Josephus; Gobryas who is mentioned in contemporary Babylonian tablets as governor of Babylon. And Cambyses, the son of Cyrus the Great.

Of Cyaxares it must be said that outside the histories of Xenophon and Josephus there is no trace of any son of Astyages occupying such a position. It is therefore doubtful whether he ever existed. Most probably Xenophon confused him with the great Cyaxares, the father of Astyages.

The chief difficulty about the identification with Cambyses is that Darius is stated to be sixty-two years old, whereas Cyrus himself was only fifty-one years old at the time. The son obviously could not be older than his father.

Of Gobryas, we know that he led the attack on Babylon, that Cyrus appointed him governor of the city and province before the inner city fell, that he in turn appointed sub-governors in the province. That he was previously king of Gutium, adjacent to Media and therefore could properly be described as a “Mede,” and that he was an elderly man at the time of the fall of Babylon. Moreover the latter part of the name Gobryas is nearer to Darius than the names of any of the other claimants. In fact, in the Babylonian Sindjerli inscription, his name looks very much like Darius.

The one objection which could be advanced against the identification of Gobryas with Darius is that he was not “king” but governor of Babylon. This however, has little validity for there were degrees of kingship in the Media-Persian Empire from the “Great King” downward, and as Gobryas was a minor king of Gutium when he was appointed to lead the army against Babylon, he presumably would retain this title when Cyrus made him governor of the important province of Babylon.

In what prophecy had Jeremiah indicated the precise reign in which the Babylonian dynasty would collapse? “All nations shall serve him [Nebuchadnezzar], and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him.” Jeremiah 27:7.

This prophecy was literally fulfilled, for Nabonidus was son-in law to Nebuchadnezzar through marriage to his daughter, and Belshazzar, the son of Nabonidus, was ruling conjointly with his father when the city fell.

How, accurately did Jeremiah predict the time of Babylon's fall?

“It shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that, I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, says the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolation!” Jeremiah 25: 12.

Jeremiah was speaking in 606 BC. just before the captivity, and it was in 538 BC., just sixty-eight years after the utterance of this prophecy, that Darius overthrew Babylon, and exactly seventy years after when Cyrus issued his decree liberating the remnant.

How literally were the detailed prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah fulfilled in the fall of Babylon?

- 1.It was captured by an invader from the north. (Isaiah 13: 1-5; Jeremiah 50: 3, 9, 41, 42.)
- 2.The Medes were the leaders of the invading army. (Isaiah 13: 17; Jeremiah 51: 11, 28)
- 3.The national weapon of the Medes was the bow. (Isaiah 13: 18; Jeremiah 50: 14, 29; 5 1: 3, 11.)
- 4.The city was taken by a snare. (Jeremiah 50: 24)
- 5.The stratagem was associated with the diversion of the river. (Jeremiah 51: 36)
- 6.The defenders were drunk and unable to resist the final onslaught. (Jeremiah 51: 32, 39, 57.)

So perished Babylon the metropolis of this first world empire, and in the process of time, just as the prophetic Word declared, it was reduced to “heaps” in the desert, avoided by men, and populated only by wild beasts and noisome creatures. (Jeremiah 51: 37; Isaiah 13: 19-23; 14: 23)

By contrast with the “golden city” of Babylon what other golden city will one day be established in the earth never to pass away?

“And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, . . . and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.” Revelation 21:2, 18.

Men may lavish energy and wealth in the building up of their golden Babylons, but one after another they are destined to perish and pass away. But when “Jerusalem the golden” is set up by God as the metropolis of His kingdom upon earth, it will stand for ever.

12. The Rise of the Second Empire

What intimation did Nebuchadnezzar receive in his vision of the great image that the Babylonian Empire would pass away?

“And after thee shall arise another kingdom.” Daniel 2:39.

The change in the metallic structure of the image indicated not just another king, but the rise of a new power which would conquer and supersede the Babylonian world empire.

From whence were the conquerors of Babylon to come? Who were specifically named as leaders of the invading forces?

“For, lo, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country: and they shall set themselves in array against her!” Jeremiah 50:9. (See also verses 3, 41-44) “Behold I will stir up the Medes against them!” Isaiah 13:17. (See also Jeremiah 51: 11-14, 28.)

To the north of Babylonia there were a great number of tribes of Aryan stock, of which the Amidae or Madai (Medes) were the oldest and most important, stemming back to Madai, the son of Japheth. (Genesis 10:2; 1 Chronicles 1:5) Originally they occupied southern Russia, but around 2000 BC. they began to move southward into north-western Persia at about the same time that the Persians, a closely related people, began to descend from the north-east.

Probably as a result of Assyrian aggression, the Median tribes became united in the sixth century BC., and in 612 BC. Cyaxares the Mede, in alliance with the Babylonians, destroyed Nineveh, and brought to an end the Assyrian Empire.

It is a strange fact that though the Medes were the more powerful of the allied forces which overthrew Assyria, Cyaxares did not press southward to occupy the Assyrian domains. Whatever the reason be, he confined himself to occupying the Cimmerian and Scythian lands of the north, leaving Babylon to become the first world power of symbolic prophecy. Media-Persia's time had not yet come.

By what prophet was the great king who founded the MedoPersian Empire named?

By Isaiah. “Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have bidden, to subdue nations before him.” Isaiah 45: 1. (See also verses 2-4 and Isaiah 44:28)

Cyaxares, king of Media and destroyer of Nineveh, was succeeded by Astyages, an indolent, voluptuous monarch who quickly lost his hold on the people and on the army. This provided an opportunity for Cyrus, son of Teispes, of the Persian line of Achaemenes, at this time a minor king of the province of Anshan, to foment a revolt and march on Ecbatana, the capital. After Cyrus had gained three victories, the army of Astyages went over to him and delivered up the capital and their king. Thus, in 549 BC. Cyrus, the obscure king of Anshan, became king of the Medes. Three years later, at the age of forty-three, he was recognized as king of Persia, and the Median kingdom became the kingdom of the Medes and Persians.

The Babylonians noted the rise of Cyrus in their annals, but clearly had no idea that he was to inaugurate a new epoch, in the history of the world. Only the prophet of God by inspiration had foretold his high destiny, which he now began to translate into history.

Having finally united the Media-Persian kingdom, Cyrus marched and counter-marched west, north, and east to consolidate the territory overrun by Cyaxares, and in a few years he ruled from the River Halys in Asia Minor, where his boundary touched that of Lydia, to the mountains east of Elam, and from Ararat in the north to Southern Babylonia and the Persian Gulf in the south.

This left him with only two rivals, Croesus in Lydia and Nabonidus in Babylon. In 546 BC. Cyrus attacked and overthrew Croesus, and Lydia was added to the Media-Persian Empire.

The next five or six years Cyrus spent in the east subduing Bactria and what is now known as Afghanistan. He then returned (539 BC.) to deal with the only remaining independent state, Babylon, with its tributary states of Syria and Egypt. How this fell has already been related.

How did Daniel designate the conquerors of Babylon?

“Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.” Daniel 5:28. (See also Daniel 6:8, 12, 15)

Although Cyrus had united the Medes and Persians eight years before and was himself a Persian, precedence was still given to the Medes by reason of their being the older race. A century later, however, the order of the races is reversed, and we begin to read of Persia and Media in the book of Esther (1:3,14, 18,19). And in the Behistun inscription of Darius I. The latter king proudly claims on his great rock monument in Western Persia, “I am Darius, a Persian, son of a Persian, an Aryan, of Aryan race.”

The fact, however, that the book of Daniel uses the form, “Medes and Persians,” is one more evidence of the early date of the book, and contradicts the assertions of the critics that it was written at a much later time.

How extensive did Cyrus declare his dominions to be? How did he recognize God's control over the nations? “Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me.” 2 Chronicles 36:23.

After the absorption of Asia Minor and Babylon, with which latter went Syria and Egypt, Cyrus was literally ruler of the civilized world.

Several ancient historians have corroborated the world-wide extent of the Media-Persian conquests. Herodotus says: “Wherever Cyrus marched through the earth, it was impossible for the nations to escape him.” Xenophon, another Greek historian and soldier, declares in his history of Cyrus that “he struck all with such dread and terror that none ventured to assail him. He subdued from his throne east, west, north, and south.”

There is no real contradiction between Cyrus' praise in the Bible to the Hebrew God for his exaltation, and his praise of Merodach in the Babylonian tablets. Though he himself worshipped neither, but rather Ahura Mazda (wise lord), the supreme god of the Persians, it was part of his diplomacy in securing the loyalty of conquered peoples to acknowledge the gods of these nations as having received him into their favor. It would seem, however, that, as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, his later contacts with the Jews resulted in his recognizing Jehovah as “the Lord God” above all others. (Ezra 1: 2.)

By what part of the great image is the Media-Persian kingdom represented?

“His breast and his arms of silver!” Daniel 2: 32.

The view has been advocated by some that the silver portion of the image corresponds only to the Median Empire and that the Persian kingdom represents a third one. This contention, however, will not bear investigation. Cyrus became ruler of the combined Media-Persian kingdom in 546 BC., eight years before he conquered Babylon and overthrew the first empire of symbolic prophecy. The Bible assumes the dual empire to be one from the beginning. Daniel couples the Medes and Persians together in interpreting the handwriting on the wall (Daniel 5: 28), and the angel Gabriel, explaining a later vision, specifically refers to the “kings of Media and Persia!” Daniel 8:20. The separation of the two is a spurious attempt to foreshorten the scope of the image, and explain away its supernatural forecast of world history.

Was silver an appropriate symbol of the Media-Persian Empire?

Indeed it was.

Silver was as appropriate a symbol for Media-Persia as gold was for Babylon. It was, for one thing, the principal adornment of the Persian warriors. More significant still, silver was the standard of exchange in the days of this empire, just as, until recently, gold was in universal use for modern international commerce. Their word for money, in fact, was the same as the word for silver. Their principal coins were the silver Median shekel and a silver talent, which was equivalent to sixty thousand shekels. A gold coin, called a daric after Darius, was later used and was valued at twenty silver shekels.

Herodotus tells us that the annual taxes in the days of Darius Hystaspes were remitted to the treasury in silver talents, and lists the tribute from the various provinces in this form.

In what form did Artaxerxes make his special gift to Ezra for the rebuilding of the house of the Lord in Jerusalem?

“And I, even I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven; shall require of you, it be done speedily, unto an hundred talents of silver.” Ezra 7:21, 22.

Here in the Scripture is a confirmation of the place which the metal silver occupied in the fiscal system of Media-Persia.

How did Daniel say the second empire would compare with Babylon?

“After thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee.” Daniel 2: 39.

Some commentators simply take this to mean “below” or “lower down” in the image as Daniel sought to present the mental picture of it to the king. But it would hardly seem that this exhausts the implications of the word. There is a definite contrast between the two kingdoms, the second being “inferior” in some way to the first.

To Nebuchadnezzar silver was certainly an inferior metal, for had he not replaced the silver inlay of Merodach's cell with gold? Moreover, in the triumphal inscription of Sargon II, we find a number of precious substances listed in the order: gold, silver, precious stones, brass—which corresponds exactly with the order of the metals in the image, and indicates a declining scale of values which has persisted even to our own day.

In what then was Media-Persia inferior to Babylon? Not in extent, certainly, for its area was actually three times as large as Babylonia had ever been. Nor could it be regarded as inferior in duration, for Media-Persia retained its dominant position for 194 years, compared with only seventy or so years of Babylonian supremacy.

It was, however, inferior in luxury and magnificence. We have seen that Nebuchadnezzar chose to use his wealth for the adornment of his palaces and temples that they might strike the beholders with the awe of his majesty. The Media-Persian kings, on the other hand, considered it best to retain their treasures in a more fluid form, that they might be available at short notice for the financing of great military expeditions. Thus the second empire was not so ostentatiously luxurious as the first, though its actual wealth was probably very much greater.

The Media-Persian kings were inferior also in that they did not enjoy the same absolute authority as the kings of Babylon. While the first empire was an absolute autocracy, Media-Persia was apportioned among a number of governors or satraps, who exercised supreme authority within their respective domains, and were not interfered with by the monarch of the empire provided they remitted their taxes regularly to the treasury. In the reign of Artaxerxes there were 127 such satraps. (Esther 1:1.)

The king, too, was subject to the laws of the kingdom. While he might decree new laws, when they were passed he was bound by them. The “law of the Medes and Persians” was supreme. Thus, when Darius was inveigled into signing a religious decree forbidding the petitioning of any god or man save himself for thirty days, he was unable to waive it even to save his trusted counselor, Daniel, from the den of lions. (Daniel 6:15) One can hardly imagine Nebuchadnezzar countenancing such a restriction of his sovereign will.

Was the second empire to prove any more permanent than the golden kingdom?

“Another third kingdom of brass shall bear rule over all the earth.” Daniel 2:39.

Strong and powerful as was the second empire, the divine Word had foretold its passing. It endured a little longer, it extended itself a little farther, but in due time, as prophecy had declared, its course was run. The great Cyrus, who was killed in a battle against some northern barbarian tribe (529 BC.), was followed by his son Cambyses (529-522 BC.), Smerdis, an impostor (7 months, 522 BC.) and then Darius Hystaspes (521-485 BC.).

Under Darius Hystaspes the bounds of the empire were pushed to their farthest extent, and the record of his vast achievements survives till to-day in the great rock inscription at Behistun, near Harnadan in Persia.

The one mistake which Darius made, and it was a fatal one, was in stirring up the Greek hornets' nest by seeking to extend his empire into Europe. Darius was not only stopped by the Greeks at Marathon as he had been stopped nowhere else in his campaigns, but he generated a hatred of the Persians in the Greek hearts, never to be assuaged till the Asiatic empire was no more.

A century and a half, however, passed before the end came. Xerxes I, Artaxerxes I, and eight more kings successively bore sway over the Media-Persian Empire, most of them bearing the names of Darius, Xerxes, or Artaxerxes. The last was Darius Codomannus. And in his reign came the successive military disasters of Granicus, Issus, and Arbela in which Media-Persia collapsed before the armies of Alexander the Great, and this “third kingdom of brass” began its “rule over all the earth!” (331 BC.).

13. A Clash of Loyalties

How did Darius reorganize the province of Babylon when he took the throne?

“It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom. And over these three presidents.” Daniel 6:1,2.

Babylon was now a province or sub-kingdom of Media-Persia and naturally had to be reorganized as a part of the greater empire. In carrying out this reorganization, Darius divided Babylonia into 120 districts, each ruled by a prince. There is no connection between the 120 districts here referred to and the 127 satraps in the dominions of Ahasuerus referred to in the book of Esther. (Esther 1:1.) The former were districts of the province of Babylon, the latter provinces of the empire. Over the princes, Darius appointed an executive council of three “presidents.”

What was the special responsibility of this council of three?

“That the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage.” Daniel 6.2.

The reference to the princes giving “accounts” is in harmony with the elaborate fiscal system which was developed by the Media-Persians, and which provided the vast revenues for their campaigns of conquest.

To facilitate the collection of revenue, the Media-Persian kings adopted the use of coinage from the Greek colonies as an improvement on the exchange of weighed lumps of precious metals. And Darius I introduced the gold “daric,” called after himself, which weighed 0.2788 oz. troy, and of which 3,000 were equivalent to a silver talent.

As a result of the elaborate organization, revenues equivalent to something like £35,000,000 annually found their way into the royal treasury, besides vast contributions in kind.

Of the three presidents, who was chief? Why was Daniel so exalted?

“Of whom Daniel was first. . . . Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.” Daniel 6:2, 3.

Daniel had been prime minister of Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar, but had been forced into obscurity by the rise of the usurper, Neriglissar. It was not unexpected, therefore, that he should be appointed chief of the executive council by Darius. He had the widest experience of any who were available for this office, and due to his sobriety of life, he was still vigorous in spite of his advanced years.

How did the presidents and princes feel toward Daniel by reason of his elevation?

“Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom.” Daniel 6:4.

When Daniel of the “children of captivity” was advanced to the highest office under Nebuchadnezzar, his Babylonian rivals were envious, and when he was exalted again by Darius, their enmity led them to plot his downfall.

Were they successful in discovering any corruption in his administration?

“But they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.” Daniel 6:4.

Throughout his official life Daniel had been noted for his strict integrity and absolute incorruptibility. Neither in the past nor the present could the Babylonians discover any flaw or indiscretion in his administration. What an example for the Christian business man or administrator to-day!

How only could they hope to trap him?

“Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God!” Daniel 6: 5.

The princes knew that Daniel was as resolute in his devotion to his God as he was honest in his dealings with men. If, therefore, they could place him in a dilemma between obeying the law of his God and the law of the kingdom, they knew he would obey God first, and thus could be charged with insubordination to the king. It was a subtle plot, and one that has been copied by the enemies of God's children in more recent days. The early Christians were ordered to burn incense before a statue of Caesar or be slain as traitors. And in our own troubled times, sincere Christians have been victimized by their conscientious refusal to obey the powers that be, when their demands have run contrary to the law of God.

What suggestion did the princes then make to Darius?

“Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counselors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree. That whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.” Daniel 6:6,7.

In proposing this enactment they knew that they would embarrass no one but Daniel and any other conscientious Jews. The Babylonians were polytheists and had no qualms about worshipping in any particular way ordered by the king. A faithful Jew, however, would react very differently, for the word of Jehovah to them was: “Thou shall have no other gods before Me.” Exodus 20: 3. Daniel therefore would be compelled by his conscience to disobey the king's decree.

The casting of criminals into a den of lions was a common manner of execution in ancient times. The kings of Assyria and Babylon constantly maintained cages for this very purpose. The practice was continued by the Greeks, and thousands of Christians were thrown to the lions in the days of pagan Rome.

What did the princes ask the king to do? How did the king respond?

“Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which alters not. Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree.” Daniel 6:8,9.

If they could get such a decree on the statute books they could reckon Daniel as good as dead, for so sacred was the law of the Medes and Persians that even the king would have to abide by it. Darius was an old man and the unctuous suggestion made by his younger counselors no doubt flattered him. So he signed the decree.

When Daniel learned of the decree, did he discontinue his devotions?

“Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.” Daniel 6:10.

If Daniel had been seeking a way of escape he could have followed his customary devotions behind closed doors, or he could have arranged a tour to some distant parts of the kingdom and so absented himself from the capital till the period had passed. But he did none of these things. Courageously he opened his windows and worshipped as was his daily custom, conscious of watching eyes, but untroubled by his enemies' machinations.

As he expected, by whom was he observed? What report did they bring to the king?

“Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. Then they came near, and spoke before the king concerning the king's decree; Has thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall he cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which alters not. Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regards not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou has signed, but makes his petition three times a day!” Daniel 6:11-13.

The princes were watching, and as soon as the evidence they sought was in their possession they hurried to the king to accuse Daniel. Before telling their story they wished to make sure of the validity of the law which they were going to invoke. For although the king was bound by the laws on the statute books he could nullify any enactment he had made. So they determined that the king should there and then declare its validity with his own lips.

Just as they desired, Darius fell into the trap and confirmed the decree. Whereupon they made known to the king that Daniel, his favorite, had set his decree at naught.

What effect had the news upon Darius?

“Then the king, when he heard these words was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him.” Daniel 6:14.

When the king saw that he had been caught, he was distressed beyond measure, and throughout the whole of that day he worked to discover a way out.

Annoyed because the decree was not immediately put into execution, what did the plotters urge upon the king? What did the king reluctantly order?

“Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree or statute which the king established may be changed. Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions.” Daniel 6:15, 16.

Realizing that the king would go to almost any lengths to rescue Daniel, the princes urged upon the king his responsibility as head of the state for safeguarding the sanctity of the law. If he allowed this rebellion to pass unpunished, how could he expect to keep order in Babylon? Better was it that Daniel should die than that all law should be placed in jeopardy—another subtle argument which has been used in more recent times against men of conscience. The king saw that there was now no way out, and he reluctantly gave orders for the carrying out of the punishment.

What hope, however, did Darius confidently express to Daniel?

“Now the king spoke and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou serves continually, He will deliver thee!” Daniel 6:16.

Still Darius did not give up. hope. He knew, no doubt, of God's providence in Daniel's earlier life and of the deliverance of his companions from the fiery furnace. To his faithful servant and friend, therefore, he expressed his faith that God would deliver.

Daniel had far more on which to base his confidence than Darius. He remembered how God had delivered David from a lion and a bear, (1 Sam. 17: 37). How angel hosts had held back the army of the Syrians (2 Kings 6: 16, 17), and how one single angel “went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians” in one night “an hundred and four score and five thousand!” 2 Kings 19: 35. Perhaps as he was thrust into the foul den he cried out in the words of the psalmist, “Let the angel of the Lord chase them!” Psalm 35: 5.

How did Daniel's enemies make sure that the king would not surreptitiously rescue him?

“And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel” Daniel 6:17.

It is clear that Daniel was not precipitated straight down into the jaws of the savage beasts, or the assembled company would have observed the miracle at once. From descriptions of such dens which have come to us from early travelers it would appear that they consisted of two divisions with a communicating door, so that the animals could be confined in one chamber while the condemned criminals were thrust into the other. So Daniel would be put into the empty chamber and the door would be sealed before the attendants opened the connecting doors to give the lions access to the chamber in which Daniel was confined. Thus the king and

the princes knew nothing of what had happened when the fateful moment came, and even the attendant may not have known anything of the miracle, hearing only the first savage roars of the released beasts.

How did the king spend that night?

“Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his, sleep went from him.” Daniel 6:18.

The princes were feasting for joy at seeing the last of Daniel, but the king was prostrate with grief. Hope and fear fought for supremacy in his brain, and when he retired that night sleep would not come, for he had lost his wisest counselor and the one man in the kingdom that he could trust.

In the morning where did he hasten?

“Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel, and the king spoke and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou serves continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?” Daniel 6:19,20.

At “the glimmer of day” the king hurried to the den. Did the silence within mean that the worst had happened, or had the savage beasts been quietened by a divine Hand? He called out and to his unbounded joy Daniel answered.

How did Daniel respond to the king?

“Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before Him innocence was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.” Daniel 6:21, 22.

Daniel's deliverance provides further spectacular evidence that “the angel of the Lord does encamp “round about them that fear Him, and delivers them!” Psalm 34: 7. The question may, however, arise, why, in the experience of souls who are truly seeking to live in harmony with the will of God, do the guardian angels sometimes seem to be missing in times of greatest need? Daniel was delivered from the lions, but equally worthy children of God were mangled by wild beasts, “stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword.” Hebrews 11: 37. Why this apparent discrimination?

The answer is that it may not always be God's will that the angels should intervene to keep His children from harm. Jesus told Peter that if He bade them come, twelve legions of angels would have been instantly at His side. But He did not call for them because He knew that it was His Father's will that He should be taken and put to death. So, too, there are occasions when the help of the angels is withheld from us and our loved ones in harmony with some providential purpose of God.

But just as angels were at hand to succor Jesus in His trial, we may be very sure that they will succor us even though they may allow us at times to pass through the waters of affliction.

How did the dastardly plot recoil upon the heads of the plotters?

“Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel. up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God. And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives. And the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.” Daniel 6:23, 24.

The proverb, “The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked comes in his stead” (Proverbs 11:8), was literally fulfilled in the case of the Babylonian princes, as it was with another enemy of the people of God in the reign of a later king of Media-Persia. (Esther 7: 10.)

What decree did the king then promulgate?

“Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for He is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivers and rescues, and He works signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.” Daniel 6:25-27.

So once again, as in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, the wrath of man was turned to the glory of God and the faithfulness of His servant was rewarded.

14. The Brazen Kingdom

Under what symbol was the third kingdom represented in the great image which Nebuchadnezzar saw? “Another third kingdom of brass, shall bear rule over all the earth!” Daniel 2:39.

We are not left to search the pages of secular history in order to discover the identity of this third world power, for just as Media-Persia was designated by Daniel as the destroyer of Babylon, Inspiration again provides us with the necessary clue.

In the eighth chapter of this prophecy, where we have a more detailed account of the conflict between the second and third empires, the rivals are specifically named as “the kings of Media and Persia” and “the king of Greece” respectively. (Daniel 8:20,21.) Again in the tenth chapter the prophet declares: “The prince of Greece shall come.” Verse 20. And still again in the eleventh chapter it is stated that the kings of Persia would “stir up all against the realm of Greece.”

Verse 2. Greece is thus conclusively identified as the third empire, corresponding to the brazen portion of the image.

Whence did the Greeks originate?

“The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan.” Genesis 10: 2.

The word “Grecia” in the book of Daniel is, in the original, Yavan, which is precisely the same word as Javan. The people of the third empire were the descendants of Javan, the son of Japheth. It is indeed significant that in this genealogical list, Javan is mentioned immediately after Madai, who was the progenitor of the Medes and their close relatives the Persians. Little did Moses, when he penned it, realize that the descendants of Madai and Javan were to constitute two great empires which would successively control the greater part of the civilized world.

When the Greeks first emerged into historical times they comprised a large number of independent city states scattered over the Greek mainland, the islands of the Aegean Sea, and the coasts of Asia Minor, with little bond between them save kinship of race, and devotion to certain religious centers such as that of Apollo at Delphi, and Demeter at Thermopylae.

It was the attempt on the part of the Persians to extend their vast Asiatic empire into Europe which forged these highly democratic communities into a powerful nation, and the two men responsible for raising the Greek kingdom to a world empire were Philip II of Macedon, and his son, Alexander the Great.

Philip ascended the throne of the petty state of Macedonia at the age of twenty-four (399 BC.) and at once applied himself to building up a powerful military force to save his country from extinction. He invented the solid Macedonian phalanx of spear men armed with heavy pikes eighteen feet long, and protected on either flank with a flexible cavalry force. With this remodeled army of 10,000 footmen and 600 horsemen he made Macedonia the most powerful state in Greece. He then abandoned Aegae, the ancestral fortress of the Macedonian kings, and established a new capital at Pella.

Invited by the Thessalians to intervene in the civil strife in the Greek peninsula, he responded with alacrity and was soon head of the Hellenic Confederacy. At once he broached his plans for war against Persia to liberate the Greek cities in Asia. All was ready for the campaign when Philip was assassinated, and his son, Alexander, at the age of twenty, ascended the throne. (336 BC.)

Having made himself master of the peninsula, Alexander turned his attention to his father's great purpose, the destruction of Persia and the conquest of Asia.

To learn whether he had the favor of the gods he went to Delphi. Arriving on a forbidden day he was told by the priestess that she could not prophesy. Seizing her, Alexander began to drag her toward the temple. “My son,” she cried out, “you are irresistible!” “That is all the oracle I need,” he answered and departed.

Nevertheless the task was a gigantic one and the odds were almost all against him. The Persians could muster thirty times the forces of Alexander. The treasuries of Susa and Persepolis were bursting with gold and silver, whereas the coffers of Pella had been practically exhausted by Alexander in securing himself on the throne. Furthermore, the Persian fleet controlled the whole seaboard of Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt. Persia's one fatal weakness was its monarch, Darius Codomannus, who, despite his vast resources, was no match for the master mind of Alexander and the morale of the Greeks.

In 334 BC. Alexander threw his army of 30,000 foot soldiers and 5,000 horsemen across the Hellespont at Abydos and hastened to meet the Persians. The two armies met at Granicus (334 BC.), where the Persian army of 40,000 strong wilted before the Macedonian Phalanx, though Alexander himself was only saved from death in the thick of the fight by the intervention of his foster-brother, Clitus.

Hellespontine Phrygia, Lydia, Sardis, Lycia, and the Ionian cities at once submitted, and Western Asia Minor was at his feet. The next spring he pressed on through Phrygia to Cappadocia and the Cilician Gates. At Issus (333 BC.), another vast Persian army, this time commanded by Darius himself, met him, but again the Macedonian tactics won.

From the safety of the Euphrates, whence Darius had fled, leaving his mother, wife, and children behind in his haste, the Persian king now sued for peace, but Alexander replied: “I am lord of all Asia, and therefore do thou come to me.... But if thou disputes the kingdom then wait and fight for it again, and do not flee; for I will march against thee wherever thou may be!”

Realizing the danger of penetrating farther into Asia while Syria and Egypt were still in Persian hands, Alexander did not at once pursue Darius, but turned south to secure his communications. (332 BC.) Most of the Phoenician cities submitted. Tyre, which made a determined stand, was taken by assault. Arriving in Egypt, he received its submission without a battle. Cyrene quickly followed suit. (331 BC.)

Alexander remained in Egypt only long enough to appoint Greek governors of Egypt, Libya, and Arabia, to choose the site for the new city of Alexandria, to replace Tyre as the trading center of the Eastern Mediterranean, and visit the temple of Zeus Ammon in the Siwa oasis deep in the Sahara. (331 BC.) He then returned to Syria and assembled an army of 40,000 infantry and 7,000 horse to deal finally with Darius. On the plains of Arbela (331 BC.) his army met 1,000,000 Persian foot soldiers with 40,000 horsemen. Though hopelessly outnumbered, Alexander for the third time carried the day, and Darius again fled eastward.

Alexander followed Darius to Babylon. Susa, Persepolis, and Ecbatana without coming up with him. Retreating still eastward, however, the ill-fated king was treacherously made prisoner by Bessus, satrap of Bactria. When he refused to mount a horse and continue his flight, he was stabbed and left dying on the ground. When Alexander came up and found the corpse he respectfully covered with his own cloak the last king of the second empire.

How extensive were the domains of the third empire to be?

“Which shall bear rule over all the earth.” Daniel 2:39.

Having sent the body of the Persian king back to his ladies at Persepolis for burial, Alexander marched on eastward (330 BC.). In 326 BC., three years after the death of Darius and seven years after crossing the Hellespont, Alexander invaded India through the Khyber Pass, and overran the Indus Valley. He would have crossed the Punjab desert into the valley of the Ganges, but the Macedonians, decimated in numbers and worn out by the long years of campaigning, refused to go farther. Reluctantly Alexander agreed to go back (325 BC.), reaching Babylon once more ten years after setting foot in Asia. (323 BC.) There he received the homage of the world.

“They came,” says Thomas Arnold, “from all the extremities of the earth, to propitiate his anger, to celebrate his greatness, or to solicit his protection.”-Thomas Arnold in 'History of Rome,' Vol. 2, chapter 30, paragraph 1.

“I am persuaded,” declared Arrian, “there was no nation, city, nor people then in being whither his name did not reach.”-Arrian in “History of Alexander's Expedition,” Rookes' Translation, Vol. 2, page 185.

“Whatever origin he might boast of, or claim to himself,” Arrian adds, “there seems to me to have been some divine hand presiding both over his birth and actions, inasmuch that no mortal upon earth either excelled or equaled him.”-Ibid, page 185.

Appian of Alexandria declared that “the empire of Alexander was splendid in its magnitude, in its armies, in the success and rapidity of his conquest, and it wanted little of being boundless and unexampled.” -Preface to “The Roman History,” Horace White's translation, Vol. 1, page 5.

In what ways was brass an appropriate symbol for the Greek empire?

As silver was used for personal adornment by the Persians so brass was characteristic of the Greek soldiers, though with the latter the metal served a more utilitarian purpose. Brazen armor was used by the Greeks from very early times. Even in Homeric poetry we find the expression, “the brass-mailed Greeks.”

Brass was used by the Greeks not only for body armor, but also on their head-dresses and sandals. It was likewise used for shields, swords, battle-axes, and for the tips of spears and arrows, as well as on chariots, and to decorate and strengthen the prows of their ships.

So characteristic was brass of the Greeks that we find the expressions, “to be struck with brass” used to describe wounds inflicted by the sword. The spear is called a “point of brass” and “smiting with a brazen edge” is a term used for wielding a battle axe. “Skilled in brass” meant “skilled in arms” and to be “brazen” meant metaphorically to be hard, strong, or stout. “Brazen-voiced” indicated clear, ringing tones, “brazen teeth” perfection of strength, and heroes were credited with “hearts of brass.”

In the seventh edition of Liddel and Scott's Greek Lexicon there are 164 words containing the root *chalk* (brass), while there are only eighty-four compounds containing the word “silver” and seventy-one from “iron,” clearly showing the supremacy of this metal in the third empire.

How strikingly does God's view contrast with man's estimate of the great age of Greece?

Historians frequently refer to the age of Greece as a golden age and expatiate upon the legacy of science and art which it passed on to succeeding generations. God, however, denominates it an age of brass, of tawdry glory with little real merit, and passes it over with the briefest reference. Paul designates this supreme period of the human intellect as the “times of this ignorance.” By inspiration he warned of its “science falsely so-called” (1 Timothy 6: 20) and its “philosophy and vain deceit” (Col. 2: 8) which led the Greeks to characterize the Gospel of salvation as “foolishness” and its preachers as “babblers.”

How long did the third empire endure and by what was it superseded?

“After thee shall, arise ... the fourth kingdom.” Daniel 2:39, 40.

When Alexander received the respects and tribute of ambassadors from the ends of the earth at Babylon there was one people not represented. No one came from the city of Rome on the banks of the Tiber. Was it that they felt themselves too insignificant to be noticed, or was it that, even at this early date, they were too proud to bow before the Great King? If Alexander had been able to carry out his plan for a great Western expedition, he certainly would have come upon the Romans and they would have had to submit or be crushed.

“It is hardly open to question,” says Bevan, in his History of Greece, “that he would have annexed Sicily and Great Hellas, conquered Carthage, and overrun the Italian peninsula.”

But once again Providence decreed that this was not to be. Following a carousal in Babylon to celebrate the departure of Admiral Nearchus to make a circuit of the southern sea via the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, the Nile Canal, the Nile, and the Mediterranean, Alexander fell into a high fever. For six days the fever raged and the sailing of the expedition was deferred. His closest companions spent a whole night of intercession in the temple of Serapis but to no avail, and on the evening of June 13, 323 BC., he died.

Truly says Bevan:

“The untimely deaths of sovereigns at particular junctures have often exercised an appreciable influence on the course of events; but no such accident has diverted the paths of history so manifestly and utterly as the death of Alexander.”-“History of Greece,” page 422.

His plans for the consolidation of his Asiatic empire were frustrated by the partition of the subjugated territories among his generals, and his scheme for the conquest of the West was never carried out. And so, unmolested, Rome grew from a village to a city

and from a city to a kingdom. It laid low the rival power of Carthage, and then it turned upon and broke the third empire. The steps by which Rome strode to world power will be described in the greater detail later. Here it must suffice for us to quote the opening paragraphs of Polybius' famous history of those times:

“Who among us is so worthless or spiritless as not to wish to know by what means, and under what kind of politics, the Romans in less than fifty-three years succeeded in subjecting nearly the whole inhabited world to their sole government—a thing unexampled in history.”

15. The Iron Monarchy

By what was the third world empire of Greece to be succeeded?

“The fourth kingdom.” Daniel 2:40.

The Oriental nations had been completely outclassed by the Western Greeks, and the successors of Alexander crushed out the last traces of resistance in the Middle East. There was, therefore, no likelihood of any new power arising in the East. The only possibility was the rise of some new power farther to the West, and it was from this quarter that the fourth empire made its appearance.

Just before he died, Alexander had planned an expedition westward to extend his conquests along the Mediterranean seaboard. If he had been able to carry out this plan he would have discovered a city some four centuries old, built upon seven hills on the banks of the Tiber in Italy, and populated by a fierce and warlike people. They had already reduced to subjection a number of the surrounding tribes and cities, and were steadily extending their conquests through the Italian peninsula.

Had Alexander been able to cross swords with them in his day the career of the Roman arms might have been for ever checked. Rome might have become but a province of the Greek Empire, and the whole course of history might have been changed. But this was not to be. Alexander died before he could carry out his intentions, and after his death his generals were each so fully occupied in obtaining as large a share as possible of the empire for themselves, that they had neither time nor inclination to turn their thoughts to Italy. So Rome was able to develop unimpeded until it was in a position to match its strength against the world.

By the beginning of the second century BC., the Romans had overthrown the great rival power of Carthage on the North African coast and in two Macedonian wars had made themselves the dominating power in all the Greek peninsula except Macedonia itself, which was left as a bulwark against the barbarian tribes of the Balkans.

The failure of Philip V of Macedon to drive the Romans from Greek soil resulted in an invitation to Antiochus the Great, who ruled Asia Minor, Syria, and Babylonia, to attempt the task. But by 189 BC. Antiochus had not only been expelled from Greece, but had been decisively defeated at Magnesia in Asia Minor (190 BC.) and thrown back beyond the Taurus mountains into Syria. In consequence, all Antiochus' possessions in Asia Minor passed into the hands of the Romans, as well as the native kingdoms of Galatia and Cappadocia.

In the third Macedonian war (171-168 BC.) Macedonia was overrun, and, following the decisive battle of Pydna (168 BC.), both Macedonia and Greece were incorporated into the Roman provincial system.

During the next century Rome used the conflicts between the Seleucids of Syria and the Ptolemies of Egypt to break the power of Syria and turn Egypt into a Roman protectorate. Finally the charms of the famous Egyptian queen Cleopatra involved Egypt in a struggle between the rival Roman triumvirs, Antony and Octavius. When, therefore, at the battle of Actium (31 BC.), Octavius completely routed the combined forces of Antony and Cleopatra, he not only secured undisputed claim to Rome, but at the same time established his right to Egypt, the last independent fragment of the Greek Empire.

It is significant that, on returning to Rome, Octavius was welcomed with frenzied enthusiasm and granted the titles of “Augustus” and “Emperor,” thus in actual fact inaugurating the Roman Empire.

A striking confirmation of Imperial Rome's place as the fourth world empire is to be found in the famous Canon of Ptolemy, the ancient astronomer and historian of the second century AD. His remarkable king list, associated with valuable astronomical data, commences with the era of Nabonassar in 747 BC., follows the Babylonian line to Nabonidus, father of Belshazzar, then takes up the Persian line as far as Darius III, the last independent king of that empire. It then lists the Greek kings from Alexander the Great, tracing the longest lived line after the division—that is the Ptolemies of Egypt—down to the beautiful Cleopatra. The next name is Augustus the Roman emperor. Ptolemy's Canon therefore, prepared without any reference to biblical prophecy, is thus a wonderful testimony to its delineation of the four successive world empires.

As the metals of the image merge from one to another in one continuous figure, so the Canon consists of one continuous list of twenty-four rulers of four successive empires, dovetailed into each other exactly where world power changed hands.

To what part of the image did the fourth monarchy correspond?

“Its legs of iron.” Daniel 2:33.

The representation of Rome by the legs of the image is worthy of special note for the Roman army was essentially an infantry force. The legion of Republican days which carried the Roman conquests to the ends of the earth comprised 3,000 heavy infantry, 1,200 lighter armed foot soldiers, and only 300 horsemen. In the days of the Empire, Augustus used a legion of 6,000 foot soldiers with only 120 horsemen to serve as dispatch riders and the like. Practically the whole cavalry in his army were voluntarily recruited non-citizen auxiliary cohorts of 500 to 1,000 strong.

What metal was used to symbolize the Roman Empire?

“His legs of iron.” Daniel 2:33

Curiously enough among the terms of peace forced upon the Romans by Porsena, king of the Etruscans, in one of their earliest wars for possession of Italy, was the requirement that no iron should be used except for agricultural purposes! What a condition to impose upon the power that was one day to become the “iron monarchy”!

Iron was indeed as characteristic of Rome as the other metals had been of the earlier empires, for the rise of the Roman arms was contemporaneous with the displacement of brazen implements and weapons in favor of iron ones.

“At the period of the Gallic war”, says Dr. L. Schmidt in his History of Rome, “the ancient brass armor was exchanged by Camillus (381 BC.) for iron armor, a polished iron helmet being a better protection against the huge swords of the barbarians.... Camillus is also said to have surrounded the shields of the soldiers with iron rims. ... At the same time the ancient weapon of the front lines was exchanged for a peculiar kind of spear (pilum) seven feet long, by which a blow might be warded off, and which might also be used as a weapon to attack the enemy.” - Page 200.

How did Daniel interpret the significance of the “iron legs”?

“And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and subdues all things; and as iron that breaks all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.” Daniel 2:40.

Unlike the Greeks, the Romans were interested neither in art nor language. War was their sole employment. They traced their descent from Mars, the god of war, and the fierce she-wolf nurse of Romulus was a fit emblem of their national character.

“From the moment of her foundation,” says Dr. L. Schmidt, “Rome had to maintain her existence by force of arms. Like a young giantess, she crushed, one after another, every one of her neighbors that came in contact with her, until toward the fifth century after her birth, she had subdued all the tribes of Italy, and acquired the sovereignty of the whole peninsula. What, in her youth, the giantess had been obliged to do in self-defense, and what had been a struggle for her own existence, became in the end her favorite pursuit. One war ever gave rise to fresh wars; she hastened from victory to victory, from conquest to conquest, till about the beginning of the Christian era she dictated her law to nearly the whole of the known world.”-“History of Rome,” page 1.

The phrase “break in pieces and bruise,” seems not only to connote power of conquest but also rapacity, blood-thirstiness, and brutality; and these attributes were abundantly manifest in the Roman campaigns.

The full force of the iron monarchy was felt by the Jewish nation and the early Christian church. Christ suffered the extreme Roman penalty of crucifixion. Jerusalem was razed to the ground, its inhabitants almost annihilated, and the remnant scattered to the ends of the earth. Rome did its best to bruise and break the Christian church. Most of the apostles suffered martyrdom at its hands, as well as multitudes of the early believers. But the task was too great even for Rome. She might contend successfully against all temporal power, but when she set herself against spiritual forces she was impotent.

What new element introduces itself into the feet and toes of the great image?

“His feet part of iron and part of clay.” Daniel 2:33.

The first three world empires of the great image are each symbolized by a single homogeneous metal, indicating that they would preserve their original form and character throughout their period of supremacy. The fourth empire is also at first represented by a single metal, iron, which continues down to the ankles of the image. But when we reach the feet a striking change takes place. The homogeneity of the iron is marred by the introduction of a new element.

How does Daniel explain this heterogeneity?

“The kingdom shall be divided.” Daniel 2:41.

For three hundred years following the accession of the “Emperor” Octavius, the Roman Empire continued in unity and unrivalled strength, and then just as prophecy had declared “division” began to manifest itself. The emperor Diocletian in AD. 189, convinced that it was impossible for one man to control efficiently the vast system of imperial machinery, adopted the unprecedented course of distributing his supreme authority.

In the second year of his reign he appointed Maximian to associate with him as Augustus, and six years later he proclaimed Constantius and Galerius as Caesars subordinate to the two Augusti, but rising in turn to first

rank, so as to supply an uninterrupted succession of emperors.

The empire was thus divided into four parts between the Augusti and the Caesars. The most honorable sections, the East and Italy, being under the control of the Augusti, and the more laborious sections, the Danube and the Rhine, being entrusted to the care of the Caesars. Diocletian himself took control of the East with his capital at Nicomedia, adopting the title “Dominus” to indicate his lordship over all.

It is remarkable that Gibbon, describing this period, unconsciously uses the very language of the prophet when he writes:

“Ostentation was the first principle of the new system instituted by Diocletian. The second was division. He divided the empire, the provinces, and every branch of the civil as well as the military administration. He multiplied the wheels of the machinery of government, and rendered its operations less rapid, but more secureDecline and Fall of the Roman Empire,” Vol. 1, 18, page 457.

The political division of the empire soon brought about the complete separation of Eastern and Western Rome. Thereafter while Eastern Rome held together as a unit for another thousand years as the Byzantine Empire, other divisive influences continued to work in Western Rome, ultimately effecting the fragmentation of the empire into the ten completely separated “toes” of the image.

Among these further divisive influences were: 1. Division in the army. Constantine introduced a distinction in the army between the court troops or Palatines, who were Romans, and the troops of the frontier, or Borderers, who were largely mercenaries interested only in the pay they received. As the former were stationed in the tranquil provinces and were progressively weakened by baths, theatres, and lack of training and discipline, the employment of barbarians to do the fighting for Rome became more and more universal.

Jerome recognized these indications as most surely pointing to the break-up of the empire. “For as in the beginning,” he says, “nothing was stronger and harder than the Roman Empire, so in the end of things nothing is weaker; since both in civil wars and against foreign nations we need the help of barbarian tribes.”

2. Division in the population of the empire. Not only did the armies of Rome become heterogeneous companies of foreign races, but thousands of aliens were settled in Roman territory to “appease” tribes which were menacing the border provinces. Thus the Burgundians were allowed to settle in the upper reaches of the Rhine, the Visigoths were permitted to occupy Aquitaine, and the Franks were given territory in France and Belgium in return for military aid against the Germans.

Sulpicus Severus, writing in AD. 401 on this prophecy of the second chapter of Daniel, refers to these alien pockets when he writes: “Finally, that the clay and iron, substances that never unite together, are mingled, denotes intermixtures of human race, mutually differing from each other.... We see that barbarian nations ... are mingled with our armies, cities, and provinces, and live among us; and yet do not adopt our customs.”

Thus weakened by strife between rival rulers, rendered practically defenseless by the corruption of its military system. And harboring within its territories hordes of foreign races in constant ferment against their protectors, the empire became totally incapable of breasting the great barbarian advance once it got on the move, and incipient division culminated in actual dismemberment. Western Rome ceased any longer to be a unit, and in its place there grew up a number of independent barbarian kingdoms. History had reached the “toes” of the great image.

16. The Anarchy of Nations

While Daniel in his description of the lower limbs of the great image refers only to the “legs” and “feet,” what further detail does he mention in his interpretation?

“And whereas thou saw the feet and toes, part of potter's clay, and part of iron.” “The toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay.” Daniel 2:41, 42.

The fact that Daniel, in his interpretation, mentions the “feet” and the “toes” separately, and that two whole verses are occupied with a description of the latter, is indicative of the fact that the toe-kingdoms were to have an existence distinct from the unified Roman Empire which had dominated the civilized world for more than half a millennium. At the same time, as the toes were composed of precisely the same material as the feet, there was to be no such sharp line of demarcation as there was between the head and breast, the breast and belly, and the belly and legs. In other words the old empire was to merge into and live on in the separated toe-kingdoms.

This is precisely what happened when the old Roman Empire of the West was dissolved and the barbarian kingdoms arose in its place in the fifth century of the Christian era.

As mentioned in the previous study, the barbarians first entered the empire as refugees, seeking the protection of the Romans against the advancing waves of Huns in Central Europe. They became guests of the Romans, accepting territory and titles from their hosts, and came to regard themselves as part of the existing order. Even when succeeding waves of invaders brought to an end the crumbling empire of the West, the barbarians incorporated the Roman heritage into their developing civilization. While, therefore, the ruling power was changed, and the barbarian proportion of the population was greatly increased, the essential features of the Roman order and civilization continued almost in their entirety. In many cases, the uncultured barbarian kings appointed Roman officials to undertake the work of administration. These men naturally continued the Roman forms of government and perpetuated the Latin tongue.

Roman literature and learning were similarly preserved by the monastic establishments of the West, and as education was entirely in the hands of the monks and nuns, the barbarian society was gradually leavened with it.

The ecclesiastical system of Christian Rome, too, built up during the last days of the empire, survived its fall, and eventually gathered all the barbarian nations into its fold.

Thus Rome is not, as Childe Harolde suggests, “The lone mother of dead empires.” She still lives in her children.

Did Daniel derive any special significance from the number of toes?

While in the prophecy of the great image no special attention is drawn to the number of toes, in the seventh chapter of Daniel, where the four empires appear again under the symbolism of four beasts, the fourth is mentioned as having “ten horns.” Daniel 7:7. We may, therefore, conclude that, although no attention is drawn to the number here, the ten toes do correspond to the ten horns, and that they are intended to represent ten distinct kingdoms occupying the original territory of Western Rome.

The suggestion has been put forward that as the ten toes are divided into two groups of five, the legs represent the Eastern and Western divisions of the empire respectively, and that half of the disintegrated fragments should be looked for in each of these sections. This, however, is quite unjustifiable as the legs of the image were divided from the beginning of their separation from the trunk, whereas the division of the empire did not occur until the last days of its history.

Moreover, the metals of the image represent primarily the territory peculiar to each power and not the territory of previous powers which it absorbed. Thus the silver represents Media-Persia which absorbed the golden empire of Babylon. The brass represents the Grecian kingdom which absorbed both Media-Persia and Babylon. The iron kingdom represents the Roman empire outside of the three previous empires—that is, Western Rome. Consequently the toe-kingdoms, which have no admixture of gold, silver, or brass, are all to be looked for in Western Europe.

Of the many barbarian tribes occupying Central Europe east of the Rhine and north of the Danube, the Alemanni and the Franks were closest to the Roman frontiers and constituted the first waves of the invading hordes.

The Alemanni (1) were actually the “first who removed the veil that covered the feeble majesty of Italy.” They swarmed over the Rhaetian Alps into what are now Alsace and Lorraine and Switzerland, the last mentioned eventually becoming the heart of their tribal domain.

The Franks (2) originally occupied north-western Germany, and when they first crossed the Roman frontiers they settled in Belgium and north-eastern Gaul. Under Clovis, however, they became very powerful, spreading over the whole of France and giving their name to that country.

To the east of the Alemanni and Franks, on the banks of the Oder, lived two related peoples called the Suevi and the Vandals, while along the Elbe was the territory of a kindred tribe, the Burgundians. In the early fourth century these reached the Roman frontiers and began their penetration.

The Burgundians (3) at first settled in Savoy and Northern Italy, then extended their territory from the Rhone to the Loire and south to Vienne, but eventually were pushed back into the Rhone Valley by the expanding Franks.

The Vandals (4), after being defeated by the Franks, turned south and crossed the Pyrenees into Spain. Soon after this they were invited into Africa by the Roman governor Bonifacius, on whom they turned and established there the great Vandal kingdom.

The Suevi (5) might be regarded as camp followers of the more powerful Vandals. They accompanied the Vandals into Spain, and settled along the western coast in the territory which is now Portugal. Further to the east of the barbarian tribes already mentioned, perhaps even in the Scandinavian peninsula, was the home of the Goths. When they began to move, they first migrated southward in two great groups known as the Visigoths (West Goths) and Ostrogoths (East Goths). Eventually they were diverted westward by the arrival of the Hun hordes from Central Asia.

The Visigoths (6) arrived in Western Rome first, crossed northern Italy, and settled in south-western Gaul. There they stayed until they were driven south across the Appennines by Frankish pressure into the vacated Vandal territories in Spain.

When the Ostrogoths (7) entered the Roman Empire, they came down on to the east coast of the Adriatic, and for a time were content to occupy what is now Yugoslavia.

Meantime two other peoples, the Lombards and Heruli, of Vandal connections, were caught by Hun and Gothic pressure and also began to move into the crumbling Western empire.

The Lombards (8) consolidated in what is now Northern Italy and Austria, and gave their name to Lombardy.

The Heruli (9) moved into Italy to occupy the whole Italian peninsula and were actually instrumental in deposing the last Roman emperor of the West. Odoacer, their leader, became the first barbarian king of Italy.

Finally, the Anglo-Saxons (10) who originated on the Baltic shores of Denmark and northern Germany, became detached from the trans-continental migrations and, crossing the North Sea. Settled in the British islands as far west and north as Wales and the Scottish border, where they laid the foundations of the English nation.

Truly it has been said: “It is in Rome that all the states of the earlier European world lose themselves; it is out of Rome that all the states of the later European world take their beginning.”—C. Delisle Burns in “Comparative Politics,” page 327.

What dangerous dis-equilibrium did the prophet declare would persist among the fragments of the broken empire?

“The kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle (margin)... They shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.” Daniel 2:42, 43.

The fragmentary kingdoms derived from the old empire were to differ in size and strength, and in consequence there would be a constant temptation on the part of the larger, stronger ones to absorb the smaller and weaker ones, with occasionally some especially powerful monarch seeking to unite the broken fragments into one whole. In the incessant conflicts, the number of the divisions would doubtless change from time to time, but, declared the prophet, the empire would never again be united under one rule. “They shall not cleave one to another.”

True to the prophecy, when the barbarian kingdoms emerged, they were diverse in territorial extent and military power. Gibbon refers to “the powerful monarchies of the Franks and the Visigoths, and the dependent kingdoms of the Sueves and Burgundians,” and no sooner were they established than they began to struggle for supremacy or survival.

Toward the close of the eighth century, Charles the Great, king of the Franks, had brought under his dominion the whole of France and considerable portions of Germany, Italy and Spain. Friendly relations developed between Charles and Pope Leo III, and on Christmas day AD. 800, Charles was crowned in Rome “devout Augustus” and “Emperor of the Romans,” and the so-called Holy Roman Empire was founded.

Actually the whole plan was a subtle attempt on the part of the Papacy to set up its own universal spiritual kingdom. But prophecy had declared that no union of the toe-kingdoms would endure, and true to the inspired Word, the Carolingian Empire quickly melted away, and the Papacy's dream of a Holy Roman Empire vanished with it. As the prophet had declared a millennium and a half before, they could “not cleave one to another.”

Between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, the consolidation of the racial groups in Europe into exclusive national states, with their own languages, traditions, and laws, gave rise to another movement toward assimilation, though from very different motives. Each state now felt that its security and independence depended upon its being superior to all others; so there began an era of national expansion, each nation seeking to absorb its weaker neighbors, or to form alliances which would keep the balance of power in its own favor.

In the first half of the sixteenth century, Charles V of Spain made a bid for the domination of Europe and at the end of his life had united Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Spain, Naples, Sicily, and Sardinia under his imperial rule. But the growing spirit of nationalism soon got to work and the union did not long survive his retirement and death.

Louis XIV of France, in the seventeenth century, fought nine nations and annexed great territories, but succeeded only in turning practically the whole of Europe against him and losing nearly all he had gained.

In the nineteenth century, Napoleon set out on a career of conquest which brought him almost to the position of dictator of Europe. He even went so far as to strike medals picturing himself as Caesar, crowned with the ancient laurel garland of victory. But at Waterloo, the great French emperor awakened to the sad realization that his dream was not to be.

It was the revival of the ideal of an all-powerful Roman Empire in the mind of Emperor Wilhelm II and his advisers, in the early twentieth century, which led them to match the strength of German aims against European nationalism.

“From childhood,” declared the Kaiser, “I have been under the influence of five men, Alexander, Julius Caesar, Theodoric II, Frederick the Great, and Napoleon. Each of these dreamed a dream of world empire—they failed. I am dreaming a dream of German world empire—and my mailed fist shall succeed.”

At last the day for which he looked came, and with all his accumulated resources he struck. But his calculations did not work out. The colossal upheaval of 1914-1918, with its sacrifice of ten millions of the world's youth, not to mention the millions more who were maimed for life. The orphans, war victims, and refugees, and the wastage of more than £30,000,000,000 in four short years, only served to reveal yet once more the truth of the divine forecast, “They shall not cleave.”

But while World War I demonstrated the intensity of the antipathies among the toe-kingdoms, it neither sublimated them in a new world power nor did it dissipate them.

Steadily building up the power of Fascist Italy, Mussolini made no secret of his determination to build a new Roman Empire.

The German nation, though crushed by its defeat in World War I remained essentially military-minded, and within a quarter of a century of the defeat of Kaiser Wilhelm II's aspirations, Hitler set in motion new Germanic hordes, resolved that the Third Reich would accomplish what the second could not.

But after five and a half nightmare years in which forty millions died by bitter, torture, famine, and disease, and a continent was reduced to a shambles, the Word was again miraculously vindicated.

The prophecy which could not fail has not failed. And if any other dictator makes bold in the future to try again, he will discover, as every other would-be conqueror has discovered, that the “sovereign” states of Europe will never again be merged in a united European state. The map of Europe will continue to resemble a patchwork quilt. There will always be the “strong” powers and the “brittle,” the large and the small, the economically rich and the poor. “They shall not cleave one to another!”

Did the prophet suggest that any means other than military conquest would be used to reintegrate the nations of Europe?

“And whereas thou saw iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.” Daniel 2:43.

Beside the attempts to restore the unity of Europe by force of arms, the prophet declared that there would also be a “mingling” of the diverse peoples of Europe through “the seed of men,” but such efforts toward European reintegration would be equally unavailing. The nations still would “not cleave.”

The first and obvious reference of this mingling of the “seed of men” is to the alliances effected by intermarriage between the descendants of the various European rulers. This, of course, was no new method. From earliest times neighboring peoples have sought peaceful relations by such means, but never has it attained so prominent a place in political diplomacy as in European history.

The policy was initiated at the very beginning of the history of the toe-kingdoms by Theodoric the Ostrogoth who married Audefieda, daughter of Childeric, king of the Salian Franks, and in turn married two of his daughters to Sigismund, king of the Burgundians and Alaric II, king of the Visigoths. His sister, Amalafreda, was also married to Thrasamund, king of the Vandals.

“This family compact,” writes Hodgkin, “binding together all the kingdoms of the West in a great confederacy, filling all the new barbarian thrones with the sons, the grandsons, or nephews of Theodoric, was a matrimonial state-system surpassing anything that Hapsburg or Bourbon ever succeeded in accomplishing.”—*Italy and Her Invaders*,” Vol. 3, page 355.

But he has to add: “When it came to the tug-of-war between one barbarian chief and another, this family compact, like so many others in later days, snapped with the strain.”

Through the centuries the method of alliance by intermarriage was continued, but although two or more nations were sometimes brought together for a few years, the spirit of nationalism always proved too great, and before long the states were independent of each other again. Immediately before World War I the sovereigns of Europe were almost all connected by marriage. But even these ties of blood failed to prevent the outbreak of that terrible cataclysm. Since then so many European thrones have been emptied by revolution that such “mingling” is no longer practicable.

There is, however, another way in which the nations of Europe have sought peaceably to “mingle” in order to restore amity in Europe. This comprises the series of attempts, also going far back in the history of the divided empire, to establish a federation of independent nations in the West as an alternative to military domination. As early as the beginning of the fourteenth century the French writer, Pierre Dubois, proposed the formation of a league of states under the suzerainty of Philip of France with super national authority for the settlement of differences between individual nations, and with the power of economic boycott to enforce its decisions.

About the same time, Dante, in Italy, broached a similar scheme in his *De Monarchia*, advocating a central organization and a system of international law for a united Europe. The hostility of the developing nations of the time, however, precluded even the discussion of such propositions.

A more grandiose proposal was launched toward the end of the sixteenth century by the Duc de Sully, a minister of Henry IV of France, who set forth his “Grand Desgr” for an international league of fifteen nations, headed by France. To secure the settlement of all differences by arbitration, and to maintain an armed force for the coercion of delinquent powers. Twelve European sovereigns, including Elizabeth of England, signified their willingness to consider such a scheme, but before anything definite could be done, Henry was murdered and the plan fell through.

In 1712, the Abbe de St. Pierre, secretary to the French diplomat who arranged the Treaty of Utrecht, suggested a scheme similar to the Grand Design for European federation of twenty-four states under a president picturesquely called the “Prince of Peace,” but got no further than any earlier proposal.

Before the eighteenth century was out no fewer than twenty-five more schemes for preserving the peace of Europe had been published. Nor was there any slackening in the nineteenth century, one of the planners.' Sineriz, a Spaniard (1839), prophetically adding a new reason for European federation, namely that a united Europe would be necessary if the continent was to hold its own against a united America!

Chief of the European planners in the nineteenth century was the idealist Czar Alexander I of Russia, who induced every sovereign of Europe except the Pope, the prince-regent of England, and the sultan of Turkey, to unite in a Holy Alliance for the perpetual preservation of the peace of Europe. But after thirty-three years of rather strained co-operation, the Concert of Europe was dissolved in the revolutions of 1848.

A new attempt at co-operation, also originating with the Czar of Russia, was made at the close of the nineteenth century, and at the Hague conferences in 1899 and 1907 twenty-six and forty four states respectively were brought together. A number of lesser disputes were settled, but the major antagonisms proved irreconcilable, and eventually blazed forth in the cataclysm of 1914-1918.

With the close of World War I it was realized by the leading statesmen that unless something effective was speedily devised in the way of co-operation between the nations, civilization must inevitably annihilate itself. Speaking in Italy, President Wilson declared in words strikingly reminiscent of the Word of prophecy, “We shall have to find a new cement to hold the nations together.” The cement he suggested was the League of Nations, but, like all the earlier cements which had been tried, it crumbled in the fierce flames of war, and the great structure it held together collapsed.

But the end of the struggle for European unity is still not yet, for to-day new and urgent attempts are being made to organize a “United States of Europe” capable of maintaining its independence and territorial integrity in the face of the growing power of the Soviet system.

Now on the strength of Daniel's prophecy these attempts might be dismissed as doomed to failure like every earlier plan. Such a judgment, however, needs some qualification. Actually, a very important prophecy in the seventeenth chapter of the Revelation reveals that for a brief period just before the end a loose federation of a very special character is destined to arise in Europe with profound consequences to the world and the people of God. We shall discuss this in the appropriate place, but here it can be emphasized that, though such a federation may become a transient reality, it will never bring about the organic union of the several European states. There were ten barbarian kingdoms in the West when Rome broke up and there will be ten sovereign nations in the territory of the old Roman Empire when God finally intervenes.

“They shall not cleave” was the divine forecast. “They have not cleaved,” is the verdict of history; and we may be confident that they will not ever cleave until God Himself takes a hand to Cause “Wars to Cease to the end of the earth.”

17. The Coming Kingdom

As Nebuchadnezzar beheld the great image in his dream what mysterious new object appeared?

“Thou saw till that a stone was cut out without hands.” Daniel 2: 34.

As the king continued to look the great image up and down, his gaze was distracted by a movement in the rock face behind. A stone became mysteriously detached from the cliff “without hands” and began to roll down the slope toward the image.

The expression “without hands,” or something similar, occurs in several places in the Scriptures and invariably indicates the personal intervention of God. Thus in the Lamentations, it is said concerning the overthrow of Sodom by God that she “was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands were laid upon her.” Lamentations 4:6. (R.V.)

All interpretations, therefore, which suggest that the stone is some earthly power such as the Jewish nation (as claimed by Augustine), or Britain (as claimed by British-Israelites), are inadmissible. The expression used by Daniel clearly indicates the supernatural and otherworldly, rather than earthly, origin of the stone.

Is this symbolic “stone” referred to elsewhere in Scripture? Whom does it represent?

“Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a Stone, a tried stone.... a sure foundation: he that believes shall not make haste.” Isaiah 28:16. “The Stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.” Psalm 118:22. (See also Genesis 49:24; Zechariah 3:8,9)

Defending himself before the rulers of the Jews, Peter clearly identified this Stone with Christ. “Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel,” he cried, “that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him does this man stand here before you whole. This is the Stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.” Acts 4: 10-12. (See also 1 Peter 2: 6-8.)

Paul likewise confirms this identification: “Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone!” Ephesians 2:19,20. (See also Romans 9:33; 10:11.)

In consequence, every interpreter of prophecy who has kept close to the Scriptures has followed the inspired interpretation of the apostles. As Emanuel Lacunza asserts: “All interpreters of Scripture so far as I have had it in my power to examine, tell us that the Stone of which this prophecy speaks is evidently the Messiah, Jesus Christ Himself, the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin!”

What befell the great image when the Stone came into contact with it? How did Daniel interpret the falling of the Stone?

“Which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and break them in pieces!” Daniel 2:34. “The kingdom. . . shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms!” Verse 44.

When Jesus came the first time He was “set at naught” by the Jews (Acts 4: 11) and was “rejected” of men. (Isaiah 53: 3.) Far from overthrowing the kingdoms of this world, He refused to take sides with the fierce patriots who were burning for an opportunity to throw off the Roman yoke. Not only did He strike no blow against Rome, but He Himself was stricken by Rome. The Stone therefore did not fall at Christ's first advent.

Some have suggested that the work of the Stone began at Pentecost, but this interpretation is equally inadmissible. The propagation of the Gospel in the Christian era bears no more resemblance to the falling of the Stone than the ministry of Jesus on earth. The Gospel message is essentially redemptive. The work of the Stone is destructive Jesus compared the Gospel not to a falling stone but to leaven working gently, gradually, silently in the lump of dough. The expression “break in pieces,” which literally means “utterly crush,” suggests a sudden shattering blow which will instantly and completely disintegrate the kingdoms of men to make room for the kingdom of God. This, therefore, must be a still future event.

Did Jesus give the disciples any assurance at His ascension that He would return to consummate His work in the earth?

“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.

The last question of the disciples to Jesus before His ascension was, “Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” Acts 1: 6. In reply Jesus told them that the time when God would complete His purposes for the earth was not to be made known to them then. However, immediately after Jesus had been taken up, they were assured by two angels who remained to comfort them that Jesus would certainly come again in person to dispose finally of sin and inaugurate His glorious and eternal kingdom.

This angelic assurance doubtless caused the disciples to remember earlier occasions when Jesus had associated the establishment of His kingdom with His Second Advent.

When telling His disciples of the signs which would give warning of His imminent return, Jesus had concluded by saying: “When you see these things come to pass [the signs of His coming], know you that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.” Luke 21:31.

Describing the separation of the righteous and the wicked at His coming He said: “When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory.” Matthew 25:31.

The Second Advent thus became the “blessed hope” and the dominant note of their evangelism. So Paul exhorted the young man Timothy: “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who

shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom, preach the Word.” 2 Timothy 4:1,2.

How different will the Second Coming of Christ be from His first advent?

“Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him.” Psalm 50: 3.

The Second Coming of Jesus will be no obscure event in history, as was His first coming to the manger of Bethlehem. Then He came in humility and weakness. When He returns He will come with the glory and majesty and power which befits the only-begotten Son of God, the Creator and King of the universe. The first time He came as a harmless Lamb. The second time He will appear as a destroying Lion. (See Isaiah 42: 13, 14; Joel 2: 2; Malachi 4: 1; 2 Thessalonians 1: 7, 8)

What will become of the kingdoms of men at the return of Christ?

“The Lord ... shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath.” Psalm 110: 5: “I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen.” Haggai 2:22. (See also Psalm 2: 8, 9) “There hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.” Joel 2:2.

Scarcely can the human mind form any conception of this stupendous event when it breaks in upon our world. The turmoil and commotion accompanying the overturning of previous empires are indicated in the image merely by the merging of one metal into another. But the last upheaval smashes the image to fragments. So is the future overthrow of earthly kingdoms contrasted with the greatest political upheavals of this world order.

Will any earthly kingdom survive the crash?

“The kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms.” Daniel 2:44.

Not one of the existing kingdoms can have any part in the kingdom of Christ. All must go to make room for the world-embracing dominion of God. As Jesus said to Pilate when He stood before him in the judgment hall: “My kingdom is not of this world [literally, not out of this order] : . . . My kingdom is not from hence.” John 18: 36.

To what are the disintegrated kingdoms of this world after the falling of the Stone compared? By what agency are they dispersed?

“Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them.” Daniel 2:35.

In the eyes of men the kingdoms of this world are powerful and stable, but before the irresistible winds of divine judgment they will be as “chaff which the wind drives away.” Psalm 1:4 (See also Isaiah 17:12,11) In that terrible day the earth will be swept clean by the winds of God.

The symbol of the wind would be perfectly understandable to Nebuchadnezzar for the name of Enlil, the chief god of the Babylonian pantheon, meant literally, “Lord of the windLord of the storm,” or “Storm of terrible strength.” Merodach inherited these characteristics from Enlil and in his struggle against Tiamet, the evil one, he made use of a “hurricane, an evil wind, a tempest, a four-fold wind, a sevenfold wind, a whirlwind.” According to Esarhaddon, Merodach assisted him in the siege of the city of Ubbumi with the blast of “the north wind.” He likewise helped Nebuchadnezzar with “four winds” to uncover the site of the temple of Shamash at Larsa so that he could rebuild it.

The king would, therefore, appreciate the power of the god whose “wind” would carry away all the kingdoms of men to make room for his own “great mountain” kingdom.

While the kingdoms of men will be scattered like chaff, whom will the angels gather?

“And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” Matthew 24:31.

While the Stone brings destruction to the kingdoms of men, it will bring deliverance to “the elect,” the “saints of the most High,” living and dead. For the appearance of Christ in the clouds of heaven will be the signal for the resurrection of the righteous dead of all ages, and for their gathering together with the living remnant who have been preserved unscathed through the fearful destruction. (See also 1 Thessalonians 4: 16, 17)

Following the dissolution of the image, what transformation did Nebuchadnezzar observe in the Stone? How did Daniel interpret its growth?

“And the Stone that smote the image became a great mountain.” Daniel 2:35. “In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom.” Daniel 2:44.

The likening of the divine kingdom to a “great mountain” would have a special significance for Nebuchadnezzar. The city of Babylon was built upon the alluvial clay soil brought down by the great rivers of the plain, and was surrounded by vast stretches of swamp land and shifting sand dunes. By contrast, the mountains in the distant north were monuments of permanence and strength, and often Nebuchadnezzar wished they had been nearer that he might have used stone from them in the building of his capital. As they were not, he had to content himself with building the city “mountains high,” and his palace “like a mountain” in the midst of it. For the

great northern citadel, he did actually undertake the transport of massive stones, “the produce of the great mountains,” and “like the mountains” he raised its “summit.”

When therefore Nebuchadnezzar was told by the prophet that the Stone was to become a great mountain, he would immediately recognize that it was to be the mightiest and most enduring of kingdoms.

“The great mountain” would also have a religious implication, for Enlil, the chief of the gods in the old mythology of Assyria, and Babylonia, was referred to as “The Great Mountain, Enlil, the Lord of the lands, dwelling in the House of the Great Mountain of the Lands.” And when Merodach superseded Enlil in the time of Khammurabi, he was given the same title. A Babylonian tablet dating from the seventeenth year of Nebuchadnezzar is signed by two priests of the “Great Mountain.” Other priests are similarly described.

So not only would Nebuchadnezzar understand the “great mountain” to be the mightiest of kingdoms, but he would realize also that it would be, in very truth, the “kingdom of the great God!”

How extensive will the Stone kingdom be?

“And filled the whole earth.” Daniel 2:35.

No competing dominion will be left upon the face of the earth. Christ's kingdom will, therefore, have no rival. It will be universal. “He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.” Psalm 72: 8. (See also Zechariah 14: 9)

Of what dominion will the kingdom of Christ be a continuation?

“Unto Thee shall it come, even the first dominion.” Micah 4: 8.

It will connect with the kingdom of Israel where it was broken off in the days of Zedekiah. (Ezekiel 21: 27.) Christ, as the Seed of David (Matthew 1: 1), will take up the kingdom and crown laid down by Judah's last king, and in Him will thus be fulfilled all the promises of the perpetuity of the old kingdom and the seed of David.

Will the Stone kingdom be subject to overthrow like the kingdoms of the world?

“And the kingdom shall not be left to other people.” Daniel 2:44.

Human monarchs have reigned for a longer or shorter period, and then have passed off the scene and their place has been taken by others. But Christ will never be superseded. He is the “King eternal.”

How enduring will His kingdom be?

“The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed. . . It shall stand for ever.” Daniel 2: 44.

The kingdom will be as eternal as its King. It will continue without diminution of its power and glory for ever. “Thy kingdom,” declares the psalmist, “is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endures throughout all generations!” Psalm 145:13. “Of His kingdom,” was the promise of the angel to Mary at the incarnation, “there shall be no end.” Luke 1: 33. (See also Isaiah 9: 7; Hebrews 1: 8)

Having completed the interpretation of the wonderful vision to King Nebuchadnezzar, how did Daniel stress its certainty?

“Forasmuch as thou saw that the Stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold. The great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.” Daniel 2:45.

The prophecies of the Word, like the promises of the Word, are “yea,” and “amen,” in Christ Jesus. (2 Corinthians 1:20) They “must needs come to pass,” for “the Scripture cannot be broken.” John 10: 35. In the previous pages we have shown how every detail of the image vision down to the feet and toes of iron and clay has been fulfilled with minute exactness. The remaining event, therefore, the coming of the divine kingdom, is equally certain and sure.

What effect had the dream and its interpretation upon King Nebuchadnezzar?

“Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odors unto him.” Daniel 2: 46.

Overcome by the marvelous revelation which he had received, Nebuchadnezzar prostrated himself at the feet of Daniel, the messenger of the great Revealer of secrets.

What confession did Nebuchadnezzar make?

“The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret.” Daniel 2:47.

Nebuchadnezzar was prepared to give Jehovah a place among the gods he worshipped, to designate Him “God of gods” as he did Merodach, to acclaim His wisdom, and to bestow honors upon His servants. But unfortunately, he did not allow the revelations of Jehovah to influence his life. If he had done so, he would have saved himself the humiliating experience related in the third and fourth chapters of the book of Daniel.

Therein is a lesson for all. Prophecy is not unfolded merely to be informative. It is intended to lead to transformation of the life into harmony with the will of God. If it does not do this, then the knowledge it imparts is valueless.

What urgent decision, therefore, must all make in the light of the great image vision?

“Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.” Luke 20:18.

The vision of the great image leaves us with but two alternatives. We may choose to retain our “citizenship” (Phil. 3:20, R.V.) with the kingdoms of men and remain a part of the image, in which case we shall share its fate; or with broken and contrite hearts we may cast ourselves at the feet of the divine King, link up with Christ before the crash, and so participate in the kingdom into which it is to grow. How urgent then is the appeal of the apostle Peter: “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.”

18. The Four Empires Again

Shortly before the fall of the Babylonian Empire, what further vision did God give to Daniel?

“In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed.” Daniel 7:1.

The first symbolic vision of the course of world history was appropriately given to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, as he was the first of the world rulers during the “times of the Gentiles.” The interpretation, however, was communicated to Daniel to remind the king and his successors that God's people would ever be the repository of His truth, and the medium through whom He would reveal His will and purpose to the world. This divine intention is further emphasized by the fact that after the first special revelation to Nebuchadnezzar, all subsequent revelations were given directly to Daniel.

The first year of Belshazzar was a significant one. Nabonidus, the old king, had retired permanently to Terna in Arabia to nurse his health, and thenceforth took little part in the affairs of the empire.

Belshazzar was left behind in the capital with supreme power in his hands, but his enjoyment of it was marred by the knowledge of the rising power of Media-Persia, which had become a serious menace to the security of his dominions.

Cyrus, the Persian, by this time had overrun the empire of the fabulously wealthy Croesus in Asia Minor, and was in the process of extending his rule eastward toward the borders of India. Soon, as no doubt Belshazzar realized, he would return to deal with his one remaining rival. This was the setting of the momentous new vision recorded in this chapter.

Being troubled by the dream, whose help did the prophet seek?

“I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things” Daniel 7:15, 16. “Then he [Daniel] wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters.” Daniel 7: 1.

There is no reference to any angelic intermediary or interpreter in connection with the image vision in the second chapter of Daniel, but here and in subsequent visions, angels play an important part in the communication of the prophetic revelations. The name of the particular angel who attended Daniel is not revealed, but without doubt it was “the man Gabriel” who appeared to him on a number of subsequent occasions. (Daniel 8: 16; 9: 20-23; 10: 10, 18)

What panorama was opened up to Daniel in this vision?

“Daniel spoke and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of heaven strove upon the great sea.” Daniel 7:2.

The background of the vision was a wide sea lashed into mountainous waves by the fury of the four winds of heaven. The angel did not explain the symbolic meaning of the wild scene, but an earlier prophet, Isaiah, tells us that “the multitude of many people . . . make a noise like the noise of the seas,” and “the rushing of nations” is as “the rushing of mighty waters!” Isaiah 17:12. In another vision, John the Revelator was also told by his angel interpreter that the “waters ... are [represent] peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.” Revelation 17:15.

Winds invariably represent strife and commotion, war and bloodshed, while “four winds,” that is, from every point of the compass, suggest grievous calamities resulting in the fall of nations and kingdoms. Thus God says of the judgment of Elam: “And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them toward all those winds; and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come!” Jeremiah 49: 36.

What did Daniel see emerging from the troubled sea? How did the angel explain what he saw?

“And four beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.” Daniel 7:3. “These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth.” Daniel 7:17.

In his dream Nebuchadnezzar was shown a composite image of four diverse metals. Daniel here sees four diverse beasts which the angel states represent four kings or kingdoms which were to arise out of the earth. The natural conclusion is that the beasts represent the same series of world powers as the metals in the image, for they come up successively, and the last is called “the fourth kingdom upon earth.”

The contrast, however, between the dazzling splendor of the image and these wild and savage beasts, immediately suggests the differing viewpoints of man and God upon the kingdoms of the world. To their rulers, the earthly empires glint and gleam like the polished metals of the image, but in the eyes of God they are roaring, ravening beasts gorging themselves on the flesh of their victims, only to be tom in pieces in their turn by others more powerful than themselves.

What was the form of the first beast?

“The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings.” Daniel 7:4.

As the most valuable of metals, gold, was used in the image to represent Babylon, so the king of beasts is here chosen to represent the first world empire, and to complete the picture, the wings of the monarch of birds, the eagle, are given to it.

The combination would not seem at all incongruous to the prophet, for great winged lions, bulls, and other creatures were to be found modeled in stone in every Assyrian and Babylonian palace. Many such sculptures have been recovered by the excavators from the ruins of the ancient cities of Mesopotamia.

The significance of this composite symbol would at once come to Daniel's mind, for no fewer than three other prophets used these same figures to describe the activities of Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon's greatest king. Jeremiah cried: “The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way.” Jeremiah 4:7. (See also Jeremiah 49:19; 50:17) He also declared that “his horses are swifter than eagles.” Jeremiah 4:13. Ezekiel used the figure of the eagle when he wrote: “A great eagle with great wings, long winged, full of feathers, which had divers colors, came unto Lebanon.” Ezekiel 17: 3, 4. Habakkuk likewise speaks of the horsemen of Babylon flying “as the eagle that hastens to eat!” Habakkuk 1: 8.

All these comparisons aptly describe the dramatic rise of the Babylonian Empire to world power. It was not until the fall of Nineveh in 612 BC. that Nabopolassar was able to make Babylon independent of Assyria and found the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Yet by 588 BC., when Nebuchadnezzar carried Zedekiah away captive, the empire had attained almost its widest extension.

As Daniel gazed at the first beast, what befell it?

“I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it.” Daniel 7:4.

Even as the prophet marveled at the power of the great beast, he saw its strength taken away. The lion heart was replaced by the heart of a man and the eagle's wings were plucked, a vivid portrayal of the weak rulers who succeeded Nebuchadnezzar and brought her to her ruin.

In what form did the second beast appear?

“And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised itself on one side.” Daniel 7:5.

The lion is a tropical beast, a denizen of the jungle and the hot desert. The bear inhabits the mountains of more northern climes. It provides, therefore, a fitting representation of the second empire, which sprang up among the mountains of Media and Persia to the north of Babylon.

One side being raised higher than the other need not necessarily indicate a deformity of structure, but simply that the prophet first saw it kneeling on one knee as are a pair of winged bulls illustrated in Henry Rawlinson's *Five Great Monarchies*. (Vol. 1, page 33) This peculiarity found its fulfillment in the fact that the Persian nation under Cyrus became the greater of the two peoples, the Medes eventually disappearing as a separate race and the empire coming to be known as the Persian Empire.

What command was given to the bear?

“And they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.” Daniel 7: 5.

The Media-Persian Empire certainly did devour to an even greater extent than Babylon. For whereas the earlier empire never extended north of the Zagros mountains, west of the Taurus range, or east of the head of the Persian Gulf, Cyrus added the whole of Asia Minor to his dominions and marched eastward to the borders of India, as well as overrunning Babylonia, Syria, and Egypt.

What had the bear in its mouth?

“And it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it.” Daniel 7:5.

The ribs represent the territories which were devoured by MedoPersia, and history corroborates the fact that there were just three great powers which it had to break in order to attain world supremacy, namely: Lydia, Babylon, and Egypt.

Lydia was overthrown in 546 BC. when Cyrus chased Croesus across Asia Minor and took Sardis, his capital. Babylon fell to him in 538 BC., when Belshazzar was killed. And with Babylon went Egypt, which had already been nominally included in the Babylonian Empire by Nebuchadnezzar.

Following the bear, what new beast came up from the sea?

“After this I beheld, and lo, another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast also had four heads; and dominion was given to it.” Daniel 7:6.

The leopard is not only a powerful beast, but it is also agile and swift. No better symbol could be found to portray the lightning speed with which Alexander the Great carried the arms of the third or Greek Empire to the ends of the earth. And as if that were not sufficient, four wings are added to suggest unparalleled rapidity of conquest.

Nebuchadnezzar, who was campaigning for nearly forty years, and Cyrus, who took thirty years to build up the Media-Persian Empire, were lumbering compared with the incredible Alexander. His campaigns have no parallel in the annals of conquerors before or since.

“Dominion” certainly was “given” in abundant measure to Alexander, who planted Greek settlements in the ends of the known world and made Greek culture and the Greek tongue universal.

In a later vision it is stated that the Greek empire would be divided into four parts after the death of its first king. The four heads of the leopard are, without doubt, these four divisions. As they are of paramount importance in the later history of the Greek Empire, they are dealt with in much greater detail in subsequent visions, and need only to be listed here as: 1. Greece proper, 2. Thrace and Asia Minor, 3. Babylonia and Syria, and 4. Egypt.

After the leopard-beast what fearful monster arose? Amazed by the fearsome character of the fourth beast, what did Daniel ask of his angelic interpreter? How did the angel begin to explain the mystery of the fourth beast?

“After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it!” Daniel 7: 7. “I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet!” Daniel 7: 19. “Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth. and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces!” Daniel 7:23.

If Daniel had not already recognized the fourth beast as corresponding with the fourth metal of the image, the angel made it quite clear to him by stating that it represented “the fourth kingdom upon earth!” This was, of course, Rome. So “dreadful and terrible” was this beast that it could be compared to no living animal. Commentators have wondered if it was wolf-like, seeing that Rome was traditionally founded by Romulus and Remus, the wolf-suckled twins, but if it had been Daniel would surely have said so, seeing that this animal would be quite familiar to him. As Inspiration has not seen fit to compare it with any existing species, we must conclude that its indescribable form was intended to denote the fiercest of the successive world powers.

The correspondence of the fourth beast with the fourth metal in the great image of the second chapter is confirmed by the fact that it had “great iron teeth,” it was “strong exceedingly,” and “it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it!”

What did Daniel notice crowning the head of the monster? When the prophet sought an explanation what did the angel say of them?

“And it had ten horns.” Daniel 7: 7. “I would know the truth ... of the ten horns that were in his head.” Daniel 7: 19, 20. “The ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise.” Daniel 7:24.

The number of toes in the great image was assumed rather than expressly stated; but here the number of the horns is given as ten, and it is stated that they represent ten kingdoms which were to arise out of the body or territory of the fourth beast. As we have already seen, this specification was exactly fulfilled when the Roman Empire was disintegrated by the barbarian invasions of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries of the Christian era.

Of all these features the prophet needed but to be reminded by the angel, for they were all paralleled in the description and interpretation of the iron portion of the image. It was the additional features of the fourth beast that were new and incomprehensible to him, and concerning these he now anxiously inquired. The angel's explanation will occupy our next study.

19. The Mystery of the Little Horn

As Daniel gazed at the horns of the fourth beast what disturbance did he notice among them?

“I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn.” Daniel 7: 8.

In Nebuchadnezzar's dream no details are given concerning the ten kingdoms into which the Roman Empire disintegrated, save that there would be no cohesion between them any more until the coming of the kingdom of Christ.

In this vision, however, special attention is directed to the divided empire in order to reveal the rise of a new power, small and insignificant in its beginnings, which was destined to exercise a profound influence on history and upon the people of God to the very end of time. 149

When would this “little horn” appear?

“Another shall arise after them.” Daniel 7:24.

The barbarian tribes which were to constitute the horns of the fourth beast began to move into the empire in the third century as “federates” or allies of Rome, so that this century may be regarded as the time when they began to come up. As the “little horn” was to arise after them, it is to be looked for in history somewhere around the beginning of the fourth century.

Would there be any similarity between the 'little horn' and the others?

“He shall be diverse from the first.” Daniel 7:24.

While this new power would come up among the barbarian kingdoms, it would form no part of any of the divisions, and would be utterly diverse in nature from them. Did any such new and different power appear upon the European scene at the time indicated in the prophecy?

Yes, one certainly did. It took its name from the old empire. It established its seat in the ancient capital. It adopted the Roman tongue. Yet unlike the powers by which it was surrounded, its claim to a place within the confines of the empire was based, not upon force of arms, but upon the pretensions of divine ordination. It was not, in its beginnings, a political power at all, but an ecclesiastical power. It was none other than the Church of Rome.

What special characteristics did Daniel note in this newly arisen horn?

“And ' behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man!” Daniel 7: 8.

The barbarian kings had little civilization and no written laws. They were literally brutish. The “little horn,” by contrast, had the “eyes of man,” a fit symbol of the culture and organization of ecclesiastical Rome, and the almost superhuman sagacity and shrewdness by means of which the Papacy rose to power in the Middle Ages.

What possibilities of growth did the little horn immediately begin to manifest?

“Whose look was more stout than his fellows.” Daniel 7:20.

Without a doubt, it was the cultural advantage the church had compared with the barbarian invaders, which put the temptation into the minds of the bishops of Rome to substitute for the declining power of Imperial Rome the spiritual paramount of the Roman See.

If “all the inhabitants of the earth” belonged to Imperial Rome, as Sulian had said, why should they not be taken over by spiritual Rome? If Rome, as the poet Claudian had declared, was the “fountain of laws” for the empire, why should not the Papacy be the new fountain of spiritual law?

“It was easy,” asserts D'Aubign6 in his History of the Reformation, “for the ambitious heart of man to reason thus. Ambitious Rome did so.”-Vol. 1, page 8.

So the “little horn,” from being merely one of the outposts of early Christianity, began to aspire to the domination of all Christendom.

How did the ‘little horn' set about achieving this exalted position among the other horns?

“In this horn [was] ... a mouth speaking great things.” “A mouth that spoke very great things.” Daniel 7:8,

As the bishops of Rome saw the empire crumbling around them, they set to work to build the superstructure of their ambitions upon a foundation of stupendous, and largely false, claims.

“Upon the mind of Innocent,” says Milman in his History of Latin Christianity, “appears first distinctly to have dawned the vast conception of Rome's ecclesiastical supremacy, dim as yet, and shadowy, yet full and comprehensive in its outline.”-Book 2, chapter 1, paragraph 8.

First, the bishops of Rome began to appropriate to the Roman church the glories of the old empire. Ancient Rome was described as Roma Celestis. Papal Rome adopted the term for itself. The throne of the Pope was described as Sancta Sedes and the Pope as Sanctissimus Papa after the manner of the Imperial throne and its occupant. The Pope also became Pontifex Maximus after discontinuance of the use of this title by the emperors.

The bishops of Rome began to issue “rescripts” and “decreta” like the emperors, and to use the “interdictum” of the Roman praetor to give authority to their commands. As the senators were princes of the empire, the leading hierarchy of ecclesiastical Rome became princes of the church, and its chief council was named the “Curia” after the ancient Roman city council.

The Latin tongue was adopted as the official language of &-c church in contrast to the Greek of the eastern world. The Bible, canon law, ritual, and ecclesiastical literature were all standardized in the Roman tongue, and Roman dress was adopted as the pattern for the vestments of bishops and priests. Thus did ecclesiastical Rome lay claim to be the successor of the old empire and deck herself in its fallen mantle.

Secondly, the bishops of Rome set out to establish a claim to be the chief spiritual authority of Christendom. In the early centuries of the Christian era, the Roman church was quite unconscious of any primacy among the Christian communities, and the canons of the first ecumenical council, convened at Nicea in AD. 325 by the Christian Emperor Constantine, give no hint of any special authority attaching to the Roman church. But in the early fourth century, just at the time the prophecy indicated, Rome began to claim primacy in the Christian world on the grounds that Peter was its first bishop, and that to him had been given first place among the apostles by Christ when he said. “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 16: 19.

So far as we know the earliest bishop of Rome to claim privileges as Peter's successor was Pope Stephen about AD. 256, while the first known reference to the “keys” was in a letter of Felix II, bishop of Rome between AD. 355 and 358, in which he refers to “the authority of this holy See and our teacher Peter, the key-bearer.”

In AD. 382 the Decretum Gelasianum of Gelasius I laid further stress upon the promise to Peter, claiming that “the first see of Peter the Apostle belongs to the Roman church,” while Jerome referred to the next Pope, Damasus, as “the successor of the fisherman.”-Ep. 16, 2.

Leo I. about the middle of the fifth century, was told in a letter from the bishops of the Province of Arles: “Through the most blessed Peter, chief of the Apostles, the holy Roman church holds the principate over all the churches of the world.”-Itaer Leon. Epp. No. 65.

Anastasius II, bishop of Rome at the end of the fifth century (AD. 496-498), referred to Peter as “the blessed key-bearer of the heavenly Jerusalem,” in the sixth century the poet Aratus spoke of “the ethereal key-bearer,” and in succeeding centuries the claim became increasingly familiar.

The success of the Roman claims is evidenced by a series of Imperial rescripts beginning with that of Valens, Valentinian, and Gratian in AD. 370, acquiescing in the primacy of the Roman See. About the middle of the fifth century one was issued to Count Aetius, military governor of Italy, to the effect that:

“Since the dignity of the city of Rome and the authority of the sacred council has established the Primacy of the Apostolic See of St. Peter, who is chief of the circle of bishops, that nothing should be attempted without the authority of this See. The peace of the churches will be everywhere preserved if all acknowledge their ruler.” - 'Pat. Lat.," Vol. 54, Ep. ii.

So by the fifth century, ecclesiastical Rome was well on the way to establishing itself as the successor both of the Caesars and of Peter, the apostle.

What powerful opposition, however, among the other horns had the “little horn” yet to overcome in its rise to power?

“Before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots!” Daniel 7:24. “He shall subdue three kings.” Daniel 7:24.

Though Rome had made considerable progress in its struggle for power by the fifth century, it now encountered a formidable obstacle. By reason of the fact that most of the new barbarian kingdoms of Gaul, Spain, and North Africa professed not the Catholic, but the Arian Christian faith, and between the two there was bitter enmity.

The difference of faith came about in this way. At the Council of Nicea in AD. 325, the teaching of Arius, a priest of Alexandria, on the status of Christ was condemned, and Arius himself was banished to Illyria. The Arian faith, however, spread over parts of the East and had its adherents even in the Eastern capital. So when Ulfilas, a Visigoth hostage, was brought to Constantinople, he learned there the Arian faith. Later he was consecrated a bishop by Eusebius of Nicomedia and returned to his people in Dacia. After a time he had to flee with many of his converts back into Mcesia within the empire, but the faith he had planted endured in spite of persecution and spread to the neighboring German tribes. The consequence was that when they entered the Roman Empire most of them had embraced the Arian faith.

“The whole of the vast Gothic population which descended on the Roman Empire,” says Dean Stanley in his lectures on the History of the Eastern Church, “so far as it was Christian at all, held to the faith of the Alexandrine heretic.”-Page 151.

As the Roman power dwindled and the barbarian kings enlarged their territories, the Arian faith grew at the expense of the Catholic, and the bishops of Rome quickly realized that Roman supremacy was doomed unless the hated heresy was eliminated.

The problem became a matter of life and death for the Papacy at the close of the fifth century when Italy itself, which up to this time had been spared the settlement of the barbarians, became a barbarian kingdom with the Arian, Odoacer the Heruli, as its first barbarian king. So from this date the “little horn” began the task of uprooting the Arian kings.

The first conflict in Italy arose over Odoacer's interference in the administration of lands which had been donated to the Papacy. A little later the Arian king had the temerity to veto a papal election and order another. This could not be tolerated and the Pope invoked the aid of Zeno, the emperor in Constantinople, who was still nominal emperor of the West also. In response Zeno offered Theodoric, leader of the Ostrogoth “federates” in Illyria, the rulership of Italy if he would expel Odoacer.

What the bishop of Rome thought of the idea we do not know, as Theodoric was also an Arian, and he would only be exchanging one Arian master for another. But the Pope had no opportunity to pick and choose, for Theodoric accepted the offer and in AD. 488 started for Italy. After routing Odoacer's forces three times the Heruli resistance utterly collapsed and on August 11, AD. 490, the Roman senate accepted Theodoric as master of Italy, and sent Festus, princeps of the Senate, to Constantinople to inform the Emperor. So fell the first horn.

For a time it seemed that the Catholics and Theodoric might be able to live together in peace, but before long a new rift developed. Theodoric learned of the persecution of Arians in the Eastern empire. He thereupon sent for Pope John and instructed him to go to Constantinople and have it stopped.

“If the emperor ... does not think fit to revoke the edict which he has lately issued against those of my persuasion,” he told John, “it is my firm resolution to issue a like edict against those of his; and to see it everywhere executed with the same vigor.”- Archibald Bower in “The History of the Popes,” Vol. 1, page 325.

The Pope was further informed that until freedom was restored to the Arians in the East he himself “must not think of returning to Italy.” Naturally the Pope was incensed by the decision of the “impious Arian” and took the opportunity of his visit to intrigue with the emperor against Theodoric. The plot came to a knowledge of the king and when John endeavored to return to Italy he was arrested and imprisoned till his death.

Meantime, another “horn” was giving trouble. The Arian Vandals had begun actively persecuting the Catholics in the areas of North Africa which they had overrun. This decided Justinian, the Eastern Emperor, to undertake a holy war for the recovery of both Italy and North Africa to the empire and to the Catholic faith.

In AD. 533, he issued a decree pronouncing the Pope “head of all bishops and corrector of Lereatics” and dispatched Belisarius to Africa to deal first with the Vandals. In AD. 534 Carthage was sacked, the Vandal power utterly destroyed, and Belisarius returned in triumph to Constantinople with Gelimer, king of the Vandals, as his chief trophy. The second “horn” had fallen.

The next year (AD. 535) Belisarius was back in Sicily; in AD. 536 he crossed into Italy and marched on Rome, from which the Goths retired without a battle. Some months later, they came back and laid siege to the city, but after a year's siege without success the barbarian army abandoned the attempt, and returned northward. The Ostogothic kingdom of Italy quickly fell, and with it the last Arian power to dominate Italy and Rome (AD. 538). Though the Goths occupied Rome again at a later date, they were soon driven out and their power finally destroyed. So the third of the opposing horns fell in response to the voice of prophecy.

What became of the other Arian kingdoms? Was their adhesion to the Papacy secured without their being uprooted?

Yes, indeed. The struggle against Arianism in Gaul and Spain was won in quite a different way, actually by the conversion of the Arian kings and their peoples at the point of the sword of Clovis, king of the Franks.

Originally a pagan, Clovis, king of the Franks of Northern Gaul, had married a Catholic wife and, possibly more with the idea of enlisting the bishop of Rome's support in his own designs of conquest than from purely spiritual motives. He accepted the Roman faith and became the protagonist of Catholicism against the Arian tribes.

“Verily it grieves my soul,” Gregory of Tours wrote to him, “that these Arians should hold part of Gaul; with God's help let us go and conquer them and take their territories.”-Gegorii Tur. 11, 37.

Clovis was quick to take the hint. In AD. 496 he conquered the Arian Alamanni and in AD. 499, the Arian Burgundians. In AD. 507 he marched against the Arian Visigoths, driving them back to the Pyrennees, subjugating all their lands eastward to the frontier of Burgundy, and eventually securing their conversion to the Catholic faith. Thus, by about the time that the last Arian power was broken in Italy itself (AD. 538) the whole of Spain and Gaul had come to recognize the bishop of Rome as their spiritual overlord. Just as prophecy had declared exactly three kingdoms had been overthrown, while, the rest had capitulated!

20. Marks of the Great Apostasy

To what final arrogance did the angel interpreter declare the “little horn” power would rise?

“He shall speak great words against the most High.” Daniel 7:25.

Already in claiming for itself primacy among the churches of Christendom and authority over all secular rulers, the Papacy had grievously wrested the Scriptures and usurped authority belonging only to God. But the blasphemies of the period of the Papacy's rise to power were as nothing to the “great words against the most High” which it uttered during the high noon of the Middle Ages.

To list all these blasphemies would occupy a volume. All that can be done here is to set down the Papacy's major claims from authoritative Roman sources and show how flagrantly they usurp the prerogative And authority of God and of Christ.

The Pope Equal with God and Christ.

There is no spiritual superlative belonging to the Godhead which has not been used to describe the dignity of the supreme Pontiff.

“The Pope, by the Lord's appointment,” asserts one authoritative collection of canons of the Roman church, “is the successor of the blessed apostle Peter, and holds the place of the Redeemer Himself upon the earth. . . . The Roman Pontiff bears the authority not of a mere man, but of the true God. upon the earth.... The Pope holds the place of God in the earth.”-“Corpus Juris Canonici Joan. Gib.,” tom ii, pages 8, 9.

Ferraris, in the sixteenth century, declared: “The Pope is of such dignity and highness, that he is not simply man, but, as it were, God, and the Vicar of God. Hence the Pope is of such supreme and sovereign dignity, that, properly speaking, he is not merely constituted in dignity, but is rather placed on the very summit of dignities. Hence also the Pope is 'Father of Fathers,'.. . 'Bishop of Bishops', divine Monarch, supreme Emperor, and King of kings.

'He is of such great dignity and power that he occupies one and the same tribunal with Christ; so that whatsoever the Pope does, seems to proceed from the mouth of God!'-Ferraris in “Bibliotheca Prompia,” verb. “Papa,” art. ii, sect. 1-29. Francof, 1783.

The fearful blasphemy and sacrilege of such claims is evident when set against the unequivocal declarations of Scripture: “I am the Lord, and there is none else.” Isaiah 45: 5, 6.

Papal Infallibility.

Deriving from the claim that the Pope is equal with God and the Lord Jesus Christ is the further blasphemy that he is infallible in wisdom and judgment. Gregory VII in clause 22 of the Dictatus Papa asserted that “the Roman church has never erred, and according to the witness of Holy Writ, shall not err throughout eternity.”

The second article of a Romish Confession of Faith drawn up by Hungarian Jesuits states: “We confess and believe that the Pope of Rome is the head of the church and that he cannot err.”-Quoted in “London Protestant,” 1831, page 208. But God has never conferred such infallibility upon any man.

Authority of ecclesiastical tradition.

Because the word of the Pope is claimed to be equal with the Word of God, every ecclesiastical tradition sanctioned by the Pope is asserted to be of the same authority as the divine Word. The Trent Catechism affirms that “all the doctrines of Christianity are derived from the Word of God, which includes Scripture and tradition.” The Bible, on the contrary, asserts that the Scriptures alone are sufficient to “thoroughly furnish” the man of God with all spiritual truth. (2 Timothy 3: 16, 17.) They alone are adequate to make one “wise unto salvation.” (2 Timothy 3: 15.) In them alone is the “certainty” of truth (Luke 1: 3, 4); believing them and in no other we may have “life through His name.” John 20: 30, 31.

Supreme Spiritual Power in Heaven and Earth.

Besides being supreme in wisdom, it is claimed that the Pope has also all power, not only in heaven, but in earth and in hell.

According to the Council of Florence and Eugenius IV: “The apostolic chair and the Roman Pontiff hold a primacy over the whole world; and that the Roman Pontiff is the successor of St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, the true Vicar of Christ, and the head of the church; and that he is the Father and Teacher of all Christians, and to him in Peter full power is committed, by our Lord Jesus Christ, to feed, direct, and govern the universal church.”-“Concilia Labbei et Cossartii,” tom xiii, “Concilia Florent.,” Sess. x, col. 154. Paris, 1671.

This is absolutely contrary to Scripture, which declares that there is but one “Great Shepherd of the sheep” (1 Peter 5: 4, 2: 25; Hebrews 13: 20), one “High Priest” (Hebrews 3: 1; 9: 7, 25), one “Father” and “Master” (Matthew 23: 9, 10), and one “Head over all things to the church” (Ephesians 1: 22, 23; 4: 15; 5: 23).

The Popes, moreover, are condemned in this claim to universal jurisdiction from the mouth of one of the earliest of the bishops of Rome, Gregory I, who rebuked the Bishop of Constantinople for claiming the title of “Universal Bishop.” In one of his letters he declared very truly: “I confidently say that whoever calls himself Universal Bishop, or desires to be so-called, doth in his elation forerun Antichrist.”-“Concilia Labbei et Cossartd,” tom v, “Gregori Papa I, Epistol.,” [lib. vi](#), Ep. xxx, Col. 1276 B.

Supreme Jurisdiction over all Temporal Rulers and Powers.

Not only does the Pope claim universal spiritual jurisdiction, but also to have the supremacy over all temporal rulers and powers. “The Pope,” declares Lucius Ferraris, “is, as it were, God on earth, the only Prince of the, faithful of Christ, the greatest King of all kings, possessing the plenitude of power, to whom the government of the earthly and heavenly kingdom is entrusted. Hence it is not wonderful, if to the Roman Pontiff, as the Vicar of Him whose is the earth, and its fullness, the world and all they who dwell therein, be attributed supreme authority and power. Not only the spiritual, but also the unsheathed material sword, just cause being assigned for transferring empires, breaking scepters, and taking away crowns.”-“Prompta Bibliotheca,” verb. “Papa.”

In harmony with this claim, many Popes since the days of Gregory II have issued decrees deposing kings who offended the Papacy and absolving their peoples from all allegiance. But this pretension is equally contrary to the Scriptures, which teach that believers are to be “subject unto ... the powers that be,” for they “are ordained of God” and are set up or abased by Him according as they serve or oppose His purposes.

Salvation only in Submission to the Pope.

Because the Pope has all wisdom and power and jurisdiction, it is claimed that the church of which he is the head is the one true church, that submission to him is necessary to salvation, and that outside of the Roman church there is no salvation.

Boniface VIII decreed: “We declare, say, define, pronounce it to be necessary to salvation, for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff.”-“Corpus Juris Canonici a Pithao,” tom ii, Extrav., Lib. 1, tit. viii, cap. i. Paris, 1695.

Could blasphemy have gone to greater lengths?

On the basis of its claims to supreme authority the Roman church has authorized innumerable doctrines and practices which are not only without scriptural authority, but are actually contrary to Scripture. Among such may be mentioned the following:

The Sacrifice of Mass.

The Creed of Pope Pius IV, drawn up in harmony with the decrees of the Council of Trent, requires the acceptance of the statement: “The Mass is offered to God a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead. And that in the holy sacrifice of the eucharist there is truly, really, and substantially, the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ. And that there is made a conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the blood, which conversion the Catholic Church calls transubstantiation.” -Quoted in C. Elliott's “Delineation of Romanism,” page 2.

The Scripture, on the contrary, expressly declares the Lord's supper to be a memorial of the Lord's death and not a repetition of His sacrifice. (Luke 22: 19; 1 Corinthians 11:24)

Efficacy of the Sacraments.

The Church of Rome claims to be the sole possessor of seven spiritual sacraments, namely baptism, confirmation, eucharist, penance, extreme unction, orders, matrimony, and that the spiritual grace in these sacraments is obtainable only through her ministrations.

The Bible, on the other hand, declares that the believer may, without the aid of any priest, go “boldly unto the throne of grace” and “find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 4: 16.

Confession.

The Council of Trent stated: “Whoever shall deny that sacramental confession was instituted by divine command, or that it is necessary to salvation or shall affirm that the practice ... is a human invention; let him be accursed.” - Session. XIV. Can. 6. But the Bible declares that confession is to be made to God (Psalm 32: 5) and to those who have been wronged (James 5: 16). Nowhere are we commanded to confess to an earthly priest.

Power of Absolution.

“Whoever,” it was stated by the Council of Trent, “still affirms that the priest's sacramental absolution is not a judicial act, but only a ministry to pronounce and declare that the sins of the party confessing are forgiven ... let him be accursed.”-Idem, session. xiv, can. 9.

Such a claim is entirely unscriptural. The messengers of the Gospel are commanded to preach “repentance and remission of sins” (Luke 24: 47), in order that. “sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3: 19), but the forgiveness and the remission are “received” (Acts 10: 43) not from man, but from God Himself. “Who can forgive sins but God only?” Mark 2: 7; Luke 5: 21. (See also Ephesians 4: 32.)

Penance.

Concerning penance the Trent Catechism states: “Penance is, as it were, a compensation for offences which proceed from the free will of the person offending, and is appointed by the will of God, to whom the offence has been offered.... The penitent must also submit himself to the judgment of the priest, who is the Vicegerent of God, to enable him to award a punishment proportionate to his guilt.” - Pages 263, 269.

This, too, is against the plain warrant of Scripture. Satisfaction on account of transgression of God's holy will cannot be rendered to Him either completely or in part by way, of the “compensation” of penance. “The chastisement of our peace was upon Him” (Isaiah 53:5), and it is through Him alone that we are delivered from “the curse of the law.” Galatians 1:13. Forgiveness is not of works, but wholly of grace.

Indulgences.

The Bull of Leo X states: “The Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter in regard to the keys, and the Vicar of Christ upon earth, possessing the power of the keys, by which power all hindrances are removed out of the way of the faithful-that is to say, the guilt of actual sins-by the sacrament of penance, and the temporal punishment due for those sins, according to the divine justice, by ecclesiastical indulgence.” - 'Monumentorum ad Historiam Concilii Tridentini,' Yudoci Le Plat, 4to, tom ii, pages 21-24, Lovanni, 1782.

The only reply to such a blasphemous claim is the reproof administered to Simon Magus: “Thy money perish with thee, because thou has thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money!” Acts 8: 20. Significantly, it was Leo X sending forth Tetzels to sell papal indulgences, which precipitated the great Reformation movement in Germany.

Extreme Unction.

The Council of Trent declared that the administration of extreme unction “cleanses away sins,” if any remain to be expiated, even the last traces of sin; and relieves and confirms the same of the sick man, exciting in him strong confidence of the divine mercy.”-“Canon et Decreta Concilii Tridentini,” sess. xiv., “De Ext. Unct.”

No such power, however, is given to any man to remit the sins of another at the point of death. Salvation at death's door is gained in no other way than at any other period of life. It is the way of faith in a crucified Savior.

Purgatory.

The Catechism of the Council of Trent states: “In the fire of purgatory the souls of just men are cleansed by temporal punishment, in order to be admitted into their eternal country.” - Page 59.

But the Scriptures know nothing of purgatory. “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.” 1 John 1: 7. And when sin is forgiven “there is ... no condemnation.” Romans 8:1. Future purgatorial punishment is thus entirely excluded.

Need more be said to reveal the monstrous claims and deceptive falsehoods of the papal apostasy? Inspiration truly describes this blasphemous power when it declares, through the apostle Paul, that he “opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” 2 Thessalonians 2:4.

21. More Marks of the Great Apostasy

Of what sacrilege against the law of God would the “little horn” be guilty?

“He shall ... think to change times and laws.” Daniel 7:25, R.V.

Among the papal claims listed by Lucius Ferraris in his *Prompta Bibliotheca* is: “The Pope is of so great authority and power that he can modify, explain, or interpret even divine laws Art. 'Papa,' II, Vol. 6, pages 26-29.

We have seen above how far the Roman church has departed from the faith of Christ in its false teachings concerning Mass, confession, absolution, penance, indulgences, extreme unction, purgatory, and the rest. It now remains to notice how Rome has treated “the law” of the Ten Commandments, which is the epitome of the divine will, and which God Himself wrote with His own finger in enduring stone.

The very first commandment, “Thou shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:3), is flagrantly violated by the counter commands respecting the veneration of the Virgin Mary.

While the Council of Trent endeavored to show that the worship offered to Mary was different from that offered to God, in the actual description of her and petitions to, her it is impossible to discern any distinction. Precisely the same powers are attributed to Mary and Christ; precisely the same praises are accorded them both. Indeed, it may be truly said that Mary is more prominent in the devotional life of the Roman church than Jesus Himself.

In Devotion of the Sacred Heart, we read: “The church, assisted and instructed by the Holy Spirit, gives to Mary titles which resemble those given to her divine Son. Jesus is our King; Mary is our Queen. Jesus is our Advocate and Mediator; Mary is also our Advocate and Mediatrix. Jesus is our hope, our refuge, our consolation; we say the same of Mary. Jesus is the Way which leads to heaven: Mary is the gate of heaven.” Page 43.

Bonaventura (1221-1279) went so far as to get out an edition of the psalms in which he replaced the appeals to God by appeals to Mary. “In thee, O Lord, have I put my trust” became, “In thee, O Lady, have I put my trust,” and, “Let everything that hath breath, praise the Lord,” was changed to “praise our Lady.”

Consequently, in one of his encyclical letters, Gregory XVI urges: “Let us raise our eyes to the most blessed Virgin Mary, who alone destroys heresies, who is our greatest hope, yea, the entire ground of our hope.” “Greg. P. XVI. Epist. Ency.,” 18 kalend, Sept., 1832.

Bernardinus de Bustis (d. 1500) actually suggested in his *Mariale* that one might “appeal to Mary” if “aggrieved by the justice of God”. Romanists, therefore, whether they admit it or not, not only expressly contradict the first commandment which specifies that God only may receive worship, but they actually exalt Mary to a spiritual eminence higher than that of God Himself!

When we compare the second commandment which states: “Thou shall not make unto thee any graven image: ... thou shall not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them” (Exodus 20: 4, 5), with the teaching and practice of Rome, we realize that this precept of “the law” is likewise flagrantly violated by the counter-command to make, erect, and worship images of Christ, the virgin, and the saints, as also by the adoration of the eucharistic “host.”

“I most firmly assert,” says article eight of the Creed of Pius IV, “that the images of Christ may be had and retained, and that due honor and veneration are to be given to them.”

It is also declared: “If any one shall say that this holy sacrament should not be adored, nor solemnly carried about in procession, nor held up publicly to the people to adore it, or that its worshippers are idolaters; let him be accursedCouncil. Trident,” session. xiii, can. 6.

The Bible, however, teaches that the worship of any object or person other than God is idolatry. To escape the implications of the second commandment the Roman church in the early Middle Ages resorted to the drastic step of expunging it from the “Ten Words” of God. The practice goes back as early as the ninth century and became the accepted rule from the thirteenth century to the time of the Reformation. So much so, that when Luther first published his longer and shorter catechisms, the second commandment did not appear. Nor did it in Justus Jonas's Catechism authorized in Latin and English in 1548 by Cranmer. It was partially restored in the 1549 catechism and came back in full in the catechism of 1552. By this time also it had been restored in all the Reformation churches.

The Roman church, as a result of fierce criticism, restored the second commandment at the Council of Trent in 1566, but so great was the embarrassment of having to explain it away, that, since the beginning of the nineteenth century, Roman catechisms have invariably omitted it and the tenth commandment is divided to preserve the number ten.

Dr. R. H. Charles in his book, *The Decalogue*, quotes Dr. McCaul as saying: “There are twenty-nine catechisms in use in Rome and Italy, France, Belgium, Austria, Bavaria, Silesia, Poland, Ireland, England, Spain, and Portugal, in twenty-seven of which the second commandment is totally omitted: in two mutilated.” - Page 74.

When we come to the fourth commandment: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God” (Exodus 20: 8-10). It will immediately be realized that not only the Roman church, but the major part of Christendom, has for many centuries observed not the seventh day, which is enjoined in the commandment, but the first day of the week. Is the Roman church in any way responsible for this change in what should be the unalterable law of the Lord?

The answer is definitely, Yes. By way of proof we must look back over the history of the two days, Sabbath and Sunday. We know that Jesus observed the seventh-day as the Sabbath, going “as His custom was” regularly to the synagogue during its sacred hours. (Luke 4: 16). We, know, too, that the disciples, both while they were with Jesus and after His ascension, observed the seventh-

day Sabbath. (Acts 17: 2` 13: 42.) There is also clear evidence that Jesus expected His disciples to be keeping this day holy decades after His ascension, for when He was describing to them the fate which would befall the city of Jerusalem, and instructing them that they should flee from the city when certain tokens of its end were seen, He urged them to pray that their flight “be not in the winter”. No doubt because of the severe hardship this would entail-”neither on the Sabbath day,” that their observance of it might not be disturbed. (Matthew 24: 20.)

There is thus abundant testimony in the Scriptures to the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath by the early church, but not a vestige of evidence of any change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week.

The departure from a strict observance of the fourth commandment first arose among the half-converted Greek Christians of Gnostic persuasion. They believed the Old Testament to be inferior to the New and claimed that the earlier revelation with its law and its Sabbath, had been superseded by the new revelation in Christ; in consequence they began to advocate the keeping of the first day of the week in honor of the resurrection in place of the seventh day of the fourth commandment.

“Marcion,” one of the Gnostic writers, “for this reason fasted on the Sabbath. For, said he, since that day is the rest of the God of the Jews, who made the world and rested on the Sabbath day, we therefore instituted fasting on that day, that we may not seem to do anything in compliance with the rights of the God of the Jews.” - Epiphanius in “Heresies,” 1, 3, sec. 42.

When Constantine became a Christian in the early fourth century, he at once seized upon the convenient correspondence between the “first day” as a memorial of the resurrection and Sunday, the solar holiday of his pagan subjects. And he tied them together in his famous Sunday law placed upon the Roman statute books in AD. 321: “Let all judges and town people, and the occupation of all trades, rest on the venerable day of the sun.”-“Corpus Juris Civilis Cod,” lib. 3, tit. 12,3.

As a result of this imperial edict, Eusebius, patriarch of Constantinople, states: “Sunday was observed with greater solemnity than it had formerly been” (Ecclesiastical History, cent 4, part 2, chap. 4, sec, 5), but for long after this time there were Christians who rejected the Gnostic teaching and the compromise of the emperor, and who continued to observe the true seventh-day Sabbath.

“Down even to the fifth century the observance of the ... Sabbath was continued in the Christian church,” asserts Lyman Coleman in his Ancient Christianity Exemplified (chap. 26, sec. 2).

This was the confused situation which the bishops of Rome found when they first began to claim jurisdiction over all Christendom.

If they had been true to the commandments of God they would have led the church back to the observance of the true Sabbath. The strongest evidence, however, that the church of Rome is the great apostasy which would seek “to change the times and the law” is that this church in a series of edicts, beginning with the Council of Laodicea (about AD. 364), categorically forbade the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath under due penalties and commanded the observance of Sunday, the first day of the week.

The decisive Canon 29 of the Council of Laodicea, declared: “Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday, but shall work on that day; but the Lord's day they shall especially honor, and, as becoming Christians, shall if possible, do no work on that day. If, however, they are found Judaizing, they shall be shut out from Christ!” Hefele's “Councils,” Vol. 2, book 6, par. 93.

“The Council of Laodicea (about AD, 364),” says William Prynne in Dissertations on the Lord's Day, “first settled the observation of the Lord's day, and prohibited . . . the keeping of the Jewish Sabbath under an anathema.”-Pages 33, 34, 44.

In many later Roman councils such as those at Carthage (AD. 401), Orleans (AD. 511, 538), Auxerre (AD. 578), Macon (AD. 585). Chalon (AD. 644), the synods of Boniface (AD. 680-755), the synods of Frankfurt (AD. 794), Rome (AD. 826), Paris (AD. 829), etc., the action of the fateful council of Laodicea was ratified and further enforced. Finally, in the authoritative Council of Trent (1545-1563), the responsibility of the Roman church for the change of the Sabbath was ' recorded. According to the Trent Catechism issued in 1566: “It pleased the church of God, that the religious celebrations of the Sabbath day should be transferred to 'the Lord's day. For as on that day light first shone on the world, so by the resurrection of our Redeemer on that day, who opened to us the gate of life eternal, our life was recalled out of darkness into light.” - J. Donovan in “Catechism of the Council of Trent,” page 347.

Yet through all the years of papal domination there were those who braved the papal anathemas and, in the darkness of the Dark Ages, obeyed the commandments not of Rome but of the Decalogue.

“The Sabbatarians (they will pardon if I term them so on account of their opinion),” wrote Lord Leonhard of Lichtenstein of Nikolsburg in 1599, “teach that the outward Sabbath, i.e., Saturday, still must be observed, for such be God's Word, will, and command.”--Cited in “The Christian Sabbath,” page 10.

“In the reign of Elizabeth, it occurred to many conscientious and independent thinkers (as it had previously done to some Protestants in Bohemia),” says Chambers Cyclopaedia, “that the fourth commandment required of them the observance, not of the first, but of the specified seventh day of the week, and a strict bodily rest, as a service then due to God.”-Article, “Sabbath,” Vol. 8, page 402.

At Woodham Mortimer, in Essex, is the tomb of Dr. Peter Chamberlen, on which it is recorded that he was royal physician “to three Kings and Queens of England, viz., King James and Queen Anne, King Charles you first and Queen Mary. King Charles you second and Queen Katherine,” and who was also “a Christian keeping you commandments of God and faith of Jesus ... and keeping you seventh day for you Sabbath above 32 years.”

Of their decisive part in the establishment of Sunday as the Christian rest day the Papacy openly confesses, and even boasts.

Says Pietro Polano in his History of the Council of Trent: “Gasper del Fosso, archbishop of Rheggio ... said that the [Roman] church had as much authority as the Word of God; that the [Roman] church hath changed the Sabbath, ordained by God, into Sunday.”-Book 6, page 439. London, 1676.

“The Catholic church ... by virtue of her divine mission,” asserts the Catholic Mirror, official organ of Cardinal Gibbons, “changed the day from Saturday to Sunday.”--September 23, 1893.

Cardinal Gibbons himself wrote: “You may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctify.”--The Faith of Our Fathers,” page 111.

This responsibility of the church of Rome for the changing of the fourth commandment is affirmed also time and again in Roman Catholic manuals and catechisms. One or two we will quote by way of example:

“Question.-How prove you that the church hath power to command feasts and holy days?

“Answer.-By the very act of changing the Sabbath into Sunday, which Protestants allow of, and therefore they fondly contradict themselves by keeping Sunday strictly, and breaking most other feast days commanded by the same church.”--Abridgment of Christian Doctrine,” by Revelation Henry Tuberville, D.D., of Douay College, France, 1649, page 58.

“Question.-Which is the Sabbath day?

“Answer.-Saturday is the Sabbath day.

“Question.-Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?

“Answer.-We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church, in the Council of Laodicea, transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday.”--The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine,” by Revelation Peter Geiermann, C.S.S.R., page 50, third edition, 1913.

That Sunday was a papal innovation was recognized by some of the reformers who urged that, with other marks of apostasy, it should be cast out of the reformed church. Melancthon, for example, the learned friend of Luther, said of Rome:

“He changes the times and laws that any of the six work days commanded by God, will make them unholy and idle days when he list, or of their own holy days abolished make work days again, or when they changed the Saturday into Sunday.... They have changed God's laws and turned them into their own traditions to be kept above God's precepts.”--Quoted in George Joye's “Exposition of Daniel the Prophet,” page 119.

The reformer Carlstadt wrote similarly, and so convincingly that Luther says:

“Indeed, if Carlstadt were to write further about the Sabbath, Sunday would have to give way, and the Sabbath-that is to say, Saturday-must be kept holy.”--Quoted in Dr. Barnes Sear's “Life of Luther,” page 147.

Unfortunately, however, Luther and the other leading reformers were not quite persuaded, and this papal blot-the counterfeit Sabbath -remained upon the Protestant church as a whole, leaving it open to such taunts as that of Mgr. Louis Segur in his Plain Talk About the Protestantism of Today (1868):

“It was the Catholic Church which, by the authority of Jesus Christ, has transferred this rest to the Sunday in remembrance of the resurrection of our Lord. Thus the observance of Sunday by the Protestants is an homage they pay, in spite of themselves, to the authority of the [Catholic] church.” Page 213.

We have now noted three specific commandments of “the law” which have been sacrilegiously set aside by the Roman apostasy. What of the others? Rome has not openly tampered with them. Apart from dividing the tenth to make up for the omission of the second, they stand in the Catholic catechisms just as they do in Protestant summaries of faith. But by her pernicious doctrines of indulgences and penance she claims to be able to relieve the sinner of the consequences of his transgression so that, to this extent, Rome has undermined these also and the whole structure of divine righteousness.

Besides setting aside the divine law, in what iniquitous activity would the little horn engage?

“I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them.” “He . . . shall wear out the saints of the most High.” Daniel 7:21, 25.

The great apostasy would not find all meekly or cravenly accepting its claims and acquiescing in its demands. Many would determine to hold fast to the truth of God whatever the cost. Against these the “little horn” would make war, seeking in all manner of diabolical ways to wear down their resistance and compel conformity.

It may be said, of course, that there was persecution of Christians by Christians before Rome began to exalt herself. This is perfectly true. It must be admitted also that the Protestants who eventually threw off the shackles of Rome on occasions persecuted Catholics as well as each other. But when all has been said, the fact remains that it was papal Rome which adopted persecution as a principle and developed it to a fine art for the attainment of its nefarious ends.

In the late fourth century, just as the “little horn” was beginning to exalt itself among the other horns, Hilary of Poitiers distinguished between the true church and the false almost in the words of the Bible prophecy when he wrote:

“The church terrifies by exile and imprisonment and forces men to the faith, whereas the true church is recognized by the endurance of exile and imprisonment.”--“Contra Arianos vel Auxentium” in Migne's “Patrologia Latina,” X, page 610.

If that criterion is applied to the story of the Middle Ages there will certainly be no doubt as to the identity of the false church!

Not one, as is often supposed, but three inquisitions came into existence in the Middle Ages: the Papal Inquisition in 1233, the Spanish Inquisition in 1480, and the Roman Inquisition or “Holy Office” in 1542. The last, and perhaps the most diabolical of all, was the Roman church's reply to the Reformation movement.

The crusades against the Waldenses, Albigenses, and Vaudois, resulted probably in the death of a million souls, but this was as nothing compared with the wholesale massacres perpetrated by Rome in its endeavors to smash the Reformation movement. Pope Martin V (1417-1431) instructed the king of Poland:

“Know that the interests of the Holy See, and those of your crown, make it a duty to exterminate the Hussites ... whilst there is still time, then turn your forces against Bohemia. Burn, massacre, make deserts everywhere, for nothing could be more agreeable to God, or more useful to the cause of kings than the extermination of the Hussites.”-Quoted by L. M. de Corenin in “The Public and Private History of the Popes of Rome,” Vol. 2, pages 116, 117.

Pius V told the king of France “that he must not spare the Huguenots because of their offences against God.” And when the news of the massacre of St. Bartholomew (August 24, 1572) reached Gregory XIII, he declared it better news than a hundred battles of Lepanto (when the Turks were decisively defeated). And proclaimed a jubilee “principally to thank God for His great mercy and to pray that the king might have constancy to pursue to the end the pious work he had begun.”

This Pope struck a medal depicting a blood-drunk slayer, holding a crucifix in one hand and a drawn sword in the other, and bearing the inscription “Hugonotorum Strages.” He further instructed the Cardinal Delegate in France to grant absolution to the murderers and urge them to continue the work of extermination.

“When we consider all things,” sums up W. E. H. Lecky in his History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe, “it can surely be no exaggeration to say that the church of Rome has inflicted a greater amount of unmerited suffering than any other religion that has existed among mankind.”-Vol. 2, page 38.

While probably three million Christians were martyred in the pagan persecutions of the first three centuries, it has been estimated that some fifty millions were exterminated in all manner of diabolical ways by the Papacy. The prophetic specification was indeed fulfilled by them with terrible exactness. And, but for the arresting hand of God, the pure faith might have been obliterated from Europe.

What time limit was put upon the persecuting power of the “little horn”?

“They shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.” Daniel 7:25.

The designation of the actual period of papal supremacy provides the final evidence for the identifying of the “little horn.” The word here translated “time” is in the Hebrew iddan. It may mean any “appointed time,” but it is also used for the specific period of a “year.” Here, therefore, it must represent a prophetic year. The word “times” is the Hebrew dual, signifying two years, and “dividing of time” may be literally translated “half a time,” making a total of three and a half “times” or prophetic years.

As the Hebrew year contained twelve months of thirty days each, a prophetic year would be equivalent to twelve prophetic months or 360 prophetic days, and three and a half prophetic years would be forty-two prophetic months or 1,260 prophetic days. These alternative definitions of the period are actually used elsewhere thus: “A thousand two hundred and three score days” (Revelation 12: 6), and “forty and two months” (Revelation 11:2; 13:5).

The length of a prophetic day is indicated for us in the time prophecy given to Ezekiel: “Thou shall bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year.” Ezekiel 4:6. From which we reach the conclusion that 1,260 prophetic days correspond to 1,260 actual years, during which the Papacy would be permitted to pursue its nefarious aims.

The natural starting point for this period is the time when the third horn fell before the “little horn” and the power of the Pope became established, namely AD. 538. One thousand two hundred and sixty years from this date brings us to 1798. If, therefore, our reckoning is correct, that date should bring us to a great crisis in the long history of the Papacy. And it certainly does.

Following the Reformation in the sixteenth century, the troubles of the Papacy multiplied. Many states turned Protestant and threw off allegiance to the papal see, while the remaining Catholic states chafed more and more at papal control.

During the latter half of the eighteenth century the Jesuits, who had been the Papacy's chief medium of political power, were expelled from one country of Europe after another, and in 1773 Pope Clement XIV was compelled to abolish the order.

But worse was still to come. In 1789 the French Revolution broke out, destroying the Roman church first of all in France and then in the neighboring countries overrun by revolutionary armies.

Finally, in 1798, to avenge the murder of a young French general by the papal militia, Bonaparte sent General Berthier with a large army into Italy, Rome was occupied, the Pope carried captive to France, and the Papacy was abolished.

When the Pope died at Valence in 1799, says Joseph Bernhart, “funeral orations were held not merely for the Pope, but for the Papacy. The goddess of freedom was already erected on San Angelico and her foot was on the tiara.”-“The Vatican as a World Power,” page 324.

Thus when the appointed hour of divine judgment struck, the power of Rome was gone. In the words of the Revelation George Trevor, Canon of York: “The Papacy was extinct: not a vestige of its existence remained; and among all the Roman Catholic powers not a finger was stirred in its defence.” “Rome and Its Papal Rulers,” page 540.

Was this to be the end of the career of the “little horn”?

“I beheld then because of the great words which the horn spoke.” Daniel 7: 11.

So convinced was Carlyle that Europe had seen the last of the Papacy that he wrote: “Popery cannot come back any more than paganism can.” This remark well illustrates the contrast between fallible human judgment and the “sure word of prophecy,” for the

prophecy which had so accurately foretold its collapse. clearly declared to those who had “ears to hear” that its course was not fully run. According to the vision given to Daniel. It would become blasphemously vocal again and play a leading part in the closing days of earth's history.

No explanation is here given as to the circumstances of the Papacy's recovery from the blow it received in 1798, but in two later prophecies of the Revelation, we shall study its revival in detail. Here it must suffice to point out that today we are witnessing this wonderful resuscitation. Once more the Pope is a temporal king. Since the Second World War the political power of the Papacy has steadily increased. Everywhere Catholic parties are in the ascendant. And, according to many keen observers, the Papacy is about to enter upon its most brilliant era since the height of its power in the thirteenth century.

What fate, however, will come to the “little horn” when it reaches its final peak of power?

“I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame.” Dan 7: 11.

The modern revival of the Papacy has captured the imagination of the nations, but it does not deceive the student of the prophetic Scriptures. It always has been and still is the great apostasy. And this is but its last bid for power before its final overthrow. In the days of its apparent triumph its doom will be sealed. It will go where it has cast millions of innocent victims, into “the burning flame!”

22. The Heavenly Assize

Shortly after the curtailment of the “little horns” power, what epochal event was to take place in heaven? “I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit.” Daniel 7:9.

The Hebrew word here translated “cast down” is remah which has two different meanings. Sometimes it means to “cast down with violence.” Elsewhere it means to set down or “place.” In this sentence the “casting down” of the thrones is associated with the seating of the “Ancient of Days.” The Revised Version therefore renders the phrase, very properly, “thrones were placed.” The whole passage, therefore, describes the arranging of a heavenly court and the seating of the “Ancient of days,” the divine judge.

How did the Ancient of days appear to the prophet?

“Whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool.” Daniel 7:9.

Snow and bleached wool are both pure white and equally symbolize the righteousness and holiness of God. These attributes are here stressed in order to indicate that the judgments He is about to make will be holy and righteous judgments.

In what dazzling setting was He enthroned?

“His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him.” Daniel 7:9, 10.

“Fire” symbolizes not only purity and glory, but also power. In the midst of fire He dispensed His law on Sinai (Exodus 19: 18), and here, in the heavenly judgment hall, Daniel sees the presence of God upon a throne like “fiery flame.”

By whom was He attended?

“Thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him.” Daniel 7:10.

We are nowhere told precisely the number of the angels, but there are many indications that they comprise a vast order of beings. In the book of Genesis they are spoken of as a “host,” Genesis 32:12. The revelator describes them as “armies.” Revelation 19: 14. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews goes still further and calls them an “innumerable company.” Hebrews 12: 22.

For what purpose was the heavenly court assembled?

“The judgment was set, and the books were opened.” Daniel 7: 10.

As we shall see later this heavenly judgment session will concern itself with every individual soul as well as every human organization. The former aspect will be dealt with in detail in connection with later prophecies in the book of Daniel and in the Revelation, so it need not be discussed here. The introduction of the judgment at this juncture is for the purpose of pointing out that the first and urgent item on the divine agenda will be the judgment of the 9 little horn.”

How is the “little horn” engaged as the heavenly judgment begins?

“I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spoke.” Daniel 7: 11.

This observation made by Daniel establishes the fact that the judgment session here brought to view takes place while the powers of earth, including the “little horn,” continue heedlessly on their way. It is not an executive judgment at the end of history, but an investigative judgment prior to its close, in which the cases brought before it are scrutinized in the light of the “books” of record in order to arrive at the recompense or reward due at the end of time.

The commencement of this heavenly investigation is indicated here as after the close of the 1,260 years of papal supremacy. In the next vision of Daniel the time is even more exactly specified.

To what decision does the heavenly court come with respect to the “little horn”?

“But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end.” Daniel 7:26.

Throughout its long career the papal system has always been the nucleus of the great apostasy and is variously named in Scripture as Antichrist (1 John 2: 18). The man of sin (2 Thessalonians 2: 3), the son of perdition (2 Thessalonians 2: 3), the mystery of iniquity (2 Thessalonians 2: 7), the mother of spiritual Babylon (Revelation 17: 5). Its claims today are the same as they have ever been. Its very foundations preclude modification. It will remain the same to the end. Judgment has waited long, but though it tarry it must surely come, and Rome will fall to rise no more.

To whom will the dominion wrested from the “little horn” and the other beasts be given?

“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom.” Daniel 7:13, 14.

The climax of this vision, like the climax of the vision of the great image, is the establishment of the divine kingdom of God. This is the grand destiny to which all creation and all ages move.

The present scene, however, depicts not the actual entering of the Son of man into His kingdom, but His receiving the title-deeds of the kingdom from the divine Judge in heaven itself.

just as judicial sentence is passed upon the “little horn” before the end comes, so the Son receives the title-deeds of the kingdom before He returns to enter upon His inheritance. Jesus suggested this in one of His parables when He said: “A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.” Luke 19:12. Daniel saw Jesus receiving His kingdom. We, if faithful, will see Him coming to claim it!

What temporary postponement of judgment was granted to the earlier beasts which Daniel saw in vision?

“As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.” Daniel 7:12.

While the earlier world powers passed away, their peoples continued as subjects of the succeeding power and their territories became provinces of the next world empire. Babylon became a Persian province. Persia in its turn became a province of the Greek Empire, and finally Greece was absorbed into the empire of Rome. For a “season and a time” therefore the lives of these beasts are prolonged until the day when all will perish to make way for the universal dominion of Christ.

How widespread and enduring will be Christ's dominion? With whom will He share it?

“I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.” Daniel 7:11. “And all dominions shall serve and obey Him [Christ].” Daniel 7:27. “His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” Daniel 7:14. “Whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.” Verse 27. “And judgment was given to the saints of the most High.” Daniel 7:22. “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High.” Daniel 7:27. “The saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even forever and ever.” Daniel 7:18. “And the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.” Daniel 7:22.

Long have the saints suffered at the hands of earthly powers and especially at the hands of the apostate monster of iniquity. But at last all earthly powers will be dispossessed and the inheritance will pass to Christ and His faithful people, from whom it will never be taken away.

Was Daniel's mind set completely at rest by the angel interpreter's explanations?

“Hitherto is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart.” Daniel 7:28.

While many things were clarified, the prophet was profoundly disturbed by what he had learned. His heart bled for the people of God, and he was impatient for the return of the angel to tell him more. For two whole years, however, he had to keep “the matter” both in and on 'Ns heart” till God spoke again in revelation to him.

23. The Vision, of the Ram and the He-Goat

When did God next communicate with Daniel?

“In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first.” Daniel 8: 1.

For two years the prophet pondered the vision of the four beasts, but no further light came from God on the mystery of the “little horn.” Then, in the very year that Babylon was to fall and be replaced by the next world power (538 BC.), God spoke again. Certainly no time could have been more fitting.

Daniel was now eighty-eight years old, but as a result of his abstemiousness, he was still keen of mind and receptive to the further word which God desired to communicate to His people.

As this new prophecy opens, the language of the book which has been Chaldean from the fourth verse of the second chapter changes back into Hebrew. This, too, is appropriate for Babylon now disappears from the symbolic revelations given to Daniel, future visions beginning with the second empire, Media-Persia.

Where was the prophet when the vision came to him?

“And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam.” Daniel 8:2.

When the new revelation came to Daniel he was in Shushan, or Susa, the capital of the province of Elam. In Assyrian times, Elam was an independent kingdom, with Shushan as the seat and treasury of its kings and the chief center of worship of the Elamite gods. The Babylonians attached Elam to their empire, and Shushan became a fortified frontier town, but their hold on Elam was never very strong and Isaiah indicated that it would go over to the side of Media and help to bring about the fall of Babylon. (Isaiah 21: 2) just as the prophet stated, Cyrus broke into Babylonia by way of Elam, and, no doubt by pre-arrangement, its king, Abradates, joined in the march on Babylon.

In return for Elam's aid in the overthrow of Babylon, Cyrus returned the Elamite gods which Nabonidus had taken to Babylon, and the Persian kings dignified Shushan by making it their favorite winter resort. Finally, Darius Hystaspes made it the capital of his empire and the eastern terminus of the royal road which ran right across Asia Minor to Sardis.

That it was the Persian capital in the days of Ahasuerus (Xerxes) is clear from the book of Esther. “In those day. . . “ we read, “the king Ahasucrus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace.” Esther 1: 2.

If, as we have suggested, Daniel had been out of high office since the death of Evil-Merodach, the prophet may have been living in retirement at Shushan, or he may have had a minor appointment in this distant outpost. Whatever the reason for his presence there, certainly no ' more suitable setting could have been selected for this vision of the conflict between the second and third empires than the city which God, in His omniscience, knew would become the capital of the MedoPersian Empire.

The Authorized Version states that, at the time of the vision, Daniel was in the “palace.” It should really have read, “in the citadel” for the “palace” (Esther 1: 22) as a building distinct from the “citadel” was not built until the reign of Darius Hystaspes some thirty years later.

What provided the background for the vision?

“And I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai.” Daniel 8:2.

In Ashurbanipal's bas-relief of Shushan, a wide canal flowing close to the walls of the citadel links together the two rivers Choaspes and Coprates. It is not named, but as the word *ubal* means literally “to conduct,” it could mean here “canal.”

The setting of the vision was thus most significant, for beneath the walls of Persia's future capital the conflict between the second empire and its great rival was symbolically staged.

What assistance did Daniel again have in understanding the vision?

“And it came to pass when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man.” Daniel 8:15.

In the previous vision Daniel mentioned receiving understanding of the things he saw from “one of them that stood by” (Daniel 7:16), but the angel interpreter was not named. Here his informant is designated Gabriel. That this angel had a special responsibility as chief of the angels of revelation is clear from the fact that he not only appears again and again to Daniel, but centuries later he was commissioned to announce John the Baptist's birth to Zacharias, and Jesus' birth to Mary. (Luke 1: 19, 26) He may also have been the angel through whom Jesus communicated the Revelation to John on Patmos. (Revelation 1: 1.)

How was Gabriel addressed by another heavenly voice?

“And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel make this man to understand the vision.” Daniel 8: 16.

Gabriel was instructed in his mission by another and superior Being “between the banks” of the river. This must have been Jesus Himself. Just as He sent 'His angel' to John on Patmos, here He commissions Gabriel to give understanding to the prophet.

What did Gabriel at once do? How was Daniel affected by the angel's presence?

“So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face.” Daniel 8:17. Obedient to his instructions Gabriel approached Daniel who prostrated himself upon the ground not in worship, but in humble recognition of this messenger from heaven.

With what assuring words did Gabriel address the prophet?

“But he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision.” Daniel 8:17.

Gabriel began his message by telling Daniel that while the vision would begin with events of his own day, it would extend on down the ages into “the time of the end,” that is a short period immediately preceding the end itself.

This is the first time that this most important period of time is mentioned in prophecy, but it will not be the last. Elsewhere the time of its beginning is very definitely indicated and many important events to take place in it are enumerated. (See especially Daniel 12: 4)

At this point, what prevented the angel from continuing his message?

“Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground.” Daniel 8:18.

Daniel had at first voluntarily fallen upon his knees before the angel, but now he fainted right away, overwhelmed by the angel's glory. And no wonder, if Gabriel's appearance was anything like the angels described elsewhere. (Daniel 10: 5, 6, 9.)

How did the angel restore Daniel? What did he then re-emphasize?

“But he touched me, and set me upright. And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be.” Daniel 8:18, 19.

Gently the angel revived Daniel, and when the prophet had fully recovered consciousness, he went on to tell him that the vision would reach to “the last end of the indignation.” This period of ‘indignation’ was referred to by God when He said to Ezekiel concerning the judgment of Israel: “I will pour out mine indignation upon thee.” Ezekiel 21:31. It began when the throne of David was overturned in the days of Zedekiah and after a series of further over turnings (Verses 25-27) it will “in the last end” (Daniel 8: 19) be terminated by the throne reverting to the Successor of God's appointing. (Ezekiel 21: 27.)

In the vision shown to Daniel what creature came first into the field of view? How did Gabriel explain the symbol?

“I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and behold, there stood before the river [or the gate] a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last.” Daniel 8:1 “The ram which thou saw having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia!” Daniel 8:20.

In the two previous visions, Media-Persia was symbolized first by the metal silver (Daniel 2), indicating its inferiority in glory to the golden empire of Babylon, and then by a bear (Daniel 7), to suggest the rapacity of its conquering kings. The symbol here used of a ram is equally appropriate, for the Medes and Persians were a pastoral people and rams frequently appear upon inscribed Persian cylinders, as well as on the palace reliefs of Persepolis.

The horns represent the two nations, the Medes and the Persians, and their unequal height, the higher coming up last, foreshadowed the eventual dominance of the Persians, the younger of the two peoples.

How was the ram occupied?

“I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward.” Daniel 8: 4.

The directions in which the ram “pushed” are a correct chronological summary of the expansion of the Media-Persian Empire. As explained in connection with the dream image of Daniel two, Cyrus first overthrew Croesus, king of Lydia, in Asia Minor to the west. He then overran the northern territories of Armenia and Cappadocia. His eastward advance is not mentioned, as the ram is itself regarded as an eastern power. Finally, Cyrus turned south into Babylonia.

What success attended these advances?

“So that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great.” Daniel 8:4.

When Cyrus overthrew Babylon, and with it gained the nominal over-lordship of Egypt, his empire was the mightiest that any oriental monarch had ever ruled. It extended from the Aegean Sea to India and from Ararat to the Nile Valley. Little wonder that he described himself as ‘ling of countries’ in the documents of his reign, and as “king of kings” on a commemorative shaft on the plain of Pasargadae.

Xenophon uses almost biblical language in his Cyclopaedia when he says of Cyrus: “He was able to extend the fear of himself over so great a part of the world that he astonished all, and no one attempted anything against him.”

As the prophet watched the progress of the victorious ram what new beast appeared on the scene? How did the angel explain it?

“And as I was considering, behold an he goat came from the west!” Daniel 8: 5. “And the rough goat is the king of Greece!” Daniel 8: 2 1.

In Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2) the third empire was symbolized by the metal brass, and in the vision of the four beasts (Daniel 7) the third creature was a leopard. The successor of Media-Persia is now represented by a goat. No choice could have been more fitting, for the first capital of the Macedonian kings, from whom Alexander sprang, was Aegae or “goat-town,” and the Macedonians themselves were called Aegedae or “goat-people.” A tradition which explains these names tells that the Macedonians came originally from Greece, led by their first king, Caranus. They were advised by an oracle to take goats for their guides, and when they encountered a herd driven before a storm they followed it to Edessa, where they fixed the scat of their kingdom, calling it Aegae, and adopting a goat as the national emblem. Alexander called one of his sons Alexander Aegus, and goats' heads and horns appear on many Macedonian coins.

How does Daniel describe the advance of the he-goat?

“On the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground.” Dan. 8:5.

The coming of the goat from the west was geographically accurate, and the speed of Alexander's conquest could not better have been portrayed than by a he-goat which “touched not the ground” as it rushed to mortal combat with the Media-Persian ram.

What peculiar feature of the he-goat caught the attention of the prophet? Whom did it represent?

“And the goat had a notable horn between his eyes.” Daniel 8:5. “And the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king.” Daniel 8:21.

Alexander was not actually the first Macedonian king, but he could correctly be described as the first ruler of the Macedonian Empire. His father, Philip, established Macedonian supremacy over the whole Greek peninsula, thus laying the foundations of Macedonia's greatness, but it was Alexander who carried the Macedonian arms across the Aegean into Asia to found the Greek Empire. It is significant that on his coins Alexander is commonly pictured with a homed headdress.

What conflict developed between the ram and the he-goat?

“And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river. and ran unto him in the fury of his power.” Daniel 8: 6.

The “fury” of the Greeks was the result of Xerxes' unprovoked attacks, first on the Greek colonies in Asia Minor and then on the mainland of Greece. When the myth of the invincibility of the Persians was dissolved by the valiant Athenians at Marathon, the Greeks burned to revenge themselves by carrying the war into the enemy's camp. In Alexander their “fury” found full and final expression.

What fate befell the ram?

“And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him. And there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand.” Daniel 8:7.

The goat is considerably more agile than the ram, and Alexander likewise completely outclassed. The lumbering Persian hosts with his swift advances and mortal thrusts. Significantly, the main offensive weapon of the army developed by Philip of Macedonia, Alexander's father, was a great pike, some twenty feet long. In action the leading ranks of the sixteen-deep phalanx moved forward with their pikes held horizontally in front of them. No attacking force could penetrate the wall of steel points nor any defending force resist their impact. The picture of the advancing Greeks must thus have looked like an army of goats with head and horns down at the charge.

In swift succession came the victories of Granicus (334 BC.) and Issus (333 BC.), and then at Arbela in 331 BC. the horns of the ram were shattered and the Media-Persian Empire was no more.

How powerful did the victorious he-goat become?

“Therefore the he goat waxed very great!” Daniel 8: 8.

When Alexander returned to Susa after completing his conquests he required all his followers to kneel at his feet and kiss the ground in token of the fact that he was not merely a king “but a god”. The son of Zeus, and “sacred ambassadors” were dispatched to the shrines of the great gods to obtain their acquiescence to his admission to the Olympian heights. Truly the notable horn did become “very great.”

“It would not be easy,” says Bevan in his House of Seleucus, “to name any other period of ten years in the history of the world beside the reign of Alexander in which as momentous a change passed over as large a part of the earth. A change which made such a difference in the face of things.” - Page 28.

At the summit of its power, however, what catastrophe befell the he-goat?

“And when he was strong, the great horn was broken,” Dan. 8: 8,

Within a few weeks of the return of the “sacred ambassadors” with acceptances of Alexander into the circle of the gods the “great horn was broken.” “Suddenly,” says Bevan in the House of Seleucus, “the pageant of the greatest empire ever known” was “swept away.” (Page. 28) Surely none but God could have foreseen, even before the first empire, Babylon, fell, that the creator of the third empire would perish at the moment of his great triumph.

How was the kingdom of the he-goat divided?

“And for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven.” Daniel 8: 8. 'Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power.’ Daniel 8:22.

“The hand of God, as if trying some fantastic experiment,” says Bevan, “Plucked this man away. Who could predict for a moment what the result would be?”-”The House of Seleucus,” page 28.

But what man could not have done at the moment of Alexander's death, God did more than two centuries before, while yet Alexander was unborn. It might have broken into two, three, five, or even ten parts like the later Roman Empire, but God said it would break into four parts, and it did. The descendants of the great king might naturally have expected to inherit their father's empire, but God further declared that none of the kingdoms which emerged would stand “in his power.” And, true to the prophecy,

Alexander's sons after a brief space disappeared completely from the scene, and the empire passed into the hands of men of other blood than the line of the great king.

The partition of the empire occupied a period of seventeen confused years, which need not be described here, but when at last comparative stability came to the shattered empire it was divided into just four parts. Cassander was supreme in Greece and Macedonia, Lysimachus held Thrace and the greater part of Asia Minor, Seleucus controlled Syria, Babylonia, and the East, while Ptolemy was well established in Egypt.

This division of the empire, however, brought only a momentary pause before the breaking out of a new series of conflicts between north and south and between east and west, which continued until all were overwhelmed by a powerful new nation which invaded the shattered Greek empire from without.

These struggles, which are dealt with in considerable detail in the last vision which Daniel received, are here passed over without mention, and the vision leaps the intervening period to the coming of the breaker of the Greek kingdoms whom we shall meet in our next study.

24. The Two Sanctuaries

What did the prophet notice emerging from one of the four divisions of the shattered Greek Empire?

“And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land.” Daniel 8:9.

The Septuagint version reads a “strong horn” in place of the “little” horn in the Authorized Version. Both renderings are equally admissible, for while this new power rose from small beginnings its subsequent activity certainly reveals its strength and power.

How did Gabriel explain this new horn?

“And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up.” Daniel 8:23.

From this description and Gabriel's further explanation we gather the following particulars about this new power:

1. It comes forth out of one of the divisions of the Greek Empire.
2. As it expands southward and eastward, this division must be one of the western ones, namely Greece or Thrace.
3. It would be a fierce and warlike power.
4. Its people would use a language foreign to the Greek-speaking world.
5. The time of its appearance would be in the later period of the divided Greek Empire. A consideration of these specifications immediately disqualifies several alleged identifications of this

power.

The suggestion that it was the Seleucid king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, is inadmissible on several counts. He did not arise out of one of the horns for he was himself one of the horns, actually the eighth of the Seleucid line. Moreover he was an eastern ruler who attempted to expand south and west, not a western power which extended south and east.

Others have suggested that the little horn was the Moslem power which overran the Middle East and North Africa in the seventh and subsequent centuries of our era. But here again the required specifications are not met. Mohammed was indeed “fierce” and he did speak a foreign tongue, but he came too late to fulfil the prophecy; he did not appear on the scene until centuries after the Greek Empire had been swept away. Moreover, the Moslem expansion was mainly westward and northward, not southward and eastward.

There is but one power which meets the specifications listed and that is Rome, the fourth world power. Its entrance into the Greek Empire was the result of the Macedonian wars, and the direction of its subsequent penetration was south and east and toward Palestine. The Romans were, as stated, a warlike people, and their fierceness and alien tongue are both mentioned in the prophetic warning given to Moses a millennium and a half before they actually invaded Syria. (Deuteronomy 28: 48-50)

The circumstances which led to Rome's interference in the affairs of Greece have already been narrated and need not be repeated here. It will suffice to note that in three protracted wars, the Macedonians were repeatedly defeated and with the battle of Pydna (168 BC.) Roman control was established over the whole of Greece. The “little horn” had intruded itself into the Greek Empire just where and when the prophetic Word had foretold,

When Rome had consolidated her power in the Greek peninsula, she set about absorbing the rest of the empire in precisely the manner indicated in the prophecy.

“Toward the south.” As early as the reign of Ptolemy Epiphanes, Rome had rendered diplomatic help in Ptolemy's struggle against the Seleucid kingdom, but during the period of her involvement in the third and last Macedonian war she had no time to spare for Egyptian affairs. So Antiochus IV of Syria took the opportunity to invade the Nile valley.

Just when it seemed that Egypt would pass into the hands of Antiochus, the Macedonian war ended with the victory of Pydna. Gaius Popillius Lmnas was sent immediately to Egypt where he confronted Antiochus with a message from the Roman Senate

demanding his immediate evacuation. Antiochus tried to hedge. Popinius drew a circle round him in the sand and required an answer before he stepped outside of it! Antiochus capitulated and left Egypt “groaning and in bitterness of heart.”

The southern penetration of the “little horn” had begun. It culminated in 31 BC., after the battle of Actium, when Egypt became a Roman province.

“Toward the east.” When the Seleucid king, Antiochus III, came to the aid of the Greeks at the time of Rome’s first penetration into the peninsula he was thrown back across Asia Minor to beyond the Taurus Mountains but no attempt was at that time made to annex any of his empire, the gains being handed over to the friendly kingdom of Pergamos. By about 90 BC., however, the weakness of Syria had given opportunity for the resurgence of the northern kingdoms of Pontus and Armenia, and Rome was compelled to take a hand to prevent the east passing permanently into the hands of these Asiatics.

In 73 BC., Lucius Lucullus drove Mithradates, king of Pontus, from his capital, and in 69 BC. entered Armenia, whither Mithradates had fled. In 64 BC. the famous Roman general Pompey took over the campaign, the northern menace was finally eliminated, and the “east” was at last securely in the grasp of Rome.

“Toward the pleasant land.” After the diplomatic defeat of Antiochus IV, the Hasmonean or Maccabean family in Palestine succeeded in setting up a semi-independent Jewish kingdom, which managed to hold out against successive Seleucid kings. In harmony with Rome’s policy of supporting all rebellions against the Seleucids an alliance was made in 161 BC. with this “nation of the Jews.”

Aristobulus was ruling the Jews when Pompey entered Palestine. He at once went out to meet him with the offer of funds and the surrender of the Jewish kingdom. When, however, Pompey’s general, Gabinius, arrived at Jerusalem the gates were shut against him. A rival Jewish leader, Hyrcanus, persuaded the people to open the gates, while the adherents of Aristobulus retired to the fortified temple area. After a siege of three months the Romans forced their way in and, following the slaughter of 120,000 souls, including priests in the act of sacrificing, all resistance ended. The “pleasant land” too had fallen to the all-conquering power of Rome. (63 BC.)

By what means was the Roman horn to reach the pinnacle of its power?

“And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practice. . . . And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many.” Daniel 8: 24, 25.

It was by the mighty power of Rome that Carthage was laid low. Her conquest of the Eastern Mediterranean lands, however, was not so much by frontal attacks as by craftily playing one power off against another until a comparatively small military effort gave her the object of her desire.

To what climax of destruction does the vision direct attention?

“And he . . . shall destroy the mighty and the holy people.” Daniel 8: 24.

In all the details mentioned thus far we have seen how accurately Imperial Rome fulfilled its destined course until finally it confronted the “holy people”—so called because it was the nation of God’s choosing, though it was far from “holy” when it passed into the possession of Rome. Without a doubt the annexation of Palestine by Rome in 63 BC., and subsequent events on to the utter destruction of Jerusalem in AD. 70, fulfilled the prophetic warning which God gave to Moses a millennium and a half before. (Deuteronomy 28:48-50.)

That the complete fulfillment of the prophecy is not to be looked for merely in Imperial Rome, however, is evident from the repeated statements of the angel that the vision was to reach unto “the time of the end” and to “the last end of the indignation.” The “little horn” must, therefore, include not merely Imperial Rome, but its successor, papal Rome. Actually, the latter has more claim to this term than the earlier Rome, seeing that this symbol has already been used of papal Rome in the vision of Daniel seven.

So in this “little horn” in the eighth chapter we may expect to find these two fulfillments merging, the Imperial power being more discernible in its earlier activities, and the papal power being seen more definitely in the later specifications. This is what we find. The description of the rise of the “little horn” seems to have special reference to the Imperial power, though at the same time the details have a secondary application in the rise of papal Rome.

Papal Rome rose when “transgressors” were “come to the full.” It was in fact the consummation of the “mystery of iniquity.”

There was a “fierceness” about the ambitious pontiffs of Rome in the days of their rise to power utterly alien to the true pastors of the flock of God.

Rome’s ritual, too, was deliberately confined to the Latin tongue in order to make the common people dependent upon the priesthood for every crumb of spiritual consolation.

The methods of Rome were likewise the perfection of craft. It had no material power itself, but it reduced the civil power to subservience and caused the civil sword to be wielded at its will.

By these means the evil ambitions of the Papacy prospered and it did “wonderfully destroy” all who opposed its blasphemous claims, so much so that the “holy people” would have been completely extinguished had it not been for the restraining hand of God.

Against what did the little horn, both imperial and papal, oppose itself?

“And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them.” Daniel 8:10.

The term “host of heaven” in its literal sense refers to the sun, moon, and stars. It is used symbolically of heavenly beings (Luke 2:9, 13; 1 Kings 22:19), and also of the people of God on earth. This last is its significance in the present passage, for Jesus is called the “Prince of the host” in His earthly manifestation, and the term is associated in verse thirteen with the earthly sanctuary.

The prophecy has a double fulfillment in that Imperial Rome destroyed many of the Jews and their leaders, while papal Rome destroyed millions of the true church of God during the fearful persecutions of the Middle Ages.

Against whom in particular did the little horn come into conflict?

“Yea, he magnified himself even to the Prince of the host.” “He shall also stand up against the Prince of princes.” Daniel 8:11, 25.

That the “Prince of the host” is none other than Christ is certain, for He introduced Himself by this very name to the valiant leader of the Israelites just before the assault of Jericho: “As Prince of the host of the Lord am I now come,” He told Joshua. (Joshua 5:14, margin.) Imperial Rome exalted itself against the person of Christ in the flesh. By Roman soldiers He was insulted in the judgment hall. By a Roman governor He was sentenced to death. By Roman hands Jesus was nailed to the cross and with a Roman spear His body was pierced.

Papal Rome also magnified itself against the ascended Christ by its pontiffs blasphemously claiming to be His “vicars,” and the priests of Rome exercising authority which belongs only to Him in demanding confession of sin, and professing to grant absolution on His behalf.

What did the little horn take away?

“And by him the daily sacrifice was taken away.” Daniel 8: 11.

The translators have here attempted to interpret rather than merely translate this verse, for the word “sacrifice” does not appear in the text. They were justified in their interpretation, however, seeing that the word rendered “daily” occurs no fewer than 102 times in the Old Testament and almost invariably has reference to the “daily” or “continual” sacrifices in the temple service. The expression is used in order to distinguish the regular services of the sanctuary from those which were offered once a year at the time of the special feasts. “Now this is that which thou shall offer upon the altar”; Aaron was told, “two lambs of the first year day by day continually.” Exodus 29: 38. (See also Numbers 28:3; 1 Chronicles 16:39, 40.) In the New Testament, the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews draws attention to the fact that the priests of the ancient sanctuary needed to offer sacrifices “daily.” Hebrews 7: 27.

The “daily” or “continual” offerings symbolized the unbroken covenant relation between God and His people. If any break occurred in the continuity of the daily offerings as a result of man's defection it would indicate apostasy from God; while if such a break were permitted by God in His providence, it would indicate His suspension of the covenant relationship by reason of their transgression.

When Israel was carried away into captivity in the days of Zedekiah the temple was destroyed and the “daily” or “continual” service was interrupted, signifying that God had, for the time being, suspended His covenant relation with them. When after seventy years the Jews were permitted to return, the command to rebuild the temple and recommence the “daily” or “continual” service was an indication of God's resumed covenant relation toward them as a nation.

In spite of God's mercy in bringing them back again to their own land and approving the restoration of the sanctuary and its services, Israel quickly fell into transgression again, and when God spoke to them as a final gesture “by His Son,” they rejected and killed Him. Though the “daily” services of the temple were continued after Jesus was crucified, God indicated that they had no further validity by the miraculous rending of the veil of the inner sanctuary “from the top to the bottom.” Matthew 27:51. In AD. 70, He permitted the pretence to go on no longer. As Jesus had foretold, the “abomination of desolation” (Matthew 24:15) came in the form of the Roman armies and the “daily” was caused to cease by the utter destruction of the temple, leaving not “one stone upon another” that was not thrown down. (Luke 21:5,6.)

It might be supposed that when the sanctuary was finally destroyed by the Romans no further fulfillment of the prophecy by the papal “little horn” would be possible. This, however, is to overlook a most vital part of the prophecy.

Time and again in both the Old and New Testaments it is stressed that the earthly or “worldly sanctuary” (Hebrews 9: 1) was patterned after the original sanctuary or “true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man,” which is in heaven. (Hebrews 8: 2. See also Exodus 25: 9, 40; 26: 30; 27: 8; Acts 7: 44.) Similarly, the priests who served in the earthly tabernacle served “unto the example and shadow of heavenly things!” Hebrews 8: 5.

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews calls the earthly sanctuary “the first” tabernacle (Hebrews 9: 8), not because it was chronologically the first, but because man was shown the earthly sanctuary before his eyes were opened to see the heavenly original. Immediately after, he refers to the earthly sanctuary as a “figure for the time then present,” (Hebrews 9: 9), that is the Old Testament era, in contrast to the believers' contemplation of the heavenly sanctuary and its ministrations in the Gospel dispensation.

The purpose of the book of Hebrews in fact was to direct the gaze of the believers to this heavenly original in which Christ after His ascension began His “daily” or “continual” ministration on behalf of the saints. (Hebrews 4: 14; 7: 25.)

John was actually privileged to look into this heavenly sanctuary for the spiritual enlightenment of the church. (Revelation 4:2; 8:3; 11:19; 15:8.) And from his descriptions it is clear that, like the earthly, the sanctuary in heaven has its two apartments, the holy place and the most holy place, with their corresponding furnishings. Looking into the first apartment, he saw the “golden altar” of

incense. (Revelation 8: 3.) In the second apartment of the “temple of God” his gaze fell upon the “ark of His testament!” Revelation 11: 19.

After Aaron's consecration to the office of high priest, he entered the first apartment of the tabernacle to institute the round of morning and evening sacrifices which were to continue without interruption through the year. (Leviticus 9:23,24.) At His ascension Jesus entered the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary to inaugurate His continual ministry on man's behalf. And what a beautiful picture the earthly service provides of the heavenly mediatorial work of Christ!

The three pieces of furniture in the first apartment perfectly symbolize the three means of grace available to the sinner. The candlestick represents the Spirit of God, whose light is shed abroad in the earth to convict of sin, and to lead sinners in the way of life. (Zechariah 4: 1-6) The show bread typifies Jesus the “Bread of Life,” and also the written Word, which is likewise heavenly Bread made available to every soul hungering after righteousness. (John 6:48) The incense represents the fragrance of Christ's character which He presents as a sweet savior to God on our behalf. (Compare Ephesians 5:2 with Revelation 8: 3, 4.)

Finally, the blood of the sacrifices symbolizes the blood of Christ, through which the grace of God is mediated to us. Through the sacrifices offered and accepted in the earthly sanctuary, remission of sins came to Israel, and through the merits of the sacrifice of Christ offered and accepted in the heavenly sanctuary, we are “cleansed” from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

The high priest wearing the jewelled breastplate, symbolic of the twelve tribes, was the anchor of Israel's hope as he went within the veil to plead for the people. Today the Christian has “an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entered into that within the veil; ... even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” Hebrews 6: 19, 20.

Wherever we may be and whenever we need His help we may have it, for He is continually “in the presence of God for us.” Hebrews 9: 24. And there is no matter which we may bring to Him which is so great that He cannot help, or so small that it is beneath His notice. (Psalm 20:2.)

Now it was this wonderful reality of the “continual intercession of Christ in the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary that the Roman apostasy “took away” by interposing the supposed “vicar of Christ” between man and God. By substituting the mass for the perfect sacrifice of Calvary, and by requiring confession to a sacerdotal priesthood which professed to dispense absolution from sin.

The fact is that no human priest has been appointed to hear confession of sin. No human priest is empowered to grant absolution from sin. It is to our great High Priest in the “true tabernacle” (Hebrews 8:2), that confession should be addressed, and it is from the heavenly sanctuary that pardon and absolution come. Any attempt to block the way to the heavenly sanctuary, therefore, is the work of Antichrist.

What despite did the little horn do to the sanctuary?

“And the place of His sanctuary was cast down.” Daniel 8: 11.

Imperial Rome burned the temple in Jerusalem, and razed it so thoroughly that, as Jesus foretold, “not one stone” was left “upon another” that was not “thrown down.” Matthew 24:1,2. Papal Rome, by its false teachings, sought to cast down the heavenly sanctuary in which Christ has ministered since His ascension by obscuring it from the sinner's gaze through its own vast sacerdotal system.

Why did God permit the defilement of His sanctuary on earth and the obscuring of His sanctuary in heaven?

“And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression.” Daniel 8: 12.

Imperial Rome was permitted to do its worst against the temple of Jerusalem because of the transgression of the Jews. And papal Rome was permitted to exercise its power through the long period of papal supremacy by reason of the transgression of the rulers of the nations, and the departure of the professed church from the faith “once delivered unto the saints.”

How did the little horn relate itself to the truth of God?

“And it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practiced, and prospered.” Daniel 8: 12.

Imperial Rome cast truth to the ground during the grievous pagan persecutions, but papal Rome did far greater despite to the truth, and for a much longer period did it “practice and prosper.”

To what end, however, is the little horn destined at last to come?

“But he shall be broken without hand.” Daniel 8:25.

This phrase recalls the climax of the great image of Nebuchadnezzar. Both uses of the expression envisage divine intervention when the iniquity of the nations and of the great apostasy have come to the full. Rome, as the fourth empire, will be “broken without -hand,” together with every other secular power when the stone falls upon the image; and apostate ecclesiastical Rome will be “broken without hand” with every other false religion in order that the “knowledge of the Lord” may fill the earth.

25. The Longest Time Prophecy in the Bible

As Daniel pondered the vision of the two sanctuaries, what angel conversation did he hear?

“Then I heard one saint [holy one, R.V.1 speaking, and another saint [holy one] said unto that certain saint [holy one] which spoke. How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?” Daniel 8: 13.

We know that the angels are as intensely interested as men in the outworking of the wonderful plan of God, and that they diligently study what God has revealed through His prophets. (1 Peter 1: 12) We may well believe, therefore, that this question sprang from the inquiring mind of one of the angel watchers. That the question and the answer were made in the hearing of the prophet shows that it was also designed to be recorded by Daniel for the instruction of the church.

The angel questioner, like Daniel, had learned from Gabriel's explanation of the vision that the “little horn” would “take away” the services of the sanctuary—first the earthly, then the heavenly—and would tread the holy precincts under its defiling feet. So it was natural for him to ask, “How long shall be the vision?”

What did the first holy one reply?

“And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.” Daniel 8:14.

In reply, the first angel asserted that the determined time was “two thousand and three hundred days,” after which the sanctuary would be “cleansed.” The introduction of the expression “cleansed” was clearly intended to call to mind the vitally important ceremony which brought the “daily” or “continual” services to an end at the close of the sanctuary year, and which was to have its greater antitype at the end of the vast span of the ages. We must, therefore, first of all seek to understand the significance of the “cleansing” of the earthly sanctuary.

As a result of the day-to-day services, the sins of the children of Israel were symbolically transferred to and accumulated in the sanctuary. When the first day of the seventh month came round, the notes of the trumpets of judgment warned the children of Israel that the day was approaching when the accumulated sin in the sanctuary would be finally disposed of. They were also warned by them that if they failed to avail themselves of the opportunity of release from their sins, they would be “cut off” from among the people and from the presence of the Lord. (Leviticus 23:29.) From the first day of the seventh month up to and including the tenth day, therefore, the Israelites were urged to afflict their souls that this last opportunity should not be missed.

The actual ceremony of the cleansing of the sanctuary was vividly symbolic. Two goats were brought to the door of the sanctuary. By the drawing of lots, one was chosen for a sin offering and offered upon the altar of burnt offering, its blood being carried into the most holy place and sprinkled before the “mercy seat.” Leviticus 16:15.

Thereafter followed a service of atonement for the holy place, the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar. Finally, the high priest appeared once more at the door of the sanctuary to the great joy of the people, who knew, by his safe return from the presence of God, that the atonement had been accepted, and that they were “clean” from all their “sins before the Lord.” Leviticus 16:30.

They then solemnly watched the high priest confess upon the head of the remaining goat the sins of all the people, and saw it led away into the wilderness, typifying the entire removal of sin from the camp.

Now we may ask how this typical service is related to the “cleansing” of the sanctuary at the end of the period of “two thousand and three hundred days” as declared by Gabriel.

As we have mentioned, the year's service of the ancient sanctuary was a type of the whole period of world history, and just as the day by day opportunity of cleansing from sin ended when the Day of Atonement or cleansing of the sanctuary came round, so the opportunity of salvation down the ages will one day come to an end in the world's Day of Atonement, or cleansing of the sanctuary.

The sanctuary which will be cleansed in that day will, of course, be the heavenly or “true” sanctuary, as the earthly sanctuary served only as a figure to fleshly Israel, and after its final destruction had no further place in the purpose of God.

In the vision of the seventh chapter, Daniel was shown a time when “the judgment was set, and the books were opened,” while here the angel speaks of a “cleansing” of “the sanctuary,” which is also a time of investigation and judgment. In the previous vision the investigative session among other matters passes judgment upon the “little horn.” In the eighth chapter the cleansing of the sanctuary terminates the defiling of the temple by the “little horn.” The conclusion is obvious that the inauguration of the judgment in Daniel seven is the same event as the cleansing of the sanctuary in the eighth chapter. And from the typical service of the sanctuary year we get a chronological picture of the events of this judgment session.

In the ceremony of the cleansing, there was first the sacrifice of the “Lord's goat” and the carrying of the blood into the most holy place. This corresponds with the great heavenly judgment session and the final blotting out of confessed sin in the closing days of earth's history.

The emerging of the high priest from the sanctuary to pronounce the congregation “clean” from all their “sins before the Lord” most fitly foreshadows the “appearance” of Jesus in the clouds of heaven at His second advent.

The placing of sin upon the scapegoat and his expulsion into the wilderness typifies the final destruction of sin and its author.

From this sequence of events, it is again manifest that the great heavenly assize does not synchronize with or follow the Second Coming of Christ, but precedes it. The return of Jesus is for the purpose of announcing the outcome of the judgment session. When the trump of God sounds, the distinction between the dead “in Christ” and the wicked dead, between the living righteous and the living wicked, will already have been made.

Thus there dawns upon our minds the solemnizing truth that while the work of the world is still going on. The judgment session in heaven will sit and decide the destiny of every soul, in order that when the court has finished its work, the erstwhile Advocate may return to the earth to execute the judgment determined.

If, therefore, we are stirred in heart by the knowledge of the imminence of Jesus' coming, how much more shall we be moved by the knowledge that even nearer is the deliberation of the heavenly court which will determine the attitude of Christ to you and me when He comes!

And if the people of God, thinking of the former event, are constrained to cry, “How long, O Lord?” how much more will they desire to know when the heavenly session convenes, and when their names will come up in review!

The Israelite had two intimations of the approach of the Day of Atonement, or cleansing of the sanctuary. He knew from the beginning of the year that it would fall on the tenth day of the seventh month, and a few days before the solemn service was to take place the trumpets of judgment gave him a final warning.

Naturally, we would expect that some equally definite indications would be given to the inhabitants of the world of the commencement of the greater Day of Atonement or cleansing, which is to seal the destiny of every human soul for eternity. It is inconceivable that so vital a period in the earth's history should break stealthily and unannounced upon the world. Nor did God intend that it should.

As the date of the Day of Atonement was definitely specified in the calendar of the Jewish year, so the time of the heavenly judgment session is as definitely indicated in the calendar of time.

The time when this epochal judgment would begin was stated in the seventh chapter of Daniel to be after the close of the “time, and times, and half a time” of papal domination, or 1798. But how long after was not precisely indicated. Here the angel questioner is informed that the divinely ordained time would be after “two thousand three hundred days,” or, reckoning a prophetic day to represent a literal year, after two thousand three hundred years. Naturally, Daniel was all attention for some further information as to the commencement of this definite time-period. For if he was told when it began, he would be able to determine exactly when it would end and when the world's Day of Atonement would begin.

What comment had Gabriel to make on this important time prophecy?

“And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true.” Daniel 8:26.

To Daniel's great satisfaction, Gabriel began a further explanation. He emphasized to Daniel that what he had been shown and told was true.

What did he then bid the prophet do?

“Wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days.” Daniel 8: 26.

Daniel was next told that the termination of the vision like that of the “time, and times, and half a time,” would be in the far-distant future. To Daniel and the Jews of his day it was not of immediate importance. It was, therefore, to be “shut up” or “sealed.” But to the church of that distant day it would be of vital import. For them it must be carefully kept. Not a phrase, not a word, must be lost; not a letter, not a number, must be changed. One day, in God's good time, the seal would be broken, and the church would understand the solemn significance of the “cleansing of the sanctuary.”

By what was the angel's explanation at this point abruptly terminated?

“And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business.” Daniel 8:27.

At this point, with the time of the beginning of the long prophetic period still unrevealed, Gabriel's explanation was brought to a premature end by the prophet's loss of consciousness. This time the angel made no attempt to restore the prophet, but left him to recover from the strain of the solemn message he had received. The vision was to be “sealed” for a far future day. What the angel had not been able to say was not urgent. It could be revealed on a later occasion.

When his sickness passed, what impression remained in Daniel's mind?

“And I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.” Daniel 8:27.

When he recovered, Daniel returned to his official work perplexed in mind by the many problems raised by the vision of the “evening morning” and by the questions left unanswered. He resolved, however, to wait patiently for the angel to return and tell him more. What 'Gabriel had to say when he visited the prophet again is told in our next chapter.

26. Did Jesus Come on Time?

At what significant time does the ninth chapter of the prophecy of Daniel open?

“In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; in the first year of his reign.” Daniel 9: 1.

Probably less than a year had elapsed since Daniel received the vision of the ram and the he-goat, and the subsequent revelation of the two thousand and three hundred days. For the third year of Belshazzar (Daniel 8:1) was the year of Babylon's fall and the present chapter is dated in the first year of Darius, who took over the Chaldean kingdom under its new Persian overlord, Cyrus the Great.

Amid the affairs of state, in what spiritual quest do we find him engaged?

“I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolation of Jerusalem.” Daniel 9:2.

Since his former vision, the prophet's mind had been much upon the fallen sanctuary, and with the change of regime the conviction grew that the day of restoration must be near. He therefore began a search of the writings of other prophets of the Lord for an understanding of the period of Israel's tribulation and the way of deliverance.

The particular document to which Daniel's study led him was not a “book,” as is suggested by the rendering in the Authorized Version, but a “letter” which Jeremiah had written some years before for the encouragement of the exiles. Which is reproduced in the twenty ninth chapter of the prophecy of Jeremiah. It is introduced by the words: “Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders which were carried away captives, and to the priests, and to the prophets. And to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon.” Jeremiah 29: 1.

In this letter Jeremiah declared: “Thus says the Lord, That after seventy years shall be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform My good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.” Verse 10.

Now if the commencement of the seventy years was to be reckoned from the fourth year of Jehoiakim when the first captivity took place, sixty-eight years had passed, and within two years the restoration should take place. No wonder, therefore, that the prophet's reverent attention was upon this prophecy.

On what had Jeremiah declared Israel's restoration would be conditional?

“Then shall you call upon Me, and you shall go and pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you. And you shall seek Me, and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart.” - Jeremiah 29:12,13.

As Daniel pondered the prophecy of deliverance he observed that restoration was to be conditional upon a conscious turning of the children of Israel to God in repentance for their transgressions. As Daniel read the conditions again and then thought upon the spiritual condition of the captives he realized that the people as a whole were not ready. On the face of it, therefore, the prospect of restoration, in spite of the promise, seemed remote.

How did Daniel relate himself to the promise in view of the heedlessness of his fellow-countrymen?

“And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.” Daniel 9:3.

Daniel could have dissociated himself from rebellious Israel. He might have pleaded that God should reward the faithful ones, like himself, while abandoning those who persisted in their rebellion. But Daniel made no attempt to ask for preferential treatment. There and then he fell upon his knees in self-abasement, and on their behalf he made his “confession” with “fasting” and “sackcloth” and “ashes.”

How did he address God?

“And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments.” Dan 9:4.

In his approach to God, Daniel recognized that the two essential qualifications for divine blessing have ever been love toward God and obedience to His, commandments. Such are the perennial marks of God's true children. In earth's earliest days, Abraham. “by faith.. . obeyed.” Hebrews 11: 8. And in the very last days of earth's history, the remnant are described as those who “keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus.” Revelation 14: 12.

In view of the divine requirements, what tragic confession had he to make concerning his people?

“We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from Thy precepts and from Thy judgments.” Daniel 9: 5.

If faith in God and obedience to His law are the marks of the faithful, rebellion consists in departure from Him and disobedience to His commandments. To such persistent rebellion on the part of Israel, Daniel humbly confessed.

How heedless had they been of divine warnings and admonitions? To what state were they reduced as a result of transgression?

“Neither have we hearkened unto Thy servants the prophets, which spoke in Thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. O Lord, righteousness belongs unto Thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day. To the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither Thou has driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against Thee.” Daniel 9:6,7. (See also verse 8.)

“Confusion of face” was indeed an apt description of Israel's condition. God had lavished His love upon them, He had borne long with their waywardness, but they had proved incorrigible. They could not lift up their heads in His presence.

Yet how confident still, was Daniel of the mercy of God?

To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him; neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets.” Daniel 9:9, 10.

Despite their rebellion, however, Daniel knew that God was still merciful and of great goodness, and would even now forgive those who turned to Him. And in this confidence he pleaded for his people.

How righteous had God been in all the judgments which had fallen upon them?

“Yea, all Israel have transgressed Thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey Thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against Him. And He hath confirmed His words, which He spoke against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand Thy truth. Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the Lord our God is righteous in all His works which He does: for we obeyed not His voice.” Daniel 9:11-14.

The curses foretold by Moses had descended upon them. They had drunk the cup of divine judgment to the dregs. Yet it was no more than they deserved. God was just and no more than justice had been done to them.

Of what former deliverance, however, did Daniel now remind the Lord?

“And now, O Lord our God, that has brought Thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and has gotten Thee renown, as at this day.” Daniel 9:15.

When in their distress the Israelites in Egypt had cried out to the Lord, He heard their cry, and when the time of deliverance came, not even Pharaoh's chariots or his horsemen could arrest the march of Israel. Thus it could be again.

What did he, therefore, ask God to do?

“We have sinned, we have done wickedly. O Lord, according to all Thy righteousness, I beseech Thee, let Your anger and Thy fury be turned away from Thy city Jerusalem, Thy holy mountain. Because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us.” Daniel 9:15,16.

So Daniel comes to his great appeal on behalf of captive Israel, their desolate city, and fallen temple. Encouraged by God's own promise through Jeremiah and with a longing desire that Israel should no longer be a reproach upon the name of God, the prophet pleaded that He would restore them to their own land and make possible a resumption of their national life.

On what in particular did Daniel's mind dwell?

“Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of Thy servant, and his supplications, and cause Thy face to shine upon Thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake.” Daniel 9:17.

The greatest concern of all in the mind of the prophet was God's “sanctuary.” Its desolation had been a source of distress to every faithful Israelite through the long years of captivity, and Daniel's thought had been constantly upon it. ever since the vision of the “evening mornings.” Surely the time had now come when the defiling footsteps of the foreign tyrant should be effaced and the honor of the sanctuary should be vindicated.

On what strong basis did Daniel reinforce his plea for God's aid? With what stirring peroration did he end his prayer?

“O my God, incline Your ear, and hear; open Your eyes, and behold our desolation, and the city which is called by Thy name: for we do not present our supplications before Thee for our righteousness, but for Thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for Your own sake, O my God: for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name.” Daniel 9:18, 19.

So long as the city that was called after the Lord lay desolate it was a dishonor to the holy name. Not merely for Israel's sake then, but for His own name's sake, Daniel called upon God to act. Moving indeed were the prophet's final words. Hear, forgive, act, and act quickly for the vindication of “Thy name” upon Thy city and Thy people.

How speedily did God respond to the prophet's earnest petition?

“And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God. Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel ... being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.” Daniel 9:20,21.

No prayer from the heart of man, whether uttered or unspoken, goes unheeded by God. “Before they call,” God assured the prophet Isaiah, “I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear!” Isaiah 65: 24. To this divine promptitude, saints of every age can testify, including Daniel. At the hour of sacrifice Daniel was praying, when an angel hand touched him gently. He looked up and saw before him “the man Gabriel,” chief of the angels of revelation.

Of what did the return of Gabriel at once remind Daniel?

“Whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning.” Daniel 9:21.

The return of Gabriel brought flooding back into Daniel's mind the remembrance of the vision of the “evening-morning” a few months before. He remembered how it had been broken off by his physical collapse, and how, when he came to his senses, Gabriel had gone and had never come back to finish his explanations. How Daniel's heart must have leapt at the sight of this glorious angel again. At last the questions over which he had pondered would be answered.

For what purpose did Gabriel explain that he was now sent?

“And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding.” Daniel 9:22.

Gabriel's first words heightened Daniel's sense of anticipation. As if reading the prophet's thoughts, he told him that he had come to give the “skill and understanding” for which he was so anxious.

What comforting assurance did he convey of God's regard?

“For thou art greatly beloved.” Daniel 9:23.

To hear from the lips of an angel such a message of God's regard was a privilege indeed. And yet, is not that how the Father regards all who put their trust in Him? So Paul believed when he started his Roman epistle, ‘To all that be in Rome, beloved of God.’ (Romans 1:7), and when he described the Thessalonian saints as “beloved of the Lord.” 2 Thessalonians 2: 13.

When did Gabriel say he had received his commission to visit the prophet? To what did he bid Daniel address himself?

“At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee. ... Therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.” - Daniel 9:23.

The vision to which Gabriel referred was not one he was about to disclose, for Daniel received no new vision at this time. Obviously, therefore, he was speaking of the former revelation which he had been unable fully to explain by reason of the prophet's indisposition. Literally Gabriel said: “I am come to teach thee the meaning,” that is, the meaning of the unexplained portions of the former visions, and particularly the significance of the vision of the sanctuary and its cleansing which were uppermost in the prophet's mind.

Beginning his explanation, what new time period did Gabriel announce?

“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city!” Daniel 9:24.

As the angel had already directed the prophet to carry his mind back and “consider” the former vision, the “seventy weeks” about which he now speaks must have some relation to the “two thousand and three hundred days!” Dr. Hales is obviously right when he comments: “This chronological prophecy ... was evidently designed to explain the foregoing vision, especially in its chronological part of the 2,300 days ~'A New Analysis of Chronology,” Vol. 2, page 517.

The connection becomes clear when Gabriel's first words are rendered rather more literally than in the Authorized Version. The word “determined” is translated by Dr. S. P. Tregelles “divided.” B. W. Newton renders it “severed.” The Pulpit Commentary says: “It means 'cut off.'” So Gabriel actually said: “Seventy weeks are cut off”.

“Cut off” from what? As Gabriel had already told Daniel to recall the former vision, the obvious conclusion is that the seventy weeks were “cut off” from the longer time-period of two thousand three hundred days. Equally obviously they must be cut off from the beginning of this period, seeing that the events to take place during the “cut off” portion were associated with literal Israel and the old city of Jerusalem, and not with the “time of the end!”

The supplementary details about these seventy weeks thus provide the missing information as to the commencement of the long time-period. For if the seventy weeks are cut off from the beginning of the two thousand three hundred days, both must begin at the same time, and if their beginning is anchored to an event in history, the calculation of the termination of both periods becomes a matter of simple arithmetic.

What was to be accomplished within this period?

“To finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.” Daniel 9:24.

The special purpose of this period allotted to Israel is very fully stated. First it was “to finish the transgression.” God had borne long with Israel. They had had chance after chance, but each time they had grievously disappointed Him. (Ezra 9:13.) They were now to have one more opportunity, but it was to be the last. If they failed this time, as a nation they would be rejected for ever.

Secondly, “to make an end of sins.” The word *chattath* may be translated either “sins” or “sin-offerings.” This is illustrated by Leviticus 4:3, where the word occurs twice and is first translated, “Let him bring for his sin,” and then, “a young bullock . . . for his sin offering.” The phrase here may, therefore, be understood as a final opportunity to Israel to cease from sin or, it may refer to the ending of the typical sin offerings in the sanctuary by the manifestation of the divine sin-offering in the person of Jesus on Calvary's cross.

Thirdly, “to make reconciliation for iniquity,” or literally, “to make atonement for iniquity.” By His mediatorial sacrifice Christ provided the means of reconciliation, or atonement, between man and God. (See 2 Corinthians 5: 19.)

Fourthly, “to bring in everlasting righteousness.” Jesus came not merely to provide for the blotting out of transgression and the reconciliation of man to God, but also to impart His righteousness to man. Paul puts this vital transaction very clearly when he says: “God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Romans 8:3,4.

Fifthly, “to seal up the vision.” The fulfillment of the predicted events connected with the first advent of Jesus would authenticate the seventy weeks prophecy, and also give assurance of the certain fulfillment of the remaining events at the end of the two thousand three hundred days.

And finally, “to anoint the most Holy.” When the services of the first tabernacle were inaugurated in the wilderness, the sanctuary, as well as its ministers, were anointed. (Exodus 30: 26-30) When Jesus returned to heaven to begin His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, it was necessary, in harmony with the type, that this sanctuary and its Priest should be anointed. This is the solemn heavenly event referred to in this prophecy, “to anoint the most Holy.”

When was the probationary period of the seventy weeks to begin?

“Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks.” Daniel 9: 25.

The cut-off period was to begin with the “going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem.” From this event to the manifestation of the Messiah would be sixty-nine weeks.

Now there were several decrees issued by the Persian kings referring to the return of the Jews to their own land, and to the rebuilding of the temple and city of Jerusalem. Can we determine which of these is to be taken as the starting-point of the two time-periods? Let us look at them.

The first decree was that of Cyrus, the conqueror of Babylon, in 536 BC. It is recorded in the first few verses of the book of Ezra: “Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled. The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom. And put it also in writing, saying, Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth. And He hath charged me to build Him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah' Ezra 1:1,2.

This decree of Cyrus terminated the seventy years' captivity by providing for the return of the Israelites and the rebuilding of the temple, but it made no mention of the restoration of the state of Israel as a governmental unit in the hands of the Jews again. It does not, therefore, really qualify as the starting date of the seventy prophetic weeks of Daniel.

The second decree was promulgated by Darius in 519 BC., authorizing the resumption of building operations after they had been stopped by the enemies of Israel. This is recorded in the sixth chapter of the book of Ezra. (Ezra 6:12.) But important as was the impetus Darius gave to the restoration of the religious life of the Jews, his decree still did nothing to restore the civil administration and government which was foundational to the revived life of the community.

In the seventh chapter of the book of Ezra we have recorded a third decree issued by King Artaxerxes in 457 BC. In this letter of authorization which Artaxerxes handed to Ezra when he sent him on his way to Jerusalem, the king, after referring to his gifts toward the service of the temple, instructed Ezra. “And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in your hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God. And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him.” Ezra 7:25,26.

At once we note that this instruction went very much further than the two previous decrees, for it delegated again to a Jew, after long years of subjection, full civil and ecclesiastical authority over Palestine and its people. This surely is the decree for which we are looking and which meets the requirements of the prophecy “to restore and build [the state of] Jerusalem.” Moreover, by a divine providence, its date is one of the best authenticated in ancient history, being established by the famous Canon of Ptolemy, by the Greek Olympiads, and by other allusions in Persian and Greek history as beyond doubt, 457 BC. So the commencement of the seventy weeks and the two thousand three hundred days is well and truly anchored in history.

In what circumstances was the city to be rebuilt?

“The streets shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.” Daniel 9:25.

In the books of Ezra and Nehemiah are described some of the “troublous times” during which the temple and city were rebuilt. It is difficult to establish the exact date when the rebuilding was completed, but, according to Prideaux, it was actually finished seven prophetic weeks or forty-nine years after the work was begun, that is in the seventeenth year of Darius Nothus, 408 BC.

What further interval was to elapse before the manifestation of the Messiah?

“Unto Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks.” Daniel 9:25.

So from the date, 457 BC., sixty-nine prophetic weeks or 483 literal years, should bring us to “the Messiah!” Did this prophecy prove true.

In the third chapter of Luke's gospel the baptism of Jesus is dated “in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar.” Luke 3:1. Now Tiberius became associated with Augustus Caesar in AD. 12, so that his fifteenth year would begin in AD. 26 and run over into AD. 27.

In John 2: 20 the Jews remarked to Jesus during the first year of His ministry that the temple in which they stood had been “forty and six years ... in building.” We know that Herod the Great began its construction in his eighteenth year and that he began to reign in 37 BC. The temple was, therefore, begun in 20 BC. and the forty sixth year of its construction would also be AD. 26 running into AD. 27.

The question will perhaps be asked, But was not Jesus thirty when He began His ministry? How then could it be in AD. 27? The answer is that when Ussher drew up his chronology upon which our system of dating is based, he did not correct the error of four years in earlier calculations of the beginning of our era, the actual year of Christ's birth being not AD. 1, but 4 BC. This is confirmed by the fact that Herod the Great was still reigning at the time of Christ's birth, and he is known to have died in 4 BC. If, therefore, Christ's birth is taken as 4 BC., and He was, as the Scripture states, “about thirty” (Luke 3:23) when He began to preach, we arrive again at the same date, AD. 26 or 27.

So, by three lines of evidence, the year in which Jesus began His ministry is fixed as AD. 27, and when this year is set against the prophecy of the seventy weeks, it is seen to be exactly sixty-nine prophetic weeks or 483 actual years from the “going forth” of Artaxerxes' decree in 457 BC. This portion of the prophecy was thus fulfilled exactly on time.

Jesus Himself referred to the accurate fulfillment of this prophetic period when He began to preach, for His first words were: “The time is fulfilled: ... repent you, and believe the Gospel.” Mark 1:14,15.

What find opportunity would be extended to Israel during the last of the seventy weeks?

“And He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week.” Daniel 9:27.

The manifestation of the Messiah was the final and greatest confirmation of the covenant God made with man in the beginning. As the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews says: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.” Hebrews 1: 1,2.

What epochal event was to occur in the midst of the week?

“And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself.” Daniel 9:26. “In the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.” Daniel 9:27.

Jesus' earthly life was “cut off” by His death on the cross, not for any crime of His own, but for the sin of the world. As Isaiah had prophesied centuries before: “He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was He stricken.” Isaiah 53:8. In the midst of the seventieth week the wonderful system of sacrifices inaugurated in the wilderness sanctuary came to an end when type and antitype met upon the upraised cross of Calvary.

Did this momentous event occur on time just as every other detail of the prophecy up to this point?

Yes, it did. Exactly midway between the beginning and end of the last week of the seventy, in the spring of AD. 31, Jesus was crucified, and at the moment of His death, in witness of the merging of type in antitype, the veil of the temple was rent in twain “from the top to the bottom.”

The certainty of this date is as demonstrable as the beginning of the first of the seventy weeks and the end of the sixty-ninth. The simplest calculation may be made from the Passover records in the gospels. Jesus attended four Passovers during His ministry, all of which are recorded by John. (John 2:13; 5:1; 6:4; 13:1.) As He began His ministry in the latter part of AD. 27, the first Passover would be in the spring of AD. 28, the second in AD. 29, the third in AD. 30 and the fourth in AD. 31, when He was crucified.

What was to happen during the latter half of the last week?

“And He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week. Daniel 9:27.

After the “cutting off” of the Messiah and the “ceasing” of sacrifice and oblation, there was still half a week, or three and a half years, during which the covenant was to be finally confirmed. This was fulfilled by the continuing witness of the apostles to the Jews in Jerusalem from the day of Pentecost to the official rejection of the Gospel by the Sanhedrin, and the martyrdom of Stephen just three and a half years later, in AD. 34.

The death of Stephen was followed by the opening of a general persecution against the Christians (Acts 8: 1), as a result of which the believers were “scattered abroad,” thus bringing to an end the exclusive witness to Israel and inaugurating the taking of the Gospel to the Gentiles.

What late was ultimately to befall the sanctuary from which the glory had departed?

“And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolation is determined.” Daniel 9:26.

True to the prophecy, thirty-six years after the period “cut off” for Israel ended, the final drama around the abandoned sanctuary was enacted. The city was captured and destroyed by the Romans, the sanctuary was thrown down, and, as Jesus had declared, not “one stone” was left “upon another” that was not thrown down.

Why did this judgment come?

“For the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.” Daniel 9:27.

Israel's iniquity had come to the full, and the nation paid a fearful price for the rejection of its last opportunity.

When would it end?

Subtracting the 490 years from the 2,300, we are left with 1,810 years. Adding this to AD. 34 brings us to 1844, as the termination of the 2,300 days and the time of the cleansing of the sanctuary, with all that this momentous symbol implies for the world. Can we be sure of this date? We surely can, for the fulfillment of every detail of the seventy weeks “sealed” up that vision and definitely fixed the beginning and ending of the remaining 1,810 years of the 2,300. The prophecy of the seventh chapter had already located the beginning of the investigative judgment at some time after 1798. Now the prophecy of the two thousand three hundred days, supplemented by that of the seventy weeks, pin-points it in the autumn of 1844. Which means that more than a century ago the momentous heavenly court assembled and the great judge took His seat. The books of the record were opened, and a review of every life from Adam to the last soul born upon the earth before the end of time was begun, in order to determine who will be “clean before the Lord” and who must be “cut off” from the presence of the Lord!

The solemn question, therefore, comes to mind, Has the judgment session yet reached the names of the living? When will my name come up for review? The answers to these questions we cannot know, but it certainly will not be long now, for there is not much time left. Events on the earth are speeding to the great climax and the work in heaven will not be behind. The judgment session will finish on time. Then will go forth the momentous decree: 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.' Revelation 22:11.

Surely then, it is high time that we “afflict our souls.” that we review our own lives in the light of God's holy law, and that we hasten to the heavenly sanctuary to confess our sins so that the great High Priest may finally dispose of them before probation ends.

God grant that in that day you may be among those who are “clean from all their sins” before the Lord.

27. Behind the Scenes in a Royal Court

What sorrow came to Daniel in the third year of Cyrus?

“In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia. . . in those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.” Daniel 10: 1-3.

Since the wonderful revelation of the “seventy weeks,” two years had passed by. Although Daniel was now almost ninety years of age and might reasonably have hoped for tranquility in his declining days, these two years had been years of terrific strain.

Daniel had been thrown into the lions' den for defying the edict issued by Darius. From the jaws of death the aged prophet had been miraculously delivered, and as a result of his persistence in prayer he had seen the issue of the first great edict permitting the Jews to return to Palestine and rebuild the fallen sanctuary.

But while the setting off of the first band of pioneers had brought great joy to the prophet, who himself was too old to accompany them, his joy was turned to sorrow when he heard of the obstacles put in the way of the builders.

So he determined to give himself again to a special period of fasting and prayer that God might intervene on behalf of the restorers of the sanctuary.

Where did he go to pray during this period of seeking God?

“And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel; . . . a thing was revealed unto Daniel whose name was called Belteshazzar.” Daniel 10: 4, 1.

The Hiddekel was the River Euphrates on which Babylon stood. It is called the “great river” in Genesis 15:18 and in the Sumerian language it was designated the “great water.”

Daniel may have had a house on the banks of the River Euphrates outside Babylon, much as a wealthy London business man might have a country house on the upper reaches of the Thames. Or by this time Daniel may have relinquished his official position at court and retired to one of the Jewish settlements along the river to live out quietly his remaining days in the companionship of those with whom he could share his hopes and fears.

Whichever be the explanation of his presence there, it was in this riverside retreat, on the twenty-fourth day of the first month that God spoke to him, giving him the important and comprehensive revelations contained in the last three chapters of his prophecy.

With what was this final revelation concerned?

“And the thing was true, but the time appointed was long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision.” Daniel 10:1.

Like previous visions, while this final revelation would begin with imminent events, it would thereafter span the ages and bring to the prophet's view momentous events of the end-time.

As Daniel prayed, what glorious personage appeared to him?

“Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain Man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz. His body also was like the beryl and His face as the appearance of lightning, and His eyes as lamps of fire, and His arms and His feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of His words like the voice of a multitude.” Daniel 10:5,6.

The similarity between this description and that of Jesus in the first chapter of the Revelation shows that this “certain Man” who appeared to Daniel was none other than the Son of God Himself. The linen, the brass, and the gold are all symbolic of Christ's holiness and purity, the lightning and fire of His omnipotent power, and the voice of a multitude the omniscience of His word.

What effect had the appearance of the Son of God upon those who were with Daniel?

“And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves.” Daniel 10: 7.

As when Jesus met Paul and his companions on the Damascus road (Acts 9: 1-7), the vision was seen only by Daniel, but the unseen presence so powerfully affected all who were with him that they fled to hide themselves.

How was Daniel affected?

“Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of His words: and when I heard the voice of His words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground!” Daniel 10:8,9.

Left alone in the presence of the Son of God, Daniel was overwhelmed by His glorious appearance and by the wondrous tones of His voice. A pallor overspread the features of the prophet and his limbs were no longer able to support him. The breath went from his body and he fell in a coma prostrate upon his face.

By whom was he raised up? What comforting words did he hear?

“And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee: ... for unto thee am I now sent.” Daniel 10:10,11.

The hand that touched Daniel and raised him up was not the hand of the Son of God, but that of Gabriel, the angel who on so many previous occasions had been commissioned to communicate with the prophet. Gently lifting up the old man, he once more assured Daniel that he was “greatly beloved” of heaven.

As the prophet stood to his feet, what further assurance did the angel give to him?

“And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou did set your heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.” Daniel 10:11,12.

As before, God had put into operation the answer to the prophet's prayer as soon as he began to utter the first sentence of his petition. While Daniel “was yet speaking” God had heard. But there had been an unavoidable delay in the arrival of Gabriel, with the result that only after twenty-one days was Gabriel able to come to the prophet. The reason for the delay Gabriel explains.

By what had the angel been delayed in coming?

“But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days.” Daniel 10:13.

The cause of the delay had been a conflict with the prince of the kingdom of Persia. This significant explanation takes us behind the scenes of the visible world to behold the spiritual conflicts which are constantly going on between the angels of God and the minions of Satan for control of the minds of men.

In this case, evil angels had been seeking to influence the king of Persia to heed the insinuations of the enemies of the Jews. Gabriel, on the other hand, had been seeking to evoke from the king a tolerant policy toward them. The king seemed at first to be more influenced by the unseen evil influences around him and his heart was turning against the Jews. Gabriel, therefore, sought more powerful spiritual aid in his conflict.

Who came to his assistance?

“But, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the king of Persia.” Daniel 10: 13.

In response to his appeal, Michael, who is described as “one of the chief princes,” came to his aid. Who was Michael? The name means “like God.” Later in his conversation with Daniel, Gabriel describes Michael as “your Prince,” that is, the special guardian of Israel. (Verse 21.) He also mentions that besides himself only Michael had a knowledge of the divine mysteries he was

about to reveal. Then, at the end of his revelation to Daniel, Gabriel explains that Michael “The great Prince” would finally “stand up” for the consummation of the age-long purposes of God. (Dan 12:1.)

All these activities point to one Person and one only, Christ Himself. Only He could truly be described as “like God!” He certainly is the “great Prince” of Israel. He shares with the Father a knowledge of the future and His “standing up” and coming forth out of heaven will bring to completion the great plan of salvation conceived “before the foundation of the world” and sealed on Calvary’s cross. So it was with the aid of the Son of God Himself that Gabriel prevailed upon the mind of the king of Persia to deal generously with the returned captives and facilitate their work.

Now, that he was able to come to Daniel, what had he been instructed to tell him?

“Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.” Daniel 10:14.

Leaving the court of the king of Persia, Gabriel now came in answer to Daniel’s prayer to further enlighten the prophet for the benefit of the people of God.

How was Daniel affected when he learned of the desperate spiritual conflicts in the unseen world?

“And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb.” Daniel 10: 15.

No wonder Daniel was overcome as this dramatic struggle in the unseen world was opened up to him. And surely our hearts are solemnized, too, as we realize that around our lives spiritual forces are in constant conflict, the emissaries of Satan seeking to divert our steps into the paths of sin, the angels of God gently leading into ways of righteousness. Oh that we may ever respond to the latter’s gracious suasion.

How was the aged prophet again strengthened? What did he then ask? In reply, what did Gabriel tell Daniel he must continue?

“And behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spoke, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me’ straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me. Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, and said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak: for thou has strengthened me. Then said he, Know thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia.” Daniel 10: 16-20.

The spiritual conflict which had raged in the court of the king of Persia was by no means over, and the glimpse in this chapter into the first phase of the struggle helps us to picture the subsequent battles which were reflected, first in the obstruction of the work of the Jewish builders, and finally in the second dramatic decree of Darius the Great.

How long did Gabriel say his support of the king of Persia would continue?

“And when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Greece shall come.” Daniel 10: 20.

Daniel was assured that though enemies would be constantly seeking to turn the minds of successive kings of Persia against the Jews, their malevolence would be restrained by angels of God in the Persian court until the time came when Persian rule would be superseded by that of the prince of Greece. Then Gabriel’s responsibility would be transferred from the Persian court to that of Alexander, who would similarly be influenced to grant favors to the Jews.

How effective the angel ministry was in the court of Greece is shown by the fact that when Alexander came to Jerusalem he greeted the high priest reverently, desired him to offer sacrifices to God on his behalf, and finally departed with assurances of favor and peace.

Before Gabriel returned to direct the angel guard in the Persian court, what did he promise to reveal to Daniel?

“But I will show thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth.” Daniel 10:21.

This final revelation which occupies the remainder of the book of Daniel is designated by Gabriel “the scripture of truth” or the “true writing,” indicating that it would comprise an inerrant prophetic outline of the course of history in relation to the people of God. Who only beside Gabriel had an understanding of these mysteries?

“And there is none that holds with me in these things, but Michael your Prince.” Daniel 10: 21.

As the “great Prince” of Israel, Michael had strengthened the hand of Gabriel in securing favor for the Jews at the hands of the king of Persia. Michael was associated, too, with Gabriel in the communication of these momentous revelations to Israel. Without doubt what is said of Jesus in connection with His revelations to the apostle John (Revelation 1: 1) could be written equally of Jesus, Gabriel, and Daniel. The “scripture of truth” was a revelation of Michael (or Jesus Christ) which “God gave unto Him” and which He sent “by His angel [Gabriel] unto His servant” Daniel.

In the studies which follow we shall learn the contents of this last prophetic revelation to Daniel.

28. World Power Moves West

For how long had Gabriel been appointed to the court of the Persian kings?

“Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him.” Daniel 11:1.

When Darius was made ruler of Babylon after the death of Belshazzar, Gabriel was given the special responsibility of strengthening him upon his throne. And when Cyrus personally took over the province, Gabriel lent his support to this king. It was from the court of Cyrus that Gabriel had now come to talk with Daniel.

How did Gabriel outline the future course of Persian history?

“And now will I show thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than all.” Daniel 11:2.

It will at once be noted, as Gabriel begins this last revelation, that he no longer speaks in symbolic terms, but outlines the highlights of future history in plain language. The reason for this is that this last word to Daniel is not so much a new revelation, but rather a final commentary upon the earlier visions, with additional details respecting certain crucial periods in the drama of the nations.

Beginning with the immediate future of the Persian Empire, Gabriel explained that three kings would come and go, during which the wealth and power of Persia would steadily increase, until the summit of Persia's glory would be attained in the reign of the fourth king.

History fully confirms the accuracy of Gabriel's prophecy. When Cyrus died in 529 BC. he was succeeded by Cambyses who reigned from 529 to 522 BC. Then an impostor, Gautama the Magian, or pseudo-Smerdis, held the throne for seven months until he was murdered by Darius Hystaspes, the “third” king, who ruled, from 522 to 485 BC. Finally, there came to the throne the famous or infamous Xerxes, called Ahasuerus in the book of Esther, who did exactly what the angel said he would do.

More than any of the earlier Persian kings, the “third” monarch “Darius the Great,” by his fiscal reorganization of the vast empire, laid the foundations of the immense power and wealth of his successor, Xemes.

He was also the first Persian king to cast covetous eyes across the narrow straits of the Bosphorus and to formulate a plan for adding European territories to the Persian Empire. The first expedition of Darius in 512 BC. produced no tangible results except to stir up the hatred of the peninsular Greeks against the Asiatics and he was preparing for a new and greater expedition to Europe when he died in 486 BC., after an illustrious reign of thirty-six years.

Xerxes, the Ahasuerus of the Bible and the “fourth” Persian king mentioned by Gabriel, inherited the great power, the vast riches and the ambitions of his father. And nowhere are these more vividly symbolized than on the great “portal of the nations” which he built at the entrance of his palace at Persepolis, portions of which still stand among the ruins. On the walls of the terrace at the top of the great double staircase three rows of bas-reliefs picture the peoples of the far-spreading empire bringing gifts from every quarter. Above is a trilingual inscription which opens: “I am Xerxes, the Great King, the King of kings, the King of many tongued countries, the King of the Great Universe, the son of Darius, the king, the Achmenian. Xerxes the Great King says: 'By the grace of Ormuzd I have made this portal, whereon are depicted all the countries.'”

To what use did he determine to put the vast resources of the empire?

“And by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece,” Daniel 11:2.

Having established his authority in Egypt and Babylon, which were in a state of rebellion on his accession, Xerxes began preparations for the task of his life, the conquest of Greece.

Xerxes' own army, according to Herodotus, numbered no fewer than 2,641,610 armed men with an equal number of attendants, though Ctesias puts the figure for the army and navy at 1,531,610. Whichever is correct, it was a vast force.

Leaving Susa, they marched along the Royal Road to Sardis, where they wintered. The next year they crossed the Hellespont by a bridge of boats as Darius had done, turned south, and ravaged the peninsula as far as Athens. This almost uninterrupted success on land, however, was not supported by corresponding success at sea, for the Persian navy was disastrously defeated in the bay of Salamis in 480 BC. This necessitated the retirement of the army to Asia w1Lere, at Sardis, Xerxes was tragically murdered in his bed. The Persian expedition had utterly failed. Worse than that, it had added further fire to the imperishable animosity of the West.

By whom was the power of Persia at last broken?

“And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will.” Daniel 11:3.

Ultimate disaster did not come immediately to Persia. Actually, nine kings reigned after Xerxes before the “mighty king” of Greece arose. But in 333 BC., Alexander, who had succeeded to his father's leadership of the Greek states, crossed the Bosphorus in the reverse direction to that of Darius and Xerxes. In two years the last Darius was dead and within ten years Alexander's dominion was wider than that of the greatest of the Persian kings.

What tragedy, however, came to this great king in the day of his triumph?

“And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside these.” Daniel 11:4.

At the moment of triumph, as he celebrated in Babylon his conquest of the world, Alexander was struck down. And, as we have already seen, after some seventeen years of fighting, the empire he had acquired was divided into four territories, roughly north, south, east, and west, among his closest associates, but with his own posterity completely excluded and actually extinct. The conflicts between these powers, as we shall see were to set the stage for a conflict which was to continue to the very end of time.

29. An Age-Long Conflict Begins

Which of the four divisions of the Greek Empire was first to become strong?

“And the king of the south shall be strong” Daniel 11: 5.

From earliest times, Palestine has been at the cross-roads of the world. In the days after the Flood the Hamitic peoples crossed this natural land bridge to establish the Egyptian kingdom in the Nile Valley and soon they were penetrating northward again across Palestine to dominate for a time the Semitic inhabitants of the Tigrus and Euphrates Valley. Then, in latter centuries, the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians successively marched south across Palestine to subjugate Egypt.

When the Persian Empire was destroyed the whole of the Middle East was for a brief period comprehended in the vast domain of Greece, but before very long this empire was broken to fragments, of which the most enduring were again to be the kings of “south” and “north,” with Palestine still the cockpit of their conflicts.

As the angel Gabriel declared, the Ptolemies of Egypt were the first dynasty of the divided Greek Empire to establish themselves. The reason for this becomes apparent if a glance is taken at the map of the Eastern Mediterranean. Greece, Asia Minor, and Babylonia, all had long frontiers marching with each other and exposed to the intermittent waves of barbarian invaders from Northern Europe and Asia. In consequence, their kings had to spend far more of their time defending their frontiers than building up their internal strength. Egypt, on the other hand, being surrounded by deserts on three sides and the Mediterranean on the other, was almost immune from attack except across the narrow isthmus of Suez, and so the Ptolemies were able to consolidate their territory, and even extend their power across the Mediterranean, before any of the other divisions of the empire had become stabilized.

When the first Ptolemy, Ptolemy Lagus or Soter, abdicated in favor of the son of his wife Bernice in 285 BC., he committed to Ptolemy II Philadelphus, a “strong” kingdom indeed.

What power was in time to become “strong above” the powerful king of the south?

“And one of his princes ... shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion.” Daniel 11: 5.

During the confused struggles after the death of Alexander, Ptolemy Soter gave sanctuary to his close friend Seleucus, who had become satrap of Babylon but had had to flee before the advance of a rival general, Antigonus. Being given a place among Ptolemy's Cypriotes or generals, Seleucus took part in the great Battle of Gaza (312 BC.) in which Ptolemy. disastrously defeated Demetrius, the son of Antigonus.

Recognizing that the time was now ripe for him to recover his satrapy, Seleucus asked permission of Ptolemy, and the Egyptian king, little realizing what a dangerous rival he was releasing, gave him a small force of a thousand men with which he set out across the desert. Seleucus was received with enthusiasm by the inhabitants of Babylon and the dynasty of the Seleucid “kings of the north” was founded. Susiana, Persis, and Media were quickly annexed and soon he was acknowledged as supreme from the River Jaxartes to the Indus. By the beginning of the second century BC., he had not only eliminated Antigonus in eastern Asia Minor but had quarreled with and overthrown Lysimachus and was ruling without rival over all Alexander's empire in Asia, literally king of the whole of the north. except the Greek mainland.

Too late Ptolemy realized what he had done by sending Seleucus back to Babylon, for the empire of the “king of the north” was now “strong above” even the powerful “king of the south” and Seleucus was able to pass a truly “great dominion” to his son, Antiochus Soter.

The rivalry between the kings of north and south now began to flare up. Antiochus recognized that Ptolemy's power lay in his control of the Mediterranean coastal cities and so he set about wresting Ptolemy's Asiatic possessions from him. While no decisive battles were fought, a guerilla warfare was kept up on land and sea through the reigns of Antiochus Soter and Antiochus Theos, as a result of which Ptolemy lost many of his Asiatic cities and his control of the Aegean became most precarious.

By what means was a temporary peace achieved between the warring kings of the north and south?

“And in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement.” Daniel 11:6.

“Suddenly,” writes E. S. Bevan in his House of Seleucus, “in the last years of Antiochus II, we find a complete revolution in the relation of the powers. The dreary war between Seleucid and Ptolemy, which had seemed to have become a permanent feature of the world, ceased: It not only ceased, but was succeeded by close alliance.”-Vol. 1, page 178.

The expression “join themselves” means literally “mingle themselves” and suggests intermarriage, just like the identical expression in Daniel 2:43. And exactly as prophecy declared, the alliance was cemented by a marriage between the two royal houses. Ptolemy offered the hand of his daughter Bernice to Antiochus, together with a large dowry and probably further territorial concessions in Asia, on condition that the latter would put away his former wife, Laodice. Antiochus accepted, received Bernice at Pclusium on the borders of Egypt, and sent Laodice away to Ephesus.

What succession of tragedies, however, resulted from this marriage?

“But she shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times.” Daniel 11:6.

The alliance, the angel declared, would be but short-lived, and so it proved. Laodice induced Antiochus to leave Bernice in Antioch and come to her, and soon after his arrival in Ephesus the king died suddenly, probably poisoned by the jealous Laodice lest he should again desert her. So Antiochus did not long “stand.”

This dastardly act split the Seleucid kingdom in two. Bernice's son was proclaimed king in Antioch and the eldest son of Laodice was enthroned in Ephesus. But Bernice did “not retain the power,” for Laodice had her son kidnapped and killed; whereupon Bernice shut herself up in Daphrie, near Antioch, and appealed to her brother, Ptolemy III Euergetes, who had just succeeded to the Egyptian throne. He set out at once with an army to relieve her, but by some ruse Bernice was tempted to leave her retreat, and with many of her associates was killed by supporters of Laodice before Ptolemy's arrival. So every detail of the tragic prophecy was fulfilled. She was “given up” to the enmity of Laodice and in the massacre not only did Bernice herself die, but “they that brought her,” her faithful Egyptian retainers, and “he that strengthened her in these times,” her supporters in the court of Antiochus.

By whom was the king's daughter avenged?

“But out of a branch of her roots shall one stand up in his estate, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail.” Daniel 11:7.

Ptolemy III, the brother of the murdered Bernice, was of course the “branch of her roots.” Though too late to save his sister, he marched into Syria with a great army, causing Laodice and her son to retire into Asia Minor. Confused as are the details of the invasion, they certainly indicate that Ptolemy did “prevail.” His conquests, which took him across the Euphrates into Persia, are stated to have been more extensive than those of Thutmose III, the great Egyptian empirebuilder, and to be comparable with the march of Alexander the Great. At sea, too, Euergetes recovered all that Philadelphus had lost.

What loot did the king of the south carry back to Egypt?

“And shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, and with their precious vessels of silver and of gold.” Daniel 11:8.

The vast loot gathered during Ptolemy's extensive marches on land and his expeditions by sea was carried back to Egypt just as the prophecy foretold. It is recorded that he took with him 40,000 talents of silver and 2,500 images of gods, some of which had been taken from Egypt by Cambyses, king of Persia, almost three hundred years before. It was this latter act which gained him the title Euergetes or “Benefactor.”

Would the king of the south follow up his victories over the king of the north?

“So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land.” Daniel 11:9.

After Ptolemy's return from his victorious campaign in Asia he never left Egypt again, though the garrisons he left behind contested generally successfully, the attempts of Seleucus Callenicus to recover his lost territories. After that, it became unnecessary for him to worry about the king of the north, for Callenicus became fully occupied in a fratricidal war with his younger brother, Antiochus.

For how long did the king of the south continue after his return to Egypt?

“And he shall continue more years than the king of the north.” Daniel 11: 8.

True to the prophecy, Ptolemy Euergetes was still living when Seleucus Callenicus met his death by a fall from his horse. (225 BC.) Actually, he outlived the next king of the north, Seleucus Ceraunus, who died in 222 BC., and Antiochus the Great had been reigning more than a year when Euergetes himself died. So, including the year that he was contemporary with Antiochus Theos, Ptolemy Euergetes knew four Seleucid kings.

How did later kings of the north retaliate?

“But his sons shall be stirred up and shall assemble a multitude of great forces: and one shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through: then shall he return, and be stirred up, even to his fortress.” Daniel 11:10.

The sons of Seleucus Callenicus were the next two kings, Seleucus Ceraunus (225-222 BC.) and Antiochus the Great (222-186 BC.), and it was in their day that the Seleucids turned from fratricidal strife to avenge their father's defeats at the hands of Ptolemy Euergetes.

The first of the two sons, Seleucus II, though ill-fitted for the task of restoring the Seleucid prestige, began the recovery of Asia Minor from Pergamos, which had become powerful during the Seleucid quarrels. He did not, however, live to launch an attack

on Egypt itself, being poisoned by a traitor in his own camp in Phrygia in 223 BC. So it was the younger son, Antiochus the Great, who assembled the “multitude of great forces,” to attack Egypt. By the spring of 217 BC., Antiochus had possessed himself of all Syria and Palestine as far south as the “fortress” city of Raphia and was poised for the invasion of Egypt.

How did the king of the south react to this invasion? What was the issue of the battle?

“And the king of the south shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north: and he shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand.” Daniel 11:11.

Stirred to action by the threat, Ptolemy assembled a great force at Pelusium and set off northward to Raphia. Both kings had actually assembled “a great multitude,” but that of Antiochus was the greater. For five days neither side gave battle, but on the sixth day the opposing forces came to grips. At first Antiochus gained the advantage, but, pursuing too far, he was caught by the Egyptian infantry phalanx, losing 14,000 killed and 4,000 captured. The multitude of the king of the north was literally “given into the hand” of the king of the south. Antiochus retired first to Raphia, then to Gaza. Finally he decided to return to Antioch, leaving all Syria once more in Egyptian hands.

How foolishly did the king of the south misuse his victory?

“And when he hath taken away the multitude, his heart shall be lifted up; and he shall cast down many ten thousands; but he shall riot be strengthened by it.” Daniel 11: 12.

With Antiochus expelled and suing for peace, and the petty chieftains of Palestine falling over one another in their professions of allegiance, Ptolemy could have been greatly “strengthened” by his great victory at Raphia. But instead, he threw away all his advantage by a foolish and vicious act.

Coming to Jerusalem, ostensibly to offer sacrifices, he essayed to enter the holy of holies of the temple. Simon the high priest begged him not to defile the sanctuary, but Ptolemy, heedless of prayers, imprecations, and threats, pushed his way past the prostrate Simon toward the inner apartments. At the entrance he suddenly reeled and fell and had to be helped, stupefied, out of the building.

Burning with anger, he returned to Alexandria to vent his wrath upon the Jews in Egypt. According to Eusebius 40,000 Jews, and according to Jerome 60,000, were slain, while the rest were branded with the sign of the ivy leaf. Thus did Ptolemy “cast down ten thousands,” but was “not strengthened by it,” for it aroused hatred against him and hastened his ruin.

What revenge did the king of the north eventually take?

“For the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with much riches.” Daniel 11:13.

“After certain years,” says the prophecy. Actually, an initial year's truce was followed by a treaty which gave fourteen years of peace between the warring kings of north and south. Antiochus used this respite to liquidate the rebel general Achaeus in Asia Minor and to recover Armenia, Iran, Parthia, Hyreania, and Bactria, as far as the borders of India. At the conclusion of which he was once more the “Great King.”

Back in Seleucia, covered with glory, Antiochus once more turned his eyes upon Palestine and Syria and his heart burned to avenge the humiliation of Raphia. The “certain years” were ended and the next stage in the north-south conflict was impending.

As a result of his eastern conquests, Antiochus could now put into the field “a multitude” even greater than before, backed up by the enormous wealth which had poured into the Seleucid treasury. The favorable opportunity came when Ptolemy Philopater died and was succeeded by the four-year-old Ptolemy V Epiphanes. (205-234 BC.)

How did the king of the north seek to assure victory this time?

“And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south!” Daniel 11:14.

To make sure of victory this time Antiochus determined to ring Ptolemy round with enemies. So in 202 BC. he made a treaty with Philip V of Macedon, the most powerful king in the Greek peninsula, to divide the possessions of Ptolemy in Syria, Asia Minor, and the Aegean. Antiochus and Philip were favored in their plans also by sedition in the court of the young Egyptian king, which they most certainly fostered.

By 199 BC. Antiochus had recovered Palestine and was well placed for delivering the death-blow to the dynasty of the Ptolemies, when a new contestant suddenly appeared on the scene and changed the whole balance of power in the Middle East. What Gabriel declared would happen and how prophecy was confirmed by history, we shall see in our next study.

30. Rome Takes Over

What new power now intervened in the bitter conflict between the kings of north and south?

“And . . . the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision!” Daniel 11: 14.

Earlier prophetic visions given to Daniel had indicated that the Greek Empire would eventually be overwhelmed by another power, which proved to be Imperial Rome. In the second chapter of Daniel, Rome's massive might was portrayed under the symbol of iron that “breaks in pieces!” In Daniel seven, the ferocity and brutality of its conquest was suggested by the symbolism of an indescribable beast.

Now, in this latest prophecy, Rome's avarice, particularly as it affected Palestine and the Jews, was envisaged in the designation, "the robbers of thy people." The Romans were indeed robbers and Rome was progressively enriched by the spoils of their conquests.

What disaster, however, was ultimately to overtake these robbers?

"But they shall fall." Daniel 11:14.

Though Rome would despoil many peoples and countries, including the people of God and their land, the time would certainly come when they themselves would be robbed of all their gains and would fall.

Before the intervention of this new power what course did the conflict between the kings of the north and south take?

"So the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities: and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither shall there be any strength to withstand." Daniel 11:15.

It was about 200 BC. when the Roman senate first warned Antiochus IV to leave Ptolemy alone. But as Rome was fully committed at the time in its war with Macedon, the king of the north felt that he need take no notice of the threat. He overran Palestine and then began a simultaneous land, and sea assault upon Ptolemy's possessions in Asia Minor. By 197 BC. he had reached Ephesus, where he received another warning from the Senate, but again paid no heed to it. The next year Antiochus crossed into Europe, wrested Thrace from the northern barbarians, and gave it to his son. Roman envoys met him for a third time at Lysimachia, but still they failed to intimidate him.

What decisive intervention now took place?

"But he that comes against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him." Daniel 11:16.

When, two years later (192 BC.), Antiochus entered Greece proper, Rome was compelled to act. He was met by a Roman army at Thermopylx (191 BC.) thrown back to Chalcis, and then across the Aegean to Ephesus. The next spring the Roman forces under the famous Scipio brothers crossed the Hellespont, joined up with the king of Pergamos, and utterly routed Antiochus at Magnesia. The king fled back to Syria and, through his envoys, accepted the humiliating Roman terms of the "Peace of Aparna."

Into what land did the new power of Rome ultimately enter?

"And he shall stand in the glorious land, which by his hand shall be consumed." Daniel 11:16.

Rome had come to the Middle East to stay, and her aim was now complete elimination of the Seleucid and Ptolemaic Empires. The details of the struggle, which actually occupied more than a century, are passed over without comment by the prophecy, the end of the long drama being foretold. For Syria and Palestine this came when Pompey, after destroying the power of Pontus and Armenia, turned south into Syria, dispossessed Antiochus XIII, and declared Syria (64 BC.) and Judea (63 BC.) Roman provinces. Thus, as predicted, "the glorious land" was by his hand "consumed."

How completely was the territory of the king of the south then overrun?

"He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do." Daniel 11: 17.

If, as Thomas Newton suggests, this phrase should read, "He shall also set his face to enter by, force the whole kingdom," we have a prediction of the absorption of Egypt, the final fragment of the Greek Empire. And the passing of "the whole kingdom" of Alexander into the hands of Rome in the days of Julius Caesar and his successor Augustus Caesar.

When Julius Caesar landed in Egypt (48 BC.) in pursuit of his rival Pompey he was approached by the fascinating Cleopatra for support in her claim to co-rule with Ptolemy XII Philopater under the will of their father. Caesar was doubly willing to intervene, first by reason of his political designs on Egypt and secondly because of his personal attraction to Cleopatra. The refusal of the Ptolemaic party to recognize Caesar's right to settle the succession precipitated the Alexandrine war. After early reverses Caesar secured reinforcements, including a force of 3,000 Jews, doubtless the "upright ones" referred to in the prophecy, compelled the surrender of Alexandria, and placed Cleopatra on the throne in association with a younger brother, Ptolemy XIII Philopater. The older brother having been killed during the war, Egypt thus became a protectorate of Rome and its complete absorption drew nearer.

How will did the queen of Egypt requite her Roman supporter?

"And he shall give him the daughter of women, corrupting her: but she shall not stand on his side." Daniel 11:17.

Cleopatra proved to be as treacherous as she was beautiful, and after Caesar's departure she assiduously sought to rid Egypt of the overriding power of Rome, her intrigue culminating in the fatal conflict of Caesar's successor, Octavianus, with her last lover, Mark Antony.

In what direction did Caesar depart and with what consequences?

"After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many: but a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; without his own reproach he shall cause it to turn upon him." Daniel 11:18.

The language here is puzzling but the essential details of the prophecy are that Caesar would set out northward, on leaving Egypt, would subjugate rebellious rulers there, but following his successes, he would himself come into reproach, which would bring about his ruin.

This is precisely what happened. Receiving word of the defeat of one of his legates at the hands of Pharnaces, son of Mithradates, in Asia Minor, Caesar tore himself away from the luxury of the Egyptian court and set off to deal with the invader. He met the Asiatic army near Zela, and utterly defeated it, sending to Rome his famous laconic report, “Veni, Vidi, Vici” (I came, I saw, I conquered). Crossing Asia Minor, he reached the coast and set sail through “the isles” for Italy.

What find disaster overtook him?

“Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.” Daniel 11: 19.

Caesar arrived at Brundisium in September, 47 BC., and from thence proceeded in triumph to Rome. Soon, however, it became known to his “reproach” in the eyes of the republicans, that he was intending to secure the title of king and make his great-nephew, Octavianus, his successor. A conspiracy against his life was secretly fostered by Brutus and Cassius, both of whom were pardoned supporters of Pompey, and on March 15, 44 BC. Caesar was murdered in the senate house, falling at the foot of Pompey's statue. “His own reproach” had tragically turned “upon him,” and exactly as predicted he stumbled, and fell, and was not found.

By whom was he succeeded?

“Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom.” Daniel 11:20.

A period of confusion followed the assassination of Caesar but out of it a new triumvirate emerged. Octavianus, Caesar's adopted heir, took the provinces to the west of Italy, Mark Antony received the Eastern provinces and Egypt, while Lepidus was given North Africa, the three triumvirs holding Italy in common. Lepidus, who had little power or popularity, was soon displaced by Octavianus, and the triumvirate was reduced to a duo with Octavianus supported by the Senate and the West while Antony had allied himself with Cleopatra of Egypt.

At the celebrated battle of Actium in 31 BC. the struggle between the two rivals ended in the disastrous defeat and subsequent death of Antony and Cleopatra, leaving Octavianus, the intended successor of Julius Caesar, master of Egypt and of the whole Roman Empire.

It is particularly mentioned in the prophecy that this king would be a “raiser of taxes.” This prediction was literally fulfilled. The empty treasury resulting from the demands of the civil war compelled Augustus to institute a number of new taxes to add to the flow of revenue, and it was in obedience to Caesar's instructions relative to taxation in Palestine that Joseph and Mary had to travel up to Bethlehem just before Jesus was born. (Luke 2: 1.)

To what end did “the raiser of taxes” come?

“But within a few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle.” Daniel 11:20. The reign of Augustus viewed from the human standpoint was quite a long one of forty-four years, from 30 BC. to AD. 14. From the standpoint of the great span of prophecy, however, his reign was but a “few days.” As foretold, his end came neither by treachery at home nor by violence on the field of battle. Having been in poor health for some years he retired in AD. 14 to Nola, where, following a brief illness, he died a natural death in the arms of his wife Livia.

Who succeeded him and in what circumstances?

“And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honor of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.” Daniel 11: 21.

Having no male heir, Augustus originally intended his successor to be Marcellus, the son of his sister Octavia, but Marcellus died at the early age of twenty. He then chose his friend, Agrippa, as his successor. But Agrippa did not outlive Augustus and his sons Caius and Lucius were both mysteriously killed in their youth.

During all these years, Livia, the second wife of Augustus, had determined that her dissolute son by her first marriage, Tiberius, should succeed Augustus and she is believed to have been involved in the deaths of Marcellus, and the two sons of Agrippa. After the deaths of Caius and Lucius she brought Tiberius back to Rome from Rhodes, where he had been living in retirement, and persuaded Augustus to adopt him as his heir, though the emperor had once said to her, “Your son is too vile to wear the purple of Rome!” The prophetic Word had unerringly foreseen that the “vile person” would ascend the throne of Augustus, and so it transpired.

After all the intrigues and treachery of Livia, one might have anticipated trouble when Augustus died, but in fact Tiberius came “peaceably” into the kingdom by “Flattery!” Says the Encyclopedia Americana: “On the death of Augustus, he succeeded (AD. 14), without opposition, to the sovereignty of the empire; which, however, with his characteristic dissimulation, he affected to decline, until solicited by the servile senate.” Vol. 12, page 251, Art. “Tiberius.”

During his earlier life Tiberius had managed to conceal from most of his associates his essentially sensual and vicious nature, but after his accession it became manifest in all its vileness. In AD. 26 he actually left the rule of the empire in the hands of his supposed confidant, Aelius Sejanus, and retired to the island of Capri, where he gave himself over to bestial sensuality and cruel sadism.

What military success did this “vile” king have?

'And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflown from before him,' and shall be broken." Daniel 11:22.

Despite his immoral and dissolute character Tiberius enjoyed great military success both before and after his accession to the throne, especially along the northern frontiers of the empire.

Against whom in particular would his power be exerted?

"Yea, also the Prince of the covenant!" Daniel 11:22.

More significant, however, than any of the many northern tribes which were overthrown by the arms of Tiberius, was the fact that it was during his reign that Jesus, "the Prince of the covenant," was crucified. According to Luke, John the Baptist started to preach in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3: 1-3), and Jesus began his ministry six months later. Reckoning the years of Tiberius from the time he became co-ruler with his stepfather (August, AD. 12), would place the beginning of Christ's ministry in the latter part of AD. 27, and His death in the spring of AD. 31, in the nineteenth year of Tiberius.

In AD. 37 the vile king himself perished. He had removed from Capri to a villa near Misenum, where exhausted by debauchery he sank into a coma. His courtiers, thinking him to be at the point of death proclaimed Caligula as Caesar, and when Tiberius unexpectedly revived, they suffocated him with pillows.

Thus six years after the "altogether lovely One" had been put to death in His innocence on Calvary's cross, the "vile person" who sat upon the throne of the empire received the deserts of his terrible life.

31. The Tragedy of the Jew

How treacherously did Rome work against the Jewish people?

"And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people." Daniel 11:23.

In verses fourteen to twenty of this remarkable prophecy, the political history of the Roman "robbers" is outlined from their first interference in the affairs of the kings of north and south to the complete elimination of both powers and the occupation of the "whole kingdom" of Alexander by Augustus Caesar. In the verses that follow this decisive period is recapitulated, particularly from the angle of the people of God, beginning with the league of amity between Rome and the Jews in the middle of the second century BC. and closing with the desolating Roman flood which in AD. 70 overwhelmed the apostate nation abandoned by its God.

It was in 161 BC. that the Hasmonean family, seeking to establish a Jewish kingdom, independent of the Seleucid Empire, first sought the protection of Rome in a "league of amity and confederacy!" Josephus has preserved the text of the treaty and also records that the alliance was reviewed about 128 BC. when Hyrcanus sent another embassy to Rome. At that time it was agreed "to renew their league of friendship and mutual assistance with these good men, and who were sent by a good and friendly people."-"Antiquities of the Jews," book xiii, chap. 10, sec. 2.

How did Rome's rise to power in the East contrast with her earlier struggles?

"He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province. And he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his father's fathers: he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches: yea, and he shall forecast his devices against the strongholds, even for a time." Daniel 11:24.

Rome's conquest of the Western Mediterranean lands was the result of continuous and desperate conflict. In the East, however, her methods changed to a great degree from conquest to craft. Time and again she would play one power off against another and then step in and with little effort acquire all. In other cases, as with the Jews, she would offer her friendship and protection which eventually led to annexation.

Against whom did Rome come finally into conflict?

"And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army. And the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him." Daniel 11:25.

The final conflict which gave Rome the "whole kingdom" of Alexander was, as we have already seen, between Rome and the king of the south, or actually the queen of the south-the beautiful and powerful Cleopatra.

The Roman duumvir Antony, fascinated by Queen Cleopatra, had joined himself to her court in Alexandria and between them they had conceived a vast plan for the revival of the kingdom of the Ptolemies and the division of the Roman world among their Children. Stung by the insult, the Romans looked to Octavianus to maintain the prestige of the empire, a task which he was only too ready to accept.

In BC. 31, Antony gathered at Ephesus his fleet of 500 galleys with 125,000 soldiers on board, and, headed by the gilded, purple sailed galley of Cleopatra. They sailed for the Adriatic, anchoring off Corcyra, while the army was put ashore near Actium.

Augustus was able to assemble in the northern Adriatic only about half as many ships as Antony, nor had he at his disposal more than 80,000 troops. Antony had been advised to fight out the issue on land, but he decided to place his main hopes upon a naval battle. The two forces met on September 2, 31 BC. in the Gulf of Ambracia, near the city of Actium, and one of the most decisive conflicts in history began.

What brought Antony's defeat and the extinction of Egypt?

“Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow: and many shall fall down slain.” Daniel 11:26.

As the prophecy indicated, victory for Rome came as the result of defection within the opposing forces. When victory for the Egyptian side began to be in doubt, Cleopatra turned her ship round and fled. Sixty other Egyptian ships followed suit. When Antony realized what was happening he lost heart himself and, following after Cleopatra in a swift sailing ship, boarded her vessel, leaving the remnants of the Egyptian fleet to be destroyed and the army to surrender without fighting to Octavianus.

The next year Octavianus appeared in Egyptian waters and his troops landed on both sides of Alexandria. When the Egyptian fleet and the cavalry went over to Octavianus without striking a blow, Antony was compelled to retire into Alexandria, where, being misinformed that Cleopatra was dead, he fell on his own sword.

Actually Cleopatra, hoping to charm Octavianus by her beauty, had hidden herself in her palace. But when she learned that the victorious Roman intended to spare her life merely that she might grace his triumph in Rome she destroyed herself.

The death of Cleopatra brought the Ptolemaic dynasty of the kings of the south to an end, and when Egypt was declared a Roman province, the “whole kingdom” of Alexander was at last in Roman hands.

How disastrously did the intrigues of the rival rulers end?

“And both these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed.” Daniel 11:27.

The defeat and death of Antony brought to a climax the “mischief” which the two Romans had been planning against each other ever since the death of Julius Caesar. And “at the time appointed” the end of the quarrel came with the triumph of the one and the suicide of the other.

What glorious era was now to open in the history of Rome?

“Then shall he return into his land with great riches.” Daniel 11:28.

The victories of Octavianus, culminating in the annexation of the rich land of Egypt, brought great wealth to Rome and the age of Augustus proved literally to be the Golden Age of Rome.

Against whom, however, was the mighty Roman power soon to be directed?

“And his heart shall be against the holy covenant.” Daniel 11:28.

Though Rome had, in the beginning, supported the Jews in their efforts to break away from the Seleucid Empire, when Palestine became a Roman province, it became the subject of crushing taxation and attempts at rebellion were put down with cruel force.

In earlier days God had delivered His people time and again from their oppressors, but this time there was to be rig deliverance. Their “seventy weeks” of probation had passed and they had sealed their doom by demanding the crucifixion of the Son of God. Consequently, when Vespasian and his son Titus in AD. 70 entered Palestine their fearful end came not so much for their insurrection against Rome, as their rebellion against heaven.

How completely was Palestine reduced?

“And he shall do exploits, and return to his own land.” Daniel 11:28.

In the first stages of the Palestine campaign, Vespasian and Titus reduced the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, where Jesus had been rejected by His fellow-countrymen.

When Vespasian was called back to Rome to assume the Imperial throne. Titus marched south on Jerusalem and besieged it. As the Roman armies surrounded the city, the Christians were reminded of the warning given by Jesus before His crucifixion. “And when you shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereunto.” Luke 21:20-22.

Profiting by an unexpected retirement of the Romans, the Christians escaped from the city and when the besieging army again closed round Jerusalem and the city was taken by storm, not a Christian perished.

Following these “exploits” against the “holy covenant.” the victorious Titus returned to Rome where the golden candlestick and other articles which he had saved from the temple were exhibited in his great triumph. The candlestick was afterward placed in Vespasian's Temple of peace and was depicted upon the Arch of Titus where, though mutilated by the passage of time, it still witnesses to the dire consequences of overstepping the limits of divine probation.

32. Identifying The Great Conspiracy

What diminution of power was subsequently to overtake Rome?

“At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter!” Daniel 11:29.

Despite the triumphs of Rome under the great Caesars, its days were numbered and “at that time appointed” its fortunes were reversed. (Compare Daniel 11: 24) If the “time appointed” is to be taken as a specific prophetic “time” of 360 years during which Rome would enjoy unchallenged supremacy, and this is dated from the battle of Actium, 31 BC. it would extend to AD. 330, which was the time when the barbarians became a serious menace to the empire, and the exact year when Constantine the Great removed the capital of the empire from its ancient seat at Rome in the West to his new city of Constantinople on the shores of the Bosphorus.

At the end of this “time,” one of Rome's new enemies was to come from the south. The Romans would go forth to meet the menace, but their experience would be very different from their “exploits” in the south lands in earlier days.

By what new power was Rome at this time attacked?

“For the ships of Chittim shall come against him.” Daniel 11:30.

“Chittim” is mentioned a number of times in the writings of the prophets, and was a general term for the coastlands and islands of the Mediterranean. This is confirmed by Josephus who states: “All islands and the greatest part of the sea-coast, are called Chethim [Chittim] by the Hebrews.”

When Tyre was destroyed by Alexander, the Tyrians, who had been the chief Mediterranean sea-power, “fled in their ships,” as Josephus tells us, “and took refuge in Carthage,” which thus qualified for the term the “ships of Chittim.”

At the time referred to in the prophecy, the Phoenician kingdom of Carthage had passed into the hands of the barbarian Vandals who, after occupying this ardent city in 439AD., proceeded to build up a navy which made them for three decades “the tyrants” of the sea. These Vandal war vessels were, therefore, the “ships of Chittim” which began their destructive attacks upon Italy about 440 AD.

Centuries before the Romans had destroyed the Carthaginian navy in the Punic Wars; now it was the Romans turn to be ravaged. In A.D 455, in the greatest of the Vandal marauding expeditions, Rome itself was taken and in fourteen days looted of all its removable wealth.

Against whom did Rome vent its indignation?

“Therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do.” Daniel 11: 30.

Rome was “grieved” and humiliated by her weakness in the face of the barbarian onslaughts, and sought a scapegoat to explain the ill fortune that had come to her. The scapegoat was found in the Christians, the people of the holy covenant.

The non-Christian, Zosimus, commenting on the sack of Rome in AD. 410 by the barbarian Alaric, notes that Athens, protected by Athena, was spared invasion by Alaric's horde, but Rome, which had exchanged its ancient gods for Christianity, was ravaged.

But there was no new persecution of the Christians as in earlier days, nor any revival of paganism as was attempted by the Emperor Julian in the middle-of the fourth century AD. Christianity had come to stay.

How would the compromise between paganism and Christianity be effected?

“He shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant.” Daniel 11:30.

It was not, however, a pure Christianity which conquered the Roman Empire, but a travesty of the true faith. In the process of winning over the empire to Christianity, the Christian church was itself corrupted by the favors it received. As a result it became divided into the powerful, yet withal increasingly apostate, Roman church, enjoying the Imperial approval and favor, and the true people of God who refused to compromise their faith for any material advantages which might thereby accrue.

What double pollution thus resulted?

“And arms shall stand in his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that makes desolate.” Daniel 11 : 3 1.

The liaison between the Roman state and apostate Christendom did not save the empire, and it was fatal to the church.

The pollution of the “sanctuary of strength,” that is the ancient seat of the Roman Empire, began with the successive sackings of Rome by the barbarians, the first by Alaric in AD. 410. It became deeper when, in AD. 476, Odoacer expelled Romulus Augustulus from his Imperial throne, and was crowned the first barbarian king of Italy. It culminated in AD. 800, when the Frankish king, Charles the Great, was crowned as Emperor of the Roman Empire of the West.

While the “sanctuary of strength” was being progressively polluted by barbarian arms, the Roman apostasy was taking away “the daily sacrifice” or perpetual mediation of the Lord Jesus, and in its place setting up the spiritual “abomination that makes desolate.”

The “placing” or setting up of the abomination of desolation had its beginnings in the compromises of the Emperor Constantine with Christianity. And culminated in the famous decree of Justinian making Pope John “head of all the churches” and inaugurating the “time, times, and dividing of time,” during which the great apostasy was to exercise its power.

In Justinian's imperial letter in AD. 533, he declared- “Justinian victor, pious, fortunate, famous, triumphant, ever Augustus, to John, the most holy Archbishop and Patriarch of the noble city of Rome. Paying honor to the Apostolic See and to Your Holiness, as always has been and is our desire, and honoring your blessedness as a father. We hasten to bring to the knowledge of Your Holiness all that pertains to the condition of the churches, since it has always been our great aim to safeguard the unity of Your Apostolic See and the position of the holy churches of God which now prevails and abides securely without any disturbing trouble. Therefore we have been sedulous to subject and unite all the priests of the Orient throughout its whole extent to

the see of Your Holiness. . . . Whatever questions happen to be mooted at present we have thought necessary to be brought to Your Holiness's knowledge, however clear and unquestionable they may be, and though firmly held and taught by all the clergy in accordance with the doctrine of Your Apostolic See. For we do not suffer that anything which is mooted, however clear and unquestionable, pertaining to the state of the churches, should fail to be made known to Your Holiness, as being the head of all the churches. For as we said before, we are zealous for the increase of the honor and authority of Your See in all respects.” Codex Justiniani, lib. 1, tit. I; trs. R. F. Littledale in “The Petrine Claims,” page 293.

This status of Rome was confirmed by Justinian's famous code, the ninth edict of which stated that “as the elder Rome was the founder of the laws; so was it not to be questioned that in her was the supremacy of the pontificate.”

The 131st edict declared even more specifically: “We, therefore, decree that the most holy Pope of the elder Rome is the first of all the priesthood, and that the most blessed Archbishop of Constantinople. The new Rome, shall hold the second rank after the holy Apostolic chair of the elder Rome.”

While the Arian king Theodoric ruled in Rome, these decrees were, of course, of limited efficacy, as the Pope's position was subject to the discretion of the barbarian king. But when, in pursuance of Justinian's plan for the reconquest of the West, Belisarius expelled the Goths from Rome in AD. 536 and from Italy in AD. 538, the abomination of desolation became securely “placed” in the seat which it was to occupy for many a long century.

33. Faith in Dark Ages

How deeply was the compromising church of Rome corrupted?

“And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries.” Daniel 11:32.

Through the Dark Ages, the compromising church of Rome sank deeper and deeper into apostasy against the covenant. Bishops and abbots became princes as well as priests, and the great ecclesiastical organization accumulated vast wealth and power, by which it was sadly corrupted. The local clergy likewise demanded money at every turn. So much so that Juan de Valdez, brother of the secretary of Emperor Charles V, wrote:

“I see that we can scarcely get anything from Christ's ministers but for money; at baptism money, at bishoping money, at marriage money, for confession-no, not extreme unction without money! They will ring no bells without money, no burial in the church without money; so that it seems that Paradise is shut up from them that have no money.”-Quoted by F. Seebohm in “The Era of the Protestant Revolution,” page 58.

False teachings and practices were foisted upon the ignorant masses in order to strengthen the Papacy's hold and supplement the church's revenues. Masses were sold for purely monetary gain. “Penny preachers” shamelessly hawked indulgences until Gascoigne, Chancellor of Oxford in 1450, bitterly wrote: “Sinners say nowadays, 'I care not how many or what evils I do in God's sight. For I can easily and quickly get plenary remission of all guilt and penalty by an absolution and indulgence granted me by the Pope, whose written grant I have bought for 4d. or 6d., or have won as a stake for a game of tennis.'” Quoted in G. G. Coulton's “Social Life in Britain,” page 204.

Besides unspeakable avarice, the church was blighted by universal moral corruption. The priesthood, from the papal throne to the parish cleric, sank to fearful depths of degradation and iniquity. Bishops and archbishops even drew regular incomes from the sale of licenses for concubinage among the lower clergy.

“It was notorious to everyone living at the time,” says F. Seebohm, “that Rome used her power so ill, and that her character and that of her Popes were so evil, that she had become both politically and spiritually the center of wickedness and rottenness in Europe.”- “The Era of the Protestant Revolution,” page 22.

Did any remain proof against the universal corruption?

“But the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.” Daniel 11:32.

Despite the moral and spiritual darkness of the Middle Ages, the light of truth was never completely extinguished. Scattered here and there throughout Europe, as also in Asia and Africa, there was a remnant which “knew their God” and who resolutely witnessed to their faith.

There were the Albigenses of Southern France in the twelfth century, against whom Alexander III in 1180 and Innocent II in the next century raised crusades of extirpation.

There were the Waldenses, who went out like the seventy in the days of Christ, urging men to turn from their sins, and who won thousands between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries from darkness to light at the peril of their lives.

There were the Joachimites within the church of Rome, raised up by Joachim of Floris, who at the end of the twelfth century declared that the Papacy had made the church “a house of prostitution,” “a den of robbers,” and was Antichrist.

There was Wycliffe in England in the fourteenth century who translated the whole Bible into the English language and organized the “poor priests” to distribute it and teach the pure Gospel throughout the land.

There were the Hussites of Bohemia, gathered out by the reforming work of John Huss in the fifteenth century, and many other “reformers before the Reformation” too numerous to mention here.

These all refused to compromise the pure faith of Christ even though for thousands, yea millions, it meant privation, torture, and death. In many lands these noble Christians “did exploits” for the cause of Christ during the dark days of apostasy.

How active was this faithful remnant?

“And they that understand among the people shall instruct many!” Daniel 11:33.

In all manner of ways the faithful remnant went about instructing those who were responsive to the pure message of the Gospel. Where there was freedom to preach, they openly taught the people; and when their preaching was proscribed they went forth as peddlers with Bibles and tracts secreted among their merchandise. Secretly, in private homes or in remote spots in the mountains, they gathered the believers for worship and instruction. So the flame of truth was kept alive.

How terribly, however, did the true people of God suffer for their faith?

“Yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days.” Daniel 11: 33.

Terrible, indeed, were the sufferings of those who stood for the pure faith of Christ. Crusades and massacres were organized to exterminate them. At thousands of stakes all over Europe they were burned alive. Multitudes suffered cruel imprisonment and endured treatment worse than death in the “floating hells” of the prison galleys. Countless more were spoiled of their homes and all their possessions, and driven out into the waste places of the earth.

“Many days” they suffered thus. Actually, twelve hundred and sixty prophetic days, or literal years, was the period during which the Papacy was permitted to exert its power against the true church, though the evil was increasingly restrained, by the mercy of God for His faithful people, as the time drew on.

By what were the trials of the persecuted church mitigated?

“Now when they shall fall, they shall be helped with a little help.” Daniel 11: 34.

Up to the beginning of the sixteenth century, the European rulers in general supported the Catholic church and willingly made the secular arm available for the execution of the church's sentence against heretics. But in the sixteenth century, the great Reformation movement, which originated in Germany and Switzerland, saw many of the princes embracing the reformed faith and granting protection to their Protestant subjects. It was in fact the princes who protested against the enforcement of the Edict of Worms at the Second Diet of Spires in 1529 who first earned the name of “Protestants.”

In due time Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, England, Scotland, and the Netherlands all revolted from Rome, leaving only France, Italy, and Spain tightly in her grip.

By what, however, was the Protestant witness marred?

“But many shall cleave to them with flatteries!” Daniel 11 : 34.

The accession of rulers to the Reformed faith was not, however, all gain to the Protestants. Some of the princes embraced Protestantism merely to strengthen their hands in resisting papal demands. and because the compromise principle of Augsburg that “the ruler's choice determines the established religion of his territory,” gave them unfettered power over the bodies and souls of their subjects. So, in not a few countries, the Reformation was for the common people no more than a change of tyranny.

How long did the persecution of the faithful continue?

“And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed.” Daniel 11:35.

In the seventh chapter of Daniel, where the war against the true church is first brought to view, the period of papal domination is exactly specified as a “time, times and the dividing of time.” This we saw was 1,260 literal years, beginning in AD. 538, when the last of the obstructing horns was removed from the path of the advancing church of Rome, and ending in 1798, with the spectacular curtailment of papal power by Napoleon Bonaparte.

In the present prophecy it is now revealed that the termination of this period would mark the beginning of the most momentous period in the history of the world, designated the “time of the end.” The stirring events in earth and heaven during this most decisive of all times will unfold in the studies which follow.

34. The Great Revolt

What new power would arise to curb the papal tyranny as the time of its supremacy drew to an end?

“And the king shall do according to his will.” Daniel 11:36.

Chief among the factors which would bring the papal tyranny to an end would be the rise of a new power which would extricate itself from the ecclesiastical domination of Rome and “do according to his will.” Did such a power appear around the end of the eighteenth century. Yes it did—in France; and the means by which the papal fetters were broken was the terrible French Revolution.

In the French Revolution the Papacy tasted, by a signal retribution, some of the horrors it had itself perpetrated in the religious persecutions of the Middle Ages. Yet even the excesses of the “Reign of Terror” were as nothing compared with the sustained terror of the centuries of papal domination. As Michelet has truly said: “What are the twelve thousand men guillotined of the

one, to the millions of men butchered, hung, broken on the wheel-to that pyramid of burning stakes-to those masses of burnt flesh, which the other piled up to heaven?"

In its beginnings the Revolution was no more than a demand on the part of the unpropertied classes, or "third estate," for a fairer representation in the government of France. But when the king, the nobles, and hierarchy refused to capitulate, the third estate took over the reins of government, and set up a new and Revolutionary constitution.

When the Duc de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt hurried to Versailles to acquaint Louis XVI of the capture of the hated prison of the Bastille, the king cried out, "Why, this is a revolt!" The duke replied: "It is a revolution." He was right, for its reverberations were to extend into every country in Europe and to resound down the years to our own time.

At the time of the Revolution every fiftieth person in the land was a priest, monk, or nun. The church owned between one-fifth and one half of all the land and property in France, and had an income of between fifty and one hundred million sterling a year. By the Declaration of Rights all tithes and fees were abolished, all payments to Rome were discontinued, and shortly after, all church property was confiscated for the nation and all religious orders dissolved.

To what extreme were the revolutionaries carried in their rejection of papal authority?

"And he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods. . . . Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers. . . nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all." Daniel 11:36,37.

Several decades before the Revolution, Voltaire began his attacks on Christianity denying the existence of God, the divinity of Christ, revelation, and miracles. He declared: "I am weary of hearing people repeat that twelve men established the Christian religion. I will prove that one man may suffice to overthrow it." The influence of Voltaire and the Encyclopedists penetrated every level of society, but up to this time there had been no trial of strength against the old order. Now the followers of Voltaire had their opportunity and they took it.

If the fall of the Bastille marked the opening of the first phase of the Revolution, the disinterring of the remains of Voltaire from his unhallowed grave at Scellieres and their removal, with great ceremony, on July 11, 1791, to the Pantheon foreshadowed the second phase, the coming of the pagan state.

The Girondists, the first republicans in power after the dethronement and execution of the king at the beginning of 1793, "were nearly all unbelievers," and many of the Jacobins, who superseded them and inaugurated the Reign of Terror (October 31, 1793), were blatant atheists.

Roeme on October 5, 1793, introduced a new calendar abolishing the weekly cycle and substituting a ten-day week, with every decade or tenth day, a day of rest.

Chaumette as procureur of the Commune sought systematically to dechristianize the capital.

"Ministers of whatever sect, were forbidden to function outside their churches," declares J. M. Thompson. "The vessels used in the chapel of the Town Hall were sent to the Mint, and the altar-linen made into shirts for soldiers. Church books were sold to grocers for packing paper; leaden coffins were melted down in the munitions factories; religious images were mutilated and relics burnt."-"The French Revolution," page 443.

On November 9th, Chaumette induced Gobel, bishop of Paris, "to declare to the Convention that the religion which he had taught so many years was, in every respect, a piece of priest craft, which had no foundation either in history or sacred truth. He disowned, in solemn and explicit terms, the existence of the Deity to whose worship he had been consecrated, and devoted himself in future to the homage of liberty, equality, virtue, and morality."-Sir W. Scott in "Life of Napoleon Bonaparte," Vol. 1, chapter 17.

The next day, November 10th, "the doors of the Convention were thrown open to a band of musicians, preceded by whom, the members of the municipal body entered in solemn procession, singing a hymn in praise of liberty. And escorting, as the object of the future worship, a veiled female, whom they termed the Goddess of Reason." - Ibid.

When the goddess, a dancing girl of the opera, was introduced to the assembly the orator declared: "Mortals cease to tremble before the powerless thunders of a God whom your fears have created. Henceforth acknowledge no divinity but Reason. I offer you its noblest and purest image; if you must have idols, sacrifice only to such as this. . . . Fall before the august Senate of Freedom, O Veil of Reason!

Alison in "History of Europe," Vol. 1, chap. 10.

Finally, the opera-singer goddess was borne to the Notre Dame where she was placed upon the high altar and worshipped to the strains of the Hymn to Liberty.

"This not being deemed sufficient," declares Louis Madelin another Goddess of Reason, the wife of Momoro, a member of the Convention, was installed at Saint-Sulpice on the following decadi. Before long these Liberties and Reasons were swarming all over France: wantons, only too often, with here and there a goddess of good family and decent behavior."-"The French Revolution," page 389.

On the Paris stage the comedian Monvel, arrayed as the priest of Illuminism, reached the heights of blasphemy when he cried, "God if You exist ... avenge Your injured name. I bid You defiance. You remain silent; You dare not launch Your thunders; who, after this, will believe in Your existence?" -Ibid., page 24.

So, just as Prophecy declared, the Convention and populace of France during the Reign of Terror swung from the extreme of Catholicism to the extreme of infidelity and atheism, speaking "marvelous things against the God of gods."

How did the great revolt affect morality?

"Neither shall he regard ... the desire of women." Daniel 11: 37.

Associated with the destruction of religion was an inevitable and fearful deterioration of morality. "In the neighborhood of the Convention," writes Louis Marie Debost, "among the crowds walking up and down. . . are heard people of repulsive appearance saying that the existence of God was a hoary superstition. That hell was a myth, and man a being without a soul, who ought to indulge all the pleasures to which his nature prompted him, without concern either for religious or for moral principles. In accordance with this view, indecent prints and obscene books were on sale; and nothing was left undone to destroy morality or corrupt the public mind."-Quoted in "The French Revolution," by J. M. Thompson, page 445.

By a decree on September 20, 1792, the dissolving of marriage was made possible and immediately, states Louis Medelin, there was a rush for divorce; by the end of 1793-fifteen months after the passing of the decree-5,994 divorces had been granted in Paris.... Under the Directory we see women passed from hand to hand by a legal process. What was the fate of the children born of these successive unions? Some people got rid of them: the number of foundlings in the Year V rose to 4,000 in Paris and to 44,000 in the other departments. . . . The family was dissolved."- "The French Revolution," pages 552, 553.

Besides the goddess of Reason what new god was raised to preeminence by the Revolution?

"But in his estate shall he honor the god of forces (margin, munitions): and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things." Daniel 11:38.

Turning its back upon moral suasion, the Revolution exalted in its place brute "force," with which it sought to consolidate the new people's regime in France. Before very long Revolutionary France was using its forces in foreign conflict, and with the rise of Napoleon, France began to dream of a *universal empire which would communicate the blessings of the Revolution to the world.

The question may perhaps arise in some minds how this "god of forces" could be one which their fathers "had not known," for civil wars and wars of conquest have been common to every age. Admittedly there have always been wars, but war took on a different form with the Revolution. Up to the end of the eighteenth century it had been the "sport of kings" and enlistment had been largely voluntary, the ruler who could pay the largest wages and offer the greatest spoils securing the largest army. From the time of the Revolution war became an instrument of policy of the people and war service a national responsibility.

The word "conscription" was first heard in October, 1789, in the debates in the French Assembly, and in the spring of 1793 the first law of universal liability to service was enacted. It was decreed that "unmarried citizens and widowers, without children, from eighteen to twenty-five" were to be called up, and the conscript army of 450,000 which resulted was the first step to the total war of our day. The "Grande Army" of Napoleon was the next. "Thus 1793," rightly says the Encyclopedia Britannica, "saw the birth of a new system of war."-Vol. 9, page 807.

In a special sense; therefore, the Revolution did initiate the worship of the "god of forces."

What conspicuous success was to attend the activities of this new power with its strange god?

"Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain." Daniel 11:39.

The revolutionary devotees of the "god of forces" first wrested France from the power of the king, the nobles, and the church and gave it to the people, among whom it was "divided" to provide funds for the impoverished national exchequer.

By 1796, France had adopted the policy of "invading and revolutionizing the monarchies and principalities of old Europe. . . . The 'liberation of the oppressed' had its part in the decision, and the glory of freeing the serf easily merged in the glory of defeating the serf's masters." Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 9, page 813.

With the birth of the French Empire, Napoleon Bonaparte led the conquering armies of France from end to end of Europe as well as into Africa and Asia, everywhere "dividing" and reorganizing the lands to consolidate his control.

At Tilsit in July, 1807, Napoleon and Alexander of Russia "agreed to deprive Prussia of half her territory: all west of the Elbe to become the kingdom of Westphalia for Napoleon's brother Jerome, and her Polish provinces to become the Grand Duchy of Warsaw under the King of Saxony. Alexander was to receive Finland and the Danube provinces of Turkey which he hoped France would help him to secure."--C. A. Alington in "Europe," page 325.

If Napoleon had not been stopped at Waterloo he would assuredly have "divided" the world.

How long was the great revolt to continue?

"And shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done." Daniel 11:36.

The actual duration of the French Revolution was comparatively short. By the middle of 1794 the fierce opening scenes of the "indignation" were over, and by 1815 the Napoleonic Empire had collapsed. But the forces which the Revolution had set in motion did not stop. The conflict between the revolutionary forces and the remnants of the old tyranny was to go on all over the face of Europe until the "indignation" had fully done its work.

Significantly, the several phases of the revolt in France have been most exactly re-enacted on a European scale. As in France the revolution began with constitutional reform and ended in a "reign of terror," so many of the new European liberal democracies which arose in the nineteenth century have now passed from their constitutional phases into dictatorships of the proletariat. To-day, says J. J. Saunders in The Age of Revolution, a "revived and scientifically organized Jacobinism" has set up a new gigantic "reign of terror" over vast areas of the earth's surface and the threat to the rest of the world is dark and menacing. The great revolt is reaching its world climax. What will be the outcome? What will be unfolded in the final scene?

35. The Last Drama

In the time of the end, what ancient conflict would again develop? “And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him. And the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.” Daniel 11:40.

When Rome intruded itself into the Eastern Mediterranean world in the second century BC. it found the Seleucids and the Ptolemies, the kings of north and south respectively, in deadly conflict. In a century and a half, Rome had destroyed both kingdoms, and had absorbed their territories into its own vast domains. Thereafter we hear no more of these kings in the prophetic Word until the verse we are now considering, which is dated “in the time of the end.” From this and the remaining verses of the chapter, we learn that in the very last days two new powers would come into existence with territories to the north and south of the Holy Land just like the original kings of north and south. And that the clash of these two powers upon the hills of Palestine would introduce the last act of the world drama.

That the kings of “north” and “south” did disappear completely for nearly two millenniums is one of the most striking facts of the history of the Middle East. Through all the Roman period there was no room for either north, south, east, or west within its bounds. When Western Rome was broken up into the barbarian kingdoms, Byzantine Rome, with its capital at Constantinople, continued to dominate the Middle East until the seventh ' century, when the great Moslem power came into existence. Thereafter, for a further period of thirteen centuries, Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, were a part first of the Saracenic and then of the Ottoman Empire.

During this long period, the Middle East played an almost negligible part in the history of the nations. It was a world apart, penetrated only occasionally by diplomats, merchants, and pilgrims to the holy places. Very significantly, however, with the coming of the “time of the end,” that is, the beginning of the nineteenth century. When so many other prophetic trends began to take concrete shape, the “iron curtain” which had descended between Western Christendom and the lands of Islam was lifted, and Middle East affairs suddenly began to assume an importance which they had not had for more than a millennium.

The reason for the new turn of events was the approaching dissolution of the Islamic Ottoman Empire and the consequent scramble on the part of the European nations for a place in the power vacuum which was being created. As one writer put it, “anxious watchers” stood by the bedside of the “sick man of the East ... not as loving friends, soothing his closing hours. But as interested beneficiaries in his mortgaged estate, seeking to realize as large a share as possible when foreclosure was made, and his estate was torn into fragments by rival claimants.”

This new and startling interest in the “Eastern question,” coinciding with what the prophetic Word foretold in the “time of the end,” naturally engaged the attention of the students of the Scriptures.

Believing from other signs that the coming of the Lord was imminent, they came to the conclusion that the closing verses of Daniel eleven were due to be fulfilled in a comparatively few years by the powers then occupying the Middle East stage. Namely Turkey to the north and Egypt to the south. They, therefore, looked for some correspondence between prophecy and history.

They saw an ambitious pasha of Egypt preparing to “push” at his nominal overlord, the Sultan, of Turkey. In this ambition the pasha was encouraged by Napoleon who landed in Egypt in 1798, and the next year began an advance into Turkish Syria.

It was stated in the prophecy that the “king of the north” would fiercely react against the southern “push” and throw it back. This seemed to find a fulfillment in the fact that the Turkish forces, with the assistance of the British and Russians, forced the French to retire, and eventually drove them right out of Egypt and restored the sovereignty of the Sultan over the south land.

If, however, the students of the prophetic page in the days of the great Advent awakening of the early nineteenth century had realized that the time of Christ's coming was not quite so near as they had thought. They would have seen that these events, while bearing some resemblance to the specifications, came short of completely fulfilling the prophetic outline.

In the first place, the kings of north and south were never really separate and distinct kingdoms. Actually, Egypt continued as a province of the Ottoman Empire right on until 1881, when it was taken over as a protectorate by Britain.

Again the Sultan could hardly be described as going forth “like a whirlwind” or of “overflowing” and “passing over” in his wars with France and Egypt. It was only with the active support of the British and Russians that he was able to stop the advance of the rebel pasha of Egypt into Syria and Asia Minor. Certainly Turkey in the nineteenth century bore no resemblance to the “whirlwind” king of the north in the prophecy.

Today, therefore, we realize that the contending nations brought to view in these verses may not be the comparatively minor powers of Turkey and Egypt, but two far greater powers destined to clash on the Middle East stage in the final terrific conflict of history. So we are led to ask two questions about the Middle East today:

1. Is the “Eastern question” still as controversial an issue among the nations now as it was in the nineteenth century?
2. Have any great powers appeared in this region during the past century or so, and if so are their interests likely to come into conflict, with worldwide repercussions?

In answer to the first question it will at once be realized that the Middle East is a source of infinitely greater concern to the nations today than ever it was in the nineteenth century.

If Napoleon saw the Middle East as a vital line of communication between Britain and her possessions in India, today it has become the very hub of the world's communication systems by land, sea, and air, and the key to world security.

Besides being the strategic center of the world, the Middle East has also acquired enormous importance by reason of the vast natural resources discovered there in recent years, the chief of these being oil. Actually, the oil there constitutes no less than forty-two per cent of the world's reserves, while to date they are supplying only four per cent of the world output. No wonder that Mr. Ickes should have made the remark: "The Middle East is the coming capital of the oil empire!"

Besides oil there are other as yet untapped resources in the Middle East, which might easily become a bone of contention among the great powers. In the Dead Sea it is estimated that there are supplies of essential mineral elements like potassium, sodium, chlorine, magnesium, and bromine sufficient for the world's needs for two thousand years.

"It is easy to see, therefore," President Truman has said, "how the Near East and the Middle East might become an arena of intense rivalry between outside powers, and how such rivalry might suddenly erupt into conflict."—"Public Opinion," 7 June 28, 1946.

This brings us then to our second question. In view of the strategic and economic importance of the Middle East and its vast natural resources, are there any particular powers orienting themselves north and south of Palestine and dominating the comparatively weak countries of Turkey, Egypt, and the Arab states? The answer at once springs to the lips, yes, indeed.

While Turkey still occupies the territory of the old Seleucid king of the north and Egypt is an independent kingdom as it was in the days of the Ptolemies. These minor nations are completely overshadowed by other great powers and the rivalry between these is the real menace in the Middle East to-day.

In the future conflict destined to break out in the Middle East how successful will the king of the north at first be?

"And he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon. He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps." Daniel 11:40-43.

While the church in each generation is admonished to compare prophecy with history and note the progressive outworking of the divinely foreshadowed course of events, it is not its prerogative to dogmatize on the future. All that can be said, therefore, on these as yet unfulfilled details is that they suggest that the future king of the north will at first be successful in his pressure southward, while the king of the south will be compelled to fall back toward Central Africa. The northern power will overrun Palestine between the Jordan and the Mediterranean, dominating the ancient highroad of the "way of the sea," but not concerning itself seriously with the eastern highlands and desert, once the home of the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites. In his victorious advance the king of the north will invade Egypt, spoiling it of its treasures, and penetrating even farther southward into Ethiopia and along the North African coast into Libya.

By what will this southern drive finally be arrested?

"But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him." Daniel 11:44.

When Turkey was regarded as the power which would execute this powerful southern thrust against Egypt in the last days, it was generally believed that "tidings out of the east and out of the north" indicated an attack on Turkey by the rising power of Russia which lay geographically to the north and east. Now, however, that the possibility exists that the conflict between the kings of north and south may have a vaster fulfillment than was formerly envisaged. The power or powers whose "tidings" produce such alarm in the heart of the "king of the north" may too have to be looked for from a more distant point of origin.

What find desperate effort will the king of the north put forth?

"Therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him." Daniel 11: 45.

In a final effort, the king of the north will seek to hold his own against his enemies on all sides. From the mountains of Palestine he will resist the fierce onslaught, but in vain. The king of the north will fall to rise no more.

What use will the victorious powers make of their victory? On this matter Daniel was not informed. John the Revelator, however, was and we shall learn more of the fateful period immediately after the overthrow of the king of the north when we come to the later chapters of the Revelation.

Here we are carried over this climactic period to the time when God at last intervenes to bring to an end the long controversy of the ages. This decisive event will be the subject of our next study.

36. From Tribulation to Triumph

As the drama of history reaches its climax upon earth, what momentous preparations will be going on in heaven?

"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great Prince which stands for the children of thy people." Daniel 12:1.

As events on earth move inexorably toward the final crisis, Heaven also is preparing for decisive intervention. At the precise time when the king of the north comes to his end at the hands of the combined forces arrayed against him, Michael, the great Prince—that is Christ—arises to play His part.

When Jesus ascended He sat down at the right hand of the Father “till His enemies be made His footstool.” Psalm 110:1; Hebrews 10:13. Now that the final defeat of the forces of unrighteousness is imminent, He “stands up” to assume His rightful authority. (Compare Daniel 11:2-4)

The standing up of Christ has also a further significance. As we have before noted, He has through the ages been continuously occupied in the heavenly sanctuary, pleading the merits of His blood on behalf of the responsive of heart. The “standing up” of Christ, therefore, must also mark the close of that intercessory ministry, when He lays aside His priestly garments to array Himself in the robes of kingship.

The point of time brought to view in this verse is, therefore, a momentous one indeed. How near it is we cannot tell, but the fact that the earthly crisis which is to be the signal for these momentous heavenly happenings seems imminent must surely urge all to seek cleansing from the last trace of sin, so that when the divine Advocate ends His intercessory ministry and comes forth as judge and King, we may be among those who are “accepted in the Beloved.”

With what fearful epoch will history close?

“And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time.” Daniel 12: 1.

Between the “standing up” of Michael or Christ and His actual appearing comes the most fearful period in the whole history of Satan's rebellion, “a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time!”

The reason is not far to seek. Probation has closed. The wicked, no longer restrained by the Spirit of God, are driven to their final desperate acts. And at the same time the seven vials of divine wrath are being poured out one after another upon a lost world. (See Revelation 16)

Who only will be delivered out of that terrible time?

“And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.” Daniel 12:1.

While the day of the Lord will be a day of terror to the rejectors of God, for those whose names are “written in the book” it will be the great day of deliverance and triumph. The great question, therefore, which all should be asking as the day of God draws on is, “Is my name written there?” It will be if we accept the merits of the shed blood of Christ and claim Jesus now as our “Prince and Savior.”

As the living wicked are destroyed and the living righteous are delivered by the returning Christ, what awakening will come to the dead?

“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” Daniel 12:2.

When Christ returns not only the living but the dead also will be profoundly affected by His presence. The Bible does not teach, as the Spiritualists suggest, that the spirits of the dead live on around us in some kind of ethereal existence. Nor does it teach, as Rome would have us believe, that they have a conscious existence in a remedial “purgatory” where they are prepared for admission to heaven. The Bible consistently declares that the dead are “asleep,” unconscious of anything in earth or heaven, and that not until Jesus comes with the “keys of hell [the gravel and of death]” (Revelation 1:18), will they “awake” out of their sleep.

In this passage Daniel refers to the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked as if it were one event (compare also John 5:25-29). But in the twentieth chapter of his prophecy, John the Revelator reveals the fact that these two resurrections will actually be separated by a period of one thousand years, commonly known as the millennium. The resurrection of the righteous, which he calls the “first” resurrection, will occur at the beginning of the millennium, while the resurrection of the wicked does not take place until its end. The relation between these resurrections we shall discuss more fully in due course.

What glorious reward will be granted to the saints?

“And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” Daniel 12:1

How often down the ages the Gospel of salvation has been characterized as “foolishness” by those who are wise in their own conceits. “The preaching of the cross,” was so regarded by the ancient Greeks (1 Corinthians 1: 18), and it is similarly thought of by many modern “Greeks,” too. It is foolish, according to them, to credulously accept the Bible as the Word of God. It is foolish to imagine that there is merit for us in the shed blood of Christ. It is foolish to regard the Ten Commandments given to the Israelites millenniums ago as the standard of conduct for man in our enlightened times.

In the day of God, however, the real values will be manifested. The wisdom of the world will then be seen to be foolishness, while the “foolishness” of God will be seen to be true wisdom, and they who have followed it the truly “wise.” The light of the worldly wise will go out in darkness, but those who have sought after and found the wisdom of God will shine forth as stars for ever.

37. How Long, O Lord?

As the aged prophet pondered the wonders which had been revealed to him, by whom were he and Gabriel joined?

“Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river.” Daniel 12: 5.

With the conclusion of “the Scripture of truth,” the revelations of God to the aged Daniel were almost completed. The long period which was to intervene between the overthrow of the kingdom of the Lord in the days of Zedekiah and its final re-establishment at the coming of Christ had been clearly mapped out for the guidance of the people of God. With the aid of the wonderful prophetic panorama which the prophet had faithfully recorded, the people of God would be able to trace the outworking of His purposes and see the grand climax drawing ever nearer.

God had but one more word for Daniel. To communicate it, two heavenly beings appeared, one on either bank of a river, and engaged Gabriel in conversation.

What question was put into the mouth of one of the angels?

“And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?” Daniel 12: 6.

Into the mouth of one of the angels, God dramatically put the question which ever recurred to the prophet's mind as he pondered all he had seen: “How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?”

How did Gabriel reply?

“And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by Him that lives for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half. And when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people all these things shall be finished.” Daniel 12:7.

For answer, Gabriel lifted up his hands to heaven in token of the veracity of the word which he spoke on the authority of God. He then reminded his angel hearers, and the prophet, of the focal time-period in the whole prophetic panorama, the “time, times, and an half,” of the great apostasy.

All the earlier events—the successive rise and fall of the four world empires—would lead up to the establishment of that “mystery of iniquity”; and after the end of its period of power, events would move rapidly to the final judgment of the apostate church and the deliverance of God's people.

What further time periods did he then associate with this crucial epoch?

“And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that makes desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days!” Daniel 12: 11.

With the period of the “time, times, and half a time,” the angel associated two other periods, each including the period of domination of the great apostasy, but extending beyond the twelve hundred and sixty years or running back anterior to its commencement. Seeing that the first period of 1,290 days is concerned particularly with the removal of the daily sacrifice and the setting up of the spiritual abomination, it would seem most likely that the thirty extra years is to be reckoned anterior to the twelve hundred and sixty. This would make its beginning in 508 AD. and its termination like that of the 1,260 years, in 1798. We ask then, did any event take place in this year which notably contributed to the setting up of the abomination?

The answer is, yes, for it was in 508 AD that Clovis, the Catholic king of the Franks, triumphed over his Arian rivals in Gaul and Spain and prepared the way for the dominance of the Papacy in the Middle Ages. In that year, asserts Richard W. Church, “it was decided that the Franks, and not the Goths, were to direct the future destinies of Gaul and Germany, and that the Catholic faith, and not Arianism, was to be the religion of these great realms”. “The Beginning of the Middle Ages,” pages 38, 39.

Clearly, therefore, the year AD. 508 ranks with AD. 538 as a decisive date in the establishment of the great apostasy.

In what date would there be special blessing for the saints?

“Blessed is he that waits, and comes to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.” Daniel 12:12.

The second period associated with the “time, times, and an half a time” is forty-five years longer than the 1,290 prophetic days or literal years. Do these years go back before AD. 508 or beyond their termination in 1798? The latter assumption is the more likely seeing that the forty-fifth before AD. 508 is of no special importance, whereas by adding forty-five years to 1798 we come to the decisive year of 1843-4, the terminal date of the 2,300 years.

Those privileged to be living at decisive epochs in the history of God's purpose are especially blessed. Jesus told His disciples at the time of His first advent that many prophets and kings had desired to see the things which they were privileged to behold (Luke 10: 24), but the blessing had been reserved for them. “Blessed,” He said, “are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.” Matthew 13:16.

Likewise blessed were the believers who lived in the decisive years 1843-4. They saw the culmination of the great Advent revival which had been growing in power and extent since the commencement of “the time of the end”. And to them was granted an understanding of the passing of the great High Priest from the first to the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary and the commencement of the investigative judgment of the world's Day of Atonement.

38. The Meaning of Our Amazing Age

Still perplexed by much of what had been shown to him, what final question did Daniel ask of Gabriel?

“And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?” Daniel 12:8.

Daniel was troubled because he was unable fully to comprehend all the symbolic pictures which had been opened up to him and the “times” associated with them. He longed to grasp completely their solemn import. He must get it all clear before his angel informant left him. So he asked of Gabriel, “O my lord, what shall be the end of these things?”

How did Gabriel set the aged prophet's mind at rest?

“And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end!” Daniel 12:9.

The angel's reply assured Daniel that his failure to comprehend all that had been revealed was not due to any dullness of his understanding. “Do not be concerned,” Gabriel said in effect, “if you can discern but vaguely the outline of the future. You have been the medium through whom God has revealed the progressive outworking of His purposes, but it is not for you to comprehend fully. The devious course of history down the long vistas of time. What God has shown you, He has clothed in the language of symbolism to shut up and seal its message until the knowledge shall be profitable and necessary for the church. Then it will be progressively opened up to their understanding, for their assurance and encouragement.”

Down the ages, therefore, the church may expect to see the prophetic picture become sharper and sharper as the events foretold emerge upon the page of history. Finally, the grand unfolding of the “end of these things” will come when the church and the world enter the climactic period of history designated “the time of the end.” Then the seals will be broken, then the symbols will become clear, then the people of God will see clearly the last steps of the way which will lead them safely through the gates into the kingdom.

What, therefore, was Daniel told to do with his prophecy?

“But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end.” Daniel 12:4.

So Daniel was told to close the book of his prophecy and seal it, so that not a word should be lost or changed. He might not understand it, but when the fateful “time of the end” came, its meaning would become clear and the church would walk the lighted way through the darkness of the last days.

By what striking signs would the arrival of the momentous “time of the end” be heralded?

“Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased!” Daniel 12: 4.

Seeing that the “time of the end” would be one of opening understanding for the church, it was important that the beginning of this period should be clearly recognizable. To aid the church to discern the coming of the time, God provided various pointers to indicate its arrival.

In the first place it was clearly dated by the termination of the “time, times, and half a time,” for when that period ended, the “time of the end” would begin.

Now it is revealed that the opening of this momentous epoch would be further signaled by a sudden, remarkable burst of progress and advancement in every phase of the world's life and work. “Many,” declared the angel, “shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.” By this striking sign the dating of the prophetic periods would be confirmed.

Did any such transformation of the face of civilization take place as the world entered the nineteenth century? Sir Richard Acland provides a striking answer:

“In the last hundred and fifty years there has been a social revolution without precedent in history. Take a typical citizen from a Babylonian civilization, . . . teach him the right language, and put him down in any European market town of 1780, and in twenty-four hours he'd understand everything going on, and more important, he'd understand how the ordinary man at the grass roots was thinking about his own life. Take a citizen of Sheffield from 1780 and put him in Sheffield to-day and he wouldn't have a clue to your thought unless he could remake the basic pattern of his thinking.”—Tribune, March 18, 1949.

In the expansion of knowledge, in discovery and invention, there is no corresponding period of time in all the history of man which can be compared with the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Mr. Gladstone was not exaggerating when he declared that he could point to a single decade in his own lifetime during which the world had advanced further than in five hundred earlier decades.

Historians have listed seven wonders of the ancient world, but those who have written the story of the past hundred years cannot but describe it as a century of wonders!

The prophet declared that men would “run to and fro” and undoubtedly the most spectacular of all the changes these years have wrought has been the unparalleled development of communications, whereby space and time have been well-nigh annihilated, and the peoples of the world have been drawn into the closest contact with one another.

When Queen Victoria came to the throne, the rich still drove in their horse carriages with mounted postillions, as had been the custom for centuries. Those who had no carriage of their own could choose between the mail coach or the slower stage coach, according to their means.

In 1825, however, the revolution in transportation began with the starting of the first steam train service between Stockton and Darlington in the industrial north of England. By 1842 there were 2,000 miles of railways in this country and expresses were travelling at the unbelievable speeds of twenty-nine to thirty-six miles an hour. Ten years later, 7,000 miles of iron roads had been laid, and now, a century and a quarter after Stephenson's "Rocket" set out on its first journey, the country is traversed by a vast system of metal ways, along which fiery monsters with Pullman coaches, restaurant cars, and sleepers, hurtle at speeds up to ninety miles an hour.

Railways began a little later on the Continent and in the New World, but they were not long in catching up on the progress in Britain, and now powerful engines haul their burdens from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from Cairo to the Cape, and from Leningrad to Vladivostock.

With the invention of the internal combustion engine in 1875, power-driven transport took another tremendous leap forward, and the automobile was soon competing with the steam engine as a means of speedy transport.

While land communications have been revolutionized by the steam train and the automobile, ocean travel has been similarly transformed during the past century and a half. In 1838, the journey to America ordinarily took six weeks. Steamships, however, were at that very time beginning to attract attention, and when the Royal William crossed the Atlantic in seventeen days in 1833, a new era had indeed opened. Fifteen years later the Cunard steamer America crossed from Liverpool to Canada in nine days. Now the Queen Mary and the Queen Elizabeth do the trip to New York in only four days.

Last of all, the internal combustion engine has literally lifted man off the earth and sent him speeding at ever-increasing speeds toward the stars. Less than half a century after the time when the first tiny contraption left the ground at Kitty Hawk, in North Carolina, the airplane has outstripped steamer, locomotive, and car.

Today Australia is only four days away from Britain by plane, and America less than half a day. Distant European capitals can be reached from London in a few hours. From New York to Los Angeles is only half a day's journey over prairies, deserts, canyons, and mountains.

And still we are only at the beginning of aerial achievement, for in the past few years the development of jet, ram-jet, turbo-jet and rocket engines have increased the speed of flight actually beyond that of sound. Surely the prophecy that men would "run to and fro" has been miraculously fulfilled.

Yet even this is not all. For while man has found ways of transporting himself at ever-increasing speeds from continent to continent, he has discovered means of sending his words even faster.

Until early Victorian times, a message could be sent to a distant destination no faster than a horse could travel. But in 1837. Wheatstone in England had established telegraphic communication between Euston and Camden Town, while a year later, Morse in America had demonstrated his telegraph to the president of the United States. The telegraph was followed quickly by the telephone, invented by Alexander Graham Bell in 1876. Then came the wonder of wireless telegraphy (Marconi, 1896) and wireless telephony, enabling messages to be sent across the world without wire or cable. Soon by means of television, it will be possible for individuals at opposite ends of the earth to both see and hear each other at will.

The ancient prophet declared not only that men would run to and fro, but that "knowledge" would be "increased" and truly enough, contemporaneous with the inventions which have annihilated space and time, and made the whole world one, has come the equally remarkable growth in our knowledge of the world in which we live.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, says J. J. Saunders in *The Age of Revolution*, "enormous tracts of the earth's surface were unexplored. The Western half of North America was little known: a geography published in 1800 contained no reference to the Rocky Mountains.... The forests of Brazil had hardly been penetrated.... Africa was still the Dark Continent; the coasts were frequented by European traders, but the interior was a blank, and as late as 1860 the mythical 'Mountains of the Moon' were marked on the maps. Australia was unexplored save for a few coastal strips. European missionaries and traders were to be found in the ports and even in the inland cities of China, but the inner recesses of that huge country, the deserts of Tartary and Mongolia, were less known than in the days of Marco Polo."

"Yet," he declares, "by the end of the century there was hardly a tract of land of any value to be found anywhere in the world that was not politically controlled or economically exploited by the white powers." - Page 139.

Think, too, of the vast expansion of scientific knowledge. One has only to contrast the crude ideas of a hundred years ago with the exact knowledge in the realms of chemistry, physics, biology, and other sciences now available to see how phenomenal has been the advance.

It was not until 1832, that Michael Faraday, the "patron saint" of electrical engineers, invented the electric dynamo and paved the way for a hitherto undreamed-of industrial development. The electric motor did not come until 1873. Yet today in every city are great power-houses supplying electrical energy for heat, illumination, and motive power to thousands of factories and countless homes. Our domestic and business life has been transformed beyond recognition.

A hundred and fifty years ago the only available lights were candles and oil lamps. Gas lighting was invented at the turn of the nineteenth century, but the first gas lights were only dim fishtail burners. The incandescent gas mantle did not come till 1886. The electric lamp is only just over fifty years old.

Turning to the sphere of medicine and surgery, one cannot but stand amazed at the advance of the healing art during the past century or so. Up to the early years of C-e nineteenth century the practices of medicine and surgery had changed little since the time of Christ. Thermometers and stethoscopes were unknown and there were no anesthetics, so that operations had to be performed on

patients while fully conscious. Doctors were ignorant of the causes of infection and a very large proportion of patients operated on died of blood-poisoning or gangrene. What a contrast between the shambles of a hundred years ago and the modern hospital!

What marvelous blessings, too, have come to humankind since the discovery of radium less than fifty, and X-rays only thirty, years ago. It is indeed impossible to begin to enumerate all the wonderful discoveries made during the past century which have helped mankind to conquer pain and disease.

During the past century every nook and cranny of Nature's storehouse has been explored. With great telescopes astronomers have explored the farthest recesses of the great universe, and astronomical cameras have mapped the heavens as accurately as the terrestrial continents.

With the microscope, another universe invisible to the unaided eye, has been explored, bringing new knowledge and power into the hands of man.

Unfortunately, all this new knowledge has not only been used to multiply the amenities of civilized life. It has also increased man's capacity to injure and destroy his fellow-man. And so we have battleships, submarines, modern artillery, tanks, bombing and fighting planes, and latest of all, the fearful atom bomb, which have transformed war from the minor conflicts of earlier centuries into world conflagrations which now threaten to annihilate human life upon this planet.

Not only has the content of human knowledge vastly increased during the past century or so, but it has also become disseminated more widely among mankind by advances in printing and the photographic art, by the spread of literacy and education. It was the English Times which first stole a march upon the newspaper producers of the early nineteenth century by installing the first crude cylinder press which enabled it to turn out as many papers in three hours as its rivals could print in ten. Today giant rotary presses in all the great newspaper offices turn out tens of thousands of papers an hour, folded, counted, and packed ready for dispatch by rail, car, or plane. "Knowledge" on the material plane has surely unbelievably increased."

Even more important, however, than the increase of knowledge of the world in general in the "time of the end," would be the increase of knowledge of the purposes of God as outlined in His prophetic Word. At this momentous time in history, the long-sealed book penned by the ancient prophet would be opened by the Spirit of God to earnest seekers after truth. The way the Lord had led in the past would be illuminated as never before as they noted the marvelous correspondences between history and prophecy, and the way before them would be lighted up by the prophetic page clear through to the kingdom of God.

True to the prophecy this unveiling of the Word did come to the people of God as they entered the "time of the end." The beginning of the nineteenth century was marked by the great Advent revival which has grown and extended in subsequent years and has led multitudes in many lands from one end of the earth to the other to turn from their "idols to serve the living God. And to wait for His Son from heaven." 1 Thessalonians 1: 9, 10.

What then does all this mean? It can only mean one thing—that for one hundred and fifty years the world has been in the long-foretold "time of the end" and that the "end of time" itself cannot be far distant.

"This Gospel of the kingdom," declared Jesus to His disciples before He left them, "shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Matthew 24:14. And in the providence of God the railway, the steamship, the airplane, the telegraph, the telephone, and the radio, have come in these latter times not so much for man's material convenience as to give the last Gospel message wings that it may fly to the uttermost ends of the earth. And the modern printing press has likewise come to multiply and scatter the pages of truth like the leaves of autumn to every "nation and kindred and tongue and people."

The tide of time is at the flood and the last invitation of divine love is even now failing upon "hearing ears!"

How will mankind be divided as the last message goes out to all the earth, and the end draws on?

"Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." Daniel 12: 10.

As God's last message of mercy speeds to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, it will gather out of the nations of earth those who are "wise" unto salvation. Purified, made white, tried and proved, they will stand firm amid the swirling tides of wickedness, patiently awaiting the consummation of their hope, while the wicked go on heedlessly to their doom.

Where will the faithful prophet himself stand in that day?

"But go thy way till the end be: for thou shall rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." Daniel 12:13.

The final word to the aged prophet was one of assurance. He had been faithful to God for more than seventy years. To successive monarchs of Babylon and Media-Persia he had courageously witnessed for God and His truth. At God's command he had recorded the wonderful visions granted him of the course of the ages right on to the coming of the divine king and the setting up of His eternal and universal kingdom.

Now, said the angel, he was to "rest" from all his labors. But he would not be forgotten. When, in the investigative judgment, his name should come up for review, the divine Advocate would plead the merits of His blood and he would be accounted worthy of a place and a part in the kingdom of which he had, by inspiration, revealed so much.

And when Jesus comes to gather His people from the dead and from among the living, Daniel will be raised in glorious resurrection to stand "in his lot" with the saved of the ages.

Where will you stand in that day? You may not have been called to any great work for God, as was Daniel. It may not have been required of you to be tried as Daniel was tried. But if you, in the common places of your life, have been faithful as Daniel was faithful, your "lot" will be with him in glory.

Now, therefore, is the time for you “to make your calling and election sure” that “an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” 2 Peter 1:10,11.

39. A Letter from Heaven

How is the last book of the Bible named?

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ.” Revelation 1: 1.

In our Authorized Version the prophecy is entitled. “The Revelation of St. John the Divine.” Such, however, is the translator's designation and is no part of the sacred text of Scripture. Actually it is quite incorrect, for, as the first words of the book clearly state, it is “the revelation of Jesus Christ.” This vitally important book is of no human composition. Like all the other books which precede it in the Bible, it is a “letter from heaven.” John was simply the inspired penman of the divine Author.

It is to be particularly noted also that the book is described as a “revelation,” or literally, an “unveiling” of the program of God in history. Surely then, it would be ingratitude itself to neglect that which Jesus has graciously made manifest, and folly to suggest that what He has “unveiled” is incomprehensible.

From whence did the Revelation originate?

“Which God gave unto Him.” Revelation 1: 1.

From this we are not to conclude that Christ is less than God, or that He is excluded from any wisdom or understanding that is in God. The Son is in all respects equal with, and indeed one with, the Father, but in order to carry into effect the “council of peace” which was between them, Jesus “emptied Himself” of His glory to become the Mediator between God and man. In this voluntarily-assumed status, “God gave unto Him” a “revelation” of His purpose that He in turn might communicate it to man. (See John 5: 20; 7: 16; 12: 49; 14: 10; 17:7, g.)

By what two names is the Revelation, therefore, appropriately described?

“The Word of God, and ... the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Revelation 1:2.

Coming from God, this prophecy, like all the other writings of the sacred canon is properly described as “the Word of God.” And mediated to man by Jesus Christ, it is equally “the testimony of Jesus Christ!”

What other heavenly beings had a part in revealing the divine will?

“And He sent. . . it by His angel!” Revelation 1:1.

An angel was commissioned to make Daniel “understand” the visions which he received, and John also was aided in his apprehension of the message of God by angel ministrations.

The description of John’s angel informant as “His,” or Christ's “angel” would suggest one specific heavenly being. In the book of Daniel, the angel Gabriel is named as fulfilling this function on a number of occasions, and this same angel was given the wonderful privilege and responsibility of announcing the imminent birth of John the Baptist to Zacharias and of Jesus to Mary. (Luke 1: 19, 26.) It would seem most likely, therefore, that the angel sent to speak with John was also Gabriel.

Who was the human recipient of this message of God?

“Unto His servant John.” Revelation 1:1.

Much has been said and written respecting the identity of the writer of this book. Because he names himself simply “John,” the book has been credited to a number of leaders of that name in the early Christian centuries. The very fact, however, that the writer felt himself under no necessity to add any other identifying phrase, is conclusive evidence that he was none other than the apostle John, the author of the fourth gospel and of the three epistles to which his name is attached.

What a contrast there is between the humble fisherman John, the son of Zebedee and Salome of Bethsaida, and Daniel, a prince of the house of David, to whom God communicated the most important prophetic revelations of the Old Testament. And yet does not the choice of these two men show that God is “no respecter of persons” and finds His servants in all walks of life from the highest to the lowest? Not social status nor intellectual capacity, but responsiveness of heart is the quality for which God looks when He is seeking men through whom He can communicate His will.

There was undoubtedly a definite reason why the one great outline of the future was given to a high government official and the other to a Gospel preacher, for the book of Daniel is largely a political history of the world in relation to the church of God, while the Revelation is an outline story of the church in relation to the nations. Both cover the same ground, but in the one, the course of world power provides the broad canvas, while in the other the story of the church provides the setting of the prophetic picture of world events.

For what purpose was the Revelation given?

“To show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass.” Revelation 1: 1.

Again it is reiterated that the purpose of the book is to “show” something to the people of God. To assert therefore that what is shown is not understandable is to impugn the intelligence of God.

The future events unveiled were “shortly” to come to pass, or shortly to “begin to come to pass.” This gives us the key to the interpretation of the prophetic revelations which follow. They are panoramic prophecies beginning mainly in the time of the prophet and going right on to the end of the world. And they all “must” come to pass, for God not only reveals the end from the beginning, but He that works all things after the counsel of His own will.” Ephesians 1:11.

What similarity is there between the books of Daniel and the Revelation?

“And He sent and signified it.” Revelation 1:1.

Like the book of Daniel the prophecy of the Revelation is written largely in “sign” language. This symbolic form is not, however, used in order to render truth incomprehensible, but in order to confine its understanding to those possessing the “key” of spiritual discernment, and to the time when it would be most profitable to the people of God.

How faithfully did John record what he saw?

“Who bare record.. . of all things that he saw.” Revelation 1 : 2.

John, like Daniel, did not understand all that he was commanded to write down, but he faithfully recorded everything, confident that the “key” to unlock the divine mysteries would be provided in due time by the Keeper of the keys. (Revelation 1: 18)

What special blessing is pronounced on all who receive the words of this prophecy?

“Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things that are written therein.” Revelation 1: 3.

In the early days of the Christian era, and for that matter until the invention of printing, books were scarce and expensive. And this, coupled with the fact that only a minority could read, meant that far more people would “hear” the message of God than would themselves be able to “read” it. But whether read or heard, there was blessing in this wonderful Word for all who would receive and “keep” it in their hearts.

For the third time, therefore, in this brief introduction to the prophecy, it is underlined that the church is to familiarize itself with the book, and that the pondering of its message will bring a reward of spiritual blessing and enrichment.

Why is its message so urgent?

“For the time is at hand.” Revelation 1:3

If the early believers were urged to ponder the sacred revelation because the “time” or “season” for the beginning of the things revealed was at hand, how much more is there need that we diligently compare prophecy with its fulfillment as the grand consummation of the divine revelation draws nearer and nearer?

40. Behold, He Comes

To whom is the Revelation dedicated?

“John to the seven churches which are in Asia.” Revelation 1: 4.

Here, for the first time, the prophet mentions to whom he is writing. His book is dedicated to the “seven churches which are in Asia,” that is, the Roman proconsular province of that name at the western end of Asia Minor. A little later these churches are listed as Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

Some, who would depreciate the importance of this prophetic revelation, quote this verse as proof that John was simply writing to the churches of his diocese, from which he had been exiled by the Roman government. But when we examine this explanation we quickly discover its inadequacy. If John were writing merely to the churches over which he had oversight, why did he single out certain groups and omit others which were equally large and important, and certainly must have come under his jurisdiction? Why, for example, is there no mention of the church of Miletus, which was actually nearest to the isle of Patmos? Why was not Colosse listed, seeing that it was a neighbor church to Laodicea, and had a special letter from Paul? Why is Pergamos listed, yet nearby Troas omitted?

These certainly would be very real difficulties if John had simply been writing to the churches of his diocese, but if John was led to choose these seven out of all the cities in his care and listed them in this particular order for some wider purpose, the problems disappear.

When the messages to the churches themselves are studied, this wider purpose quickly becomes obvious. The seven churches were specially chosen and arranged in this order to represent seven periods in the story of the church from the days of John to the end of time. Because these particular cities portrayed in their character and history the distinguishing features of the seven ages of the church.

What benediction does John desire for the believers of all the churches alike?

“Grace be unto you, and peace.” Revelation 1: 4.

While special words appropriate to their condition and needs were to be spoken to the individual churches, John began with a comprehensive benediction for all. "Grace" is the love of God in action on behalf of men, while "peace" is the fruit of grace in the life.

From whom does this grace and peace proceed?

"From Him which is, and which was, and which is to come!" Revelation 1:4.

This title of God indicates the eternity of His being (compare Exodus 3:14 and Hebrews 13:8), and according to the arrangement of the elements emphasizes His past, present, or future activity. Here, and in verse eight, the emphasis is on the fact that He who "was" and "is to come" is even now active on behalf of His people. In chapter four, verse eight, the elements are set in chronological order, "was, and is, and is to come," to indicate the grand sweep of His eternity.

Who is associated with God in the bestowal of the divine blessing?

"And from the seven Spirits which are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ." Revelation 1:4,5.

Because the "seven spirits" are "before" the throne of God and not with God in His throne, some interpreters have thought them to be angels, but it is unlikely that created beings would be placed between the Father and Son. Clearly the designation "seven Spirits," is synonymous with the Spirit of God. The number suggests the perfection of His being and the sum of His activity on behalf of mankind.

Associated with the Father and the Spirit in the divine benediction is Jesus Christ Himself, so that the blessing upon the churches comes equally from all three Persons of the Godhead.

How has Jesus made this divine benediction effectual in the lives of men?

"Who is the faithful Witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth." Revelation 1:5.

In His capacity as the "faithful Witness," He made known the purpose of divine grace first through the prophets, and then in His own person. "Behold," says God through the prophet Isaiah, "I have given Him for a witness to the people." Isaiah 55:4. (See also John 18:37.) As the "first begotten of the dead," Jesus blazed the trail from death to new life for those who avail themselves of the merits of His vicarious atonement. And when finally He comes as "Prince of the kings of the earth," the victory of grace will be complete. (Isaiah 9: 6, 7; Revelation 17: 14; Revelation 19: 16.)

In what other terms is Christ's activity on the sinner's behalf described?

"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood." Revelation 1:5.

Nowhere more fully than in the gospel and the epistles of John is the wonder of the love of Jesus declared. So also here he emphasizes that it is out of that infinite love that the redemption and exaltation of the saints issues.

What added dignity has Christ conferred upon redeemed humanity?

"And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father." Revelation 1:6.

Not only are the redeemed restored to fellowship and communion with God, but they are organized into a "kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19: 6), or as Peter expresses it "a royal priesthood." 1 Peter 2:9.

What honor is due to so wonderful a Savior?

"To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Revelation 1:6.

Jesus gave up the "glory" which He had with the Father "before the world was" (John 17:5), and took upon Him "the form of a servant" (Phil. 2:7) in order to accomplish man's redemption. Having triumphantly carried out His work of love, He will be fully entitled to resume the glory and dominion which He voluntarily set aside.

When will this well-deserved glory and dominion be conferred upon Him?

"Behold, He comes with clouds." Revelation 1:7.

Daniel was shown in vision the heavenly ceremony just before the second advent at which glory and dominion will be conferred upon Christ. (Daniel 7:13,14) Here John pictures the triumphal procession of the glorified Christ from heaven to earth. (Compare Matthew 24:30; 26:64.)

How openly will Christ's glory be manifested?

"And every eye shall see Him." Revelation 1: 7.

The "glorious appearing" of Jesus will be both visible and audible to every living soul upon the earth. It will be a spectacular unveiling to the whole world of the once crucified Savior as King of kings, and Lord of lords. The sight of it will be brilliant "as the lightning" that "comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west." Matthew 24:27. The sound of it will be as "a great sound of a trumpet," which will arouse even the sleeping dead. (Matthew 24:31; 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17.) Glorious, indeed, will be the triumph of Christ.

What special group will be raised to see His triumph and sense their shame?

“And they also which pierced Him.” Revelation 1:7.

Sad to say only a remnant of those who see Him will rejoice. To a vast number His coming will bring consternation and shame. Among this class will be “they also which pierced Him.”

Now the actual perpetrators of the crime of crucifying the Son of God died many centuries ago. How then will they be able to see coming in glory the One on whom they laid cruel hands? Obviously they must be raised immediately prior to the second advent for the purpose of witnessing His triumph. If they were raised in their “order,” as Paul puts it (1 Corinthians 15: 23), they would not come forth until the second “resurrection of damnation!” But in order that they may realize the depths of their folly in laying unholy hands upon the Lord of glory they will be raised in a “token” resurrection just before Jesus appears.

Some commentators believe that this special resurrection is referred to in the twelfth chapter of Daniel, where we read that, at the standing up of Michael, or Christ, “many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” Daniel 12: 2. If this is a description of one event and not an amalgamation of the first and second resurrections, the last phrase could portray the murderers of Jesus who will be raised to witness His return.

Who will be included in that tragic company we are not precisely told, but it certainly will comprise not only those who actually nailed Jesus to the cross and pierced Him as He hung there (John 19: 34), but all those who were responsible for bringing Him to Calvary. Their humiliation will be complete when they see the crucified One coming again in all His glory as King of heaven and earth.

What fear will possess the enemies of Christ in that day?

“And all peoples of the earth shall wail because of Him.” Revelation 1: 7.

Later in the book of Revelation John depicts the consternation of the wicked when they behold the returning King. (Revelation 6: 14-17) This mourning, however, will not be a sorrow unto repentance, for probation will have closed before Jesus returns. At His second coming Christ will have no evangelist for the sinner as He had when He came the first time. Rather will He come as a judge to execute the righteous sentence of God upon the rejecters of His mercy.

What personal postscript does Jesus add to this picture of His work of redemption and judgment?

“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, says the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.” Revelation 13.

In the previous verses John wrote what he was told concerning God's purpose of salvation and of judgment which will be brought to fruition at Christ's second advent. To this recital Jesus adds, as it were, His personal signature. “Alpha” and “Omega” are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, and fitly represent Jesus who is the “beginning and ending” of the divine purposes. (See also Revelation 1:17; 2:8; 21:6; 22:13) He is also the “Almighty” who will unfailingly bring them to pass.

How was John, as representative of the true people of God, affected by this revelation of Christ's second coming?

“Even so, Amen.” Revelation 1:7.

To what he was shown concerning the glorification of the redeemed John added a joyous “Amen.” Verse 6. With sadness, however, he appends also to the doom of the wicked his “Even so, Amen! God's purposes will all, in His good time, be fulfilled. They cannot fail. It is for us to determine, by the surrender of our lives to Him, that we will be eternally within and not outside the sphere of His redemptive providence.

41. Among the Candlesticks

Where did John receive this revelation from God and how, did he come to be there?

“I John, . . . was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Revelation 1: 9.

Patmos, or Patmo as it is now called, is a small island a few miles off the west coast of Asia Minor, a little to the south of the town of Miletus. It is about ten miles long and six miles wide in its broadest part and comprises a number of volcanic hills rising to about eight hundred feet above sea level.

In ancient times the mines and stone quarries of the island were worked by slaves and Roman prisoners. And John's presence on the island “for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” suggests that he was exiled thither for forced labor during one of the periods of persecution by pagan Rome.

A tradition preserved by Irenaeus, Eusebius, and other early Christian writers, states that his exile took place in the fourteenth year of Domitian and that he remained on the island until AD. 96 when, at the beginning of the reign of the Emperor Nerva, he was permitted to return to Ephesus.

By reason of his banishment how does John describe himself?

“Who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.” Revelation 1: 9.

It was appropriate that, having to reveal so much concerning the future trials of the church, he could claim to be their “companion in tribulation.” John was himself a living example of the church, suffering yet patient (Revelation 2:2,3,19; 3:10; 13:10; 14:12), persecuted yet looking forward in faith to ultimate deliverance in the kingdom of God. (Acts 14:22; 2 Timothy 1:12.)

In what circumstances did God speak with him?

“I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day!” Revelation 1:10.

John states that he was in the Spirit “on the Lord's day.” Reading this, many have jumped to the conclusion that John received these revelations during his Sunday devotional meditations. It is true that in many Christian communions, Sunday is commonly termed “the Lord's day,” but actually there is no warrant for this anywhere in the Scriptures.

If John had called the first day of the week “the Lord's day” in the Revelation, he would surely have given it the same designation in his gospel, which he wrote at a later date. But he does not! He there follows the practice of the other gospel writers in referring to the resurrection day as simply “the first day of the week.” (See Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2,9; Luke 24:1; John 20:19.)

In the book of Acts, Luke likewise speaks only of the “first day of the week” (Acts 20:7), and Paul's reference to the day in 1 Corinthians sixteen, verse two, is consistent with all the other Bible writers.

It will come as a further surprise to many that the use of the term “Lord's day” for the first day of the week is unknown in any of the literature of the early church, until nearly a century after the last of the New Testament books was written. The earliest references to the Lord's day outside the Bible are by Melito, bishop of Sardis, in AD. 170, Dionysus, bishop of Corinth, in AD. 175, and Tertullian in North Africa, about AD. 200.

It is thus clear that the idea of calling the first day of the week the “Lord's day” in honor of the resurrection was something about which John and his contemporaries knew nothing at all. It was, in fact, an invention of the late second century for the purpose of giving a pseudo-authority to Sunday as a holy day in place of the true Sabbath, and which is utterly devoid of scriptural or apostolic support.

There is only one day of the week which can justifiably be called the “Lord's day,” and that is the Sabbath, or seventh day. This day of all the days of the week was set apart at creation as “holy unto the Lord.” In the fourth commandment it is specifically described as the “Sabbath of the Lord” (Exodus 20:8-11), and through the prophet Isaiah, God designates it, “My holy day!” Isaiah 58:13. The Lord Jesus, who was associated with God in the creation of the Sabbath, pointedly described Himself as “Lord. . . of the Sabbath.” Mark 2:27,28; Matthew 12:8. This day, therefore, must be the “Lord's day” to which John was referring and on which he was found meditating upon the things of God.

As John was carried off in vision, whose voice did he hear calling to him?

“And heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet.” Revelation 1: 10.

The “trumpet” is commonly associated with the messages of God because of all instruments it is the most imperious and challenging. The prophets often used the figure of the trumpet blast in declaring God's judgments and His providence. And here Christ, in trumpet tones, forewarns the church concerning its perils, and calls it to faith and endurance.

Whom did the Speaker again declare Himself to be, and what did He command John to do?

“I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou see, 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.

No fewer than twelve times in this book John declares that he simply wrote down what was given to him by Inspiration. (Revelation 1:11,19; 2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5.) On many occasions John did not understand the meaning of what he was writing, just as the Old Testament prophets were often ignorant of the meaning of their own messages (Daniel 7: 28; 8: 27; 12: 8; 1 Peter 1: 10- 12). But he faithfully recorded all he saw and heard, that the Spirit might make it known to the church when the opportune time should come.

The seven churches to which the messages were addressed are here enumerated. The successive eras of the church which they represent we shall study in detail as we come to them in the second and third chapters of the book.

Turning to see the One who spoke with him, what first met the prophet's gaze? What explanation was he given?

“And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks.” “And the seven candlesticks which thou saw are the seven churches.” Revelation 1: 12, 20.

The seven-branched candlestick (Exodus 25: 31) typified the seven Spirits, or the sum of the activities of the Spirit of God in the earth, as was explained to Zechariah when it was shown to him in one of his visions. (Zechariah 4: 2.) The original candlestick, of which the one in the earthly sanctuary was a copy is still in heaven (compare Exodus 25:31,33; 37:23 with Hebrews 8:2,5; 9:2,23), but it was not shown to John on this occasion.

These seven separate lamp stands represent collectively the people of God who are called to be “burning and shining lights,” illuminating the dark world by their witness.

Whom did John see in the midst of the candlesticks?

“And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man.” Revelation 1: 13.

Walking in the midst of, or among the candlesticks' was one like unto the “Son of man,” a term invariably used in both the Old and New Testaments (Mark 2:28, etc.) of Jesus. His position typifies His continuing presence in the church by the Spirit

throughout all time. To ancient Israel God said, "I will walk among you" (Leviticus 26:12), and here He promises that His association with spiritual Israel will be no less close.

How was Jesus clothed?

"Clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girt about the chest with a golden girdle." Revelation 1:13.

The flowing robe of Jesus with its girdle was the official garment of a priest. The Rhemish New Testament actually translates the phrase, "a priestly garment down to the foot!" Certainly no garb could have been more appropriate to the vision, because this was the special function for which Jesus had returned to heaven and which He would continue to perform until the time came for Him to lay aside His priestly garments and become man's judge. (Zechariah 6:13; Hebrews 3: 1; 8: 1.)

How is His appearance further described?

"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 His voice as the sound of many waters. . . and His countenance was as the sun shines in his strength!" Revelation 1: 14, 15, 16.

The hair of Jesus "white like wool" and "white as snow" signifies the eternity of His being, the perfection of His wisdom, and the purity and holiness of His character. In Daniel's vision of the Ancient of days, "the hair of His head," was "like the pure wool" for the same symbolic reasons. (Daniel 7: 9.)

The eyes of Jesus flamed like "fire" and His feet had the appearance of molten brass, suggesting that if He is not an Advocate on our behalf He will be a "consuming fire." Deuteronomy 4:24. (See also Deuteronomy 9: 3; Hebrews 12: 29; 2 Thessalonians 1: 8; Psalm 21: 9.)

His countenance like "the sun shining in his strength" typifies Him as the source of light and life for His people.

What proceeded from His mouth?

"And out of His mouth went a sharp two edged sword!" Revelation 1: 16. Where the Lord is given opportunity, He lovingly assuages the wounds which He has perforce to inflict in the excision of sin from the human heart, but if sin is retained, the sword must ultimately destroy. (See Revelation 19: 21.)

What did Jesus hold in His hand? How did He explain this symbol?

"And He had in His right hand seven stars." "The mystery of the seven stars which thou saw in My right hand. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches!" Revelation 1: 16, 20.

Here again the closeness of the association of Jesus with His church is suggested by His holding the "angels" of the churches or the leaders of the church of God in each age, in His hands, assuring them of His support and protection.

How did the vision of Jesus affect John?

"And when I saw, Him, I fell at His feet as dead!" Revelation 1: 17.

Ezekiel "fell" upon his "face" in the presence of "the glory of the Lord" (Ezekiel 1: 28), and Paul was prostrated before the glorified Jesus on the Damascus road. (Acts 9: 4) So likewise the prophet John, in the presence of the same glory, fell at the feet of Jesus "as dead."

Gently raising the prophet, what assurance did Jesus give him?

"And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not." Revelation 1: 17.

As John lay fainting upon the ground, a comforting hand raised him, and to his ears came the assuring word which so many of God's children have heard. "Fear not, Zacharias," said the angel visitor to the father of John the Baptist. (Luke 1:13) "Fear not, Mary," the mother of Jesus was bidden. (Verse 30.) "Fear not," were the wondrous words which floated across the night air to the shepherds as they started to their feet at the vision of the angels in the fields of Bethlehem. (Luke 2:10.) Nor had John anything to fear, for was not this the same Jesus on whose breast he had so often leaned?

With what concluding words did Jesus assure His church of the certain fulfillment of all the promises of this book?

"I am the first and the last: I am He that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Revelation 1:17,18.

Because He is the "first and the last" the churches can be assured of His continual presence. And as the "living One," He has demonstrated His power over death by going into the tomb and emerging triumphantly therefrom. Death has met its Conqueror and the "keys" are in the hands of the Son of God. In His due time, therefore, "all that are in the grave shall come forth," the righteous to eternal life, the wicked to receive their eternal sentence. (1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17.)

What, then, should John hasten to do?

"Write the things which thou has seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." Revelation 1:19.

Jesus' final command was actually a little different from the way it is rendered in the Authorized Version. What He told John to do was first to faithfully record "the things which thou has seen." Secondly, he was to set down "what they are," that is, what they signified. Finally, he was to write "the things that shall be hereafter" as these events would successively be shown to him.

As the vision faded. John saw Jesus still holding the "stars" in His hands, assuring the leaders of the people of God of His provision and protection all the days unto the end.

42. The Church of Conquering Faith

To whom was the first of the seven letters of the Revelation sent?

"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write." Revelation 2: 1.

The appropriateness of the choice of Ephesus to represent the first age of the church (AD. 33-100) becomes apparent as soon as one studies its place in the Graeco-Roman world and its part in the spread of Christianity through the empire.

Situated three miles from the sea on the Cayster River, one of the four main streams which flow down from the highlands of Asia Minor into the Aegean Sea, Ephesus was the metropolitan city of the province of Asia and one of the most important commercial cities of the Roman world. From it, shipping routes ran north and south along the coast, while roads linked it with neighboring coast towns (Acts 20:13-15) and the cities in the interior (Acts 19:1). In John's day it was the "largest emporium in Asia this side of the Taurus."

Besides its political and commercial importance, Ephesus had also most important place in the religious life of the GrxcoRoman world, by reason of the fact that here was the great temple of the earth goddess called Cybele by the Phrygians, Artemis by the Greeks, and Diana by the Romans. To the Artemis festivals every year thousands of pilgrims flocked, and around the temple there gathered a multitude of artisans who made a rich living from the manufacture of offerings for the goddess. (Acts 19:21-41.)

Besides all this, Ephesus was one of the chief educational and cultural centers of the ancient world.

From this brief sketch of Ephesus in the first century AD., one can readily understand what an ideal center it was for evangelism, and how the light of truth from the strong Christian church established there went forth to all parts of the empire.

No wonder, therefore, that Harnack described this city as the second fulcrum of Christianity after Antioch, and that Inspiration selected it as the symbol and type of the first church as it went out to conquer the Roman Empire for Christ.

What title did Jesus use in writing to the Ephesian church?

"These things says He that holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." Revelation 2: 1.

To each church Jesus revealed Himself by one or more of the characteristics portrayed in the vision of the first chapter. The two chosen for the first or Ephesian church were to assure them that He would be ever present to strengthen, comfort, and exhort, and that in all their experiences they would always be in His hand.

How was the church of Ephesus commended?

"I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience." Revelation 2:2.

Jesus reminded each successive church that He knew their "works," or spiritual condition. The works of some were not commendable, but in the case of Ephesus, the addition of the words "and thy labor, and thy patience," indicates that these first believers had the approval of their Lord.

In what way did the Ephesians manifest their loyalty to God?

"Thou cannot not bear them which are evil: and thou has tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and has found them liars." Revelation 2:2.

Even in the time of the apostles, false teachers began to arise in the infant church seeking to draw away disciples after them, and in a number of his letters to the churches, Paul had to warn the believers against seduction. (Galatians 4:4; 1:6, 7; 2 Corinthians 11:13.)

In his final address to the elders of Miletus and Ephesus before he left for Jerusalem, Paul told them: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch!" Acts 20:29-31.

From Christ's commendation of the first church it is evident that while in certain places error gained a hold, the early believers manifested a carefulness in maintaining the parity of the faith and took drastic steps to eliminate the evil influence of false teachers.

What error in particular had they rejected?

"This thou has, that thou hates the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate!" Revelation 2:6.

No actual traces of the Nicolaitanes have survived, but references to them in ancient literature suggest that they were a sect of the gnostics of whom Paul warned Timothy: "Avoiding. . . oppositions of science [gnosticism] falsely so-called." 1 Timothy 6:20.

The chief tenets of the Nicolaitanes seem to have been their boasted “inner light” direct from God, which caused them to discard the Old Testament Scriptures as inferior, and to deny all the restraints of the law of God. This resulted in considerable compromise with heathen practices, such as eating food offered to idols, to moral laxity, adultery, fornication, etc.

The error of the Nicolaitanes was the parent of all the attempts in later ages to assimilate Christianity with prevailing philosophy and culture, and to soften its stern teachings so as not to conflict with the customs of society. The Nicolaitanes, no doubt, thought there was no harm in the formal burning of a few grains of incense in the Emperor's temple. They were not the kind of Christians who would die on account of such a trifle.

To the heresy of the Nicolaitanes, therefore, can be traced the modernism of our time which seeks to make Christianity harmonize with the philosophies and scientific notions of our time, and also the easy-going Christianity which bows to the customs of society rather than courageously doing what is right.

In what were their labor and patience manifest?

“And has borne, and has patience, and for My name's sake has labored, and has not fainted.” Revelation 2:3.

To emphasize the courageous loyalty of the early church to the truth of God, use is made of a play on words. It is stated that while they could not bear evil men and their false doctrines, they were prepared patiently to bear the burdens occasioned by their Christian profession.

What weakness, however, did God see beginning to appear in the Ephesian church?

“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou has left thy first love.” Revelation 2:4.

While during, the first century the early church vigorously contended for the purity of the faith and for the moral standards of the church, God saw a grave weakness developing. The first fervor of love for their Lord and for one another began to cool, and indifference and apathy began to take its place.

Nothing could be more fatal in the relations between Christ and His church, for as soon as love wanes the way is open for degradation in faith and conduct. As it turned out, the decline of love's first ardor in the Ephesian period led to actual apostasy in subsequent epochs.

What were they, therefore, called upon to do? Otherwise, what would be their fate?

“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” Revelation 2:5.

There was no injustice in the warning of Jesus, for if love faded, and the life and experience of the church declined, it would inevitably cease to be a “light” in the world, and the removal of the candlestick would be merely the taking away of a useless encumbrance.

With what admonition was the message to each of the churches concluded?

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches.” Revelation 2:7.

Of Israel Jesus had sadly to confess, quoting the words of the prophecy of Isaiah: “By hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand. And seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed.” Matthew 13:14,15. Paul, too, had to say the same of Israel after attempting for years to convince them that “this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.” Acts 17:3.

This sorry condition had come about because they had obstinately refused to exercise their spiritual faculties in the things of God. Because of this they had atrophied, and when the Gospel was preached to them they were unable to recognize Jesus as the promised One. To only a small remnant out of the whole nation, among them the chosen disciples of Jesus, was the Lord able to say: “Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.” Matthew 13:16.

So to the church in each age, Jesus makes a solemn appeal, urging the responsive ones to accept His diagnosis of their spiritual condition and by grace eradicate the defects revealed.

What was promised to the overcomers?

“To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” Revelation 2:7.

By reason of sin our first parents were expelled from the garden of Eden, and the placing of cherubim to “keep” the way to the tree of life denied any access to its fruit. Eventually, because of spreading iniquity, the tree and the garden of God were removed from earth to heaven.

One day, however, the people of God will have the joyous experience of readmission to its delectable groves. And when the saints are once again privileged to pick and eat the luscious fruit of the “tree of life,” the curse of sin will indeed have been fully removed! The enjoyment of this privilege, however, will be the portion only of those who are overcomers or “more than conquerors” in Christ Jesus.

Significantly, John has much to say in his epistles as to what the saints will have “overcome.” In the first place, they will have overcome “the wicked one” and put him to flight. (1 John 2:13,14.) They will have overcome also all the minions of the devil, and in particular his culminating deception of the last days, “the spirit of Antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come.” 1 John 4: 3. And finally, they will have overcome all that is of “the world.” 1 John 5:4.

How will this victory have become theirs? Not in their own strength. Oh no. As John tells us, “He that overcomes the world,” is “he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God.” “And this,” he adds, “is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.” 1 John 5:5,4.

The way of victory for every child of God in the earliest church is the way of victory for today. May that overcoming faith be yours!

43. Suffering for Christ's Sake

To whom was the second letter addressed?

“And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write.” Revelation 2:8.

The second letter, dedicated to the church of Smyrna, represented the second age of the church. This, beginning with the opening of the second century, covers the period of the pagan persecutions and closes with the decree of toleration granted to the Christians by Constantine the Great in AD. 313.

Smyrna, which today is still a flourishing town, lies about fifty miles to the north of the site of Ephesus at the head of one of the deep gulfs which indent the west coast of Asia Minor. It is the port of the Hermas Valley, in the upper reaches of which. stood the cities of Sardis, Thyatira, and Philadelphia. In Roman times it was a brilliant city, rivaling Pergamos and Ephesus for the title of “first city in Asia.”

The very name “Smyrna” seals the appropriateness of the divine choice of the church in this city. It means “myrrh,” which was one of the ingredients of the incense which arose as “a sweet smelling savor” to God in the ancient sanctuary. And surely the loyalty of the early Christian church amid the fierce fires of persecution during the second and third centuries, was a “sweet smelling savor” which earned for it Heaven’s commendation unmixed with any word of reproof or criticism. Only this church and the church of Philadelphia attained so high a distinction.

How does Jesus describe Himself to the church of Smyrna?

“These things says the First and the Last, which was dead and is alive.” Revelation 2:8.

The title by which Jesus designated Himself to the Smyrna church was indeed an encouragement to the suffering saints. They were about to enter a period of grievous tribulation, and multitudes would be called upon to give their lives rather than deny the faith. In the coming distress, Jesus wanted to remind them that He had humbled Himself, even unto the death of the cross, but that in the power of God He had risen triumphantly from the tomb. They could be assured, therefore, that as the grave could not hold Him, neither would it be able to hold those who were faithful to His cause. Man might compass their death, but not even Satan would be able to hold them when the Savior turned the key and called them forth. (1 Corinthians 15:57; 1 Thessalonians 4:15,17. See also Luke 14:14.)

For what things were they especially commended?

“I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich).” Revelation 2:9.

Defining the “works” of the Smyrna church, Jesus mentions their endurance of “tribulation” and their sacrificial “poverty.” These characteristics of the Christian church during the Smyrna period are strikingly illustrated by the experience of the believers in the city of Smyrna itself at this very time.

Religiously, Smyrna had always favored Roman deities, and altogether three Emperor temples, were built there, making it one of the greatest centers of Emperor-worship in Asia. By reason of this, Christians were here under severest trial, because their refusal to worship in the temples to the emperors was a direct insult to the honor and prestige of Rome. It was here that Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, was martyred during a Greek athletic festival in AD. 155.

Because of their loyal adherence to the cause of Christ, the Christians of the Smyrna period faced the loss of their possessions, and deprivation of all their privileges as citizens of the empire. But while they willingly became poor for Christ's sake, Jesus reminded them that they were truly “rich.” For though outwardly possessing “nothing,” they really possessed “all things” in Christ. (2 Corinthians 6:10.) On earth they might seem to be destitute, but in heaven they had accumulated great and eternal treasure. (Matthew 6:20.)

By whom, in addition to their pagan persecutors, were the early Christians opposed?

“I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.” Revelation 2:9.

Besides persecution from the Roman state, the Christians of the Smyrna period, and particularly in the city of Smyrna itself, faced the bitter opposition of bigoted Jews.

These Jews on two counts were blasphemous in their claim to this title. In the first place, as Paul declared, “He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; ... but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly.” Romans 2:28,29. (See also Romans 9:6,7) So that a Gentile Christian could more rightly claim to be a true Israelite than a Jew according to the flesh who rejected the Jew's Messiah. (Galatians 3:29. See also Revelation 7:1-8) Then, too, many of the Jews had already given way to the luxury and temptations of Roman life, and had seriously compromised their orthodoxy. A second-century inscription refers to “erstwhile Jews” who had lost their racial status and had been assimilated into the general population.

These Jews had no right to the honored title of their fleshly forebear. They were rather what Jesus called others of their kin, of their “father the devil” (John 8: 44), and of the “synagogue of Satan!”

What would the believers in the Smyrna period be called upon to suffer?

“Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days.” Revelation 2: 10.

In the Jewish and pagan persecutions began the fulfillment of the prediction of Jesus: “They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time comes, that whosoever kills you will think that he does God service.”

Some expositors have explained the “ten days” as ten periods of persecution between AD. 57 and AD. 314. Others understand the “ten days” as prophetic time and refer it to the last and most severe of the persecutions which began in the reign of Diocletian and continued for a period of ten years (AD. 303-313). This was certainly the most widespread of all the persecutions, involving the church throughout the whole empire. St. Alban, the first British martyr, died about this time.

This final terrible persecution was brought to an end with the Decree of Milan in AD. 313, when Constantine for the first time gave full religious liberty to the Christians.

How were the persecuted saints encouraged, and what would be the reward of the faithful?

“Fear none of these things which thou shall suffer; be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” Revelation 2: 10.

Though they were called upon to suffer in Jesus' name they had no cause to fear, for while men might “kill the body” they “are not able to kill the soul.” They have cause indeed for fear who have incurred the wrath of Him “which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Matthew 10:28.

The promise of a “crown” would be very significant to the Christians in Graeco-Roman times. It was customary for the worshippers of the pagan gods to wear garlands at the religious festivals, according to their particular deities, myrtle for Aphrodite, ivy for Dionysus, olive for Zeus Olympus. Garlands were also given to the victors in the Greek games, to pagan priests at the close of their term of office, and they were placed upon the bodies of the dead in heathen burial processions.

These all were only perishable crowns, but the “victors” in the Christian warfare, the “priests” of God at the end of their earthly ministry, and the “dead in Christ” will receive at the hands of Jesus a “garland of life” that will not fade. (1 Peter 5: 4.) This will be both the emblem of their allegiance and their sign of triumph. (See also 2 Timothy 4: 8; James 1: 12.)

From what will the overcomer be delivered?

“He that overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death.” Revelation 2: 11.

Appropriate to the “overcomers” of the Smyrna period of the church, was the promise that while physical death might come to them at the hands of their pagan persecutors. They would “in no wise” be touched by the second death in the “lake of fire” (Revelation 21:8; 20:14,15) which would destroy their enemies forever.

44. The Fatal Union

To whom was the third letter addressed?

“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write!” Revelation 2:12.

The third of the seven churches of the Revelation, chosen to represent the period from the conversion of Constantine to the enthronement of the papal apostasy (AD. 313-538), was Pergamos.

Pergamos was the most northerly of the seven cities, being situated fifteen miles from the sea up the valley of the Caicus river. Originally founded by colonists from the Greek mainland, it attained no great distinction until it was chosen as the capital of the kingdom of Pergamum, which the Attalid dynasty carved out of Alexander's dominions in Asia Minor.

The choice of Pergamos as the royal city of the Attalids and later as an administrative center in Roman times, was undoubtedly by reason of the impregnability of its mighty acropolis, of which, as Sir Wm. Ramsay remarks: “The epithet 'royal' is one that rises unbidden to the traveler's lips, especially if he beholds it after seeing the other great cities of the land, with its immense acropolis on a rock rising out of a plain like a mountain, self-centered in its impregnable strength.” - “Letters to the Seven Churches,” pages 43,44.

It was doubtless from its physical position that the city gained its name, which means “height” or “elevation.” Significantly also this name strikingly reflects the period of Christian history which it was chosen by inspiration to represent, for during the fourth, fifth, and early sixth centuries, Christianity was elevated from a tolerated sect to the dominant religion of the empire.

By what ominous title, however, does Jesus reveal Himself to the church of Pergamos?

“These things says He which hath the sharp sword with two edges.” Revelation 2:12.

While the church, released from the persecutions of earlier days, multiplied rapidly and grew steadily in power and influence, its exaltation was at the expense of its purity. And the brotherly love which had at first existed between the churches in the great centers of the empire was replaced by bitter strife for ecclesiastical supremacy. Consequently, not encouragement or consolation, so much as cutting reproof, was what this church most needed.

By what special peril was this church menaced?

“I know. . . where thou dwells, even where Satan's seat is.” Revelation 2: 13,

The perilous situation of the church at Pergamos was typical of temptations which beset the whole Christian church during the Pergamos period, for in that city idolatry was indeed “enthroned.” It was the seat of no fewer than four heathen deities, Zeus, Dionysus, Athena, and Aesculapius, as well as three temples dedicated to Roman emperors. Moreover, this city provided a very definite link between the idolatries of Babylon and Rome. For when the Persians overthrew ancient Babylon, the Chaldean priests fled with their cult of sun worship to Pergamos, from whence it spread westward and provided ecclesiastical Rome with many of the false teachings which became incorporated into her Babylonian system. This last may be the real key to the expression, “Satan's seat.”

By what Old Testament allusion did Jesus reveal the tragedy of the Pergamos period?

“I have a few things against thee, because thou has there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.” Revelation 2:14.

Balaam was a seer or prophet who lived by the River Euphrates (Num. 22: 5) and belonged, like Laban and Bethuel (Genesis 24: 50), to the worshippers of the true God who were left behind after Abraham departed for Canaan.

In the twenty-second chapter of Numbers it is recorded how Balak, king of Moab, seeking spiritual aid against the tribes of Israel who were approaching his kingdom, appealed to Balaam to come and put his curse upon them. (Num. 22:5,6.) At first Balaam refused to co-operate, though his ambitious and covetous nature was attracted by the patronage and rewards which Balak offered. (Verses 7, 13.) When God saw that Balaam's covetous desires outweighed his loyalty to him, He eventually permitted him to ally himself with Balak, though He controlled and overruled the liaison to fulfil His omnipotent designs. The result of Balaam's defection, however, was that many in Israel followed him into apostate association with the Moabites, and incurred the fierce anger of the Lord. (Num. 25: 3)

In the experience of Balaam we have a most impressive parable of the beginnings of the great apostasy of the Christian era. Balak strikingly symbolizes rulers like the Emperor Constantine and Clovis, king of the Franks, who sensed the power of the Christian faith, but were more interested in its value for their own aggrandizement than they were influenced by its message.

Like Balak they offered inducements to susceptible leaders in the church, and many covetous and ambitious ecclesiastics were attracted by these offers. At first, as in the case of Balaam, there were no doubt many conflicts of mind between duty and desire, and like Balaam they tried to persuade themselves and God that it would further the interests of the church to secure the friendship of the state. At last they succumbed to temptation, and the union of church and state was cemented in the great Roman apostasy. The church gained vast wealth and power, but at the same time its energies became increasingly diverted to secular and frequently impious ends. Thus was the experience of Balaam repeated on a far greater scale in the tragic apostasy of the papal church in the Middle Ages.

What other false teachings continued to corrupt the church during this period?

“So has thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate!” Revelation 2:15.

The Nicolaitane heresy, as we have explained earlier (page 304) was the union of Christianity with gnostic philosophy, in contrast with the error of Balaam, which was alliance with the secular state. False philosophy had begun to influence the church in its earliest days before ever the possibility of union with the state arose. When the latter became the church's chief preoccupation, philosophical accretions received less attention, but they came to the fore again during the Renaissance period and gave birth to the modernism of our time.

In spite of deepening apostasy what faithfulness did the Lord still find in Pergamos?

“I know thy works: . . . thou holds fast My name, and has not denied My faith.” Revelation 2:13.

History records that during this period of growing corruption many did stand firm against both false philosophy and the papal apostasy. It was the little groups of faithful ones like the Waldenses, the Wyclifites, and Hussites, which kept the light of truth burning until it blazed forth in the Reformation of the sixteenth century.

What special designation is given to these loyal ones?

“Even in those days wherein Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwells.” Revelation 2:13.

It is hardly likely that one single martyr out of many who died in the earliest Catholic persecutions would have been selected for special commendation. “Antipas,” must, therefore, be a collective name coined to describe the particular error which they resolutely opposed. The word is a shortened form of “anti-papa,” and “papa” was a title used by the leading bishops of the church and eventually monopolized by the “papa” or Pope of Rome.

These martyrs of Pergamos, therefore, were the ones who were prepared to die rather than surrender to the claims of the apostate popes of Rome.

How were those who succumbed to temptation admonished?

“Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.” Revelation 2:16.

When the false prophet Balaam went to join himself to Balak he was threatened by the angel of the Lord who stood in his path with a “sword drawn in his hand!” Num. 22:23. Eventually, because he persisted in this evil association, he was slain by the sword at the time of the defeat of the Midianites. (Num. 31:8; Joshua 13:22.)

Jesus here threatens the apostates of the Pergamos period that incorrigible rebellion will bring to them a like fate. The execution of this threatened judgment the revelator was actually shown in a later vision. (Revelation 19:21.)

On the other hand, what would be the reward of those who remained true to God?

“To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the hidden manna.” Revelation 2: 17.

The children of Israel were sustained on their wilderness journey from Egypt to the promised land by manna from heaven. (Exodus 16:14,15. Compare Psalm 78:19,24,25.) So likewise would the faithful remnant be spiritually sustained during their “wilderness” experience as they fled from the oppression of the great apostasy. (Revelation 12:14.)

What other sign of approval would be given them?

“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.

The conferring of an inscribed white stone would be readily understood by the Christians of Roman days, for this token was used for several symbolic purposes. In trial by lot, white and black stones were placed in an urn. If the white one was drawn the person on trial was acquitted; if the black, he was condemned. The successful competitor in the Olympic games, besides being crowned with a garland of victory, received also a white stone or tablet inscribed with his name.

The spiritual parallels of these uses of the white stone must have brought assurance to the severely tried Christians. Through the merits of the cross of Christ and the Savior's advocacy, they would receive acquittal in the heavenly court and at the end of their spiritual race they were assured of receiving the victor's crown and stone.

What will be the secret name inscribed on the stone? It will not be the name of God, for elsewhere John declares that “the Father's name” will be “written in the foreheads” of the saints. (Revelation 14:1.) The name in the white stone will be something more personal to the child of God, for it is to be disclosed only to the one receiving it. Without a doubt, it will be the “surname” (Mark 3:16) which Jesus will choose for each one, describing the character developed through grace, and the service performed in His strength.

45. The Depths of Satan

To whom was the fourth message addressed?

“And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write.” Revelation 2:18.

The city of Thyatira was situated in Northern Lydia in a cross valley linking the Hermas and Caicos valleys. Though never one of the greater commercial centers, it was a busy city, whose trade guilds were more fully organized than in any other city of Asia. There were, according to the inscriptions, guilds of wool-workers, linen-workers, garment makers, dyers, leather-workers, tanners, potters, bakers, and bronze-smiths. Every craftsman was a member of his appropriate guild, and all the guilds were linked with the temple and priesthood of the patron deity.

How vivid a picture Thyatira presents of the Middle Ages, in which the almost universal Catholic guild system made the life of any craftsman who fell foul of Rome almost impossible.

How does the Lord describe Himself to the church of Thyatira?

“These things says the Son of God, who bath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet are like fine brass.” Revelation 2: 18.

The declining faith of the Pergamos period made Jesus threaten to unsheathe His double-edged sword. To the spiritual idolaters of Thyatira, He revealed Himself as One who would tread His enemies under His feet and consume them with fire.

What did Jesus commend in the faithful ones of Thyatira?

“I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.” Revelation 2:19.

All through the long Dark Ages of papal domination, there was a faithful remnant bound by ties of love to one another, patiently enduring all things for Christ's sake, and assiduously seeking to spread a knowledge of the truth of God.

What, however, was the sad experience of the majority in Thyatira?

“Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou suffers that woman Jezebel, which calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols.” Revelation 2:20.

Apart from the remnant of faith, the masses during the Middle Ages acquiesced in the development of the harlot church, here called Jezebel, after the Zidonian princess and sun worshipper who married Ahab and alienated him and his people from the worship of Jehovah.

This dark episode of Israelite history vividly pictures the papal apostasy of the Middle Ages. As Jezebel dominated Ahab, so the Papacy sought to dominate the rulers of the European states and to impose upon them her idolatrous system. Her priesthood

received the patronage of the state and attained great power, while the true church was driven into the wilderness. (Revelation 12: 6) When Naboth stood in the way of Jezebel's plans he was removed. The Papacy similarly brooked no interference, and rivers of blood flowed as a result of the carrying out of her nefarious designs.

The shutting of heaven for three and a half years in token of God's displeasure corresponds exactly with the three and a half prophetic years during which the Papacy was permitted to do its will during the Thyatira period.

What opportunity of reform was given her?

“And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.” Revelation 2:21.

Through the messages of Elijah, Ahab and Jezebel were called to repent and return to the worship of the true God, but they would not hear. The papal church similarly had its opportunity when confronted by appeals for reform from many lands, but its only answer was to intensify the persecution of all who dared to criticize its actions.

To what, therefore, was she condemned?

“Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.” Revelation 2:22.

Jezebel's sin brought tragic retribution. (2 Kings 9:30-37.) Her bed of fornication became a bier of death, and Ahab who was “with her” in her idolatry perished on the field of battle. This all had its parallel in the fearful retribution which came upon the apostate Roman church in the great revolt of the French Revolution.

What judgment was to come upon all those who associated with her?

“And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am He which searches the reins and hearts!” Revelation 2:23.

After the death of Ahab and Jezebel the king's seventy children were all put to death by Jehu. (2 Kings 10:1-7) These may well represent the proscription of the religious orders as the revolutionary tide spread over Europe.

What will be the basis of God's judgments?

“And I will give unto every one of you according to your works.” Revelation 2: 23.

The judgment of the Papacy in the days of the French Revolution was literally according to her works. She had killed with fire and sword and her priests were destroyed with the same weapons. She had driven multitudes into exile and so she, from the Pope downward, experienced the pangs of banishment. At the last, spiritual Babylon will receive “double according to her works.” Revelation 18: 6.

How mercifully did God deal with the faithful ones?

“But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.” Revelation 2:24.

In love and mercy God looked upon those who had suffered for His name at the hands of spiritual Jezebel and their burden was eased as the permitted period of papal domination drew to an end. Through Daniel, God promised that the persecuted church would be “helped with a little help.” Daniel 11: 34. Jesus declared that the days would be “shortened ... for the elects sake.” Matthew 24:22. And in a latter vision John saw that “the earth helped the woman,” delivering her from the flood of persecution which threatened to overwhelm her. (Revelation 12:15,16)

How are the saints admonished?

“But that which you have already hold fast till I come.” Revelation 2:25.

The “coming” of Jesus to the earlier churches of Ephesus and Pergamos referred to threatened judgment, but the coming which Jesus now begins to speak of is His actual return in glory. The earlier comings were dependent on whether or not they responded to His appeals for repentance. This coming is His foreordained return at the time God has appointed. Toward this the church was to look with hope, and in anticipation of it they were to “hold fast.”

How will the overcomers be rewarded?

“And he that overcomes, and keeps My works unto the end, 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 be broken to shivers: even as I received of My Father.” Revelation 2:26,27

During the Dark Ages of persecution, the people of God were the subjects of grievous oppression. Every means was used to subjugate them, and when they would not submit they were broken. Appropriate, therefore, was the promise that the day would come when the tables would be turned and they, with their Lord, would rule the nations and execute judgment upon their oppressors. (See Psalm 2: 8, 9.)

What will they be given?

“And I will give him the morning star.” Revelation 2:28.

Because they had endured the darkness, to them would be granted the privilege of beholding the ascendancy of the “bright and morning Star” (Revelation 22: 16; 2 Peter 1: 19), that is the glorified Christ, and the dawning of the day of God.

46. The Undeclared Remnant

To whom was the fifth letter addressed?

“And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write.” Revelation 3: 1.

Sardis, situated about thirty miles south-east of Thyatira, was one of the most famous of the cities of Asia. It first appears in history as the capital of Croesus. The fabulously wealthy king of Lydia, being chosen by him, without a doubt, for its imposing acropolis made impregnable by almost vertical cliffs and a natural moat formed by the river winding round its base. It continued to be a city of great importance during the Persian, Greek, and Roman periods until AD. 17, when it was destroyed by an earthquake. In John's day it had been rebuilt, but it never again attained more than a shadow of its earlier greatness. This vanished glory was undoubtedly the reason why it was chosen to represent the period immediately following the end of the papal domination, as will appear when we note what Jesus had to say about it.

How did Jesus describe Himself to the church in Sardis?

“These things says He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.” Revelation 3:1.

It was in the sevenfold fullness of the power of the Spirit that the church had endured the fearful trials of the Dark Ages. And as it emerged into the tranquil waters of the Sardis period, Jesus reminded the believers that the same power was still available, and that their “C1star” was as surely in His hands as that of the martyr church of earlier days. And they would need this sevenfold power, for while they might not have to endure suffering and danger, there would be more subtle dangers to resist.

Into what condition, in fact, did this church degenerate?

“I know thy works, that thou has a name that thou lives, and art dead!” Revelation 3: 1.

Here we begin to glimpse the reason for the choice of Sardis to represent the church of the post-papal period. Unlike some of the other cities of Asia which began in obscurity and attained greatness in Roman times, the most glorious days of Sardis had long passed when John knew it as one of the cities of his diocese. The name of Sardis still stirred glorious memories, but compared with its past it was now a “dead” city.

The story of the church following the heroic days of the Reformation was strikingly parallel with the history of the ancient city, for as soon as peace came to the Reformed church, decline set in. It still had behind it the reputation of the great “protest,” but it was not long before it had little more than a “name.” The fervor of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was replaced by the deadness of indifference and apathy in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

How far short of God's purpose did the church of the Sardis period come?

“I have not found thy works perfect before God.” Revelation 3:2.

While the persecuted church of the Thyatira period was highly commended for its charity and service, its faith and patience, the Lord found the “works” of the succeeding church far from perfect in His sight. The complaint was indeed justified, for though the Christians of this period faced no opposition, endured no trials, they failed to use these favorable circumstances to consolidate their spiritual position, and instead sank into degeneracy and decline.

How does Jesus, therefore, admonish this church?

“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.” Revelation 3:2.

This admonition of Jesus to the church of Sardis is vividly illustrated in the story of the ancient city, for on two critical occasions tragedy came to it through failure to watch.

“Carelessness and failure to keep proper watch, arising from overconfidence in the apparent strength of the fortress,” says Sir Wm. Ramsay, was the cause of the disaster which, in 549 BC., ruined the dynasty of Croesus, “and brought to an end the Lydian Empire and the dominance of SardisLetters to the Seven Churches,” page 377.

Again in 218 BC. the story of disaster was repeated when a Cretan named Lagoras, in the army of Antiochus the Great, entered the city by the same ruse which the Media-Persians used to take it more than three centuries before. Against this background of tragedy, Jesus urged the Reformation church at the end of the eighteenth century to beware of false confidence in its strength. For though Satan had failed to destroy the church by direct assault, he would assuredly use all his subtlety to lull the church to sleep and bring about its fall in some other way.

The church as a whole failed to heed the warning and this is precisely what happened to it. Recovering from its deadly wound, the Papacy set out to recover its former power. In addition, pro-Catholic movements were insinuated into the Protestant churches and began the work of demolishing the Protestant faith from within.

What was this church urgently called upon to remember?

“Remember therefore how thou has received and heard, and hold fast, and repent.” Revelation 3:1

They were urged to remember the faith which they had received from their spiritual fathers and recover their hold upon it, lest it should completely escape them.

What would be the sad consequence of a failure to heed the warning?

“If therefore thou shall not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shall not know what hour I will come upon thee.” Revelation 3: 3.

The urgency of the appeal was underlined by a more definite warning than to any earlier church of the approaching advent of the Lord, which, if they were not watchful, would overtake them as a thief.

Amid the decadence of the church of Sardis, what brought consolation to Jesus?

“Thou has a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments.” Revelation 3:4.

From the ancient church of Sardis, but one illustrious name has come down to us, Melito, bishop of Sardis in the second century. Similarly, in the church of the Sardis period, Jesus could count but a few names of those who had escaped the prevailing degeneracy and decay.

Such were men like Wesley and Whitefield, who sought to revive the faith of the church, and the founders of the Bible societies and the missionary societies of the early nineteenth century, upon whom came the burden to carry the message of the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

What promise was made to the overcomers in Sardis?

“He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment.” Revelation 3:5. “They shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy.” Revelation 3: 4.

White is the “livery of heaven” and typifies the purity and righteousness of God and of the angels who stand in the presence of God. To fit the redeemed for heaven they are promised white raiment (Revelation 3:4,5,18; 6:11), and when in vision John sees them in glory, they are invariably so clad. (Revelation 7:9,13)

In what book will the names of the faithful ones be ever retained?

“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.

Every town in the Gracco-Roman world had its book of citizens, from which periodically were struck off those who died or who forfeited their privileges as a result of misdemeanor. God reminds the believers that He too has a book of citizenship in His kingdom. The names of those who were of Israel after the flesh were once written in this book as the nucleus of the people of God, but because of their iniquity He had to blot them out. (Exodus 32:32,33; Deuteronomy 29:20.) In it He then began to write the names of Abraham’s spiritual seed, the saints of God. Jesus bade His first disciples rejoice that their names were “written in heaven.” Luke 10:20. Jesus here promises that the names of the faithful in Sardis will in no wise be blotted out.

Soon Jesus must decide what He will do with your name and mine. Shall we not avail ourselves of His grace, that our sins may be blotted out (Acts 3: 19; Hebrews 8: 12) and our names retained, so that we may be “accepted in the Beloved” when He comes for His own.

47. The Open Door

To whom is the sixth letter written?

“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write.” Revelation 3: 7.

The city of Philadelphia lay about thirty miles from Sardis in the valley of the River Cogamis, tributary of the Hermus. It derived its name from Attalus II Philadelphus, second king of the Attalid dynasty of Pergamos who founded it or perhaps refounded it between 180 and 138 BC. From its foundation, the history of Philadelphia was conditioned by its unique geographical situation and it was this, as we shall see later, which made it a wonderful type of the sixth epoch of the church in the mid-nineteenth century.

The name of the city, too, which means “brotherly love,” could not have been more appropriate. It was bestowed upon Attalus II for his affection and loyalty toward his brother, and it equally fittingly describes the unity of the believers of the Philadelphian period of the church's history as they drew together in the “blessed hope” of the soon coming of their Lord.

What title does Jesus assume in addressing the Philadelphian church?

“These things says He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens.” Revelation 3:7.

An intimation of the function of the Philadelphian church in the divine plan is provided by the titles which Jesus chose in announcing Himself to it.

He is the “true” One who is about to “reveal” truths reserved until the “time of the end” and to send forth a special message which would extend to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people His final offer of mercy and salvation.

By designating Himself the “Holy” One, Jesus indicated further that He was about to declare, in a special manner, the requirements of His holiness and to bring men into judgment according to the claims of His holy law.

Finally, that His people might know that He had the authority to “unseal” the truth and to exercise judgment. He announced that He was appointed the divine Key-bearer and that, according as He opened or shut the door of the kingdom of God, men would be privileged to enter or for ever be excluded.

How did Jesus declare He would use the keys of which He is custodian?

“I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.” Revelation 3:8.

Now we begin to see why Philadelphia, in particular, was chosen as a type of this period of the church's history. For Philadelphia was pre-eminently a “-key” city, a “door” to the great hinterland of Anatolia. Up the valley of the Cogamis ran the principal trade route from Smyrna into the interior, and in the first century AD. it was actually part of the Imperial post-road from Rome via Troas, Pergamos, and Sardis to the East. Moreover, when Philadelphia was first established, it was intended by Attalus II to be a “cultural door” “for the diffusion of Greek language and letters in a peaceful land by peaceful means.” “Letters to the Seven Churches,” by Sir W. M. Ramsay, page 392.

When the Gospel was planted in Philadelphia this city, without doubt, also became a door through which went ambassadors of the cross to win the interior of Asia Minor for Christ.

How fitting then was the choice of Philadelphia to represent the age when the key was to turn and the door swing open in the providence of God (compare 1 Corinthians 16:9; 2 Corinthians 2:12; Colossians 4: 3). For the Gospel of the crucified, risen, and soon-coming Savior to go into all the world.

There was also another “door” which was to be opened by the divine Key bearer at the end of this critical period, not on the earth, but in heaven. It will be remembered that in the ancient sanctuary there were two apartments. The first was the holy place in which the priests ministered “continually” through the year. This was typical of the “continual” ministry of Christ, the High Priest, in the heavenly sanctuary on behalf of the people of God after His return to heaven. (Hebrews 8: 1, 2; 9: 12, 24.)

The second apartment, the most holy place, came into prominence on the climactic Day of Atonement, when the high priest, drawing aside the veil which gave access to this inner apartment, went in to perform the solemn expiatory service which closed the sanctuary year.

This symbolic service obviously required that, at a certain time in His heavenly ministry, Jesus would open the door from the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary into the most holy place and enter upon the antitypical judgment of the world's Day of Atonement.

As we have seen from the prophecy of the two thousand three hundred days in the eighth chapter of Daniel, this solemn point in the history of the ages was reached in 1844, which decisive day falls within the period of the Philadelphian church. So, while Jesus was opening a door on the earth for the Gospel to go to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, He was also opening the door in heaven giving access to the most holy place and inaugurating the world's investigative judgment.

To both doors Jesus has the “key” and neither can be opened without His aid, nor closed but at His command. Nothing can stop the onward march of the Gospel to the ends of the earth, and no power in earth or heaven can prevent the world's Day of Atonement moving on to its consummation at the close of human probation.

How were the faithful in Philadelphia commended?

“For thou has a little strength, and has kept My word, and has not denied My name.” Revelation 3:8.

Philadelphia was only a little city—one of its names was little Athens—but it had an illustrious history. The people of God during the Philadelphia period would likewise be insignificant in the eyes of the world of its day, but not in the sight of God. Jesus rejoices that the “little” remnant of Philadelphia are “keeping” His word and “confessing” His name.

What humiliation would ultimately be brought upon their enemies?

“Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet and to know that I have loved thee.” Revelation 3:9.

In a letter of Ignatius, one of the early church fathers, to Philadelphia, it is evident that false Jews who claimed to believe in the Messiah, yet rejected the Gospel, were a constant source of trouble to the church. So also in the Philadelphian period there would be many claiming to be the people of God yet who would reject the “present truth” which He would make known in the last days. These opposers of the work of God are stigmatized as of the “synagogue of Satan,” a fearful condemnation indeed, which should cause us to search our hearts that we may not be inveigled by Satan into such a position.

These might enjoy a temporary ascendancy, but the day would come when they would not only be compelled to acknowledge and bow before Christ (Psalm 72: 9; 110: 1; Phil. 2: 10), but also before the despised remnant. (See Isaiah 60: 14; 45: 14; 49: 22, 23.)

What promise of succor did Jesus give to the faithful remnant?

“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.” Revelation 3: 10.

As in the message to the Ephesus church, Inspiration makes use of a play on words to emphasize the reward of the Philadelphian saints. They by grace have “kept” His word; therefore He will “keep” them in- the hour of temptation.

“The temptation” referred to here is not just the trials which are the lot of all the people of God in all ages, but a special period of testing when Antichrist comes to the peak of his power in the final crisis of history.

What urgent announcement is now made?

“Behold, I come quickly.” Revelation 3: 11.

More and more definite are the Lord's announcements of His coming as the close of history approaches. To the first three churches the advent was not mentioned because it was in the distant future. The church of the Middle Ages was first called upon to hold fast “till I come!” Sardis was warned that Jesus' coming would be as a thief to the unprepared, while upon Philadelphia the imminence of Christ's return is impressed.

In consequence, how are the believers admonished?

“Hold that fast which thou has, that no man take thy crown.” Revelation 3: 11.

Time and again in the record of God's outworking purposes, men have failed to measure up to the requirements of God and their reward has passed to another. Esau's rightful inheritance passed to Jacob because Esau was “profane.” (Genesis 25:34; 27:36) David superseded Saul. (1 Sam. 16:1,13.) Judas lost his privileged position among the twelve disciples, because of his treachery, and Matthias was elected in his place. (Acts 1:26) So the Philadelphian church is similarly exhorted to hold fast its faith that, so near the kingdom, their crown might not be lost to them.

What promise is made to the overcomers in Philadelphia?

“Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out.” Revelation 3:12.

To each in Philadelphia came the necessity of deciding whether they would be built into the “synagogue of Satan” or into the “temple of God.”

Peter describes all the saints in the temple of grace as “lively stones” (1 Peter 2: 5), while here it is indicated that certain ones will enjoy the special privilege and responsibility of being “pillars.” In the early church Peter, James, and John were such “pillars” (Galatians 2: 9), by reason of their outstanding experience and service, and from the crucial Philadelphian period of the church's history Jesus will find many more “pillars” for His temple.

How will God identify each overcomer with Himself?

“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.” Revelation 3:12.

Included in the reward of the saints, will be the honor of bearing on their foreheads the name of God, as the One to whom they belong, the name of Jesus, with whom they are fellow-heirs, and the name of their eternal dwelling place, the New Jerusalem.

48. The Last Age of the Church

To whom was the last of the seven letters addressed?

“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write.” Revelation 3:14.

The city chosen to represent the last epoch of the church was Laodicea, which lay some fifty miles south-cast of Philadelphia on the great road up the Lycus Valley into Phrygia from Ephesus and Miletus.

Established by Antiochus II Theos (261-246 BC.) and named after his first wife Laodice, it remained a small town until Roman times, when it became very wealthy through its manufactures and banking houses. Like so many cities of Asia Minor it was devastated by the earthquake of AD. 60, but it was restored and was still a sufficiently important city in the fourth century of the Christian era for the famous Council of Laodicea to be held there. (AD. 364)

The name of the city, which means, “The judging of the people,” has a very definite significance. For it was in 1844, the year which opens the last age in the history of the church, that the great antitypical judgment session began in heaven, and the 'Judgment-hour message' began to go forth on the earth. (Revelation 14: 6, 7.)

Cruden renders the name of the city not “the judging of the people,” but “a just people!” This is equally appropriate, for the judgment-hour message will call forth a just people who will “keep” all “the commandments of God” through the “faith of Jesus!” Revelation 14: 12.

How, does Jesus describe Himself to this last church?

“These things says the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God.” Revelation 3:14.

These three appellations of Jesus are of the highest significance to the last church. We are reminded that in this final decisive period, the Gospel is to be preached in all the world for a “witness” (Matthew 24: 14), and He who was the “Beginner [not the beginning] of the creation of God” will, as its “Amen,” triumphantly finish His work.

How deluded are many in the Laodicean church as to their spiritual condition?

“Thou says, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” Revelation 3:17.

The ancient city of Laodicea was, in Roman times, both “rich” and “increased with goods.” So wealthy were the inhabitants, that after the earthquake Of AD. 60, they would not accept any help from neighboring towns toward the rebuilding of their city. Yet for all its material wealth, Laodicea was a failure compared with “little” Philadelphia. It exerted no cultural influence on Phrygia such as Philadelphia exerted on Lydia, and Phrygia remained the least Hellenized of all the provinces of Asia Minor. Probably it was because it concentrated so much on material riches that it had no time for the things of the mind and the spirit.

What a picture this ancient city provides of the nominal church of God in the last days of earth's history. Possessed of imposing buildings, in good standing with the powers that be, patronized by wealth, and eminently respectable, it is nevertheless poverty-stricken so far as spiritual wealth is concerned. It preserves the “form of godliness,” yet is devoid of its “power.” 2 Timothy 3:5.

In what other terms is the Laodicean church described?

“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: ... thou art lukewarm.” Revelation 3:15, 16.

No condition could be more dangerous. If men are “cold,” that is “untouched by the powers of grace,” there is still hope for them. As Archbishop Trench says, the “grand experiment of the Gospel” may yet be tried. If the church is “hot” with fervor and zeal, its spiritual temperature can be maintained by continuous contact with the source of its power. But a church that finds satisfaction in the feeble spark which grace has barely succeeded in kindling, is almost impervious to the further impress of the Spirit.

What aversion does God consequently feel toward it?

“I will spew thee out of My mouth!” Revelation 3: 16.

Just as lukewarm water produces a sense of nausea and loathing, so a lukewarm experience is abhorrent to God. This figure of speech was used by God in His warning to ancient Israel. (Leviticus 20: 22) The last church is in a similar danger. Unless they are brought to a realization of their true condition they must be “spewed” out of the mouth of God and abandoned to their fate.

What urgent counsel is, therefore, sent to Laodicea?

“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 that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye salve that thou may see.” Revelation 3: 18.

The only hope for the Laodiceans of our time is to find the true wealth, the beautiful garments of righteousness, and spiritual health.

The true spiritual wealth (James 2: 5; 1 Timothy 6: 18) is not to be bought with material gold and silver, but is available “without money and without price” to those who truly desire it. (Isaiah 55: 1, 2.)

In exchange for the fine yet besmirched garments of a worldly church, Jesus offers the white robes of His own righteousness. (Revelation 19: 8)

In Laodicea was a famous school of medicine where, in all probability, the “Phrygian powder” for the eyes was made. But no eye salve of human manufacture is here suggested. Only the heavenly eye salve of illuminating grace can enlighten eyes blinded by sin and make them sound and single. (Matthew 6:22.)

By what is Christ's love indicated? How should we respond?

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, be zealous therefore, and repent.” Revelation 3:19.

Despite all man's sin, Jesus dearly loves the sinner and seeks to restore him to the way of righteousness. Through His Word and His messengers, He rebukes and exhorts the erring ones. Through His judgments, He chastens. That He brings trial into our lives is an evidence that He loves us. (Proverbs 3: 12) It should not, therefore, arouse in us bitterness and resentment, but rather repentance and reformation, that our fellowship with Jesus may be restored, and that our lukewarm hearts may glow again with the joy of communion with Him.

How imminent does He now declare His coming to be?

“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.” Revelation 3:20.

The message to the Philadelphian church was, “I come quickly.” Now He is “at the door!” By His Word, by His Spirit, by His providence in our lives, and by the signs of His approach which are all around. He is knocking at our heart's door. Should we not be as ready to swing open the door and welcome Him as we would be to hail the arrival of some loved one after a long absence? Yet how many are there to-day who are so absorbed in their worldly occupations and pleasures that they either do not hear the urgent summons or, hearing, they are too indifferent to bestir themselves.

What will be the privilege of the overcomers of Laodicea?

“To him that overcomes 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.” Revelation 3:21.

When Jesus entered upon the work of salvation, He left His rightful place with God in His throne in order to go in search of lost mankind. Having purchased man's redemption on the cross of Calvary, He returned to heaven and resumed His place beside the Father (Ephesians 1:20,22; Hebrews 8:1,2; Zechariah 6:12,13), where He awaits final victory over His enemies. (Psalm 110:1.) A part

in that throne is never offered to man. Only God and He who is “equal with God” can sit there. The place of all created beings, whether angels or men, is “before” that throne.

But just before Christ's return in triumph to the earth, God will enthrone Him, as ruler of “the kingdoms of this world,” upon the throne of David, vacant since Zedekiah was deposed. (Daniel 7:13,14) On this throne He will appear in His glory, and to it He will call the saints to share His reign. (Daniel 7:18, 27; Revelation 20:4.)

49. Looking Into Heaven

What expression now indicates the opening of a new series of visions before the eyes of the prophet?

“After this I looked.” Revelation 4: 1.

The phrase “after this” does not mean that the scenes to be described by John were to take place after the events of the previous chapter, for the latter actually reach right on to the end. Wherever it is used-and it occurs six times throughout the book-it indicates the opening of a new series of revelations. (See Revelation 4:1; 7:1,9; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1.)

With what view was this new vision introduced?

“Behold, a door was opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me, which said, Come up hither.” Revelation 4: 1.

Several prophets have had the wonderful privilege of being permitted to look into heaven and return to describe its glories for the encouragement of the people of God in times of difficulty and trial. At a critical period in the history of God's ancient people, the heavens opened before the gaze of Isaiah, and he saw, high above the walls of the temple in which he stood, the throne of God. (Isaiah 6:1.) By it he was assured of God's omnipotent power and overruling purposes.

To the prophet Ezekiel, by the river of Chebar during the dark days of the captivity, “the heavens were opened,” and he was given a vision of the throne that is above all earthly thrones. (Ezekiel 1:1-10)

Before Stephen the first martyr died, he was granted a vision of his ascended Lord at the right hand of the Father for his encouragement and for the comfort of all who would thereafter die for their faith. (Acts 7:56)

John, on several occasions in the book of the Revelation, shared with Isaiah and Ezekiel and Stephen this wonderful privilege of looking into heaven. Before the story of the seven epochs of the church was unfolded to the prophet, he was shown a vision of Jesus walking amid the candlesticks; and now before this second series of pen pictures of the church's experience, he received new encouragement for himself and the church from a vision of God's throne. (See also Revelation 11:19)

How much more wonderful will it be when the momentous words, “Come up hither,” are spoken to all the saints and the “everlasting doors” swing open to receive them personally into the abode of God!

Into what spiritual ecstasy did the prophet at once pass?

“And immediately I was in the spirit.” Revelation 4:2.

When Enoch and Elijah were caught up to heaven they were transported bodily thither. Ezekiel, Stephen, Paul, and John were transported thither “in spirit,” that is to say, their bodies did not leave the earth, but with the inward eye they were enabled to glimpse the busy activity of heaven.

On what did John's eyes first rest?

“And behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne!” Revelation 4:2.

This throne which John saw was not the throne of God at the center of the universe, but a throne which had been “set” in position for the purpose of the vision to be shown to John. The word used is the same as that employed to describe the placing of cushions for the accommodation of guests at an oriental ceremony. The view presented to John's gaze, therefore is not to be regarded as the invariable appearance of the heavenly courts but, as it were, a tableau arranged to display the special truths which the prophet was to communicate.

How is the seated One described?

“And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone.” Revelation 4:1

As we are told in the Scriptures that “no man hath seen God at any time,” we may conclude that John did not actually see the form of God, but only the supernal glory emanating from the enthroned One. It is an interesting fact that a sardius or sardine was the first stone in the high priest's breastplate, while jasper was the last. (Exodus 28: 17.) So what John saw was the divine original of which the breastplate was a miniature replica, symbolizing the perfection of the character of God.

By what was the throne encircled?

“And there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.” Revelation 4:3. Over-arching the throne, a beautiful rainbow of emerald hue promised hope and deliverance to those who claim His power and grace. (Compare Genesis 9: 12, 11)

What awe-inspiring sounds proceeded from the throne?

“And out of the throne proceeded lightning and thunders and voices.” Revelation 4:5.

Thunder and lightning were associated with the giving of the law on Sinai (Exodus 19:16) in order to impress the children of Israel with the authority and power of the Lawgiver. Here again John's sense of the majesty of the throne of God is heightened as he saw lightning flash out from the throne while thunders reverberated around it.

What did John see burning before the throne?

“And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.” Revelation 4:5.

The seven lamps burning before the throne immediately remind us of the seven-branched golden candlestick with its seven bowls of oil (Exodus 25:31-40; 26:35) in the ancient sanctuary. Both symbolize the sevenfold perfection of the Spirit of God, through which God's blessings to man are communicated. (See also Revelation 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6.)

Whom did he see grouped around the throne?

“And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting.” Revelation 4:4.

Who were these privileged ones seated so close to the throne of God? The fact that they are described as “elders” suggests that they are not angels but men, for this term was commonly used in both Old and New Testaments for the leaders of the people of God. (Exodus 3:16; Isaiah 37:2; Acts 20:17.). The twenty-four elders which John saw thus clearly represent the leaders of the redeemed and glorified saints.

But it may be asked, how could there be human beings around the throne of God at the time John received his visions, seeing that the dead were still asleep in their graves waiting for the day when Jesus would return in glory to call them forth? We only know of three exceptional persons in the Old Testament, Enoch, Moses, and Elijah, who were translated to heaven.

The explanation is that in the earthquake which occurred at the moment of Christ's death, many “graves were opened,” and at His resurrection the “bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves. . . and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.” Matthew 27:52,53. These resurrected ones were later taken to heaven, as Paul states in his letter to the Ephesians: “When He ascended up on high, He led a multitude of captives.” Ephesians 4: 8, margin.

So when the “door” opened in heaven to John's amazed gaze, there was actually a considerable “token” company of the redeemed participating in the blessings and the service of heaven. These were represented before the throne of God by the twenty-four elders, their number corresponding with the courses of the sons of Aaron and the Levites who ministered before the presence of the Lord in the earthly sanctuary.

How was their character reflected in their raiment?

“Clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.” Revelation 4:4.

The white robes of the elders betoken the attainment of perfection of character through the conferment of the righteousness of Christ, while their crowns indicated that they had overcome in the conflict with evil. (2 Timothy 4:8.) In character, therefore, they portray, by way of anticipation, the multitudes of the redeemed in the kingdom of God.

What stretched out before the throne?

“And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal.” Revelation 4: 6.

When the elders of Israel were called up into Mount Sinai to appear in the presence of God, they saw “under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness.” Exodus 24: 10. The shimmering surface of the glasslike sea which John saw is the same glorious pavement on which those in the presence of God stand. (See Revelation 15:2.)

What other beings were in the immediate vicinity of the throne?

“And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne were four beasts.” Revelation 4: 6.

Completing the wonderful heavenly tableau, John sees closest of all to the throne four “living creatures.” It is unfortunate that the translators should use for these beings the same term as they use elsewhere for the savage animals representing the nations of men, for the two original words are quite distinct. The word used for the beasts symbolizing the warring nations of earth (Revelation 11:7; 13:1, etc.) is *therion* or “wild beasts,” while that employed to describe the beings associated with the throne of God is *zoa* or “living creatures,” this name being derived from *zoe* or “life.”

Their activities, mentioned later, which include calling forth the judgments of God (Revelation 6) and giving the vials of His wrath to the angels of judgment (Revelation 15), indicate their angelic and not human nature. This is confirmed by the fact that identical beings seen in vision by Ezekiel are specifically designated “cherubim.” They are, in fact, the angel bodyguard of God. That is why they were depicted on the veil and over the mercy-seat in the ancient sanctuary. (Exodus 25:18-20; 26:31; 36:35; 1 Kings 6: 23-29.) God Himself is commonly referred to as “the Lord of hosts, . . . which dwells between the cherubims (Exodus 25:22; Psalm 80:1; Isaiah 37:16.)

Whether the number four denotes the actual number of the cherubim, or whether this number, like that of the elders, is symbolic, we cannot tell. But we do know that in the beginning, the chief of this angelic bodyguard of God was none other than Lucifer, son of the morning, for his original status is described as “the anointed cherub that covers.” Ezekiel 28:14. No doubt there had

to be a reorganization of the order of cherubim as a result of the defection of Lucifer. Their number was, no doubt, made up and another of the order was appointed chief. Some believe that the one who took Lucifer's place was Gabriel, for he is the only angel we know by name.

By what symbolic forms were the cherubim represented?

“And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within!” Revelation 4:7,8. “Full of eyes before and behind!” Verse 6.

Obviously this was not their real form, but rather a symbolic representation of their nature and office. The face of a lion fitly represents the power and strength of the cherubim, for “what is stronger than a lion?” Judges 14:18. (See also Proverbs 30:30.) The eagle soars nearest to heaven in its flight and well pictures the beings who constantly “behold” the “face” of God. (Matthew 18:10) The human face reveals their wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, which is also portrayed by their being “full of eyes.” Ezekiel 10:12; Revelation 4:6,8. Finally, by the face of an ox calf is indicated their willing obedience and faithfulness in the service of the Creator. The multiple wings of the cherubim further emphasize their swiftness of flight on God's errands of grace or judgment. (See also Isaiah 6:2,3.)

What an example and pattern the cherubim provide for the children of men to emulate. True, we are never to become angels, for men and angels each have their special place in the creation of God, but we may and must attain to the likeness of angels in character if we are one day to mingle with them around the throne of God.

How were the cherubim ceaselessly employed?

“And they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” Revelation 4:8.

To the angels the repetition of praise to God for His holiness, His power, and His eternity never becomes monotonous, for it is the expression of their hearts' intense devotion. Nor will such praise pall upon our lips if our hearts feel the same toward Him.

For what was their song a signal?

“And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to Him that sat on the throne, who lives for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne. And worship Him that lives for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne.” Revelation 4:9,10.

As the prophet with rapt attention watched the cherubic choir, he noticed that their song was the signal for the twenty-four elders to worship (Revelation 4:10; 5:8), and later for the vast angelic throng to break into songs of praise (Revelation 5:11,12). In addition to constituting the bodyguard of God, therefore, the cherubim are seen to be the leaders of the celestial choir.

What was the theme of their song?

“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for Thou has created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.” Revelation 4:11.

Wonderful indeed was the privilege extended to John of looking upon and listening to these heavenly choristers. More wonderful still is the assurance that that privilege will one day be ours if we too are faithful.

In introducing to the prophet this wonderful throne scene in heaven what did the angel say as to his purpose? “I will show thee things which must be hereafter.” Revelation 4: 1.

The angel was about to show to the prophet a new series of visions depicting the experience of the church through the ages, for the purpose of stressing other aspects of the history of the people of God. This vision of the throne was to provide the heavenly background to the events which would be depicted upon the earth.

The heavenly scene was actually a portrayal of the heavenly sanctuary of which the earthly tabernacle was a “pattern.” There was the glory of God radiating from the throne, just as the shekinah glory illuminated the earthly sanctuary. There were the accompanying cherubim, corresponding to the cherubim over the mercy seat and on the veil between the holy and the most holy place. Before the throne and the cherubim were the seven Spirits of God, corresponding to the seven-branched candlestick, while the elders symbolized the assisting priests. In a later scene, John saw also the divine original of the altar of incense which stood before the cherubim-embroidered veil. (Revelation 8: 3.)

The position of the prophet, as he viewed the heavenly sanctuary, was clearly in its first apartment. Indicating that the “continual” ministry of Christ in the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary would be the background of the momentous events to be described, and the constant fortification of the people of God in their age-long witness for the truth.

50. The Sealed Book Opened

As John steadfastly beheld the throne of God, upon what object did his gaze rest?

“And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals!” Revelation 5: 1.

The book which John saw was not, of course, a book such as is familiar to us, but, as was common in John's day, a long roll attached at either end to a supporting rod or stick. Presumably the seals had tabs projecting from the end of the roll and so were all plainly visible. As each seal was broken and a portion of the roll unwrapped, the next seal would be exposed.

Without a doubt there is a special significance in the number of the seals, which is identical with the number of churches in chapters one to three and with the number of the trumpets and plagues in later chapters. Seven is the symbolic number of perfection and the seven churches, seals, and trumpets cover the whole of the time from the commencement of the Christian era to the end. The seven plagues likewise indicate the fullness of the wrath of God.

What challenge did John hear issued to all the inhabitants of heaven? Did anyone accept it?

“And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.” Revelation 5:2, 3.

The question was asked not because there was any likelihood of someone stepping forward from among the ranks of the angels to break the seals, but in order to impress John with the rare qualifications needed by the one claiming a right to open the book.

What distress did the sight of the still sealed book give to John?

“And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.” Revelation 5:4.

John's sorrow was occasioned not so much by personal disappointment at being denied a knowledge of the contents of the sealed roll, as from a realization that the knowledge contained in it would fortify the minds of the people of God down the ages. Without what it revealed, their lot would be harder because more incomprehensible.

By whom was he at once comforted?

“And one of the elders says unto me, 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.” Revelation 5:5.

John's sorrow at the absence of anyone worthy to open the book was quickly allayed by one of the elders, who explained to him that though no created being was able or worthy to break the seals, One had been found who was qualified to do so. The worthy One was none other than the Son of God Himself, introduced under the two-fold appellation of “Lion of the tribe of Judah,” and the “Root of David.”

Turning to look upon the “Lion of Judah,” what did he see standing before the throne?

“And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb.” Revelation 5:6.

To John's surprise instead of seeing before the throne the “Lion” of which the angel spoke, his eyes lighted upon a Lamb in the center of the adoring throng. The unexpected sight conveyed the vivid truth to the prophet that the Lion and the Lamb are one. The Lamb symbolizes the extent of Christ's self-emptying and sacrifice (Isaiah 53:7; Phil. 2:8); the Lion, the height of exaltation from which He descended to accomplish the redemption of a lost world, and to which at His ascension He returned. (Revelation 19:16)

What was especially remarkable in the Lamb's appearance?

“A Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.” Revelation 5:6.

In the appearance of the Lamb. John beheld both weakness and strength, both humility and glory. For, on the one hand, while he saw it as if it had just been smitten before the altar. in the sanctuary, he noted also the symbols of omniscience in its seven eyes, and omnipotence in its seven horns.

What did John see the Lamb do?

“And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne!” Revelation 5:7.

The taking of the book was more than the receiving from God of a revelation to pass on to man; it was a taking over of the course of history with the express intention of working “all things after the counsel of His own will.” Ephesians 1: 11.

For what was the taking of the book a signal?

“And when He had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb.” Revelation 5:8.

In the sacrificial Lamb the living creatures and the elders recognized the divine Redeemer, and as representatives of angels and men, they fell down in adoration and worship.

By what means did they express their emotions at the wondrous sight?

“Having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints.” Revelation 5: 8.

In the ancient sanctuary the sons of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun led the praises of the congregation of Israel “with harps!” Psalm 49:4. Others of the priests offered the prayers of the people as they sprinkled incense upon the fire on the golden altar. (Luke 1:10) In the scene which John saw, we have the heavenly counterpart of these earthly, ministrations with their harps the living

creatures and the elders expressed the joy with which they contemplated the divine Opener of the scaled book of redemption. While with their golden vials they offered to Him the universal prayer and praise of the people of God.

What song did the living creatures and the elders sing?

“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou was slain, and has redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” Revelation 5:9.

Reading these verses in the Authorized Version raises a perplexing problem. For while sentiments of this song were appropriate enough to the elders who were a token company of the redeemed, they were hardly appropriate in the mouths of the cherubim who were not earthly beings and who had never fallen.

The incongruity is explained by the fact that the word “us” does not appear in the best manuscripts and is omitted in the Revised Version. What the living creatures and elders really said was: “Thou has redeemed to God a company out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation.”

To what dignity were the redeemed exalted?

“And has made [them] unto our God kings and priests: and [they] shall reign on the earth.” Revelation 5:10.

Again the song should be read not in the first person, but in the third as the Revised Version makes very clear. Jesus had made the company of the redeemed, which included the elders but not the cherubim, kings and priests, and they would reign upon the earth.

By whom were the cherubim and the elders joined in their song?

“And I beheld, and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands!” Revelation 5:11.

As the prophet listened entranced, the glory song of the living creatures and the elders swelled into a mighty chorus as the angels joined in. Through the ages the theme of redemption had been their constant study. (1 Peter 1: 12.) Now, as they saw its culmination approaching, their praise overflowed in rapturous song.

What was the theme of the angels' song?

“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.” Revelation 5:12,

In sevenfold adoration the angels lifted their voices in praise, each ascription comprehending a different aspect of the glories of the Lord.

As the angels sang, what further multitude of voices echoed their praise?

“And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I” Revelation 5:13.

A question may very properly be asked here. When is this song sung? For while the elders declared that the redeemed would in the future reign upon the earth, a renewed and cleansed creation is heard universally ascribing glory and praise to the Lamb-at which time the saints surely will be reigning upon the earth.

The explanation is that the song is not sung by all at one and the same time. It is a cumulative one, the stanzas of which will be successively sung by angels and men. It begins with the song of the cherubim and the elders as the Lamb takes the book from the hand of God. To this will be added the song of the angels as they see the triumph of the salvation of God, and finally that of the renewed creation as it rolls on into the ceaseless ages of eternity.

What will be the theme of creation's song?

“Saying, Blessing and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” Revelation 5:13.

Creation's song is a perfect echo of the song of the angels. Beginning where they left off by ascribing blessings to Christ for His wondrous redemption, it glimpses the honor and glory that are His, and closes on the note of power with which the angels began.

To creation's triumph song, what will the four beasts respond?

“And the four beasts said, Amen.” Revelation 5: 14.

That “Amen” has not been sung, for the work of redemption is not yet completed. One day, however, the work of God will be finished. Then the living creatures around the throne of God will be able to add to the waves of praise which roll out to the ends of creation and return, their last and grand “Amen! “

How will the elders climax the song?

“And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped Him that lives for ever and ever.” Revelation 5:14.

As the great Amen resounds to the ends of the heavens, the elders will fall down in worship in token of the universal adoration of the victorious Lamb.

51. The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

As the Lamb opened the first seal what invitation was extended to John?

“And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.” Revelation 6: 1.

In the setting of the majestic heavenly scene described in the previous chapter, the Lamb begins to open the fastenings of the sealed book, and to unfold to John the trials and triumphs of the church right on to the setting up of the kingdom of heaven. As He breaks the first seal one of the cherubim calls to the prophet bidding him not, “Come and read,” or “Come and hear,” but “Come and see.” For instead of actually reading, or hearing read, the record contained in the inscribed rolls, the events described were visibly enacted before his eyes.

As he approached, what did the prophet first behold?

“And I saw, 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.

When Roman emperors or generals passed in triumph through the streets of Rome during the celebration of their campaigns, they invariably rode upon white horses. In the vision of the first seal, Inspiration chooses a white war horse and crowned rider to symbolize the spiritual conquests of the Gospel in the early centuries of the Christian era. And each feature of the vision contributes to the picture of the pristine glory and power of the first church.

Glorious indeed was the triumph of the early church in its God given strength. The power of entrenched heathenism fell back before the advance of the armies of the cross, and multitudes of erstwhile pagans “turned” from their “idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven.” 1 Thessalonians 1: 9, 10.

One emperor, Julian the Apostate, who made a great effort to stem the advance of Christianity and to revive the decaying pagan worship of Rome, made the remarkable confession on his death-bed, “Thou Galilean, has conquered!”

As the second seal was broken, what did John see?

“And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. And there went out another horse that was red.” Revelation 6: 3, 4.

If the whiteness of the first horse typified purity in doctrine and life, the red color of the second horse must represent the corruption of the church in later days, for in the Scriptures sin is described as “red like crimson.” Isaiah 1: 18. This fits in exactly with the history of the church in the second and subsequent centuries.

“There is scarcely anything,” writes Dowling in his History of Romanism, “which strikes the mind of the careful student of ancient ecclesiastical history with greater surprise than the comparatively early period at which many of the corruptions of Christianity, which are embodied in the Roman system, took their rise.”-Book 2, chapter 1.

During the period of the second seal there came into the teaching and practice of the church, at least in rudimentary form, a host of errors-fastings, penance, prayers for the dead, invocation of saints, the superstitious use of images and relics, the worship of the Virgin Mary, saints' days, etc. And not the least of the erroneous teachings which at this time became rooted in the church's life was the observance of Sunday, the first day of the week, in place of the true Sabbath of the fourth commandment as observed by Jesus, the apostles, and the earliest church.

What weapon was given to the rider of the red horse?

“And there was given unto him a great sword.” Revelation 6:4.

As the church became popular with the Christian emperors it began to solicit their aid for the suppression of so-called “heretics,” and the fearful civil war began within the church in which apostate ecclesiastics turned their newly acquired sword against the true people of God.

What havoc did the second rider wreak in the earth?

“And power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another.” Revelation 6:4.

As a result of the internecine strife which arose within the church, peace was taken for many centuries from the earth. It would not, in fact, be untrue to say that there were more religious wars during the Middle Ages than conflicts which arose from other causes.

With the opening of the third seal, what did John see?

“And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo, a black horse.” Revelation 6:5.

The change in the color from white to red typified the pollution of the church by false teachings and sinful practices during the second, third, and fourth centuries. The appearance on the scene of a “black horse” must indicate the depths of apostasy.

The black horse is, in fact, a fitting symbol of the “Dark” Ages in which the papal apostasy reached the Emit in falsifying the faith of the Gospel, and when the light of truth was almost extinguished from the earth. Archdeacon Woodhouse writes: “As the stream of Christianity flowed farther from its pure fountain, it became more and more corrupt; as centuries advanced, ignorance and superstition increased; and unauthorized mortification and penances. Rigorous fasting, vows of celibacy, monkish retirement and austerities, Mary Worship, the jargon and repetition of prayers not understood, tales of purgatory, pious frauds and the worship of saints. Relics, and images, took the place of pure and simple Christianity; till at length, the Book of God, being laid aside for legendary tales and 'the traditions of men,' all these corruptions were collected into a regular system of superstitious oppression, well known by the name of the papal yoke.”-“Annotations on the Apocalypse,” page 133.

The church of the Dark Ages was thus as completely the antithesis of the primitive Gospel church as black is the opposite of white. Every aspect of the life and faith of the Gospel church had been replaced by a horrible counterfeit.

No wonder that the first church and the church in the depths of apostasy are contrasted as the “mystery of godliness” and the “mystery of iniquity,” and later in the book of Revelation are respectively compared to a pure virgin and a harlot. (Revelation 12:1; 17:3.)

What did the third rider carry? For what was it used?

“And he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny!” Revelation 6:5,6.

In this symbol is portrayed the wholesale robbery by the apostate church which became one of the worst features of the Middle Ages. A choenix was a measure equivalent to about two pints, and constituted the ration of a Roman slave for one day. The price of a choenix of wheat was normally about one-eighth of a denarius or “penny” (equivalent to just over seven pence in our coinage). So that a worker whose wage was a penny, or a denarius, a day (Matthew 20: 2) would have no difficulty in providing bread for himself and his family and still have something left over for other commodities.

In the conditions described under the third seal, however, a man's wage would only be enough to provide a bare ration for himself. Consequently, he would be compelled to purchase the cheaper cereal barley, usually fed to the animals, and even on this coarse diet, there would hardly be enough to go round.

This portrays the time when the church, which should have ministered help and blessing to the poor withheld the Word of life and became a system of extortion and fraud toward rich and poor alike.

In the midst of this spiritual darkness what admonition did John hear a heavenly voice utter?

“See that thou hurt not the oil and the wine.” Revelation 6:6.

While during the Dark Ages an apostate priesthood exploited and consistently withheld the Word of life from a needy people, they were not able to stop the flow of spiritual grace from heaven to seeking souls. The oil and wine of the Spirit continued to flow earthward, and even in the darkest days of the Dark Ages the sustaining grace of God preserved the faithful remnant.

Once more, with the opening of the fourth seal, what was the prophet bidden to do?

“And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him.” Revelation 6:7,8.

What John now saw was terrible in the extreme. The church which was to have been the channel of life to the world had become a minister of horrible death. The sickly, greenish-yellow pallor of this horse was the, color of a corpse, and grimly reminiscent of the fate of millions at apostate Rome's hands.

What did these terrible riders bring upon the earth?

“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!” Revelation 5:8.

The reference to the fourth part of men indicates their sphere of jurisdiction, which was roughly the territory of the Western Roman Empire. The territory of the old Greek Empire was almost entirely in the power of the Eastern church, and the ancient territories of Medo-Persia and Babylon were overrun by the Moslem power in the seventh and subsequent centuries.

When the fifth seal was unloosed, what did the prophet behold?

“And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held.” Revelation 6:9.

With the breaking of the fifth seal John saw the fearful consequences of the centuries of pagan and papal persecution. Around the base of an altar of sacrifice were the martyrs who had given their lives for the cause of truth.

There is no suggestion here, of course, that the dead whether martyred or otherwise, were actually in heaven. The Bible consistently teaches that the dead “sleep” in their graves until the resurrection day.

The condition of the martyrs in the vision is a highly symbolic representation in order to impress the mind of the prophet with the fearful results of the great apostasy. These “souls” were not glorified saints, or disembodied spirits. They were the persons of the martyrs represented as lying beneath the altar just as they fell for their witness to God and His truth.

This scene was shown to John in order to assure the church that no one who has sacrificed his life for the cause of God is forgotten. The place of their death has been noted, their names are in the book of life, and from faithful Abel to the last martyr of the last days the reward of each is sure.

What question was put into the mouths of the martyred saints?

“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?” Revelation 6:10.

Just as the vision shown to John was not intended to teach that the dead are gathered into any one place either in heaven, on the earth, or under the earth, so their speaking is no proof that the dead are conscious and capable of the emotions of the living. The dead cannot see, or hear, or speak. But in order to assure the church of the certainty of God's purposes, the martyrs are represented in the vision as asking how long it will be before their persecutors will be judged and their blood, avenged. (Compare Genesis 4: 9, 10.)

What was conferred upon the waiting martyrs?

“And white robes were given unto everyone of them.” Revelation 6: 11.

The response of God to the martyrs was twofold. First, white robes were given to them. Like the rest of the symbolic vision it is not to be supposed that the martyrs have yet received their reward. They will not do so until the resurrection day when the saints of all ages will be glorified together. In a sense, however, the martyrs did receive white robes of honor at the hands of the Protestant churches after the close of the great persecution. Instead of being maligned as the off scouring of the earth, they came to be recognized as the “noble army of martyrs” whose sufferings and death had given truth and freedom to the world. The white robes which they received from their spiritual children were but a foretaste of the white robes which will be conferred upon them by the Lord Jesus Himself when they awake in His kingdom.

What patience were they bidden still to exercise?

“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.” Revelation 6:11.

Besides receiving “white robes” in token of their faithfulness, the martyrs were bidden by God to wait just a little longer. Satan was to be permitted a further short season to reveal the full extent of his rebellion. During this period he would do his worst against the church, and the martyrs of the Middle Ages would be joined by yet others who in the last days would refuse to receive the “mark of the beast.” Revelation 13: 15-17. But eventually Satan would be arrested in his evil course, and judgment, swift and sure would overtake him.

52. Heralds of the Day of God

As the Lamb opened the sixth seal, what cataclysm occurred?

“And I beheld when He had opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake!” Revelation 6:12.

At the close of the vision of the fifth seal, John heard the martyrs inquiring how long it would be before the cause of truth would finally triumph. In answer, a voice from heaven bade them be patient just a little longer, but no specific indication was given to them or to John as to just how long the waiting period would be.

With the opening of the sixth seal, however, it becomes evident that the church is not to be left without intimation of the approach of the final crisis. For as the Lamb breaks this seal, a series of spectacular signs come successively into view as heralds of the day of God.

First, John beheld “a great earthquake.” Jesus had declared that among the catastrophes of the last days there would be “famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places” (Matthew 24: 7). But He had not mentioned this particular earthquake which by reason of its vast extent and colossal force would be recognized by those who had eyes to see as a sign from God. Joel, however, was more specific, for, listing the signs of the “day of the Lord,” he said: “The earth shall quake before them.” Joel 2: 10.

So we ask, Was the world startled by any notable seismic disturbance somewhere about the end of the papal persecutions of the Middle Ages? The answer is yes, for on November 1, 1755, a terrific terrestrial convulsion, centering upon Lisbon in Portugal from which it came to be known as the Lisbon earthquake-shook a great area of the earth's surface.

That the Lisbon earthquake was without parallel in history down to that day has been admitted by many authoritative scientists.

“The effects of the earthquake of the first of November, 1755,” asserts Nourse in his History and Philosophy of Earthquakes, “were distributed over nearly four millions of English square miles of the earth's surface; a most astonishing space! And greatly surpassing anything of this kind ever recorded in history.” - Page 334.

Quite rightly, therefore, Nelson's Encyclopedia asserts that “the Lisbon earthquake” was “the most notable earthquake of history.”

In the city of Lisbon, which was right at the center of the disturbance 90,000 out of a total population of 150,000 lost their lives in the earthquake shocks and as a result of the tidal waves which swept over the city.

In North Africa the effects were almost as severe. "A great part of the city of Algiers was destroyed," states Robert Sears in Wonders of the World. "Many houses were thrown down in Fez and Mequines and multitudes were buried beneath their ruins. Similar effects were realized in Morocco. Its effects were likewise felt at Tangier, at Tetuan, at Funchal in the island of Madiera; . . . it is probable. . . that all Africa was shaken by this tremendous convulsion." - Pages 50,58.

Records also exist of the effects of the quake in Germany, Holland, France, and Britain, in Norway and Sweden, and even as far north as Greenland.

Earthquake tremors were recorded also across the Atlantic in Antigua and Barbados, and a number of ships at sea recorded severe shocks.

The effect of this earthquake upon the people of Europe of that day is described by James Parton in his Life of Voltaire:

"For many weeks as we see in the letters and memoirs of that time, people in distant parts of Europe went to bed in alarm, relieved in the morning to find that they had escaped the fate of Lisbon one night more."-Vol. 2, pages 208, 209.

By what was the earthquake followed in the vision of the sixth seal?

"And the sun became black as sackcloth of hair." Revelation 6:12.

While the sign of the "great earthquake" was referred to specifically by only one prophet prior to the vision of the seven seals, the second sign of the darkening of the sun was mentioned by no fewer than five earlier prophets including Jesus Himself. (Joel 2:31; Amos 8:9; Isaiah 13:10; Ezekiel 32:7,8; Matthew 24:29; Mark 13:24.) From these many prophecies, four features of the remarkable phenomenon can be adduced to aid in its identification. It was to take place immediately after the close of the great papal persecutions (Christ). The day would begin clear and bright (Amos) and then a cloud would as it were come up over the sun (Ezekiel). As a result, while still morning, the sun would be dark as night (Isaiah).

Did any such celestial manifestation occur in the latter years of the eighteenth century?

Yes, on May 19, 1780, there occurred what has gone down in history as the "Dark Day."

Noah Webster, in his Explanatory and Pronouncing Vocabulary, records the event as it was experienced in New England: "The Dark

Day, May 19, 1780-so called on account of a remarkable darkness on that day extending over all New England. In some places, persons could not see to read common print in the open air for several hours together. Birds sang their evening songs, disappeared, and became silent; fowls went to roost; cattle sought the barnyard; and candles were lighted in the houses. . . . The true cause of this remarkable phenomenon is not known.' - Edition 1869.

In Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Professor Samuel Williams wrote up the observations he collected about this remarkable phenomenon in considerable detail. He says:

"It came on between the hours of ten and eleven a.m., and continued until the middle of the next night.... "The degree to which the darkness arose was different in different places. In most parts of the country it was so great that people were unable to read common print, determine the time of the day by their clocks or watches, dine or manage their domestic business, without the light of candles.

"The extent of this darkness was very remarkable. Our intelligence in this respect is not so particular as I could wish; but from the documents that have been received, it seems to have extended all over the New England States.... It is probable it extended much beyond these limits in some directions, but the exact boundaries cannot be ascertained by any observations that I have been able to collect.

"With regard to its duration, it continued in this place at least fourteen hours, but it is probable that this was not exactly the same in different parts of the country."-Vol. 1, page 234, 235.

Of the effect of the Dark Day upon the minds of the people who experienced it, contemporary newspapers and other documents provide a striking commentary.

"A very general opinion prevailed," asserted Timothy Dwight, "that the day of judgment was at hand." - Quoted by John W. Barber in "Connecticut Historical Collections," page 403.

What appearance would the moon acquire after the obscuration of the sun?

"And the moon became as blood." Revelation 6:12.

Each of the prophets who foretold the sign of the Dark Day also spoke of a sign in the moon immediately following. (Joel 2:31; Isaiah 13:10; Ezekiel 32:7; Matthew 24:29; Mark 13:24; Luke 21:25.) And true to the prophecies, the night after the Dark Day of May 19, 1780, saw the fulfillment of this further sign.

"The darkness of the following evening," writes Dr. Samuel Tenney of Exeter, New Hampshire, "was probably as gross as ever has been since the Almighty gave birth to light.... I could not help conceiving at the time, that if every luminous body in the universe had been shrouded in impenetrable shades, or struck out of existence, the darkness could not have been more complete. A sheet of white paper held within a few inches of the eyes, was equally invisible with the blackest velvet."-Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society for the year 1792," Vol. 1, pages 97, 98.

The Boston Gazette and Country Journal had this to say on May 29, 1780: "In the evening ... perhaps it never was darker since the children of Israel left the house of bondage. This gross darkness held till about one o'clock, although the moon had been full but the day before!"

Unquestionably the signs in the sun and moon were fulfilled in the remarkable Dark Day of 1780 and the night which followed.

What further sign appeared in the heavens in the vision of the sixth seal?

"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." Revelation 6: 13.

Jesus in His list of the signs in heaven and earth which would herald His coming said: "The stars shall fall from heaven." Matthew 24: 29. John's prophecy adds the further feature that the stars would appear to be falling from one point in the heavens like a shower of unripe figs from a tree shaken by a strong wind.

More than half a century passed after the Dark Day before this third sign appeared, but on November 13, 1833, a considerable proportion of the world's population saw the greatest meteoric shower in the history of the world, which exactly fulfilled the prophetic specifications.

"The most sublime phenomenon of shooting stars, of which the world has furnished any record, was witnessed throughout the United States on the morning of the 13th of November, 1833," writes Elijah H. Burritt in *The Geography of the Heavens*. "The entire extent of this astonishing exhibition has not been precisely ascertained, but it covered no inconsiderable portion of the earth's surface." - Page 163.

Not a few who wrote on this remarkable celestial sight mentioned its striking resemblance to the prophetic picture penned by the prophet John. Perhaps the most remarkable eye-witness description of all was printed in the *New York Journal of Commerce* of November 14, 1833, in the course of which the writer says: "Here is the exactness of the prophet. The stars did not come as if from several trees shaken, but from one: those which appeared in the east fell toward the east. Those which appeared in west, fell toward the west; and those which appeared toward the south (for I went out of my residence into the park), fell toward the south; and they fell, not as ripe fruit falls. Far from it. But they flew, they were cast like the unripe fruit, which at first refuses to leave the branch. And, when it does break its hold, flies swiftly, straight off, descending; and in the multitude falling, some cross the track of others, as they are thrown with more or less force!" -Vol. 8, No. 534, page 2.

In recent years the wonder of this sign of the falling of the stars has been still further enhanced by the greater knowledge of the phenomenon of meteorite showers which modern astronomical research has given to us. It has now been established that they are the result of the earth every now and then passing through a comet orbit in which travels a stream of particles of comet matter so far away from the nose of the comet as to be non-luminous. But which at once become luminous as a result of the friction of the earth's atmosphere.

Every year the earth passes through a number of such comet orbits, resulting in regularly occurring annual showers, such as the Lyrids in April, the Perseids in August. The Orionids in October, the Leonids and Andromedes in November, and Geminids in December, the designations being given according to the radiant or point in the heavens from which they appear to radiate.

Normally, these showers are not at all spectacular, but if a comet on its vast orbit happens to pass by just before the earth arrives on its annual journey, the concentration of meteoric matter is far greater and the shower more intense. The closer the earth is to the comet on these rare occasions, other factors being equal, the more numerous are the specks of matter which enter the atmosphere. But the intensity of the displays is not predictable because other factors, such as the gravitational influence of the earth and other planets, may sweep the particles away and dissipate the expected shower.

All this sheds wonderful light on the spectacular meteoric shower which first made its appearance in 1800, reached maximum intensity in 1833, decreased considerably in 1866, and disappeared entirely in 1899. In His omnipotence God ordained that "when the tribulation of those days" came to an end, a certain comet would be "lit up" perhaps by atomic fission. And would pass through the earth's orbit at such a time and place as to produce the most outstanding display of celestial fireworks of all time. He further ordained that while this comet tail would contact the earth on successive occasions in the "time of the end" as the comet returned on its thirty-three year journey through space, the 'Stream would, by gravitational displacement and other factors, decrease in concentration and at last completely disappear.

Nearly nineteen centuries before it was to appear God foretold this last-day celestial display and exactly on time the "sign" appeared and was recognized as one of the promised tokens of the return of the Son of man.

Surely we can put our trust in the Word of such a One who knows "the end from the beginning," and have confidence that all the rest of His promises, as yet unfulfilled, will be "yea and amen" in Christ Jesus.

53. No Place to Hide

Following the signs in earth and heaven, what was the next dramatic event in the vision of the sixth seal?

"And the heavens departed as a scroll when it is rolled together." Revelation 6: 14.

The signs mentioned up to this point in the vision of the sixth seal have all been fulfilled. There has been "a great earthquake." The sun has been darkened at noon-day and the moon has been seen as if it were blood. The stars have fallen. All these are past. The event here described introduces the actual coming of Christ in triumph. In the story of the seals, therefore, we stand today between the

thirteenth and the fourteenth verses of the sixth chapter of the Revelation. When the time for the majestic appearing of Christ comes, the heavens will be rolled up like a scroll and the Lord, with His glorious retinue, will descend through the parted skies.

What terrestrial convulsions will ensue as Christ approaches the earth?

“And every mountain and island were moved out of their places.” Revelation 6: 14.

On earth, vast terrestrial disturbances will accompany the return of Christ. (Compare Isaiah 24:1,20; Jeremiah 4:23,24; Nahum 1:5) This rolling up of the heavens and the accompanying convulsions on the earth are parts of the universal “shaking” which God declared through several prophets would accompany His final judgments. (Haggai 2:6,7; Hebrews 12:26,27; Haggai 2:21,22; Joel 3:16; Isaiah 13:13.)

How will the inhabitants of the earth be affected by the return of Jesus?

“And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and rocks of the mountains.” Revelation 6:15.

The book of Revelation is rich in sevens and here the reactions of seven different classes of people on the earth are listed. The kings of the earth, who for so long have kept a tight hold upon their dominions, see their kingdoms crumbling into ruin before a greater King. The great men, who have had a vested interest in the established order, see that order dissolving before their eyes. The rich men realize that all their accumulated wealth now avails them nothing and are ready to cast it out as trash into the streets. The chief captains, who prided themselves on their knowledge of strategy and tactics, find themselves impotent against the Lord and His heavenly munitions. Bondmen and freemen are no longer conscious of their former status amid the terrors of the divine visitation. All who are not at peace with God, whether high or low, great or small, realize that the hour of judgment has found them utterly unready. Uncontrollable terror seizes them. In desperation they rush to hide themselves.

For what do they appeal?

“And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne.” Revelation 6:16.

Stricken with terror they begin to pray. But it is not the prayer of faith. It is a cry of despair to the unhearing rocks to shield them from the consuming glory of the One whom they have refused to acknowledge. They were blatant enough in their blasphemies while God remained veiled from mortal sight. They arrogantly denied His activity in history; they even denied His existence. Now their lies provide no refuge as they frantically seek to hide from His presence.

A recent writer on the peril of modern atomic warfare strikingly entitled his book, *No Place to Hide*. How much more appropriately may this be said of the “great and terrible day of the Lord.” For while defenses may be devised even against the devastating atomic bombs, there will be no shelter for the wicked from the overflowing wrath of God in the day of the world's judgment.

For the people of God, on the other hand, there will be a safe refuge in the cleft of the Rock of their salvation. (Psalm 18:2; 31:3; 62:2,6; 94:22)

But just as the door of the ark was shut before the destroying flood came, so the way to the Rock of salvation will be closed before the final judgments of God are poured out. There will be no access for those who wait until the day of wrath before they seek its shelter. Now, therefore, we must enter that refuge. If we will cry now to the Rock of our salvation, we shall not cry to the rocks to cover us in the day of God's wrath. But if we pass by the Rock unheeding to-day, we shall be among those who cry in vain in the day of judgment.

How will the horror-stricken sinners describe the judgment which comes upon them?

“The wrath of the Lamb” Revelation 6:16.

That there should spring to the lips of the wicked as they go down in destruction the cry, “the wrath of the Lamb,” is significant indeed!

When Jesus was first manifested to the world, John the Baptist said, “Behold the Lamb of God' which takes away the sin of the world.” John 1:29. After His ascension the appeal was taken up by the “apostles of the Lamb” Revelation 21:14. But the saving ministry of the Lamb has been largely refused. He has waited long and patiently, “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” 2 Peter 3: 9. He still waits to-day, but in this vision we are carried forward to the time when the day of grace will have ended, and the attitude of the Lamb to an incorrigibly rebellious world will have changed from mercy to wrath. Here the Lamb comes to do “His strange work; and bring to pass ... His strange act.” Isaiah 28:21.

Judgment is an unnatural act on the part of God; but it is a necessary one, for He cannot tolerate sin forever. His universe must be cleansed, and because men will not accept cleansing by the blood, it can be cleansed only by the purging of judgment.

In what other words do they describe their fate?

“The great day of His wrath is come.” Revelation 6:17.

Down the ages the wicked have often prepared for “the day” when their carefully laid plans would go into operation and they would, for a season, attain some part of their evil designs. But they leave out of account the fact that God is preparing, too. He has His master plan. He has designated “the day” for divine action, and when it comes it will be irresistible.

For the saints, Jesus' return will be a "glorious" day (Titus 2:13), a time of rejoicing and reward. In it, the "Blessed hope," which they have so long cherished, will become a reality; the inheritance, for which they have so long held the title deeds, will come into their possession. But for the wicked it will be a "terrible" day (Joel 2:11), a day of separation (Matthew 25:32), of condemnation (John 3:18,19), of desolation (Matthew 25:30), for at long last they will drink to the dregs the cup of the wrath of God.

What question will too late spring to the lips of the wicked?

"Who shall be able to stand?" Revelation 6:17.

If they had asked this question before, they would not have lacked an answer. Would not the psalmist have told them: "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; ... he shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of His salvation"? Psalm 24:4,5.

Would not Malachi have declared very plainly: "Behold, the day comes, that shall burn as an oven. And all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall"? Malachi 4:1,2.

But they did not ask and now, even if they were apprised of the necessary qualifications for standing in the day of the Lord, it would avail them nothing. For probation has closed. The harvest is past. The last sheaves have been garnered in. All who are still outside are lost forever. (Jeremiah 8:20).

How vital then, that while probation still lingers we face up to, and settle for ourselves, this most important and most urgent question which can come into the mind of man.

54. The Lull Before The Storm

As the events of the sixth seal draw to a close, what glimpse behind the scenes of history is John shown?

"And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth." Revelation 7:1.

On a previous occasion it was mentioned that the expression, "after these things," does not mean that the events to be described, chronologically succeed those that have gone before, but rather that it marks the beginning of a new scene in the series of visions.

As the sixth seal actually reaches to the return of Christ in triumph, and the events of the seventh chapter clearly occur before the final crisis, it is evident that they belong to the closing days of the sixth seal. But have been separated from the rest of the narrative in order to give them special emphasis.

What were the four angels in the vision doing?

"Four angels. . . holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree." Revelation 7:1.

Winds in Bible prophecy invariably refer to strife, commotion, and war, and they are particularly used of those great crises of history which have resulted in the fall of one world power and the rise of another. (Daniel 7:2,3; Jeremiah 51:1,2; Jeremiah 49:36.) The unparalleled destructiveness of the final blast when the last judgment overtakes the nations is indicated by its designation as "a great whirlwind.. . from the coasts of the earth." Jeremiah 25:32.

That the "four winds" of heaven are seen in this vision as held by the "angels of the winds" indicates God's complete control over all earthly events. Ancient kings and modern dictators may think themselves unfettered in the carrying out of their ambitious designs, but in reality they are able to do nothing except by permission of God. They can go just as far as His overruling purpose allows, but when He calls a halt, they can take not one step more.

Looking at history with the insight which this glimpse behind the scenes provides, one cannot but fail to recognize many occasions when the course of conquest has been miraculously arrested by the controlling hand of the "angels of the winds!"

Why, for example, did the king of Babylon, after overrunning Assyria, Syria, and Egypt, not turn northward and invade the plateau of Iran? Surely because God was placing a protecting hand over the northern peoples of Media and Persia, who were in due time to bring about Babylon's overthrow.

Why was Alexander, after conquering the whole of the eastern world, prevented by his death from fulfilling his plans in the West? Without a doubt because if he had overrun the West as quickly as he had conquered the East, the tiny kingdom of Rome might have perished in its infancy.

Yes, there is evidence enough, for those who have eyes to see, of the control of events by the "angels of the winds!" And now at the end of time the prophet sees the four angels at the four corners of the earth on the point of lifting their restraining hands, and allowing the "whirlwind" of universal strife and war to bring final judgment upon the earth,

As John watched, what new figure appeared on the scene?

"And I saw another angel having the seal of the living God." Revelation 7:2.

In the fourteenth chapter of the Revelation we read of three angels going forth successively in the last days with special messages to the world, and as a result of the third and last message, a people are gathered out to stand for God at the very end of time. Clearly, therefore, there must be a definite connection between this third angel of Revelation fourteen and the sealing angel of chapter seven.

In point of fact, they represent the same message and work viewed from two different standpoints. In Revelation fourteen the emphasis is upon the going forth of the final message to every nation under heaven, the sealing of those who accept the message being implied. Here in chapter seven the coming of the sealing angel with the seal includes the carrying of the sealing message to earth's remotest ends as well as the actual sealing of those who accept it.

In order that the sealing angel might carry out his appointed task, what command did he give to the “angels of the winds”?

“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.” Revelation 7:2,3.

In the longsuffering of God, judgment was to be delayed for yet a little space while the final offer of mercy should go to the last generation of humanity. Not until every living soul has had the opportunity to accept or reject it, and the responsive ones have been marked as the people of His possession, is the “whirlwind” of final catastrophe to be released.

Now if we can trace the restraining hands of the “angels of the winds” in the earlier history of the nations, there should be equally clear evidence of their response to the command of this sealing angel, as well as of the going forth of the sealing message.

Nor have we far to look, for the evidence is writ large across the history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and constitutes one of the most startling of the signs of our times.

We have already seen how, just before the nineteenth century opened, there burst upon Europe the great French Revolution, whose reverberations plunged the whole continent into chaos, and for half a century kept its statesmen in a state of almost continual dread.

In 1830 when the second wave spread from Paris across Europe, Metternich ' the great Austrian chancellor, as well as many other leading European statesmen began to fear “that the universal triumph of the Revolution was not far distant The Era of Revolution,” by Saunders, page 25.

On January 27, 1848, De Tocqueville in the French Parliament used almost the language of prophecy when he asked: “Do you not feel the earth of Europe trembling once more? Do you not feel the wind of revolution in the air?”

In February, 1848, the wind began to blow for the third time out of France, and this time it seemed that the European revolution had really come. Statesmen were stunned at the thought of the impending disaster, and multitudes of those who looked, with the eye of faith, upon the dramatically moving events were convinced that the end was upon them.

In a sermon preached in St. George's Church, Bloomsbury, in the spring of 1843, on “Signs of the Second Advent in the State of the World at Large,” the Revelation J. W. Brookes had asserted:

“The first outbreak of that tumultuous and insubordinate spirit [the sea and the waves roaring] which is to shake the kingdoms ... may be dated from the French Revolution of 1789-92. ... A pause has since taken place. But ... Europe resembles a volcanic mountain, which occasionally sends forth smoke, and voices, and thunders ... thus giving fearful indications that another and more dreadful eruption may be expected-an outburst that will overflow to the extremities of the earth and produce a universal reign of terror with hearts everywhere 'failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.”

Now it seemed that the explosion was about to take place. Then suddenly, almost before it had got really started, the proletarian revolution of 1848 collapsed. Books and books have been written in an endeavor to explain what really happened. Francois Fejto, one of the contributors to The Opening of an Era, says:

“Contemporary observers looked upon the bloody defeat of the liberal, democratic, and nationalist movements of 1848 as an historical enigma.” - Page 414.

The prophetic Word provides the only valid explanation of the mystery. In the providence of God “the angels of the winds” had been commanded to hold the revolutionary forces in check until the work of God in the earth should be finished. And never in all the history of the nations were their restraining hands so signally exerted.

As the four angels held back the winds of strife, what did the sealing angel do?

“And I saw [the] angel ascending from the east.” Revelation 7:2.

The fact that the angel “ascends” like the rising sun “from the east” suggests that the sealing message which was to go forth as the storm of revolution subsided would appear first like the glimmering of the dawn, but thereafter would extend and brighten until it illuminated the whole world with its glory.

Did any divine message begin to go forth about the middle of the nineteenth century and in the manner described? Yes, indeed, the Advent message, having all the characteristics of the sealing message of Revelation seven, and the messages of the three angels of Revelation fourteen, began at that very time to go forth. And just as prophecy declared, it was born like the glimmer of the dawn; while in subsequent decades it spread like the rays of the rising sun, until today its light penetrates to the remotest corners of the earth.

How did Jesus declare the world would react to the sealing message?

“As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man Luke 17:26.

In the days of Noah, God postponed the judgment of the antediluvian world one hundred and twenty years in order that a last opportunity of deliverance might be extended to a doomed world. But instead of availing themselves of the days of grace, all save a very small remnant were confirmed in their sinful conceit and godlessness.

So also has it been in the borrowed time of these last days. God's grace has tarried long, but men have turned a deaf ear to His appeals. They have been utterly heedless of the seal He would imprint upon their hearts. And those who have eyes to see and ears to hear and hearts to understand cannot but discern in the tragic events of our time that the angels are beginning to loose their hold upon the winds which for a century they have held closely in check.

How much longer the winds will be restrained none can tell, but surely the lull before the storm in which we are now living should urge us to seek that transformation of character which will merit the seal of God and ensure our safety in the days of the "whirlwind" of universal destruction.

55. Sealed for Eternity

In what ancient crisis were the faithful people of God marked or sealed that the judgment of God might pass them by?

"He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand. And, behold, six men came.... And one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar. ... And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side. And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of . . . Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." Ezekiel 9:1-4.

Ezekiel was taken captive in the second Babylonian invasion of Judea and from the banks of the Chebar in Assyria he was shown, in vision, the final separation of the righteous from the wicked in Jerusalem and their sealing preparatory to the utter destruction of the city. This dramatic scene provides a ' perfect miniature of the vaster sealing work at the close of human probation in which the saved of all lands will be marked for deliverance in the day of God.

What seal is used to mark the final remnant?

"The seal of the living God." Revelation 7:2.

Whenever the expression "the living God" occurs in Scripture, it is to emphasize the contrast between the true God and false gods who may be competing for man's allegiance. (See Deuteronomy 5:26; Joshua 3:10; Jeremiah 10:10,11; Daniel 6:20; 1 Thessalonians 1: 9,10.) In the last days Satan, knowing that "he hath but a short time" (Revelation 12: 12), makes a last desperate attempt to prevent the sealing of the saints. To do this, as we learn elsewhere, he designs a seal of his own, called in Scripture "the mark of the beast" to deceive the credulous. (Revelation 13:17; 14:9) And while God is seeking to seal His people, Satan is striving to subvert men to accept the "mark" of allegiance to him.

Where are the faithful ones sealed?

"Hurt not the earth. . . till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." Revelation 7:1

The use of marks, signs, or seals upon the person was common in the ancient world. Roman soldiers were usually marked in their hands with the sign of their allegiance. Slaves were branded in their foreheads to facilitate recognition. . Devotees of different gods often had the name of their deity marked upon their persons. So the remnant people of God in the last days are represented as being marked with the seal of God in their foreheads.

Do the Scriptures give any information as to the nature of this seal of God?

"In whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." Ephesians 1: 13. (See also Ephesians 4: 30; 2 Corinthians 1: 22.)

From this Scripture it is clear that primarily the seal of God is the impress upon heart and life of His Holy Spirit. Through His Spirit the believer has the witness in himself that he is a child of God.

In what visible way, however, will those who are sealed by the Spirit reveal their allegiance?

"Nevertheless the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, The Lord knows them that are His. And, Let every one that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." 2 Timothy 2:19.

The seal of the Holy Spirit while visible to God is not visible to men. The seal must, therefore, have some visible aspect which will distinguish the people of God from the followers of Satan. Paul here indicates that the outward sign of the inward seal will be a life in harmony with the will and law of the Lord.

In what other scripture is conformity to the law of God shown to be the outward sign of the inward seal?

"Bind up the testimony, seal the law among My disciples." Isaiah 8:16.

Back in the days of ancient Israel the people of God, in whom dwelt the Spirit of God, were distinguished from the wicked by "obedience" to His law. In the Gospel era, the apostle Paul declared that the true people of God would ever be identifiable by the fact that "the righteousness of the law" would be "fulfilled" in them. (Romans 8: 4) In the last days, as we shall note in a later chapter in this

prophecy, the people of God are similarly distinguished from the unsaved by inward “faith” in Jesus Christ and outward obedience to “the commandments of God.” Revelation 14:12.

This being so, we should expect that just at the time when the sealing message was to go forth, that is about the middle of the nineteenth century, the people of God, eagerly awaiting the fulfillment of the “blessed hope,” would be led to recognize the law of God as His seal and, by faith, to seek perfect conformity with its requirements. That is precisely what did happen, for it was in 1844, the year when the great time-period of the 2,300 days came to an end (Daniel 8: 14). That students of the prophetic Scriptures were led by the Spirit of God to proclaim that “the hour of His judgment” was “come” (Revelation 14: 7), that the law of God would be the divine standard of judgment. And that those who would stand uncondemned before the judgment bar of God would be those who kept “the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus Christ.” Revelation 14: 12.

Is any part of the law in a special sense a “seal”?

“Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, 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.” Exodus 31:13. (See also Ezekiel. 20:12,20)

While the whole law of God, reflected in the lives of God's people, is a visible sign of their allegiance, the Sabbath commandment is a seal in a very special sense. For just as a seal of state contains the name of the ruler, the nature of his authority, and the extent of his jurisdiction, so the Sabbath commandment is the only one which contains the name of God. The Lawgiver, defines His authority as “Creator,” and designates the sphere of His jurisdiction as “heaven and earth.”

The Sabbath commandment, as the above Scriptures indicate, was always a special mark of the people of God in Old Testament times. We may naturally expect, therefore, that it would receive similar emphasis in the last days.

So we ask, was the proclamation of the law of God in the Advent revival associated with any such re-emphasis of the claims of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment? Indeed it was. For as the people of God began to study, with a new solemnity, the law of God as the standard of the coming judgment, they were startled to discover that the great apostasy in the church had flagrantly mutilated it. Not only had they cut out the second commandment in order to exalt the worship of images and divided the tenth commandment in order to preserve the traditional number, but they had also expunged the crucial phrases of the fourth commandment which designated it as the “seventh day” of the week. And then foisted a counterfeit Sabbath, namely Sunday, the first day of the week, on a deluded church.

Recognizing this as a fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy of the apostate power which would “think to change times and “the law” (Daniel 7: 25), they at once began to call their fellow-believers to obedience to all the commandments of God, including the observance of the true seventh-day Sabbath of the Lord.

As believers in both the Old and New Worlds proclaimed the faith of Jesus and the commandments of God as the marks of the remnant people of God. The message coalesced into the great Advent movement and then began to spread from country to country and from continent to continent, until to-day after a hundred years, there are nearly eight hundred thousand people in almost every country in the world seeking by the grace of God to “keep” all “the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” Christ as they await the return of their Lord.

How many was John told would be sealed by the great sealing message?

“And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.” Revelation 7:4.

Much has been written on the question of whether this number of the sealed ones is to be taken as a literal number of the saints who will meet Jesus in triumph when He comes, or whether the number is to be regarded as symbolic. The fact that this glorious company adds up to an exact number of thousands, and that there are just twelve thousand of each of the tribes' suggests that it is a symbolic and not a literal number. Twelve is a number frequently used in Scripture to represent the completeness of divine ordering, and the designation of the number of the saints at the return of Jesus as twelve times twelve thousand indicates that the number of the true people of God in that day will be perfect and complete. Not one will be included who has no right to a place in that company, and not one who should be there will be forgotten.

Certainly this number should not be used for the purpose of “counting heads,” a practice as contrary to the purpose of God as that of the “date-setters” who ever and anon seek to set a precise date for the return of the Lord in glory, when He has specifically stated that “of that day and that hour knows no man.”

The actual number of this glorious company does not matter very much. What is important is that in that day there will be just two classes in the world, the sealed and the unsealed. The former will be safe from the overflowing wrath of God; the latter will be utterly consumed. It is for us by grace to see that if we live until the coming of the Lord we are among the 144,000, and that if we sleep in death we will rise in the resurrection of the saints to join the vast throng around the throne which John sees a little later in this vision.

How, will the 144,000 be made up?

“Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand.
Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand.
Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.
Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand.
Of the tribe of Nephtalim were sealed twelve thousand.
Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand.
Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand.
Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand.
Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand.
Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand.
Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand.
Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.” Revelation 7:5-8.

In his epistle to the Romans, Paul explains that because of iniquity, the branches of the olive tree of Israel representing the fleshly seed of Abraham, have been broken off (Romans 2:28,29), while the Gentiles have been grafted into the tree of Israel as new branches. (Romans 9:6-8; 11:17-26) The tribes of Israel, therefore, now comprise the remnant of literal Israel who have accepted the faith of Jesus and the Gentiles who have been “adopted” into the tribes of Israel. James assumes this adoption of the Gentile believers when, in his epistle, he addresses them as “the twelve tribes ... scattered abroad.” James 1:1.

The particular tribes into which the Gentile believers will be grafted will presumably be determined on the basis of character and experience. Just as Jesus “surnames” each individual who comes to Him (Mark 3:16,17), so is he “adopted” into one or other of the tribes of spiritual Israel. Whatever the criteria of classification, it is to be noted that the tribe of Dan is unrepresented among the 144,000. This is because Dan was guilty of gross idolatry, and no idolater can enter the kingdom of heaven. (Deuteronomy 29:18-21,24-26; Leviticus 24:10-16.)

Following the sealing work, what glorious scene was shown to the prophet?

“After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and peoples, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” Revelation 7:9, 10.

What John now sees is not just a hundred and forty-four thousand, comprising the living saints who see Jesus returning in glory, but a “great multitude.” This vast assemblage comprises the redeemed of every nation and of all the ages raised in the first resurrection to join the 144,000 before the throne of God. Their white robes indicate their attainment by grace to the righteousness of God (Revelation.3:5, 18), while the palms in their hands denote the victory they have gained. On the lips of all is praise to God as the Author, and Christ as the Mediator, of salvation to man.

To what new act of worship does the song of the great multitude inspire the surrounding angelic throng?

“And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God. Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever. Amen.” Revelation 7:11,12.

All through the ages the angels have diligently studied the wonderful plan of salvation and eagerly co-operated in leading souls from darkness into the light. No wonder, therefore, that when they see in the vast assemblage of the redeemed the culmination of the divine purpose, they will fall down in adoration, and, in a seven-fold anthem, extol the glories and praise of God.

What final question did one of the elders put to John? How did John reply?

“And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knows.” Revelation 7:13, 14.

The question was asked not so much to test John's understanding of the vision as to lead up to the final word which God wished to give him. Zechariah and Ezekiel were asked similar questions by their accompanying angels for the same purpose. (Zechariah 4: 2, 4, 5; Ezekiel 37: 3)

What closing explanation did the elder then give?

“And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they 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.” Revelation 7:14, 15.

In this scene is fulfilled the promise to the church that in God's good time they will be “presented” blameless before the throne. (Ephesians 5:27.) They have endured every trial; they have been made fit to associate with the holy beings of heaven. Their “wilderness” wanderings are over; at last they have entered the heavenly Canaan.

What bounteous provision will be made for the saints?

“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 water.” Revelation 7:16,17.

In their earthly life the saints have suffered constant privation. They have often lacked bodily necessities. Now they will want no more, for the Lamb who has redeemed them will continually sustain them.

What will be forever assuaged?

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” Revelation 7:17.

By removing all reason for sorrow on account of the past and excluding from His kingdom all that could produce sorrow again, God will indeed wipe the tears from every eye, and “sorrow and sighing” will for ever “flee away.”

56. Heaven's Welcome Home

What transpired when the seventh seal was opened?

“And when He had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.” Revelation 8:1.

It is unfortunate that the biblical scholars responsible for the division of the Bible into chapters and verses decided to put a chapter division between this verse and the one preceding, for it is clearly related to what goes before and not to what follows after. The often recurring phrase, “And I saw,” with which verse two opens indicates that a new vision begins there and that the first verse of the chapter is actually the closing verse of the vision of the seven seals.

The story of the sixth seal ended with the parting of the heavens to make a way for the returning Christ, the shaking of the earth to its foundations, and the consternation of the wicked before the Lord's glorious presence. As the seventh seal opens, the scene is transferred to heaven, but to the prophet's astonishment, for the space of “half an hour” there was complete silence.

What is the explanation of the silence in heaven? The answer is quite simple. It is the result of the temporary emptying of heaven while the angelic hosts accompany Jesus on His triumphal return to the earth. Whether the statement that Jesus will come “in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him” (Matthew 25:31), means that heaven will be completely depopulated, we cannot certainly say. There would seem to be evidence that at least the celestial gatekeepers are left behind to swing back the “everlasting doors” to admit the returning King and His retinue, and there may be other heavenly beings who will remain for the performance of other duties. But we can well believe that the voices of the celestial inhabitants awaiting the homecoming of the King will be hushed to silence as they gaze eagerly earthward for the first sight of the returning procession.

At this point the story of the seven seals ends, but in the book of Psalms we have a vivid postscript, describing the dramatic happenings at the end of the seven-day period when the King of kings comes back in triumph with the hosts of the redeemed.

In the twenty-fourth psalm David's inspired pen asked the question, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?” and, “Who shall stand in His holy place?” (Psalm 24: 3), and the answer is given, “He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart.” Verse 4, 5.

Then follows a thrilling pen-picture of the coming of the pure in heart to the “hill of the Lord.” “Lift up your heads, O you gates,” the cry goes forth from the angelic advance guard as the procession ascending the skies approaches the heavenly gates. “Be you lift up, you everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.” Verse 7.

From within the gates the demand comes from the heavenly doorkeepers, “Who is this King of glory?” The advancing angels reply: “The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle,” and they renew their command, “Lift up your heads, O you gates; even lift them up, you everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.”

Once more the gate-keepers of heaven ask: “Who is this King of glory?” and again the angels reply, “The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory.” Verse 10. And at that, the gates of heaven swing back, the glorious procession sweeps through, and the courts of heaven again reverberate with songs of triumph and praise.

What a day that will be! What an enthralling prospect it opens to the faithful people of God. What an incentive to each one to “endure unto the end.”

57. While Mercy Pleads

As a new vision opens before the prophet's eyes, whom does he see?

“And I saw the seven angels which stood before God” Revelation 8:2.

Standing before the throne of God, John sees seven angels awaiting their instructions for some special task within the framework of the divine purpose.

What was given to the seven angels?

“And to them were given seven trumpets.” Revelation 8:2.

In the Old Testament the coming of divine judgment is frequently referred to under the symbol of the blast of the trumpet of God. (Jeremiah 4:5; Amos 3:6; Zephaniah 1:14-16.) We may conclude, therefore, that the trumpet angels seen by John were receiving authority to announce seven successive judgments upon the earth.

These judgment trumpets obviously do not chronologically follow the seals of the previous vision, for Christ comes under the sixth seal and the seventh sees Him returning to heaven with the redeemed. They must, therefore, run parallel with the seven seals and the seven churches, recapitulating the history of the Christian era from still another, standpoint. The difference becomes obvious when we begin to study them, for whereas in the story of the seals and the churches the emphasis is upon the vicissitudes of the church down the ages, in the vision of the seven trumpets the judgment of the nations is the dominant theme.

As the prophet awaited the commissioning of the seven trumpet angels, by what was his attention diverted? “And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and there was given to him much incense.” Revelation 8:1

Expectantly John awaited the command to the seven angels to sound their trumpets of judgment, but before the word went forth he was shown, as on previous occasions, a scene which was to provide the heavenly background for the events to take place upon the earth.

The golden altar was the heavenly original of the altar of incense which Moses set up in the holy place of the earthly sanctuary. And as an earthly priest stood daily before the earthly altar to offer incense, so John sees an angel standing before the altar in the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, similarly equipped with censer and “much incense.”

What was this angel's duty?

“That he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.” Revelation 8: 3, 4.

In the earthly sanctuary the incense typified the righteousness of Christ which, mingling with the faithful Israelites' prayers, rendered them acceptable as they rose to the throne of God. Thus David prayed, “Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as incense.” Psalm 141: 2. In the heavenly ministry the angel similarly takes the incense and “adds it” to the prayers of the saints as he offers them before the Father upon the throne.

In this scene we have another beautiful portrayal of the ministry of Jesus in the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary since His return, assuring repentant sinners of His continual advocacy for the forgiveness of sin, and His ever-present help in every time of need.

Following his ministry on behalf of the saints, to what strange use did the angel turn the censer?

“And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth.” Revelation 8: 5.

As the angel ended his ministration before the golden altar, John was startled to see him fill with coals of fire the censer which just before had held the sweet-smelling incense, and cast the fire down upon the earth, an act clearly symbolic of the outpouring of divine judgment. What the prophet was beholding was a symbolic representation of the close of human probation when at last the long-suffering of God will come to an end and grace will give place to fiery judgment.

The fact that the same angel who ministered at the golden altar is the one who casts fire into the earth, and that the golden censer once used to offer incense with the prayers of the saints is the instrument which, at the last, holds the fires of judgment, emphasizes the solemn truth that He who is now man's Savior will one day be his judge.

What sounds did the prophet hear as the coals of fire fell upon the earth?

“And there were voices, and thunders, and lightning, and an earthquake.” Revelation 8:5. These ominous sounds rising from the earth correspond with the “lightning, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake” in Revelation 11:19, and the “voices, and thunders, and lightning; and ... great earthquake” in Revelation 16:17,18. They all depict the certain judgment which awaits the rejecters of God's infinite grace.

So the whole scene first of blessing, then of judgment, provides a vivid background to the history of the trumpets which are to follow. During the long period covered by them, sinners repenting by reason of the judgments of God in the earth are assured of a ready response from the throne as their penitent prayers ascend with the sweet incense of Christ's righteousness before the throne. But with the sounding of the final blasts, the service of heavenly intercession will cease, wrath will take the place of mercy, and judgment will be poured out upon the transgressors by the very hand that was before extended in forgiveness and mercy.

Shall we not then heed the lesson and claim the merits of the holy Sacrifice while mercy pleads?

58. The Trumpets Sound

Following the solemn introductory scene to the vision of the trumpets, what did the seven angels prepare to do?

“And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.” Revelation 8:6.

The introductory vision being concluded, the trumpet angels were given the command to sound, and as each one raised his instrument to his lips, successive calamities fell upon the nations. These find an amazing fulfillment in the progressive disintegration of the Roman Empire during the centuries of the Christian era.

A reading of the story reveals that the trumpet judgments are divided into two groups, the first four constituting one group, and the last three another. The latter are not merely heralded by trumpet blasts, but are also designated “woes.” This is absolutely true

to history, for it was by four mighty blows that Western Rome was laid in ruins, while two more shattered the Eastern empire, leaving one final trumpet to announce the judgments of God upon the nations at the end of time.

What calamity resulted from the sounding of the first trumpet?

“The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth.” Revelation 8: 7.

This first catastrophe which came upon the Western empire was, without question, the incursion of the barbarian Goths under the leadership of Alaric, son of Baltha the Bold, which culminated in the sack of the “eternal city” of Rome in AD. 410.

The direction from which this first blow came is suggested by the symbol used, and, true to the prophecy, the Goths came down from the frozen north of Europe upon the plains of Italy like hail upon a field of golden corn. The fire aptly symbolizes the flaming cities, villages, and devastated lands left in the wake of Alaric's advance. And the blood denotes the toll of human lives which he took as he swept across the crumbling empire. Almost immediately on his ascension to the throne in AD. 395, Alaric began his first advance upon the empire across Thrace and Macedonia almost to the gates of Constantinople. Being persuaded to turn back from the Eastern capital, he retired into Illyria, and for four years nothing further was heard of him. Then, at the end Of AD. 401, he suddenly determined to invade Italy. Though he was stopped by the Roman general Stilicho at the battle of Pollentia (AD. 402), and was driven back again after a second incursion in AD. 403, a conviction that he was the agent of a divine purpose led him to descend for the third time upon Italy in AD. 408.

To a monk who came to his tent door to dissuade him from his purpose he declared himself urged on by a mysterious impulse within. The historian Socrates records his words:

“I am impelled to this cause in spite of myself: for something within me urges me every day irresistibly onwards saying, Proceed to Rome and make that city desolate.”-Socrates, vii, 10, quoted by T. Hodgkin in “Italy and Her Invaders,” Vol. 1, part 2, page 677.

Arriving outside the walls of the capital, he reduced it to a state of famine and compelled the surrender of the city. When the Emperor Honorius failed to ratify the peace terms, Alaric, reinforced by thousands of barbarian slaves who had fled to him, marched on Rome for the second time (AD. 409), again compelling its surrender. Failing still to get any satisfaction out of the emperor, Alaric attacked Rome for the third and last time in August, AD. 410. Forcing his way into the capital by the Salarian gate, he this time permitted his barbarian soldiers to bum and pillage at will

The effect of this sack of the city upon the minds of men from end to end of the empire is indicated by the horror-stricken comments which have been preserved. Jerome, from his cell in Bethlehem, wrote to one correspondent: “The frame of the world is failing into ruins, yet our sins fall not from us! That renowned city, the head of the Roman world, has been destroyed by one conflagration.”-T. Hodgkin, *Ibid.*, page 799.

Alaric did not long survive after his destined task was accomplished. Following the devastation of the Imperial city, he led his forces south to Rhegium, intending to cross the Mediterranean and sweep through North Africa. His fleet, however, was wrecked by a storm, and before he had time to assemble another, he died at Naples. Athaulf, his brother-in-law, for a time contemplated the continuation of the African plan, but finally abandoned it, marched north along the west coast of Italy, and early in AD. 412 disappeared into Gaul. The tempest of hail and fire and blood had swept by, but the devastation remained for many a decade.

How much of the empire felt the effects of this desolating storm?

“And the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.” Revelation 8:7.

When Constantine the Great died he left the empire to his three sons, Constantius, Constantine II, and Constans, each having a “third” of the empire. Constantius inherited the Eastern provinces and Egypt, Constantine II had Britain, Gaul, and Spain in the West, while Constans held Italy, Africa, and Illyricum. It was this central third, including Illyricum and Italy, which bore the brunt of Alaric's attack.

Whether the references to trees and grasses are to be interpreted symbolically as the Roman nobles and the common people, is not clear, but it may with truth be taken literally, too, for the poet Claudian bemoans the blazing forests and the destruction of vegetation which Alaric left in his train.

The estimate of Alaric in the minds of later historians is well expressed by T. Hodgkin in his *Italy and Her Invaders*, when he says that Alaric was “equaled, as it seems to me, by only three men in succeeding times as a changer of the course of history. And these three are Mohammed, Columbus, Napoleon.” - Page 809.

What did the second trumpet bring?

“And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea.” Revelation 8:8.

The symbol of a “mountain” is used a number of times in Scripture for an aggressive kingdom. Babylon, for example, is described as a “destroying mountain” (Jeremiah 51:25), while, by contrast, the divine kingdom of God is to grow into a “mountain” which will one day fill the earth. (Daniel 2:35.) This fiery mountain cast into the sea therefore suggests some shattering attack from the sea upon the Roman Empire subsequent to the Gothic “hail.”

No symbol could more accurately portray the devastating offensive launched across the Mediterranean by the barbarian Vandals who had established themselves in Africa during the first half of the fifth century AD.

With the taking of Carthage on October 19, AD. 439, Gaiseric, the Vandal king, had become master of North Africa. Ambitious then to attack the heart of the empire itself, he “turned all his energies to ship building, and soon possessed incomparably the most formidable naval power in the Mediterranean.”-T. Hodgkin in “Italy and Her Invaders,” Vol. 2, part 3, page 251.

The first sea attack by the Vandals was launched in AD. 440 against Sicily and continued almost without cessation “against Italy, against Syria, against Illyria, against the Peloponnesus, against the rich and defenseless islands of the Aegean” (T. Hodgkin, *Ibid.*, page 25 1), until within a year or two of Gaiseric's death in AD. 477. In AD. 455 the Vandal fleet attacked and looted Rome itself.

Like Alaric, Gaiseric had a mysterious presentment that he was the instrument of divine justice against the fourth world empire. On one occasion, as the Vandal fleet was setting off on one of its expeditions, the pilot asked Gaiseric which way he was to steer. Gaiseric replied: “For the dwellings of the men with whom God is angry.”-T. Hodgkin, *Ibid.*, page 253.

As a factor in the destruction of the Roman Empire, Gibbon declares that Gaiseric “has deserved an equal rank with Alaric and Attila.”

How was the sea affected?

“And the third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.” Revelation 8:9.

True to the prophecy, a “third part” of the empire was ravaged by the Vandals; not quite the same “third” as was devastated by Alaric, for his attack was a land assault, while as Hodgkin states, the Vandal power “was essentially a maritime domination.” Hence the reference to the destruction of the sea creatures and ships.

What followed the sounding of the third angel?

“And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp.” Revelation 8: 10.

Battered by the driving “hail” from the north and reeling from the impact of the “fiery mountain” cast into the Roman sea, the Western empire was struck, when the third trumpet sounded, as it were, by a blazing star or meteor out of the heavens. This suggests some new barbarian power which suddenly burst upon the empire, spreading devastation in its track, and then as quickly fading out into darkness. No more fitting symbol could have been chosen to portray the meteoric career of Attila, king of the Huns, the so-called “terror of the world” and the “scourge of God!”

It was not long after the time that the Vandals crossed into Africa that Attila succeeded to the leadership of the Hunnic tribes on Rome's northern frontier, whom his uncle Rugila had bound together into a powerful kingdom. No sooner had he come to the throne, than with lightning speed he began to subjugate the surrounding tribes and in a few years had built up a vast empire extending from the Roman frontier in the West to the frontiers of Scythia in Asia, and northward to the islands of the Baltic Sea.

After consolidating his rule over all these peoples he began, like Alaric before him, to harass the wealthy Roman provinces across the Danube. A vivid contemporary comment on the meteoric speed of the Hunnic campaigns comes from a Roman soldier who fought against Attila during the latter's first attacks upon the empire. He wrote: “When attacked, they will sometimes engage in regular battle. . . . More often, however, they fight in no regular order of battle, but being extremely swift and sudden in their movements, they disperse, and then rapidly come together again in loose array, spread havoc over vast plains, and flying over the rampart, they pillage the camp of their enemy almost before he has become aware of their approach. It must be owned that they are the nimblest of warriors.”-Quoted by T. Hodgkin in “Italy and Her Invaders,” Vol. 2, Book 2, pages 33, 34.

About AD. 451, when a stronger Emperor ascended the throne in the East, Attila turned for easier prey to the West. With a vast army of many barbarian tribes, he poured across the Rhine into the Belgic provinces, giving city after city to the flames and putting the inhabitants to the edge of the sword in a “revel of lust and spoliation!”

Across France the Hun flood rolled to the gates of Orleans, where, for the first time, Attila was stopped by a combined army of Romans, Visigoths, and Franks, defeated at Chalons, and caused to retreat precipitately to his own domains.

The next year, however, AD. 452, he was on the move again, this time driving swiftly south into Italy itself. In the palace of Milan he found a picture of two Roman Augusti giving audience to defeated barbarian chiefs, and with grim humor he had another picture painted on the opposite wall showing himself on the throne and the two emperors prostrate before him.

The Roman senate, fearing lest Attila should wreak destruction throughout the length and breadth of Italy, sent envoys to him near Lake Garda, one of whom was Leo, bishop of Rome. Whether Attila was overawed by this ecclesiastical dignitary or rendered cautious at the news of the approach of Roman reinforcements, we shall never know, but the outcome of the interview was the arresting of Attila's headlong career of conquest and his return to his own land. Within a year he was dead, and as his successors possessed none of his amazing energy or ability, the empire went quickly to pieces.

Like a “meteor” Attila had appeared in the Roman firmament and like a meteor his empire went out in utter darkness. As Thomas Hodgkin asserts: “With dramatic suddenness the stage after the death of Attila is cleared of all the chief actors, and fresh performers come upon the scene.”-*Ibid.*, pages 190, 191.

What was the Hun meteor” appropriately named?

“And the name of the star is called Wormwood.” Revelation 8: 11.

Wormwood is used figuratively in Scripture to suggest bitter sorrow. (Jeremiah 9:15; Lamentations 3:15) Appropriate then was this name for the Hunnic leader, for bitter indeed did Attila make the lives of millions who were caught in his path. The extirpation of his foes was his remorseless aim and his boast was that the grass never grew again where his horse had trod.

Where were its effects chiefly felt?

“And it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; . . . and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.” Revelation 8: 11.

The Vandal attacks were against the southern sea frontiers of the empire; the hordes of Attila emerged from the great river sources of Central Asia, fell upon the northern river frontiers of the Rhine and Danube, and overflowed into the fair provinces of Gaul and Italy. Thus it was substantially the same third of the empire which had suffered during the period of the first two trumpets.

What new calamity followed the sounding of the fourth trumpet?

“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.” Revelation 8:12.

There is a striking difference between events during the first three trumpets and the catastrophe which occurred on the sounding of the fourth. In the case of the first three trumpets, an instrument of destruction-hail, a burning mountain, a flaming meteor-burst in upon the Roman world with devastating consequences. Following the fourth trumpet no new military power fell upon the empire; its light just went out.

This description aptly symbolizes what happened in AD. 476, when the Western empire came to an end and Odoacer, the Heruli, became the first barbarian king of Italy.

Very shortly after the emperor, Romulus Augustulus, was placed upon the throne by his uncle Orestes, the Heruli mercenaries in the Roman army presented the demand: “Assign to us one-third of the land of Italy for our inheritance!” The demand was refused and on August 23, AD. 476, Odoacer was elected leader of the rebels. Within five days Pavia fell and Odoacer was on his way to Ravenna. Entering the city with little resistance he deposed the boy emperor and compelled the Senate to send an embassy to Constantinople, informing the Eastern emperor that the imperial office in the West was abolished and asking that he be appointed a patrician and guardian of Italy.

Thus, almost insignificantly, as the prophecy had indicated, the sun of Imperial Rome went out. Jerome actually wrote down in his Bethlehem cell: “The world’s glorious sun has been extinguished!” Using a different metaphor, but to the same effect, Thomas Hodgkin comments: “It is not a storm, or an earthquake, or a fire, this end of the Roman rule over Italy: it is more like the gentle fluttering down to the earth of the last leaf from a withered tree!”

If the sun represented the emperor of the West, the moon and stars may well symbolize the consulship and the senate of Rome. These were not abolished by Odoacer, nor even by the Ostrogoth Theodoric, when that chieftain superseded the Heruli king. But in AD. 541, during his short ascendancy in Italy, Belisarius abolished the consulship, and in AD. 552, when Narses finally defeated the Goths, the fate of the “senate,” according to Gibbon, was “sealed.”

So by the middle of the sixth century, true to the prophetic Word, the sun, moon, and stars over a “third” of the Roman Empire had been extinguished.

59. Smoke From The Abyss

Following the first four trumpets, what heavenly messenger was seen by John?

“And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven!” Revelation 8: 13.

With the sounding of the fourth trumpet the dissolution of the empire in the West was complete. A heavenly messenger now appeared to announce the nature of the judgments which were to result from the sounding of the last three trumpets.

What dread word did the flying messenger bear?

“Saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound.” Revelation 8: 13.

The heavenly messenger did not merely declare that three more trumpets would sound; he designated them as three “woes” which would bring fearful catastrophes upon the world.

While the first four trumpets resulted in the disintegration of the empire in the West, these lands recovered in a remarkable way from the blows dealt them and became the seat of the highest civilization in the modern world. The “woes” which were to fall upon the eastern part of the empire, however, were to wipe out the civilizations planted by Greece and Rome so completely that these lands would never recover from the scourge.

What form did the first woe take?

“And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth.” Revelation 9:1.

A “star” in symbolic prophecy invariably represents some noted personage or leader. The one which fell upon the Western empire on the sounding of the third angel was Attila the Hun. We may well conclude, therefore, that this new star in the days of the fifth trumpet represents the leader of some aggressive people which did for the Eastern empire what the barbarian tribes did for the West. That “star” was undoubtedly Mohammed, the seventh-century founder of Islam, and inspirer of the great Saracen invasions of Europe and North Africa.

What was given to the power represented by the star?

“And to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.” Revelation 9: 1.

The term “bottomless pit” or “abyss” is first used in Scripture to describe the primeval chaos before the creative Spirit of God began the work of fashioning a beautiful world. “The earth,” we are told, “was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the abyss.” The same expression is used to describe the condition of the earth after the final wrath of God is poured out upon it. (Jeremiah 4:23-28; Revelation 20:1) Here, therefore, it must refer to the chaotic wastes of the Arabian desert, out of which the first “woe” emerged.

Mohammed was an Arab of the Koreish tribe, born between AD. 567 and 569. In his early years he was a caravan leader, but after his marriage he settled down in Mecca and began to receive what he believed to be revelations from God. The rulers of Mecca, feeling that Mohammed might become a rival, began to persecute him and his followers, resulting in his flight to Medina on July 16, AD. 622, which date was later fixed as the beginning of the Mohammedan “hejira,” which means “flight.” Civil war between Medina and Mecca ensued for several years, but in the eighth year of the “hejira,” Mohammed attacked Mecca, and after a brief resistance took it. Thus was the key of the Arabian “abyss” given into the prophet's hand.

When the door of the pit was opened to the outer world what emerged?

“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 9:2.

If pure light is representative of the truth of God, “smoke” must symbolize error. In this case, the smoke was the false teaching of Mohammedanism. The time of the opening of the pit may well be dated from the AD. 629, or A.H. 7, just before Mohammed attacked Mecca, when the prophet sent to all known sovereigns and potentates a letter demanding their submission to Islam.

The letter which was sealed with a silver ring engraved with the word “Mohammed, Messenger of God,” was similar in each case and included the following appeal and warning: “I invite you to the call of Islam. If you submit you will enjoy safety and God will grant you a double recompense. But if you turn your back, the sin of your subjects will be upon you.” - Ghulam Sarwar in “History of Islam,” page 369.

The Emperor Heraclius, on receipt of the letter, astonished his courtiers by saying through an interpreter to the Arabs, with almost prophetic insight: “If all this be true I am sure his kingdom will reach to the place I tread. I was certain that a prophet was coming, but I did not think that he would be born in Arabia.”-Ibid., page 372. The Negus of Abyssinia promptly accepted Islam on receipt of Mohammed's letter and the reply of Harith of Yemen was also favorable. Chosroes II of Persia, however, indignantly tore up the communication and dismissed the embassy. When the Prophet received their report he said: “God will tear his kingdom into pieces.”

What did John further distinguish as he peered into the smoke from the pit?

“And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth.” Revelation 9:1

As John watched, something more serious than “smoke” began to pour out of the Arabian “abyss.” From the midst of the smoke came forth “locusts” upon the earth.

Locusts, suggesting an innumerable host (Joel 2:25; Psalm 105:34), and utter devastation (Deuteronomy 28: 38; 2 Chronicles 7: 13), aptly symbolize the Arab hordes. Which, at the command of the successors of Mohammed, poured out of Arabia, first north into Persia, then west into Syria, Egypt, and beyond in a universal “holy war!”

In the very language of prophecy, the emergence of the Arab locusts is vividly portrayed by Sir William Muir in *The Caliphate: Its Rise, Progress and Decline*;

“Warrior after warrior, column after column, whole tribes in endless succession with their women and children, issued forth to fight. And ever, at the marvelous tale of cities conquered; of rapine rich beyond compute-fresh tribes arose and went. Onward and still on ward, like swarms from the hive, a flight of locusts darkening t “ he land, tribe after tribe issued forth and hastening northward, spread in great masses to the East and to the West!” - Page 43.

How are the locusts described?

“And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.” Revelation 9:7-9.

This description of the locust is not unlike an Arab one which reads: "In head like a horse, in breast like a lion, in feet like a camel, in body like a serpent, in tail like a scorpion, in antennae like a virgins hair! And certainly it accords exactly with the character of the Arab armies.

While they comprised both infantry and cavalry, horsemen on their renowned Arab steeds had pride of place. Describing the first contacts of the Arabs with the Byzantines, Sir Wm. Muir says:

"The Bedawi horse excelled in celerity and dash. Their charge, if light, was galling, and so rapidly delivered that ere the surprise was over, the troop itself might be out of sight." - "The Caliphate: Its Rise, Progress, and Decline," page 69.

On their heads the Arabs wore yellow turbans like crowns of gold. To "assume the turban" meant to become a Moslem.

While in the faces of the Arab warriors was the burning enthusiasm of their faith, they commonly wore their hair long like that of women. To represent their savage strength, it is stated that they had teeth "like a lion," a peculiarly appropriate symbol, as the lion was a denizen of Arabia.

The Arab chiefs sometimes wore complete suits of armor as they went into battle, but more commonly they had breastplates or cuirasses of steel. In the battle of Ohud in the early days of Mohammed's struggle for supremacy (AD. 624), it is recorded that 700 wore cuirasses.

The amazing speed of the Arab conquests bore comparison with the speed of destruction wrought by the locust plagues, for within eighty years the Moslems had extended their dominions from the Indus to the Atlantic, an achievement more notable than that of Rome.

What further symbol is introduced into the picture of the "locusts" to enhance their fearfulness?

"And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails." "And unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power." "And their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he strikes a man." Revelation 9:10, 3, 5.

The Arab writer quoted above referred to the locust as being "in tail like a scorpion," and the inspired symbol makes use of a similar comparison. In the usual order of battle, says Khan Bahadur Aksanullah, "the soldiers carrying lances and spears were placed in the forefront" while "archers were placed in the extreme rear." (History of the Muslim World, pages 65, 66) So, as the prophecy declared, the Arab hordes literally had stings like scorpions in their tails!

What limitations were placed upon the destructiveness of the locusts?

"And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads." Revelation 9:4.

In one respect the Arab armies were in complete contrast to the symbol chosen to represent them. Whereas real locusts eat up every green thing in the track of their advance (Exodus 10: 5, 12, 15), the locusts of this prophecy were expressly warned against wanton destruction, and even against the taking of the lives of any save the one class whose transgression merited swift judgment.

That such injunctions were actually given to the Arab armies as they set out upon their conquests, we have conclusive evidence in the famous speech of Abu Bekr to his troops. At the beginning of the Syrian campaign, Abu. Bekr gathered the forces of Usama and said to them: "Men, I have ten orders to give you, which you must observe loyally. Deceive none and steal from none. Betray none and mutilate none; kill no child, nor woman, nor aged man; neither bark nor bum the date palms; cut not down fruit trees nor destroy crops; slaughter not flocks, cattle, nor camels except for food. You will fall in with some men with shaven crowns; smite them thereon with the sword. You will also meet with men in cells; leave them alone in that to which they have devoted themselves." - Quoted by Sir Wm. Muir in "The Caliphate: Its Rise, Progress, and Decline," page 65.

The one class toward which the Arabs were instructed to have no mercy were idolaters. These they were told to exterminate, as also to destroy all their idols of wood and metal and stone. This judgment, of course, fell heaviest upon the Western church, which of all churches at that time "had not the seal of God!" The Eastern Christians, among whom images were prohibited, were permitted to practice their faith unmolested.

By whom were the locust swarms commanded?

"And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue has his name Apollyon." Revelation 9: 11.

In still another respect the symbol of the locusts had to be modified in order to use it of the Arab invasion of the Middle East and Europe. The wise compiler of the Book of Proverbs remarks in Proverbs 30: 27 that "the locusts have no king, yet they go forth all of them by bands!" Mohammed indeed never regarded himself as a king but as the religious leader of Islam, but the caliphs, to whom the leadership passed after the death of the prophet, were both secular and spiritual leaders.

The name given to the "king" of the locusts, which means "destroyer" would seem to be in contradiction to the command given to the locusts as they went forth to the Saracenic wars. The fact is, however, that while they were commanded to be merciful to individuals, they did effectively destroy the Graeco-Roman civilization over the great area which they occupied.

How long did their harassing activities continue?

"And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months!" Revelation 9:5. "And their power was to hurt men five months!" Revelation 9: 10.

The plague of locusts sent forth into the earth was not at first to destroy what remained of the empire. Rather would the emperors be tormented by the wresting from their power of province after province and by the ever-present menace to the heart of the empire-Constantinople. The period of swarming of locusts is approximately five months, from May to September, and the time period of these symbolic locusts was “five” prophetic months, or 150 literal years.

As the period of dominance of the Caliphate from Mohammed to the fall of Constantinople and the “killing” of the Eastern Empire under the next “woe” was over 800 years, expositors differ considerably in their placing of this period of “torment.” Some have regarded it as covering the initial period from AD. 612, when Mohammed first declared his mission, to AD. 762, when Caliph Al-mansur built the first permanent capital of the Moslem Empire at Bagdad, following which the respective spheres of the Moslem and Christian powers were largely stabilized and the “torments” inflicted upon Christian Europe were greatly alleviated.

Others, however, with better reason, as we shall see when we come to study the next “woe,” regard the period of “torment” as the final 150 years of assault upon the Byzantine Empire by the Ottoman Turks. which culminated in the actual “killing” of the empire.

Remarkably enough, we know the exact date when Othman made his first attack on the Greek Empire, for Gibbon, on the evidence of Possinus who wrote in 1669, and who in turn derived his facts from the church historian Pachymeres, a contemporary of Othman, states:

“It was on the twenty-seventh of July, in the year twelve hundred and ninety-nine of the Christian Era, that Othman first invaded the territory of Nicomedia; and the singular accuracy of the date seems to disclose some foresight of the rapid and destructive growth of the monster.”-“Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,” Vol. 6, chap. 64, page 226.

From the middle of 1299 the final “tormenting” period carries us to the middle of 1449, which was precisely the time when the Byzantine Empire “died.” It was in that year that the unprecedented step was taken of asking and receiving from the Ottoman Sultan, Murad II, in Adrianople, his approval of the enthronement of Constantine XI, the last of the Caesars of Eastern Rome.

To what depths of despair did men sink by reason of the “torment” of the first woe?

“And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.” Revelation 9:6.

Thus vividly are portrayed the emotions of the Byzantines under the constant menace of the Moslem invasions. Time and again it seemed that the death of the Eastern empire was near, but it did not come until the days of the second “woe.”

What further woes were to come?

“One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.” Revelation 9: 12.

60. The Turkish Night

With the sounding of the sixth angel, what voice did the prophet hear?

“And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God.” Revelation 9:13.

The importance of the sixth trumpet in the history of the Eastern Roman Empire is emphasized by being introduced by a voice from the horns of the golden altar in the heavenly sanctuary.

This judgment, like the previous one, is described as a “woe,” because whereas the barbarians of the West adopted and advanced the civilization which they found, the Turkish flood hereafter depicted wiped out the civilization which it overwhelmed and left almost primitive barbarism.

Says W. C. D. Allen in *The Turks in Europe*: “When the 'Turkish Night' overshadowed the Balkan lands, all trade, all art, all literature, all education, all social progress ceased. The Bulgaria of Tsar Simeon was as progressive as the England of Edward the Confessor; the Serbia of Stephen Dushan was as advanced as the France of St. Louis. But today [he wrote in 1919] the Serbs, the Bulgars, the Greeks, and the Albanians are without a national culture, without political institutions, without coherent traditions, without a history.... The 'Turkish Night' is the negation of history.” -Pages 1, 2.

What command did the voice utter?

“Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.” Revelation 9:14.

To understand these words of the angel we must go back into the days of the first woe and notice the events which led up to the final onslaught on the Byzantine Empire.

The “Euphrates” is used in symbolic prophecy to represent the power occupying the Tigro-Euphrates Valley, or Mesopotamia, which, of course, during the earlier part of the first woe was the Saracenic Empire of the Abassid Caliphs, whose capital was at Bagdad. The fact, however, that the angels of the Euphrates are here described as having been “bound” suggests that the freedom of action of the Caliphate had been in some way circumscribed. This is exactly what did happen, for in the centuries which followed the establishment of Almansur in Bagdad in AD. 762, Spain, North Africa, and Egypt were detached from the Abassid Empire, and finally the Moslem ruler of Southern Persia and Iraq reduced the Caliph of Bagdad to a mere puppet.

The angels of the Euphrates were certainly closely “bound” and might have for ever remained so, had it not been for a remarkable turn of events in the early eleventh century. At this time there came out of the Kirghis Steppes of Turkestan in Central Asia, a Turanian tribe led by a chieftain named Seljuq ibn Yakak. In return for help rendered to the Moslem sultan Mahmud of Ghazneh (AD. 998-1030), they were permitted to settle in Transoxiana, but before very long they had turned on their erstwhile masters, overrun the whole of Persia, and had become the protectors of the Abassid Caliph. Under Tughril Beg and Alp Arsan, Seljuks continued to extend their conquests until their empire ranged from the Hindu Kush Mountains to the Mediterranean, from the Caucasus to Jerusalem, and had renewed the prestige and spiritual authority of the Bagdad Caliphate over all this great area. And in harmony with the prophecy, there were exactly four groups of Seljuks in Syria, Iraq, Asia Minor, and Southern Persia.

Just, however, when the fettered angels of the Euphrates were ready to be released, for the “killing” of the Eastern Empire, there came the terrible invasion of the Mongols in the thirteenth century which shattered the Seljuk Empire leaving only the Sejuk kingdom of Asia Minor, which was off the main track of the Mongol advance.

The time for the release of the angels had not come and did not come until the birth of the powerful Ottoman Empire, which administered the coup de grace to the Byzantine Empire.

The Ottoman Turks were one of the many Turkish tribes akin to the Seljuks, who, driven before the Tartars, infiltrated into Asia Minor during the later days of the Seljuk Empire. Ertughril, their leader, in return for help against the Tartars, was given territory in the neighborhood of Eski-Shehr, some 190 miles south from Constantinople. In 1281, Ertughril died and was succeeded by his son, Osman or Othman, who proceeded at once to enlarge the territories granted to his father and, on the death of the sultan (1299), declared his independence. From this beginning, Turkish history starts, and Osman or Othman gave his name to the Osmanli or Ottoman dynasty which he founded.

Beginning his “torment” of the Byzantine Empire with an attack on Nicomedia on July 27, 1299, Othman soon held all the Asiatic coast of the Sea of Marmora and Osman's son, Orkhan, in 1337 abandoned the title Emir and began to call himself “Sultan of the Ottomans!” In 1343 Sultan Orkhan was given the first opportunity to interfere in European affairs by an invitation from one of the rivals for the Byzantine throne. For the Romans this was a fatal appeal, for soon Orkhan had subjugated southern Thrace, and established a European capital at Adrianople (1357).

Once again, however, the release of the angels of the Euphrates was held up by another Tartar invasion led by Tamerlane which almost brought the Turkish Empire to ruin. After the death of Tamerlane, however, Mahommed I and his successor, Murad II, restored the empire, and Mahommed II, the “Conqueror” (1451-1481), dealt Eastern Rome the final blow by taking Constantinople on May 29, 1453, and making it his capital.

With the fall of Constantinople the Eastern Roman Empire came to an end and its place was taken by the empire of the Ottoman Turks. And, like the Seljuk Empire before it, the Ottoman emperors divided the region drained by the river Euphrates between four sultanies based on Damascus, Aleppo, Iconium, and Bagdad.

Thus was the releasing of the four angels of the Moslem Caliphate begun by the Seljuks and carried to completion by the Ottoman Turks, who raised their empire in Asia and Europe to its zenith in the so called Augustan Age of Turkey under Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566).

Of what did the conquering army of the Turks principally consist?

“And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of Jacinth, and of brimstone.” Revelation 9:17.

Like the Saracens, the Turks were essentially horse-soldiers in contrast with the massed infantry of the Eastern Roman Empire, and the multicolored host which the prophet saw well portrayed the bright Turkish uniforms in which red, blue, and yellow predominated.

How are the Turkish horses further described?

“And the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.” Revelation 9:17.

The lion heads of the horses suggests the savage strength and destructive rapacity which characterized the Turks in their wars against Byzantium. The reference to “fire and smoke and brimstone” issuing out of their mouths is noteworthy, for while both the Byzantines and the Turks made use of the newly discovered gunpowder in their numerous wars, the more extensive employment of it by the Turks contributed conspicuously to their success. The Turks in particular mastered the art of firing their muskets while riding, so that to watch a cavalry column in action it would appear as if the fire was issuing from the horses' mouths.

How numerous were the Turkish horsemen?

“And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousands. And I heard the number of them.” Revelation 9:16.

Ten thousand times ten thousand is a “myriad,” so that the number of horsemen was represented as two “millions.” This number can hardly be taken as literal, for no empire of that day could have had even so many inhabitants. Actually, the expression “ten thousand times ten thousand” is used in Scripture not necessarily as a specific number, but as representing a very great or “countless number.” (See Revelation 5: 11; Luke 12: 1; Hebrews 12: 22)

Remarkably enough, Gibbon, who on a number of occasions used almost prophetic language in his great history, refers to “millions of Turkish horses” in one of his descriptions of the vast Turkish offensive.

In what was their principal offensive power?

“For their power is in their mouth and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt!” Revelation 9:19.

“Power in their mouths” would seem again to have reference to the muskets which the Turks fired while galloping into battle. Tails “like unto serpents” suggests the “basilisk,” a cannon so-called from its resemblance to a snake or serpent, which threw a cannon ball some two hundred pounds in weight, and which was dragged around by artillery horses. As the cannon were drawn along with the muzzle facing the rear, the horses would seem to have stings in their tails, while the cavalry horses belched fire from their mouths.

What was the dire result of the second woe?

“For to slay the third part of men.” Revelation 9:15. “By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.” Revelation 9:18.

Under the first woe the Byzantine “third” of the Roman Empire was tormented, but its political structure did not suffer extinction. The Seijuks prepared the way for this final calamity by their penetration beyond the Saracen frontiers into Asia Minor. The Ottomans continued the advance into Europe, and the prophecy was spectacularly fulfilled when Sultan Mohammed II took Constantinople in 1453.

For how long were the angels of the Euphrates released?

“And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year!” Revelation 9:15.

This prophetic period, representing 391 actual years and fifteen days, covering the duration of the Turkish power, provides one of the most remarkable examples of prophetic fulfillment in all the Scriptures.

We have already seen that the ascendancy of the Ottomans began in the middle of 1449 when the last Byzantine emperor asked the Sultan's permission to ascend the throne, and that the zenith of Ottoman power was reached in the sixteenth century. Thereafter decline set in and by the close of the eighteenth century the Turkish Empire was fast dissolving. Mesopotamia, Armenia, Arabia, had become independent, and serious revolt was being fermented by Mehemet An in Egypt.

“It seem probable,” says W. C. D. Alien in *The Turks in Europe*, “that, at first, he [Mehemet Ali] aimed at making himself the independent ruler of Egypt and Syria, but that later, encouraged by the facility and swiftness of Ibrahim's victories, he actually aspired to displace the House of Othman at Constantinople, and to establish there the family of the fisherman of Kavalla.”-Ibid., pages 122, 125.

Sultan Mahmud turned first to Britain and Austria and then to Tsar Nicholas for aid, and by the latter's ready intervention, Egyptian progress was temporarily halted.

Josiah Litch in 1838, pondering the prophecy of the duration of Turkish power, asserted that if the period of “torment” under the first woe ran from the very definitely established date of July 27, 1299, to July 27, 1449, the period of the Turkish woe would expire in August, 1840. Shortly before that time, he specified August 11th as the exact termination of the prophetic period, and exactly on time the predicted end came.

The succession of Abdul Medjid to the Sultanate had been followed by the betrayal of the Turkish fleet into the hands of the Egyptians at Alexandria, and a new land advance into Asia by Egypt began. Without immediate aid it seemed that the sultan must fall. Britain and Russia met in conference in London, where the Treaty of London was signed on July 15, 1840. An ultimatum was dispatched to Mehemet, offering him the hereditary government of Egypt and territory in Palestine and the Gulf of Suez for his lifetime, on condition that he returned the sultan's fleet, and immediately evacuated the rest of Turkish territory. The offer was handed to and accepted by Mehemet Ali on August 11, 1840.

The fulfillment of this prophecy produced a great sensation at the time, and gave a powerful impetus to the Advent revival of the eighteen forties.

Did the judgments of the “second woe” lead men to repentance?

“And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood; which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk. Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorcery, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.” Revelation 9:20, 21.

The Saracenic and Turkish woes were intended to bring papal Europe to repentance; but they did not. In fact, the idolatry of the great apostasy through the Middle Ages became more and more degraded. The worship of images of gold and silver, brass, stone, and wood continued. The false priesthood continued to deceive the incredulous populace by their impostures, and licentiousness was widespread.

The first and second woes had failed to produce any turning to God on the part of the apostates. Worse judgments were, therefore, to follow.

61. God's Last Word

Between the sounding of the sixth and seventh angels, who appeared in vision to John?

“And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.” Revelation 10:1.

In our study of the seven seals we noted that the vitally important vision of the sealing work (Revelation 7) was not described in its chronological position under the sixth seal, but was placed as a supplement to the narrative in order to give it special emphasis. A similar procedure is adopted here, a supplementary vision occupying the next chapter and a half. Then in the fourteenth verse of the eleventh chapter we return to a recital of the seven trumpets with the words: “The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe comes quickly. And the seventh angel sounded.”

The theme of this interpolated vision is linked with the assertion at the end of the ninth chapter that the wicked “repented not.” Revelation 9:20,21. In it is shown how ample had been the opportunities for repentance, and consequently how just a recompense will be the fate of a wicked world under the fearful seventh trumpet or “third woe.”

In the first part of the vision John was shown a mighty angel descending from heaven resplendent with heavenly glory. Four details are listed concerning his appearance, each of which emphasizes the character of the One whose ambassador he is. The angel is clothed with a cloud, indicating that he is a representative of the Most High God. The rainbow upon his head reveals that though the God for whom he speaks is awe-inspiring in His majesty and power, He is also a God of mercy, who keeps covenant with those who put their trust in Him. The angel's face “as it were the sun” and his feet as “pillars of fire” portray the unapproachable holiness of the Lord.

Where did this mighty angel take his stand?

“And he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth.” Revelation 10:2.

The angel's stance, partly on the earth and partly upon the sea, suggests the universality of the message he bears. To the remotest part of the earth and across the farthest sea his message is to sound.

What did the prophet see in the angel's hand?

“And he had in his hand a little book open.” Revelation 10: 2.

In this “little book open” was the angel's message. It was a “little” book in comparison with the whole volume of prophetic truth because its contents were limited to a special revelation for a particular generation. And the fact that the book was “open” implies that once it was shut, but now it has been specially opened for the enlightenment of those living down at the end of time.

When Daniel was given his final visions, it will be remembered that he was told to “seal” them up until “the time of the end.” Daniel 12: 4. Here an angel appears and holds out to John, as representing the church of the last days, a book “open.” The obvious inference is that the now opened book is the same one which Daniel was told to close and seal.

We may, therefore, ask whether in the days after 1798. The beginning of the “time of the end”, and round about 1840, the close of the “hour, and day and month, and year” of the Turkish woe, there was any special opening of the prophetic Scriptures to the people of God. The answer is, Yes, for it was in this very period that there occurred, in both the Old and New Worlds, the great Advent awakening.

Since the days of the Reformation godly students of the Scriptures had, at different times and in various lands, begun to turn with a new interest to the prophetic Scriptures. In the seventeenth century, for example, there were Joseph Mede, B.D., a professor of Christ's College, Cambridge; Vitringa, a professor of the Franeker University in Holland; and Johann Albrecht Bengel of Denkendorf, in Germany. Outstanding in the eighteenth century were Sir Isaac Newton and Bishop Thomas Newton, but still the number of students of the prophecies was comparatively small.

In his *Observations Upon the Prophecies* (1733), however, Sir Isaac Newton expressed his conviction that the age of the “opening” of the prophetic book was near, for he wrote. “If the last age, the age of opening these things, be now approaching, as by the great successes of late interpreters it seems to be, we have more encouragement than ever to, look into these things.... Amongst the interpreters of the last age there is scarce one of note who bath not made some discovery worth having; and thence I seem to gather that God is about opening these mysteries.” Pages 251-253.

True to the great scientist's premonition, with the beginning of the nineteenth century the 'little book' was opened, and, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, a host of students of the Scriptures began literally to pour forth volumes elucidating the prophecies of the last days.

“As we ... enter the portals of the nineteenth century,” writes L. E. Froom in *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, “a swelling chorus of voices becomes discernible. As the years pass, it is increasingly apparent that prophetic interpretation has entered upon a new and unfolding era. . . . A definite conviction develops that mankind has entered a new epoch—the era of the last things, the time of the end.” -Vol. 3, page 263.

To what was the angel's voice compared in the vision?

“And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars.” Revelation 103.

The message which was to come forth from the “open” book would not be hushed up or confined to a very few people. It was to be proclaimed with a “loud voice” to many nations and peoples. As we have seen, such was the character of the Advent proclamation of the mid-nineteenth century.

“It is not merely in Great Britain that the expectation of the near return of the Redeemer is entertained, and the voice of warning raised”. wrote Mourant Brock. “But also in America, India, and on the continent of Europe. In America, about three hundred ministers of the Word are thus preaching 'this Gospel of the kingdom;' whilst in this country about seven hundred of the Church of England are raising the same cry Advent Tracts,” Vol. 2. page 135.

By what was this mighty angel's cry succeeded?

“And when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.” Revelation 10: 3, 4.

There are some things that it is not meet for us to know, and evidently the messages of the seven thunders are among the “secret things” which the Lord has not seen fit to reveal. (Deuteronomy 29:29) We, therefore, pass them by without attempting to speculate.

What solemn pronouncement did the mighty angel now make?

“And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by Him that lives for ever and ever, who created heaven and the things that therein are, and the earth and the things that therein are. And the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer.” Revelation 10:5,6.

The silence on the nature of the seven thunders is amply compensated by the momentous revelation which the mighty angel now makes. Raising his hand in a solemn oath in the name of the eternal God and Creator of all he declares: “There shall be time no longer.”

This phrase does not mean that the moment when time would merge into eternity had come, for there were still many events yet to take place before the beginning of the eternal years. At the same time, it means something more specific than is suggested by the rendering in the American Revised Version: “There shall be no more delay.” It rather indicates that the end of some long predicted time-period (chronos; compare Acts 7:17; Galatians 4:4), which had reached down the centuries, was imminent.

The time-periods extending into the last days include the 1,260 days of the papal persecution which ended in 1798 the 1,290 days, terminating at the same time, and the 1,335 and 2,300 days which, as we have seen, both ended in 1844. The “time” referred to in this prophecy cannot be 1798, for the mighty angel did not appear until after the end of this period. The terminal point of “time” referred to must therefore be 1844. The longest time-period in the Bible, which began right back in the days when the decree went forth to “restore and to build Jerusalem” (Daniel 9:25), was moving to its momentous close. The last prophetic “time” was about to end and the final events were drawing on apace. These were the stirring tidings the angel brought!

What was now quickly to be finished?

“But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as He hath declared to His servants the prophets.” Revelation 10:7.

The ending of prophetic “time” was to be signalized by the sounding of the trumpet of the seventh angel, and as its note re-echoed in heaven and earth the “mystery” of God's age-long purpose would reach its culmination.

What command did John now receive? How did he respond?

“And the voice which I heard from heaven spoke unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which stands upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up.” Revelation 10: 8, 9.

In this acted parable the prophet was shown the part which the people of God in the last days would be called upon to play in the “finishing” of the “mystery of God.” In a precisely similar manner the prophet Ezekiel learned the part he was to perform in carrying a final message of judgment to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. (Ezekiel 2:8-10; 3:1,2)

The taking and eating of the roll meant to Ezekiel the assimilation of the message which it contained so that he would be able to “speak,” the words of God “unto the house of Israel.” John, as representative of the remnant of the last days, was in like manner to receive the special message of the finishing of the mystery of God.

What was the effect of the message on Ezekiel? How did it correspond with the effect upon John of his partaking of the “little book”?

“Then I did eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.” Ezekiel 3: 3. “It shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.” Revelation 10: 9.

The first effect upon Ezekiel was eminently pleasurable. Into his mind came a sweet assurance of the triumph of the purposes of God, and the glorious deliverance which would be the portion of His faithful

people. This also was the experience of John and of the remnant of the last days whom he represented. As there came to the people of God in 1833 the realization that the last of the signs in the heavens had been displayed (Revelation 6:13). As they noted the spectacular termination of the “hour, and day, and month, and year” of the sixth trumpet (Revelation 9:15) on August 11, 1840. As the conviction deepened that the longest time-period in the Bible, the 2,300 days, would end in the autumn of 1844 (Daniel 8:14), they felt sure that the Bridegroom was at hand and they joyfully prepared to meet Him.

What contrasting feelings, however, were to supervene?

“And it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.” Revelation 10: 9. “And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly Was bitter.” Revelation 10: 10.

Ezekiel records that when he fully comprehended the import of the message he was commanded to communicate to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, “I went in bitterness ... of my spirit!” Ezekiel 3: 14. So it was to be also in the experience of the remnant of the last days, when they realized that Jesus was not to appear quite as soon as they had expected, and that hard tasks and grievous experiences awaited the church before her deliverance.

In this, the experience of the Advent believers corresponded exactly with that of the disciples on the Mount of Ascension when they asked Jesus, “Wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1: 6), and sorrowfully learned that the time was not yet.

In the interim, what further task had the remnant of the last days still to carry out?

“And he said unto me, thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.” Revelation 10:11.

When the “time” passed and the end did not come, the believers were at first terribly disappointed and perplexed beyond measure. But, not losing their confidence, they turned again to the prophecies of the “finishing” of the mystery of God, and read the words which before they had passed over and failed to comprehend: “Thou must prophesy again.” Then the truth dawned upon their minds.

The ending of the “time,” they now understood, was not to be immediately succeeded by the return of Christ, nor was it to mark the end of their witness. Their greatest witness was still future, and the message they were to carry was the most solemn and ominous ever to be delivered.

All, at last, was clear, and the Advent people braced themselves to the task they had thought to be almost over. They went forth to “prophesy again,” and today they are still pressing on into the remotest corners of the earth calling out, in the now rapidly closing, days of the judgment hour, a people keeping “the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” Revelation 14:12.

Soon, very soon, their work of “prophesying” will be done, and the last responsive souls will have been sealed with the seal of God. Then Jesus will certainly come. Where will you be in that day? May you be among the Advent people, watching and waiting for their Lord.

62. Faithful Witnesses

Following the commission to John to “prophesy again,” what was the prophet given, and for what purpose? “And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.” Revelation 11:1.

When we began to study the vision of the angel with the little book,” it was pointed out that the tenth chapter of the Revelation and the first fourteen verses of the eleventh chapter from a special supplementary vision inserted as a kind of addendum to the vision of the sixth trumpet. Just as the vision of the sealing work in Revelation seven is supplementary to the vision of the sixth seal.

The first part of this special vision portrays the going forth of God's last word to an unrepentant and incorrigibly rebellious world, and is summarized by the culminating command, “Thou must prophesy again.” Revelation 10: 11.

These words provide the key to an understanding of the fourteen verses which follow, which are really a “vision within a vision,” recapitulating the “prophesying” or “witness” of the church from the days of John right down to its last witness in the closing days of earth's history.

In this “vision within a vision” John was given a measuring reed, or rod, with which he was instructed to measure “the temple of God,” the “altar,” and the “worshippers” in the temple. This symbolic task immediately recalls a parallel experience which Ezekiel had when he was being commissioned to carry a last message of warning and appeal to Israel. (Ezekiel 40: 2, 3)

Unlike John, Ezekiel was not given the measuring rod himself and told to measure the temple; instead he saw the angel measure every detail of the vision-temple before him.

When the angel had finished measuring he turned to Ezekiel and said: “Thou son of man, show the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them measure the pattern. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, show them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, . . . and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof,. . . and all the ordinances thereof, and do them.” Ezekiel 43: 10, 11.

These instructions to the prophet make it clear that the purpose of the measuring was in order to exhibit to Israel the symbolic proportions and order of the vision-temple so that they might test their lives by its perfection and repent of their iniquities.

The measuring of the temple by John must similarly have been for the purpose of comparing the perfection of the temple shown to John with the life and experience of the church, and with the same object of exposing apostasy and evoking repentance and reformation.

The question, therefore, immediately arises, What temple was this? Certainly it was not the old temple in Jerusalem, for that had been abandoned by God long before, and had already been destroyed by the Romans. Was there then any other temple in existence in John's day? Why yes, there was the heavenly sanctuary, the divine original of the earthly pattern, in which Christ began to minister after His ascension. This was the temple John was bidden to measure.

By this act he was to indicate to the people of God all down the centuries that the sacred law in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary would continue to be the standard of righteousness to which by grace they must conform. And that the mediatorial services of the heavenly sanctuary would be the divinely appointed means whereby sinners could be brought into a right relationship with that holy law.

What did the angel say was to be excluded from the measuring?

“But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.” Revelation 11:2.

In the earthly temple the Gentiles might enter the outer court, but only the true believers were permitted beyond the barrier in the sanctuary itself. By a remarkable providence the only temple inscription which has been preserved to us from those ancient days is one once displayed on this barrier and which says: “No stranger may enter within the balustrade round the temple and enclosure. Whoever is caught will be responsible to himself for his death which will ensue. “Quoted by A. Deissman in “New Light from the Ancient East.” page 79.

In the Christian era, by virtue of the ministry of Christ, the true believers are admitted “within the veil” of the heavenly sanctuary (Hebrews 10: 19, 20), but the unbelievers and apostates are confined to the outer court unmeasured and unprotected by the providence of God.

This “outer court,” and the city beyond, the angel went on to explain to John, would be “trodden under foot” or dominated by a power opposed to God for a period of “forty and two months.” At once we recognize this power as the great papal apostasy and the period of its domination as the same as the “time, times, and half a time” (Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Revelation 12:14) and the “twelve hundred and three score days” (Revelation 11:3; 12:6) associated elsewhere with this power.

1260 prophetic days or literal years. 42 months contain 42 x 30 days

3.5 times or years contain 3.5 x 360 days 1,260 prophetic days or literal years.

This period, as we have previously seen, began in AD. 538, when the last anti-papal power in Italy was overthrown, and ended in 1798, when the French revolutionary armies deposed the Pope and almost extinguished the Papacy.

During the treading down of the city, what witness to the truth of God would be given?

“And I will give power unto My two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.” Revelation 11:3.

While God permitted the “outer court” and city, that is the earth, to remain unmeasured and for many centuries to be dominated by the apostate power of Rome, the unbelieving world was not left without witness.

Jesus told His disciples that though they were not “of the world” they were sent “into the world” to witness, in the power of the Holy Spirit, of sin, righteousness, and judgment. So also here it is emphasized that through all the dark ages of apostasy a witness would be maintained in the “outer court” to the unceasing mediatorial ministry of Christ in the “holy place.” Yet it would be a witness in “sackcloth,” for the witnesses would be relentlessly persecuted and oppressed by the dominating apostasy.

Who were these witnesses?

“These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.” Revelation 11:4.

These “two witnesses,” the minimum number required for effectual testimony (Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:16), are defined in terms of two further symbols. They are the “two olive trees” and the “two candlesticks.” These at once direct our minds to the vision given to Zechariah in which he saw “two olive trees” pouring out their oil into “two candlesticks” for the purpose of shedding light upon Israel's pathway on their return from Babylonian captivity.

In this prophecy, the witnesses or mouthpieces of God were the individuals, Zerubbabel and Joshua. In earlier times in Israel's history, Moses and Aaron, Elijah and Elisha, were witnesses to the truth of God. During the Christian era, there have been many associated witnesses in different ages like Huss and Jerome, Luther and Calvin. Cranmer and Ridley, but no two individuals can be designated as the mouthpieces of God during the whole of the period. It may, however, very properly be said that the witness was given (Mark 16:15) by the preaching of the Gospel contained in the Old and New Testaments. Joseph Galloway, who lived during part of this period (1730-1803), came to this very conclusion in his Brief Commentaries when he said:

“Is it not by these two sacred and infallible records. . . [which have] been preserved amidst the waste of all-devouring time, the ravages of wars, the wrecks of books, and even during the Dark Ages of pagan sensuality, of Mohammedan ignorance, and papal superstition. I ask, is it not by these two holy records alone, that God has been pleased to reveal and attest His righteous and immaculate will to mankind?”-“Brief Commentaries,” (1809 Ed.), Vol. 1, page 57.

These were indeed the two life- and light-giving streams of divine truth and power which, despite all the efforts of evil men, were never stemmed during the centuries of papal darkness.

How were the “two witnesses” protected throughout the period of their testimony?

“And if any man will hurt them, fire proceeds out of their mouth, and devours their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.” Revelation 11:5.

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What power did they exercise?

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At the close of their testimony, by whom were the two witnesses to be attacked?

“And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.” Revelation 11:7.

If the witness of the Scriptures in sackcloth symbolizes the trials of God's people during the days of apostasy, the killing of the witnesses must mean the actual suppression of the Christian religion by some atheistic power who emerges from “the abyss.”

The term “abyss” we have seen was descriptive of the primeval chaos in the beginning (Genesis 1:2), of the chaotic wastes of Arabia from which the locusts of the first woe emerged (Revelation 9:1). And of the final chaos when the wrath of God is poured out upon a doomed world (Revelation 20:1). Was there then about the time of the end of the papal era (1798) a period of chaos and confusion out of which some atheistic power arose, which for a time actually destroyed Christianity?

Indeed there was. The great revolt of the French Revolution which brought about the end of the papal domination and actually abolished the Papacy, went beyond anti-clericalism to obliterate every form of the Christian religion in France.

J. Galloway, who wrote his Brief Commentaries during the period of the French Revolution, describes the shudder which this act sent through the Christian world of that day. “If we search the annals of the world, we shall not find even a private society or sect, much less a civil community and state, which, before our day, has, in the most public manner proclaimed to all the nations around it that THERE IS NO GOD! And made that position the basis of the constitution of its government.” The fulfiller of this prophecy, he adds, “is obviously, that political and atheistical monster, the revolutionary power now ruling the French nation.”-Vol. 1, page 78.

Originally the French Revolution was intended to do no more than assert the rights of the “third estate” or the middle classes against the first and second estates, the nobility and the clergy. When the Roman hierarchy refused to conform and the Pope condemned the new constitution (March 10, 1791), the Revolution became anti-papal, but it was still not irreligious. In fact, the favors granted to the Protestant church indicated that it might become a Protestant Revolution. A Protestant was elected president of the Assembly, and Protestants, hitherto proscribed, “were raised to full religious freedom and political equality.”-T. H. Gill in “The Papal Drama,” bk. 10.

But soon power began to pass from the moderates into the hands of the extremists, and the Revolution began to reveal a frankly atheistic trend. By 1793 the extremists had gained complete control and an out and out attack on religion was launched.

The first atheistic act was the introduction of the Republican calendar, in which a decadi of ten days was substituted for the immemorial seven-day week, and the tenth day of each decadi was designated a day of rest in place of the Sabbath. With the introduction of the new calendar the Christian dating of the years was also discontinued and a new era was inaugurated.

“The French Era,” says C. D. Hagen in his French Revolution, “was to succeed the 'Christian Era,' now declared abolished. Henceforth the years were to date not from the birth of Christ, but from the birth of the French Republic, September 22, 1792. Year One would run from that day to midnight of September 21, 1793, the first year of the Revolution, the first year of 'free' humanity.”-Vol. 2, page 760.

This was dearly intended, as Durand de Maillane asserts, as “the prelude to the abolition of Christianity” (Quoted in The French Revolution as Told by Contemporaries, by E. L. Higgins, page 329), and the climax was not long in coming.

On October 14th, Chaumette ' , obtained a resolution ... that ministers of no religion should be allowed to exercise their worship out of the temples appropriated to it." All religious signs were suppressed in cemeteries and "all the outward signs of religion were entirely abolished." - "History of the French Revolution," by L. A. Thiers, Vol. 3, page 237.

On November 7th, a number of Catholic ecclesiastics and Protestant ministers were persuaded to go to the bar of the Convention and abjure their faith, following which "Hebert, Chaumette, and their associates appeared at the bar, and declared that 'God, did not exist; and the worship of Reason was to be substituted in His stead History of Europe," by A. Alison, Vol. 2, page 179.

The great cathedral of Notre Dame was requisitioned by Chaumette and converted into the Temple of Reason, and a Festival of Reason was instituted for each decadi to replace the services of Christian worship. At the inaugural ceremony on November 10th, the mayor of Paris, all the municipal officers, and public functionaries repaired there together with a great congregation of citizens to see a young woman representing the goddess of Reason enthroned.

Following the service in the Notre Dame, the company repaired to the Convention where, after addressing the representatives, Chaumette gave a fraternal kiss to the goddess amid boisterous bravos and shouts from the assembled company.

The final act came on November 24th, when the Commune decreed "that all the churches and temples of every religion and every sect which exist in Paris shall be immediately closed," and that any one asking for their re-opening "shall be arrested as a suspected person."

"The services of religion," says Alison, "were now universally abandoned. The pulpits were deserted throughout the revolutionary districts; baptisms ceased; the burial service was no longer heard; the sick received no communion, the dying no consolation. The village bells were silent. Sunday was obliterated. Infancy entered the world without a blessing; age quitted it without a hope."-"History of Europe," Vol. 3, page 182. The "witnesses" were dead!

Where were their bodies to lie?

"And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." Revelation 11: 8.

The center of the atheistic acts of the Revolution was, of course, Paris, which prophecy aptly designated Sodom, Egypt, and the place where Christ was crucified afresh. Sodom was conspicuous for its licentiousness and a like shocking state resulted from the overthrow of Christianity in revolutionary France. The Egyptians rejected a knowledge of the true God and gave themselves over to the basest idolatry; the people of France did likewise when they rendered homage to a human "goddess of Reason," and conferred almost divine honors upon the revolutionary leaders. The inhabitants of Jerusalem chose the revolutionary Barabbas in place of Christ; in France the atheistic revolutionaries were exalted, while Christ was crucified again in their acts of profanation and in the rabble's fearful cry, "Crush the wretch."

For how long was this fearful period to continue?

"And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them' and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth." Revelation 11:9, 10.

If the beginning of this period be dated from November, 1793, its end on the basis of three and a half prophetic days representing three and a half literal years, would be due about the middle of the year 1797. It may be suggested by students of the Revolution that the Hebertists, the most blatant of the Atheists, did not endure anything like as long as this. That is true, for by March, 1794, Robespierre, who had always disapproved of the decrees of the previous November, had succeeded in bringing about their fall and execution. In May of that year he actually secured the enactment of a decree in Convention, the first article of which stated: "The French people acknowledges the existence of the Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul."

But the "two witnesses" were not yet to be revived, for though France was caused to render lip service to a deity, the "Supreme Being" Robespierre invented was in no sense the God of the Bible, nor did the worship he inaugurated correspond in any way with the worship the God of the Bible demands of His subjects. As Aulard well says in his book, *Le Culte de la Raison et le Culte de l'Etre Suprime*:

"Robespierre, having triumphed over the Anarchists, proceeded to establish the existence of a Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul by a decree of the Convention! (May 7, 1794.) It was not, however, the God of the Scriptures, but the God of Reason, substituted for the Goddess of Reason."-Quoted by A. Hassall in "Modern History of Europe," Vol. 5, page 149.

So the "two witnesses" continued to lie dead in the streets of Paris and the cities of France for yet a further period. Then, true to the unerring Word, and exactly on time, the prophecy of their resurrection was fulfilled.

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By what was the rejoicing of the enemies of the Bible cut short?

“And after three days and a half the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.” Revelation I I: 11.

At the end of 1795, the Revolutionary Convention came to an end and the Directory was inaugurated with its two legislative councils, the “Ancients” and the “Five Hundred.” On June 17, 1797, Camille Jordan introduced into the Council of the “Five Hundred” his celebrated report on the “Revision of the laws relative to religious worship,” which, with some small modifications, was made law.

The propositions of this report stated:

1. That all citizens might buy or hire edifices for the free exercise of religious worship.
2. That all congregations might assemble by the sound of bells.
3. That no test or promise of any sort unrequired from other citizens should be required of the ministers of the congregations.
4. That entrance to assemblies for the purpose of religious worship should be free for all citizens.
5. That all other laws concerning religious worship should be repealed.

The effect of the new law was spectacular, for in July, 1797, according to *Annales de la Religion*, public services were restored in 31,214 communes of France and forty-one churches in Paris were crowded with worshippers.

As George Croly remarks in *The Apocalypse of St. John*: “The Church and the Bible had been slain in France from November, 1793, till June, 1797. The three years and a half were expended and the Bible, so long and so sternly repressed before, was placed in honor, and was openly the book of free Protestantism!” -Pages 181, 183.

How were the witnesses further exalted?

“And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.” Revelation 11:12.

Not merely was the religion of the Bible to be restored in France, but the “ascension” of the witnesses suggests a mighty expansion of the witness of the Bible at this time.

This aspect of the prophecy was remarkably fulfilled in the latter days of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, when so many of the great Bible and missionary societies of modern times were born.

“The closing years of the eighteenth century,” asserts Dr. D. L. Leonard, in his *Hundred Years of Missions*, “constitute in the history of Protestant missions an epoch indeed, since they witnessed nothing less than a revolution, a renaissance, an effectual and manifold ending of the old, a substantial inauguration of the new. It was then that for the first time since the apostolic period, occurred an outburst of general missionary zeal and activity. Beginning in Great Britain, it soon spread to the Continent and across the Atlantic. It was no mere push of fervor, but a mighty tide set in, which from that day to this has been steadily rising and spreading.” - Page 69.

What contrast was there to be between the troublous events upon the earth and this mighty advance of the Gospel?

“And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.” Revelation 11:13.

An “earthquake” means a national upheaval and the tenth part of “the city” involved clearly indicates one of the ten kingdoms of the papal Roman world. Without doubt this refers to the collapse of Catholicism in France. And the sweeping away of those who had made France the principal weapon in the hands of the Papacy for crushing the true faith.

That the glorifying of God as a result of the breaking of the papal tyranny was, however, of very short duration and impermanent in its effects, emerges from the subsequent events of the nineteenth century which we shall have cause to study in greater detail in connection with the later visions of John. There was no permanent repentance on the part of men. The judgments of the “third woe” had become due.

63. The Final Woe

The first and second “woes” having failed to produce repentance in the hearts of men, what final woe was now due to be poured out upon the earth?

“The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe comes quickly.” Revelation 11:14.

Neither the Turkish menace in the East nor revolutionary atheism in the West, which together constituted the “second woe,” produced any abandonment of the great papal system of idolatry which had grown up through the centuries. (Revelation 9:20,21.) This was

conclusively demonstrated by the acquiescence on the part of the nations in its spectacular resurgence during the later decades of the nineteenth century and continuing into our own time. So, because the “second woe” had failed to bring men to repentance, the “third woe” must quickly come.

By what was the third woe introduced?

“And the seventh angel sounded.” Revelation 11: 15.

The “mighty angel” in the vision of the tenth chapter had declared that the sounding of the seventh angel would synchronize with the ending of the long “time” period of the 2,300 days and the beginning of the world’s Day of Atonement (Revelation 10: 6, 7). While this verse associates together the sounding of the seventh trumpet and the commencement of the “third woe.” Certainly, therefore, there was no more vital date in the whole of the nineteenth century than 1844.

What proclamation is made in heaven during the course of this last crucial period of history?

“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.” Revelation 11: 15.

The time of the announcement is not stated, but it must obviously mark the time just before the end when Christ, having finished His mediatorial ministry, takes off His priestly garments and assumes His kingly robes preparatory to His descent to take over the kingdoms committed to His rule. (Compare Daniel 7:13,14.)

What does the proclamation call forth from the twenty-four elders?

“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.” Revelation 11:16,17.

Time after time in the Scriptures it is declared, “The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.” Exodus 15:18. Now the moment has come when, in heaven, Christ receives the title deeds of His kingdom, preparatory to His descending to claim that which is His. No wonder the elders lift their voices in thanksgiving and praise.

In what state are the nations of earth at this time?

“And the nations were angry.” Revelation 11:18.

Even as power and dominion are being transferred to Christ, the nations are preparing for their last desperate opposition to the King of kings and Lord of lords. The winds of strife hitherto held back by the angels of the winds for the scaling of the servants of God (Revelation 7:2,3) have now been released and the anger of the nations rises to a crescendo unparalleled in the long history of sin.

On His return, what will Christ dispense?

“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 that destroy the earth.” Revelation 11:18.

At this time will come the long-appointed day of judgment, when God will reward His children (Matthew 16:27; Revelation 22:12), and recompense destruction upon the destroyers of His creation. (2 Peter 3: 7; Isaiah 24:21)

When the elders had finished their song, to what was John's gaze directed?

“And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament.” Revelation 11:19.

As the elders ended their song, the prophet saw a door open in heaven and through it he glimpsed “the ark” containing the two tables of testimony (Exodus 25: 16; 31: 18; Deuteronomy 10: 2, 5). At the beginning of the vision recorded in this chapter. John was told to “measure” the temple to provide a standard by which to test the loyalty of the people of God. And here at the very end of time, as the final judgment of the world is about to begin, John sees, dominating the heavenly scene, “the ark of His testament” containing the sacred law.

Here is a convincing answer to those who suggest that since the cross the law has been abrogated, and no longer serves as a test of loyalty or a standard of judgment. It always has been and still is both. Not a jot or tittle has been dropped or ever will be.

What followed the opening of the temple?

“And there were lightning, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail.” Revelation 11:19.

Here in one brief and yet fearful sentence is summarized the final outpouring of wrath upon a God-rejecting world. And solemn, indeed, is the realization that this climactic event must be very near. On earth we see the nations becoming more and more angry. In heaven the time of the transfer of dominion approaches. Soon judgment will be executed, rewards given, and recompenses dispensed. Where will you stand in that awful day?

64. The Dragons Wrath

In a new series of prophetic visions, what striking sign did John first behold in heaven?

“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!” Revelation 12:1

With this chapter begins still another series of revelations spanning the ages from long before John's day right on to the coming of Christ, and filling in more details in the vivid picture already drawn of the course of the great controversy between Christ and Satan.

The vision opens with a “sign” (semeion, Revelation 1:1), not a “wonder” as our Authorized Version has it, in the form of a pure and beautiful woman. A woman is very frequently used in the Scriptures, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament periods, to represent God's people. (Hosea 2:19,20; Jeremiah 3:14; Ephesians 5: 23,32.) Here the same symbol is used, her adornments of sun, moon, and stars supplying further touches to the lovely form.

The sun may well be taken to represent the glory of the Gospel dispensation when the Sun of righteousness became fully manifest in the person of Christ. (Malachi 4:2.) The moon, by contrast, represents the Old Testament dispensation, when the types and ceremonies of the ancient sanctuary service shone in the reflected rays of the cross of Christ.

The crown of twelve stars symbolizes the twelve tribes of Israel in the Old Testament period (Compare Genesis 37: 9). The twelve apostles who formed the nucleus of the Christian church, and finally the twelve tribes of spiritual Israel which will comprehend all who are sealed of God and gathered at last into His kingdom. (Revelation 7:4-8)

In what condition did the prophet observe the woman to be?

“And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.” Revelation 12:1

The very first promise made by God in Eden after the entrance of sin was linked with “the Seed of the woman.” Genesis 3:15. The manifestation of the Seed was the subject of numerous prophecies (Psalm 132:11; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6), and every mother in Israel hoped that it might be through her that the Seed would come.

What further sign now appeared?

“And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon.” Revelation 12: 3.

As John gazed at the woman, he became conscious of the appearing of another “sign,” a “great red dragon,” as fierce and terrible as the woman was pure and lovely.

That John might not be in any doubt as to the interpretation of this symbol, what explanation was given to him?

“The great dragon. . . that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan.” Revelation 12:9.

The dragon primarily represented the great rebel in God's universe called in Scripture the “Devil” (Matthew 4:1) and “Satan” (Matthew 4:10), who in Eden took the form of a “serpent” for the purpose of deceiving Eve. (Genesis 3:1.)

This symbol was as apt as the woman was for the faithful people of God, for by contrast it suggests a power which is savage, cruel, malevolent, and destructive. (See John 8:44) The red color appropriately suggests the ferocity of destruction which has been typical of the activities of Satan since his fall.

How is the dragon further described?

“Having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.” Revelation 12:3.

While the dragon primarily represents Satan, it will be recognized that he accomplishes his work largely through human agencies, over which he gains control. As “prince of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), he has been able to use many world powers for the carrying out of his nefarious purposes. These are typified by the heads and horns of the monster. As the head is the seat of intelligence, the heads typify successive earthly powers through which Satan has worked. The crowns upon the heads of the dragon indicate that each represents a separate sovereignty, or period of world rule. The ten horns immediately recall the ten horns of the fourth beast of the seventh chapter of Daniel, and indicate that these powers have a place as persecutors of God's people in the long history of the satanic dragon.

Various explanations have been proposed for identifying the successive heads. As the power which opposed the people of God in the days when the Man child, Christ, was born was Imperial Rome, some have suggested that the seven heads were seven forms of government during the history of the Roman Empire and its successor, ecclesiastical Rome. Namely: kingly, consulate, decemvirate, dictatorial, triumvirate, imperial, and papal.

This interpretation, however, is not convincing, because the seven heads clearly represent, not a part of the story of the dragon, but its whole history. The seven heads must, therefore, represent seven phases of world power from the beginning of the dragon's manifestation in prophecy to the end of time.

Where then should we begin to list the seven heads? Some would start with the first power to set itself in opposition to ancient Israel, namely Egypt. This might seem to be supported by the fact that Pharaoh of Egypt is designated in Ezekiel's prophecy “the great dragon that lies in the midst of his rivers.” Ezekiel 29: 3. Such an interpretation, however, would be out of harmony with

every other panoramic prophecy in the books of Daniel and the Revelation. Without exception these all begin-where they go back as far in history with Babylon as the first world power after the overthrow of the kingdom of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar.

It is therefore more in harmony with the other visions in these two great prophecies to begin the list with Babylon as the first of the seven heads. Media-Persia then becomes the second, Greece the third, Imperial Rome the fourth, papal Rome the fifth, leaving two more heads beyond -the end of the 1,260 years of papal supremacy, the significance of which we shall notice when we meet them in later prophecies. (See Revelation 17.)

On this basis, John lived during the dominion of the fourth head, Imperial Rome, and it was this power which confronted the woman when the time came for the delivery of the Child. In view of this, it is very remarkable that during the Imperial period of Rome, a dragon was, next to the Roman eagle, one of the most familiar military ensigns used by the legions. Red was also a common color with the Roman emperors, consuls, and generals.

The ten horns, of course, were the ten kingdoms into which the Roman Empire was broken up by the barbarian invasions. At the time John saw the monster, they had not arisen, but they are added to provide a complete picture of the history of the dragon. The fact that they are not crowned indicates that their time had not yet come. In a later vision (Revelation 13: 1), when Rome had become divided, we shall observe that they are crowned.

What further detail is added to the description of the dragon?

“And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth.” Revelation 12:4.

Stars represent exalted beings, either heavenly or earthly. Jesus is called the Day-star. The angels are “morning stars.” Distinguished earthly rulers are also designated stars in prophecy. There would seem, therefore, to be a dual application of this feature of the dragon. Satan drew many of the “stars” of heaven after him in his rebellion against God. Jude 6) Imperial Rome, on the other hand, overthrew many earthly stars in the course of its conquests.

What harm did the dragon seek to, do to the woman?

“And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her Child as soon as It was born.” Revelation 12:4.

Ever since the Seed was promised to the woman, the dragon had before her, for Satan well knew that if he did not destroy the Seed as soon as it should be manifested, the Seed would one day destroy him. (Genesis 3:15.) All his endeavors, therefore, were directed to the avoidance of this calamity.

He caused Cain to kill his brother because Abel was a loyal follower of God, through whom the Seed might well come. He came near to corrupting the whole antediluvian world, but in the providence of God the human line of the Seed was preserved in Noah. (Genesis 6:9.)

During the Egyptian bondage, Satan caused Pharaoh to attempt the destruction of every male child that the Seed might be obliterated. But through a baby's tear, an Egyptian princess was led to bring up the deliverer of Israel in the security of the royal court., (Exodus 2:6.)

During the days of the monarchy the royal line of David once hung on the thread of a single life through the malevolence of Athaliah. (2 Chronicles 22:10; 23:10-13) Again in the days of the Persian kingdom, Satan nearly succeeded in wiping out the captive Israelites. But once more his purpose was frustrated. (Esther 6)

Whom did the woman at last bring forth?

“And she brought forth a Man child, who was to rule the nations with a rod of iron.” Revelation 12:5.

When at last the time came that the Word should be made flesh (John 1:14) Satan put it into the heart of Herod to kill all the children of Bethlehem from among whom the new King of the Jews was to come. (Matthew 2:16-19) But Herod failed and the Seed was delivered.

How was the Child eventually delivered from the power of the dragon?

“And her Child was caught up unto God, and to His throne.” Revelation 12: 5. Throughout Jesus' life on earth Satan constantly sought to encompass His destruction. He tried without success to persuade Jesus to cast Himself from a pinnacle of the temple. (Matthew 4:6,7) He caused a hostile crowd to press Him toward the edge of a precipice. (Luke 4:28-30.)

At last, Satan beheld the Son of God nailed to the cruel cross. With fiendish delight-he saw the dead body of Christ carried to -the tomb and a great stone rolled before the entrance. But Satan rejoiced too soon. On the third day Jesus came forth in glorious resurrection life, and, after showing Himself on numerous occasions to His disciples, was “caught up unto God, and His throne”. Where at the right hand of the Father, He awaits the day when He shall return in all His glory to put Satan and his minions finally to flight.

65. How the Controversy Began

By what explanation was the vision of the woman and the red dragon interrupted? “There was war in heaven.” Revelation 12:7.

Following the description of the deliverance of the Man-child, Christ, out of the clutches of the dragon, the vision was interrupted in order to explain in greater detail how the war between Christ and Satan began. By the declaration, "There was war in heaven," we are carried back before John's day, before even the tragic story of Eden, to a time in heaven when the first seeds of rebellion against God were sown.

It is important that the tragic details of this catastrophe be clearly understood, for it provides the only explanation of the fearful trail of sin and sorrow and death which, through the ages, has marred the history of mankind. Several Bible writers have touched upon different aspects of the great rebellion, and from them we can piece together the whole painful story.

Where and how the revolt began we learn from the two prophets, Isaiah and Ezekiel. They were actually pronouncing judgments upon the kings of Babylon and Tyrus, but in the course of their indictments they go back of the sins of these earthly monarchs to the primal sin of the author of iniquity. And so "the proverbs" (Isaiah 14: 4) which the prophets take up against these two kings merge into a "proverb" against the evil one who provoked and fostered all transgression.

From these glimpses behind the curtain of human iniquity, we learn that among the high ranking angels around the throne of God was one named Lucifer, which means the "shining one," the "day star," or the "son of the morning." Isaiah 14: 12. Judging by Ezekiel's description, Lucifer was a creature of surpassing beauty, and wondrous wise. So much so, that God said of him: "Thou seals up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty." Ezekiel 28: 12.

The prophet goes on to explain that Lucifer's special office in the courts of heaven was that of "the anointed cherub that covers." Ezekiel 28: 14. (Compare Revelation 4: 6-9) He seems, in fact, to have been the chief of this angelic retinue of God. And it was in the heart of this exalted being that the first revolt against the Creator was born!

In the prophet's inspired indictment of the rebel king of Tyrus, we hear the divine diagnosis of Lucifer's sin. "Your heart," declared God, "was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou has corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness!" Ezekiel 28:17.

Through the prophet Isaiah, God reveals Lucifer's secret ambition: "Thou has said in your heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will sit 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 14:13,14.

From the beginning, God read like a book the thoughts of Lucifer's heart, and though He knew his every move, He gave Lucifer opportunity to repent and amend his ways. But His longsuffering was of no avail, and when Satan had succeeded in seducing one-third of the angel host to his side (Revelation 12:4), God acted. In the midst of the assembled angels the fearful decree went forth: "Thou has sinned: therefore will I cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire." Ezekiel 28:16.

Consumed with hatred and rage by the exposure of their iniquity, and the indignity of their decreed fate, Lucifer and his angel supporters decided to make a stand and fight it out with God. So, says the Revelator: "There was war in heaven."

Who was the leader of the loyal angels in the conflict?

"Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels." Revelation 12:7.

Jude refers to Michael as "the Archangel" (Jude 9), while Paul, speaking of the return of Christ, says: "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel." 1 Thessalonians 4:16. From these scriptures we realize that "Michael" and the "Archangel" are none other than the "Lord Himself." It was the Son of God who led the loyal angels against Lucifer and his rebel legions.

What was the outcome of the first battle in the great war?

"And [Lucifer and his angels] prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven." Revelation 12: 8.

The conclusiveness of Lucifer's defeat was referred to by Jesus in the course of His earthly ministry. Recalling that terrific conflict and His signal victory, He declared: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Luke 10: 18.

Jesus here no longer called His angel adversary by his original name, Lucifer. As a result of his rebellion the once mighty cherub had forfeited not only his high place, but also the glorious name that he bore. Now he was not "the morning star," but "the Devil, and Satan." Revelation 12: 9. No names could be more appropriate, for "Diablo" means "accuser," while "Satan" means "adversary."

What now became the scene of Satan's operations?

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan. . . he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." Revelation 12:9.

Pondering this transfer of Satan's activities from heaven to earth the question may be asked, Why did not God destroy him and the rebel angels at once, and so cut short the tragic history of sin?

There was, of course, no question of God's ability to do so. He could in a moment have annihilated not only Satan, the instigator of the rebellion, but the whole of the rebel host. He did not do so because if He had summarily executed them, the accusation of arbitrariness might have been flung at Him by the fallen angels as they perished. In consequence the unfallen angels might have begun to wonder whether Satan was not right after all, and their service might thereafter have been motivated by fear rather than love.

So God chose to reveal the foulness of Satan's lies by permitting, for a season, the outworking of his rebellious purposes.

What did Satan at once proceed to do?

“Which deceives the whole world.” Revelation 12:9.

Prevented any more from subverting the unfallen angels in heaven, the outcast Satan began to look around for others to tempt. Sad to say, it was not long before his nefarious schemes bore fruit in the defection of our first parents in Eden. (Genesis 3) And the subsequent history of the human race reveals the tragic consequences of that first sin.

What rejoicing in heaven did the expulsion of Satan bring?

“Therefore rejoice, you heavens, and you that dwell in them.” Revelation 12:12.

The unfallen inhabitants of heaven had cause for joy when the rebel angels were defeated and cast out. The disharmony resulting from Satan's subversive activities had brought sorrow to God and Christ and to the loyal angels. Now joy abounded again with the restoration of harmony and peace.

What sorrow, however, was the entrance of Satan into the world to bring?

“Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath.” Revelation 12:12.

But while the faithful angels rejoiced at the expulsion of Satan from the heavenly courts, they stood aghast at the prospect before the inhabitants of the earth exposed to the wrath of the defeated Lucifer and his angel accomplices.

What heavenly proclamation did John hear after Satan's expulsion?

“And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.” Revelation 12:10.

Just when this proclamation was made in heaven is not specifically stated. The outcome of the first conflict was a very definite “casting down” of the “accuser” and a vindication before all the inhabitants of heaven of the “salvation, and strength, and kingdom” of God, and “the power of His Christ,” their supreme Commander. But it was also anticipatory-of His final-triumph. Actually, the Bible reveals a progressive “casting down” of Satan (John 12:31,32; Revelation 20:1-3), from his original expulsion to his final destruction.

By what would Satan's 'wrath be intensified?

“Because he knows that he hath but a short time.” Revelation 12:12.

As Satan realized that his time was becoming inexorably shorter, his activities, and those of his minions, for the ruin of souls would increase to a pitch of frenzied intensity. And just before the end, as we shall later notice, Satan will marshal all his forces for an all-out offensive against Christ. (Revelation 16: 14.)

By what means are the loyal followers of God upon the earth to resist Satan's attacks?

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.” Revelation 12:11. Against the assaults of Satan and the evil angels the faithful children of God are called upon to wage a ceaseless war. As the apostle Paul vividly puts it: “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against. . . spiritual wickedness in high places.” Ephesians 6: 12.

The first of the two weapons of our warfare in John's list is “the blood of the Lamb”. This might seem a strange weapon to use against a mighty spiritual foe. But as the hymn truly declares: “There's power in the blood,” “wonder-working power in the precious blood of the Lamb.” There is power to cleanse the sinner and power to protect the saint from every satanic assault.

The power in the blood of Christ, however, is released only as it is claimed. So the victory of the saints is, in the second place, through “the word of their testimony!” When Satan hears the blood of Christ invoked by the humblest saint he knows that he is powerless to claim his victim.

How bitter, however, is this spiritual struggle to be?

“And they loved not their lives unto the death.” Revelation 12: 11.

Should not the realization that we fight an already beaten foe, urge us also to avail ourselves of every spiritual resource to hold on to God and to His grace. That when Satan and those whom he has deceived, are cast into the fire “prepared” for their everlasting destruction, we, as “brands plucked from the burning,” may be safe and secure in the fold of God?

66. The Church in the Wilderness

When Satan was cast into the earth, following his-expulsion from heaven, against whom did he direct his wrath?

“And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the Man child.” Revelation 12:13.

Through all the centuries since the promise of the Seed to our first parents in Eden, the, dragon (Satan) has. persecuted the woman (the people of God). When the Man-child, Christ, was born, the fury of the dragon was turned upon Him. When Jesus was

delivered from his clutches, the dragon turned upon the infant church, manifesting his relentless hatred first in the bloody persecutions of the early Christian church by pagan Rome, and then by the even bloodier persecutions of papal Rome.

What refuge was provided for the woman from the wrath of the dragon?

“And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there!” Revelation 12:6. “And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished!” Revelation 12:14.

The eagle is a denizen of the wilderness. On her powerful wings she is able to soar to the remotest crags, there to establish her secret nest, impregnable against attack from her enemies.

On eagle's wings Israel escaped from her Egyptian oppressors (Exodus 19: 4) and found shelter in the wilderness of Sinai (Exodus 14:5) where she was nourished and protected by God for forty long years. Stephen refers to Israel during this period as “the church in the wilderness.” Acts 7: 38.

John now forewarns of another even longer wilderness experience through which the Gospel church would be called upon to pass, and which was tragically fulfilled during the long Dark Ages of papal domination.

All through the medieval period there were in existence two churches. One, dominated by the bishops of Rome and the papal hierarchy, attained wealth and power and popularity, but its prestige was gained at the expense of its purity. It entered into liaison with the dragon and, in fact, became one of the heads of the dragon-the papal head.

The other church held fast to the faith “once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3) in the face of deepening apostasy. Persecuted by the dragon, this, the true church, was compelled to flee from the dragon's wrath into remote places of the earth to become again “the church in the wilderness.”

The full story of this church cannot be written, for the dragon church sought, by all and every means, to root out and destroy its records. But what glimpses remain to us are sufficient to show the courage and devotion of those who held aloft the banner of truth through all those dark days till the time came for it to blaze forth in the great Reformation movement.

“In many parts of the world, all the way from Ireland in the West to China in the East, there were centers of truth,” says B. G. Wilkinson in *Truth Triumphant*. “The leaders in these centers were united in their desire to remain in the faith, and to perpetuate from generation to generation the pure truths of the Gospel handed down from the days of the apostles.” - Pages 12, 13.

A few paragraphs must here suffice to sketch the thrilling story of the various branches of the wilderness church.

While the Western church in Greece, North Africa, and especially in Italy, became rapidly corrupted by its increasing union with the Roman state, the church on the eastern edges of the Roman world, in Syria, Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, and beyond, retained the pure faith of the early church.

Evidence of this is seen in the diatribes which were launched against it by the apostate ecclesiastics of the West. They show that the Bible was recognized as the all-sufficient rule of faith and life in contrast with the increasing authority of “tradition” in the West. Faith in the merits of Christ's sacrifice was taught as the way of salvation, while in the West there was a growing emphasis upon “works.” The ten commandments were accepted as the standard of Christian conduct and the seventh-day Sabbath continued to be kept according to the fourth commandment, while in the West the counterfeit Sunday was being exalted.

It is significant that it was at the Council of Laodicea in Asia Minor (C. AD. 365) that the Romanizers sought to proscribe the Sabbath-keeping eastern church by its decree: “Christians must not Judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day. . . . But if any shall be found to be judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ.”-Canon 29. See Scribner's “*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*,” 2nd series, Vol. 14, 148.

The Roman ecclesiastical historians called the eastern Christianity “judaistic Christianity” and those who practiced it “Judaizers,” but the facts are that it was the pure faith of the Gospel preserved by the true church in opposition to the corrupt faith of the apostate church. of which Rome was rapidly becoming the center and head.

Toward the end of the second century, Victor I, Bishop of Rome, excommunicated the churches of the East for their refusal to accept the decrees of the Western synods. They thus became part of the church in the wilderness, which nevertheless continued to spread the message of Christianity far and wide throughout Asia, even as far as China and Japan.

While the Gospel was thus carried ever eastward by the church in the wilderness, it was from this point of origin also that the pure Gospel was planted in two other great centers in the far west of the Roman Empire, namely Gaul and Britain. The name “Gaul” was given to France in the early centuries of the Christian era as a result of the migration there of Celtic peoples from the “Galatian” provinces of Asia Minor. And it was undoubtedly Galatian Christians among the migrating peoples who planted the pure faith of Christ there, from whence it quickly traveled across the Channel into the British Isles.

From the records of the life and teachings of Patrick of Ireland, Columba of Iona, and Aiden of Lindisfarne we can see how pure was the faith of the Celtic church in contrast with the corruption of Rome.

There are, furthermore, a number of evidences which indicate that the church in Britain for centuries observed the seventh-day Sabbath of the early church and not the first day of the week as enforced by Rome.

James C. Moffat in *The Church in Scotland* says: “It seems to have been customary in the Celtic churches of early times, in Ireland as well as in Scotland, to keep Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, as a day of rest from labor. They obeyed the fourth commandment literally upon the seventh day of the week.” - Page 140.

So, until the end of the seventh century of our era, the light of truth burned brightly in the “wilderness church” in these British islands. The Bible was revered as the rule of faith; Christ was the object of their devotions. There was no saint worship, image worship, or relic worship. The commandments of God were the standard of Christian conduct, and the true Sabbath was a special mark of their independence of apostate Rome.

One of the prime purposes for the sending of Augustine and the Roman mission to England at the end of the sixth century was to subjugate this faithful Celtic church. “Acknowledge the authority of Rome,” Augustine demanded at a meeting with representatives of the Celtic Christians. And when the British church refused to capitulate to Rome, a savage war was waged against it for centuries.

The third great center of the “wilderness church” was in the Alpine valleys of northern Italy and eastern France. During the pagan persecutions of the second to the fourth centuries, the Gallic Christian communities planted by missionaries from the east were driven into the mountain country of the Vallenses or Waldenses. These earliest Bible Christians were joined in later centuries by others who refused to bow to Rome or accept the false doctrines which she sought to impose upon the church.

Summarizing the beliefs of the Waldensian or Vaudois churches Antoine Monastier writes:

“The ancient Vaudois constantly rejected doctrines that were based on authority and human tradition; they repelled, with holy indignation and horror, images, crosses, and relics as objects of veneration or worship; the, adoration and intercession of the blessed Virgin Mary and the saints; ... they likewise rejected the mass, auricular confession, purgatory, extreme unction, and Prayers for the dead.”-A History of the Vaudois Church,” pages 83, 84.

“The first rules, and instructions,” says their enemy Reinerius, “which for rudiments they gave unto their children was the Decalogue of the Law, the Ten Commandments.”-Quoted by Philip Mornay in “The Myserie of Iniquitie,” page 449.

It seems clear too that the early Waldenses were Sabbath-keepers, for David Benedict says of them in his General History of the Baptist Denomination: “Because they observed the seventh day, they were called by way of derision, Jews as the Sabbatarians are frequently at this day.”-Vol. 2, page 414.

The “wilderness churches” of Celtic Britain and of the Waldensian. valleys, like the church of the east, not only preserved the primitive faith while Roman Christendom sank into the deepest apostasy, but they were missionary churches, which through the dark centuries sent out a constant stream of missionaries into the countries dominated by the apostate papal church, sowing the seeds of truth and raising up companies of believers to, witness and, to suffer for their faith.

The influence of the Sabbath-keeping Celtic- missionaries is evident from the reference to Judaizing in the minutes of the Synod of Liftinae in Belgium in 743 AD. “The third allocution of the council warns against the observance of the Sabbath, referring to the decree of the Council of Laodicea.” -Dr. Karl 7. von Hefele, “Concilien-geschichte,” Vol. 3, page 512, sec. 362.

After the extinction of the faithful British church no more missionaries came from the isles of the West, but God still had His witnesses in the Vaudois of the Waldensian valleys and when the flow of Celtic missionaries was stemmed the Vaudois began to go forth.

How did the dragon seek to destroy the “wilderness church”?

“And 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 d: 15.

The flood-from the dragon's mouth symbolizes the efforts made by the Roman church to submerge and subjugate the Christian communities which refused to conform to her beliefs and practices.

When the Jesuit missions succeeded in penetrating the Moslem barrier, Francis Xavier spread the flood into the Orient and in 1545 succeeded in establishing the bloody Inquisition in Goa, India, for the checking of what was called “Jewish wickedness,” but in reality was the Sabbath-observing church in the wilderness.

It was the Jesuits, too, who carried the flood into Abyssinia with the object of destroying the Sabbath-keeping church which had endured in that land.

On the western flood, at the end of the sixth century, came the mission of Augustine to Kent, bent on compelling the flourishing Celtic church to bow before the papal throne. While Augustine failed, his successors were more successful, and by the end of the eighth century all England and Wales had been forced to accept the supremacy of Rome, save for the Cornish bishops, who held out until the tenth century.

When Margaret married Malcolm III, king of Scotland, the Roman flood swept in, as Barnett remarks, “to Romanize and Anglicize the ancient Celtic church in Scotland,” while Henry II of England was given permission by Pope Adrian IV in 1156 to invade Ireland to “enlarge the limits of the church.” Even so, some parts of Ireland were not completely subjugated until the fourteenth century.

When the light of the Celtic church of the British Isles had been extinguished, Rome turned all its ferocious power for four terrible centuries against the heroic Waldenses of the Piedmont valleys. But, the protecting hand of God preserved this faithful “church in the wilderness” until it had sown the seeds all over Europe which bore their fruit in the great Reformation of the sixteenth century.

By what providence was the wilderness church helped?

“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.” Revelation 12:16.

The swallowing of the flood suggests the merciful arrest of the papal advance, and two great events, one in the East and the other in the West, contributed largely to this.

In the East, the vast territorial conquests of the Moslems set up a great barrier against the Roman world which held the flood back until the rise of the Jesuit missions of the sixteenth century.

In the West, the adhesion of many of the Christian princes of Germany and Britain to the Reformation cause gave protection to the church in the wilderness when it was near to perishing. During the seventeenth century such statutes as the Edict of Nantes in France restrained the force of the dragon's flood and gave the persecuted church respite in the midst of her trials. In 1655, a combined protest of the Protestant powers of northern Europe saved the Waldenses from "complete annihilation" in the last great assault made upon the Piedmont valleys.

For how long was the woman sustained in the wilderness?

"A thousand two hundred and threescore days." Revelation 12:6. "For a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent". Revelation 12:14.

This period, referred to in different forms no fewer than seven times in the Scriptures (Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Revelation 11:2,3; 12:6,14; 13:5), began in AD. 538, when Justinian's decree making the Pope "head of all the churches" went into effect on the expulsion of the Goths, and ended in 1798 when the French Revolutionary army under General Berthier entered Rome and took the Pope into captivity. True to the prophetic forecast, this latter epoch marked the emergence of the church from the wilderness to proclaim again, without let or hindrance, the Gospel in those lands where before it was proscribed.

"It was a glorious hour," says B. G. Wilkinon in Truth Triumphant, "when the church came up out of the wilderness. She had done, her work well; she had been faithful to her task. It had not been a Thirty Years' War, or Hundred Years' War, but a 1,260-year struggle." - Page 379.

Against whom does the dragon finally turn his wrath?

"And the dragon was wrath with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed." Revelation 12:17.

Down now in the "time of the end" the dragon is conscious that his time is indeed "short." So with a subtlety and a virulence unequalled since he first turned upon the "woman," he declares war upon the "remnant" church of the last days.

It is in the midst of that conflict that we stand to-day and each one must soon choose whether he will take his place with the faithful "remnant" on the side of God and truth or be drawn to ruin by the "tail" of the dragon.

By what special characteristics will the "remnant" be recognized?

"Which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ!" Revelation 12:17.

A "remnant" of cloth is identical in every sense with the bolt from which it is taken. In consequence, the remnant church will be recognized by its identity with the faith and practice of the "wilderness church," and with that of the first church from which it is descended in true apostolic succession.

By a miracle of condensation the marks of the remnant church are gathered up by the prophet into thirteen words: "Which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ!"

The "testimony of Jesus Christ" is the Gospel of the grace of God. Paul elsewhere designates it "the testimony of God" (1 Corinthians 2: 1), and summarizes it thus: "By grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God!" Ephesians 2: 8.

Besides holding firmly to the Gospel of the grace of God, the remnant church will also "keep the commandments of God". Not in order to gain salvation, which is by "faith only," but because, as Paul further explains, "the righteousness of the law" must inevitably "be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:4.

Such faith and works were the marks of the apostolic church. The first preachers of the Gospel expressly "received grace and apostle ship for obedience to the faith among all nations, for His name." Romans 1:5. (See also Romans 16: 26.)

These marks characterized the "wilderness church" wherever it was found, and they emerged again in the great Reformation movement and its continuation, the Advent movement. The great truth of justification by faith was reborn in the heart of Luther, and was proclaimed with power by him and his fellow-reformers of the sixteenth century. Next Wesley was raised up to emphasize the continued obligation of the moral law as the standard of conduct, and the demands of holiness or righteousness by faith. Finally, in the great Advent movement of the nineteenth century, a restudy of the ten-commandment code led to the exposure of the "change" of the fourth commandment and the restoration of the true Sabbath of God. Thus was revived, in all its full-orbed beauty, the "faith once delivered unto the saints," in preparation for the finishing of the work of God in the earth, and by these marks, coupled with the "blessed" Advent "hope," the remnant church may now be recognized in all the world.

67. The Dragon Delegates His Power

Following the vision of the woman and the red dragon, what new scene was opened before the prophet?

"And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea." Revelation 13: 1.

In the vision of the twelfth chapter, the whole history of satanic activity from before the first advent and to the second is portrayed in the persecution of the woman by the great red dragon. In the visions which occupy this and the next few chapters, the principal earthly powers through which Satan carries out his nefarious designs are described in greater detail.

The relation of the dragon of chapter twelve and the beasts of chapter thirteen and onward may be compared to the sets of superimposed diagrams used in the teaching of anatomy and physiology. The topmost picture, illustrating the general outline of the human body, corresponds to the seven-headed ten-horned dragon, which exhibits the overall picture of satanic activity. On drawing aside the first anatomical picture, another diagram is revealed beneath, in which the underlying structure of the human body is differentiated into its various parts. This corresponds with the visions of the thirteenth and later chapters of the Revelation, in which the several powers through which Satan pursues his evil ends are delineated.

The prophet must often have stood upon the shores of Patmos and watched the waves of the sea roll endlessly in. And quite possibly it was on one such occasion that he was caught away in vision and the wide seascape, fitly portraying the tumultuous nations of the world (Revelation 17:15), became a background for the new symbolic revelation.

How is the beast described?

“And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion.” Revelation 13: 2.

The anatomical details of the beast cannot but recall the remarkable vision given nearly seven hundred years before to Daniel, and recorded in the seventh chapter of his prophecy, though an important difference is noted between the two visions. In the former, the prime minister and prophet saw a succession of four beasts, the first having the appearance of a “lion,” the second “like to a bear,” the third “like a leopard,” and the fourth so fearsome that it defied description. (Daniel 7: 4-7) Here the beasts are combined to produce one composite monster.

Daniel was told that the beasts he saw were “four kings” or successive world powers, and we have conclusively identified these as Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome. The composite beast therefore, must include these same powers. The reason why Daniel saw the beasts separately was because he was living in the days of the first empire, and beheld the others rise successively out of the turbulent sea of the nations. John, on the other hand, was looking at the beast in the days of the fourth empire, when there was no longer any need for the earlier world powers to be separately distinguished. So, for compactness of symbolism, they were combined in a single composite creature.

By what further anatomical feature was the composite nature of the beast suggested?

“Having seven heads!” Revelation 13: 1

Further to indicate that the beast symbolized a long series of world powers, some past, one present, and some still future, the composite creature is represented like the dragon of chapter twelve as is having “seven heads,” which are explained by the angel as “seven kings” or kingdoms.

The first three of these heads are obviously indicated by the “lion,” “bear,” and “leopard” features of the beast and correspond to Babylon, Media-Persia, and Grecia. The fourth must represent Imperial Rome and the last three, the successors of Imperial Rome which would rule the Roman earth between John's day and the end.

What descriptive detail indicates the particular period in the history of the beast upon which John's attention was to be centered?

“Having ... ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns.” Revelation 13: 1.

The ten horns are a familiar symbol. We have met them before on the head of the fourth beast shown to Daniel, and upon the Roman dragon of chapter twelve. They represent the ten kingdoms into which Western Rome was divided by the barbarian invasions of the fourth and fifth centuries. It is to be noticed, however, that whereas in the twelfth chapter of the Revelation these horns were uncrowned, because the kingdoms they represent had not yet come into existence, in this vision they each have crowns.

The difference, therefore, between the seven-headed, ten-horned dragon of the twelfth chapter which sought to destroy the Man-child, Christ, and the seven-headed ten-horned beast of the thirteenth, is that the former represents the period of undivided Imperial Rome. While the latter corresponds with the period when Imperial Rome has been dissolved into the ten barbarian kingdoms.

What relation existed between the Imperial Roman dragon and the beast with the ten crowned horns? “And the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.” Revelation 13:2.

By this statement the power represented by this beast can be most accurately identified. It is the one which sat down in Rome immediately after the evacuation of the Imperial seat by the Western emperors. The one power which answers to this description is, of course, papal Rome. True to the prophecy, the Papacy did rise at the very center of the empire, taking its seat on the throne of the Caesars in the ancient capital, from whence for more than a millennium it held the nations of the West in its thrall.

Gibbon makes this very clear time and again in his Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire in such statements as: “After the loss of her legions, and provinces, the genius and fortune of the Popes again restored the supremacy of Rome!” - Vol. 9, page 131.

“The successors of St. Peter and Constantine were invested with the purple and prerogatives of the Caesars!” - Ibid., page 161.

Thus the beast to which John was introduced in this vision,- and to which the Imperial Roman dragon delegated its power was none other than the medieval Papacy, the period of the fifth head.

By what further features is this identification corroborated?

“And upon his heads the name of blasphemy.” Revelation 13: 1. “And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies.” Revelation 13: 5.

All the previous world powers had in varying degrees blasphemed God in the sense of taking His place and claiming divine honors and authority, but in this respect papal Rome exceeded them all.

To what depths of blasphemy did papal Rome sink?

“And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.” Revelation 13: 6.

Jesus was falsely accused of blasphemy when the Pharisees said of Him, “Thou. . . makes Thyself God” (John 10:33), but the Papacy utters the supreme blasphemy when it claims its pontiff to be “God on earth.”

Jesus did not blaspheme when He forgave the repentant sinner (Luke 5:21), for He had a divine right to absolve the transgressor. But the Papacy blasphemes against the tabernacle of God when it obscures the continual ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary by its idolatrous altars, its apostate priests, and its false masses and indulgences.

Furthermore it blasphemes the inhabitants of heaven by its worship of the heavenly host contrary to the express command of God.

Against whom did it manifest especial malevolence?

“And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them.” Revelation 13:7.

Daniel was told that papal Rome would “wear out the saints of the most High.” Daniel 7: 25. John was similarly informed that it would make war against and overcome for a time the people of God. The detailed examination of this specification is not again necessary, for we have shown earlier with what terrible exactness it was fulfilled by the apostate ecclesiastical power of Rome.

How far did the dominating power of the Papacy extend during the Dark Ages?

“And power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” Revelation 13:7,8.

From the coronation of Charlemagne in AD. 800 the power of the Papacy grew until, during its heyday at the beginning of the thirteenth century, it was, as Dr. C. A. Allington states, “unquestionably the strongest force in Europe.”-“Europe,” page 111.

And yet, even during this period of the Papacy's greatest authority, there was a remnant scattered through all the countries of Europe who refused to bow the knee to the supreme Pontiff. Despised, persecuted, driven hither and thither, dwelling in the dens and the caves of the earth, they were nevertheless the object of God's special, concern; their names were written in the Lamb's book of life.

How long was the papal beast permitted to exercise his power?

“And power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.” Revelation 13:5.

This period of the beast's power is precisely the same as the “time, and times, and the dividing of time” (Daniel 7: 25), and the “one thousand two hundred and threescore days” (Revelation 12: 6), and represents 1,260 literal years from AD. 538 to 1798, during which the Papacy was to pursue its fell career.

At the close of this vision, what final and conclusive evidence of the identity of the beast was given to John? “Here is wisdom.

Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six.” Revelation 13:18.

In ancient times the numerical value of a name was often used on stamps and seals for the sake of brevity, or for purposes of concealment. So, says Thomas Newton in his Dissertations on the Prophecies: “Since then this art and mystery of numbers was so much used among the ancients, it is less wonderful that the beast should have this number, and his number is 666.”-Vol. 2, pages 298, 299.

Now, is there any title historically associated with the Papacy and its supreme pontiff which has this numerical value? Yes there is, for in the so called “Donation of Constantine,” the basic document used by the Popes for securing prestige, privileges, and power with the secular rulers of medieval Europe. And which was incorporated into Roman Canon law by Gratian and into the revised Canon Law issued by the authority of Gregory XIII, the supreme pontiff, is designated, Vicarius Filii Dei.”

The relevant passage in the “Donation” reads, according to Christopher Coleman's translation: “As the blessed Peter is seen to have been constituted Vicar of the Son of God on the earth, the pontiffs who are the representatives of that same chief of the apostles, should obtain from us and our empire the power of a supremacy greater than the clemency of our earthly imperial serenity The Treatise of Lorenzo Valla on the Donation of Constantine,” page 13.

If the numerical value of the several letters in this title are set out, this is what we get:

V 5
 I 1
 C 1 0 0 A 0
 R 0
 I 1
 U 5
 S 0

F 0
 I 1
 L 50
 I 1
 I 1

D 500
 E 0
 I 1

It has been objected that this identification is not valid, because the Donation of Constantine has been proved to be a papal forgery. Actually, however, this makes the identification all the more remarkable.

It is a fact that Constantine the Great never did delegate to Pope Silvester the authority and power specified in this "Donation." As long ago as 1440 it was proved by the Renaissance scholar, Lorenzo Valla, that it was composed by the clergy of Rome during the rule of Pope Hadrian I or thereabouts (C. AD. 752-774). And fraudulently attributed to Constantine for the purpose of exalting the Papacy in the eyes of the secular rulers of Western Europe. But the Papacy was thereby caught in its own craftiness, for the prophet John hundreds of years before was given the "number" of the very name by which the papal apostasy would fraudulently choose to designate its papal head!

No doubt it was the realization of the stigma attaching to this title that led the Papacy in later days to modify the title of the supreme pontiff to Vicar of Christ, Vicar of Jesus Christ, Vicar of God, God's Vicar, etc. However that may be, the fact is that the document upon which the whole power of the Papacy in the Middle Ages was established, and which was concocted by the Roman clergy themselves, designates the Pope "Vicarius Filii Dei," the numerical value of which is 666.

With what solemn expression does the announcement of the judgment of the medieval Papacy open?

"If any man have an ear, let him hear." Revelation 13:9.

Whenever Jesus used this phrase during His earthly ministry, it was to indicate some momentous announcement. Here it is intended to set in bold relief the retribution which was to come upon this proud persecuting power.

What signal judgment was to come upon the papal beast at the end of its period of power?

'He that leads into captivity shall go into captivity: he that kills with the sword must be killed with the sword!' Revelation 13:10

This expression is parallel with the decree pronounced by Jeremiah against the Jews: "Thus says the Lord. Such as are for death, to death. And such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity!" Jeremiah 15: 2. A similar sentence was passed upon Egypt by the same prophet. (Jeremiah 43:11.)

Both these expressions suggest the absolute certainty of divine judgment; and as surely as the decreed punishment came upon Israel and Egypt, so it would come upon the great apostasy when the hour of doom struck.

Rome had been responsible for the captivity of millions. When the time of her captivity came she would be impotent to escape. Rome had killed millions with the sword. Soon the sword would be unsheathed against her and she would receive an almost fatal blow.

How is the catastrophe described which terminated the power of the medieval Papacy?

"And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death." Revelation 13:1

A first reading of the prophecy might give the impression that this wounding of one of the heads of the beast preceded the period of papal domination, and referred to the destruction of the fourth or imperial head to make way for the papal head.

Some expositors have interpreted it in this way, but in doing so, they overlook a frequent feature in the visions of the Revelation. Quite often a general outline of a period of history is first presented and then the prophecy goes back and describes in more detail some particular aspect of the period, in order to give special emphasis to the separated portion. The structure of the present vision is like this. The first four verses of Revelation thirteen delineate the history of the beast right down to the last days. The prophecy then goes back and supplies a number of further details for the identification of the beast and to link it with its last-day manifestation.

The twelve hundred and sixty year period of papal supremacy described in verses five to ten, therefore, belongs chronologically between verses two and three. And the judgment of the beast, described in verse three, refers to the wounding of the fifth or papal head at the end of its medieval period of dominion.

We ask, therefore, was the terminal year of papal power, namely 1798, marked by a sudden curtailment of power such as might properly be described as a “wound unto death”? It certainly was, for, as explained in connection with the prophecy of the “little horn” in the seventh chapter, this was the very year in which General Berthier, by the command of Napoleon, deposed the Pope and abolished the Papacy.

Commenting on this catastrophe, Dr. Adam. Clarke in his Commentary writes: “In 1798, the French republican army, under General Berthier, took possession of the city of Rome, and entirely superseded the whole papal power. This was a deadly wound.”- Commentary on Daniel 7:25.

Joseph Bernhart, himself a Catholic, says of the death of the captive Pope in 1799: “Funeral orations were held not merely for the Pope, but for the Papacy. The goddess of freedom was already erected on San Angelico and her foot was on the tiara.”-“The Vatican as a World Power,” page 324.

Remarkable, indeed, is the fulfillment of every detail in the story (if the “beast from the sea” from its rise down to the death blow to its fifth head. Surely then we can have complete assurance that the outline of its last-day activities and ultimate end will be fulfilled with a like exactitude.

In what spirit, therefore, may the saints await their final deliverance?

“Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.” Revelation 13: 10.

Primarily these words describe the spirit of the persecuted people of God during the dark days of the Middle Ages. Equally, however, they describe the two characteristic marks of the last-day remnant awaiting the final destruction of their oppressors and the realization, in all its fullness, of the promise of eternal bliss. May that patience and faith be yours.

68. The Healing of The Deadly Wound

As the prophet continued to behold the wounded head of the papal beast, what miraculous recovery did he observe?

“And his deadly wound was healed.” Revelation 13:1

Commenting about a hundred years ago on the overthrow of the Roman Catholic Church at the end of the eighteenth century, the great English historian, Thomas Carlyle, declared: ‘Popery cannot come back, any more than paganism can.’

He was not alone in this conviction. It was the common belief of the “secular progressives” of Victorian times that the French Revolution, and the subsequent “liberal” revolutions of the early nineteenth century, had administered the final death-blow to Rome. Its power was gone forever. Time would complete its utter ruin.

But while Carlyle and his contemporaries were convinced that they had seen the last of papal greatness, the prophecy which had so accurately foretold its collapse clearly declared to those who had “ears to hear” that its course was not fully run. The vision revealed that in due time it would recover from its deadly wound, and enjoy a further period of power and prestige in which it would accomplish its final acts of apostasy.

Students of the Scriptures, therefore, in the face of the scorn of the secularists of that day, uttered their warnings on the authority of the prophetic Word. The Revelation J. W. Brookes, for example, one of the hundreds of Anglican ministers in Britain who were in those days proclaiming the Advent message, declared in a sermon in 1842, which was reprinted in book form in 1843:

“Those who followed the spark of their own kindling ridiculed that such a superstition [as the Papacy] should ever revive or acquire influence, in an age of surpassing learning, science, and knowledge like this boasted nineteenth century. . . . Those who looked only at prophecy even when Popery was humbled, declared that she would rise again and obtain some considerable measure of power and ascendancy once more.”-“The Second Coming, the Judgment, and the Kingdom of Christ,” page 178.

Christian G. Thube in Germany expressed a similar conviction in his *Das Buch des Propheten Daniels*, when he wrote:

“The present state of the Papacy is this: that it has a wound from the sword, and nevertheless remains alive. How long this state will last thus, and in what the life of the Papacy yet continuing will consist; that cannot yet be determined with certainty. The deadly wound will become healed again sooner or later. But how and by what it will be healed again, that likewise, we do not know before it will happen.” - Pages 123, 124.

What has the verdict of history been? Who proved to be right, the distinguished historian, Carlyle, and the “secularists,” or the humble students of the Scriptures? The answer once again is, those who trusted not in fallible human judgment, but in the “sure Word of Bible prophecy.

No sooner had Bonaparte overthrown the Papacy than he began to realize the value of its moral backing, and before very long, he was seeking to bring it back to life again as his ally.

To this end, he permitted the election of Cardinal Chiaramonte as Pius VII, on the understanding that the church accepted the place which he was prepared to give it. It was but the ghost of an existence, but as Cardinal Secretary of State Ercole Consalvi confessed:

“Was it not a triumph to know that religion was to revive again in a country where people had worshipped the goddess of reason?” Quoted by Joseph Bernhart in “The Vatican as a World Power,” page 328.

With the fall of Napoleon, the Papacy set about recovering its old independence, but for a long time progress was very slow. Nevertheless, all the time the Papacy was rethinking its position in the modern world and laying plans for a great “come-back” when times should be propitious.

It was Pope Leo XIII, who ascended the papal throne in 1878, who first clearly saw the beginnings of the chaos toward which “liberal Europe” was moving, and recognized, in the signs of the times, that the Papacy's great chance was coming. In order to utilize the coming opportunity, he devised a new approach to the democracies of Europe through “encyclical letters,” which have since become so prominent a feature of papal propaganda.

The early years of the twentieth century saw the chaos deepening and at the same time the power and prestige of the Papacy growing steadily greater. Many at that time began again to look toward her “to bring salvation to an era that was on the verge of collapse.” Joseph Bernhart, *Ibid.*, page 346.

The ordeal of the Great War of 1914-18 provided a further immense impetus. When Benedict XV ascended the papal throne in 1914, there were only fourteen nations represented at the Vatican, but when he died in 1921 the number had risen to twenty-five. Even the hitherto staunchly Protestant states of England and Holland had established temporary legations at the Holy See. At the enthronement of Pius XI, in 1922, only two great powers, Italy and Russia, were unrepresented.

The signing of the Lateran Treaty with Mussolini on February 11, 1929, restored some of the territory wrested from the Papacy by the Italian State in 1870 and made the Pope an independent king again.

Thereafter the resurgence of the Papacy was sensational. And when Pope Pius XI died and the cardinals gathered to elect a new pope, Mr. Duff Cooper asserted, in the *London Evening Standard*, that “never since the Reformation had the election of a new Pontiff been awaited with so much anxiety by the whole world.”

More than fifty national delegations witnessed the coronation of Pius XII in the Basilica of St. Peter's. And for the first time in history, radio broadcasts echoed to every nation under heaven the portentous words of the crowning cardinal: “Receive this Tiara of Three Crowns and know that you are Father of Princes and Kings, the Governor of the Earth, the Vicar of our Savior Jesus Christ.”

As the world situation in the inter-war years steadily worsened, the leading statesmen looked more and more to the church of Rome as the most likely ally in the quest for peace. And when the second world war broke out, the position of Pius XII was very different from that of Benedict XV at the beginning of the first world war. Both sides courted the favor and moral support of the Papacy in the titanic struggle. And within a few months after the outbreak of hostilities even the traditional alienation between the Vatican and the United States had been overcome by the appointment of Mr. Myron Taylor as President Roosevelt's personal representative to the Papal See.

After the war, when Communism began to spread eastward over Europe many felt certain that the Papacy was destined to receive a most severe setback. But the very menace of Soviet totalitarianism has driven the nations farther into the arms of Rome, which today is coming to be recognized as the bulwark of Christendom against the menace of godless totalitarianism.

In most of the Continental countries of Western Europe, Catholic controlled political parties have been elevated to political control or are near to power, and Catholic representatives are in a majority in the newly organized European Consultative Assembly.

At the present time Turkey, Greece, and the Scandinavian countries are the only nations this side of the Iron Curtain which have no representative at the Vatican, and of the twenty-one American nations, only Mexico and Canada have no diplomatic relations with the Papacy.

Dr. Schumacher pertinently wrote not long ago in the Swiss journal *Weltwoche*: “The Pope today is a power with which we must reckon politically, perhaps the only power which will really outlast the European catastrophe.”

Need any more be said to show how utterly wrong Carlyle was in the 1840's when he said: “Popery cannot come back”?

“If Carlyle were permitted to peer into the future for a century,” writes Bertrand Weaver in *America*, “and see the ceaseless procession of rulers, government ministers, and ambassadors, who ... would have begged audience with the occupant of the papal chair, he would have torn the above piece of rhetoric into such small bits that not even an inquisitive housemaid would have discovered this evidence of his warped mind. Today, the Papacy is the cynosure of the world.”

The “deadly wound” has indeed been miraculously healed! The papal beast lives again. The period of the sixth head of the beast, which has continued for more than a century since the fifth fell in 1798, is almost gone. The resurgent Papacy is rising to power as the seventh head of the beast.

Though others may have been surprised by this turn of events, students of the Scriptures have not been. They expected it.

They do not, however, accept the Roman Catholic explanation that it has weathered the crisis because it is the church and enjoys divine favor and protection. They recognize the present revival of Rome as its last permitted period of power during which it will fill tip its cup of iniquity.

How completely will the world of the last days come under the spell of the Papacy?

“And all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?” Revelation 13:3, 4.

If the resurgence of Rome as a political power during the past half-century or so has been miraculous, the numerical expansion of the church has been no less so. When the Papacy received its “deadly wound” a hundred and fifty years ago there were

some 100,000,000 Catholics in all the world. During the troubles of the early nineteenth century the numbers probably dropped much lower than that, but today there are no fewer than 425,000,000 Catholics in the world.

How rapid the increase has been in recent years is indicated by, the claim that during the past twenty-nine years no fewer than 119,000,000 have been drawn into the Roman church. In the past fifty years there has been a five-fold increase in the mission territories. Pius XI gained the name of the "Pope of Missions" by reason of the enthusiasm with which he fostered the growth of the church during his pontificate.

Not only is the number of Roman Catholics in the world today far in excess of the membership of the protestant churches, which among the more than two hundred separate denominations can muster only about 200 millions. But it is now larger than any of the great heathen faiths of Asia and Africa. The Confucianists and Taoists, which are the largest religious group in the East, number no more than 393 millions, the Moslems with 296 millions are a long way behind, while the Hindus, the third largest heathen faith, have only 253,000,000 adherents.

In the British Empire there are now some twenty-one millions out of a total of 150 millions, or one in every seven persons. In the United States of America and American dependencies there are some thirty-six million Roman Catholics. The United States itself has twenty-five million of these, which is nearly three times the largest Protestant group and comprises almost one-third of the total "church" population.

The period before the war and the years of conflict brought great difficulties for the Roman church in Europe. But contrary to the expectations of many, Rome has emerged more powerful than ever in spite of the cutting off of that section of the church which is behind the Iron Curtain. Germany's Catholic population has been enormously increased as a result of the expulsion of German Catholics from Poland and Czechoslovakia, and Roman Catholics have also greatly increased their numbers in Belgium and Holland. Thus the Catholic revival in Western Europe is assuming vast proportions.

These facts show how far Rome has moved during recent decades toward its goal of universal homage. From virtual extinction, the Papacy has so far recovered its spiritual authority in the world that one out of every two professing Christians looks to St. Peter's as the mother church, and acknowledges the primacy of the papal pontiff. One Christian in every two is already "worshipping the beast whose deadly wound was healed!"

How the power of the Papacy can be extended until it embraces the whole of mankind, while a great section of it is utterly alienated from the Vatican behind the Iron Curtain can perhaps not yet be seen. Time alone will show, but as surely as the earlier details concerning the course of the papal beast have been fulfilled with the most minute exactitude, this specification will also be fulfilled. And the whole world will not only wonder but worship—all save the last-day remnant whose names are in the book of life.

69. America in Bible Prophecy

Having been shown the history of the dragon and of the ten horned beast, to what third power was the prophet's attention now directed?

"And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb." Revelation 13:11.

In the twelfth chapter John was shown the red dragon which symbolized Imperial Rome. In the first part of the thirteenth chapter the prophet was shown the seven-headed ten-horned beast in its second aspect, which we identified as the great papal apostasy. John is now shown the third in the trinity of earthly world powers used by Satan for the prosecution of his war upon the truth and people of God. What does this third beast represent?

That the two-horned lamb-like beast is a political power is clear, for the symbolism is parallel with that of the lion, bear, leopard, and the other beast, representing successive political powers through the ages. Yet in a number of ways, this new power would be different from any of the older kingdoms.

Being "another beast" it would perforce have to rise outside the territory of the first beast, which comprises parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa. It is also stated that it would come up "out of the earth" rather than "out of the sea," whence the seven headed beast came. Now as the "sea" represents the surging peoples of the Old World from which Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome successively emerged the "earth" must symbolize some virtually empty space upon the earth's surface hitherto outside the purview of world history in John's day.

In character, too, the new power would be diverse from the earlier ones, for whereas they were compared to ferocious, ravening "wild beasts," this power is portrayed as a gentle "lamb." Evidently its rise to greatness would not be by tearing its predecessors to pieces but, like a lamb, it would come peacefully and without contention into being in some distant, unclaimed land.

This is further borne out by the expression "coming up" used of the rise of this new power. The word literally means "to grow or spring up as a plant." It would not come crashing onto the scene of the world empires like a ferocious beast; on the contrary, it would come up silently like the germination of a seed.

The two horns, being specially mentioned, were evidently intended to suggest two prominent characteristics of its lamb-like power.

Finally, the time of its rise is indicated by the prophecy as about the close of the long period of 1,260 years, during which the apostate church had persecuted the true church of God. This period, as we know, began in AD. 533-538 with the enforcement of the decree of Justinian, and closed in 1793-1798 with the temporary abolition of the Papacy.

We ask, therefore, did such a power come into being somewhere about the close of the eighteenth century and in a manner specified by the prophecy? When John Wesley wrote his Notes on Revelation Thirteen in 1754, he said of the "lamb-like" beast: "We is not yet come though he cannot be far off: for he is to appear at the end of the forty two months of the first beast."

Before the century was out, however, and exactly on time, a power having all the required characteristics did appear on the stage of history through the welding of the scattered settlements on the remote North American continent into a united nation in the year 1776. This momentous event provides yet another instance of an historical development which came to pass in the most amazing harmony with a divine prophecy "which must needs be fulfilled!"

The Old World had known for three centuries of the new continent far away across the vast wastes of the Western Ocean. For Columbus had landed on the Caribbean island of San Salvador in 1492 and John and Sebastian Cabot had entered the Gulf of the St. Lawrence five years later.

Strangely enough, however, or perhaps we ought to say providentially the two streams of explorers who followed in the track of these pioneers seemed to be far more interested in finding a way round to the Far East than in the continent itself. In consequence, while British and French sailors became acquainted with the Canadian seaboard on the route of the North-west Passage, and the Spanish and Portuguese explorers opened up and circumnavigated the South American continent, the rich central area remained for more than a century untouched by European civilization. Its time had not come.

When it did come at the beginning of the seventeenth century it was not settled by the Conquistadors who had so cruelly enslaved the native peoples of Central and South America, but by the freedom loving peoples of Britain and Northern Europe. In 1607 the first group of English settlers landed at Jamestown, Virginia, to be followed a few years later by the Pilgrim Fathers who cast anchor off Cape Cod, New England, in December, 1620 and the first Dutch settlers who settled on Manhattan Island in 1626.

These groups constituted the tiny beginnings of what were to be the United States of America. But, even so, the developments of the next century and a half gave little indication that a new nation was being born, let alone that it would one day become the most powerful nation in the world. Actually there seemed every likelihood that the North American continent would be carved up by the European powers to provide another battle ground for their rivalries.

Josiah Tucker, the economist and ecclesiastic who became Dean of Gloucester in 1758, thus expressed his view of the possibilities of an American nation materializing from the diverse states in the New World: "As to the future grandeur of America, and its being a rising Empire under one head whether republican or monarchical, it is one of the idlest and most visionary notions that was ever conceived even by writers of romance. The national antipathies and clashing interests of the Americans, their differences of government, habitude, and manners, indicate that they will have no center of union and no common interest. They never can be united into one compact empire under any species of government whatever. A disunited people till the end of time, suspicious and distrustful of each other, they will be divided and sub-divided into little commonwealths and principalities according to natural boundaries, by great bays of the sea, and by vast rivers, lakes, and ridges of mountains!"

Even when in May, 1787, the great conference convened in Independence Hall, Philadelphia, to attempt to forge a constitutional union, the representatives were fundamentally divided on the question whether the preamble of the new Constitution should speak of "We, the people of the United States," or "We, the deputies of the Sovereign and Independent States!"

At last, George Washington, the chairman, realizing the gravity of the impasse, interposed in the discussion with a dramatic appeal, closing with the words: "The event is in the hand of God."

That final sentence was spoken more truly than he knew. God had declared nearly two millenniums before that a new political power would come into existence just about this very time and in a part of the world outside the territory of the seven-headed beast of the Old World. And true to the prophetic Word, just one hundred days after Washington's famous peroration, and in defiance of anticipations, the North American colonies became one people, calling themselves the "United States of America!"

How vigorous was the growth of the "plant" when it had become firmly rooted in the soil of the New World is indicated by the fact that in 1775 shortly before the union, the population of the thirteen states was not quite three millions, while to-day, after only 175 years, the population has grown to over 135,000,000. And the number of the states to forty-eight, extending over an area of more than three and a half million square miles from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans and from the famous "forty-ninth parallel" to the Gulf of Mexico.

That the founders of America were determined not only to initiate but to maintain a national state totally different from that of the Old World which they had left behind. This is indicated by the inscription they chose for the Great Seal of the republic, "Novus Ordo Seclortim," or "New Order of the Ages!"

The prophecy had stated, too, that the lamb-power would have two horns, and, significantly enough, De Tocqueville enumerates, in his Democracy in America, two fundamental principles which bound the United States into one nation:

"It is the result (and this should be constantly present to the mind) of two distinct elements, which in other places have been in frequent hostility, but which in America have been admirably incorporated and combined with one another. I allude to the spirit of religion and the spirit of liberty." "Democracy in America," Vol. 1, page 42.

Surveying the rise and unification of this great nation in defiance of all the circumstances which seemed to preclude any such development. And in direct contrast to the fragmentation of the Spanish South American empire, one cannot but agree with George Washington, the first president of the United States, who, in his remarkable inaugural address, declared:

“No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation, seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency.”-”Annals of Congress,” Vol. 1, page 28.

As John beheld the lamb-like beast, what startling transformation did he observe in it?

“And he spoke as a dragon.” Revelation 13: 11.

Considering the circumstances of the rise of the United States and the noble aspirations of the founding fathers, one is, to say the least, startled by the suggestion that this great nation could ever experience so revolutionary a change as to be transformed from a peaceful, inoffensive “lamb” into a ferocious “dragon.” Yet the prophecy is clear. The gentle lamb was destined to grow such teeth and claws and develop such a voice that it would strike fear into the hearts of the wild beast powers of the last days. Let us then see whether history confirms or refutes this predicted volte face.

Turning our attention to the political and economic history of the United States, we soon discover a striking paradox at its very beginning which we did not notice in our earlier glimpse at the establishment of the new republic. In the first cabinet of the United States two men were associated with George Washington; by name Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton.

Jefferson, who has been described as the personification of the “American ideal,” believed in a maximum of individual liberty consistent with the corporate life of the nation. His conception of the new state was an eminently lamb-like one, for he thought of the future of America purely in terms of an agricultural state and his interest in industry was only to the extent that it would contribute to the productivity of the land.

Alexander Hamilton, who was chosen by Washington as secretary of the treasury, was, on the other hand, fundamentally opposed to the Jeffersonian ideal, and hankered after the building of a great industrial state with a strong central government. Adams, the American historian, expresses the contrast tersely: “Hamilton stood for strength, wealth, and power; Jefferson for the American dream.”

Putting these facts into the setting of prophecy, we may say that in that first cabinet of the United States, there began the struggle for supremacy in the life of the nation of the lamb and the dragon.

In the early days the Jeffersonian ideal prevailed, Thomas Jefferson became the third president of the United States (1801-1809), and his “American dream” culminated in the famous “isolationist” Monroe doctrine, promulgated by President James Monroe (1817-1825). In effect it put up a fence around America with a notice, “No wild beasts admitted.” There the “lamb” intended quietly to graze upon its own pastures, hoping that the “wild beasts” outside would one day learn by its example the ways of peace.

But it soon became evident that America could not continue either as a Jeffersonian agricultural state nor in isolation from the rest of the world. And as the years passed the original Jeffersonian dream was replaced by the ideal of a powerful Hamiltonian centralized state linked primarily to wealth and industry.

The development of industry and commerce steadily narrowed the gulf between the Old and the New Worlds and in the second decade of the twentieth century the “lamb,” now showing distinct signs of claws and a voice strangely dragon-like, came through its self-erected fence to help save European civilization from the German menace. Two decades later, when the Second World War gathered momentum, the claws and the dragon voice once again appeared, and America plunged into the conflict against Nazi domination.

In World War I the “lamb turned dragon” helped to tip the scales in favor of the Allies. After World War II, strange as it may seem, the “lamb” emerged stronger than any of the “wild beasts” of the Old World she had gone forth to aid. Today, America is, as President Truman has truly asserted, “the most powerful nation of the world-the most powerful nation, perhaps, in all history!” And furthermore, the “lamb” shows no signs of reverting to type. As Mr. George Marshall, former American Secretary of State, said: “We have tried since the birth of our nation to promote our love of peace by a display of weakness. This course has failed us utterly.” So the claws and the dragon voice are to remain a permanent transmutation.

As John watched the transformation of the “lamb” power into a “dragon,” in what surprising direction did he see its power extending?

“And he exercises all the power of the first beast before him.” Revelation 13:12.

The “first beast” is, of course, papal Rome and the power and authority which it exercised was over the peoples of the Roman earth, that is, the nations of Western Europe. According to this prophecy, therefore, the lamb turned dragon would, in the latter times, abandon its traditional isolation from the Old World and would actually dominate Europe as completely as the Papacy did in the Middle Ages.

Has history confirmed this reversal of policy? It surely has. A hundred years ago, it seemed that the Old and the New Worlds were to go their separate ways in perpetuity. Fifty years ago, at the turn of the twentieth century, Europe was beginning to take America seriously, but there was still little indication of the New World attempting to impose its will upon the older nations. Even twenty-five years ago, after World War I, America made it very evident that she intended as far as possible to keep out of Europe's problems.

When the second world war broke out, however, all will remember the president's references to America's “rendezvous with destiny” and “the world pattern of events” drawing the hemispheres of the Old and New Worlds together. And at Pearl Harbor, not only much American war material, but also American isolationism was blown sky-high, leaving America starkly facing in the direction of her historic destiny.

No century of the world's history has seen so tremendous a reorientation of world influence. And Mr. Sydney Dark was absolutely right when he declared not long ago in the Malvern Torch: "The United States obviously has the power, if she has the will, to compel (I use the word designedly) the rest of the nations" to adopt her policies and programs.

Politically and militarily, therefore, the "lamb-like" power has, in the brief century and a half of its existence, accomplished the apparent impossibility of turning into a "dragon" and of returning to dominate the continent which its founders had determined to leave for ever.

70. An Image to the Beast

Continuing the story of the "lamb turned dragon," what wonders did John learn he would perform in the sight of an amazed world?

"And he does great wonders, so that he makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men." Revelation 13:13.

Compared with past ages we may truly say that we live today in an age of wonders. These wonders of science and invention are not, of course, confined to any one nation. Every nation can claim its contribution to the phenomenal progress of modern times. The vast resources and wealth of the United States, however, have made it possible for the ideas of inventors the world over to be developed and brought to wonderful fruition in America in a way that has not been possible anywhere else on the earth. In consequence, the United States may justly be described as the "wonder nation" of the world.

According to the prophecy, the final "wonder" which the "lamb turned dragon" would exhibit to the world would be to make "fire come, down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men." Pondering this vivid phrase one cannot resist the conclusion that one aspect at least of its fulfillment is that culminating product of American research and technology, the atomic bomb. Which brought consternation as well as wonder to the hearts of men everywhere when it crashed down out of the Japanese sky upon Hiroshima on August 6, 1945.

Significantly enough, R. E. Wimperis begins his book, *World Power and Atomic Energy*, with the words: "The door of Creation's great storehouse of atomic energy has been forced and stands ajar. Nothing since the discovery of how to make Fire has so added to man's physical control over the forces of Nature." - Page v.

The capacity of the lamb-like beast to make "fire come down from heaven," however, has doubtless a spiritual as well as a material application. The descent of fire at the call of the prophets of God has a number of times in the Scriptures been an evidence of divine favor. (Leviticus 9: 24; Judges 13:19,20; 2 Chronicles 7:1; Num. 16:35.) Pentecost was signaled by the descent of the Spirit in the "tongues like as of fire" upon the assembled disciples. (Acts 2:3) As Satan has attempted to counterfeit every manifestation of divine power it is only to be expected that he would endeavor to simulate this sign also among the "signs and lying wonders" (Matthew 24:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:9) which he will work in the prosecution of this last work of deception.

We ask, therefore, whether any spectacular spiritual deception has emanated from America during the last century or so, and at once the phenomenon of modern Spiritualism comes to mind.

Contact between evil spiritual intelligences and man goes back, of course, to the beginnings of human history and has occurred where ever human beings have permitted themselves to be "possessed," but nothing so widespread as the Spiritualism of our time has ever occurred in any other period of human history.

Beginning with the mysterious rappings heard by Margaret and Catherine (Kate) Fox at their home in Hydesville, a suburb of the town of Arcadia, in New York State, in 1848, "the contagion," as C. E. Beckhofer Roberts says in *The Truth About Spiritualism*, "spread with rapidity". And "by 1851 it was estimated that there were a hundred mediums in New York alone, and fifty in Philadelphia." - Page 46.

Since then Spiritualism has swept through America until to-day it is claimed that there are 112,250 Spiritualist churches, societies, and clubs, with 3,400,000 enrolled members.

The first Spiritualist medium arrived in England in 1852, and in a few decades there were hundreds of thousands of Spiritualists, including noted scientists, public leaders, and even high-ranking clergy. Two world wars in our century have given Spiritualism further immense impetus, with the result that Spiritualism has now become a world-wide movement of vast proportions, and its devotees have no lesser plans for it than spiritual world domination.

On the material and the spiritual level, therefore, the lamb-like beast has certainly worked "wonders," even to calling down fire from heaven.

To what tragic ends will the prestige of this miracle-working power be used?

"And deceives them that dwell on the earth by means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast." Revelation 13:14. "And causes the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed." Revelation 13:12.

Fascinated by the miracle-working power of the "lamb turned dragon," men will be constrained to follow credulously and uncritically in the way it leads. This, prophecy declares, will ultimately bring the world back again into the control of the very power which, a century and a half ago, they struck down and left as dead.

Reading this startling prediction, one may well exclaim: Is it possible that the great American nation could so far forget its spiritual heritage as to induce men to bow the knee to the great apostasy? But what has been written cannot be unwritten and in later

visions this power is actually called the “false prophet” (Revelation 16:13; 19:20; 20:10) among the many “false prophets” of the last days (Matthew 24:11,24; Mark 13:22).

Strange as it may seem, so complete a change of heart in the American nation was not entirely unforeseen by some of the founding fathers. Thomas Jefferson, for example, was one who realized how easily the noblest ideals could be subverted if the first glowing convictions were lost. Because of this he uttered the solemn warning:” The spirit of the times may alter, will alter. Our rulers will become corrupt, our people careless. A single zealot may commence persecution, and better men be his victims. It can never be too often repeated, that the time for fixing every essential right on a legal basis, is while our rulers are honest and ourselves united.” - ‘Notes on the State of Virginia,’ page 169.

How true his premonitions were is realized when one begins to study the profound and far-reaching changes which have taken place in the social and religious life of America since the days when the Pilgrim Fathers landed on the shores of New England.

However surprising it may be to many outside America, the fact is that the largest religious group in the United States today is the Roman Catholic Church. Its 25,000,000 adherents are actually more than twice the membership of the largest Protestant denomination, the Methodist, which has no more than ten million church members-and these latter are divided into twenty-one separated sections. Actually, the total number of members of all the great Protestant denominations is now but little in excess of the adherents of the Roman communion.

No wonder that the Christian Century, at the close of a series of articles discussing the possibilities of Catholic ascendancy in America should remark: “From this continent, the church may yet regroup its retreating forces and counter-attack successfully.”

Without a doubt the “counter-attack” of the Papacy upon the European nations through America began when Mr. Myron Taylor was, appointed President Roosevelt's personal representative at the Vatican, and for the first time in the history of the United States the two powers established relations with each other. During the post-war years the effects of the liaison between the United States and the Vatican have become increasingly evident. Italy has received more generous treatment than any other European country. America has repeatedly indicated that it wants to see Spain restored to favor. Visits by the leaders of the Catholic supported Christian Democratic parties in Europe have been welcomed, and the work of the Roman Catholic Church on behalf of peace has been lauded in extravagant terms.

Nor is American influence making itself felt only on behalf of the Vatican in Europe. In other parts of the world as well, marked deference and favor is being shown to Rome. Every opportunity, for example, is being given to the Roman Catholic Church to attain a place of dominance in Japan, and the protests of the United States hierarchy have resulted in a noticeable restriction of the work of Protestant missionaries in the Catholic states of South America.

In these and many other ways the lamb-like beast is “causing” men to return to the worship of the papal beast.

In what other indirect way will the lamb-like beast promote the cause 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! Revelation 13:14.

What are we to understand by this “image to the beast”? An illuminating comment by the Revelation A. Plummer, MA, D.D., past principal of University College, Durham, will guide us in its identification. It will be suggested, he says, in the Pulpit Commentary, that there should be set up an image of the first beast “not in order to pay greater honor to the first beast, but that an apparent alternative might be offered to men. So that those who hesitated to pay direct allegiance to the first beast might overcome their scruples and worship something that resembled him, while allowing them to, as it were, cheat their own consciences by persuading themselves that they were not worshipping the beast himself.”

Now if, as we have seen, the “beast” is the apostate ecclesiastical system of Rome, an “image to the beast” would be some other ecclesiastical system, ostensibly independent of Rome, but in reality, a replica of that apostate church. In other words, a Protestantism which has abandoned its “protest,” and become an echo of the church from which it separated in the great Reformation movement.

Are there then any evidences among the Protestant churches, and in particular in American Protestantism, of a desire to erect a world ecclesiastical system parallel to that of Rome, and if so in what direction is this super-church organization likely to move?

The posing of these questions cannot but bring to mind the ecumenical or church union movement which has grown to large proportions in recent years, and which culminated in the first Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam in August, 1948. Significantly enough this modern ecumenical movement was initiated by a bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church of America, and at the first Assembly of the World Council, the American churches had by far the largest number of representatives.

If this drawing together of the non-Roman churches of the world were solely for the strengthening of the Protestant witness, as no doubt many who have joined it intend, the movement would, of course, be wholly desirable, for none can but regret the divisions of Protestantism. But there are ominous signs that influential sections of the World Council are anxious steadily to lessen the gap between Protestantism and Catholicism in preparation, they hope, for eventual union with Rome itself.

The last Lambeth Conference, at which all the bishops of the Anglican church throughout the world gathered for deliberation, made it quite clear that the Anglican church is not prepared to give up its -‘Catholic’ principles in order to achieve union with the Protestant Free Churches. In their encyclical letter they revealed their “Catholic” leanings when they said: “We feel more and more

keenly the rift between the different parts of the Anglican Communion and the Protestant churches,” and they were quite emphatic that if the Protestant churches wanted reunion they would have to become “Catholic.”

The Lambeth fathers clearly have the idea that even if reunion with Rome is impossible, or at least a very distant goal, the churches which are willing should go ahead to form a “Catholic” yet non Roman church which would be world-wide in extent. The readiness with which the Anglican church joined the World Council of Churches may suggest that they believe this new world organization of the non Roman churches will provide the stage upon which this world-wide “Catholic” church may come into being.

So while there were those at Amsterdam who would certainly have no part in erecting an “image” or replica of Roman Christendom, from which they have very definitely “come out” (Revelation 18:4), there were many others who wish to give the World Council as close a resemblance as possible to Rome in the hope that the time will come when the two will no longer be able to maintain a separate existence.

Not only are there powerful influences seeking to turn the World Council into a theological “image” of Rome, but there is also a determination on the part of many of its members to adopt the papal method of utilizing the secular arm of legislation and coercion for the securing of desired religious objects. In this connection it is significant to note that there are in this country, and particularly in America, not a few organizations within the Protestant church whose avowed object is the enforcement by legislation of their particular interpretations of Christian practices.

The National Reform Association, for example, aims “to secure such an amendment to the Constitution of the United States as will ... indicate that this is a Christian nation, and place all the Christian laws, institutions, and usage of our government on an undeniably legal basis in the fundamental law of the land.” - David McAllister in “The National Reform Movement, Its History and Principles,” page 16, Constitution of the National Reform Association, Art. II.

In a History of the International Reform Bureau, it is stated that tile Bureau is “the first 'Christian lobby' established at our National Capital to speak to government on behalf of all denominations.” It also seeks a “Christian amendment” to the Constitution to secure the legislation of its particular brand of “Christianity.”

The Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, representing eighteen great denominations, defined its objects at its very first meeting in 1908 as: “That the great Christian bodies of our country should stand together. . . [in dealing with] questions like those of marriage and divorce, Sabbath desecration, social evils,” etc.

In a recent issue of the Bulletin of the Federal Council, an article appeared on the necessity of “ecumenical obedience” on the part of the churches of Christendom in the campaign for the establishment of a Christian order. The writer, Mr. J. Quintin Miller, asserted: “The time has come for ecumenical obedience. The churches of Christendom are now confronted by the necessity of measuring their conduct by their ecumenical vision and understanding. To continue to disobey this is sin in high places. Since the churches are one in their faith in Jesus Christ as divine Lord and Savior, they must now act as if they were. . . . The Gospel itself places this mandate upon the churches. The times, likewise, demand such action. This kind of ecumenical obedience is imperative now.” - April, 1949.

This sounds suspiciously like the papal demand for conformity in the medieval period, and one cannot but be apprehensive of trends in the ecumenical movement when such statements are made by its leaders. And if the character of the majority of these federated Christian organizations should move still further from the old Protestant witness to a “Catholic” position, it is easy to see how Protestant America, and through its influence other countries also, may be caused to do obeisance to an “image to the beast.”

Those, therefore, who have “eyes to see” cannot but sense the dangers of an ecumenical movement among the erstwhile Protestant churches of the Old and New Worlds which shows distinct signs of a return to a “Catholic” theology, a disposition to secure its ends by coercion rather than persuasion, and which is clearly already beginning to demand “ecumenical obedience” from its members.

In these things they cannot fail to discern the sharpening lines of that “image to the beast” which the unwary are destined to discover, only when it is too late, will involve them with the “beast” in opposition to the truth of God.

No doubt many supporters of the ecumenical movement would recoil in horror at the suggestion that it could end in so fearful a travesty of the Christian faith. The warning signs, however, are there. The true people of God must, therefore, preserve their spiritual independence, heeding the appeal of the prophet Isaiah: “Say you not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear you their fear, nor be afraid.” Isaiah 8: 12. Rather must they: “Sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself; and let Him be” their “fear, and ... dread.” Verse 13.

71. The Mark of The Beast

When the “lamb-turned-dragon” has succeeded in setting up the image to the beast,” how will he compel allegiance to it?

“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.” Revelation 13:16.

The “image to the beast” will, as we have seen, result in the establishment of an alternative to the papal apostasy, by giving their allegiance to which, men will be able to persuade themselves that they are not worshipping the beast. The two systems will, however, in course of time converge more and more until the worshippers of the to the beast” will plainly bear the undisguised “mark of the beast.”

While it is not to be supposed that this expression, “the mark [charagmal] of the beast,” denotes a literal or visible mark in the hand or forehead of the worshippers, there is clearly a parallel between it and the charagmata or “stamps” used in ancient times to indicate ownership and allegiance.

A. Deissmann mentions in his *Light from the Ancient East*, that in John's day the term charagmata was used for the stamps by which documents were authenticated, and especially “for the imperial seal” inscribed with the name and year of reign of the emperor which was widely used on legal documents in the first and second centuries. The “mark of the beast” in the lives of the worshippers of the beast or his image will likewise clearly reveal their allegiance.

In striking contrast with this distinguishing mark of the beast worshippers, will be that other “mark,” designated the “seal of God,” which is to be upon the foreheads or in the hands of God's true people just before the close of history. (Revelation 7:3.) These two “marks” or “seals” are obviously in antithesis to each other, the one denoting allegiance to the beast and the other loyalty to God. If, therefore, we can identify the one, the nature of the other can readily be deduced.

Now from our study of the seal of God in the seventh, chapter, we saw that it was, first of all, inward and spiritual, consisting of the impress of the Holy Spirit upon the heart. Believers are “sealed” by the “earnest of the Spirit” in their “hearts.” 2 Corinthians 1:22. The “mark of the beast,” by contrast, will be an “unholy spirit,” emanating from the originator of all revolt against the will of God, and which “works in the children of disobedience.” Ephesians 2:2.

In its outward aspect, the seal of God reveals itself in obedience to the law of God. (2 Timothy 2:19; Isaiah 8:16; Romans 8:4; Revelation 14:12) By contrast, therefore, the “mark of the beast” will involve obedience to the perverted law of that power which has thought to ‘change times and the law!’ Daniel 7:25, R.V. To these perverters of His law in the last days God will speak as He did through Jeremiah to apostate Israel saying: “How do you say, We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us? Lo, certainly the false pen of the scribes works for falsehood.” Jeremiah 8:8, margin.

Finally, we saw that, within the law itself, is one particular commandment, the Sabbath, which in a special way constitutes the seal of the law by the presence in it, as in the charagma of old, of the name of the law's Author. His office, and the realm over which He rules. Obedience to the Sabbath commandment by the faithful in Israel was thus a visible “sign” or “seal” of their allegiance to Jehovah (Exodus 31: 13; Ezekiel 20: 12, 20). And by it the loyalty of the true church in the last days to all the commandments of God will be signified.

Naturally this commandment, which is the seal of the law of God, has been the special object of satanic attack. And the most violent “change” wrought by the great apostasy in the Decalogue has been the reducing of the fourth commandment to the bare sentence, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,” so that it could substitute a counterfeit Sabbath for the day specified in the commandment.

In James Butler's Catechism, to quote only one of many, we notice the following sequence of questions and answers:

“Q. Say the Third Commandment.

“A. Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.

“Q. What is commanded by the Third Commandment?

“A. To sanctify the Sunday.” - Page 34.

Again in H. Cafferata's *The Catechism Simply Explained*, we

“What is the third commandment?

“The third commandment is, 'Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.' “What are we commanded by the third commandment?

“By the third commandment we are commanded to keep the Sunday holy.” - Page 89.

With bold effrontery Rome admits this deliberate change in the (if God. Thus in James Bellord's *A New Catechism of Christian trine and Practice*, we further read:

“What day was the Sabbath?

“The seventh day, our Saturday.

“Do you keep the Sabbath?

“No: we keep the Lord's Day.

“Which is that?

“The first day: Sunday.

“Who changed it?

“The Catholic church.”-Pages 86, 87.

Richard Challoner's *The Catholic Christian Instructed*, similarly

“Q.-What warrant have you for keeping the Sunday preferably to the ancient Sabbath, which was the Saturday? “A-We have for it the authority of the Catholic church, and apostolic tradition.” - Page 202.

If then the seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment is the “seal” of the law of God, the counterfeit day deliberately substituted by the papal apostasy becomes the “seal” of the perverted law of Antichrist, and the distinguishing “mark of the beast.”

The receiving of the “mark,” therefore, must be the knowing and willful observance of this false or counterfeit Sunday after the issue has become clear to the world by God's last message.

While the great apostasy was permitted to hold the minds of men in darkness, ignorance of God's requirements was overlooked by Him, just as was ignorance of the true God on the part of the Athenians (Acts 17: 30). But just as Paul declared that his hearers were under obligation to repent when they had had the message of God clearly set before them, so in the last days when the beast reaches his final peak of power, when the “image of the beast” is fully enforced, and the “seal of God” and the “mark of the beast” are set in bold contrast to one another by the last warning message of God, then men Will be held responsible by God if they persist in turning a deaf ear to His last appeal of mercy.

On the issue, therefore, of the divinely appointed seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment and the counterfeit Sunday of Antichrist, the final spiritual conflict will be staged. And in this conflict we are told that America, the lamb-like beast, will give a prominent lead just as it plays the chief r61e in the making of the “image to the beast.”

No doubt many will at once ask the question, How could any such development as the imposition of Sunday laws in so tyrannical a manner ever develop when the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States declares so definitely: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

For answer attention may be drawn to two significant facts in the religious history of the United States. First, a constant battle has been going on ever since the passing of the First Amendment aiming at its repeal or drastic modification, so as to make possible legislative measures of a religious nature. And at the very top of the list of such religious enactments desired by the critics of the First Amendment are Sunday laws, or “blue laws,” as they are called.

The National Reform Association, which has been called the “N.R.A. of Religion” was organized in 1863, with the object, according to its constitution, of placing “all the Christian laws, institutions, and usage of our government on an undeniably legal basis in the fundamental law *of the land.” And among the laws to be secured, “Sabbath” legislation was particularly mentioned.

The Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America-the largest ecumenical church organization in America until it merged into the still larger National Council of Churches of America-clearly stated at the time of its organization in 1908 its determination among other things:

“That all encroachments upon the claims and the sanctities of the Lord's day should be stoutly resisted through the pre3s, the Lord's day associations and alliances, and by such legislation as may be secured to protect and preserve this bulwark of our American Christianity.”-“Report of the First Meeting of the Federal Council,” Philadelphia, 1908, page 103.

Thus far, it must be said to the honor of the conscientious legislators in that nation's capital, that every attempt to undermine the force of the First Amendment has been repulsed. But in spite of these rebuffs to the “blue law” protagonists, the struggle continues, and hardly a session of Congress passes without attempts being made to secure some form of religious legislation.

In the Philadelphia Public Ledger of November 20, 1920, the secretary of a Sunday Observance Society is reported to have stated in an interview: “We shall agitate ... until no Congressman who cares to stay in Congress will dare refuse to vote for our measures.”

But even though the First Amendment should remain unassailable upon the Statute Book, preventing the enactment of any religious legislation by Congress, there is still another avenue of approach, of which the “blue law” protagonists are fully aware, and are exploiting with subtlety and craft. It is argued by many that although the Federal Government may not, by Constitution, enact religious legislation, this prohibition does not apply to the individual state governments, which are left entirely free to take any attitude to religious legislation they like. Thus, in the decision on a Sunday-law case in the state of Louisiana it was asserted:

“The Constitution of the United States forbids the Congress fit, in making any law respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. But this is an inhibition to Congress only leaving the State governments the whole power over the subject of religion.” - Both's Case, 13. Ia. Ann. 663, quoted in “Sunday: Legal Aspects of the First Day of the Week,” by James T. Ringgold, pages 1,2.

So, if the powerful religious, forces determined to secure religious legislation find that they can make no impression upon Congress, they may turn all their attention to the pressing of this interpretation of state rights, and seek to impose their “dragon” will upon the nation by capturing the state legislatures one by one!

That the successful introduction of “blue laws” in America would unite Catholic and Protestant forces in other countries is evident from statements which have been made by both sides as to their readiness to unite in the establishment of Sunday as a distinguishing mark of a Christian order. Thus a Catholic, the Revelation Wm. Butterfield, in the English journal, The Clergy Review, significantly affirmed that Roman Catholics would be ready to co-operate with Protestants among other things upon such practical lines as “that the observance of Sunday and the great Christian feasts be enforced by law.”

It is thus easy to see how a crusade for Sunday as the visible emblem of a Christian civilization could unite the forces of the “beast” and the “image of the beast” and compel decision on the part of all as to whether they would accept the “mark of the beast” or receive the “seal of God” in token of their loyalty to God and His commandments.

As the climax of the conflict approaches, what sanctions will be imposed upon those who stand. true to God and refuse to accept the “mark of the beast”

“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.” Revelation 13:17.

How easy the application of economic sanctions will be when the time comes, we can understand with our experience of registration cards and rationing in the war and post-war years. Such sanctions have already been freely used by totalitarian atheism on

the other side of the Iron Curtain, and there is little doubt but that the Roman church would as readily use them against dissenters if she had the power.

To what extremes of coercion will the beast and the creators the “image to the beast” eventually go?

“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.” Revelation 13:15.

Here the last stage in the great struggle between Christ and Antichrist is reached. Unaided, the people of God would be without defense against the forces of seemingly triumphant apostasy. But God will not desert His people in their extremity, for it will be at this time that He will step in to effect their deliverance, and bring about the final destruction of the forces of rebellion.

The triumphant outcome of this decisive intervention will appear in the opening verses of the very next chapter of this remarkable prophecy.

72. God's People Delivered

In striking contrast to the vision of the church's final conflict, what glorious scene was now shown to John? “And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with Him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads.” Revelation 14: 1.

The vision of the previous chapter closed with the remnant church in dire peril. The beast had attained its final peak of apostate power. The “lamb” turned dragon had caused the “image to the beast” to be set up and was demanding that all should do obeisance either to the beast or to his image. “Worship or die,” were the grim alternatives facing the people of God. When the curtain rises again, the scene has changed from the raging tumult of earth's last crisis to the calm and peace of heaven.

Upon the “hill of the Lord” John's eyes rest first upon “a lamb,” or as many manuscripts have it “the Lamb,” no longer “as it were slain,” as it appeared in the fourth chapter, but exalted and triumphant, a symbol of the victorious Christ.

From the Lamb, the prophet's gaze moves to the surrounding multitude, a hundred and forty-four thousand, with the “Father's name written in their foreheads.” He had seen this company before and recognized them at once as the last remnant, the living righteous who will see Jesus coming in glory. The last time they were shown to him, they were receiving the seal of God in token of their loyalty in the last dread hours of earth's history. Now he beholds them rejoicing in their reward.

What sounds of celestial music fell upon his ears? For what was it the accompaniment?

“And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps. And they sung as it Were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth!” Revelation 14:2, 3.

As John gazed at the glittering throng, the sound of celestial music broke upon his ears. When the opening chords of the celestial accompaniment died away, the vast throng of the, redeemed burst forth in rapturous song. In essence, their song was the age-old song which has ever welled up in the hearts of the people of God. It was “new,” however, because the stanzas they now sang were a song of deliverance from the church's last tribulation. And just because it was a song of experience, none but those who had passed through the tribulation could sing it.

How are the hundred and forty-four thousand described?

“These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins.” Revelation 14:4.

In the seventh chapter the character of the scaled ones was not stated, but here the reason for their selection is indicated. Virginity appropriately describes those who have kept themselves in undeviating loyalty to Christ. Adulterers, by contrast, are those who have, for the sake of pleasure or gain, entered into sinful liaison with the world.

What characterized the speech of the sealed remnant?

“And in their mouth was found no guile.” Revelation 14: 5.

The rendering in the Revised Version, “No lie” is “in their mouth” is significant, for Paul specifically designates the two classes of people in the last days as those who receive “the love of the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:10) and those who believe “a lie,” or literally “the lie.” Verse 11. Only those who “speak the truth” in their hearts, as the fifteenth psalm tells us, will be privileged to “ascend into the hill of the Lord.” Psalm 24:3; 15:1. Those who harbor the great “lie” will perish with it.

In what does the description of their perfection culminate?

“They are without fault before the throne of God.” Revelation 14:5.

They have, in fact, attained by grace to the perfection of character of the “Lamb,” who is Himself “without blemish and without spot.” 1 Peter 1:19. None unaided can reach this perfection of holiness, but in Christ is the power whereby we may be sanctified “wholly” and “preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” “Faithful,” says the apostle Paul, “is He that calls you, who also will do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24), if we will let Him.

What will be the high privilege of this special company?

“These are they which follow the Lamb whither so ever He goes.” Revelation 14:4. Wonderful is the revelation that those who stand for God as the vials of God's wrath are poured out, will be nearest to their Lord through the eternal years. They will be His special companions for ever, accompanying Him on all His journeys, not only upon earth, but to all of the unfallen worlds of His vast stellar domain.

How are they further designated?

“These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.” Revelation 14:4.

It may seem strange that the hundred and forty-four thousand should be called the “first fruits” unto the Lamb when in reality they are the very last of the remnant church to receive deliverance. But this is an instance where the last will literally become the first.

Just who will have a place and a part among this privileged company of course, none can certainly say, for we cannot know who will sleep and who will “tarry till He comes.” But even if it be not our privilege to be among the 144,000, there will be room for all among great multitude” of the redeemed who will rise to join the last remnant around the throne of God. God grant that in one or other of victorious companies all who read these words may have a part.

73. The Heavenly Assize Opens

Having seen the forces arrayed against the truth of God in the last days, what was the prophet John now, shown?

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven.” Revelation 14:6.

As on a number of previous occasions, the vision of the thirteenth and early fourteenth chapter is followed by a supplementary scene going back into the time when the “image of the beast” is set up. The purpose of its separation from the earlier narrative is in order to give solemn emphasis to the last message of warning against the final deceptions of the arch-enemy.

The new vision takes the form of three angels appearing one after another, building up a threefold message of warning and appeal. These messages were not, of course, to be given by literal angels any more than God's messages in earlier days have been given by angels. These heavenly beings are symbolic of three divine messages communicated through human instrumentalities empowered to speak in God's name. We will notice them in turn.

What tidings did the first angel bear?

“Having the everlasting Gospel.” Revelation 14:6.

There are some people who seek to make a difference between “prophecy” and the “Gospel.” Their erroneous discrimination is plainly manifest by this statement, for the message of the first angel is declared to be the “everlasting” or “eternal” (R.V.) Gospel. It was announced in Eden as God's remedy for sin. Through subsequent centuries it has been faithfully preached by the chosen messengers of God. And in the last time it will be finished by the giving of the messages of the three angels. The special importance of these messages lies in the fact that they constitute the last offer of mercy to a doomed world. They give notice that the final “day of salvation” has come, and that when it closes, the destiny of all will be sealed for ever. There is, therefore, no more solemn word in the whole of the Scriptures than theirs.

How widely is the message of the first angel to be proclaimed?

“To preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.” Revelation 14: 6.

In His great prophecy, recorded in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, Christ asserted that the “Gospel of the kingdom” would be “preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations” before “the end” should come. (Verse 14.) Here John sees the last Gospel call going “to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.”

With what power is the message to be given?

“Saying with a loud voice.” Revelation 14:7.

The message of the first angel is concerned with the eternal destiny of every human soul. Therefore it must be sounded loudly and imperiously in the ears of men everywhere compelling attention and decision.

What special note of urgency is the first angel's message to sound?

“The hour of His judgment is come.” Revelation 14:7. The Gospel appeal in every age has called attention to the fact that all must one day appear before the “judgment seat of Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:10), but earlier messengers have always referred to the “day of judgment” as a future day. During His earthly ministry, Jesus spoke of the judgment as certain but still future. (Matthew 10:15; 11:21-24) Paul declared that God had “appointed a day” in the which He would judge men (Acts 17:31), but he too referred to it as a ‘Judgment to come.’ Acts 24:25. (See also James 2:12; 2 Peter 2:4,9; Jude 6.) Now, however, comes the momentous announcement, that “the hour of His judgment is come.”

On first reading, it might be supposed that the angel was announcing the appearance of Jesus in power and glory to execute judgment in the earth. A little consideration, however, will show that this cannot be, for when that message goes forth there will be none to follow, whereas here there are two more. Moreover, when Jesus appears as the world's judge, the destiny of all will already be sealed. At that time, therefore, there will be no appeal for repentance and reformation.

Obviously then, this “hour” refers to the beginning of the investigative judgment in heaven, in which the cases of all are reviewed preparatory to the return of Christ to implement the decisions. So in the message of the first angel we have the announcement of the world's antitypical Day of Atonement and the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. (Daniel 8:14.) This precisely pinpoints the beginning of the first angel's message as immediately preceding the year 1844.

It must now have become apparent that there is a definite connection between the message of this first angel and that of the “mighty angel” with the “little book open” whom John saw and wrote about in the tenth chapter. That angel came down from heaven (Revelation 10:1), proclaiming his message “with a loud voice” (verse 3), and his opening pronouncement that there should be “time no longer” (verse 6) is clearly identical with the first angel's message that the “hour” of God's judgment was come. The one announced the end of the 2,300 days in 1844, while the other proclaimed the beginning of the period of investigative judgment at that same time.

It would not be correct, however, to say that the two angels are identical, for the angel with the little book,” in his further word to John, goes on to declare that he must “prophesy again,” thus foreshadowing the second and third angel's messages. The truth is that the “mighty angel” of Revelation chapter ten enfolds the three messages of the fourteenth chapter, while the three angels of Revelation fourteen unfold the message of the angel of Revelation ten.

We saw in our study of the tenth chapter that as the end of the “time” approached, the “little book” was literally opened and the sealed prophecies of Daniel stirred up the great advent revival of the early nineteenth century. It only remains to ask: Was the special judgment message of the first angel given prominence in that movement? The answer is that it certainly was.

Prior to the nineteenth century, prophetic writers disclaimed any fulfillment of the prophecy in their day. Martin Luther for example, in the sixteenth century wrote: “I hope the last day of judgment is not far,” and he added: “I persuade myself verily it will not be absent full three hundred years longerFamiliar Discourses,” pages 7, 8.

Significantly, however, with the coming of the nineteenth century, many preachers and writers began to sense that the time for the fulfillment of the prophecy had come. J. M. Campbell in *The Everlasting Gospel*, a sermon preached in Scotland in 1830, asserted very definitely that the time of fulfillment had come:

“I would now say to you this night,” he says, “ ‘Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come,’ in a strict and literal sense. We are now at the close of that last day concerning which the apostle says: ‘Hereby we know that it is the last time.’ . . . We are just at the evening of that day—we are at the last hour of that day; and it is very nigh, very nigh, even at the door. My dear hearers, I beseech you to consider that it is near at hand, at the very door.”

So also declared the Revelation J. W. Brooks in his *Elements of Prophetic Interpretation* (1836). “It is the duty of all to call upon those to ‘fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come,’ but more especially is it the duty of God's ministers.”-Pages 166,467.

Many who proclaimed the hour of God's judgment at this time made the mistake of assuming it to be synchronous with the return of Jesus. As a result they were bitterly disappointed when the end of the 2,300 days passed and Christ did not come. When, however, they re studied the prophecy, they came to realize that the “hour” marked not the executing of judgment upon the earth but the commencement of the heavenly assize. Then their disappointment was assuaged, and they went forth to declare the solemn message that the investigative judgment, which is to determine the eternal destiny of every soul, had opened.

That was more than a hundred years ago. With how much greater solemnity, therefore, does the message of the first angel sound in our ears to-day as we realize that the heavenly investigation must be far advanced, and that very soon the judge must come to the names of those living to-day-to your name and to mine!

Oh, that we might each one sense the importance of the entries which the recording angels are now writing upon our pages of the “books.” Shall we not seek to give joy to the angels as they write., satisfaction to them as they carry the “books” to the judgment hall, and finally give them the joy of hearing our names among those who are to receive the reward of eternal life?

That we may be accepted when our cases come before the great Judge, what appeal does this first angel make to the last generation of the living?

“Fear God, and give glory to Him.” Revelation 14:7.

Far more urgently even than in the days of Joshua, the challenge goes forth: “Choose you this day whom you will serve.” Joshua 24:15. And in response to it the people of God will declare as they did in the Israel of old: “God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods.... We will serve the Lord.” Verses 16, 21.

To what attribute of God's character is attention especially directed by the warning message of the first angel?

“And worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” Revelation 14:7.

The angel with the little “book” in Revelation ten referred to God as Creator when he “swore by Him that lives for ever and ever, who created heaven,. . . and earth,. . . and the sea.” Revelation 10:6. Here the first angel powerfully recalls the people of the last days to the worship of God in His capacity as Creator.

The full significance of this emphasis appears when the first angel's message is placed alongside the remarkable prophecy in the third chapter of Peter's second epistle. There we are told that in the last days the world would be fundamentally divided on this very doctrine of creation.

On the one hand there would be those who were "willingly ignorant" that "by the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water!" 2 Peter 3:5. Because of this blindness to the truth of the earth's "beginning" they would go on to deny all other alleged divine interventions in history, such as for example the Flood, when "the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." Verse 6. And finally, they would scoff (verse 3) at the idea of the world being brought to an "end" by God. "Where," they would derisively ask, "is the promise [evidence] of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning." Verse 4.

Dismissing, therefore, from their minds all thought of the coming of the Creator as the world's Judge, they would walk "after their own lusts" (verse 3) until, like a bolt from the blue, inescapable judgment would come upon them. (Verse 10)

The other class of people upon the earth in the last days, however, would receive the message of the first angel, and the "fear of the Lord" who made "heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is," would be literally the "beginning" of their "wisdom." Proverbs 1:7. Accepting the fact that all things came into existence in the beginning by the fiat of God, they would find no difficulty in believing that He had appointed an "hour" when He would call His creatures to account for the use they had made of their stewardship. Realizing that the "hour of His judgment" had actually come, the question uppermost in their minds would be: "What manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God." 2 Peter 3:11,12. And in response to this challenge they would be diligently seeking that preparation of heart which would enable them to be "found of Him in peace." Verse 14.

When we turn from the prophecies of John and Peter to the history of our time, we cannot but recognize how accurately they delineate the scientific, philosophic, and religious background of modern thought.

In 1859 just a few years after the passing of the great prophetic "time", the thoughts of men were directed in a remarkable way to the question of God as Creator by the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*. This book launched the modern evolutionary attack upon the Creator. And at the same time stimulated godly scholars to confront the theories of those who would banish God from His universe with the facts of astronomy and geology, of physics and chemistry. Which have shown how impossible it is to explain the things that are, except by assuming the existence of a personal Creator.

Without a doubt, the controversy which this fundamental issue concerning "beginnings" aroused in the minds of men, has played a great part in focusing attention also upon the "end" and upon the of God's judgment with all their solemn implications.

Where do you stand in relation to these vital truths? If you believe that the Creator "is" you will believe also that "He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). And you will eagerly listen to the second and the third angels' message in order that you may be accounted worthy when your case is brought before the heavenly before the "hour of His judgment" ends.

74. Modern Babylon Exposed

What solemn announcement did the second angel make?

"And there followed another angel, 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.

By the message of the first angel, the world was made aware that He who called the heavens and the earth into existence was about to demand of His creatures an account of their stewardship. In the face of the last day delusion which was attempting to banish God from the minds of men, a solemn recall was sounded to the worship of the Creator.

A second angel now appears to supplement the warning against "Anti-god" with another against the last day system of "Antichrist," which for the first time in the Book of Revelation is designated Babylon, thus revealing it as the culmination of earth's first apostasy. (Genesis 10:10; 11:1-9)

In the eleventh chapter of Genesis we are told how there entered into the hearts of the dwellers in the "plain of Shinar" (Genesis 11:2) a proud and sinful thought and they began to say among themselves. "Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name". Genesis 11:4. Thus it was at Babel that the first rival system to the government of God after the Flood was organized.

God frustrated the consolidation of Babel in earth's earliest ages by confounding the language of the apostate plotters and scattering them to the ends of the earth. (Genesis 11: 6-9.) But ever since that time Satan has nurtured the scattered seeds of rebellion with the intention of establishing himself permanently in this fallen world.

As its name implies, the city of Babylon was the lineal descendant of ancient Babel, and in the empire of which it was the capital we have one of the outstanding attempts on the part of Satan to consolidate his forces in the earth.

Because the history of Babylon was so closely connected with the story of ancient Israel, we are told far more about that city than about its parent city, Babel, and in consequence, it provides us with a very detailed picture of modern Babylon, which is the final expression of the satanic design.

Ancient Babylon dwelt "upon many waters" (Jeremiah 51:13), that is to say, it was a widespread empire extending from the waters of the Euphrates and Tigris to the waters of Egypt. Modern Babylon, as we shall notice in a later prophecy (Revelation 17:1), sits upon "many waters,," indicating its even more universal sway.

Ancient Babylon was “abundant in treasures” (Jeremiah 51:13), and so certainly is the harlot church of the last days in comparison with the poverty in worldly goods of the virgin or remnant church.

Ancient Babylon was “proud against the Lord” (Jeremiah 50:29), and so also will be modern Babylon, though equally in vain.

The ancient Babylonian religion was a synthesis of the idolatry of the ancient world. The mixed wine of its fornication it offered in its luxurious “golden cup” to the nations over which it held sway, until they became “drunken” with it. (Jeremiah 51:7.) Modern Babylon is likewise a synthesis of the idolatry of our time. And, repeating the history of ancient days, “all nations” are preparing to drink “of the wine of the wrath” of modern Babylon's fornication and will be made drunk thereby. Yes, the “Babylon” of the last days is well named.

But now the question must be asked. What is included in the modern Babylonian system? Without question it includes the Roman apostasy for, as the Revelation Alexander Hislop shows so vividly in his book, *The Two Babylons*, in no modern-religious system is the ancient Babylonian religion so literally duplicated.

“The essential character of her system, the grand objects of her worship, her festivals, her doctrine and discipline, her rites and ceremonies, her priesthood and their orders, have all been derived from ancient Babylon.” Page 3.

But Babylon cannot be papal Rome only, for if it were, the warning call in the eighteenth chapter: “Come out of her, My people” (verse 4), would apply only to those within the fold of that apostate church. While, therefore, Babylon includes Rome, it is something wider and more extensive even than the Roman system.

The key to an understanding of the nature and extent of the Babylonian system is to be found in the seventeenth chapter. We shall consider that important prophecy in greater detail when we come to it, so here it will suffice for us to notice that Babylon is there described as the “mother of harlots and abominations of the earth!” Revelation 17: 5. Babylon is actually an apostate “family” in contrast with the true “family of God,” and besides the “mother church” of Rome there are in Babylon many daughters who partake of her character and share her condemnation in the sight of God.

Who are these daughters? They are the churches which came out of Rome in the great Reformation movement and began their existence as “chaste virgins” (2 Corinthians 11:2), but which since have become harlots by returning to the wine of her false doctrines and hankering after renewed fellowship with their “mother.” In other words, they are the “Catholicized” churches of false Protestantism which co-operate in the erection of the “image to the beast!”

Besides the Roman “mother” church, and the “Catholicized” Protestant churches, Babylon must also include the so-called Orthodox churches which, in their earliest days, also stood out against the Roman apostasy, but which in time became equally corrupt in doctrine and practice.

Thus Babylon comprehends the whole family of apostasy, including the Roman “mother,” her “Catholicized” Protestant daughters, and her near relations, the Orthodox churches, whom she is continually trying to entice back into the family circle.

Now that we understand the nature and extent of modern Babylon, we are in a position to inquire as to the meaning of the angel's declaration, “Babylon is fallen!” This cannot mean that the Babylonian system of the last days has been destroyed, for there is a third angel yet to come to warn against the worship of the “beast” and its “image,” which are constituent parts of Babylon.

To all appearances the papal apostasy will be reaching the peak of its popularity and power. Its supreme pontiff will be accepted as arbiter among the nations. The non-Roman churches participating in the Babylonian system will have developed a parallel organization with that of the Papacy, with which they will be co-operating on the most friendly basis. Never since the heyday of the Middle Ages will the papal religion have such prestige or wield such power.

But at such a time as this the voice of the second angel is heard in solemn warning, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen!” The whole Babylonian system, despite appearances, is declared to be a vast usurpation of the authority and power of God. It will be permitted to endure for a little while longer because its iniquity is not yet come to the full, but as surely as Babel and Babylon of old were destroyed, so latter-day Babylon will be thrown down, encompassing in its ruin all who are entangled in its system of iniquity.

Just before the fall of ancient Babylon, the prophet Jeremiah was commissioned to warn the faithful among the exiled Jews of the consequences of continuing to dwell in the midst of her. (Jeremiah 51:6,45; 50:8.) Similarly, to all who have ears to hear, the warning sounds concerning modern Babylon's doom: “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.

Realizing the tragedy of being found in Babylon when its end comes, and sensing the urgency of the angel's call, “Come out of her,” we naturally ask, where do we stand to-day in relation to Babylon and the second angel's message?

We know that the first angel began to declare his message more than a century ago. Has the second angel yet begun to speak? Indeed, he has. As soon as the “deadly wound” of the beast began to heal, the second angel began to declare the truth about the “beast,” “Babylon is fallen!” To-day as “Babylon, the mother,” is captivating the attentions of the world with her charms, and her daughters are vying with one another to claim kinship, the message of the second angel is sounding louder and more insistently than ever. And in an ever-increasing stream the remnant are obeying the call, “Come out of her,” in their determination to be loyal to God and ready for the coming of His Son.

75. The Last Warning

By whom was the second angel followed?

“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice.” Revelation 14:9.

Following the announcement by the first angel of the beginning of the heavenly judgment session, and the exposure by the second angel of the real condition of the fallen churches of Christendom, the third and last angel appears with the most momentous message ever given to men. It comprises a solemn warning of the fearful consequences of refusal to “come out” of the doomed Babylonian system, and a brief but marvelously comprehensive description of the remnant gathered out by the last warning message.

What final warning does the third angel give?

“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.” Revelation 14:9,10.

The close connection of the message of the third angel with that of the second implies that he must “follow” his predecessor almost without any interval. As soon as the second angel makes men aware of their entanglement in the Babylonian system of the last days, the third must follow at once demanding decision and action. If, therefore, the second angel is proclaiming his message in our time, the third must even now be sounding his urgent warning, too.

Actually, as we have said, the three messages are successive only in the sense of being complementary to each other and cumulative. In point of fact they are a three-fold message rather than three successive messages, apprising men of the time in which they live, tearing away the false facade of nominal Christendom and revealing Babylon in all its stark apostasy, warning men of the consequences of tarrying in the doomed “city,” and calling them out into the fellowship of the true church of God.

The object of the third angel's message is to set in bold contrast to one another those upon whom the wrath of God must soon descend and the remnant which will be gathered into His everlasting kingdom.

“If any man worship the beast,” the angel says first, “the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God! The “beast” is, in its widest sense, the succession of powers which, since the rise of ancient Babylon, have usurped the authority of God over the souls of men. In its last-day sense, it is the resurgent Papacy basking in the adulation of an amazed and deluded world.

There are millions to-day who no doubt believe the Roman church to be the only true church, and its supreme pontiff to be the representative of God on earth. Holding this belief in sincerity, they are not condemned by God. The time of their “ignorance,” as Paul told the Athenians, God overlooks, and they are accepted according to the light that they have. But when the truth about the beast has been made clear to all by the world wide proclamation of the message of the second angel, and the powerful papal church is seen to be the “mother,” not of the true family of God, but of the family of the harlot church, then all will be held responsible for their attitude to the papal “beast.”

As the Athenians after the preaching of Paul were commanded to repent and turn from idols to the true God, so those who are entangled in the system of the “beast” are now being called to “come out” and take their stand on the side of God if they are not to be involved in her fate. That call will continue and increase in power as the end draws on, until all in the toils of Rome have been given the opportunity to choose between loyalty to God or bondage to the beast.

“If any man worship ... his [the beast's] image,” the third angel goes on to say, he too must “drink of the wine of the wrath of God! The “image to the beast,” we have shown, is that religious movement of the last days parallel to Rome, and which, to all intents and purposes, is an “image” of the papal system. It has arisen as a result of the defection of the Protestant churches from their original “protest” and by their return to the false doctrines from which the Reformers tore themselves away in their determination to be true to God.

The message of the third angel warns those associated with this parallel religious system that even though they may recoil from an unblushing worship of the “beast,” they may be inveigled into the equally culpable worship of his “image” and incur a like condemnation.

To make the issue before the world in the last days absolutely clear, the third angel declares finally: “If any man. . . receive his [the beast's] mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God.”

The “mark of the beast,” as we have seen, is the antithesis of the [or mark] of God! In its inward aspect it is the “spirit of disobedience” implanted by the author of rebellion in contrast with the -spirit of holiness” which possesses those who are sealed as God's children. In its outward aspect the “mark of the beast” will be the acceptance of the perverted law of Antichrist in contrast with the true and unchangeable law of God.

The falsity of the perverted law will become clear to all when Sunday, the false Sabbath of the perverted law, is imposed by spiritual Babylon as the visible mark and token of the “Christian” order, while the remnant people of God in loyalty to the true law, continue to proclaim and keep the true seventh-day Sabbath of the Lord.

Then will the voice of the third angel be heard for the last time, “If any man ... receive his [the beast's] mark. . . the same shall drink the wine of the wrath of God,” and on the decisions of men in that last hour will their eternal destiny depend.

That this last call of God is as personal as every previous divine appeal is emphasized by the expression “anyone.” It means literally any individual one” and indicates that the last generation of humanity will individually choose or, individually exclude themselves from the kingdom by their own personal decision. In the final judgment none will be able to offer the excuse that his or her

decision was the consequence of someone else's course of action. Nor will any be able to lay the blame for a wrong choice upon another. Our responsibility to God's last message is personal, and by our individual decision our eternal destiny will be determined.

In what measure will the wrath of God be poured out upon the rejectors of His last message of mercy? “Which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation.” Revelation 14:10.

Whatever pleasure the wicked derive from the “wine of fornication” in Babylon's golden cup, there will be none when “the wine of the wrath of God” is poured into the “cup of His indignation,” for them to drink. They have turned a deaf ear to all His pleadings. They have spurned His repeated offers of mercy. At last His longsuffering is exhausted and His wrath is poured out undiluted and unmixed with mercy into the cup of His indignation, which they will be compelled to drink to the dregs.

What will be their fate?

“And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.” Revelation 14:10.

It is unfortunate that the word “torment” should be used in this description of the fate of incorrigible sinners, for as a result some have been led to believe that this verse supports the idea of the eternal conscious suffering of the damned. Actually, it teaches nothing of the kind. The word “torment” in the original Greek is *basanizo* and means literally to test or try. It has no necessary connection with pain or torture. When suffering is primarily implied, other words are used, like *kakou-choumenos* which means “ill-used” (Hebrews 11:37), or *odunaomai* which means “to be pained” (Luke 16:24,25), or *tumpanizomai* “to be beaten with clubs” (Hebrews 11:35).

To be tormented with fire, therefore, means simply to be subjected to the ordeal of fire which will consume that which is evil, but leave unscathed that which is good. A striking example of this ordeal by fire is the story of the three Hebrews youths. They passed through the fire without so much as the smell of burning upon their garments because they were righteous, but the Babylonian idolaters were destroyed in the flames. When the worshippers of the beast and his image are tested by the ordeal of the fires of God, they too will be consumed.

That their sufferings will be brought to an end by their “destruction” is the clear teaching of Scripture. Jesus Himself bade His hearers fear ‘Ilim that is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Matthew 10:28. Paul likewise speaks of the wicked being “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.” 2 Thessalonians 1:9. The fires of judgment are specifically stated to be “a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:29), not a miraculous fire which preserves its victims in conscious suffering for ever!

To emphasize their complete extinction such parallels are employed as the burning of “chaff” (Matthew 3:12) and the evaporation of molten wax (Psalm 37:20). The wicked will in fact be “burned up” (2 Peter 3:10) so completely that they, will “not be found.” Psalm 37: 36.

How enduring will be their punishment?

“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: 11.

This final word on the fate of the beast-worshippers is clearly patterned after Isaiah's inspired description of the judgment of Idumea or Edom. The prophet declares of that land, which had so often oppressed Israel, that “the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever.” Isaiah 34:9,10. This prediction did not, of course, mean that the land of Edom would literally smoke forever, but that there would be no recovery for it.

Jude has the same thought in mind when speaking of the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, which, he says, “are set forth for an example, suffering the Vengeance of eternal fire.” Verse 7. It was the effects of the fire which were to be eternal not the fire itself, nor the ascending smoke. In the same way, the eternal rising of the “smoke” of the beast-worshippers does not imply that they will burn “for ever and ever,” but that the consequences of their destruction will be everlasting.

What striking contrast is drawn between the fate of the wicked and the martyr dead in earth's last hour?

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.” Revelation 14:13.

Fearful indeed is the fate that is in store for the worshippers of the beast and his image. “Blessed,” by contrast, will be the martyr dead in earth's last hour. The beast worshippers will have “no rest” until they are finally consumed. The martyr dead will “rest” for a little space while they await the call to eternal life in the day of Christ's return. The “works” of the beast-worshippers will perish as utterly as the wicked themselves, but the witness and works of the martyrs will live with them for ever.

76. Marks of the Remnant

Describing the remnant people of God in the last days, what characteristic does the angel mention first?

“Here is the patience of the saints!” Revelation 14:12.

Having uttered his warning against the beast and his image, his mark and his name, the third angel concludes his solemn message with a wonderful description of the loyal remnant. First among the characteristics by which they will be distinguished will be

“patience.” That this spiritual quality should head the list of identification marks is understandable in view of the fiery trial through which they will be called upon to pass before they reach the kingdom.

As the papal church reaches the height of its popularity, and “Catholicized” Protestantism accepts her lead and associates itself fully in the implementation of her policies, the remnant will find themselves a tiny minority in the midst of a world captivated by Antichrist’s final “delusion” and culminating “lie.” 2 Thessalonians 2: 11. Abuse will be followed by practical “sanctions” against these “troublers” in Israel. They will be faced with deprivation of the means of livelihood, and finally their lives will be placed in jeopardy by their persistent refusal to do obeisance to the beast and his image. (Revelation 13: 16, 17.)

Stern will be the test, but for those who patiently endure, the reward will be abundantly satisfying when, as their Lord appears, they raise the cry of triumph, “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.” Isaiah 25: 9.

Besides patient endurance, what two other distinguishing marks will the remnant manifest?

“Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” Revelation 14: 12.

Brief though the description is, it is marvelously comprehensive, for the first of these two marks sums up the outward lives of the faithful ones, while the other reveals their inward spiritual experience.

Some may think that they could improve the grammar of John’s description of the remnant by putting an extra verb in the sentence and making it read: “Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and have the faith of Jesus.” But it is always dangerous to tamper with the Word of God. And in this case it would obscure the whole point of the phrase. It is asserted that the remnant “keep” the faith of Jesus in order to emphasize the contrast between them, and the apostate church which has tragically lost it.

That faith in Christ is basic to salvation is everywhere made clear in the Scriptures, and nowhere is it more concisely stated than by the apostle Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians where he asserts: “By grace are you saved through faith!” Ephesians 2: 8. It is “he that believes” who will “not perish!” John 3:16. The lost encompass their own destruction because, though grace is abounding toward them, they spurn the divine offer and refuse to be delivered.

The saved remnant in every age has been distinguished from the lost by the possession of this cooperating faith. Abel had faith and believed God. Cain was devoid of it. Enoch was characterized by faith in the midst of the apostate antediluvians. “Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Genesis 6:8) because he believed the warning of God and accepted the proffered means of escape. (Hebrews 11:7)

By faith Abraham was called out of Ur of the Chaldees to become the progenitor of Israel and of the Messiah. (Hebrews 11:8) Moses by faith rejected the world and its allurements in order to associate himself with the people of God. (Hebrews 11:24-28)

A remnant of faith was brought back from Babylon and Assyria after the seventy years’ captivity, and it was a similar remnant which in the Lord Jesus gathered around Him out of the apostate Jewish nation before its final dissolution.

During the Middle Ages the great papal apostasy was characterized by its denial of the “faith of Jesus,” while the “church in the wilderness” (Revelation 12: 6, 14) was manifest as the remnant church by “keeping” it.

When Jesus, referring to the last days, asked the question, “When the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18: 8), He implied that the remnant of faith would be a very small one. But such a remnant there would be, and even now there is.

What outward sign will testify to the presence of faith in the hearts of the remnant?

“Here are they that keep the commandments of God.” Revelation 14:12.

This second characteristic of the remnant is a natural outcome of the first. Obedience to the commandments of God is the inevitable result of the operation of grace through faith in the heart. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews which so strikingly reveals the faith of the people of God in all ages, just as clearly manifests their obedience to the commandments of God. Thus we read: “By faith Abraham, when he was called. . . obeyed.” Hebrews 11:8. So “by works faith was made perfect.” James 2: 22. Had Noah professed to believe God, but neglected to build the ark, his faith would have been in vain and he would have perished with the rest of his contemporaries.

At the beginning of the Christian dispensation the Gospel was sent into the world in order to evoke “the obedience of faith” (Romans 1:15; 16:26), and as a result we are told that many were “obedient to the faith.” Acts 6:7. During the Dark Ages, however, the apostate papal church not only departed from “the faith of Jesus,” but, as Daniel declared, it thought also to “change times and the law.” Daniel 7:25 (R.V.). By it the “commandments of God” were grievously perverted.

In the Reformation movement “the faith of Jesus” and the “commandments of God” began to be restored, but the recovery did not come all at once. Luther is remembered for his rediscovery of “justification by faith.” The reformers who followed emphasized the perpetuity of the law as the basis of Christian conduct, and righteousness by faith as the criterion of Christian living. Finally, a restudy of the Ten Commandment code in the mid-nineteenth century led to the exposure of the “change” of the fourth commandment and the restoration of the true Sabbath to its proper place among the “commandments of God.” At once the loyal remnant recognized that if they were to keep all the commandments of God, they must forsake the observance of the false Sabbath and return to the observance of the true Sabbath. As it had been kept by Jesus and the apostles, and by the early church in the days of its primitive purity.

So from the ranks of the Advent people there emerged, in response to the voice of prophecy the Sabbath-keeping Adventists, keeping all “the commandments of God” and the incorrupt “faith of Jesus,” and proclaiming, in the power of God, the warning messages of the three angels.

The signal blessing which has rested upon the proclamation of this message is indeed a final confirmation that its heralds are the spearhead of the remnant church. In the 1840's, when light began to break upon the three angels' messages, there was but a handful of Sabbath-keeping Adventism in all the world. In 1863 the Seventh Day Adventist church was organized with 3,500 members, thirty, preachers, and one publishing house, printing the truth in two small papers. By 1880, however, there were nearly 16,000 Seventh-Day Adventists, with 260 preachers and four publishing houses, printing ten periodicals besides tracts, pamphlets, and books in seven languages.

By 1910 the membership of the remnant church had risen to more than 100,000, the three angels' messages were being proclaimed by more than 4,000 preachers, and twenty-eight publishing houses were printing and distributing the message in sixty-seven languages. In 1930 there were more than 300,000 Seventh-Day Adventists, 11,000 evangelistic workers, and sixty-seven publishing houses using 146 languages.

To-day the numbers of Sabbath-keeping Adventists have grown to more than 100,000,000. Over 17,000 preachers are carrying the message to the very ends of the earth, fifty-two printing houses are publishing it in 195 of the great languages of the world and every week sees another one thousand believers joining the ranks of the remnant church.

As John saw in his vision, the three angels are to-day flying in the midst of heaven, the last message of mercy is speeding with the aid of every modern invention into all the world. The call to "come out" from association with both "Babylon the mother" and her "daughters" is being sounded with a "loud voice". People is being gathered out from every nation under heaven to "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" and patiently await the fulfillment of the 'Blessed hope.'

Where do you stand in relation to the three-fold message? There is not long to decide. Human probation must soon close. What will your decision be?

77. The Harvest Reaped

As the vision of the three angels faded away, what new and wondrous scene was opened to the prophet's view?

"And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man." Revelation 14:14.

In the vision of the three angels, John was shown the final message of mercy going forth with power to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people," calling out the last remnant church from among the worshippers of the beast and his image.

As the new scene opens, the work of the three angels is done. Human probation is at an end. It remains only to reap the harvest of the earth and to tread the winepress of the wrath of God.

Before the prophet's spellbound gaze, a glorious white cloud descends from heaven. It grows larger and larger as it approaches until John beholds, framed in its glorious light, a majestic figure, yet vividly reminiscent of the familiar form of the Son of man.

John was among the company of disciples that heard the angels say Jesus would return "in like manner" as He went (Acts 1:11), and now he was granted a vision of that future glorious scene. Surrounded once more by a "cloud" of holy angels (Matt 24: 30; Luke 21: 27; Revelation 1: 7), Jesus was coming back.

With what was Jesus crowned?

"Having on His head a golden crown." Revelation 14:14.

When Jesus came the first time He was forced, in His humiliation, to wear a crown of thorns. Now He comes in power, wearing a crown of victory, to destroy His enemies and deliver His redeemed people.

What did He hold in His hand?

"And in His hand a sharp sickle." Revelation 14:14.

The crown proclaims Jesus as the conquering King; the sickle reveals Him as the divine Reaper, come to gather in the harvest of the earth. The sharpness of the instrument betokens the quick and sure work which He will do. (Romans 9:28)

What command did the Son of man receive?

"And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap." Revelation 14:15.

Until the close of human probation this temple is the scene of the mediatorial ministry of Christ. Now, however, the services of the sanctuary are over, the heavenly assize is ended, and out of the temple* comes an angel messenger of God to give instructions as to the execution of the decisions reached in the judgment.

In what condition is the harvest of the earth?

"For the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe." Revelation 14:15.

The Revised Version renders this phrase, "For the harvest of the earth is over-ripe." We are not to conclude from this that God's timing has been faulty and that the harvest has deteriorated in any way. Rather does it suggest that the Lord's longsuffering leads Him to delay even after the harvest is perfectly ready that not one responsive soul might be excluded from the kingdom.

How does the Son of man respond to the command?

"And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped." Revelation 14:16.

Though the spotlight, as it were, in this vision is upon the divine Reaper, other Scriptures reveal that Jesus will have countless willing helpers in His task of reaping the harvest of the righteous. To the angels this will be the most joyous commission they have ever been given.

At the “voice of the Archangel” and the “trump of God,” the “dead in Christ” will arise from their dusty beds clothed in garments of immortality to join the living saints who have been changed from corruption to incorruption. (1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 15:52,53) Then eager angels will go forth to “gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other!” Matthew 24:31.

Who will the reaping angels be? Will they not be those who have had a particular and personal interest in the redeemed ones? Will not each guardian angel be privileged to call forth the one specially committed to his care, whom he has guided and succored through life. Whose resting place, if he sleeps in Jesus, he has lovingly marked in anticipation of the day when he will return to call the sleeper forth?

It will be a wonderful day for the saints when loved ones are reunited never again to part; it will be a wonderful day for the angels, too, when they see the consummation of all their labor of love.

To whom is the gathering of the wicked for judgment committed?

“And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven he also having a sharp sickle.” Revelation 14:17.

In the parable of the wheat and the tares, the work of harvesting covers both the gathering of the wheat into the heavenly barn and the stacking of the tares to be burned. (Matthew 13: 24-30; 36-43.) In this vision, however, the harvest represents only the gathering of the wheat. Another figure, that of the winepress, is used to depict the judgment of the wicked. The fact that Jesus Himself superintends the garnering of the righteous, while He delegates the gathering of the wicked to an angel of judgment, emphasizes once more His special care for His people.

What was the second angel instructed to do, and by whom?

“And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.” Revelation 14:18.

A third angel now appears from beside the altar which no longer consumes the substitutionary sacrifice for sin, but whose coals are to be scattered in fiery judgment. (Revelation 8:5.) Calling to the angel with the sickle of judgment, he bids him gather “the clusters of the vine of the earth” whose “grapes are fully ripe.” These grapes are not the good, sweet grapes elsewhere representing the righteous, but the fruit of the vine of wickedness whose “clusters are bitter,” whose “grapes are grapes of gall,” and whose “wine is the poison of dragons and the cruel venom of asps.” Deuteronomy 32: 32, 33.

How did the angel with the sickle respond?

“And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.” Revelation 14:19, 20.

There is no obvious symbolic significance in the precise extent of the sea of blood following the destruction of the wicked, but it certainly emphasizes the fearfulness of the judgment. This symbolic picture describes the same event as Joel's account of the gathering of the nations into the “valley of decision.” Joel 3: 9-14. From heaven Joel heard a Voice crying to the angels of judgment: “Put you in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great!” Verse 13.

Isaiah penned a similar picture of the Lord's “strange work.” As He appears with “dyed garments” out of the east, He is asked: “Wherefore art Thou red in Your apparel, and Thy garments like him that treads in the wine fat?” Isaiah 63:2. He replies, alluding first to His own sacrifice for sin: “I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save ... have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Me!” Verses 1, 3. But now, He goes on: “I will tread them” - the rejecters of His mercy - “in Mine anger, and trample them in My fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon My garments, and I will stain all My raiment. For the day of vengeance is in Mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come!” Isaiah 63:3,4.

How wonderful that even in the midst of judgment the thought uppermost in the mind of Christ is the “year” of His “redeemed.” The work of judgment has been thrust upon Him because of the persistence of sinners in their sin, but the attribute by which He desires to be remembered throughout the ages of eternity is “mighty to save!” Isaiah 63: 1.

Shall we not then, while probationary time tarries, make sure that it will be as redeemed ones that we will recognize Him when He comes and that upon our lips the cry will be: “This is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us!” Isaiah 25: 9.

78. When Jesus Pleads No More

What solemn scene was John now shown?

“And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.” Revelation 15:1.

The Revelation is a book of “signs” or symbolic scenes (Revelation 1:1), every one of which is important. But the “signs” which John now describes, he introduces as being, by comparison with the others, “great and marvelous.” No adjectives could be more appropriate, for this vision deals with the opening of the “great day of God Almighty” (Revelation 16:14), and brings to view the climax of all His “marvelous” acts. (Psalm 9:1; 78:12; 98:1; 105:5; Revelation 15:3.) No fewer than eleven times in chapters fifteen and sixteen, and twelve times in chapters seventeen and eighteen, is the term “great” applied to the events there recorded.

Before the pouring out of the plagues, however, what parenthetical scene is interposed?

“And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.” Revelation 15:2.

As on a number of previous occasions, before John was shown the final work of judgment he was given an anticipatory view of the saints standing, glorified and triumphant, before the throne of God. The object of this preview is to assure the people of God who must pass through the period of judgment that their protection is assured and their reward certain.

What is the theme of their glory song on the sea of glass?

“And they sing 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. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest.” Revelation 15:3,4.

In one grand epic the redeemed gather up all God’s “marvelous” acts from the day when He first called Israel out from Egyptian bondage to the deliverance of His remnant people from the last great tribulation. Recalling the words of Moses in his two songs recorded in Exodus fifteen and Deuteronomy thirty-two, they declare that the works of God are not only great and marvelous (Exodus 15:7; Deuteronomy 32:3), but also just and true. (Deuteronomy 32:4.) Rightly, therefore, can He claim the fear and worship of the whole creation.

Having been shown this glimpse of the glorified saints before the throne, to what was the prophet’s gaze now returned?

“And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: and the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues.” Revelation 15:5,6.

It is significant that the seven angels of judgment should be seen emerging from the “holy of holies” of the sanctuary, where stands the heavenly ark containing the original of the tables of testimony. (Hebrews 8:5.) From the beginning of the “hour of His judgment” this second apartment has been the scene of the solemn court in which the eternal destiny of every living soul is decided. As the door now opens, it is evident that the heavenly assize has ended. Jesus has pleaded the case of the last, repentant sinner, the final decision has been made, and the court has risen. Now, on instructions from the throne, the seven angels of judgment go forth.

How are the seven angels clothed?

“Clothed in pure and white linen and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.” Revelation 15:6.

The apparel of the seven angels reveals them to have been assistants of Christ in His mediatorial work. Now they are no longer ministers of grace, but instruments of God’s “strange” work of judgment.

What was given to the seven angels?

“And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever.” Revelation 14:7.

Into the hands of the seven angels, one of the four living creatures or cherubim from beside the throne places seven golden vials or bowls. These are the sacred vessels of the heavenly temple. Until now they, too, have been instruments of mercy and grace. But, like the angels who bear them, they are to be turned from their proper use to the “strange” work of judgment.

By what was the temple filled?

“And 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.

Finally, through the open door of the sanctuary there billows, not the glorious cloud which filled the tabernacle of Moses and the temple of Solomon, but impenetrable smoke. Thus, in still another way is emphasized the “strange” work to which God has set His hand.

What command did the vial angels receive?

“And 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.” Revelation 16: 1.

Terrible indeed is this picture of the wrath of God. Yet even in the narration of these final acts of judgment there stands out the wonderful assurance that indignation will have an end. There will be a “last” plague, but, thank God, there will be no end to His goodness.

79. Vials Of Wrath

What effect has the pouring out of the first vial 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: 2.

As the terrible description of the seven last plagues begins to unfold, they immediately recall the plagues of Egypt. This first vial is identical with the sixth Egyptian plague. Vials two and three, we shall see, correspond with the first plague of Egypt, when the waters were turned to blood; the fifth vial and the ninth plague both bring darkness. The sixth vial and the second plague are both associated with frogs; the seventh vial and seventh plague bring hail upon the earth. Only the fourth vial has no counterpart in the plagues of Egypt.

The seven last plagues are God's reply to a world which has rejected His last offer of mercy comprehended in the messages of the three angels of Revelation fourteen. We would expect, therefore, that the acts of God in these plagues would be a vindication of His character as declared in the threefold message. And they are.

The appeal of the angels was that men should fear and worship Him who made the “heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” Revelation 14: 7. That appeal was scornfully rejected and so the first five vials are poured successively upon the earth, the sea, the fountains of waters, and finally into the heavens, thus conclusively demonstrating that He is the Creator and that He has power to control every part of His creation to serve His omnipotent purposes.

Whether the character of the first plague is to be taken literally like the “boil breaking forth with blains” which fell “upon man, and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt” (Exodus 9:9) it is difficult to say. It is significant, however, that boils, or literally ulcers, are commonly associated with famine conditions which are referred to by several prophets as obtaining in the very last days. (Joel 1:10; Hosea 4:3.)

What will be particularly affected by the second vial?

“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.” Revelation 16:1

Again the exact nature of the judgment represented by the sea becoming “as the blood of a dead man” and “every living soul” dying “in the sea,” is not clear, for if such a literal scourge were to be widespread, life could-not long continue.

In Hosea 4:3, mentioned in connection with the first plague, we omitted the last phrase, “Yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.” This may have its fulfillment under the second plague in a destruction of the food resources of the sea upon which the maritime nations are so dependent and which, added to the effects of the first plague, would produce conditions of extreme distress in the earth.

Only the onset of these fearful judgments will reveal their full significance, but enough is certainly revealed to warn men, while there is yet time, to “flee from the wrath to come.”

Where is the third vial poured out?

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

In the third plague the tide of catastrophe strikes the “fountains of waters” in the hinterland of the great continents as the second plague struck the maritime regions. “Famine” and “pestilence” now cover, the globe, producing intense distress and suffering to the wicked.

The remnant, scattered among the unrepentant nations, are, of course, involved in these physical catastrophes, but like Elijah of old, will be assured the essentials of subsistence. “Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure,” is the promise to the remnant. (Isaiah 33: 16.)

At this time also will be fulfilled the wonderful promises to the people of God penned by the psalmist. “Thou shall not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flies by day; nor for the pestilence that walks in darkness; nor for the destruction that wastes at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with your eyes shall thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou has made the Lord which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.” Psalm 91:5-10.

After the pouring out of the third vial, what heavenly conversation does the prophet overhear?

“And I heard the angel of the waters say, 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.” Revelation 16:5,6.

After the pouring out of the third vial, John hears the voices of heavenly beings speaking with God concerning His judgments. First, he hears the voice of the angel of the waters who recalls that through the ages the enemies of God have shed the blood of prophets and saints, from the righteous Abel to the latest victims of the beast worshippers. Now retribution in kind is coming upon them.

By whom is the justice of God further commended?

“And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments.” Revelation 16:7.

Taking up the theme from the angel of the waters, the angel of the altar speaks. In the vision of the seven seals, the souls of the martyrs are represented as awaiting, “under the altar,” the vengeance of God upon their persecutors. (Revelation 6:9-11.) With full knowledge, therefore, he too can testify that the judgments of God are “true and righteous.”

John listens for other heavenly beings to speak, but no further word is uttered. As he looks again toward the open door of the sanctuary, he sees the vial angels preparing to resume their fearful task.

80. The River of Destiny

Upon what is the fourth vial poured out?

“And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.” Revelation 16:8.

The first three plagues have swept over the “earth” and the “sea” and the “fountains of waters.” The next two plagues are poured out into the firmament, demonstrating that He who has power over the terrestrial earth controls also the heavenly bodies. The “sun” is first caused so to intensify its radiation that the already famine stricken and pestilence ridden earth is scorched under its burning rays.

As the remnant are preserved from the famine and pestilence, so they are protected from the effects of the fourth plague. They now understand the full meaning of the promise: “The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.” Psalm 121:5,6.

What effect, however, has this judgment upon the wicked?

“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 16:9.

Like Pharaoh of old, the hearts of the wicked are “hardened,” and the only effect of the plagues is to add to their blasphemies.

Upon whom does the fifth vial fall?

“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.” Revelation 16:10.

While the whole earth groans and travails under the impact of the first four plagues, the fifth is now concentrated upon the kingdom of the beast. The precise nature of the judgment we cannot yet fully comprehend. We know that darkness is commonly used as a type of spiritual ignorance and error, and in the last days it is particularly stated that “darkness” will “cover the earth, and gross darkness the people.” The fifth plague may have reference in part to the deep spiritual darkness which will cover the kingdom of the beast as a result of the nations passing completely into her power. We also recall statements such as that in Joel, that the day of the Lord will be a “day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness.” Joel 2: 1, 2. These may presage actual physical conditions by which the kingdom of the beast will be thrown into dire confusion.

Does the fifth plague evoke any repentance?

“And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.” Revelation 16:11.

The effect of the fifth plague, like the earlier ones, is only to evoke in the sin-hardened nations still more fearful blasphemies.

Where does the sixth angel pour out his vial?

“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!” Revelation 16:12.

The sixth plague makes it clear that while conditions in the earth during the first five plagues have brought terrible distress to the inhabitants of the earth, they have by no means prevented the continuance of life and all the activities of civilization. Least of all have they taken from man either the will to war or the means for its prosecution, for during the period of the sixth plague the climactic war of history is staged. And the event which starts this great conflagration is the drying up of the “river Euphrates.” First, therefore, we must discover what is meant by the “Euphrates” and what is involved in the drying up of its waters.

We can at once dismiss the idea that the literal waters of the River Euphrates are here referred to, for two reasons. In the first place the literal River Euphrates would hardly be much of a barrier to the advance of powerful modern armies. In bygone days many wars have raged in the valley of the Euphrates and conquerors have repeatedly crossed and re-crossed the river.

Secondly, if the literal river were meant, the prophecy should have stated that the Tigris was dried up as well, for this river is almost as large as the Euphrates and follows roughly a parallel course from the mountains of Armenia to the confluence of the two rivers on the Babylonian plain. But the Tigris is not even mentioned. A literal understanding of the Euphrates is thus inadmissible.

vial against papal Rome. Obviously, therefore, the Euphrates of the sixth vial is to be interpreted in exactly the same way as the Euphrates of the sixth trumpet, namely as representing the peoples of the Tigro-Euphrates Valley.

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In the days of the sixth trumpet, when the Euphrates first appears its a symbolic power, the region had been occupied for centuries by the Islamic Arab kingdoms. When the Caliphate of Bagdad declined, power in the Euphrates Valley passed successively to the Sejuk Turks, the Mongols, and the Ottoman Turks. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Turkish Empire progressively declined and finally, as a result of World War I, its weak hold upon the Middle East was broken and the Arab peoples, after more than half a millennium of subjection to alien rule, recovered their independence. So today the “Euphrates” comprises the Arab kingdoms of the Middle East, namely, Iraq and Syria in the actual Tigro-Euphrates Valley, with Lebanon, Trans-Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the Yemen to the south.

Now if the restored independence and sovereignty of the Arab kingdoms of the Middle East satisfies the symbol of the flowing of the River Euphrates, what is meant by its drying up? Obviously, the ultimate taking away of their independence by powerful neighbors on either the north or south “bank” of the “river.”

From the latter part of the eleventh chapter of Daniel we learn that to the north of the “Euphrates” the last “king of the north” will be established in power; while to the south of this symbolic river will be the last “king of the south.”

In the mid-nineteenth century the kings of the north and south reappeared on the Middle Eastern scene as the nations of Turkey and Egypt, but the “Euphrates” had no separate existence by reason of the fact that it had been a part of the Turkish Empire for centuries.

Since the end of World War I, Turkey and Egypt occupy the ' same geographical positions, but with the “Euphrates,” or Arab kingdoms, flowing between them. These two nations are today reduced to such minor powers that one could hardly expect the flow of the “Euphrates” to be arrested by either of them. There are, however, ample grounds for supposing that the great powers which overshadow them to the south and north might be led, either for offensive or defensive purposes, to seek to dry up the “river” by occupying the Tigro-Euphrates Valley.

As was explained in our exposition of the latter part of the eleventh chapter of Daniel, the Middle East is today the hub of the world's communications by land, sea, and air. It is rich in mineral resources, particularly oil, the most sought-after fuel of the modern age. It is the scene of the modern Zionist experiment which is causing the erstwhile desolate hills and valleys of Palestine to blossom again as a rose, as well as smoke with industrial activity. And it still constitutes the strategic land-bridge necessary to any aspirant to the control of the Europe-Asia-Africa land mass.

Today the spheres of influence of the powers of the Middle East are becoming even more clearly oriented north and south of the kingdoms of the “Euphrates”. And the Arab states themselves reveal lateral cleavages which may sooner or later result in the retreat or absorption of the fragments into the orbits of the great power blocs.

At the present time there are a host of Middle East issues perturbing the great powers. Any one of these could precipitate a major crisis. All of them together make the Middle East the most serious menace to the peace of the world, and show how the pouring out of the vial of the sixth angel upon the symbolic Euphrates could start the greatest conflagration the world has ever seen.

81. The Gathering of The Titans

With what supreme opportunity is Satan provided by the drying up of the symbolic river Euphrates?

“And I saw. . . 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.” Revelation 16:13,14.

The pouring out of the sixth vial, resulting in the drying up of the symbolic Euphrates, or Arab kingdoms of the Middle East, provides Satan with the opportunity for which he has long waited. With an alacrity born of the realization that he has but “a short time,” he sends forth miracle-working devils to deceive the nations of the whole world into supporting him in his nefarious plans.

Reading these words, one cannot but recall how frequently in recent times statesmen and other prominent leaders have expressed themselves as convinced that more than human wickedness is at work in the earth. Shortly after the Second World War broke out, Dr. W. R. Matthews declared in a sermon in St. Paul's Cathedral:

“One who is sensitive at all to the movements of the time must have the feeling that there are demonic forces at work in the world, super-human powers of evil. The situation is not adequately described by saying that the wickedness and badness of a few men have brought this calamity upon us. Still less can we explain it by the working out of economic causes. We can almost feel the sweep of super-individual power, which uses evil men and madmen as its instruments.”

This conviction that men are struggling today against the deceptions of evil principalities and powers is entirely in harmony with the “sure word of prophecy!”

How does Satan dispose his forces for the deception of the world?

“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.” Revelation 16: 13.

When Satan begins his final work of deception he selects three demonic “chiefs of staff” to superintend the final marshalling of the nations. The reason for this is because down in the very last days, the world will have become divided into three great ideological groups, here designated as the “dragon,” the “beast,” and the “false prophet,” and composing respectively Paganism, Papalism, and false Protestantism. Into these three vast groupings humanity will have crystallized, and to bring them each and all into line with his plan of campaign, Satan sends forth three emissaries, assisted by millions of evil minions, and with deceptions appropriate to the respective outlooks of the three great world groups.

Where will the nations ultimately be gathered during the sixth vial?

“And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.” Revelation 16:16.

The use of the term “he” is true to the original but confusing in the English rendering, because it is not clear to what antecedent the pronoun refers. The word “spirits,” however, in Greek is neuter in gender and according to the rules of that language must take a singular verb even though it is a plural noun. Young's Literal Translation takes account of this idiom and more correctly renders the phrase: “They [the spirits] did bring them together.” The Revised Version similarly reads, “They gathered them.”

That the historic plain of Megiddo in Central Palestine should provide the stage for the final encounter of the nations is perhaps not unexpected, for time and time again in the conflicts of the great civilizations of the Old World, it has been the cockpit of the continents.

Here in the first struggle between the Nile and Euphratean civilizations, Thutmose III decisively defeated the federated kings of Syria not long before the Exodus. Here Deborah and Barak and the armies of Israel met Sisera and his host. (Judges 5: 19, 20.)

In the later days of the Israelite monarchy, Josiah was slain at Megiddo when he got in the way of Pharaoh-Necho of Egypt who was on his way to battle with Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon for the rule of the ancient world. (2 Kings 23: 29; 2 Chronicles 35: 22-25)

Just before the beginning of the Christian era, the Ptolemies from Egypt marched across the plain to assault the Seleucid Empire, and the Seleucids advanced in the opposite direction to give battle against the Ptolemies. In modern times it has seen the armies of Turkey and Egypt, of France and Britain. And though the methods of warfare have vastly changed between the fifteenth century BC and the twentieth century AD, the essentials of world strategy remain the same. The land bridge between Europe, Asia, and Africa is still the cockpit of the continents, and there the final battle of Armageddon will be staged.

The name itself is significant, for it could be rendered “the place of troops” (Micah 5:1). While the root from which it is derived, gadad, means “to cut to pieces” (Deuteronomy 14:1; 1 Kings 18:28; Jeremiah 16:6; 41:5), certainly an ominous warning to the vanquished upon the field of Megiddo.

We are not told precisely how the conflict on its human level between these titanic world powers will issue into a conflict between the final apostasy and God, but connecting up the strands of the story from the eleventh chapter of Daniel and the various visions given to John, it would seem that the king of the north will disappear in the first phase of the conflict leaving the king of the south and his supporters, dominated by the beast, victors on the field. This brings the Papacy for a brief season into the position of dominating the whole world. It acts speedily, supported by the false prophet and imposes its apostate system upon all humanity under threat of death.

All but the remnant capitulate and the conflict becomes one between a deluded world and the forces of heaven. This provides the signal for the climactic moment of divine intervention marked by the out-pouring of the seventh and last plague and the return of Christ.

By what solemn announcement are these decisive events brought to view?

“Behold, I come as a thief.” Revelation 16:15.

Even now the nations are calculating in terms of power politics as to what will emerge from the coming struggle of the titans. But the real answer is not to be found in the reports of the political and military advisers of the nations. It is to be found in the same “sure” Word which almost two thousand years ago foretold the rise of the last-day giants. Says Jesus through His servant John: “Behold, I come as a thief.” (See 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 4; 2 Peter 3: 10; Matthew 24:43; Luke 12:39)

The nations are not going to clash and then settle down to some new balance of power, which in turn will endure until it is once more shattered, and so on ad infinitum. No, in the midst of the conflict of the great ideologies of the last days God is planning decisively to intervene. Christ is coming back in person to assume the dominion which the nations of earth have so fearfully abused, in order that wars may “cease unto the end of the earth” and universal peace come at last.

This intervention of God will mean to the wicked the final tragedy of destruction. To His waiting people it will bring the consummation of their salvation.

How may we be assured that that day will be for us a day of blessing and not of tragedy?

“Blessed is he that watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.” Revelation 16:15.

It is important to watch in order that the coming of the Lord may not be to us as the coming of a thief in the night. But a perfect understanding of the times will be utterly valueless unless, profiting by our knowledge, we seek purification from every stain and spot of sin in readiness for the dawning of the day of God. If His work is not finished in us when it is finished in the earth, we shall be excluded from His glorious purpose of peace. Quickly, therefore, we must get ready, for there is not much time left!

82. When God Steps In

What announcement precedes the devastating effects of the seventh and last vial?

“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.” Revelation 16:17.

At the time of the sounding of the seventh trumpet the angel with the little book declared that “the mystery of God” was about to be “finished.” Revelation 10: 7. This “finishing” of the work of the Gospel occupies the period of the seventh trumpet. Its termination

provides the signal for the pouring out of the seven vials which “finish” the wrath of God. As the seventh angel pours out the contents of his vial the note of finality sounds from heaven, “It is done.” When the seventh vial has completed its work the mystery of God will be fully accomplished.

What followed the pouring out of the vial?

“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.” Revelation 16:18.

These are the same “voices and thunders and lightning” which John heard when the angel with the censer cast fire into the earth (Revelation 8:5). They are the same also as the lightning, and voices, and thunders,” at the end of the seventh trumpet (Revelation 11:19), showing that these points of time in the three visions synchronize with one another.

The earthquake that follows brings to pass that “shaking” which is to try the foundations of every earthly structure and sweep away to destruction all that is not founded upon God. “For thus says the Lord of hosts,” declared Haggai, “Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations.” Haggai 2:6,7. To which the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews adds the explanation: “And this word, Yet once more, signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.” Hebrews 12:27. (See also Joel 3:16; Isaiah 2:19; Ezekiel 38:20.)

How will the great system of Babylon be affected?

“And the great city was divided into three parts.” Revelation 16:19.

The wonderful facade of Babylon had deceived almost the whole world. Now the rottenness of its foundations is uncovered. In the great shaking the cracks which presage its utter ruin appear.

What final judgment falls upon Babylon?

“And great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.” Revelation 16: 19.

The great apostasy which caused all nations to drink of the wine of its fornication is now made to drink the cup of the wine of the fierceness of God's wrath. So momentous is this event that the next two chapters of the Revelation are devoted to it.

After shaking Babylon to its foundations, how far does the devastation of the seventh vial extend?

“And the cities of the nations fell. . . . And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.” Revelation 16:19,20.

Fearful indeed will be the universal convulsion which throws down the cities of the nations, moves islands from their places, and even disintegrates the mountains.

In what judgment does the seventh vial culminate?

“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.” Revelation 16:21.

To complete the ruin, the “treasures of the hail. . . reserved against the time of trouble. against the day of battle and war” (Job 38:22,23) are, opened up and celestial projectiles are hurled upon the earth.

More than once in the past God has released the “treasures of hail” against the enemies of His people. (Exodus 9:24; Joshua 10:11)

In his Travels in Tartary, M. Hac writes what is probably the most fearsome account of hailstorms in modern times. He states: “Hail is of frequent occurrence in these unhappy districts, and the dimensions of the hailstones are generally enormous. We have seen some that weighed twelve pounds. One moment sometimes suffices to exterminate whole flocks. In 1843, during one of these storms, there was heard in the air the sound as of a rushing wind, and therewith fell in a field near a house, a mass of ice larger than an ordinary millstone. It was broken to pieces with hatchets; yet though the sun burned fiercely, three days elapsed before these pieces entirely melted.” “National Illustrated Library,” Vol. 1, page 12.

But neither the most terrible of modern visitations nor any of those catastrophes recorded in the biblical record will begin to compare with the worldwide deluge of stones weighing in the region of fifty or sixty pounds with which God will follow up the terrestrial convulsions of the seventh vial.

Even this judgment, however, fearful as it will be, is not the end. Some of the wicked, probably hiding in “dens and caves of the earth” will survive the plague of hail, to hurl their most terrible blasphemies against God. But their end is near, for as the munitions of the seventh plague are exhausted, Jesus Himself appears.

The effects of this transcendent event are not described here, but in the nineteenth chapter we shall see how all that has not been thrown down by the earthquake or dashed to pieces by the hail will be consumed by the final fires of destruction in “the brightness of His coming.”

In that day there will only be one “secret place” of safety, and that will be “under the shadow of the Almighty.” Psalm 91:1. There the saints will find safe refuge until the indignation is over past, and from it they will come forth into the glories of God's new morning.

83. The Beast from The Abyss

What further revelation did one of the, vial angels now bring to the prophet John?

“And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore.” Revelation 17:1.

As in earlier visions, certain aspects of the seven last plagues were passed over in the main vision, for special consideration in supplementary scenes. The unfolding of these was committed to one of the seven vial angels, presumably the last, for his revelation is concerned with the judgment of the great whore or “harlot” church, to which two whole chapters are now devoted.

Where was John taken to receive the revelation concerning the great harlot?

“So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness.” Revelation 17:3.

When John was being shown the emergence of successive world powers, the tossing sea provided the most suitable background. (Revelation 13:1.) For this vision, John was carried away in spirit into the wilderness. If this was the wilderness into which the remnant church was driven through the hatred of the harlot (Revelation 12:6,14), it was certainly an ideal vantage point from which to view the judgment of this great persecuting power.

What did the prophet see?

“And I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.” Revelation 17:3.

The seven-headed and ten-horned beast is by now a familiar symbol. It represents world power under its seven successive phases, beginning with the Babylonian Empire of Nebuchadnezzar. Here attention is focused upon the beast in its papal phase, as is indicated by the “harlot” rider seated upon the beast. The choice of a dissolute woman to represent the Papacy reveals how far the Roman church had departed from the first purity of the church.

By what other feature is the extent of her power and influence emphasized?

“The great whore that sits upon many waters.” Revelation 17:1. “And he says unto me, The waters which thou saw, where the whore sits, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.” Revelation 17:15.

The wide dominions of ancient Babylon were indicated by the statement that she dwelt “upon many waters.” Jeremiah 51:13. The same figure is here used to suggest the widespread influence of papal Rome.

What further clue does the angel give to establish the harlot's identity?

“And the woman which thou saw is that great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.” Revelation 17:18.

The “great city” has been mentioned on a number of occasions in earlier visions, and in the next chapter the term is used no less than six times. It always refers to the seat of the papal apostasy. (Revelation 11:13; 14:8; 16:19)

In what was the harlot decked?

“And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls.” Revelation 17:4.

The true church of God is invariably represented as clothed in white raiment, typifying the righteousness of the saints. (Revelation 3:4,18; 6:11; 7:9; 19:8.) The papal church, however, laid aside this spotless robe of holiness in order to don the luxurious but tainted garments pressed upon her by the secular rulers of the Roman world. Purple and scarlet, colors hitherto reserved for kings and princes and nobility, thus became the official robes of the popes, cardinals, and high ecclesiastics of Rome, while gold, silver, precious stones, and priceless fabrics were provided in abundance for the adornment of her churches.

What did the harlot offer to the secular powers in return for their favors?

“Having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication.” Revelation 17:4. “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 17:2.

With the “wine” in the “golden cup” of her idolatry, ancient Babylon “made all the earth drunken.” Jeremiah 51: 7. Modern Babylon did the same for the nations of medieval Europe. Remarkably enough, Pope Innocent XI, in 1680, struck a medal in which he represented the Papacy as a woman holding a cross in one hand and extending a cup to the nations with the other. In 1825, Pope Leo XII used a similar device on his jubilee medal. On one side he displayed his own image and on the other a woman holding aloft a cup. Around the design was the legend: “The whole world is her seat.” Whether the use of this symbol was inadvertent or not, it certainly provides further corroboration of the identity of the harlot.

What were the ingredients of the wine of Rome's idolatry? First and foremost, the blasphemous exaltation of the supreme pontiff to the place of God on earth. Then the placing of Mary alongside Jesus as mediator, the false system of mediation involved in

the sacerdotal priesthood, confession, mass, penance, indulgences, absolution. The placing, of tradition above the Bible, the claim to supersede even divine laws by the authority of the church, and the obscuring of the “Blessed hope” of the return of Christ in glory.

What fearful name did she bear? To what unholy brood did s give birth?

“And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth.” Revelation 17:5.

It was a common custom in the days of Imperial Rome for individuals to bear some mark of their allegiance either to secular patrons or the gods they worshipped. Such names were not usually written plainly for all to read, but were concealed in some “secret” sign, which might be a word or a number. In harmony with this usage, the saints are represented as having the divine name upon their foreheads or in their hands, while the harlot bears upon her forehead the “secret” name Babylon, linking her with ancient Babylon, with more ancient Babel, and still further back to the author of rebellion, Satan himself.

Her name not only reveals her evil ancestry, but also her unholy progeny. For it tells that she is the “mother” of a family of daughters who have followed in her evil ways. These, as we have seen in earlier studies, comprise the Protestant churches which came into existence as “chaste virgins,” but which are now increasingly anxious to reclaim kinship with their harlot mother, and the equally fallen Eastern churches.

In what terrible condition was the harlot mother as John looked upon her?

“And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.” Revelation 17:6.

From his-vantage point with the “wilderness” church John saw the woman drunken with martyr blood. This helps us to pinpoint the time represented by the beast and rider as the very end of the Middle Ages when the harlot was sated with the blood of her millions of victims. In amazement and horror, not “admiration” as we now use this word, the prophet gazed at the harlot church, scarcely able to believe that it could fall so low.

What did the angel at once offer to do?

“And the angel said unto me, Wherefore did thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carried her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. The beast that thou saw was, and is not.” Revelation 17:7,8.

The angel began his explanation by telling John that the vision portrayed a phase in the history of the beast and its rider that was already past. The beast “that thou saw, was,” he said, but it “is” not any longer. He thus carried the prophet onward in time from the Middle Ages, when the papal beast “was” in all its glory and power, to the time after the mortal blow fell upon it, when for a period it “was” no longer.

Was this state of virtual extinction, however, to persist?

“And shall ascend out of the bottomless pit. . . and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world. When they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is [literally 'is coming or shall be present'].” Revelation 17:8.

The angel went on to explain that the beast would not long remain in this state of virtual extinction. It would rise again to the astonishment of the world as a whole, though not to the people of God who were forewarned by the prophetic Word.

In the thirteenth chapter, this revival of the papal beast is portrayed as the healing of the deadly wound which the fifth head received. (Revelation 13:3.) Here the beast is represented as ascending out of the “bottomless pit,” or literally “the abyss.” What, then, is meant by the “abyss”?

The word is first employed in Scripture to describe the chaotic world at the beginning of the creation week. (Genesis 1:2) It has also been used symbolically in the Revelation of the desolate wastes of Arabia, out of which the Moslem hordes emerged (Revelation 9:2), and the chaos of revolution, out of which Republican France arose. (Revelation 11:7) The last occasion in the Scriptures when this term is used is to portray the indescribable confusion at the beginning of the millennium after the overflowing wrath of God has been poured out upon the nations. (Revelation 20:1; Jeremiah 4:23-26.) Here, therefore, the abyss must represent a period of universal disorder into which the sixth phase of world rule would deteriorate, and which would provide the opportunity for the “ascent” of the wounded beast to power and prestige.

There is no need for us here to repeat the story of the miraculous revival of the Papacy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which we recounted in detail in our study of the vision of the thirteenth chapter. It will suffice to recall that the re-emergence of the Papacy began as far back as Napoleonic days when the emperor, having cast the church aside as something for which he had no use, soon discovered his need of it as a moral ally for the furtherance of his designs.

At first its revival was slow, but with the accession of Leo XIII in 1870, it began to move forward by leaps and bounds. The first World War gave a great impetus to the re-establishment of the Papacy as one of the greatest forces in modern Europe, and on February 11, 1929, the signing of the Lateran Treaty with Italy restored the long-lost temporal power to the popes. During the inter-war years Rome still further strengthened its influence among the nations, and when Pius XII was crowned in March, 1939, practically every European and many American and other states were represented. World War II added further to its prestige, and to-day it is regarded by many as the only power which can save Europe from catastrophe.

In what other way did the angel portray the collapse and latter day resurgence of the Papacy?

“Here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sits.” Revelation 17:9. “And there are [‘they are,’ R.V.] seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he comes, he must continue a short space.” Revelation 17:10.

A mountain is frequently used in symbolic prophecy to represent a nation or kingdom. (Jeremiah 51:25; Revelation 8:8; Daniel 2:35.) These seven mountains are the successive phases of world power; Babylon, MedoPersia, Greece, Imperial Rome, Papal Rome, and two remaining periods during which Rome is at first grievously wounded and nigh unto death and then resurgent and powerful again.

Of these seven kings or kingdoms, the angel continues, “five are fallen,” or have come to a violent end. (Jeremiah 50:15; 51:8; Ezekiel 29:5; 30:6.) These were Babylon, Media-Persia, Grecia, Imperial Rome, and finally papal Rome, which, as the angel explained, had ceased to be.

The sixth phase of the beast covers the nineteenth century, during which the Papacy lay stricken and nigh unto death. Today we are seeing the development of the seventh head in the Papacy's modern revival. The revived Papacy is to “continue” for a “short space” (Revelation 17:10), an expression similar to “a little season” (Revelation 6:11; 20:3) or a “short time.” Revelation 12:12. During this period the nations will voluntarily surrender their power again into his hands in return for his help in bringing a “new order” out of chaos.

How is the culminating Phase of the beast's reign described?

“And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven.” Revelation 17: 11.

The seventh head will culminate in an “eighth” which, as the angel explained, will be “of the seven” and the final expression of Antichrist.

What late, however, will eventually overtake the beast?

“And go into perdition.” Revelation 17:8. “And goes into perdition.” Revelation 17: 11.

While the resurgent Papacy will attain to a popularity and prestige in the closing days of history such as it did not experience even in the heyday of the Middle Ages, its triumph will be brief. At last it will go crashing down to perdition, from which there will be no return.

84. Europe's Last Ruler

In seeking to give John an understanding of the climax of the great apostasy, to what part of the beast did the angel now draw special attention?

“And the ten horns which thou saw are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet.” Revelation 17:12.

Immediately after its break-up, the Roman Empire was divided among ten barbarian tribes. These were gradually transformed into the kingdoms of medieval Europe, and finally, in the nineteenth century, assumed the configuration of modern Europe as we now know it. The angel was thus perfectly correct when he stated that, even as late as the end of the period of papal supremacy (1798), the modern representatives of the ten horns had not received their kingdoms.

With what would the ten kingdoms of the last days be contemporary?

“But receive power as kings one hour with the beast.” Revelation 17:12.

True to the angel's word the nations of modern Europe have developed alongside the reviving Papacy and in association with one another they are to continue for “one hour.” The word hora is not used here as a specific measure of time, but corresponds with the “short space” in verse ten and indicates an indefinite but brief period just before the end.

During this period what remarkable development will occur in the relations of the kings to one another?

“These have one mind.” Revelation 17:13.

All down the centuries since the break-up of Imperial Rome the nations of the Roman earth have never “cleaved” together, nor even approached a common mind. Such a notable drawing together could not, therefore, fail to be recognized when the time of fulfillment arrived.

Many thought they saw the coming of this long-foretold development when the League of Nations was inaugurated after World War I. But the League of Nations was not a European organization, nor was there much evidence of any common “mind” among the member states.

Even before the close of the Second World War, however, Mr. Winston Churchill, in one of his secret memoranda, foresaw the straits into which Western Europe might be brought by the victorious march of Communism across Europe. And pleaded earnestly with the Western powers to band together in the form of a United Europe for their self-preservation. When the war ended he hastened to make public his urgent counsel, “Unite!”

In 1948 a momentous step forward toward this great idea was taken when the Five-Power Pact between Britain, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Holland was signed. It was described as “unprecedented in the history of Europe,” and as “unlike

anything that has ever been tried on this continent,” and as “the beginning of a new era in Europe.” Further conferences between the leaders of the Western powers followed, and early in 1949 the Council of Europe came into existence. A few months later the first meeting of the European Consultative Assembly took place.

This rapid and unparalleled development in our day can surely be none other than the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophetic Word that the separated nations of Western Europe, after centuries of hostility and sanguinary conflict, would, in the last days, come almost miraculously to “one mind.”

To whom will the associated nations of latter-day Europe transfer their power?

“And shall give their power and strength unto the beast.” Revelation 17:13.

The final proof that what we now see is the development foretold so long ago by the Revelator will be if the member states of the new European Union fulfil the second specification “and . . . give their power and strength unto the beast.” Are there then any indications of a movement in a Rome ward direction? Yes indeed, for as soon as the first historic meetings of the Council of Europe convened in Strasbourg, it became immediately obvious that the secular socialist parties were in a definite minority, while the greatest influence was wielded by the Catholic-supported Christian parties which now constitute the dominant force in most of the Western Continental states.

In a leading article the Times significantly commented: “Catholicism is ... the most powerful political movement in Europe outside this country, and one which should not be underrated because it is unfamiliar!”

Students of Bible prophecy, at least, are not likely to be guilty of underrating Catholic influence in the new Europe, for they know that the last-day revival of the Papacy will be the result of the fragmentary nations of the Roman world, that is the (nations of Western Europe, coming to “one mind” and then giving “their power and strength unto the beast!”

That the Catholic church is going to bend every endeavor to control the new European parliament is evident from the statements of its spokesmen.

In an outspoken editorial in the *Osservatore Romano*, which is recognized as the mouthpiece of the Vatican ' Count Guiseppe della Torre, its editor, boldly asserted: “To-day we need a supreme arbiter and judge, beyond parties and rivalries, beyond the interests and passions of mankind.... The Catholic church-above all worldly anxieties could be the answer. . . . Had such a society been appealed to, it could to-day, as yesterday, have been the savior of peace and civilization!”

How soon the urgency of the world crisis will bring the nations of the West to the place where they will accept the Pope as “supreme arbiter and judge” none can say. But the fact that such clear hints are being insinuated into the councils of the nations is indication enough that this long-foretold situation may be nearer fulfillment than many have any idea.

At the peak of its power, however, what revulsion of feeling will set in against the harlot church?

“And 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 this verse we begin to glimpse the circumstances which will bring about the descent of the papal beast “into perdition!” The Papacy will secure the support of the nations for the carrying out of her ambitious designs and will succeed, as we have indicated elsewhere, in overflowing every opposing power and dominating the world. Then at last the falsity of her claims and the real object of her strivings will become manifest and her erstwhile patrons will turn against her, strip her of all her possessions, and bum her with fire.

For how long will the alliance with the beast continue?

“For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree, and to give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.” Revelation 17: 17.

Just how long will be occupied in the enacting of the dramatic events recorded in these verses it is impossible to say. The only guidance given us is that the final association of the ten kingdoms and the beast will be “one hour,” but this period is not of any definite length, nor are we told precisely at what point in the resurgence of the papal beast the “hour” begins. Clearly, therefore, it is not intended that we should know, lest we be tempted to delay the spiritual preparation necessary to be ready when Jesus returns. What we can see today, however, is surely sufficient to convince us that there is no time to lose if we are to take our places on the Lord's side before the final crisis.

With whom will the ten kings finally make war?

“These shall make war with the Lamb.” Revelation 17:14.

While it is impossible for the imagination to conceive the tremendous events with which human history will close, we do seem to see a definite parallel between the great revolt against the papal apostasy at the end of the Middle Ages, and the final revolt which will precipitate the intervention of Christ at His second advent.

The French Revolution began with an attack upon, and destruction of, the papal church, but it did not stop there. From the anticlericalism of the early stages of the Revolution it went on to a full scale attack upon Christianity, and finally to the complete proscription of all religion. Such, it would seem, will be the course of events at the end of time. Having “made war” upon and destroyed the “great city” of Babylon, the godless nations will fill up the cup of their iniquity by making “war with the Lamb.” This act will

synchronize with the end of the seventh plague, and be the signal for the consummation of judgment in the personal return of Christ in overwhelming power.

What will be the issue of the conflict?

“And the Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings.” Revelation 17:14.

When Nebuchadnezzar learned the significance of the wonderful dream which first lifted the curtain upon the “great interregnum,” he exclaimed: “Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods., and a Lord of kings.” Daniel 2:47.

Sad to say the king of Babylon soon forgot his great confession and the world rulers who followed him left the true King of the nations increasingly out of their reckoning. Now at long last He confronts them in overwhelming power, and the recognition which they refused to render voluntarily' to Him is forced from their lips as they perish in the “brightness of His coming.”

How are those associated with Christ in that day described?

“They that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful.” Revelation 17: 14.

From the tragic picture of the destruction of a rebel world, the angel turns the mind of the prophet to the blessed remnant who are on the Lord's side in the last decisive conflict. What a wonderful summary this is of the divine process of elimination by which God selects those to whom He will give “the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven” (Daniel 7: 27) forever.

The call of God goes out to all. The divine invitation is “Whosoever will may come.” But, sad to say, the “many” are heedless of the call and only the “few” respond. These are the chosen of the Lord: “Many are called, but few are chosen.” Matthew 22: 14.

Then we are reminded by the apostle Peter that having chosen the Lord, and having been chosen by Him, we must “give diligence” to make our “calling and election sure.” 2 Peter 1: 10. How may we do this? By faithfully enduring “unto the end.” Matthew 24: 13.

Will you not then decide now that by His grace you will be among i lie -called, and chosen, and faithful,” when He comes?

85. “Come Out of Her”

As John pondered the enormity of Babylon's sin, who appeared upon the scene?

“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.” Revelation 18:1

In the vision of the great harlot, the vial angel outlined the miraculous resurgence of papal power in the last days, its final period of dominance, and its ultimate collapse. Another angel now appears bearing a divine message to warn the world of the final machinations of the great harlot.

The manner of his coming immediately recalls the angel messengers of the fourteenth chapter. Like them he appears in the midst of heaven (Revelation 14: 6), the whole earth is illumined by his presence (Revelation 14: 6), and his message is given like that of the three angels, cc mightily with a strong voice.' Revelation 14:7,9. Surely there must be a connection between this glorious angel and one of the three angel messengers of Revelation fourteen? As soon as the angel speaks we know with which one he is associated.

What message does the glorious angel proclaim?

“And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen.” Revelation 18:2

At once we realize that this angel is associated with the second of the three angels of the fourteenth chapter, declaring God's judgment against the great apostasy. As we pointed out when we studied the second angel's message, the proclamation, “Babylon is fallen,” does not describe her ultimate destruction. It is a warning which goes forth to the world in the days of her greatest prestige revealing that, contrary to all appearances, she is a “fallen” church and that her doom draws on apace.

In its chronological setting in the present chapter the nature of the second angel's message is made very clear. First, we have the declaration of Christendom's true moral and spiritual condition: “Babylon is fallen.” This is followed by a final warning to “come out” before her plagues descend. Finally, we have her actual destruction and the lament at her passing.

How does the angel on this occasion elaborate upon Babylon's “fallen” condition?

“And is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every Unclean and hateful bird!” Revelation 18:2.

So far have the harlot church and her daughters turned from the truth of God, that they have become the habitation and breeding place of every variety of false teaching and error that Satan's devilish ingenuity could invent. All are given house room, as it were, within the "great city" of Babylon.

What are some of these "foul spirits" and "unclean birds" which have found shelter in this vast system of nominal but apostate religion?

First, there are all the "foul spirits" of Romanism: its blasphemous claim for the supreme pontiff, its worship of the virgin and its saints. Its adoration of relics, its crowning of images, its idol processions, its lamps and candles and incense, its perverted law and its counterfeit Sabbath. Its false priesthood and orders, its perverted way of salvation through baptismal regeneration, the sacrifice of mass, confession, penances, absolution, indulgences, unctions, its doctrine of purgatory, and its prayers for the dead. It is not necessary to elaborate upon these here, for we have discussed them fully elsewhere. Suffice it to say that they are as foul a collection of "spirits" as even Satan could muster.

Then there are all those other unclean "spirits" which may be summed up under the term Modernism. The eminence of many modernists in the Christian church deludes the credulous into thinking that their teachings are Christian, but if Paul were here to-day he would quickly stigmatize them for what they are "another gospel," utterly alien to the everlasting Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Galatians 1:9) Modernism's God is not the beneficent Creator and loving Father of the Bible. Its Christ is not the "Word made flesh," but only the highest product of the evolutionary process of His time. It repudiates the Bible teaching of the atonement and, of course, it scoffs at the idea of the second coming of Christ, the last judgment, and a new heavens and earth.

Surely none can contemplate a list such as this and still believe that Modernism has anything in common with the Gospel of Christ.

Finally there are the "doctrines of devils" of Spiritualism, which are insinuating themselves increasingly into the Christian churches as a result of their acceptance of Satan's first lie, "You shall not surely die."

The Bible teaches that man is a being created by God, having immortality only as a gift conditional upon obedience to Him. Spiritualism denies this, declaring that man is an inherently immortal spirit placed in earth-life as a school of training.

The cross of Christ, the very center of the Christian religion, finds no place in spiritualistic theology. The record of His bodily resurrection is declared to be a legend, and the doctrine of a personal Second Advent is explained away as a spiritual coming through His spirit messengers to declare a new evangelist to the world, namely modern Spiritualism.

By means of the unclean "spirits" of Modernism and Spiritualism, Satan has thus tragically weakened the Protestant churches and has rendered what remains an easy prey to the "Catholicizing" movement which is rapidly leading the erstwhile chaste virgins of the Reformation back again into affinity with their harlot mother.

No wonder, therefore that the whole facade of nominal Christendom in these last days is stigmatized as the habitation of devils, foul spirits, and unclean and hateful birds.

Besides harboring "spirits of devils," what is Babylon's other great sin?

"For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies." Revelation 18:1

The first sin of Babylon is the corruption of the truth of God; the second is its desertion of Christ for sinful union with the world. The harlot "mother" surrendered her spiritual independence in return for the support of the Roman emperors and medieval kings in the imposition of a "Catholic" order upon Europe. To-day her methods are still the same, while the Protestant churches who have lost the faith they won back in the Reformation are also increasingly seeking the co-operation of the state for the imposition of "Christian" standards upon society.

So the vicious circle which brought the Dark Ages to Europe is being started all over again-the church offering its aid for the replacement of the present world chaos by a "Christian order," a deceived world drinking its fill of the "wine" of Babylon's idolatry, and in return gratefully bestowing its benefactions upon the church.

To arrest the drift into the spiritual toils of modern Babylon, what urgent warning is sounded?

"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." Revelation 18:4.

There is a striking parallel between the last dramatic events before the doom of modern Babylon and those which preceded ancient Babylon's fall. When Babylon's destiny was sealed, the warning went forth: "Go you out of the midst of her and deliver you every man his soul ... for her judgment reaches unto heaven and is lifted up even to the skies." Jeremiah 51:9,45. (See also verse 6) The responsive ones immediately heeded the call and came out.

Today the doom of modern Babylon draws on apace, and in response to the warning of the third angel, the true people of God are hurrying out of the "great city" ere her plagues fall, and joining the faithful remnant who have "turned from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven." 1 Thessalonians 1: 9, 10. Where do you stand?

86. Babylon's Doom

When Babylon's CUP of iniquity is filled, what heavenly Pronouncement will go forth?

"Her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities." Revelation 18:5.

When the inhabitants of Babel in the plain of Shinar organized the first revolt against the government of God after the Flood they began to erect, as a symbol of their rebel kingdom, "a tower, whose top may reach to heaven." Genesis 11:4. That plan, and every subsequent attempt at world dominion, has collapsed. All that Babylon through the ages has succeeded in doing is to throw up a mountain of sin heavens-high.

What punishment will be meted out to her?

"Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled' fill to her double." Revelation 18: 6.

The extent to which God is willing to pardon the iniquity of the repentant, He reveals when He says: "Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God speak you comfortably ... and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned. For she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Isaiah 40:1,2.

If, on the other hand, His mercy and forgiveness are spurned, the basis on which He will punish iniquity will likewise be: "I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double." Jeremiah 16:18.

How will her pride be recompensed?

"How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she says in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine." Revelation 18:7,8.

Ancient Babylon declared, "I shall be a lady for ever." Isaiah 47:7. But to her God said: "These two things shall come to thee ... the loss of children, and widowhood." Isaiah 47:7-9. A like reversal of fortune will come upon spiritual Babylon. Once secure on the throne of her glory, she will be degraded to the dust.

Whether the "one day" in which Babylon's judgment will be accomplished is to be understood prophetically and interpreted as a literal year is not entirely clear. Many believe that this is a correct understanding of the expression, and that this period represents the duration of the seven last plagues.

How, will her final end come? What effect will Babylon's fall have upon the kings of the earth?

"And she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judges her. And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning." Revelation 18: 8, 9.

It has previously been stated that the "ten kings" of the "kingdom" of "the beast" (Revelation 16:10) will be the instigators of the final revolt against Babylon and the cause of her burning. They cannot, therefore, be the kings who wail by reason of her fall. It would seem, therefore, that after the fall of Babylon at the hands of the ten kings of the Roman "earth," the other world powers will lead the mourning for Babylon's end before their own end comes at the appearing of Christ.

What pitiful cry will they raise?

"Standing afar off for fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour is thy judgment come." Revelation 18: 10.

It will be noted that Babylon's judgment is here described as occupying only "one hour." This taken prophetically would mean a period of two weeks and may refer to her final destruction under the seventh plague.

How will the merchants of the earth react to her fall?

"And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buys their merchandise any more." Revelation 18:11. (Read verses 11-16.)

The list of products left on the merchants' hands is indicative of Babylon's luxurious living. There are gold, silver, precious stones, and pearls for the enrichment of her sanctuaries; there are fabrics of purple and silk and scarlet for the decking of her priests. There are precious woods, ivory, and metal of all kinds for the rich vessels for the enhancement of her services. There are foodstuffs for the tables of Babylon, vehicles for the journeying of her hierarchy, and most significant of all, slaves and the souls of men who, in the last days as in the days of her medieval splendor, will render her abject obedience.

How sudden will be her end?

"For in one hour so great riches is come to naught." Revelation 18:17.

Once again the period of "one hour" within the "May" of her judgment is referred to. The latter seems to be the whole period of the seven last plagues, while the former must be the duration of the last.

Finally, how will the shipmasters who carried Babylon's treasures, feel?

“And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, and cried ... Alas, alas that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.” Revelation 18:17-19.

Last of all, the shipmasters of the nations, who have enriched themselves by bringing Babylon's vast imports to their destination, mourn the closing down of their profitable trade.

In contrast to the mourning of Babylon's associates, what will the dwellers in heaven do?

“Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets., for God hath avenged you on her.” Revelation 18:20.

Very different, will be the reactions of the inhabitants of heaven and the people of God upon earth at Babylon's overthrow. Through the centuries the false church has oppressed and persecuted the remnant. Now they are vindicated and the oppressor is brought low.

How was Babylon's utter end symbolized to John?

“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.” Revelation 18:21.

When Jeremiah sent his servant Seraiah to declare to the Babylonians all that God had declared concerning the fate of their “great city” he bade Seraiah, after making an end of reading the book of judgment, to “bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of the Euphrates” and to say: “Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her.” Jeremiah 51: 63, 64.

To complete the portrayal of modern Babylon's doom, John sees an angel enact a similar scene. Taking a great stone he dashes it into the sea, declaring that Babylon shall so disappear forever.

What terrible silence will descend upon the site of the “great city” and what darkness will overshadow her?

“And the voice of harps, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee. And no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee. And the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee.” Revelation 18:22,23.

In the place of the busy activity of modern Babylon's luxurious but idolatrous life there will- descend silence and a great darkness. The sound of her seductive music will be stilled. The craftsmen who bedecked her sanctuaries with idolatrous images will be gone. Once Babylon blazed with light. Now not so much as a candle sheds its rays amid the confusion of her destruction.

In the day of her doom what will be fully exposed?

“For thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.” Revelation 18:23, 24.

In her destruction Babylon's blood guiltiness will be exposed for all to see. It will be manifest as the culmination of all the oppressors and persecutors of the people of God from the beginning.

87. The Marriage of the Lamb

Following the vision of the destruction of Babylon, to what was John's attention directed?

“And after these things I heard a great voice Of much People in heaven.” Revelation 19: 1.

The scene of the vision now moves from the earth, where Babylon has gone down in utter destruction, to heaven, and the prophet hears the response of the dwellers around the throne, to the call.. “Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.” Revelation 18:20.

First there comes to John's ears the “great voice of much people! Who can these be? Without question they are the saints delivered from the earth, led by the 144,000 who have passed through the last dread events of earth's history and have seen the King appear in His glory.

What is the theme of their song?

“Saying, 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. And again they said, Alleluia!” Revelation 19:1-3.

The expression “Alleluia” occurs twenty-four times in the Old Testament, all of them in the Psalms, and four times in the New Testament, all of them in this nineteenth chapter of the Revelation. In the Old Testament it is invariably rendered “Praise you the Lord,” while in the New Testament, curiously enough, it is always left untranslated.

Wherever the expression occurs it is an ascription of praise to the covenant-keeping God for delivering His people from all their foes and blessing them with His salvation. (Psalm 104:35) What more appropriate introduction and close, therefore, could the redeemed choose for their song celebrating the final overthrow of the forces of evil and the entrance of the saints into their eternal

inheritance? Between the opening and closing “Alleluias,” the singers extol the salvation, glory, honor and power of God new so signally manifested.

How enduring will Babylon's punishment be?

“And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.” Revelation 19:1

By this vivid word it is indicated that the judgments of the Lord are not only “true and righteous,” but will endure “for ever!” It gives no support, however, to the doctrine of the eternal torment of the wicked, which has no place in Scripture, and is a travesty upon the character of God.

A number of times in Scripture the punishment of wicked cities and nations is expressed in terms such as this, and a consideration of their fate clearly indicates what is meant. “Sodom and Gomorrah,” says Jude are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire! Jude 7. Obviously these cities of the plain are not still burning. But the fire which destroyed them is eternal in its consequences, because they will never be restored. (See also Isaiah 34:9, 10.)

Babylon similarly will be utterly burned with fire. Its smoke will rise forever. It will not recover any more.

By whom is the song of the redeemed taken up?

“And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.” Revelation 19:4.

As the song of the redeemed reaches its climax in a last grand Alleluia,” the elders and the four living creatures or cherubim take up the theme. Casting themselves down before the throne in worship they utter two great words: an “Amen” of perfect acquiescence to the will of God, and an “Alleluia” of praise for the final accomplishment of His purposes.

What further call to praise then issues from the throne?

“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!” Revelation 19: 5.

Like an echo from the throne, a voice comes back to the praising multitudes calling for a combined sound of praise from all the servants of God, from the cherubim nearest the throne to the outermost ranks of the redeemed.

What response is there to this call?

“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 thunders, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigns!” Revelation 19:6.

The mighty response like “many waters” and “mighty thunders” must be the voice of every being in heaven declaring again “Alleluia,” and “the Lord God omnipotent reigns!” The latter declaration is timely indeed. It had long been declared prophetically that Jesus would reign; now, as He is about to enter upon His dominion, the prophecy becomes actuality.

By what joyous event is the commencement of Christ's reign to be celebrated?

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready!” Revelation 19:7.

As the marriage relationship is used symbolically in quite a number of ways in Scripture, we must carefully distinguish them in order to avoid confusion here.

The union of the Lord with His people Israel was described as their marriage to Him. “Thy Maker,” He declared, “is your Husband; the Lord of hosts is His name.” Isaiah 54:5. Sad to say, Israel proved unfaithful to her Husband, but the relationship was restored in the union of Christ with His church of Jew and Gentile. The children of God, Paul told the Corinthians, are “espoused ... to one Husband,” even “Christ.” 2 Corinthians 11:2. (See also Ephesians 5:23.)

This marriage of Christ with the believers cannot, however, be the same as the “marriage of the Lamb” in this prophecy, for the former has already taken place, while the latter is still in the future. Moreover, in the parables of Jesus respecting this marriage feast, the saints are invariably regarded as the guests. In one parable Jesus tells of the sinful Jews who, for various reasons, rejected the invitation, and of the Gospel call to the Gentiles whereby the wedding will be furnished with guests. He spoke also of the self-righteous who will attempt to get into the wedding without the divinely bestowed wedding garment, but who will be cast out from the Bridegroom's presence.

The call, “Come out of her” (Revelation 18:4), is the final wedding invitation to the guests, and the close of probation marks the last date for the acceptance of the invitation. The seal of God will be the invitation card which the guests must be able to show as they enter the wedding chamber.

If then the saints are the guests at this future marriage of the Lamb, who is the bride? The answer is found in the twenty-first chapter of the Revelation, where John's attending angel declares:

“Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife,” and then points the prophet to “that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. . . as a bride adorned for her husband.” Revelation 21:2,9,10.

From this statement we see that the marriage of the Lamb is the union of Christ with His promised kingdom and His reception into its capital, the New Jerusalem.

In what is the bride of the Lamb clothed?

“And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.” Revelation 19: 8.

An empty city would, of course, be as poor a gift to a king as the presentation of an unadorned bride to her husband. So, as the father brings Jesus into His capital, He presents it as a populous city. But who comprise the population? Why, of course, the saints. The people of God are first of all invited as guests to the wedding, and then they become a part, as it were, of the bride's attire. The bride is, in fact, finally “made ready” by the gathering of the saints out of the earth. Her garments are “granted to her,” when the redeemed are brought by the angels. It can also be said that she “hath made herself ready” by receiving them into her “mansions.”

How privileged will all be who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb?

“And he says unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.” Revelation 19:9.

The angels of heaven will certainly count themselves blessed when they witness the triumph of their beloved Leader, and the joy of the redeemed will be unbounded when they hear the wonderful words, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Matthew 25: 34.

At this time, all the promises which Jesus made to His people concerning this wonderful occasion will be fulfilled. Though King of kings, He will “gird Himself, and . . . will come forth and serve them.” Luke 12: 37. Then He will invite them to sit down at His “table” (Luke 22: 30), and they will eat of the satisfying “bread” of God and drink of the delicious “new wine” of the kingdom. (Luke 14: 15, Matthew 26: 29; Mark 14: 25; Luke 22: 18)

In the banquet hall of heaven the “family of God” will become one in a sense that it has never been since the entrance of sin. Angels and men will once again enjoy that fellowship which was the privilege of our first parents in their innocence, and heaven's arches will ring with sounds of exultant thankfulness and praise.

What closing assurance was the prophet given as to the truth of these revelations?

“And he says unto me, These are the true sayings of God.” Revelation 19:9. Shortly before the end of his revelations to Daniel, Gabriel assured the prophet that what he had declared was “the truth.” Daniel 10:21; 11:2. In like manner the angel messenger to John—who may also have been Gabriel—tells this prophet that his words are “the true sayings of God!” And twice more before the prophecy closes the assurance is repeated. (Revelation 21:5; 22:6.)

Truly we have not been studying “cunningly devised fables” (2 Peter 1:16). But rather the words of “holy men of God” who “spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:19-21) and wrote “for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come!” 1 Corinthians 10:11.

Overcome by all he had seen and heard, what did John attempt to do?

“And I fell at his feet to worship him.” Revelation 19: 10.

For a moment John forgot that the angel was only an intermediary of divine revelation like himself and he fell at his feet in worship. This was wrong, but it was inadvertent. It was regarded, therefore, in a very different way from the rendering of divine honors to the beast, which will earn the unmitigated wrath of God. (Revelation 13: 4, 15; 16: 2; 19:20.)

How did the angel restrain the prophet?

“And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God.” Revelation 19:10.

Gently the angel lifted the prophet to his feet, reminding him that they were brethren, fellow-servants of the great King (Romans 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1), and bearers of the same “testimony of Jesus” to men.

By what were both he and John animated?

“For the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy.” Revelation 19:10.

Very significantly the angel added that both were able to bear “the testimony of Jesus,” because they were animated by the “Spirit of prophecy!”

False prophets who profess to speak in the name of the Lord speak not by His “Spirit,” but out of “their heart,” and their testimony is “deceit” and “lies.” Jeremiah 23:16,25,26. But the true prophet speaks by the “Spirit of God” and his witness is the authentic “testimony of Jesus.”

Of the former we are to “beware” that we may not be seduced (Matthew 7:15); the latter we are to take heed that we do not “despise” (1 Thessalonians 5:20), for through them God speaks for “the perfecting of the saints. . . for the edifying of the body of Christ!” Ephesians 4: 12.

The counsel of Jehoshaphat will be pertinent to the people of God till the end of time: “Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established; believe His prophets, so shall you prosper!” 2 Chronicles 20: 20. And when Jesus appears in the clouds of heaven the remnant awaiting His coming will not only be keeping “the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12). But they will also be cherishing “the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17), which they have received through “the Spirit of prophecy!” Revelation 19: 10.

88. The Coming of the King

With what marvelous spectacle does the final series of prophetic visions begin?

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True; in righteousness does He judge and make war.” Revelation 19: 11.

With this scene begins the final series of visions which portray chronologically the dramatic events connected with the return of Christ, the millennium, and the establishment of the everlasting kingdom of God.

First, John is shown the glorious spectacle of the coming of the divine King. During His earthly life, Jesus came “lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass” (Zechariah 9: 9), in order to reveal the depths of His humiliation on man's behalf. Now he appears as a Warrior upon a war-horse. In “majesty” He rides “prosperously” forth (Psalm 45: 4) to meet and triumph over the rebel kings of earth.

That it is a white horse indicates the dignity of the Rider and the righteousness of His cause. The names by which the divine Rider is designated are also peculiarly appropriate, for He is about to prove Himself “faithful” to all His promises and “the” in the execution of the judgments He has decreed.

How striking was the appearance of the divine Rider?

“His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns.” Revelation 19:12.

Fire is a symbol of purity and judgment, and both shine from the eyes of the conquering King as He speeds into the battle of the day of God.

In chapter fourteen, John saw upon the divine Reaper's head “a golden crown.” Revelation 14:14. That was a crown of victory (stephanos), suggesting His triumph over Satan who had sowed tares in His field. Similar crowns are worn by the twenty-four elders who stand before the throne of God (Revelation 4:4,10), and will be given to all the “overcomers” in the day of final awards. (1 Corinthians 9:25; 2 Timothy 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4.)

A victor's crown would have been equally appropriate here upon the head of the conquering Christ, but instead John notes that He is wearing “diadems” or kingly crowns. It is possible to be a victor without being a king, but Jesus is both Conqueror and Kings of kings. Hence He wears “many diadems.”

Besides the two names already mentioned, what secret name did Jesus also bear?

“And He had a name written, that no man knew, but He himself.” Revelation 19:12.

We have been told that He is called “Faithful” and “True” and later He is described as the “Word of God” and “King of kings, and Lord of lords.” But as to what this secret name is we have no certain clue. It will be remembered, however, that the saints are each to receive a “new name” which will be understood only by themselves. (Revelation 2:17) This, we suggested, will be the “surname” (Mark 3:16,17) which the Lord will give to each of His children, summing up their earthly experience. Perhaps, therefore, the secret name which Jesus bears will gather up all that He has experienced in accomplishing man's redemption. In eternity, if faithful, we may learn that wonderful name!

How was Jesus clad?

“And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood.” Revelation 19:13.

These blood-dyed garments provide a link between the now conquering King and the once suffering Savior, for it was on Calvary's cross that His garments were stained by His own blood.

For the accomplishment of the judgment now due, what proceeds from His mouth?

“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” Revelation 19:15

In Revelation 2:16 Jesus declared that He would fight against the unrepentant “with the sword of My mouth,” and here He is seen about to do so.

By what name on His blood-stained vesture is the outcome of this last conflict with the forces of evil indicated?

“And He bath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords.” Revelation 19:16.

Long have “the kings of the earth set themselves,” and the rulers taken “counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed.” Psalm 2: 2. Hitherto they have been permitted to wield their power in the earth almost unchecked, but now their ill-used authority is to be wrested from them; their power is to be utterly taken away. “Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion,” God says (Psalm 2: 6), and “the government” is henceforth to be “upon His shoulder.” Isaiah 9: 6.

By what final name is the identification of the divine Rider completed?

“And His name is called The Word of God.” Revelation 19:13.

If His vesture links the Rider with the Son of man, this name identifies Him with the Son of God. John opens his gospel with the declaration: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” John 1:1. This “eternal” Word

became the “incarnate” Word for the purposes of human redemption. (John 1:14; 1 John 1:1.) Now John sees the “Word” coming again in glory to claim that which His sacrifice has so dearly bought.

By whom is the conquering King followed?

“And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean!” Revelation 19:14.

Long ages ago, amid the increasing iniquity of the antediluvian world, the grand climax of the struggle between good and evil was revealed to that faithful prophet of God, Enoch. “Behold,” he warned his sinful contemporaries, “the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints [lit. holy ones], to execute judgment upon all.” Jude 14, 15. Centuries later, another Old Testament prophet, Joel, after naming the scene of the final conflict as “the valley of Jehoshaphat,” cried: “Thither cause Thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord.” Joel 3: 11.

The apostle Paul, among New Testament writers, depicts the same fateful day in these vivid terms: “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.” 2 Thessalonians 1: 7-9.

In this vision, John sees these “holy ones” and “mighty ones,” appropriately dressed in “fine linen clean and white” and mounted upon white war-horses, following their Leader into battle.

As John gazed in awe at the vision, who appeared upon the scene?

“And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the heaven of the great God. That you may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.” Revelation 19:17, 18.

That the issue of the battle will not for a moment be in doubt is evident from the fact that even before the battle is joined the fowls of the air are called to assemble in anticipation of the grim feast.

Whom did John see arrayed to oppose the Rider of the white horse and His angel armies?

“And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army.” Revelation 19:19.

In the seventeenth chapter, which is chiefly concerned with the nations comprising the kingdom of the beast, we saw that they would “make war with the Lamb!” Revelation 17: 14. Here we have a more comprehensive picture, for not only the kingdom of the “beast” but also the kings of the rest of the - earth with their armies are “gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse!”

To what speedy end does the battle come?

“And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.” Revelation 19: 20.

This is the first time that the “lake of fire” is mentioned. It is, therefore, appropriate to inquire how and where it will be prepared. When God destroyed the antediluvian world in the Flood, we are told that “the windows of heaven were opened and “the fountains of the great deep” were broken up. The waters thus came down from above and up from beneath, engulfing the lost world.

Peter, by inspiration, draws a parallel between the Flood and the destruction of the earth by fire (2 Peter 3:5-7), and it may be that there will be terrible correspondence in the manner in which the judgment will come. For the Scriptures seem to suggest that not only will fire rain down from God out of heaven, but that the fires deep in the bowels of the earth will break forth to form a vast lake of fire.

By what will the destruction be completed?

“And the remnant were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of His mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.” Revelation 19:21.

Who this remnant can be presents a problem, for with the overthrow and absorption of the kingdom of the dragon, the systems of the beast and the false prophet really comprise the whole of humanity. Perhaps we are to understand that only the leaders of the kingdoms of the beast and of the false prophet are consigned to the lake of fire, leaving the remnant of their deluded followers to be dealt with in the subsequent judgment. This seems to be suggested by Jeremiah's vivid description of the fatal day. (Jeremiah 25: 31-31)

The closing words of the vision complete the fearful picture. Out of the darkened heavens the fowls of the air swoop down to gorge themselves upon the carcasses of the wicked, at the very time that in heaven the righteous are partaking of the marriage supper of the, Lamb!

89. A Prison Sentence for Satan

Whom does John now see descending from heaven?

“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.” Revelation 20: 1.

As the next scene in the dramatic sequence opens, John sees an angel descending swiftly from heaven with a great chain in his hand, together with the key of the bottomless pit or “abyss,” where evidently momentous events are to take place. Naturally, we ask, Where and what is this “abyss”?

On previous occasions when the “abyss” has been mentioned it has always been some place of chaos and desolation—the dark, unordered earth upon which God began to work on the first day of creation (Genesis 1:2). The wastes of the Arabian desert from which the Moslem hordes emerged (Revelation 9:1,2, 11). The international disorders resulting from the French revolution of the late eighteenth century, and the subsequent waves of revolt which overspread the face of Europe (Revelation 11:7; 17:8), out of which the last-day manifestation of the great apostasy comes up.

Now, do the Scriptures mention any such place of confusion and chaos anywhere around the time of Christ's return? The answer, of course, is that the earth itself is described in these very terms following the pouring out of the seven last plagues of the wrath of God. Says Jeremiah: “I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by His fierce anger.” Jeremiah 4:23-26. (See also Isaiah 24:1.)

From this and other similar statements it is clear that the “abyss” to which the angel comes down is none other than the earth which has become as void and formless as it was at the beginning of the first day of creation week.

This, of course, completely refutes the fallacious idea held by many that immediately after Christ's return He will set up His kingdom, and will rule the nations from His capital in Jerusalem. For one thing there are no inhabitants, and for another, the earth is in no fit state for the setting up of any kingdom, least of all the kingdom of Christ.

In due course the earth is to be recreated in its Edenic glory for the reception of the divine King, but a considerable time is to elapse, and many things are to happen before this transformation takes place. For some time to come the earth remains a dark and desolate abyss, and the chain and key suggest that it is to be a grim prison for some notorious malefactor.

Whom did the angel proceed to bind and take into custody?

“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.” Revelation 20:2, 3.

John soon learns the intention of the angel jailer, for he lays hold upon Satan, binds him with his chain, casts him down into the desolate earth, and turns the key in the lock for a period of a thousand years!

This period is the one commonly known as the “millennium.”

Actually, the word never occurs in Scripture, but it is a convenient term for this “thousand years.”

So far, therefore, from this earth being, during the millennium, the scene of Christ's reign over the nations, it is in fact to be the dark and desolate prison in which Satan is sentenced to solitary confinement. While the redeemed, “caught up to meet the Lord in the air,” blend their voices in worship and praise around the throne in the courts of heaven.

What is the result of this binding of Satan?

“He should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled.” Revelation 20:1

How impotent Satan is to be for the next thousand years is now apparent. The saints are all in heaven out of his reach, and the wicked are all dead upon the face of the earth. There is not a soul for him to tempt or deceive. His hands are manacled more effectively than by an iron chain. His way is hedged up more closely than if he were surrounded by the highest prison wall.

One can imagine the thoughts of the arch-deceiver as he goes to and fro amid the desolation, awaiting the sentence of doom which he knows must soon be pronounced.

This casting of Satan into the desolate earth to await his fate has a very important significance, for it constitutes the antitype of the very last act on the Day of Atonement in the ancient sanctuary year, namely the banishment of the “scapegoat” into the wilderness.

It will be remembered that on the morning of the Day of Atonement two goats were brought to the door of the tabernacle and by the casting of lots, one was designated the Lord's goat, while the other was pronounced the “scapegoat.”

Some interpreters have erroneously regarded both goats as typifying aspects of the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ, but this is not so. The word translated “scapegoat” is, as the marginal reading indicates, a proper name, “Azazel,” and represents a being in opposition to Jehovah, namely Satan.

This was recognized by all the Jewish and early Christian commentators. As Wm. Jenks, D.D., in his Comprehensive Commentary states: “Spencer, after the oldest opinions of the Hebrews and Christians, thinks Azazel is the name of the devil. . . . The Syriac has Azzail, the 'angel [strong one] who revolted.’” -Page 410.

Charles Beecher in his Redeemer and Redeemed expresses the same view, which he substantiates by quoting the words of Origen, one of the most learned of the early fathers, to the effect that: "He who is called in the Septuagint ho apompaios, and in the Hebrew Azazel, is no other than the devil."-Pages 67, 68.

Clearly, therefore, this second goat has nothing to do with the substitutionary death of Christ, but in fact represents Satan himself in his relation to the events of the cleansing of the sanctuary.

What that relation was became clear at the end of the day when the sins of the congregation had been remitted by the sacrifice of the "Lord's goat" and absolution had been proclaimed upon the assembled congregation.

"When he [Aaron] hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat: ... and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited [or 'of separation'] : and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness." Leviticus 16: 20-22.

This symbolic ceremony with which the day closed, typified the final casting out of the author of sin, together with the sins for which he was ultimately responsible, to perish in the "wilderness" of "separation."

Albert Whalley in The Red Letter Days of Israel, explains the significance of the symbolism very plainly when he writes:

"Let us contemplate that scene at Christ's return to earth. The church has been judged; Israel has been judged; the Gentile nations have been also judged. . . . Now it is Satan's turn to be judged also; and our High Priest is seen putting 'the moral blame to where it rightly belongs'; judging the great corrupter and banishing him to a place of separation from the affairs of men." - Page 125.

The "fit man" of the ancient sanctuary service, who conducted the scapegoat into the wilderness, finds his antitype in the angel with the chain and the key of the abyss in the vision given to John.

To Satan the words of the psalmist may now well be applied: "He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate." Psalm 7: 15, 16.

With the expulsion of the goat, Azazel, into the place of separation, the symbolic sanctuary service ended. In his concluding visions, John shows in detail the circumstances in which Satan will come to his end. These we shall notice in a later study.

90. Millennial Glory

Leaving Satan in his prison, where was the prophet next taken in vision?

"And I saw 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." Revelation 20:4.

From the dark and desolate earth the scene moves to heaven, whither Jesus, the angels, and the translated saints have returned. Among the happy throng John noticed in particular "the noble army of martyrs" who had lost their lives for Christ's sake (Matthew 16:25; John 12:25), but had now gloriously found life again. Their "little season" of waiting is over (Revelation 6:11) and they have entered into their reward.

He saw there also the remnant of the last days who had resolutely refused to do obeisance to the beast or to his image, and who had "come out" of apostate Babylon in response to the messages of the three angels.

With these special companies, John saw also the countless other saints who "made a covenant" with God "by sacrifice," and were now gathered together as the Lord promised. (Psalm 50: 5)

What wonderful act of God had brought all these saints of all the ages together in heaven?

"This is the first resurrection." Revelation 20:5.

This vast company of worshipping saints were in heaven, it is stated, by virtue of the "first resurrection." Some actually will be living when Jesus appears in the clouds of heaven, and will not need to be raised from the dead, but they are here all classed together seeing that the "dead in Christ ... rise first" and those who "are alive and remain" are "caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17.

The fact that this resurrection is called the "first resurrection" conclusively refutes the idea commonly held that immediately after death the saints enter into their reward in heaven, while the wicked go to some refining "purgatory" or are consigned at once to a burning "hell." It is in effect to declare that the resurrection is "past already" (2 Timothy 2: 17, 18), which the Word specifically denies.

Equally conclusively negative is the spiritualistic teaching that the dead live on and float around as disembodied, ethereal spirits, at the beck and call of any human "medium" who has the power to command their attention. The Bible teaches clearly that the dead "sleep" in complete unconsciousness, knowing nothing (Psalm 146:4; 6:5; Ecclesiastes 9:5,10; Isaiah 38:18), and engaging in no activity whatever. (Ecclesiastes 9:6,10). In the grave they "rest" (Job 17: 13-16; Revelation 14:13) and "wait" for their call to life again on the resurrection day. (See also Acts 2: 34.) Jesus Himself asserted that from "the graves" the dead would "hear His voice" and "come forth" in resurrection life. (John 5: 28, 29.)

If only this truth were understood it would save many from the deceptions of the seance, and from the futility of prayers to and masses for the dead. Being devoid of consciousness, the dead cannot be communicated with or prayed to, and money paid to any priest on their behalf is wasted, for it can in no way affect their condition.

The designation of this resurrection as the “first,” furthermore disposes of the erroneous “secret rapture” theory, which suggests that the “church” will be caught away to heaven in a secret coming of Jesus some time before He returns visibly to the earth. If this teaching were true then Christ's visible manifestation would be His third coming, not His second. But the Bible means what it says. When it declares He will return “the second time ... unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:28) it means the second time. The theory of the “secret rapture” is utterly alien to plain scriptural truth.

The final conclusion that we draw from the term the “first resurrection” is that there will later be a “second resurrection” in which all who are not counted among the redeemed will come up for judgment.

In earlier prophecies in the Scriptures the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the wicked are commonly associated as if the two were a single event. Thus Daniel was told: “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” Daniel 12:2. Jesus Himself said: “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” John 5:28, 29. “There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust,” declared Paul. (Acts 24: 15)

The reason for this association of the two resurrections was that God had not seen fit fully to unveil in detail the course of events between the return of Christ and the setting up of His kingdom in the earth, though Paul had hinted at a succession of resurrections when he declared by inspiration: “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order [lit. body or troop. See 2 Samuel 23:13]: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, . . . when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.” 1 Corinthians 15: 22-25.

Here, however, it is plainly shown to John that the interval between the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the wicked will be exactly a thousand years. The first synchronizing with the Second coming of Christ at the beginning of the millennium, and the second occurring at the time of the third coming of Christ at the end of the millennium, as we shall see a little later.

How full a life will the resurrected saints lead in heaven during the millennium?

“And they lived ... with Christ a thousand years.” Revelation 20: 4.

The phrase “they lived” literally means, “They lived again” (see Luke 15: 32), emphasizing that the resurrection life will be as real and tangible as the previous earthly life of the saints, though infinitely more glorious.

The resurrection body will not be some ghostly ethereal body, but a real one. “There are . . . celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial,” Paul declares in his first epistle to the Corinthians. (1 Corinthians 15: 40.) Our present body, he goes on to explain, “is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.... And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” 1 Corinthians 15: 42-44, 49.

What a body that will be! Immortal, incorruptible! No marks of disease or age, no scars of sin will mar that glorious frame. Yet the form and countenance will be the same. The husband will recognize his beloved partner in life and the wife her dear one. Parents will joyfully clasp their children to their bosoms and children will exult in reunion with their parents. Yes, it will be a real life and we shall know each other when we meet.

How will the saints be occupied during their sojourn in heaven?

“And shall reign with Him a thousand years.” Revelation 20:6.

While the earth is the temporary prison house of Satan, the “throne” of Christ's “glory” will be set up in heaven. Around it the apostles will sit “upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28), and the righteous will begin in heaven to enter into the fulfillment of the promises of participation in the inheritance of Christ.

To what other office will they be appointed?

“They shall be priests of God and of Christ.” Revelation 20:6.

With the angel hosts the saints will also joyfully co-operate in the ceaseless worship of God. To each, no doubt, will be given a part in the organization of the heavenly worship.

What further solemn task will occupy the redeemed in heaven?

“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.” Revelation 20:4.

Besides their reign with Christ, joyous worship around the throne, fellowship with the angels, and an eager contemplation of the wondrous plan which brought them safely to the sea of glass, the redeemed will be called upon to co-operate in one more momentous task. The passing of the just sentence of God upon the angels who sinned. In one of his epistles Paul asked the believers at Corinth: “Know you not that we shall judge angels?” 1 Corinthians 6: 3.

As with every human being, the case of each of the rebel angels will come up before God. (2 Peter 2: 4; Jude 6.) Their records will be scrutinized, their guilt fully demonstrated, and sentence pronounced.

From what will those who partake of this millennial glory be preserved?

“On such the second death hath no power.” Revelation 20:6.

The life conferred by the first resurrection will be forever. For this reason it is called “the resurrection of life.” John 5: 29. The life of those who rise in the second resurrection, by contrast, is but for a brief season, to be finally taken away in the “second death.”

How privileged, therefore, are those who have a part in the first resurrection?

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.” Revelation 20: 6.

Happy indeed will be those who have a part in the first resurrection, while tragic will be the fate of those who remain in the grave until the second. How then can we be assured of participation in the “better resurrection”? Hebrews 11:35.

The answer is first, by “believing.” “He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.” John 11:25,26.

Secondly, by submitting to that “renewing” of mind and heart through the operation of the Holy Spirit of God (Romans 12: 2) which will make us ready to be clothed with “our house which is from heaven” (2 Corinthians 5:2) when Jesus comes. Sanctification is the present work which restores in the life the divine image. Transfiguration will finally clothe the renewed mind with an incorruptible, immortal body, and complete Christ's work of recreation.

91. The Last Struggle

In what state will the wicked be during the millennium?

“But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished!” Revelation 20:5.

Through the thousand-year period during which the saints reign with Christ in heaven, the wicked dead sleep on in their graves. Awaiting the “resurrection of the unjust” or the “resurrection of damnation,” when their “order” (1 Corinthians 15: 23) or group will come forth to receive just sentence for their sins in the “second death.” This “second resurrection,” John tells us here, will take place at the end of the millennial age.

What brief period of freedom will now be permitted to Satan?

“And after that [the thousand years] he must be loosed a little season.” Revelation 20:1 “And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison.” Revelation 20:7.

If the “binding” of Satan is the withdrawal of all opportunity to carry on his work of deception by reason of the destruction of the wicked and the translation of the righteous, the “loosing” of Satan will obviously be brought about by the raising of the wicked all around him on the earth, in the “second resurrection.”

But why “must” he be loosed? Would it not be better if he were never released again? No, this “little season” is necessary in order to show to men and angels that even in the day of Christ's triumph, Satan's heart is unchanged and that right up to the moment of his annihilation he is an unrepentant rebel.

On his release what will Satan at once attempt to do?

“And shall go out 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.” Revelation 20:8.

Seeing the sinners of all ages coming forth from their graves, Satan conceives a last desperate scheme to overthrow the government of God. He sends forth his angel legions to “deceive” the nations and “gather” them together to battle.

What is the grand objective of Satan's plan of campaign?

“And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city.” Revelation 20:9.

At the close of the millennium³ the New Jerusalem, with the saints, the angel hosts, and Christ, descends to the earth that the wicked may look for a brief space at the city whose gates they will never enter. (Zechariah 14: 4)

The contrast between the beautiful city of God and the still desolated earth is staggering to Satan and to the hosts of the wicked. Inside the New Jerusalem there is abundance and satisfaction for every need. Outside there is nothing to support the vast multitudes of the wicked. Satan must do something quickly if he is to preserve his forces. He persuades his leading commanders that it is in their power to take the city, and possess themselves of all its resources. He urges an immediate attack. And so, led by Satan and the tyrants of all the ages, the hosts of the wicked approach the city.

But even as the advance begins, it becomes evident that Satan's effort is in vain. His last bolt is shot. His age long rebellion has failed.

The present vision proceeds immediately to describe the doom of the wicked, but, as we shall see in our next study, the hosts of the wicked advancing on the city will first be confronted by the divine judge upon His throne and right there, before the walls of the New Jerusalem, final sentence will be passed upon them. Then the judgment described in the latter part of verse nine will fall.

By what are the hosts of the wicked consumed?

“And fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.” Revelation 20:9.

This is no doubt the time referred to by the apostle Peter, “in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up!” 2 Peter 3: 10. (See also verse 12.)

The declaration of the Word of God is now also fulfilled: “The righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.” Proverbs 11:31.

Last of all, what punishment will be meted out to the arch deceiver?

“And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” Revelation 20: 10. At long last the controversy between Christ and Satan ends in the utter defeat of the arch-rebel, and his being cast into the lake of fire which has by this time dissolved the whole earth.

By putting the word “are” into the expression, “Where the beast and the false prophet are,” the translators of the Authorized Version give the impression that these two rebel powers cast into the lake of fire at the beginning of the millennium are still writhing in torment at its end when they are joined by Satan himself. And this, together with the statement that Satan will be “tormented day and night for ever and ever,” seems again to lend support to the idea of the conscious existence of Satan and the wicked in indescribable suffering for all eternity. This, however, would be to confer eternal life upon them, whatever the circumstances of that life might be.

Actually, the word supplied in connection with the beast and the false prophet should have been “where the beast and the false prophet were cast,” leaving us to conclude, in harmony with other statements of Scripture, that they were destroyed by the consuming fires of God.

Furthermore, the word “torment” should be understood, as we have previously indicated, as meaning strictly to “test” by fire. When Satan is subjected to this “ordeal of fire” by being cast into the lake of fire and brimstone he, like the beast and the false prophet, will be burned up. (Malachi 4: 1-3.)

Thus the sentence of God through the mouth of Ezekiel will be literally fulfilled: “I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all that behold thee.... And never shall thou be any more.” Ezekiel 28: 18,19.

92. Before The Great White Throne

In this concluding vision of the great controversy, what awesome sight was opened to the prophet's vision? “And 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.” Revelation 20: 11.

The words, “And I saw,” are the usual opening for a new scene or vision, but it cannot be supposed that, after the destruction of the wicked outside the walls of the New Jerusalem, they are raised again from the dead in order to appear before the “great white throne” which the prophet is now shown. If this were so it would involve three resurrections and three deaths, whereas we read only of two resurrections and the judgment at the conclusion of the vision of the great white throne is specifically designated as the “second death.” Revelation 20: 14.

It is obvious, therefore, that the vision of the great white throne chronologically divides verse nine of Revelation twenty into two, and belongs between the advance of the wicked upon the camp of the saints and the falling of fire from heaven.

As the wicked hosts, led by Satan, advance, they are suddenly confronted by the throne of God upraised, as it were, above the city, its dazzling whiteness betokening the purity and holiness and righteousness of its Occupant. At the wondrous sight, the advance of the oncoming armies is stopped dead.

How many now stand before the throne?

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God” Revelation 20: 12. “And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them.” Revelation 20:13.

With those brought to life by the second resurrection added to those previously raised in the first resurrection at the beginning of the millennium, all who have ever lived upon the earth now stand before the throne. Nearest to Jesus, within the walls of the city are the saints. There is no fear in their hearts, for they know that their robes have been washed in the blood of the Lamb and that they have been accounted worthy. But outside the city, the hordes of the wicked are stricken with terror, realizing that the final hour of retribution has come.

What evidence will be brought before the great Judge?

“And the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life.” Revelation 20:12.

In the presence of the assembled human race, the perfect books of judgment compiled by the recording angels through the ages are produced, including the most important of all, the book of life, containing the names of every one of the redeemed.

What is now made manifest to the whole universe?

“And the dead were judged out of those things which written in the books, according to their works.” Revelation 20:12. “And they, were judged every man according to their works.” Revelation 20:13

The investigative judgment, before the return of Christ, which determined who should be raised in the first resurrection and who among the living should be translated with them, had been in books.

Neither the righteous nor the wicked were present. Now both the saved and the lost see the records on which their eternal destiny has been decided.

The “book of life” is opened, the names of the saints are read Out, and their supporting life story is revealed from heavenly ‘daybooks’ containing the complete record of every life. (Daniel 7: 10.)

Every one in the city is seen by angels and men to “have right,” through grace, to a place in the city of God. Not one mistake has been made. Turning to the company of the redeemed when the reading is ended the lovely Jesus says: “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Matthew 25: 34.

Then the records of the vast multitude without the walls of the city are exhibited for all to see. The justice of their exclusion from the city will be as plainly manifest. Some of the wicked, however, who have at one time professed fellowship with the people of God, will attempt to question the decisions saying: “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? And in Thy name have cast out devils? And in Thy name done many wonderful works?” Matthew 7:22. But their mouths will be stopped by the record of un-forgiven sin in the books open before them. They will hear the dread words spoken to them: “I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity.” Verse 23. Surely these self-deluded ones will be the most tragic cases of all.

Then to the whole vast multitude of the wicked Jesus will say: “Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Matthew 25:41.

Upon whom will the dread sentence be executed?

“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” Revelation 20: 15.

The time has now come of which the psalmist wrote in the ninety eighth Psalm. The Lord has “made known His salvation” to the whole universe, and has “openly showed” “His righteousness” “in the sight of the heathen.” Psalm 98:2. It only remains for the fearful sentence upon the wicked to be executed. Fire comes down upon them, the lake of fire opens up beneath them, and they are consumed. “This,” declares the prophecy, “is the second death.” Revelation 20: 14.

Pondering this dramatic recital of the last things,” we are surely constrained to “make haste” that we may be “found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless,” and that our “calling and election” may, in that day, be “sure.” 2 Peter 1:10; 3:14.

93. All Things New

What beautiful vision now appeared before the prophet's eyes?

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.” Revelation 21: 1.

Many have the idea that the redeemed are to spend eternity in heaven. But this is not so. While they are to find a temporary, yet withal a wonderful home there during the millennium, pending the renewal of the earth in its Edenic beauty, it is upon this purified and regenerated planet that the kingdom is at last to be set up.

“The heaven, even the heavens,” declares the psalmist, “are the Lord's: but the earth hath He given to the children of men.” Psalm 115:16. “The meek,” He says again, “shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” Psalm 37:11.

Isaiah declared very plainly that God did not create the earth “in vain,” but “to be inhabited” (Isaiah 45:18). And Daniel is equally clear that “the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High.” Daniel 7:27.

In the beginning God set man upon the earth, and gave him dominion over all that He had created and made. And His purpose will not be fully realized until the “first dominion” shall be given back to the regenerated human race upon the earth.

So, out of the fires which will dissolve this “present evil world” (Galatians 1:4; 2 Timothy 4:10; Titus 2:12) with all its sin, there will arise, “according to His promise,” a “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.” 2 Peter 3:13. Last of all the scenes shown to John was a vision of this wonderful new world.

In referring to the replacement of one “heavens” by another, John is not, of course implying that the dwelling place of God needs renovation, as does the earth. There are actually in descending order, three heavens. The highest or “third heaven” is where God dwells. There is His throne (Revelation 22:1,2) and there Jesus awaits the time when He will enter upon His earthly dominion. (Revelation 12:5; Zechariah 6:13.) In this heaven the saints will dwell while the earth lies desolate (Revelation 20:4), and from thence the New Jerusalem will descend to become the capital of the new earth. (Revelation 21:2.)

This highest heaven John saw many times in vision, and to it the apostle Paul was on one occasion caught up. (2 Corinthians 12:2.) It is indeed deeply concerned in the affairs of the earth, but it is not affected by any of the successive catastrophes here below.

Nearer to our earth are the stellar and planetary heavens in which, in their appointed orbits, revolve countless worlds inhabited by unfallen created, beings. These also follow with deep concern the vicissitudes of our earth, but they also are in no way involved in its disasters.

Lowest of all are the atmospheric heavens. These have been jointly involved with our earth in the events which have befallen it. When the earth is cleansed by fire at the end of the millennium, they will dissolve in the burning heat and pass away "with a great noise." Together with the melted earth they will be renewed after God's own glorious plan.

It is significant that the word used to describe the heavens and the earth which are to rise phoenix-like out of the fires of divine judgment is not *neos*, which means simply "new," but *kainos*, which signifies new in kind and quality. Truly it is impossible for the human mind to comprehend in more than a feeble way the excellence of the coming kingdom of glory, for the earth in its present state provides no adequate basis of comparison.

It will be as real a world as this in which we live, and it will be inhabited by real people. But all the unlovely things which have marred the face of God's creation and the happiness of His creatures will be gone for ever, while its beauties will transcend, beyond the farthest stretch of the imagination, earth's fairest scenes.

The face of the earth will be restored in all its original Eden perfection. There will be no barren deserts or uninhabited jungles and swamps, "for the Lord ... will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord!" Isaiah 51: 3.

The climate of that new world will be universal and eternal spring. There will be no fierce heat or intense cold, nor any hurricanes, earthquakes, or floods to destroy the bounties which renewed nature will bring forth. There will be no cycles of good years and bad, for all the years will be very good. The whole earth will "yield her increase" continually and in abundant measure to meet the needs of all. (Psalm 67: 6.)

The statement that there will be "no more sea" may give some perplexity, for we are told elsewhere that Christ's "dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth!" Zechariah 9: 10. The difficulty is not, however, in the inspired Word. It arises from the punctuation of the sentence, which is, of course, the responsibility of the translators. The phrase referring to the "sea" should really be linked with those concerning the "heavens" and the "earth," the whole sentence reading, "For the first heaven and the first earth are passed away, and the [former] sea was no more!" In other words, the present heavens and earth and sea will be replaced by a new heavens and a new earth and new seas.

So every trace of the curse which has come upon "the whole creation" will be removed. It will be a time of "restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21), material as well as spiritual, and creation's groans and travail (Romans 8: 22) will be turned into a chorus of praise to its Creator, as the regeneration of nature synchronizes with the redemption of mankind.

How completely will life upon the new earth be transformed?

"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 21:4.

Even more wonderful than the renewal of the physical earth in its Edenic beauty, will be the restoration of life upon the earth to its Edenic peace and joy by the eradication of sin and all its dire consequences.

What sorrow and tears, pain and death have resulted from all the strife and war which have ravaged the earth since Cain turned upon and slew his brother. In the earth made new, Christ will have made all wars to cease unto the end of the earth" and peace will reign supreme. (Psalm 46: 9.)

No conflict or revolution will disturb the tranquillity of that kingdom of peace. Never will its fair fields be drenched with the blood of ruthless carnage, nor its cities desolated by infantry's arms. But, says the prophet, the saints will "dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." Isaiah 32: 18.

As strife will be replaced by peace in the realm of redeemed humanity, so will it be also in the lower orders of creation. There will be no need of claws, fangs, and stings, nor any other instruments of defense and offence, for there will be no preying of one creature upon another. Nature herself will disarm, and there will be no more war among all her subjects. (Isaiah 11:6-9.) The struggle for existence will be superseded by harmony and mutual service.

Again, what sorrow has resulted from the false of the resources of the earth and the fruits of human toil by the concentration of the wealth of the world in the hands of the few, and the deprivation and privations of the many. Such inequalities will not exist in the new earth, for everyone will have an abundance of all things needful. There will be beautiful homes and happy occupations for all, and leisure to enjoy to the full the new creation of God. (Isaiah 65: 21-21)

Since the divine sentence, "Dying thou shalt die," was passed upon man (Genesis 2: 17, margin), the sicknesses and diseases which have wracked the human frame have probably been a more universal cause of pain and anguish than even the conflicts between man and man and his struggles with the brute creation. Glorious, therefore, is the realization that all the ills to which the flesh is now heir will likewise be banished from the new earth, with every other evidence of the curse.

There will be no need of either physicians or surgeons, for none will say any more, "I am sick." Isaiah 33:24. No epidemics or plagues will strike down the nations of the redeemed, nor will any insidious disease sap health and strength. There will be no crutches for weak and deformed limbs, for there will be no lame in that world. There will be no need of glasses for poor sight, or

Braille for blind eyes, for perfect vision will be the possession of all. No hearing aids will be there for all will hear perfectly; nor any sign language, for none will be dumb. (Isaiah 35:5,6; 29:18) The bloom of health will be on every cheek, the freshness and vigor of eternal youth. Death itself will have been abolished, and the life of the new world will have no end.

No wonder the Lord will bid the redeemed: "Be you glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create." Isaiah 65:18. There could not but be joy abounding in the day when suffering issues in sovereignty, and trial in triumph; when rest comes at last from pain and grief, toil and tribulation and death; when the saints emerge fully and finally from the "bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Romans 8:21.

By what will the glory of the new earth be consummated?

"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." Revelation 21:2,3.

To complete the blessedness of the redeemed, the throne of God will be established in the earth and the open communion which our first parents enjoyed in the days of their innocence will be restored. The redeemed will "see the King in His beauty" (Isaiah 33:17), and the prophecy enshrined in one of the names of Jesus will be fulfilled: "They shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." Matthew 1:23. (See also Isaiah 7:14.)

There will be no need of missions in the earth made new. Nor will it be necessary for any to say to another, "Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest." Jeremiah 31:34: "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Isaiah 11:9.

What pronouncement did John hear God make concerning His new creation?

"And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." Revelation 21:5.

To enlarge upon all the promises which will find their fulfillment in man's future home, would involve quoting a substantial portion of the Bible, for the coming kingdom of God is both the warp and woof of the whole fabric of revelation. Suffice it to say that the participants of the kingdom of glory will be able to say with Joshua and with Solomon: "There hath not failed one word of all His good promises." "All are come to pass, . . . and not one thing hath failed thereof." 1 Kings 8:56; Joshua 23:14.

Who will be privileged to have a part in the earth made new?

"He that overcomes shall inherit all things." Revelation 21:7.

The rewards promised in the letters to the seven churches were in each case to the "overcomers." Here John reaffirms the qualification for entrance into the kingdom of God. "He that overcomes shall inherit all things."

What will be freely available to the redeemed?

"I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." Revelation 21:6.

Not only will "all things" be for the possession of the saints, but they will enjoy them "always" for, partaking freely of the "water of life," they will never die.

What wonderful relationship will obtain between the redeemed and God?

"I will be his God, and he shall be My son." Revelation 21:7.

More precious, however, than all the "things" which the redeemed will everlastingly enjoy, will be the eternal relationship which they will enjoy with the Father.

Who, on the other hand, will be excluded from the kingdom?

"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whore mongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." Revelation 21:8.

In contrast with the overcomers, John lists those who will have no place in the earth made new. He begins with the "fearful," those who instead of braving the wrath of the dragon will capitulate to it, thinking thereby to "save" their physical lives. Tragic will be their discovery that they have lost what is of infinitely greater worth, the life everlasting.

Then there are the "unbelieving." "Whosoever believes" is promised that he shall "not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:15,16. "He that believes not," however, "is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3:18.

The word "abomination" is invariably associated in the Scriptures with idols and idolatry. The "abominable," therefore, are the idolaters of every kind and species, including the worshippers of the last-day idols of the beast and his image. God will cause all idols to "cease," and those who bow down before them will cease with them. Hence, the appeal with which John closes his first epistle: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." 1 John 5: 21.

Those who are not saved by Christ's sacrifice unite themselves with His "murderers" and must partake of their fate. The "whore mongers" are those who associate with the great "harlot" and her daughters. Such obviously can have no part with the true bride, the Lamb's wife. (Revelation 14:4; 17:1,2.) The "sorcerers" are those who traffic in the sorceries of the great apostasy. (Revelation 9:21; 18:23)

The terrible list ends with all “liars.” Sin began with a lie (Genesis 3:4) and will culminate in Satan's last “lie.” Thus the inhabitants of the earth in the last days will be divided into lovers of “the truth” and lovers of “the lie.” 2 Thessalonians 2:11,12. The latter, with the rest of the wicked, will perish in the “lake of fire” which is the “second death.”

What assurance was John again given of the truth of these revelations? How fully will God's, purpose be fulfilled?

“And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And He said unto me, It is done.” Revelation 21:5, 6.

When the last of the vial angels poured out his final plague, a voice out of the throne declared: “It is done!” This same angel, after showing John the beauties of the new earth now declares by way of anticipation, “It is done!” And we may be sure that the promises of God, as surely as His judgments, will be “yea and amen” in Christ Jesus.

What will Jesus prove Himself to be?

“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.” Revelation 21:6.

In the beginning Jesus was the Creator. Since the entrance of sin He has been man's only Redeemer. He will yet show Himself to be the Re-creator of all things. Time began with Him and He will dominate its end as it merges into eternity.

94. Metropolis of the Kingdom

What happy task was committed to one of the seven vial angels?

“And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.” Revelation 21:9.

The first time this vial angel came to the prophet it was to conduct him “into the wilderness” to see the “great whore.” Revelation 17:1,3. Now the far happier task devolves upon him of showing to John “the bride,” “the Lamb's wife,” or the New Jerusalem. (Revelation 21:9.)

As previously mentioned, the figure of marriage is used in the Scriptures to express two spiritual relationships. First, it represents the union of Christ with Israel and with the church. (2 Corinthians 11:2) Secondly, it is used to represent the induction of Christ into His capital and His kingdom. In this latter union, the New Jerusalem is the “bride” and, when the marriage has been celebrated, “the Lamb's wife.”

The New Jerusalem is the “city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God,” which Abraham saw by faith. (Hebrews 11:10,16) It is the city of which prophets, apostles, and martyrs have dreamed (Hebrews 13:14), and which God promised to prepare for their reception. (Hebrews 11:16)

Fleshly Israel, in their sinful conceit, imagined that it was the Zion they knew, but Paul told them plainly that the earthly Jerusalem was “in bondage with her children” (Galatians 4:25), and that the city to which the prophets referred was “Jerusalem which is above.” Verse 26.

From what vantage point was John shown the New Jerusalem?

“And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.” Revelation 21:10.

To see the great harlot, John was carried “into the wilderness.” To view “the bride,” the “Lamb's wife,” he is taken into a “great and high mountain.” (Compare Ezekiel 40:2) From thence he saw the heavenly city descending to its prepared site as the stately metropolis of the renewed earth. (Zechariah 14:4)

How glorious did the city appear?

“Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.” Revelation 21: 11.

While a figure of speech is used to portray the union of Christ with His kingdom, the “bride” herself is no figure, but as real as the recreated earth, of which it is to be the capital forever.

The glory of God rested for but a brief period upon the old Jerusalem, and the time came, as a result of Israel's unfaithfulness, when there was written across it, “Ichabod ... the glory is departed.” 1 Sam. 4:21. From the New Jerusalem, however, the glory of the presence of God, like gleaming crystal and jasper, will never depart.

By what is the city surrounded?

“And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three gates. On the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates!” Revelation 21:12, 13.

Twelve is the number of governmental perfection; the twelve gates, therefore, indicate the perfect order and organization of the metropolis.

The twelve tribes whose names are inscribed upon the gates of the city are not the tribes of fleshly Israel, but of spiritual Israel, comprehending all the nations of the saved. As Paul explains in his epistle to the Romans: "They are not all [spiritual] Israel, which are of [fleshly] Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children." Romans 9:6,7. "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart." Romans 2:28,29. "If you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Galatians 3:29.

In one or other of the tribes, according to their experience, the faithful 144,000 who endure the final wrath of the great apostasy will be enrolled. (Revelation 7: 4-8.) And so also will all the vast company of the saved when they come up in the first resurrection.

On what is the wall of the city founded?

"And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." Revelation 21:14.

As the walls are pierced by twelve gates, so they are built upon twelve superimposed foundations. The names of the twelve apostles on these provide further proof that the tribes are not the tribes of ancient Israel, but the new tribes of spiritual Israel.

What are the dimensions of the city?

"And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lies foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal." Revelation 21: 15, 16.

It is not clear whether this measurement refers to the circuit of the city or to each side of the vast square. As, however, Ezekiel's vision-city measured 4,500 furlongs on each side (Ezekiel 48:16) and 18,000 furlongs "round about" (verse 35), the New Jerusalem could hardly be smaller. It would seem, therefore, that it will be 12,000 furlongs or 1,500 miles along each side, or 6,000 miles in circuit.

The "equality" of the length, breadth, and height of the city does not mean that it will be as high as it is long and wide, but that the city will be "proportionate" in its dimensions. That is to say, the vertical elevation of the city will be in harmony with its vast surface area.

As the earthly Zion was upon the tops of the mountains of Judah it would seem that the heavenly Zion will itself have the appearance of a great and high mountain, with the glorious throne of God crowning the summit. This would fit in with the expressions commonly used of it, "Mount Zion" and the "Mount of the Lord!" It also makes it very easy to understand how Satan's host approaching the city will suddenly find themselves in the full glory of the great white throne.

How high is the wall of the city?

'And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel." Revelation 21: 17.

This represents a height of some 216-266 feet, a massive enough structure to one standing at its base, but not high enough to obscure the rising terraces of the city leading up to the throne of God.

Of what materials are the wall and the city constructed?

"And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass." Revelation 21:18.

Jasper was probably the ancient name for diamond. A golden city set in a diamond frame will surely be a sight of surpassing loveliness.

With what are the foundations of the city garnished?

"And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst." Revelation 21:19, 20.

It is difficult precisely to picture the colors by reason of the fact that the ancient names do not correspond exactly with those of modern stones. But they would seem to produce a kind of double rainbow with the reds of sardonyx, or onyx, and sardine stone, or sardius, in the center, merging above and below into yellows (chrysolite, topaz), greens (emerald, beryl, and chrysoprasus or aquamarine), and blues (chalcedony, sapphire, jacinth, and amethyst). The base of the wall is transparent jasper or diamond, like the material used for the main structure of the wall above.

Of what material are the gates constructed?

"And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl." Revelation 21:21.

Wonderful will be the iridescent glory of the pearly gates as they swing back to admit the nations of the saved.

Of what is the street of the city made?

“And the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.” Revelation 21:21.

This may mean that the material of which all the streets of the city are made will be transparent gold. A more likely explanation of the word *plateia*, however, is that it is a vast central square in the heart of the city before the throne. Wonderful beyond imagination will be the reflection of the throne and of the buildings of the city in that glorious expanse.

What seemed to be missing from the city, and why?

“And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.” Revelation 21:22.

Dominating the ancient city of Jerusalem were the gleaming temple buildings, but in the New Jerusalem John saw no such structure, for the whole dry will be a temple and the throne of God and of the Lamb the holy of holies of it. All its inhabitants will be priests and worship will be ceaseless before the throne.

By what will the city be illuminated?

“And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light.” Revelation 22:5. “And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” Revelation 21:23. “There shall be no night there.” Revelation 21:25.

Time will still be divided into days and nights, weeks and months, in the new earth, otherwise it would be impossible for the nations of the saved “from one Sabbath to another” and “from one new moon to another” to come up to worship in the city. But, as Isaiah explains, “the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days” (Isaiah 30:26), so that there will be no night as we commonly understand the expression. The city will continually be bathed in the *shekinah* glory from the throne.

Who will be privileged to dwell in this wonderful city?

“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. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day.... And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it.” Revelation 21:24-26.

The kingdom of God will be divided among the “nations” or “tribes” of the saved, over whom there will be subordinate rulers appointed in token of their service in the cause of God on the earth. These rulers will be called on special occasions to councils in the city, while Sabbath by Sabbath and from month to month the saints will throng thither to worship before the throne.

Who, on the other hand, will be excluded from the New Jerusalem?

“And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defiles, neither whatsoever works abomination, or makes a lie. But they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.” Revelation 21:27.

The list of those shut out from the glories of the kingdom again includes those who have partaken in the idolatries of Antichrist and those who have had a part in perpetuating Satan's “lie.” Only those whose names are retained in the book of life will be there.

What will be among the most conspicuous features of the city of God?

“And he showed me 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.” Revelation 22:1, 2.

Proceeding from the throne of God, the river of life will flow across the great central square, if that is the meaning of the *plateia* or “street.” This is the “living water” which Jesus promised to all who believe in Him (John 4:10; 7:38), and the “river of Thy pleasures” to which the psalmist looked forward with such anticipation. (Psalm 36:8)

Arching over the river from both sides will rise the luxuriant tree of life with its twelve manner of fruits. From its description we are not to understand that it will bear twelve different kinds of fruit. There will only be one kind, but there will be new fruit upon the tree every month. As the nations of the saved come up to the city month by month, doubtless each new crop of fruit will be awaiting their delectation.

The statement that the leaves will be for the “healing” of the nations should more correctly be rendered for the “service” of the nations, for none will be ill nor have need of healing in that wonderful world. (Isaiah 33: 24)

From what will the earth be completely delivered?

“And there shall be no more curse.” Rev 22:1

All the effects of sin will have been removed from the natural world, and all its marks upon the character and life of men will have gone. The consequences of the curse that fell upon Eden will be completely eliminated in Eden restored.

What will stand in the midst of the city?

“But the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and as servants shall serve Him.” Revelation 22:1

Occupying the most central and the most elevated place in the city will be the throne of God and of the Lamb, with an open space stretching out in front of it for the reception of the vast throngs who will come periodically to worship before the Lord.

What will be the chief joy of the redeemed?

“And they shall see His face.” Revelation 22:4.

Chief of all the joys of the new world will be that of open communion with God and with His Son, Jesus Christ. To see His face, the fairest of ten thousand, to hear the melody of His voice as the “sound of many waters,” to sit at His feet and listen to the wonderful words of life which come from His lips will indeed be “fullness of joy.” Psalm 16: 11.

What will eternally indicate the allegiance of the saints?

“And His name shall be in their foreheads.” Revelation 22:4.

Indicative of their “right” to enter the gates of the city and partake of the tree of life and the water of life, will be the Father's name in their foreheads.

How long will the reign of the saints in the renewed earth be?

“And they shall reign for ever and ever.” Revelation 22:5.

Then will the prayer which Jesus taught His disciples, and which has been continually upon the lips of the people of God ever since, “Thy kingdom come,” be fully answered. (Matthew 6: 10)

Released from the trammels of the reign of sin, the renewed mind of man will revel in divine arts and sciences, and the discoveries of our time will be as nothing to man's exhilarating quest in the world to come.

Not even the most vivid imagination can picture the delights of the reunited family of God as they live and learn, worship and praise, through the eternal years. (1 Corinthians 2: 9)

95. Whosoever Will

Once again what assurance was given to John concerning the revelations he had received?

“And he said unto me, these sayings are faithful and true.” Revelation 22: 6.

All that was to be shown to John had now been given him. The visions were ended. It only remained for the great purposes of the prophecy to be underlined and the final appeal made. So the angel for the third and last time assures John that all he has seen and heard is faithful and true. (Revelation 19: 9; 21:5)

Why was their communication so necessary and urgent?

“And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show unto His servants the things which must shortly be done.” Revelation 22:6.

Not only were the revelations given to John “faithful and true,” but their fulfillment was imminent. Even in the prophet's own time the outworking of the visions would begin. Thereafter they would progressively unfold until they found their consummation in the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwells righteousness.

How did Jesus reinforce the word of the angel?

“Behold, I come quickly.” Revelation 22:7.

According to human reckoning, the time has seemed long since Jesus made this declaration, but not according to the divine estimate, for “a thousand years” is with the Lord “as one day.” 2 Peter 3:8. Nevertheless, the signs indicate that the day of His return cannot now be far distant. For nearly two thousand years we have been in the “last time.” 1 John 2:18. For more than a hundred and fifty years the “time of the end” has run. (Daniel 12:4.) Today we stand almost at the “end of time.”

What assurance, therefore, is given to those who heed the prophetic Word?

“Blessed is he that keeps the sayings of the prophecy of this book.” Revelation 22:7.

To neglect this vital portion of the Word of God or to profess indifference to it would, in the light of this promise, not only be ingratitude, but foolishness indeed! To its earnest appeal to “come out” of the darkness of apostasy and into the blessed fellowship of Christ and His remnant church (Revelation 14:9-12), we must respond.

What testimony does John himself bear to the things he had written? How did their solemn import affect him?

“And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before me feet of the angel which showed me those things. Then says he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.” Revelation 22:8, 9.

To the message of the angel and to the word of Jesus, John adds his own testimony. Everything he has written, he declares, he has seen and heard. Then once more, overcome by the solemnity of it all, he fell down in worship before the angel. Again, however, he was restrained, the angel reminding John that he was but a servant of God and a fellow-member of the family of the saints.

With what urgency was the prophet instructed to communicate the revelation to the churches, and why?

“And he says unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.” Revelation 22: 10.

When Daniel received his visions, their fulfillment, to a great degree, was in the far distant future. As it was not necessary or desirable that the people of God should understand how long the intervening period would be, he was bidden to seal the things he had written “until the time of the end.” Daniel 12:4,8,9. John's visions, however, were to be progressively fulfilled from his own day. Therefore they were not to be sealed. The church was to begin at once to understand and to proclaim with boldness the revealed Word.

By what decree will human probation soon be closed?

“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.” Revelation 22: 11.

These words underline the urgency of response to the “sayings of the prophecy of this book,” for if the return of Christ is nigh “at hand,” the close of human probation is nearer still. Soon, very soon, the decree will go forth sealing the unjust and the filthy forever in their iniquity, and the holy and righteous for ever as the saints of God. If we are to have a part with Christ and the saints in the coming kingdom, we must decide now, before it is too late.

What does Jesus reiterate?

“And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” Revelation 22:12.

For the second time the Lord Himself speaks. He is coming and coming soon, He declares. And when He comes it will not be to give men still another opportunity to respond to the Gospel appeal, but to put into effect the decisions which have already been made. (Isaiah 40:10; 62:11.) Therefore, we cannot, we must not, delay our preparation until He comes. We must make our “calling and election” sure now.

On what authority does Jesus speak?

“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” Revelation 22:13.

As Jesus was the Creator of all things, the final disposal of all things is likewise in His hands. From His decisions there will be no appeal.

Upon whom is His blessing pronounced? What will be their reward?

“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.” Revelation 22:14.

Happy are those who put their trust in Him and who, in the strength He provides, keep all 'His commandments,” for they will be privileged to pass through the gates into the city of God, and “by right” partake of the tree of life.

Some advocates of “only-believe” who are anxious to dispute the essential qualification of obedience, assert that the original here did not say “do His commandments” but, “wash their robes!” As authority for this alternative translation they quote the Alexandrine, Sinaitic, and other manuscripts, and the Revised Version. The fact is however, that the Codex Vaticanus, which is equally as-old as the Sinaitic manuscript, supports the Authorized Version, and so do the Syriac and the Coptic versions. Moreover, the earliest of the church fathers who quote the text support the reading in the Authorized Version, including Tertullian (AD. 200), Cyprian (AD. 248-258), and Tichonius (AD. 390). The first of the fathers to support the Sinaitic text, on the other hand, is Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria (AD. 326-373). There is, therefore, far greater authority for the reading, “do His commandments,” than for the reading, “wash their robes!”

Who will be forever excluded from the city?

“For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whore mongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loves and makes a lie.” Revelation

This does not mean that there will be sinners outside the city and yet in the new earth, for all who gain an entrance into the new earth will have “right” to enter into the city. If they are “without” the city, they will be outside the new earth. They will have perished in the lake of fire.

In what further way does Jesus describe Himself?

“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.” Revelation 22:16.

As Jesus explained to John at the beginning (Revelation 1:1-3), He communicated the message to His angel, probably Gabriel, and the angel gave the message to John in order that he might testify of the things he had seen and heard to the church. As further authority for what He had done, Jesus declared that He was the Root as well as the Offspring of David and the bright and morning Star. In other words, He was “before all things, and by Him all things consist.” Col. 1:17. He is also the ‘May star’ to which all prophecy points and in which all will find consummation. (2 Peter 1:19.)

With what gracious invitation does the prophecy conclude?

“And 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.” Revelation 22:17.

All through the Scriptures the call to “come” is sounded, and on the same note the last book of the Bible closes. The Spirit which indited the prophecy cries “Come!” The New Jerusalem invites all to enter and partake of its blessings. And all who hear and respond are bidden to pass on the invitation to “whosoever will.”

What solemn warning, therefore, is uttered against any who may attempt to suppress or alter the word which has gone forth?

“For I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” Revelation 22:18,19.

When God gave His first manifesto to Israel He impressed upon all: “You shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish ought from it.” Deuteronomy 4:2. Equally inviolate must be also His final manifesto to the church and to the world. As dire plagues were threatened upon any who should alter the law given on Sinai, so are they threatened upon any who alter, in even the smallest particular, the Word which came to John on Patmos.

For the third and last time what note of urgency is sounded?

“He which testifies these things says, Surely I come quickly.” Revelation 22: 20.

God has tarried until now, not because He is “slack concerning His promise,” but because He “is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish!” 2 Peter 3: 9. But He will not wait much longer.

The worlds dark night of sin has been long, but the glorious morning of the new to-morrow is soon to dawn. The “better country” for which God encouraged the exiled Abraham to hope is not far away. (Hebrews 11:16) The “salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5) is almost due. The inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven” for the saints, will soon be given into their hands. (Verse. 4)

What then should be the response of the saints to the Good News of God?

“Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” Revelation 22:20.

In the day of Christ’s appearing in glory two cries will issue from the lips of the beholders. The despairing cry of the wicked will be: “Hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!” Revelation 6: 16. The joyous acclamation of the righteous will be: “This is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: ... we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation!” Isaiah 25:9.

If we would know which will be on our lips in that day, we should ask ourselves quietly and honestly whether we can join with John in his response to the revelation of the Coming One. If we can sincerely echo the words, “Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus,” we may be assured that God is working by His Spirit in our lives and preparing us to meet Jesus in peace when He comes.

Upon those who so respond what benediction does the prophet pronounce?

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” Revelation 22:21.

John opened his prophecy with a prayer that through his words grace might be unto the people of God. He closes with a petition that grace may continue with them, that they may be assured of a place and a part with the “election of grace” (Romans 11:5) when Jesus comes.

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