

# Gleanings on the Church

Hamilton Smith.

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## Foreword

Hamilton Smith was an early twentieth century writer well known among those commonly known as "brethren." His writings have been much used by God for the edification, exhortation and

comfort of many of God's dear people, and are recognized for their scriptural soundness and depth. Yet they are written with simplicity and clarity so that those both younger and older in the things of God may alike enjoy and profit from the truths set forth therein.

The three short articles which comprise this new book were originally published individually in pamphlet form. They are republished herein as written, except for some very minor editing, to clarify punctuation and an occasional older word, to help the modern reader. These three articles were combined because we felt that they uniquely fit together to present:

- the *facts* as to the true Church of God.
- The God-honoring *pathway* for each believer to walk as part of that true Church; also showing how easily failure can come in.
- the future *glory* that awaits the Church when we "live and reign with Christ for a thousand years."

How refreshing, enlightening and encouraging to read such ministry! We would encourage every Christian, and specially younger ones, to read this book — and to do so with an open Bible and with the heart lifted up in prayer that the Holy Spirit will first make the truth clear and then give the grace to act accordingly, cost what it may.

Throughout this book, the English words *assembly* and *Church* are both used to translate the Greek word *ecclesia* (called-out ones). When the first letter of the word is capitalized, it refers to the entire Church or Assembly of Christ, the body and Bride of Christ. When not capitalized, the local church or assembly, the local representation of the whole Church, is in view.

R. P. Daniels (Ed.) 1983

Note: The abbreviation JND stands for the very accurate "New Translation" of the Bible by John Nelson Darby. KJV stands for the King James Version.

## **Section 1 *Outside The Camp***

### ***Introduction***

In this section, the Scriptural differences between Judaism and Christianity are set forth point by point, including what it means to "go forth therefore unto Him (Christ) without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Heb. 13: 13). Given are the Scriptural reasons for believers to leave the religious systems and sects of men and to gather unto the Name and Person of our Lord Jesus Christ in the simple manner and in the glorious position that the Word of God sets forth for all believers. Scripture makes it very clear that all believers of our present dispensation are members, from the moment of their salvation, of the only Church recognized in Scripture, the body of Christ (Eph. 1: 22, 23; Col. 1: 18). Thus they do not need to join any other "church," but simply walk in the pathway of Scripture that answers to their wonderful position as members of that only true Church (Ed.).

### ***Outside The Camp***

"This spake He of the Spirit, which they who believe on Him should receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7: 39).

"Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Heb. 13: 13).

In the Gospel of John, we have in Christ the presentation of that which is entirely new upon the earth. The religious system that existed before the coming of Christ — before "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" — is set aside in view of the introduction of Christianity. In the first chapter the law of Moses gives place to "grace and truth" which "came by Jesus Christ." In the second chapter the Jewish temple is set aside by "the temple of His body." In the third chapter "earthly things" give place to "heavenly things." In the fourth chapter the failing waters of this present passing life give way to "the fountain of water springing up into everlasting life," and Jerusalem-worship is set aside for the worship of the Father in spirit and truth. In the fifth chapter, the whole legal system with the pool, the angel and the sabbath is set aside by the all-powerful voice of the Son of God. In the sixth chapter the natural bread, sustaining natural life, is thrown into the shade by "the bread which came down from heaven" to give and sustain a new and heavenly life. The seventh chapter brings rivers of living water into this dry and barren world. The eighth and ninth chapters bring the light of life into a world of darkness and death. In the tenth chapter the Christian flock takes the place of the Jewish fold, and finally in the eleventh chapter, the Son of God, acting in the mighty power of resurrection life, annuls the power of death and the grave. We will look at these two systems — the old and the new — under eleven points in that which follows.

## ONE

Old things pass away and in Christ there is the introduction of all things new. But further, we have brought before us the two great outstanding facts of the Christian period on the basis of which the new things of Christianity are established, and by which the truth of Christianity is maintained. These two distinguishing facts are prophetically announced in John 7: 39. On the last and great day of the feast — the day that looks on to a new world of satisfied desire — the Lord invites all the world to come unto Him and drink. He also speaks of the present result for the one who comes. Such would become a channel of refreshment in this needy world. Then we are definitely told that the Lord is speaking of the Holy Spirit which they who believe on Him should receive. True believers companied with the Lord in His earthly path, but they had not received the Holy Spirit. Then we are told that the gift of the Holy Spirit on earth awaited the presence of Christ in the glory, as we read "The Holy Spirit was not yet given because that Jesus was not yet glorified." Here then we have the two great distinguishing features of Christianity.

1. There is a Man in the glory.
2. There is a Divine Person on earth.

Christ as Son of Man is seated in the glory, the Holy Spirit — a Divine Person — is present on earth.

## TWO

There are four great outstanding facts that every Christian should cherish. First, the Cross; second, Christ's session in the glory; third, the Holy Spirit's presence on earth, and fourth, the second coming of Christ. All true Christians rightly make much of the Cross; very generally, too, they look for the second coming of Christ. But sadly, the two central facts are almost ignored and their significance lost, and yet those two central

facts are the distinguishing marks of the present dispensation. The blessings of the Cross are not confined to this present period. Every saint of every age, whether past, present or future, finds in the Cross the righteous basis of all blessing. Nor can the coming of Christ be confined to the saints of the

present period. This great event in one form or another will affect every saint of every dispensation. But the two great intermediate facts give to Christianity its unique character and distinguish the Christian period from all that went before and all that is yet to come. Never before in this world's history could it be said that there is a Man in the glory and a Divine Person on earth, and never again will it be true. These facts belong exclusively to the Christian period, and upon them the Church is established and by them the Church is maintained. Not until Christ was glorified as the risen, exalted Head, and the Holy Spirit come to baptize believers into one Body could the Church be formed, and in its pathway through this world it is maintained by Christ in the glory and the Holy Spirit on earth. Even its last passage from the earthly journey to the heavenly home will be taken in answer to the voice of the Man in the glory and the quickening power of the Holy Spirit on earth (1 Thess. 4: 16, Rom. 8: 11).

If these then are the distinguishing marks of the Christian period, it should hardly surprise us if they become the unceasing object of the enemy's attack. The devil knows full well that if he can succeed in obscuring these two truths, he will succeed in robbing us of every true thought of "Christ and the Church." He cares not if we are *legal saints* after the pattern of a former dispensation or if we seek to be *millennial saints* after the pattern of the world to come, if only he can prevent our being *heavenly saints* according to God's purpose for the present moment. The unceasing hostility of the enemy is ever shown in seeking to rob Christ of His glory and the saints of their blessings. If however by the grace of God these two great facts are received and maintained in power in our souls, we shall have the key to the Christian period and the way of recovery of the truth of that great mystery — Christ and the Church.

### THREE

In the early chapters of the Acts we have the record of the historical fulfilment of these two outstanding facts. In the first chapter, Christ is received up into glory. As He stood, as the risen One in the midst of His disciples, having uttered His last words, "He was taken up and a cloud received Him out of their sight." In the second chapter the Holy Spirit is received on earth. The disciples "were all together in one place (JND) and there came suddenly a sound out of heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and filled all the house where they were sitting. And they appeared to them cloven tongues of fire and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit."

The immediate result is that the disciples are baptized into one body, united to Christ the Head in heaven. The Church is formed, the gospel is preached, the dreadful works of men are exposed, the wonderful works of God are declared, three thousand souls are converted, and additions are made to the Church daily.

Thus there is found on earth an assembly of people apart from this world, belonging to another world, drawing all their resources from Christ in the glory and controlled by the Holy Spirit on earth.

### FOUR

The effect of these two great facts upon the individual saint is strikingly set forth in the history of Stephen. In this devoted servant we see a characteristic-saint of the Christian period, according to God's thought, and hence the display of the moral features which should have marked the whole Church during the absence of Christ.

The closing verses of Acts 7 present a man on earth indwelt by a Divine Person — the Holy Spirit — and drawing all his resources from a Man in the glory. As we read "He being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up stedfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God" (v. 55). Blessed effects follow:

1. He "*looked up.*" A man on earth full of the Holy Spirit looks up! Such an one is not indifferent to what is within or what is around, but characteristically he is not marked by looking within or looking around. To look within is to be depressed, to look around is to be confused, but to look up is to see no man anymore except Jesus only.

2. He looked up "*stedfastly.*" As a better translation has it, he "fixed his eyes" on another scene and refused to be distracted by the evil of this world on the one hand, or detained by its attractions on the other.

3. He "looked up stedfastly *into heaven.*" The man *filled* with the Holy Spirit is *linked with heaven while passing through the earth.* Such an one realizes that he is a partaker of the heavenly calling. Inasmuch as we yield to the control of the Holy Spirit, we shall be led into the heavenly calling even as Rebekah of old, consenting to go with the servant, was led from the land of her fathers to have part with Isaac in a new land (Gen. 24). Ignoring the presence of the Holy Spirit the Church has settled down in the earth, quieting its conscience by much zeal for the good of man.

4. Stephen, looking up to heaven, sees "*the glory of God.*" Everything in this world speaks of the glory of man. But the man filled with the Holy Spirit is no longer occupied with the fading glory of dying men, but looks into a scene where everything and everyone speaks of the glory of God. "In His temple doth everyone say, Glory" (Ps. 29: 9, JND)!

5. Not only does he see glory, but he sees the glory of God "*and Jesus.*" He sees a Man in the glory. In the brightest spot of the universe, where God is fully displayed in all His infinite perfections, he sees a Man. All other men may come short of the glory of God, but at last a man is found — *the Man Christ Jesus — who has answered to the glory, maintained the glory and passed into the glory.* The chapter opens with the God of glory appearing to a man on earth and ends with a Man appearing in the glory of God in heaven.

6. Furthermore the Man whom he sees in heaven — Jesus — is standing on "*the right hand of God.*" Not only is there a Man in the glory, but that Man is set in the place of supreme power and honour. The One who came into the world in circumstances of weakness, who passed through it as a poor Man, who in passing out of it was crucified in weakness, in heaven now holds the place of highest power and glory.

Every mark of dark dishonour,  
Heaped upon the thorn-crowned brow,  
All the depths of His heart's sorrow  
Told in answering glory now.

7. **Lastly, Stephen can say, "Behold I see *the heavens opened.*"** There has been unrolled before his vision a heavenly scene wherein he sees the glory of God. In the glory he sees a Man — the Man Christ Jesus, and that Man he sees in the place of supreme power. But he sees more; he sees that the heavens are opened so that all the glory and the power of the Man in heaven is at the disposal of a man on earth. If the Lord Jesus has gone back to heaven to occupy a place of supreme power, He has left the heavens open behind Him so that all the love and power and grace of the Man in heaven may stream down upon a man on earth.

The result of this seven-fold vision, if we may so speak, is very blessedly set forth in the closing scene of Stephen's earthly life. He is a man on earth controlled by the Holy Spirit, and consequently drawing all his resources from Christ in glory. In result we see in Stephen a beautiful example of a man

on earth in the midst of the most terrible circumstances, supported by the Man in heaven. We further see that just as the man on earth is *supported* by the Man in the glory, so the Man in the glory is *represented* in the man on earth. Stephen, lifted above all thought of self, becomes a shining witness to the character of Christ in heaven. Like his Master he prays for his enemies, commits his spirit to the Lord and leads the long line of martyrs by sealing his testimony with his blood.

In Stephen then we are permitted to see the practical results that flow from an individual believer being controlled by the Holy Spirit on earth and drawing his resources from Christ in heaven. What was so blessedly set forth in Stephen is still God's thought for His people today, and seeing that Christ is in the glory and the Holy Spirit is yet on earth, it is still possible to answer to the mind of God.

## FIVE

Moreover, the Word of God not only presents the realization of these two great facts in the case of an individual believer, but we are permitted to see companies of saints governed and characterized by these facts. In Acts 9: 31 we read, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were multiplied." Here we have Christian assemblies marked by two things: they walked in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit. Opposed and persecuted by the religious world of the day, they were directed and supported by the Lord in glory and guided by the Holy Spirit on earth.

Not many wise after the flesh, nor many mighty or noble were found in these assemblies. For the most part those who formed these companies were drawn from the foolish, the weak and the base of this world, who like Peter and John were unlearned and ignorant men. And yet in the sight of the Lord they were the excellent of the earth in whom He finds His delight and with whom the Holy Spirit is content to dwell. Without worldly wealth, without humanly devised creed or articles of religion, without visible head or guide, with nothing indeed that appealed to sight or which nature could appreciate or in which flesh could boast, they pursued their pilgrim way as the ransomed of the Lord, with songs and everlasting joy, for they were on their way to the city which has foundations in company with the Lord in glory and the Holy Spirit on earth.

Without Christ and the Holy Spirit they had nothing, for earth was closed behind them, but with Christ and the Spirit they had everything, for heaven was opened before them. Little wonder that they enjoyed rest and edification, comfort and multiplication. How far, alas, has Christendom travelled from this simple and beautiful picture. The assemblies have not held the Head in heaven and have ignored the Holy Spirit on earth. As a result there is among the people of God unrest and starvation, distress and disintegration. Yet Christ in the glory remains the same yesterday, today and forever, and the Holy Spirit abides with us forever. There is no change in Divine Persons. If then, in separation from corruptions of Christendom, even a few will yet look to Christ in heaven as their only resource and submit to the control of the Holy Spirit on earth, will they not in the end of the Church's history find, even as at the beginning, some measure of rest, edification, comfort and multiplication?

## SIX

The consideration of the history of Stephen and the early assemblies brings before us the further great fact that Christianity sets our feet in a path which demands, at every step, the exercise of *faith*. In this respect Christianity is in direct contrast to Judaism. The Jewish system was designedly of a national and earthly order. Everything in that system — the temple with the costly stones, the priests with their beautiful robes, the singers with their instruments, the altars with their sacrifices — appealed to sight and sense. Its laws and precepts regulated every detail of the present natural life, but it was silent as to heaven, the life to come and things unseen. That there existed great men of faith in

connection with that system is beyond question, but the system itself demanded obedience from the natural man rather than faith from one born again. In Christianity, while of necessity it will greatly influence the life here, we are at once brought into relation with heaven and the unseen, and above all, with Divine Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Here at once faith is a necessity since only by faith can we know the Father, see Jesus crowned with glory and honour, or realize the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth.

Yet if we look at Christendom today, we are at once faced with the solemn fact that it has turned back to a Jewish order of things, marked by everything that appeals to sight and sense, with very little that calls for the exercise of faith. In result the great distinguishing truths of Christianity are entirely lost. Christ in the glory as the risen and exalted Head of the Church is set aside by human appointed heads, and the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth is almost entirely ignored.

If, however, Christ in the glory and the Holy Spirit on earth are ignored, it must inevitably lead to the loss of all true understanding of that great mystery — Christ and the Church — and of the heavenly calling and the purpose of God, with the result that true Christians will not rise beyond preaching the gospel to meet the need of man, while the great mass of mere professors prepare the way for the great apostasy.

## SEVEN

If, however, through the mercy of God the eyes of a few have been opened to see the distinguishing truths of Christianity and the great departure from these great truths in Christendom, what are such to do? Are they to remain in ecclesiastical systems which by their constitution or practice set aside the Headship of Christ and the presence of the Spirit? Does Scripture afford any light as to the course those should take whose eyes have been opened to these great truths and who desire to answer to them?

It is impossible to think that God has left His people without any guidance for an evil day. We read in 2 Timothy 3: 16-17,

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." So we may be sure there is light to show the path of the godly in an evil day. Through ignorance or bad teaching we may fail to discern it. We may be so wedded to national and hereditary systems of men that we even oppose it. We may through indifference and lack of exercise fail to walk in it. Nevertheless God has a highway through this wilderness-world for the ransomed of the Lord, and He has given light that we may discern this way in a day of ruin.

This light is not confined to one scripture. The Second Epistle to Timothy, the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, the Second Epistle of Peter, the Epistles of John and of Jude, the addresses to the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3, all have in view the ruin of the Church in responsibility and in a special way give light for the Christian path in the last days. Moreover we have in the Epistle to the Hebrews very special light for those who find themselves linked up with religious systems formed after the pattern of Judaism.

That Epistle was written to Jewish believers who were in danger of turning back from Christianity to Judaism. To meet this danger, *Christ is* presented to their hearts. The glory of His person, the glory of the place He holds at the right hand of God, the grace and sympathy of His heart as our great High Priest, and the efficacy of His work, all pass before us to attract our hearts and thus draw us outside of every religious system on earth and attach our hearts to Himself in heaven. Hence, the

great closing exhortation of the Epistle, "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Heb. 13: 13)! One great aim of the Epistle is to show that if Christ appears before the face of God in heaven, He takes a place outside the religious systems of men on earth. If He has gone within the veil He has also gone without the Camp. So the exhortation to the believer is to go without the Camp to reach the company of Christ in the outside place.

Here then is the Scriptural reason and the Scriptural warrant for leaving the religious systems of men. We do so, not simply because there is a great deal of evil in these systems, but because Christ is outside of these systems and we desire to reach Him and give Him His place. We "go forth . . . unto Him."

## EIGHT

The question, however, may arise, What is signified by "the Camp" and how can this term cover in its significance the religious systems of Christendom so as to warrant us leaving them?

First, let us note that whatever the significance of the Camp it is something of which it is said that Christ is outside. Three times in the three verses of Hebrews 13: 11-13 we have the word "without." In verse 11 it is used in connection with the type, in verse 12 in connection with the great antitype and in verse 13 in its application to believers.

Under the law, the body of the sacrifice (sin offering) was burned without the Camp. In the Antitype, Jesus, that He might set apart His people from everything inconsistent with the holiness of God, suffered the judgment of sins in the place of forsaking. But to accomplish this great work He went outside the worldly religious system (Judaism) which in its beginning had been sanctioned by God, but in its history had become corrupted by man. This system is set before us under the figure of a Camp or a City; both figures presenting the same idea of an ordered religious system adapted to the natural man, but in different circumstances — in *movement* at one time and *settled* at another.

But what, more precisely, is the Camp? The Camp represents a worldly religious system, originally set up of God, making its appeal to the natural man and composed of people outwardly in relationship with God. Turning to Hebrews 9: 1-10 we find a description of the Camp.

1. It was marked by *a worldly sanctuary* with magnificent vessels and furniture (1, 2).
2. There was an inner shrine to this worldly sanctuary, veiled from the outer and known as "the Holiest of all" (3, 4).
3. In connection with this worldly sanctuary there existed an order of priests, distinct from the people, who devoted themselves to the service of the sanctuary and over whom there was a High Priest (6, 7)
4. There were the people (v. 7) distinct from the priests and who had no direct part in the service of the sanctuary.
5. The system, as such, signified (while it lasted) that there was no direct access to God (8).
6. This worldly sanctuary with its priests and sacrifices, could not give a purged conscience.
7. There is one significant omission. There is no thought of any reproach connected with this worldly religious system.

Such is the description of the Camp in its significant features as presented in the Word of God. But the Word also presents Christianity in all its beauty as the exact contrast to the Camp. The Christian Company is composed of a people, not in mere outward relationship with God by natural

birth, but in vital relationship by *new birth*. Instead of outward worship in magnificent buildings it introduces living worship in "spirit and truth." In place of a special class of priests distinct from the laity, all believers are priests with Christ their great High Priest. Moreover, Christianity carries with it the blessing of a purged conscience and direct access to God. Moreover, since it opens heaven to the simplest believer, it entails on earth the reproach of Christ.

Having before us the characteristic differences between the Jewish "camp" and the Christian company, we may easily test the great religious systems of men. Do these great universal, national or non-conformist systems of men bear the characteristics of the Camp or those of Christianity? Sadly, beyond all question, truth compels us to admit that they are framed after the pattern of the Camp. They have adopted a worldly sanctuary with its railed-off inner shrine; they have ordained a special class of priests under the direction of a supreme priest who stands between God and the people, with the result that these systems, as such, give no direct access to God and no purged conscience. These systems recognize man in the flesh, appeal to man in the flesh and are so constituted as to embrace man in the flesh. Hence with them, there is no reproach.

Are then such systems the Camp? Strictly they are not. In one sense they are worse than the Camp inasmuch as they are merely imitations framed after the pattern of the Camp, with certain Christian adjuncts. The Camp was in its inception set up by God, but these great systems have been originated by men, however sincere and pious they may have been. Hence if the exhortation to the Jewish believers was to go forth without the Camp, how much more incumbent it is upon the believer today to go forth outside that which is merely an imitation of the Camp.

## NINE

Here then we have our warrant for going outside the great religious systems of men, but let us remember we do so in order to come under the direction of Christ in glory and the control of the Holy Spirit on earth. We have had our eyes opened to see that it is impossible to remain in these systems and give Christ His place or the Holy Spirit His place. As to our actual histories, a variety of reasons may have swayed us in leaving these systems. But it is of the first importance to see that the true Scriptural motive for leaving these systems is to "go forth *unto Him*." Going forth from that which we have learned to be evil is merely negative. No one can live on negatives. Going forth *unto Christ* is positive. It will indeed involve separation from much that is evil, but it is above all separation *to Christ* — a separation that gives us a *positive Object* for the heart. If we are moved by any less motive we shall be in danger of going back and building again the things we have destroyed. Those who go forth lightly can go back lightly, but the soul actuated by true motives goes forth from the Camp-order of religion to come under the sway of Christ and the Spirit.

This outside place with Christ is one of great privilege and corresponding responsibility. Of privilege, for what can be more blessed than coming into the company of the risen Christ and under the control of the Spirit? Of responsibility, for the company of Christ and the Spirit will demand the exclusion of all evil — moral doctrinal, ecclesiastical — inconsistent with the presence of Divine Persons.

To come into this place is very different from merely leaving a sect because it has bad doctrine or bad practice or bad ecclesiastical procedure, such as one-man ministry. We may indeed separate from some system and come together in somewhat more Scriptural fashion, meeting simply as believers and refusing one-man ministry, and yet fall short of coming *to Christ* and giving the Spirit His place; and in result only make one more sect which opens the door to a great deal of self-will through any-man ministry.

Moreover, this outside place with Christ is not only a place of privilege and responsibility, but one of *reproach*. In the verses we have considered (Heb. 13: 2-13) the outside place is viewed in two ways; first, as the place of judgment and second, as the place of reproach. In marvellous grace, Christ went outside the gate bearing both the judgment of God against men and the reproach of men against God. He could say, "The reproaches of them who reproached Thee are fallen upon Me" (Ps. 69: 9). None except Christ could bear the judgment of God, but others can share in the reproaches of men. Thus, while Christ has gone without the gate bearing our sins, we are called to go without the gate bearing His reproach. If the grace of God has associated us with the glory of Christ in heaven, it gives us also the high privilege of sharing the reproach of Christ on earth. The riches of Christ in heaven entail the reproach of Christ on earth. The Jewish system gave man a great place on earth but no place in heaven. Christianity gives the believer a blessed place in heaven, but no place on earth except one of reproach.

Yet if once we realize that we are in the company of Christ and the Holy Spirit, we shall esteem "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." What is more blessed or more wonderful than a company of people on their way to glory in company with the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit? Such people indeed may be poor and feeble in themselves, with no human creed to maintain sound doctrine, no articles of religion to maintain order, no ritual or ceremonial rites to conduct their assembly meetings or their service for the Lord. However, having Christ in the glory as their Head and the Holy Spirit on earth to control, they will have more than all the systems that pious men have ever devised because they will have all the vast resources of the Godhead at their disposal, for in Christ all the fulness of the Godhead is pleased to dwell. How great then the encouragement to our feeble faith to act upon the exhortation, "Let us go forth *unto Him*."

#### TEN

It may be that only a few have faith to obey the exhortation. Those who do will find themselves not only in a place of great blessing, but in a place where so much that is according to God's Word, can be carried out quite simply — things which would only be possible in a limited way to those who remain in the Camp. This is strikingly indicated by the writer of Hebrews, in the verses that follow in Hebrews 13.

1. For those in the outside place it is comparatively simple to wear the pilgrim character, as the writer says, "Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (v. 14).

2. Such who are set free from the restraints of man's systems, can worship in spirit and in truth. We are thus exhorted "to offer the sacrifice of praise continually, that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His Name" (v. 15).

3. Those in this outside place will not be indifferent to the needs of the bodies of men (v. 16).

4. They will also care for souls, as we read "They watch for your souls" (v. 17).

5. Set free from the hampering ritual of men they will be able to draw near to God in prayer (v. 18).

6. They will be in a place where it is possible to do the will of God (v. 21).

7. They will be in a place where it is possible to be well pleasing in His sight (v. 21).

#### ELEVEN

Seeing then the path that is opened to us by Scripture, and seeing something of the blessedness of

this path, may we have grace and faith to leave all that is of man and enter upon the highway that has been cast up for the ransomed of the Lord. However great our individual failure, however great the ruin of the Church in its responsibility, these two tremendous facts still abide. Christ is still a Man in the glory at the right hand of God and the Holy Spirit is yet on earth, and thus it is still possible to answer to the exhortation "Let us go forth unto Him."

With these two stupendous facts the Church was formed and commenced its pilgrim way: with these two facts it has been maintained throughout the long ages, and with these two facts it will also at last close its earthly journey, for before God closes His Book we have one last view of the Church on earth as the waiting Bride, led by the Spirit on earth and listening to Jesus in the glory (Rev. 22: 16-17).

In the course of its journey through this scene, how greatly these facts have been obscured! How much has been adopted that is wholly inconsistent with them, but at the last the Church, stripped of every human resource, every religious device and all worldly aids, will pass into glory in the power of the two great facts that Jesus is in the glory, and the Holy Spirit present with the Church on earth.

Great indeed has been the failure and small indeed has been the appreciation of the vast resources involved in these truths. Yet because Jesus remains in the glory, the same yesterday, today and forever, because the Holy Spirit abides with the Church forever, the ransomed of the Lord will at last come to the heavenly city with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. There they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

## ***Section 2 In The Last Days — Philadelphia and Laodicea***

### ***Introduction***

In the first part of this Section the Scriptures are simply allowed to speak in relation to the way in which Christ is presented to the assembly in the Asian provincial city of Philadelphia (Rev. 3: 7-13). The attitude of approval which the Lord takes towards Philadelphia, expressed in His own gracious words, as well as His word of warning to them and His word of encouragement to the overcomer, are full of instruction for each of us today.

In the second part of this Section, we are shown the Lord's presentation of Himself to the assembly in the Asian city of Laodicea (Rev. 3: 14-19). The Lord first exposes the Laodiceans with strong words of disapproval, then counsels them, deals with them, shows His grace to them, and finally gives a word to the overcomer.

By studying the Lord's addresses to the seven assemblies of the Roman province of Asia in Revelation 2 and 3, and particularly the addresses to Philadelphia and Laodicea as presented in this Section, we are able to discern assembly conduct which brings both the Lord's strongest approval and strongest disapproval. Consequently, we as individual believers are able to better judge whether or not our "church" position and attitudes meet with the Lord's approval by being Philadelphian in character, or whether we have drifted towards Laodicean walk, influence and attitude (Ed.).

### ***In The Last Days***

#### ***Part 1 Philadelphia — Revelation 3: 7-13***

The addresses to the assemblies in Revelation 2 and 3 were sent to seven assemblies actually

existing in the Roman province of Asia in the days of the Apostle John. Bearing in mind, however, that in the introduction to Revelation, the whole book is referred to as "prophecy," it becomes evident that these addresses have a prophetic character. Evidently, the Spirit of God has taken occasion by the conditions existing in these assemblies to portray the consecutive history of the Church from beginning to end, viewed as the responsible witness for Christ on the earth during the time of His absence.

*Ephesus* represented the condition of the Church, under the eye of Christ, at the beginning. Then there came a time when that phase in the Church's history passed away and was succeeded by *Smyrna* which in turn, characterized the whole Church. *Smyrna* was succeeded by *Pergamos*, and finally *Pergamos* was succeeded by *Thyatira*. It is, however, important to see that *Thyatira* is not succeeded by any other assembly. The fact of the Lord's coming being mentioned in *Thyatira* shows that this phase of the Church's history continues to the end. It is the last of the successive assemblies; that is to say, it is the last assembly that is viewed as holding an ecclesiastical position representative of the whole Church. The last three assemblies are not viewed in this way. So, we may say the beginning of the Church's history *in responsibility* is presented in *Ephesus* and the end is reached in *Thyatira*; the last three assemblies presenting particular phases of the end.

*Thyatira* assumes an ecclesiastical position and is marked by the grossest corruption. *Sardis* represents a movement in which there is the correction of abuses, but which leads to lifeless formalism. *Laodicea* represents a still later movement marked by indifference to Christ and self-sufficiency.

Confining now our thoughts to *Philadelphia*, we are at once faced with the notable fact that in spite of the last days being marked by the corruption of Rome, the lifeless formality of Protestantism, and the indifference and self-sufficiency of Modernism, there will be found upon the earth those who have the approval of the Lord.

We do well to remember that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,"; at the same time there are certain portions which give the people of God positive instruction, in the mind of the Lord, for the last days. Of these Scriptures, the Second Epistle of Timothy and the address to Philadelphia have a pre-eminent place. In Second Timothy the Apostle Paul gives us definite instructions how to act when the House of God has become likened to a great house in which there are vessels to honour and to dishonour. Apparently, however, it was not revealed to Paul that in the last days of the Church's history there would be a Church revival. This great fact was revealed to the Apostle John in the address to Philadelphia, wherein we have clearly set forth a special movement of the Spirit of God, in the end of the Church's history, bringing about a Church revival which has the Lord's approval and therefore is according to His mind.

Having then the instruction of Second Timothy and the addresses to the seven assemblies, it is possible for us to know exactly what the Lord condemns and, of yet greater importance, to know by the address to Philadelphia, what the Lord approves in these last days. Hence, however great the confusion of Christendom, there can be no excuse for the people of God to drift in aimless confusion, groping for light "amidst the encircling gloom," each seeking to find his way as best he can, without any certainty as to the mind of the Lord. Alas! as the result of listening to the many voices of men, this confused state of mind is only too common. If, however, we have an ear to hear what the Spirit saith to the churches, we shall learn what is according to the mind of the Lord. Then knowing His mind, the one who loves the Lord will seek to answer to His mind without assuming to have done so.

It is then of the first importance to see the true character of the Church revival in Philadelphia. It is not a revival of the Church in its ecclesiastical position: it is a revival of *the Church morally*.

Thyatira represents the Church ecclesiastically, but with almost every moral trait of the Church lacking, and hence, in the eye of Christ, is utterly corrupt. Philadelphia, on the other hand, assumes no ecclesiastical position, but is marked by the great moral characteristics of the Church, and hence has the approval of Christ. This by no means infers that those who are right morally are indifferent to corporate or assembly responsibility. Such will indeed be jealous of every Church principle, while refusing the assumption of being *the* Church.

In Philadelphia there is no attempt to reform that which has become corrupt in Thyatira, nor to revive that which has become lifeless in Sardis, but there is a return to the great spiritual features of the Church as in the beginning. In this sense, Philadelphia represents a Church revival.

What then, we may enquire, are the great spiritual features of the Church? This raises another important question: For what purpose was the Church left on earth? There is surely only one answer. It was left here *to witness for Christ* during the time of His absence. It is God's great thought that, though Christ has been rejected and has gone from earth to heaven, yet there should be a company of people left behind on earth in whom the character of Christ should be continued so that, though Christ is personally gone, He should still be seen in His people.

Now the whole value of the Philadelphian assembly lies in this fact that, in the end of the Church's history, they express something of the character, the path and the strangership of Christ, and thus return to the spiritual features of the Church as at the beginning. They take their character from the One who is the Holy and the True; a door is set before them that no man can shut; they move in circumstances of outward weakness; they keep Christ's Word; they do not deny His Name; they are opposed by those who claim an hereditary and official religious position; they are loved by Christ; they keep the word of His patience and thus wear a stranger's and pilgrim character while waiting for His coming in glory.

What, however, is all this but Christ — His character and path of strangership — reproduced in His people? God is the Holy and the True, and Christ was in this world, the perfect expression of all that God is, in circumstances that were ever marked by outward weakness. The manger and the inn, the lonely path, the upper room, the cross and the borrowed grave, all speak of the outward weakness in which the Son of God passed through the world. He also met the constant opposition of those who claimed to be the hereditary people of God. But in spite of every circumstance of weakness and in the face of all opposition, to Him the porter opened a door which no man could shut. They sought to cast Him down from the brow of the hill, they took up stones to cast at Him, they sought to entangle Him in His talk, and they took counsel to destroy Him, but all in vain. God had opened a door that men and demons combined could not shut. In circumstances of weakness and in the presence of continued opposition, He perfectly expressed all that God is as the Holy and the True; He kept the Father's word, declared the Father's Name and received the Father's approval. In the midst of the ruin of the Jewish dispensation, the Father could look down upon Him and say, "This is My beloved Son in whom is My delight." He refused to interfere in the course of this world — it was the hour of His patience and no one took His crown, for He passed from the place of weakness to the place of power at the right hand of God where faith delights to see Him crowned with glory and honour.

Such was the path of Christ on earth. We repeat the whole value of Philadelphia lies in the fact that, in the midst of the ruin of Christendom, God can look down and see something of the character of Christ displayed in a little remnant, and therein a return to His original intention in the Church. This meets with the unqualified approval of the Lord.

Earnestly desiring to answer to that which meets with His approval, we may well enquire: How

was the condition that the Lord approves in Philadelphia brought about? For whatever brought about a return to the spiritual features of the assembly in their case can accomplish a like result in the Lord's people today. Is not the return to the Church morally entirely brought about by *the appreciation of Christ in the way that He presents Himself to the Philadelphians?*

This brings us to the consideration of:

### ***The Way in which Christ is Presented to the Church in Philadelphia***

Christ is seen in a three-fold way: first as "the Holy," then as "the True" and lastly as "he who hath the key of David." It is clear that Christ is not presented to this assembly in His official character as holding the seven stars and walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. He is presented in His moral glories.

He is "the Holy" — the One Who is free from all taint of sin and wholly separate from sinners. Personally, He was ever so, but at the cross He vicariously stood in our place, was made sin, and as such was forsaken of God, for God is holy. But He is risen, the sins are gone, the man who committed the sins is judged and legally removed from the eye of God, and as the risen Christ He is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens."

In the prayer of John 17 we learn the two great ways in which practical holiness is brought about in the saints. First, it is by the cleansing power of the Word, for the Lord can say, "Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy Word is truth." Then it is by having Christ Himself before us as an object in the glory, as He says, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth." The Word searches our thoughts and words and ways, leading to the condemnation of all that is of the flesh. Further, it reveals to us Christ in the glory, the perfect pattern of a holiness that is according to God. As we behold the glory of the Lord we become changed into the same image from glory to glory. He is apart from all evil and separate from sinners, and we too, if we call upon the Name of the Lord, are responsible not only to depart from iniquity, but to separate from those who go on with iniquity. We must purge ourselves from the vessels to dishonour (2 Tim. 2: 19-21). There can be no holiness without separation from evil and from those who hold the evil.

Then Christ is "the True." All that He is, He is in perfection. All that He does and all that He says is in absolute perfection. He is nothing *partially*; He is everything *perfectly*. If He is the Light, He is "the *true* Light." If He is the Bread come down from heaven, He is the "*true* Bread." If He is the Vine, He is the "*true* Vine." If He is the Witness, He is the "*true* Witness." Does He bear record of Himself? His "record is *true*." Does He pass judgment? His "judgment is *true*." Correspondence to Christ as "the Holy" will demand separation from all the corruptions of the flesh which find their greatest expression in Thyatira; the appreciation of Christ as "the True" will deliver from the lifeless formalism and unreality of Sardis.

Furthermore, the Lord has "the key of David." Keys are not directly connected with the Church and its administration, but with the Kingdom and government (Matt. 16: 19). The quotation is taken from Isaiah 22: 22, and the context of the passage connects the idea of government with the key, for in the preceding verse the Lord says, "I will commit thy government into His hand." The two great symbols of government in Scripture are the sword and the key. The sword implies the exercise of government in the judgment of evil; the key implies the exercise of government in restraining evil or in opening a door for blessing. The day is coming when the Lord will use the sword in overwhelming judgment. Today, He uses the key on behalf of His people to make a way for what is of Himself and to restrain that which opposes Himself. How blessed to apprehend Christ as "the Holy" and "the True"

and as the One Who holds the key and can thus maintain His people in testimony for Himself in spite of all the power of evil.

The answer to this presentation of Christ results in:

### ***The Expression of His Character and The Support of His Power***

This is very blessedly seen in the assembly of Philadelphia. In addressing this assembly there are four things of which the Lord can say with unqualified approval "Thou hast."

**First**, The Lord can say, "*Thou hast a little strength.*" There is no display of power before the world in Philadelphia. The world cannot appreciate Spiritual power, and Philadelphia does not possess the power that would secure them a place in this world. They hold no ecclesiastical office; they wield no political power; they draw upon no worldly resources; they have no authority in the councils of men. They meet in no sumptuous buildings, they have no ornate ritual. They possess nothing that would make any show before men or give them a place in the eyes of the world. In this respect there is a return to the condition of the Church at the beginning.

**Second**, the Lord can say of Philadelphia, "*Thou has kept My Word.*" Christ's Word is the absolute expression of Himself. In reply to the Jews' question, "Who art Thou?", He can say, "Altogether that which I also say to you" (John 8: 25, JND). His Word expresses His mind. To "keep" His Word is more than having it or assenting to it; it implies that His Word is treasured and governs the life. In a day when Christ's words are belittled, and man's small mind (expressed by his feeble words) made much of, it is no small thing in the eyes of the Lord that a few, getting back to Him Who is from the beginning, order their whole pathway according to the mind of Christ, expressed in the Word of Christ and learned in the company of Christ.

**Third**, the Lord can say of Philadelphia, "*Thou hast not denied My Name.*" If His words express His mind, His Name expresses all that is set forth in Him. If His Name is called *Jesus* it declares that He is the Saviour. If His Name is Emmanuel, it is that God is set forth in Him. Corrupt Christendom is not only indifferent to His Word, but adds to its sin by denying His Name. His deity is more and more widely denied; He is in effect refused as Saviour and virtually rejected as Lord by those who profess His Name. Once again He is wounded in the house of His friends. Nevertheless, there is found a remnant, represented by Philadelphia, who do not deny His Name and thus make a stand against the corrupt mass that drifts on to the great apostasy.

**Fourth**, the Lord can say, "*Thou hast kept the word of My patience.*" His patience is the patient waiting for the moment when He will assert His rights and come forth as King of kings and Lord of lords. In the meantime it involves the refusal to interfere in the course of this world. If we keep the word of His patience, we shall accept the place of stranger ship with a rejected Christ and refuse to assert our rights in regard to this world. We shall take no voluntary part in political rule, in parochial administration or in the social ordering of the world. Such is the attitude of Philadelphians towards the world. They refuse to reign where Christ is rejected. The reigning time is not yet.

Thus in Philadelphia we have a return to the great spiritual features of the Church as at the beginning. In that lovely picture in the opening chapters of the Acts, we see the Church mainly composed of the poor of this world possessing little of its wealth, and using what little they had only for the Lord, holding none of the religious offices and without social or political power. They were people indeed with little strength, but very precious in the eyes of the Lord, for they kept His Word, did not deny His Name and kept the word of His patience.

Here then we have a Philadelphian remnant that return to the Church's right relations to Christ, and consequently to its right attitude to the world. The result that flows from this is of the very deepest importance. In getting back to the right relations of the Church to Christ:

### ***They Learn the True and Unchanging Attitude of Christ to the Church***

This brings us at once to the consideration of what Christ is to the Church. How beautifully it comes before us in the Lord's own gracious words:

- I know thy works.
- I have set before thee an open door.
- I will make them to come and worship before thy feet.
- I have loved thee.
- I also will keep thee.
- I come quickly.
- Him that overcometh will I make a pillar.

**First**, the Lord can say, "*I know thy works.*" Philadelphia possesses no great works that the world can appreciate or that would give them a place of pre-eminence in the religious world. They do not seek to publish moving reports of evangelical campaigns or assembly progress, nor to compile records of devoted lives. They do not seek the approval of men but the approval of the Lord. It is enough for them that the Lord has taken account of their works. They rest in the fact that He has said, "I know thy works."

**Second**, the Lord can say, "*I have set before thee an open door.*" Philadelphia realizes the power of the Lord exercised on behalf of the Church in setting before it an open door that no man can shut. Thus it was in the beginning. Without human influence, human organization or human learning, the testimony of the Church was sustained in the presence of a hostile world. The Lord "opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles" (Acts 14: 27) and no man could shut it. Again the Apostle can say "a great door and effectual is opened unto me and there are many adversaries" (1 Cor. 16: 9). The testimony of *one* man could not be silenced by *many* adversaries if the Lord opened a door for that man.

**Third**, the Lord in dealing with those who oppose can say, "*I will make them of the synagogue of Satan,*" and again, "*I will make them to come and worship before thy feet.*" Philadelphia thus realizes the subduing power of the Lord in dealing with opposition to His Church. There are those who "say they are Jews and are not, but do lie." Such hold an official religious position before the world and profess to be the people of God on the ground of a hereditary religion based upon tradition which appeals to the natural man. Such will always be in deadly opposition to those who return to the spiritual features of the Church. But the Lord can subdue such as far as He sees fit. He can expose their true character, for He says, "I will make them of the synagogue of Satan." In spite of their religious pretension they will be manifested to be only a Satanic imitation of the Jewish system. On the other hand, the Lord will make them acknowledge what is according to Himself. "I will make them to come and worship before thy feet." Thus Philadelphia realizes not only the *support of the Lord* in opening doors, but also the *subduing power of the Lord* in dealing with opposition.

**Fourth**, with great delight the Lord can say, "*I have loved thee.*" Philadelphia realizes the Lord's love to the Church. It is the opposers who draw forth this expression of the Lord's love. Such will have

to learn what the Philadelphians already knew, that Christ loves His Church. The departure of the Church from the place of witness to Christ arose from leaving "first love" to Christ. This meant that the consciousness of Christ's love to the Church was lost. In Philadelphia there is a return to the sense of Christ's love to the Church and hence a revival of love to the Lord.

**Fifth**, those whom Christ loves He will surely keep. Hence the Lord can say, "*I also will keep thee out of the hour of trial which is about to come upon the whole habitable world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*" Having returned to the truth of the Church, Philadelphia has no delusion as to the course of this world. Philadelphia knows full well that all the desperate efforts of men to bring about universal peace, relieve poverty and improve social conditions, will entirely fail. In spite of alliances, conferences, leagues and treaties, there fast approaches an hour of unprecedented trial for those who dwell upon the earth, when before the rising tide of revolutionary passions, governments will be overturned, treaties will be torn up, alliances will be broken and the whole edifice of society will fall to ruin. But Philadelphia knows that the Church will be kept out of the terror and confusion of this hour of trial, by being caught away to meet the Lord in the air.

**Sixth**, the Lord encourages Philadelphia with His arresting words, "*I come quickly.*" The hour of patience will give place to the day of glory when Christ will come forth in power and glory and display His Church all glorious, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Philadelphia is in the secret of this blessed hope which ends the path of suffering and leads to an eternity of blessing.

**Seventh**, when Christ comes, His reward will be with Him. The Philadelphian seeks no power and fills no place of prominence in this world, but of the overcomer the Lord can say, "*Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God.*"

Such is the attitude that the Lord takes toward Philadelphia. It is, however, important to remember that it represents the Lord's true and unchanging attitude towards the whole Church. It is not simply His attitude toward a Philadelphian company. It is true they alone may realize it, but *what they realize is true for the whole Church*. The Church may have changed and grievously departed from her right attitude to Christ, but Christ is the same and His attitude to His Church has never changed. He still knows all that is of Himself, He still supports His Church, He still subdues those who oppose His Church, He still loves His Church, and He will preserve her from the trial that is coming upon the earth. He is coming for His Church and at the last will display the Church in glory, in company with Himself.

Thus, in the assembly of Philadelphia we have a company of people under the eye of the Lord who, in the midst of the ruin of the Church, return to the true attitude of the Church to Christ and learn the true and unchanging attitude of Christ to the Church. Moreover, being in right relations with Christ, they are a company of people who are in right relations with all those who are Christ's, for the very name *Philadelphia* means, "love of the brethren." Thus they walk in obedience to the "new commandment" given to the disciples in the Lord's last discourse, "that ye love one another" (John 13: 34). Again as the Lord unfolds before His disciples the lovely picture of the new Christian company in John 15: 9-17, He twice repeats His command "that ye love one another" (vv. 12, 17).

No breakdown of the Church in responsibility can for one moment set aside the Lord's new command given "in the beginning": it abides to the end. It is significant that the Lord's description of the new company opens with the assertion of His great love for His own (John 15: 9). It is only as we abide in the sense of the Lord's love to *all His own* that we shall be constrained to love *all that are His*. It must be remembered that Philadelphia does not mean "love of the Philadelphians," but *love of the brethren*. Sadly, many may be found in religious systems from which we are bound to separate, if we are determined to keep His Word and not deny His Name; nevertheless, "love of the brethren" will lead

out one's affections to all who are "His brethren." In spite of all barriers, love will find some outlet for practical expression while maintaining all that is due to holiness, for divine love will always be linked with divine holiness.

For such, the Lord has:

### ***No Word of Reproof, But He Has A Word of Warning***

*"Hold that fast which thou hast, that no one take thy crown."* It is not simply "a crown" that they are in danger of losing, but "thy crown" — their own distinguishing crown. The distinction of the Philadelphians is that they cherish the truths concerning Christ and the Church in a day when on every hand, these truths are denied. Having returned to the apprehension and practice of the truths concerning Christ and the Church, their ever present danger is that they may surrender these truths and be drawn aside into the surrounding corruption, unreality and self-sufficiency of Christendom. Hence the exhortation is "Hold fast." Every effort of Satan will be made to lead the Philadelphian to give up what has been so blessedly revived to him. The enemy will gladly plead the help of saints and the need of sinners if, by so doing, he can get the Philadelphian to abandon what he has. He will argue that there are a few saints in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and that there are needy sinners in Laodicea who are poor and blind and naked. He will say to go into Sardis to help those saints; go into Laodicea to reach those sinners! But to go back under any plea to that which the Lord condemns, is to abandon that which the Lord approves. All the seductions of the enemy are met by the Lord's warning words, "Hold fast." If the Philadelphian "holds fast," the Lord will doubtless open doors to help His people wherever they may be and to meet the need of sinners wherever found.

Does not the very exhortation to "hold fast" indicate that times of revival may be followed by times of declension in which many may drift and lose their crown? Blessed indeed to be a Philadelphian, but Philadelphia is no haven of refuge where saints can settle down, but rather a company blessed with the approval of Christ, and for this reason the special object of the enemy's attacks: hence the constant need to contend for the faith, and "hold fast" that which has been received.

The word of warning is followed by:

### ***A Word of Encouragement to the Overcomer***

The question may arise, If the Lord has nothing to condemn in Philadelphia, what is there to overcome? The reference to the synagogue of Satan and the exhortation to "hold fast" will dispose of this difficulty. The overcomer is evidently one who overcomes every effort of the enemy to induce him to surrender the truth revived and to move him from the place of separation that the truth demands. In a word, the overcomer is one who "holds fast." Such an one will have a very blessed reward. He will not only form part of the temple — the Church in glory — but he will be a *pillar* in the temple. On earth, such had no place of honour or power in the religious world, but in glory he will have a place both of honour and power. At last he will find a haven of rest, for "he shall go no more out." The Lord will make such a three-fold witness that all can read. The Lord can say, "I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, new Jerusalem . . . and My new Name." He will be the witness in glory to God made known in Christ; to the Church of God in perfection as the New Jerusalem; and lastly the witness to Christ for all eternity in connection with the New Jerusalem, the new heavens, the new earth and all things new, for it will be Christ's new Name that will be written on the overcomer.

The address closes with the appeal to the individual who has an ear to hear. "Let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." The Lord addresses the Church, and the Spirit applies in power the words of the Lord to the individual with the opened ear.

It may be said that the assembly in Philadelphia as presented in Revelation is extremely attractive, but where can we see it in actual existence today? Again, can any company say they are Philadelphians? We must remember even if we are unable with our limited vision to see anything that we could say answers to Philadelphia in an absolute way, nevertheless the Spirit of God has foretold that in the closing days of the Church's history, such will be found on the earth under the eye of the Lord, and what the Lord *sees is everything*, not what we see. Moreover, let us remember it is the Lord who says of the Philadelphians, "Thou hast a little strength, thou hast kept My Word and hast not denied My Name." It is not what the Philadelphians say of themselves. What the Lord says of His people is everything, not what they say of themselves.

We live in days when men are making great efforts to bring about the religious unity of Christendom. Thyatira with its corruption, Sardis with its dead formality and Laodicea with its indifference and self-sufficiency are seeking to enter into an alliance in which there will be everything to gratify the flesh and nothing that Christ can approve. In the presence of the activities of religious flesh it is an immense mercy to see how the Spirit of God is working and to know what has the approval of the Lord. The path of blessing for His people will be to follow where He leads and seek to answer to that which has His approval, ever remembering that those who approach nearest to Philadelphia will be the last to assume that they are Philadelphians. At the same time we must not forget that there may be as much pride with those who loudly protest that they are not Philadelphians as there is assumption with those who claim that they are. May we have grace to set our faces with all earnestness towards that which the Lord approves and leave Him to say how far we have answered to His mind.

### ***Part 2 Laodicea Revelation 3: 14-22***

The address to the assembly in Laodicea presents the last phase in the history of the professing Church on earth. That this phase has been reached is made very manifest by the rise in recent years of a religious infidel movement passing under the name of Modernism, etc., marked by characteristics that exactly correspond to those so graphically depicted in this address. The great importance of the address to Laodicea is that therein we have a definite unfolding of the Lord's mind in regard to this last phase of Christendom, the attitude He takes toward it and the truth He would bring before it. The believer is thus warned against the condition which the Lord so severely condemns, and at the same time instructed how it is to be met.

It is noticeable that in the assembly in Philadelphia, the Lord has nothing to condemn, whereas, in the assembly in Laodicea there is nothing that He can approve. The earnest desire of every true-hearted saint in these last days must be to answer to the condition that the Lord approves and to escape the condition that He condemns. It is however well to remember, that in ourselves there is no power for Philadelphian recovery or for escape from the Laodicean condition. The power, whether for recovery or escape, is in Christ. The appreciation of Christ as presented in Philadelphia is the power for recovery, just as the appreciation of Christ as presented in Laodicea is the way of escape.

First then we have:

## ***The Lord's Presentation of Himself to Laodicea***

Christ presents Himself in a threefold way as "the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." It is noticeable in the address to Philadelphia, the Lord does not present Himself in His official character in connection with the Church, but rather in His moral glories. It is still more noticeable that in Laodicea, so low is their state, that the Lord does not present Himself in an aspect that properly belongs to the Church at all, but in an aspect that gives a very beautiful and complete presentation of Christ in connection with the present creation.

**First**, Christ is "*the Amen.*" God has made exceedingly great and precious promises in connection with the present creation, and these promises will all have their fulfilment in Christ. That this is the meaning of the title *Amen* is clearly shown by 2 Corinthians 1: 20. Speaking of the promises of God, the Apostle writes that "whatever promises of God there are, in Christ is the Yea, and in Christ the Amen" (JND). If God makes promises He will surely fulfil them. His promises are marked by certainty (Yea), and fulfilment (Amen). It is, however, *Christ* who secures certainty and fulfilment. He is the "Yea" and He is "the Amen." The promises are fulfilled in Him and by Him. But if every promise of blessing for the "world to come"\* is fulfilled by Christ, then everything in the world to come\* will be for the glory and exaltation of Christ. Alas, the Laodiceans exclude Christ and use the present scene for the exaltation of themselves. They stand condemned by Christ as the Amen.

{\*i e., the Millennium, the thousand years' reign of Christ.}

**Second**, Christ is "*the faithful and true Witness.*" This creation is the sphere in which man has been placed in responsibility to witness for God. Adam, Noah, Israel, the Gentiles and the Church have at different seasons and in various ways, been set in responsibility to witness for God. Sadly, all have failed both in faithfulness to God and in witness before men. Adam disobeyed; Noah could not govern himself; Israel turned to idols and apostatized from Jehovah; the Gentiles abused the government committed to them; and the Church, leaving her first love, proved unfaithful to Christ and hence, lost her place of witness before men — the candlestick is removed. The last and most terrible stage of the Church's failure is reached in Laodicea; a Church that, instead of faithfulness, is marked by indifference to Christ, and in place of witnessing to Christ actually bears witness to herself. This terrible condition is rebuked by the presentation of Christ as the One who passed through this world as "the faithful and true Witness." He alone was faithful to God and a true witness of God before man.

**Third**, Christ is "*the beginning of the creation of God.*" He is not only the Amen, the One in whom every promise for this creation will be fulfilled, but He is also the beginning. He is the beginning as *source* inasmuch as the whole creation is derived from Him. He is also the beginning as the *object of creation* inasmuch as from the outset of creation, God had Christ in view. "All things were created by Him and for Him." If everything derived from Him, it must be in order that everything should be for His glory. If He *begins* all and is the *Object* of all, it is that He may fill all.

Thus, every thought of God for this present creation centres in Christ. He is the beginning. He is the Amen and He is the faithful and true Witness. In the light of this presentation of Christ, the Laodiceans stand utterly condemned. The One who is "everything and in all" in God's thoughts, is outside the "church" of the Laodiceans. They are indifferent to the claims of Christ and filled with their own importance.

Had the Laodiceans received the truth concerning Christ as the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God, they never would have put Christ outside the door. They would have realized that they had everything in Christ and nothing without Him. Had they given heed

to the epistle to the Colossians, which was to be read "in the church of the Laodiceans" (Col. 4: 16), it would have saved them, as indeed it would save religious professors today, from making everything of man and nothing of Christ. There they would have learned the glories of Christ in connections with all created things, and that Christ "is everything and in all." There, too, they would have learned that *to give man in the flesh a place means the setting aside of Christ*. To give heed to man's enticing words beguiles from the steadfastness of faith in Christ (Col. 2: 4-5). To be led away by the philosophy of men is to follow that which is "not after Christ" (Col. 2: 8). To pursue legal observances is to follow the shadow and lose the substance, which is Christ (Col. 2: 16-17). By being beguiled into superstition — intruding into things not seen — men are puffed up and cease to hold the Head, even Christ (Col. 2: 18-19).

The Laodiceans had given no heed to the truth ministered through Paul in the epistle to the Colossians and hence came under the rebuke of the Lord ministered through John in the Revelation. The enticing words of men, philosophy and vain deceit after the traditions of men, had prevailed with the result that, in their sight, man was everything and Christ of no account. Their terrible condition is brought before us. The Lord's presentation of Himself is followed by:

### ***The Lord's Exposure of the Laodiceans***

It is not until the Lord has presented Himself that He exposes the Laodiceans. Only as Christ is before us, can we justly estimate how serious has been the departure.

The **first** and most terrible characteristic of the Laodiceans is *indifference to Christ*. As regards Christ they are neither "cold nor hot." They have neither the worldly infidel's hatred of Christ, nor the true Christian's jealous love for Christ. They see no beauty in His Person; they put no value upon His work. As regards the Person and work of Christ, in the "church" of the Laodiceans you may think what you like, hold what you like and say what you like. It is all a matter of indifference. In the sight of the Lord this indifference is fatal. To express His abhorrence of this deadly indifference to Himself, the Lord uses terms of loathing and contempt such as He never used of Thyatira with all its corruption, nor Sardis with all its dead formality. The fact that the Lord can say He will spew them out of His mouth, proves that He views them as professing Christians. He never speaks thus of the heathen. It is the profession of the Name of Christ to enrich and improve a man who is totally indifferent to Christ, that is so loathsome in the sight of Christ.

**Second**, the Laodicean is marked by *self-occupation*. "Thou sayest I am" this and I am that. If they are indifferent to Christ they are full of themselves. Instead of being a witness to Christ, the Church becomes a witness to herself.

**Third**, the Laodicean is marked by *self-complacency*. "Thou sayest I am rich," but, alas, the riches in which the Laodiceans boast are in themselves, not in Christ.

**Fourth**, the Laodicean is *self-made*. He says not only I am rich, but I am "increased with goods." The riches of the Laodiceans are the result of their own labours. They not only boast in their riches, but in the labours by which they have acquired them.

**Fifth**, the Laodicean is *self-sufficient*, for he says that he has need of nothing. They do not need Christ personally, for He is outside their church. They do not need His work, for they are satisfied with their own works. They need neither the Scriptures nor the Holy Spirit to unfold them. In Christ's estimation they need everything: in their own they need nothing.

**Sixth**, the Laodicean is *ignorant of his true condition*, for the Lord has to say, "Thou knowest

not." Those who talk most of themselves know least about themselves. The man who is indifferent to Christ must be ignorant of himself, for it is only in the light of Christ that we learn our true condition. In the presence of the grace of God revealed in Christ, Peter says, "I am a sinful man." The most religious man who ever trod the earth discovered by one ray of light from Christ in the glory, that he was the chief of sinners. In His light we get light, and apart from that light all is darkness and ignorance.

**Seventh**, the Laodicean is *unregenerate*, for the Lord has to say, "thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked." With all their boasted wealth, how wretched their condition, how miserable their plight if, while professing the Name of Christ, they are strangers to Christ. Such, alas, is their condition, for they are *poor* — they do not possess Christ or anything from Christ; they are *blind* — they see no beauty in Christ; they are *naked* — Christless and exposed to judgment.

Such is the terrible conditions of the Laodiceans. They may indeed have a prominent place in the eyes of the world, for they possess in large measure the riches that the world can appreciate, but in the eyes of the Lord they possess nothing of Christ except His Name. They are filled with themselves, self-occupied, self-complacent, self-made, self-sufficient, ignorant and unregenerate professors of Christianity.

It is notable that, until recently, commentators on the book of Revelation have had difficulty in finding any who exactly correspond to the Laodicean condition. They had to content themselves with pointing out that such would appear in the last stage of the Church's history. Today this difficulty no longer exists. A class of people has arisen under the term *Modernism*, etc., in whom is found, not only a particular feature of the Laodiceans but the exact correspondence to their terrible condition.

Modernism is characterized by total indifference to the glory and honour of Christ. His deity may be denied, His incarnation derided, His atoning work belittled, His resurrection rejected, but the Modernist is indifferent. Your belief or unbelief is of no consequence. If the virgin birth of Christ, the miracles of Christ, the sayings of Christ, do not appeal to your reason you are welcome to reject them — the Modernist is indifferent. But if the Modernist is indifferent to *Christ* he has much to say of *himself*, for he is not lacking in religious pretension and intellectual arrogance. According to his own estimate, he is rich in human ability and enjoys the monopoly of intellectual culture and ripe scholarship. He has grown rich through the accumulated stores of generations of laborious research. Thus equipped with the wisdom of the ages, the Modernist undertakes to criticise Scripture with unbounded confidence. He assumes to know more about the Word of God than Christ and the Apostles. He pretends to have discovered the original sources of Scripture and presumes to tell us how much may be discarded as myth and how little we may safely retain as genuine.

The self-sufficiency of the Modernist is such that he has need of nothing outside the scope of his own mental powers or beyond the reach of his own efforts. He has no need of the love of God that gave His only begotten Son; he has no need of Christ the great Mediator who gave Himself; he has no need of the sovereign work of the Spirit in new birth. While needing everything, in his own sight he has need of nothing. Such may possess all the wealth of Scholarship, but without Christ they are "poor." They may possess fine critical discernment, but failing to see beauty in Christ they are "blind." They may wrap themselves in a covering of intellectual pride, but without Christ they are naked and exposed to judgment.

Yet, Modernism exactly suits the last stage of corrupt Christendom. Its pernicious principles have worked their way into the "National Churches" and have been greedily accepted by many of the great nonconformist sects; they reign in many theological colleges and have invaded the missionary

field; they are preached from innumerable pulpits, hold a prominent place in religious conferences and are applauded by the secular press.

We may well ask, How is this terrible evil to be met? The answer is found in:

### ***The Lord's Counsel to the Laodiceans***

Not only does the Lord expose this last phase of Christendom in all its utter degradation, but in His marvellous grace He gives His counsel. If we would know what the Lord has to say to the Higher Critic, the Modernist, and every other form of religious infidelity, we must turn to the address to Laodicea.

**First**, the Lord counsels the Laodicean to *buy from Himself*. He can say "Buy of Me." The first great need of the Laodicean is to have *a personal transaction with Christ*. This surely is the thought of buying. We know that when we are invited to come to Christ and buy, it is "without money and without price." The secret of the Laodicean condition stands revealed. They are indifferent to Christ and filled with themselves because they have never made personal acquaintance with Christ.

**Second**, they need the *"gold tried in the fire."* The gold represents all the wealth of blessing that is secured to the believer through the death of Christ. The riches in which the Laodiceans boast — the vast benefactions of men and the stores of knowledge acquired by human efforts — make an imposing show before men, but are worthless in the sight of God. They will not stand the test of judgment, and hence will not meet the requirements of a holy God who is a consuming fire. As with every sinner, the Laodiceans need the gold tried in the fire that alone can be obtained by faith in Christ. Abandoning their own riches they must come to Christ empty-handed, poor and helpless, to obtain the true riches.

Of old, Abraham obtained the promised seed entirely by the intervention of God. As far as Abraham was concerned he was "as good as dead" (Heb. 11: 11-12). In like manner it is as impossible for a sinner to justify himself from guilt in the sight of God by his own efforts as it would be for a dead man to do so. As far as doing anything to justify ourselves, we are "as good as dead." We are entirely shut up to the work of another — to Christ. But the sinner who believes in the risen Christ is justified in the sight of God from all things (Acts 13: 38-39). Such an one has, like Paul, parted with his "own righteousness" in order that he may have the righteousness "which is through faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. 3: 9). He stands before God in a righteous condition as the result of what God has done through Christ on the cross, and not what man has done. This righteous condition is secured by divine righteousness, not human righteousness. In Christ in the glory, this righteous condition is set forth — He is our righteousness. This righteousness is "the gold tried in the fire."

**Third**, the Laodicean is further exhorted to obtain the *"white raiment"* that he may be clothed and that the shame of his nakedness does not appear. If the gold speaks of the divine righteousness in which the believer appears *before God*, the white raiment speaks of the righteousness of the saints in which they appear *before men*. To be naked is to be Christless before God and exhibit nothing of the character of Christ before others. The self-occupation, self-exaltation and self-sufficiency of the Laodicean are exactly opposite to the lowliness, meekness and gentleness of Christ. The wisdom of men and the intellectual attainments in which the Laodiceans may boast may indeed, like the fine clothes of the fashionable world, commend them to the great mass of unthinking men, but in the eyes of God's people such things will only add to the shame of their nakedness. If it is only by coming to Christ in faith that we obtain a righteous condition before God — the gold tried in the fire — so it is only by personal acquaintance with Christ that we acquire the character of Christ that excludes the flesh with all

its shame.

**Fourth**, the Lord counsels the Laodicean to *anoint his eyes with eye-salve* that he may see. The eye-salve secures that spiritual discernment which can only be obtained by faith in Christ and reception of the Holy Spirit. "Sight" and the gift of the Holy Spirit are strikingly connected in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Ananias is sent to tell the man who had been blinded to everything of earth by the light from heaven, that "Jesus who appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me that thou mightest *receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 9: 17). Saul was a man whose fine natural mind had been trained to the highest pitch, and doubtless, like the Laodiceans, he believed he was thoroughly competent to judge all things. Yet so absolutely blind was this religious man, so ignorant of his own need, so ignorant of Christ and all that God is doing through Christ, that he was actually seeking to rid the earth of all that bore the Name of Christ. But this highly intellectual bigot — blinded to everything of Christ — is by grace brought into the presence of Jesus and immediately he is blinded to everything of earth in order to have his eyes opened in connection with the gift of the Holy Spirit. Henceforth, he sees everything on earth and in heaven in the power of the Holy Spirit. This means his "senses" are "exercised to discern both good and evil." He sees what is according to God because he is led by the Holy Spirit to view everything in relation to Christ.

The Laodiceans, trusting in the fancied competency of the human mind, neglect Christ from whom alone they can receive the anointing of the Spirit. Confidence in self and indifference to Christ leave them in utter spiritual blindness. But, says the Apostle, writing to believers, "Ye brethren are not in darkness" (1 Thess. 5: 4). "Ye were once darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord" (Eph. 5: 8). The anointing which we have received of Christ abides in us and enables us to "know all things" (1 John 2: 20, 27).

Such then is the counsel of the Lord to the Laodiceans. He is not, however, content merely to give counsel and then let them go their way, for the Lord's counsel is followed by:

### ***The Lord's Dealings with the Laodiceans***

In spite of the solemn condition of the Laodiceans they still bear the Name of Christ and once stood as witness for Christ in the world. Hence the Lord can say to them, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." He lingers in love over the self-sufficient Laodiceans as in other days He wept in love over self-righteous Jerusalem. Yet it is not the love of complacency that can rest with delight in its object, but rather the love of pity that is compelled to rebuke and chasten. If the time is not far distant when He will have to reject them with loathing, He will first seek to win with love and arouse with rebuke. If they steel their hearts against the love of His heart, and harden their conscience against the rebuke of His lips, then He will seek to reach them by the chastening of His hand. It may be that when brought low under His chastening hand, some self-sufficient Laodicean will discover that speculation of the mind, intellectual culture and modern thought will minister no comfort in the presence of sorrow, will bring no ease to a burdened conscience, no balm to a broken heart and no support in a dying hour; and that without Christ and the true riches, they are indeed "wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked."

Then mark the grace that follows. If through the Lord's dealing in love, a Laodicean is brought to repentance, at once he will realize:

## ***The Lord's Grace for the Laodicean***

The Laodicean condition may indeed call forth His loathing, but they themselves call forth His tender grace. If we would know the attitude the Lord takes towards the self-sufficient religious sinners who in these last days are boasting in the infidelity of modern thought, we have it clearly set forth in these words of marvellous grace, "Behold I stand at the door and am knocking." These are words indeed that speak of the crowning sin of the Laodiceans, for have they not shut Christ out, but also words that speak of the infinite grace of Christ, for does He not stand at their door and knock in order to come in? They may close their door upon Him, but they cannot close His heart against them. If they thrust Him out in utter indifference, He will wait at their door with perfect patience. Not once or twice does He knock and then retire, but He can say, "I stand at the door and am knocking" (JND). He is knocking and will continue knocking until the day of grace runs out.

Alas for those who reject such grace and keep their door locked and barred against the waiting Saviour. Grace rejected must end in judgment executed. Rejecting Christ, they will be cast forth by Christ to prove the appalling solemnity of those irrevocable words, "I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all My counsel and would none of My reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me. For that they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of My counsel; they despised all My reproof. Therefore, shall they eat of the fruit of their own way and be filled with their own devices" (Prov. 1: 24, 31).

But it may be that some individual, brought to repentance, will indeed hear the voice of the Lord and open the door. Such will enjoy:

## ***The Lord's Manifestation of Himself***

The work of God in the soul leading to repentance makes way for the voice of Christ to be heard, and the hearing of faith that listens to His voice will open the heart to receive Himself. The real answer to all the infidelity, latitudinarianism and self-sufficiency of Modernism is not found in falling back upon the orthodoxy of the creeds, but in letting Christ into the heart. The answer to Modernism, as well as the preservation from all that leads that way, is found in Christ Himself and in attachment of heart to Him. How rich the blessing that follows when Christ has His place in the affections. The Lord can say, "I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me."

"If I let Christ have His place in my affections," one has truly said, "He will sympathize with me in my things and lead me into the communion of His things, and the practical result is that I gain the most blessed intimate acquaintance with Christ Himself." How blessedly is this seen in that little band of disciples who in the upper room partook of that last supper with the Lord in their midst. He makes them so perfectly at home in His presence that John can lie upon His bosom. He enters into all their troubles, saying as it were, "I know the power of Satan that is against you, I know the treachery of Judas who will betray Me with a kiss, I know the weakness of Peter who will deny Me with an oath," but, "let not your hearts be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in Me." He knows that in the world they will have tribulation; but He says, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." He knows that the world will hate them, but He says, "If the world hate you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you." He knows that the world will persecute them, but He says, "these things will they do unto you because they have not known the Father, nor Me." He knows that they are filled with sorrow because

He is leaving them; "nevertheless," He can say, "it is expedient for you that I go away."

In all such tender consideration and sympathy for His own, was He not *supping with them*? But He does more; He leads them *to sup with Him*. Not only does He sympathize with them in their things, but He leads them into communion with Him in *His* things. He leads their thoughts away to the Father's house and to the Father's heart. He speaks of a new circle of love comprised of His "friends," where His peace is enjoyed, His love is known, His commandments cherished and His joy abides. And He tells them that One is coming who will guide them into all truth, tell them of things to come, and take of His things and show them unto them. Again we ask, as He engages their hearts with Himself and His interests, is He not leading them to *sup with Him* as before He had supped with them?

Nor is it otherwise with the individual who, in our day, opens the door to Christ. He also finds One who with infinite tenderness and perfect sympathy, enters into all his exercises while at the same time he is led into the circle of the Lord's interests. So that though as an individual he opened the door to Christ, yet he is not left in isolation or independency of others, but is led to find his interests where Christ finds His, in company with those who call upon the Lord out of a pure heart.

As we trace the ways of the Lord with the Laodiceans we cannot but marvel and adore in the presence of the perfect love and wisdom which can maintain truth and yet show such grace to such sinners. In absolute fidelity to truth the Lord exposes their condition, and having done so, with infinite wisdom He counsels them to buy of Himself the gold tried in the fire, the white raiment and the eye-salve. Then, in order that the exposure and the counsel may become effective, He deals with them in rebuke and chastening; and if under His dealings any repent, He reveals Himself as ready and waiting to bless. Lastly, if any man hear His voice and opens the door He manifests Himself in sympathy and communion. Thus, there passes before our delighted gaze:

- the *truth* of Christ that exposes
- the *wisdom* of Christ that counsels
- the *love* of Christ in His dealings
- the *grace* of Christ that waits to bless
- the *delight* of Christ to manifest Himself.

As in the closing days of the Jewish apostasy, the darkness of the cross was lit up with the love of God, so in these last days of the Christian profession, the black background of modern religious infidelity serves to bring into relief the glories of Christ.

Feasting in the presence of Christ prepares the way for overcoming. To overcome the evil of the great professing mass that looms so large in this world is no small achievement. The power for such overcoming is alone found in the company of Christ, there to learn that He is the great Overcomer who can say, "I also overcame and am set down with My Father in His throne." At the end of His path the Lord could say to His disciples, "I have overcome the world," and as one has truly said, the world the Lord overcame was the "Jewish world" of worldly religious profession and self-righteousness in its last and darkest day. The one who has supped with Christ, overcomes the world of Christian profession in its last dark days of lukewarmness and self-sufficiency. This indeed means that the overcomer, judging the whole Laodicean condition and separating from that which has shut Christ outside, finds himself where Christ is in the outside place. He "goes forth unto Christ without the camp, bearing His reproach." But the one who bears His reproach will share His glory, as the Lord can say, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne." That day will come when Christ's appreciation of

the overcomer will be displayed before all the world, even as the Father's appreciation of Christ as the great Overcomer is witnessed by the place He now fills in the Father's throne.

The address closes with the deeply important call to the one who has an ear, to listen to what the Spirit has to say to the churches. All may not be Laodicean in the full sense, but all are in danger of the Laodicean spirit and hence the warning to hear the Spirit's voice. The one who hears will judge every tendency to indifference to Christ, to assumption and to self-sufficiency. He will take his place apart from that which is so soon to be spewed out of Christ's mouth and he will make room for Christ to sup with Him in the day of His rejection while waiting to reign with Him in the day of His glory.

### **Section 3 *Christ Glorified in His Church***

#### ***Introduction***

This section is in two parts, the first part entitled "The Marriage of the Lamb," and the second part entitled "The Glory of the Bride."

The first part transports us by God's revelation into the future to first show us the total destruction of the fake "church" (Babylon) and then the marriage of the Lamb. Then the true Church, the Bride of Christ, will be presented to Christ the Bridegroom, a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. The Bride then will be dressed in fine linen, bright and pure, which are our acts done now for the love of Christ. Every act we do for Him now will come into display in that future day of glory! What a wonderful but sobering thought! The marriage of the Lamb then leads us directly into the second part of this Section.

In the second part we are shown the holy Jerusalem. This is not a literal city, but a symbol or picture of the Church in Millennial times — when it will be displayed before the world for the glory of Christ. In this display the Church will have a glory — a manifested excellence — beyond our greatest expectations. This City is then beautifully described, verse by verse, and contrasted with the false church as also seen under the symbol of a city — Babylon. We are shown what is *not* there, and then permitted to delight in the blessings that *are* there; blessings that await each one of us who know the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord (Ed.).

#### ***Part 1 The Marriage of the Lamb — Revelation 19:1-9***

In Revelation 18 we are permitted to see the final overthrow of the corrupt Papal system.\* For long centuries it has claimed to be the Church of Christ and representative of God upon the earth. As to fact, it has through the ages deceived the nations, corrupted the world and drenched the earth with the blood of saints.

{\*This false church (Babylon) is evidently a *combination* of all those left of Christendom after the Rapture, out of the various denominations and isms all around us today. It is a false "world-church," although dominated by and organized along the lines of present-day Catholicism. But I would suggest that it is *more* than present-day Roman Catholicism: it is Roman Catholicism in its final form (Ed.).}

The outstanding characteristics of this corrupt system are summarized in verses 23 and 24 of the chapter.

There we read, "Thy merchants were the great men of the earth." While professing to be the Church — the Bride of Christ — it entirely falsifies the truth of the Church, being marked by

"merchandise" and "earth" instead of faith and heaven. It professes to confer every spiritual blessing in return for money paid to the church: in place of preaching faith in the living Christ, salvation, pardon and heaven itself can be purchased with gold. It traffics in the souls and bodies of men (v. 13).

Then we read, "By thy sorceries were all nations deceived." Instead of being the pillar and ground of the truth, and proclaiming the grace of God to sinners, it has deceived with error and bewitched the world with music, art and every possible device to appeal to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

Finally we read, "In her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all that were slain upon the earth." Instead of protecting, it has persecuted the saints. Instead of holding forth the Word of Life to dying sinners, it has carried death among the living saints.

Here then we have a system professing to be the Church of God that is characterized by money instead of faith; that is earthly instead of heavenly; that deceives with error rather than enlightening by truth; that persecutes instead of protecting; and brings death instead of life to men.

For long centuries God has borne with this corrupt church, but at last there comes the day of her judgment — the hour of her desolation — in which she is overthrown with swift and overwhelming destruction. "For strong is the Lord God who judgeth her" (v. 8).

Following upon her judgment there is weeping and wailing upon earth; but heaven, with all the saints, apostles and prophets, are called to rejoice (v. 20, JND). The response to this call is given in the opening verses of Revelation 19. John hears "a great voice of much people in heaven saying, Hallelujah; salvation and glory and power unto the Lord our God." The salvation, glory and power which Babylon had arrogated to herself are ascribed by heaven to the Lord our God.

Moreover, the judgment of this false system is the vindication of God. His judgments are seen to be "true and righteous" (v. 2). The judgment of Babylon is the public demonstration that through the long ages God has not been indifferent either to the corruptions of this system or to the persecution of His saints. The judgment will be according to the truth of all the corruptions and persecutions as seen by the all-searching eye of God; and being according to truth, will be in perfect righteousness. Heaven rejoices that it is so. Heaven adds its Hallelujah to God's judgments. And God will have a perpetual witness to the overwhelming judgment of this false church, for we read, "Her smoke rose up for ever and ever" (v. 3). The Papal church looms large in the eyes of men today, but in the years to come the only trace that she ever existed will be the smoke of her torment that throughout Millennial ages will bear witness to her irrevocable doom and God's holy hatred of her corruptions.

All heaven responds to the call to rejoice over the fall of Babylon. Then a more limited circle — the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures — take up the praise. They say nothing of the judgment of the great whore. It is true they add their "Amen" to all that God has done, but they are occupied with God Himself. Hence they fall down and worship God who sits upon the throne saying, "Amen; Hallelujah."

Then at last one voice speaks from the throne saying, "Praise our God, all ye His servants and ye who fear Him, both small and great." The first call to praise had been to "saints, apostles and prophets" to rejoice over the judgment of the great whore: this second call is to all heaven to "Praise our God." There had been a glad response to the first call, but it is far exceeded by the overwhelming volume of praise that is called forth by the voice from the throne, for, says John, "I heard as a voice of a great crowd and as a voice of many waters and as a voice of strong thunders, saying, Hallelujah, for the Lord our God the Almighty has taken to Himself kingly power. Let us rejoice and exult and give Him glory;

for the marriage of the Lamb is come and His wife has made herself ready" (Rev. 19: 6-7 JND).

In this great burst of praise, we have the celebration of two transcendent events for which the ages have waited:

1. The establishment of the kingdom of Christ
2. The marriage of the Lamb

These great events awaited the setting aside of that false church that for so long had dishonoured Christ while professing to act in His Name; that had set aside His work while parading the symbol of His cross; that had deceived the nations while pretending to give salvation; that had corrupted Christendom with error while professing to maintain the truth; that had hounded the saints to death while professing to show the way of life. As a great city she had reigned over the kings of the earth. As the great whore she had masqueraded as the Bride of Christ. Her reign being ended, her false claims set aside, the way is at once prepared for the reign of Christ and the marriage of the Lamb.

The heavens are soon to open for Christ to come forth and reign over the earth as King of kings, but before the reign on earth there is the marriage in heaven. The marriage of the Lamb must precede the reign of the king.

Here we may all pause and contemplate the wondrous story of the Lamb. Patriarchs, prophets and apostles had at different times and in varied ways borne witness to the sufferings of the Lamb. Abraham, in the day of the offering up of Isaac, foresaw the coming of the Lamb provided by God to suffer as the burnt offering. Isaiah, in his day, with nearer and clearer vision, spoke of the perfect submission of the Lamb in the day of His suffering. And when at last the Lamb is come to earth, John, the forerunner, looking upon Jesus as He walked, can say, "Behold the Lamb of God," and foretell the far reaching effect of His sufferings. And when those sufferings are accomplished, the apostle Peter can assure the elect that they are redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." Later when Peter had put off his tabernacle, John, from his Patmos prison, carries us into the future and shows us things to come. In company with him we pass through the door opened in heaven, there to view the great host of the redeemed, the thousand times ten thousand of angelic beings, and "in the midst of the throne . . . a Lamb as it had been slain." Yet a little later John, having shown us the glory of the Lamb, conducts us to the marriage of the Lamb.

Moreover, if patriarchs, prophets and apostles had foreseen and dwelt upon the sufferings of the Lamb, likewise many a bridal scene had pictured the marriage of the Lamb. The marriage of Isaac speaks of *the satisfaction of love* that he finds in his bride (Gen. 24: 67). The marriage of Joseph tells of *the recompense for toil and loss* that he found in Asenath (Gen. 41: 50-52). The marriage of Boaz speaks of the fame he acquires on the occasion of his union with Ruth (Ruth 4: 11).

Thus in prophecy and picture, God has ever kept before us the Lamb and the marriage of the Lamb, the sufferings and the glory that shall follow; for all these bridal scenes will have their glorious answer in the great day of the marriage of the Lamb. For that day Christ, the true Isaac, is waiting in glory; and towards that day we like Rebekah, in company with the servant, are moving across this wilderness world under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. When at last the marriage of the Lamb is come, then indeed the suffering Lamb will find in the Church — His Bride — an object that will satisfy His love, recompense Him for His suffering and toil, and one through whom He will acquire fame, for on the day of the marriage the great multitude, as the voice of many waters and as the voice of many thunders, will declare His fame and celebrate His praise.

Here then we are permitted to look beyond the present moment in which the Bride is being

sanctified and cleansed and nourished and cherished, to the day when the Church will be presented to the Bridegroom a glorious Church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Then we are told that "she hath made herself ready," indicating that the judgment seat of Christ is passed. All that in her wilderness journey which was contrary to Christ has not only been met by the atoning sufferings of Christ at the cross, but has been reviewed in the presence of Christ at His judgment seat. There every question has been solved, every difficulty removed and the Bride fully learns His mind about every detail of the path; henceforth to think *with Him* about it all. Thus all that was not of Christ has been dealt with and only what is of Christ remains for His approval and delight. Nothing in the past will rise up to cast a shade upon that fair scene or mar the fulness of joy on the marriage day.

Furthermore we are told of the adorning of the Bride, for we read, "It was given her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and pure, for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints" (v. 8, JND). The false woman had also clothed herself with fine linen (Rev. 18: 16) but how different from the Bride of Christ. With the harlot her fine linen was acquired by "merchandise" (Rev. 18: 12); with the Bride the fine linen was "given." The Bride's adornment speaks of her own acts, yet they were all the outcome of grace given. Outwardly, many acts of righteousness may look alike, whether done by believers or unbelievers, and yet the motive be very different. The acts of righteousness of the false woman had a legal and selfish motive. The righteousnesses of the saints are *acts done for the love of Christ*.

Christ will delight to see His Bride invested with a robe that speaks of the love of His Bride for Himself. Happy for us to realize that every act that we do out of love to Christ is a stitch in the robe in which we shall appear in glory for the delight of the heart of Christ. What a joy to know that though we may be of no account in the world, unnoticed, despised and misunderstood, yet every little act that is done out of love to Christ will at last come into display in a day of glory. Not a cup of cold water given to one of His little ones will be forgotten by Christ. All that has been done for Him; all that has been expended upon Him; all of this world that has been refused for Him; all will be remembered in the day of glory. The thoughtful act of some loving heart that provided a pillow for His comfort in the day of His lowly service; the feast that was spread at Bethany for His refreshment and the ointment poured upon His feet in the day of His rejection; the confession of the dying thief in the day of His suffering; and the love that constrained Him to enter the house at Emmaus on the day of His resurrection, will all be remembered in the day of His glory. The tears that love has shed for Him, the prayers that have been uttered for His sake, the sufferings that have been borne for His Name, as well as every true answer to His last request to "Do this in remembrance of Me." will come up for remembrance in the day of glory, "for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints." Yet again, let us remember, all will be the fruit of His own grace, for "*it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen.*"

The garment we shall wear *then* is being woven *now*. The robe we shall put on with gladness in the presence of Christ in the day of glory is being woven amid the sorrows of earth in the day of His rejection. The sorrows of earth, the trials by the way, the rough ways, the dark days, the weariness and weakness are being used for the trial of our faith to call forth the graces of Christ. The meekness and lowliness, the patience and gentleness, the grace and love of Christ, which the trial of faith calls forth are being wrought into the warp and the woof of the garment that will be worn on the day of the marriage of the Lamb. Well may we sing,

With mercy and with judgment

Our web of time He wove,  
And aye the dews of sorrow  
Were lusted with His love.  
We'll bless the hand that guided,  
We'll bless the heart that planned.  
When throned where glory dwelleth  
In Immanuel's land.

Thus we are carried on to the day of the marriage of the Lamb. The scene indeed, as one has said, is only intimated and not described, for it is no part of the Revelation to unfold the inner scenes of glory. In the Paradise of God there are things unspeakable and incomprehensible to those who are yet in mortal bodies. Enough has been told to set the heart longing for the day of the marriage of the Lamb: the day long purposed in the counsels of God, foreshadowed in many a bridal scene and foretold by prophets and apostles: the day to which the Bride on earth is journeying and for which Christ in heaven is waiting: the day of the gladness of His heart.

When at last the day dawns, it will be celebrated with feasting: there will not only be the marriage, but the marriage *supper* of the Lamb. It will truly be the day of the gladness of His heart, but others will be called to share in the joy and gladness of the feast. They will not be present as the Bride of the Lamb, but as the *guests* at the feast. They are not angelic hosts since they are "called." Angels who have kept their first estate are not characterized as "called." The "call" comes to fallen men from the God of glory to call them into the glory of God. Of such there is a great host called by the grace of God throughout the ages before the cross. They will not form the Bride of Christ, but like the companions who follow the King's daughter, they will be brought unto the King. "With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the King's palace" (Ps. 45: 13-15).

Whether, however, it be the angelic hosts, or the Bride, or the guests who are called to share in the supper, all will unite in homage to the Lamb. As with the voice of many waters and as with the voice of mighty thunderings they say, "*let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him.*"

## ***Part 2 The Glory of the Bride — Revelation 21:9 - 22:5***

The Revelation closes with the vision of the holy city — the New Jerusalem.\* To realize its meaning we must, at the outset, rid our minds of a thought fostered by sentiment that the holy City is a *literal* description of the eternal home of believers. In a book where all other visions are symbolic, it is unlikely that, in this vision, symbols should give place to literal description. The City is expressly said to be "the Bride the Lamb's wife;" *hence it is clear that the City is a symbol of the Church in glory.* Yet we judge from many a detail that it is not solely a symbol of the saints themselves, but rather a *symbolic description both of the Church in glory and of her eternal home.*

{\*Notice in Scripture, that this City, a symbol of the Church, is called "the *holy city, Jerusalem*" (Rev. 21: 10, JND), or "the holy Jerusalem" (KJV) during *Millennial times*, but is called "the holy city, new Jerusalem" (Rev. 21: 2, JND, KJV) in the *eternal state* (Ed.).}

Moreover while all that characterizes the City will surely abide for eternity, yet it is a vision of the Church in relation to the earth during Millennial days. The mention of the nations, the kings of the earth and the necessity for healing would prove that the City is the figure of the Church as the heavenly

centre of government for the world to come.

Before seeking to interpret the vision, it will be well to remember the distinction between the truth of the Church as presented by the Apostle Paul and by the Apostle John. Paul in his doctrine always takes us to heaven, whereas John brings heavenly things to earth. Thus the ministry of Paul sets the Church before God in heaven; and if he speaks of the Bride he does not go beyond presenting her to Christ all glorious. John carries us a stage further and tells us not only of the marriage of the Lamb — when the Church will be presented to Christ for His supreme satisfaction and joy, but of the glory of the Bride when she will be displayed before the world for the glory of Christ. Being satisfied with the Church at the marriage of the Lamb, Christ will be glorified in the Church before the world. Only that which satisfies Christ can glorify Christ.

Thus the heavenly City presents the Church, not in her intimate relations with Christ as the Bride, but in her glories as displayed before the world as the centre of blessing and government for the glory of Christ. Further we may add that though John presents the Church "descending out of heaven," he does not see it descending to earth. It will be displayed in relation to earth as a testimony to God, for the glory of Christ and for the blessing of the nations who will walk in the light of it, but it is not said that the Church will be on earth in Millennial days.

Further, in reading this description of the Church in glory, we cannot fail to realize the solemn contrast that is presented by the Church in her passage through this world as presented in Revelation 2 and 3. In the addresses to the seven Churches at the opening of the Revelation, we see the ruin of the Church under the responsibility of man: in the holy City at the end of the Revelation we have the glory of the Church according to the counsels of God.

It is significant that the ruin of the Church in responsibility commenced at Ephesus where the labours of the Apostle Paul culminated in unfolding the highest doctrines of Christianity. Two great objects were before the Apostle; first, to link up the hearts of the saints with Christ in glory, as he can say, "I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 4: 2). Second, that the saints on earth should be a faithful witness to Christ, "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation among whom ye shine as lights in the world: holding forth the Word of Life" (Phil. 2: 15-16). Thus the Apostle laboured that the saints should be marked by "love" and "light" — love to Christ and light before the world. The words "love" and "light" are indeed characteristic of his epistle to the Ephesians. He seeks that we may be rooted and grounded in love and know the love of Christ which passes knowing; then he says we are "light in the Lord" and exhorts us to "walk as children of light."

In the first address to the "seven churches" in Revelation 2, we learn how entirely the assembly at Ephesus had failed in maintaining love to Christ and light before the world. The Lord has to say to Ephesus "Thou hast left thy first love," and warns the assembly that unless they repent, He will remove the candlestick. If their first love to Christ is lost, their light before the world will cease. Here then we have the commencement of the ruin into which the Church has fallen — the loss of bridal affection for Christ with the consequent loss of light before the world.

Admitting the ruin, at once we see the *grace* that has given the vision of the City so that we may be encouraged to look beyond the ruin and see the Church presented to Christ in the fulness of love at the marriage of the Lamb, and yet a little later behold the Church as the holy City, shining in the light of the Lamb — resplendent with the glories of the Lamb, the nations walking in its light. Then at last, "love" and "light" will be realized in perfection in the Church displayed in glory according to the counsels of God.

Furthermore let us remember that these visions are not unrolled before us simply for our encouragement, nor only to engage our minds with that which is supremely blessed, but also that the light of what is to come may be thrown upon our pathway in the present. In the City we see *actually* set forth in perfection what God would have *morally* set forth in the Church during her passage through this world.

### ***The Angel and the Mountain (v. 9)***

It is not without reason that the Spirit of God has specially recorded that it was one of the seven angels who had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, who was deputed to show John the glory of the Bride the Lamb's wife under the symbol of a city. Turning back to Revelation 17: 1 we learn that it was also one of these seven angels who showed John the judgment of the great whore under the symbol of Babylon. Thus God calls our attention to the contrast between Babylon the great and Jerusalem the holy. In one city there is everything of man and nothing of Christ; in the other everything speaks of Christ. It is a solemn consideration that everybody in Christendom is either working for great Babylon — the city that is going to be judged by Christ — or for the holy Jerusalem — the City that will display the glory of Christ. Nor is it difficult to discover for which city we are working. Is Christ or man our object? If man is our object, whether self or others — if we are seeking to improve, elevate, please and exalt man — we are helping to build great Babylon. If Christ is our object we are working in the interests of the New Jerusalem. Alas! the great mass of Christendom are definitely and avowedly working only for the improvement and elevation of man, to make, as they say, "a better and brighter world," and thus are erecting a vast system without God or Christ, which God calls Babylon. We do well, however, to remember how subtle is the flesh, that though by grace we may be citizens of the New Jerusalem, we may in practice be lured into helping on the interests of Babylon by adopting the methods and aims of the religious world.

Further, the different viewpoints of the two cities are instructive. The fact that Babylon is seen from a *wilderness* in contrast to the great and high mountain from which the Holy City is viewed, would indicate that for the detection of evil no great moral elevation is required. The man of the world, though he falls far short of God's estimate of evil, can go far, as history has shown, in recognizing and condemning the corruptions of Christendom. To enter, however, into the blessedness of the Holy City is utterly beyond the capacity of the natural mind. Even in the saint of God it calls for the moral elevation of soul and separation from this world, symbolized by the great and high mountain. It may be we make slow progress in entering into deep things of God because we are not prepared for the separation and elevation of the great and high mountain. To reach the height with its vast view and heavenly atmosphere entails more labour than our easy-going Christianity can put forth. Hence we at times find it more congenial to live at a lower level, in more contracted surroundings, breathing the atmosphere of earth. But if, like John, our affections are set on things above, the Holy Spirit is ready to carry us away to the great and high mountain to have unrolled before our vision the vast counsels of God for Christ and the Church.

### ***The Characteristics of the City (v. 9-10)***

The first view of the City discloses to the Apostle John its outstanding characteristics.

**First**, we learn it is "the *holy* city Jerusalem." The words "that great city" are not in the original Greek. The word "great" is only once used in connection with the City, when the wall is described. In contrast, the city of Babylon is seven times described as "great," but it is never called "holy." Greatness

appeals to man and marks his city: *holiness* is the characteristic of God's city. It must be so: the City which displays the glory of God must be according to the nature of God.

**Secondly**, the City is seen "descending out of *heaven*," not only proving that the rapture must have taken place, but indicating that the Church is heavenly in character. In its passage through this world, how entirely the heavenly character of the Church has been lost or obscured. When, however, the Church comes into display in the Millennium, what is already true to faith will become manifest to all — that the Church is comprised of believers taken out from the Jews and Gentiles and blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

**Thirdly**, the City comes "*from God*." The Church is heavenly in character and is divine in origin. In contrast the great religious systems of Christendom, finding their extreme expression in Babylon, not only stand condemned by their earthly character, but by their obviously human origin.

**Fourthly**, the City descends out of heaven from God "having *the glory of God*." The glory of God signifies the display of God in all His attributes. Babylon "glorified herself." In the great city of Babylon all the wisdom, intelligence, power and skill of man is seen in full display. In the heavenly City all the attributes of God are in display. The City is resplendent with the glory of God.

Here then we have the outstanding characteristics of the Church in glory. Comparing the religious systems of Christendom we are at once arrested by the solemn contrast they present to the heavenly City in its four leading characteristics. The City is *holy* in nature, *heavenly* in character, *divine* in origin, and *for the glory of God*. Alas, man's great religious systems are corrupt in nature, worldly in character, human in origin and for the glory of man. If we would answer to God's mind and order our path according to His Word and walk in the light of the City, the practical effect of the vision would be to separate us from every religious system which by its principles or practice makes the maintenance of holiness impossible; which is earthly in character; which has its origin from man; and the object of which is simply the glory and benefit of man rather than for the glory of God.

If the *world* in a day to come will walk in the light of the City, it surely becomes the *believer* to do so now.

### ***The Shining of the City (v. 11)***

The Apostle John proceeds to speak of the "shining" of the City, for thus it should read, "Her shining (not "her light") was like a most precious stone, as a crystal — like jasper stone"

(JND). The word "shining" is only used in one other passage — Philippians 2: 15. There we read, "Ye *shine* as lights in the world." No figure could more fitly express the truth as to the light of the Church than the shining of a precious stone. However precious, the stone has no light in itself: it can only shine by reflected light. If placed in darkness, it ceases to shine. So the Church will shine by reflecting the light of Christ. "The Lamb is the light" of the City and the City shines by reflecting the light of the Lamb. Let us remember that what will be true in glory should be true on our way to glory. We are set to "shine as lights in the world." Hence it is that in the early part of Philippians 2, Christ is set before us in all the perfection and beauty of His lowly grace. As we walk in the light of all that He is, we shall in that measure exhibit the graces of Christ. We shall only shine as we are in the light, and this shining will be reflected light. It will not be self but *Christ* who will be seen. Babylon displays the glory of man: the heavenly City will reflect Divine glory, for her shining is "like a jasper stone" — the stone which in Revelation 4: 3 is used to set forth the glory of God.

### ***The Wall of the City (v. 12)***

The City "had a wall great and high." The wall speaks of security and exclusion. The wall is "great," and thus the City is secured against every assault of the enemy. It is "high," and therefore all evil is excluded. The *great* wall cannot be broken down; the *high* wall cannot be scaled. Had the Church on earth walked in the light of the Church in glory, it never would have become likened to a "great house" in which there are vessels "to honour and some to dishonour." No vessels to "dishonour" will be found in the holy City, for "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth." The wall separates the City from all outside. Had the Church maintained a holy separation from the world, it would have been proof against the attacks of the enemy and the intrusion of the evil. The apprehension of the truth symbolized by the great and high wall would in practice lead us to depart from iniquity and separate from vessels to dishonour. Every departure from the principle of exclusion of evil had led to a corresponding departure from the truth.

### ***The Gates of the City (vv. 12-13)***

The City has twelve gates, four on every side; at the gates twelve angels, with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written upon the gates. Gates are for entrance and exit, and thus speak of reception and outflow. If the walls symbolize exclusion from the City of all that is not of Christ, the gates symbolize the reception of only what is according to Christ. In Scripture the gate of a city is well known to be the place of governmental judgment, and angels are the heavenly executors of judgment. The angels are there to bar the way to all that is contrary to the divine judgment passed upon the flesh, even as of old when Cherubims with a flaming sword kept "the way of the tree of life." The names of the twelve tribes indicate the outflow of blessing from the City and the direction it takes. In earthly cities men often call the main streets of their cities by the names of the towns to which they lead. So in the heavenly City the gates bear names of the Tribes to which the blessings of the City flow. This blessing will flow in equal measure to every quarter of the globe, for there are three gates on each of the four sides of the City. Had the Church walked in the light of the City, she would have received only what is of Christ and thus would have become a testimony to Christ — a source of blessing to the world around. Alas! the professing Church, having become Laodicean, has closed the door against Christ and let in everything of man — things that appeal to nature and gratify the lusts of the flesh — and thus has become a source of corruption to the world.

### ***The Foundations of the City (v. 14)***

The wall of the city had twelve foundations and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The names of the twelve apostles connect the City with the foundation work of the apostles at Pentecost. By their work under the control of the Holy Spirit, the Church was formed on earth as the House of God where God dwells, rules and blesses. A sphere of heavenly blessing and rule was thus formed on earth. This work, commenced on earth through the instrumentality of the apostles, is seen in its completion in the City in glory. This indicates that the City does not set forth the Church as presented by the Apostle Paul in its intimate relations to Christ as the body of Christ, nor in its privileges of access to the Father's house. It is the aspect of the Church presented by the twelve — the vessel for the display of the glory of God before the world.

## ***The Measuring of the City (vv. 15-17)***

John records that the Angel who talked with him "had a golden reed to measure the city." It is not only that certain measurements are given, but that the City is *measured*; as we read, "he measured the City," and again, "he measured the wall." This indicates that the City is tested by being measured and that all answers to the Divine test. All is found to be exact; nothing falls short of perfection, nothing is out of place, for "the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal."

Gold is the well known symbol of Divine righteousness. The City being measured by the golden reed thus sets forth that all is tested by Divine righteousness with the result that the City, the gates and the walls entirely meet the requirements of Divine righteousness. The City is thus the display of the righteousness of God in Christ — the answer to the cross of Christ (2 Cor. 5: 21).

## ***The Materials of the City (vv. 18-21)***

"The *wall* of it was jasper." From Revelation 4: 3 we learn that jasper is a figure of the Divine glory of Christ. It is His glory that excludes all evil from the City. With a deeper sense of the glory of the One who dwells in the Church, we should realize how impossible to connect evil with His Name. The glory secures the exclusion of all that defiles.

"The *City* was pure gold\* like unto clear glass," setting forth the absolute righteousness and holiness that characterizes the City. We know the new man is created in righteousness and true holiness, but there is now often much about believers that speaks of the "old man" and his ways. In every child of God there is the real gold, but with some alloy of baser metal. In the City the dross will be gone. There the gold is pure without alloy. There too all will be transparent like clear glass. There will be no obscurity — no hidden motives.

{\*Just as *gold* speaks of divine righteousness, pure gold seems to carry us a step further to include the glory and deity of Christ (Ed.).}

*The foundations* were "garnished with all manner of precious stones." There is variety in the stones, but all are precious. The stones are not a source of light, but they reflect and refract light and thus exhibit the beautiful colours of light. Christ is the light; in Him all excellencies are combined in perfection to form the light. In His people every excellency is set forth in detail to exhibit, as it were, the colours of the light.

It is not without significance that the description of *the gates* follows the foundations. If the *commencement* of a city is set forth in laying the foundations, the *completion* of the city is seen in setting up the gates (Joshua 6: 26). In this city there is no diminution in perfection: the gates are as perfect as the foundations. Not only are the foundations adorned with precious stones, but every gate is a precious stone. The one pearl of which each gate is formed may set forth the preciousness of the Church to Christ. This we may gather from Matthew 13: 46 where the Church is alluded to under the figure of "one pearl of great price." From every point of approach the City will exhibit the preciousness of the Church to Christ. It is true that everything in the City speaks of the preciousness of Christ. Today He is precious to those who believe (1 Peter 2: 7). In a day to come, all the world will see in the Church how precious Christ is to God, but they will also see how precious the Church is to Christ. Then will be fulfilled the Lord's own words to Philadelphia, "I will make them to come and worship before thy feet and to know that I have loved thee."

*The street* of the City was pure Gold. The street of an earthly city is the place of public resort where men come in contact with one another, where we have to be on our guard, speak with reserve

and walk as it were with girded loins for fear of defilement. In the heavenly City there will be no need for the girded loin. There will be nothing to defile: the street is pure gold. There will be no need for reserve, for there will be nothing to hide from one another. All will be transparent.

### ***Things That Are Not in the City (vv. 22-27)***

**No temple.** "I saw," says John, "no temple therein." The temple hid God behind a veil. It concealed His glory and involved a special priesthood by which men could *approach* to worship, but not immediately\* draw near to God. In the City there is no temple — nothing that will conceal God. The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. They *fill* the City: access to God is immediate.\* How little Christendom has walked in the light of the City is evident inasmuch as "temples" have again been set up after a Jewish pattern, with priests between the people and God. Thus the true conception of the Assembly (Church) with Christ in the midst has been entirely lost.

{\*Used in the sense of nothing or no one in between God and man. Such drawing near was not possible in temple days (Ed.).}

**No light of the sun nor of the moon.** The sun and moon are natural lights symbolic of the natural mind of man. Such light will not be there, and where all will have the mind of Christ, will not be needed. "The glory of God has enlightened it and the lamp thereof is the Lamb" (v. 23, JND). God is the light and the Lamb is the "Light-bearer" through whom the light reaches the City. The City reflects the light of Christ and the nations walk in the light of the City. Thus the prayer of our Lord in John 17: 23 (JND) will have its perfect answer — "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected into one; and that *the world may know* that Thou hast sent Me and that Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me." God will be perfectly revealed in Christ, reflected by the Church and seen by the nations. As a result "the kings of the earth do bring their glory to it" (v. 24, JND). They will own that the heavens do rule, not by the light of the sun, but by the light of the City, and that all their glory is subject to the rule of the city.

**No closed gates.** The gates of the City shall "not be shut at all by day." There will be no cessation of the outflow of blessing. Today the professing Church, with Laodicean indifference, has closed its doors upon Christ, and as a result Christ has closed its door to the world. He has ceased to use it as a channel of blessing to the world. In the heavenly City, the Lamb is the light thereof, and thus blessing will flow to man and that *unceasingly* since the gates will not be shut.

**No night.** "There shall be no night there." Not only will the light of the City never cease, it will never grow dim. Darkness is ignorance of God even as light is the knowledge of God. Today our light is often hindered by our ignorance. Our ignorance largely results from seeking to walk in the light of our own reason rather than by the light of Christ, thus having His mind. Had we always a single eye to Christ and His glory, our whole body would be full of light, having no part dark. In the City no shade of darkness will obscure the light that shines upon the world, for there will be no night there.

**No evil.** "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth." There will be no intrusion of the flesh to defile. There will be nothing that can raise an idol between the soul and God — no abomination. There will be nothing that deceives — no lie. Moreover, it is not only that the flesh, with its defilements, abominations and lies is not here, but it shall in no wise enter there. This was never said of the garden of delights on earth. There indeed all was perfect as created by the hand of God, but of Eden it was not said that evil "shall in no wise enter." In the City we have not only a City of perfection, but a *City beyond the possibility of defilement*. They alone will enter who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

## ***The Blessings of the City (22:1-5)***

We have seen that the things of nature and of the fall are not there, are not needed there and will never enter there. Now we are permitted to delight in the positive blessings that *are* there — blessings that provide for the well-being of the City.

**First**, there is "*a river of water of life*" (v. 1), a symbol of the fulness of life in the Spirit flowing from the throne. In an early part of the Revelation when John was raptured to heaven, he records that "out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices;" fit symbols of the holy judgments of God that were about to proceed from the throne. Here we have passed beyond the judgment and learn that the throne that dealt out judgment to the nations has become the source of unceasing blessing to the City. For the City, the judgments of the throne were exhausted at the Cross. The fulness of blessing in the City by the Spirit, is the glorious answer to the Cross.

**Second**, we learn that in the midst of the street of the City and on either side of the river is *the tree of life* (v. 2). The river speaks of the Holy Spirit as the Water of Life; the Tree speaks of Christ as the Food of Life. The City will be sustained in perennial freshness by drinking of the River of Life and feeding on the Tree of Life. The River will never fail, the Tree will never wither and the City will never grow old. At the end of Millennial days John sees "the holy City, *new Jerusalem*, coming down from God out of heaven, *prepared as a Bride* adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21: 2). A thousand years have rolled away, but the bridal freshness of the City remains.

**Thirdly**, we have the *fruits* of the tree, for we read that the Tree of Life "bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month" (v. 2). The fruits speak of the varied glories of Christ. It is not enough to know and feed upon Christ in *one* aspect. We need Christ in His fulness, and the City will be sustained in perennial freshness by successive unfoldings of His graces and excellencies.

**Fourth**, the *leaves* of the tree will be for the healing of the nations (v. 2). Just as the City will find in Christ a source of perennial vigour, the nations will find in Christ the source of healing. The judgments of the nations will be over. It will not be the Lord Jesus revealed from heaven in flaming fire dealing in destruction with those who know not God, but Christ in the midst of the City as the Tree of Life bringing healing to the sore-stricken nations. The nations that for long centuries have been torn with strife and violence, will find healing in the appreciation of Christ in His beauty, for the leaves set forth His outward beauty. Strife and conflict, jealousy and distrust will be ended by a leaf from the Tree of Life. Christ seen in the perfection of His way will end strife among the nations; even as Christ apprehended in His graces brings healing between the Lord's people today.

**Fifth**, *the throne* of God and the Lamb shall be in it (v. 3). The seat of God's righteous judgment for the Millennial earth will be established in the City. The curse will be gone and hence the throne will dispense blessing rather than judgment. It will be the happy privilege of the saints to serve in dispensing the blessings of the throne.

**Sixth**, *His Name* shall be in their foreheads (v. 4). They will see His face and He will be seen in their faces. Even now if we looked more steadily in His face we would more truly reflect His graces. Gazing upon the glory of the Lord we should be changed into the same image from glory to glory. In the City we shall no longer see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. And when we see "no man any more save (except) Jesus only," then only Christ will be seen in the saints. The names we have borne on earth will have passed forever. No more will "thief" be written on the brow of the saved malefactor, nor "sinner" upon the woman of Luke 7: 36-39, nor will "Pharisee" be seen on the face of Saul of Tarsus. These names will have passed with the lives that earned them and the Name of Christ

will alone be written on every sinless brow.

**Seventh,** "The Lord God giveth them *light* (v. 5). Not only will the City *be filled with life*, for the River of Life and the Tree of Life will be there; not only will it be the home of love, for "JESUS" the Name of love is written on every brow; but it will be filled with light, "for the Lord God giveth them light." The City will never know any trace of darkness — no clouds or shadows — for "there shall be no night there." The prophetic lamp will no longer be needed to guide us through the encircling gloom. The night will be gone, the lamp put out, the brightness of the sun be dimmed, and the City shall bask for eternity in the light of the Lord God.

Moreover, through Millennial days these blessings will never fail, for "they shall reign for ever and ever. " We shall find in the Paradise of God a River whose waters never run dry, a Tree whose fruit never fails, with Leaves that never wither. There too will be a Throne that will never be shaken, a Name that will never lose its lustre and a Light that will never grow dim.

No soil of nature's evil  
No touch of man's rude hand  
Shall e'er disturb around us  
That bright and blissful land.  
The charms that woo the senses  
Shall be as bright as fair,  
For all, while breathing round us,  
Shall tell of Jesus there.  
What light, when all its beaming  
Shall own Him as the Sun!  
What music when its breathing  
Shall bear His Name along!  
No pause, no change of pleasure  
No cloud to dim our view,  
The draught that lulls our thirsting  
Shall wake our thirst anew.