

The Kingdom in Various Aspects

As Presented in Scripture.

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THE KINGDOM

In seeking to enter into the mind of God on the subject of the kingdom, or kingdoms, as revealed in His word, we are met at once with a variety of expressions that have to be considered. "The kingdom of God"; "the kingdom of heaven," with "the mysteries" of both; "the kingdom of the Son of man"; "of the Son of his love"; "the kingdom of his Father," and "of their Father" (as of the righteous); "His heavenly kingdom"; "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ": and all these in

the New Testament. These cannot all refer to one and the same thing. And we have long learned by experience that every clear distinction of scripture yields blessing, as we wait upon God for His meaning in it, in the increased apprehension of His mind into which it leads. In humble dependence upon Him by His Spirit to instruct us, this brief sketch of a great subject is attempted. With the hope that it may help in the study of the word on the subjects before us an index is given at the close, of the passages referred to.

1.

"The Kingdom of Heaven"

may be taken up first, as bringing out an aspect of the kingdom which is constantly found in the Gospel of Matthew, and only there. "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" is the testimony of John the Baptist, and of the Lord Jesus when John's testimony closed; also the twelve, as sent out by Him, were to preach that the kingdom of heaven was at hand: and thus generally it is presented in Matthew 3 - 12. It is the kingdom of Old Testament prophecy, but is given a character by the name "kingdom of the heavens" (as it always is in the original) that it hardly possessed in Old Testament communications, though an expression in Daniel 4: 26, "after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule," may have prepared the way for the use of it. It implies that the seat of the authority of the kingdom, when set up, is in the heavens; and thus the rejection of the King, and His sitting at God's right hand is indicated in the title, before that rejection comes out fully, as it does in Matthew 12 and what follows. Already there is the vein of rejection running through Matthew 5 - 7, commonly called the Sermon on the Mount. It brings out the principles that should characterize those who enter into the kingdom when established, and by implication the principles of the kingdom which the Lord was prepared to introduce. See the Beatitudes.

The title is peculiar to Matthew, and gives the dispensational character of the kingdom; and this is so distinctly marked, that when the instruction goes deeper, and involves what is moral, rather than its form in God's dispensation, the "kingdom of God" is used, as in Matt. 6: 33; Matt. 12: 28; Matt. 19: 24; and Matt. 21: 31, 43. The rejection of the King comes first fully before us, in the change in, the Lord's address to the twelve from Matthew 10: 16, and in the circumstances of Matthew 11, when the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done repented not. But in Matthew 12, when the leaders of the nation take counsel how they might destroy Him, and denounce the manifested power of the Spirit of God in Him, in casting out demons, as of Beelzebub, the prince of the demons, the Lord pronounces judgment upon the nation; and, disowning His natural relationships in Israel, He leaves the Jewish house, and goes out by the seaside of nations in Matthew 13 to announce the outward results in the world of a new work, namely, of sowing seed to *produce* fruit, instead of looking for it any more in Israel; and after this preparatory parable, which is not one of the kingdom of heaven, though the seed sown is the word of it (ver. 19), we are given the wholly new form which the kingdom would take as

"The Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven"

in the six following parables. The first three of these give the external features of it, as to be established in the world by testimony, and are spoken to the multitudes generally. The last three, bringing out the hidden reality in it known to the heart of the Lord, with the interpretation of that of the wheat and tares, are communicated to the disciples privately, in the house. In that of the wheat and tares we find already a mixed state of things in the sphere of the profession. The field is the world, as

the Lord distinctly states While men slept the enemy has been at work; and there are in result the children of the wicked one, the tares, introduced among the wheat, the children of the kingdom, and so to be left till the harvest, namely, the end of the age. In the time of the harvest angel reapers, in God's providential ways, were to gather together first the tares, and to bind them in bundles ready to be burned, while the wheat is gathered away out of the field into the heavenly granary. So far the parable: in the interpretation the Lord goes further with the disciples, even to the end of the age, to which we must refer again. In the parable of the mustard seed, that which was sown the least of all seeds becomes a tree, always the symbol in scripture of the great powers of the world: while in the last of the three the kingdom of heaven is likened to leaven hid in three measures of meal, until the whole is leavened. It is the spreading of doctrine as a system through a measured mass, a property that it has as experience proves, affecting numbers besides those who are reached by it in heart and conscience. That leaven, everywhere else in Scripture, is a type of evil is significant of the Lord's estimate of such a state, in that which professes to be His kingdom in His absence.

If these parables were all, we might think that there was little to be found in it of value to the Lord. But in the last three communicated to the disciples we learn of the reality known to Him to be there. The treasure hid in the field for which the Lord with joy sold all that He had and bought the field, would be the whole company of His redeemed that are in the world. The pearl of great price is added to bring out what that special part of them that forms the assembly,* called out now in the time of His rejection, from Pentecost till He comes, is to Him. Seeking goodly pearls, when He had found one that was in His estimation of great price, He sold all that He had and bought it: "He loved the church, and gave himself for it." Lastly, if the net cast into the sea gathers of every kind, the fishermen have for their occupation putting the good into vessels; while as usual the interpretation adds fresh features, and brings us to the end of the age, when angels will be used in carrying out the judgment of God on the bad, as previously so employed, in the interpretation of the tares. Thus would the Lord furnish us with instruction as to the kingdom of heaven, without which we could hardly account for the state of things in which we find ourselves — "things new and old" (ver. 52): for if the thought of the kingdom was from of old, the form it was to take in the rejection of the King, and as now seated in the heavens, was wholly new.

*I only use the word throughout as truer to the original than "church," with all the varied meanings attached to it unknown to Scripture.

But now we must inquire into the relation in which this aspect of the kingdom stands to that which is expressed by a term of much more extended scope,

"The Kingdom of God."

Not that it tells of a different kingdom. It is the kingdom of heaven still, but presented in its moral characteristics rather than in its dispensational form. The passages where the change of expression takes place in Matthew will have prepared us for this. As, for instance, when the Lord says (Matt. 12: 28), "If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is *come upon you*," that is, the moral power of it was displayed in His Person. It could not have been so said of the kingdom of heaven: it was *at hand*.

A passage often misunderstood helps as to the force of if. (Luke 17: 20.) When the Pharisees asked when the kingdom of God should come, the Lord replied: "The kingdom of God cometh not with outward observation;" namely, in such a manner as to be seen with the eyes. "For, behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you." (New Trans.; Rev. marg. — not surely "within" Pharisees!) Again, it is

as manifested in its characteristic traits and power, in Him who was in their midst. Later on, when the kingdom had been actually established by the testimony of the Holy Ghost to Christ risen, and glorified at God's right hand, we learn from 1 Corinthians 4: 20 that it "is not in word, but in power," and from the same apostle in Romans 14: 17 that it "is not in meat and drink; but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." It flows from this deeply blessed character of the kingdom of God, that even when Christ was here, and every lovely feature of it was displayed in its perfection in His Person, it needed to be born wholly anew to see it, much more to enter into it when established. (John 3: 3-5.) Only do we enter into it in reality when, by the word applied to our souls in power by the Spirit, we are made partakers of a life and nature suited to such a kingdom.

That it formed part of the testimony of the Lord, as well as in the form of it given in Matthew, we know from such passages as Mark 1: 14, 15; Luke 4: 43: the twelve also and the seventy were sent out to proclaim that it was come nigh. It is, as at present known, the sway of God established by testimony over those reached by the testimony, subjecting us to Him; even as under the form of it, as the kingdom of heaven, it is the subjection of the soul to Christ, as at God's right hand. Hence it is said in Luke 18: 17: "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein." Both may be taken up in the way of mere profession, as we have seen as to much that is included in the kingdom of heaven in Matthew 13. But when the difference of moral character and dispensational form is comprehended it will be seen that the latter yields itself to this aspect of a professing sphere, rather than the former. Thus only two of the parables in which the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are contained are applied to the kingdom of God, those of the mustard seed and the leaven (Luke 13; Mark 4), though Mark prefaces these by a parable, peculiar to him, of the sower who leaves the seed to itself to spring and grow up, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear, till the harvest is come, when he intervenes again to put in the sickle. (Mark 4: 26-29.)

The time of the inauguration of the Kingdom.

As to the time of the kingdom being established, we know from the Lord's words as to John the Baptist that it had not been in his time. For, although he was greater in privilege than all the prophets who had gone before him, as coming nearer to the King in Person, the least in it when actually come was greater than he. (Matt. 11: 7-11; Luke 7: 26-28.) "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every one *presseth* into it" (Luke 16: 16), another form of the expression used as to the kingdom of heaven in Matthew 11: 12, where, "from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth *violence*, and the *violent* take it by force." For the testimony of it, in either aspect, was putting every one to the test. It involved the path of a Christ rejected out of the world, where self must be denied and the cross taken up, that He may be followed, and that in the teeth of the opposition of every principle of man and his world. It needed the holy energy of faith to break through every obstacle, to be wholly for Him whose claim on His own was absolute. That the time of it was not yet, while the Lord was on earth, is plain from the parable He gave when nigh to Jerusalem (Luke 19: 11), when they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear; also from that of the fig-tree and all the trees in Luke 21: 29-31, "When they now shoot forth," etc., "So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand."

Having formed such a full part of the Lord's instruction before His death, He still speaks of the things pertaining to it when risen from the dead. (Acts 1: 3.) And at last we find it formally inaugurated by the testimony of the Holy Ghost come down at Pentecost to Jesus, raised up of God and exalted by His right hand, made of God both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2: 33-36.) In its dispensational character,

Peter had been given the keys of it by the Lord in Matthew 16, which he uses to open it to the Jews in Acts 2 and to the Gentiles in Acts 10 Philip preached the things concerning the kingdom of God in Samaria (Acts 8: 12), as Paul did at Ephesus till all they of Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus. (Acts 19: 8.) And he became the great exponent of its principles, not only there (Acts 20: 25), but also at Rome. (Acts 28: 23, 31.) Apart from him, indeed, it forms no part of the actual testimony of any given us in Acts, save that of Philip at Samaria. Not that it was not established in the most real way, but the great subject of the testimony of all as they went from province to province and from city to city was Christ, and His death, resurrection and ascension; and to this the power of the Holy Ghost gave effect in souls, subjecting them to the confession of His name, and thus the kingdom was formed and spread. Nor is it otherwise in the epistles. Besides the two passages already quoted from 1 Corinthians and Romans, not many will be found that speak of it in its present form. It was not the subject of testimony in the teaching of the apostles, any more than what is given us of their preaching; although every fresh soul brought to bow to Christ by the gospel was introduced into it, the sphere of it being thus continually extended.

The believer in the most blessed way has *been* delivered from the power of darkness and *translated* into it, and that as the kingdom of the Son of His love, an expression which only occurs in Colossians 1. It gives us the thought of the deep interest of the Father in that which is so directly connected with the glory of the Son whom the Father loves, and of our part in a kingdom of such precious associations, for Him and for us. Again, it is not a different kingdom, but a special character it has, enhancing the blessedness of being of it and in it. Paul, too, can speak of his fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God in the same epistle. (Col. 4: 11)

In Revelation 1: 5, 6, the moment He is presented as the faithful witness, looking back to what He was on earth — the first-born from the dead in resurrection, and prince of the kings of the earth in millennial glory yet to come — our hearts go out to Him who "loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his own blood, and has made us a kingdom," and also "priests unto his God and Father;" while John himself speaks out of his present conscious companionship with others, in the tribulation, and kingdom, and patience of Jesus Christ (ver. 9) — things that go together as long as it is the kingdom of Him who has been rejected out of the world. But it will not always have this character, hence his attitude of *patience*, reflecting that of the blessed Lord on high.

2.

This leads us on naturally to the second part of our subject,

The Kingdom in its future aspects,

when it will be no longer a question of the mysteries of a kingdom, either of heaven or of God, established by testimony, and embracing as its sphere all who profess to receive the testimony (though in reality only those who have been born, by the testimony reaching heart and conscience in the power of the Spirit); but when it will be set up in manifested power and glory with both its heavenly and earthly parts.

Of the earthly side of it the Old Testament, in the Psalms and prophets especially, is full. The heavenly side of it was as yet unrevealed, though doubtless there were those who by faith, like Abraham who looked for the city that hath foundations, rose above earthly promise and hope to that which is heavenly. (Heb. 11: 16.) But a heavenly portion for His people was among "the secret things

that belong unto the Lord our God: those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever," as Moses speaks. (Deut. 29: 29.) The things that were revealed pointed clearly to a kingdom to be set up in power upon earth, to embrace the whole world within its scope, as in Ps. 22: 27, 28; Ps. 72; Dan. 2: 44; Dan. 7: 13, 14. But the same testimony of the prophets is decisive, that judgment, world-wide in its bearing, will be necessary to clear the scene for the shining in of the glory of Christ in such a kingdom.

Not by the gospel, or any such testimony of long-suffering and grace on the part of God, will Israel and the nations be reached. "The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth." (Ps. 9: 16.) "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." (Isa. 26: 9) "Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce wrath: for all the earth shall be devoured by the fire of my jealousy. For *then* will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent." (Zeph. 3: 8, 9) But, first, we must turn to the New Testament for

The heavenly part of the Kingdom.

We can well believe that it was not possible that the moral traits and power of the kingdom were perfectly manifested in Him, who alone had come down out of heaven — "even the Son of man who is in heaven" (and that while speaking to Nicodemus on earth) — without something of the heavenly side of it being expressed, and that so as to leave the impression of what was heavenly more and more upon those who had to do with Him. There was, besides, the direct teaching of the Lord. Already in "The Lord's Prayer" (so called), both in the form of it given in Matthew and that in Luke, He directs the hearts of His disciples to the Father's kingdom, "Father . . . thy kingdom come"; while on the earthly side of it, in Matthew at least, they are taught to look for the Father's will to be done as in heaven so on the earth (see R.V. Matt. 6: 10), in the same whole-hearted, joyful obedience.

This double aspect of the kingdom in the future comes out clearly, in the *interpretation* of the parable of the wheat and tares" in Matthew 13, already alluded to. For while the parable left the tares gathered on the field in bundles to be burned, the wheat being gathered out of it into the barn (ver. 30), the interpretation (vers. 36-43) occupies us chiefly with the end of the age; when the Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all scandals, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the

Kingdom of their Father,

so that the kingdom divides into these two parts: the kingdom of the Father in which the righteous are displayed in heavenly glory and the *kingdom of the Son of man*, of which they are heirs. In that heavenly side of it, "my Father's kingdom," the Lord looks forward to the renewal of His joy with the true remnant of His people in Matthew 26: 29, though the parallel passage (Luke 22: 16) contemplates rather the kingdom then about to be brought in in grace, as we have it now.

Again, the Mount of Transfiguration, as presented in Luke 9: 29-36, must have strongly impressed the chosen witnesses, with a character of the kingdom beyond anything prophesied of it in the Old Testament. For it was not only "the Son of man coming in his kingdom" that was portrayed there, as in Matthew; nor "the kingdom of God come with power," as in Mark, both belonging to the future. But in Luke there is another side of it. They saw the kingdom of God indeed in a very bright

gleam of the coming glory of it; they saw His glory and heavenly saints who appeared in glory. But that passed — the time was not yet when it could be established. Still there was what remained; as the cloud of the excellent glory overshadowed them, and they entered into it, to hear such a voice from it saying, "This is my beloved Son; hear him." Jesus remained to them, revealed in a glory of His Person, deeper than all that could be manifested in the day of the glory of the kingdom — the perfect object of the Father's delight. This is the heavenly side of the kingdom, and is closely connected with the Father's house, in the abiding and eternal joy of it, though this last is apart from and above all dispensation. Thus they had the word of prophecy the more confirmed, as we know from 2 Peter 1: 19; if there was what went beyond the scope of prophecy in the glory of the Lord Jesus revealed there.

And what we have seen of the Mount of Transfiguration is quite characteristic of Luke; as Jewish and earthly hope recedes through the rejection of Christ, though not one word of promise will fail of its ultimate accomplishment, what is heavenly and eternal comes into view. Luke 12 opens the heavens to faith, before the whole scene of man's responsibility under law and grace closes in judgment in Luke 13. The kingdom is connected with the Father's counsels in verse 32, "it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," even as it is "His kingdom" we are set to seek in verse 31 (reading thus, with New Trans. and R.V.); and accordingly their hearts are directed to a treasure in the heavens (ver. 33) and to the heavenly side of the Lord's coming by the "parable" (ver. 41) of verses 36 and 37, as shown by the blessed result to the watchers, "Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." For this is the rich reward of watching for Him, whether He comes in the second watch or in the third: He will bring us into the Father's house and minister to us the richest joys of it for ever — and what untold joy will be found in having Him to minister it to us, the blessed Lord finding thus the occasion to serve the objects of His love, when we might have thought the need and possibility of His service was over for ever. There is another side of the Christian's life intimately connected with true watching, namely, that of active service; to which the Lord passes on in reply to Peter, as to the application of the parable, "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh, shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath." That is in the day of the kingdom. Both ought to be characteristic of the Christian; but the reward of the watcher is as high above that of the doer as heaven is above the earth, which expresses the relative estimate of these things for the heart of the Lord.

Association with Christ, in both parts of His kingdom, was to be the portion of those who had continued with Him in His temptations in Luke 22: 28. For I suppose that eating and drinking at His table in His kingdom (ver. 30) would be entering into His joy; while on the earthly side of it they would "sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." But it was not only when Christ was here that temptations, or what we now speak of as testing, lay on the path for those who follow Him. "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14: 22), which enables us to understand how all the persecutions and tribulations the Thessalonians were enduring, in patience and faith, was a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God; that they had been counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which they suffered (2 Thess. 1: 4, 5). If the unrighteous shall not inherit it (1 Cor. 6: 9, 10; Gal. 5: 21; Eph. 5: 5: where it is both "the kingdom of God and of Christ"), "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" (James 2: 5.) How well we may be "exhorted and comforted and charged" by the beloved Apostle, "as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called us unto His kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. 2: 12) — "a kingdom that cannot be shaken," that we receive (Heb. 12: 28), when all things that are made, not the earth only, but also heaven will be shaken to their removal, according to His promise. In his last epistle Paul looks with confidence to the Lord to be preserved unto His heavenly kingdom (2 Tim. 4: 18), which indeed is "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and

Saviour Jesus Christ," for it will never pass away, or pass to another; into which an entrance will be ministered abundantly to those who give diligence to make their calling and election sure. (2 Peter 1: 10, 11.)

We have thus looked at the main passages in the gospels and epistles, in which the kingdom in its heavenly part, in various connections, is brought before us. But there are others, in which it may not be specifically named, but which instruct us as to the

Purpose of God in Establishing the Kingdom,

and thus help to enlarge our apprehension of the all-important place it has in the ways of God. Thus it is of deepest interest to learn that it is the answer of God, according to His predeterminate counsel, to the lowly grace and humiliation in which His Son came to carry out all His will, and to the world's rejection of Him as thus humbling Himself. Psalm 2 already presents Him as exciting the rage of the nations - their kings and rulers gathered together against Jehovah, and against His Christ. But they can only "do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: Jehovah hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession"; though it is to "break them with a rod of iron; and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." And the kings are warned to come to terms with Him while it is still possible.

Psalm 8 carries us further; for the Spirit's interpretation in Hebrews 2 gives us the answer to the question of the psalm, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the Son of man, that thou visitest him?" It is Christ made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour, and set over God's works. "For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the habitable world to come," of which the apostle speaks. (See Heb. 2: 6.) "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet," so that to have this place of destined supremacy for man He had to become man; though not for that alone, but "that he by the grace of God should taste death for everything." By another quotation of the psalm in 1 Corinthians 15: 27 we learn how absolute is the subjection of all things to Him that is spoken of in it; for the only exception is He who subjects them to Him, although we see not yet the accomplishment of this. Other psalms might be referred to, but Psalm 110 enters into the argument of the apostle in 1 Corinthians 15: "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet." His place of universal supremacy as man seems a little distinct from all hostile power being subjugated to Him, and this psalm is evidently referred to which says: "Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool."

This then characterises the whole time of the kingdom — God subjecting everything to Christ. Psalm 91 beautifully grounds His exaltation upon His devotedness. "Because *he hath set his love upon me*, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name." (Ver. 14.) In the Gospel of John: "The *Father loveth the Son*, and hath given *all things* into his hand." (John 3: 35.) In John 5: 20 *et seq.* it flows from the same place He has in His Father's love, that He has determined that, if the lowly place He took, and that was necessary to carry out His Father's will, exposed Him to be despised and rejected of men, all men shall "honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." Hence besides His life-giving title as the Son, all judgment has been committed to Him, because He is the Son of man — the very form in which He was disowned and dishonoured.

The same truth of the connection between the place He is set in, and the infinite humiliation He came into in the accomplishment of the divine will, could not be more fully stated than in Philippians 2: the exaltation of verse 9 and following is directly founded upon it. Emptying Himself as God,

humbling Himself as man to become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (vers. 6-8), forms the ground of verse 9: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow," and not only of the heavens and earth, but even of the infernal regions, and "that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

The Mystery.

The revelation of the mystery comes in to confirm what we have seen in the fullest way, bringing out the universal headship of Christ, as nowhere in the Old Testament, save as Psalm 8 supplies a connecting link. For in Ephesians 1, when first the believer is given to know the place he has had individually in Christ in the eternal counsels of God, in complacency, sonship and acceptance — God satisfying Himself in the character of the blessing unfolded to us — He counts upon having those who will be interested in His counsels for the glory of Christ, in whom we have been so blessed; and in all wisdom and prudence He makes known to us the mystery of His will concerning Him: that in view of the dispensation of the fulness of times, when the purpose, for which the ages of time were set in motion, has been reached, He would head up all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. That is then the object of God in the kingdom, though it may be only seen to be fully accomplished at its close. It is the furthest reach of God's government in time, and discloses Christ as the centre and object of the eternal counsels of God in the establishment of it, and all "to the praise of his glory." (Ver. 14.) "The fulness of times" doubtless carries us on to the end of the millennial reign, which discloses Christ set at the head of everything in heaven and earth.

That this revelation, of God's eternal purpose as to Christ, is intimately connected with the place of the assembly, which is the subject of the mystery in every other passage, may be seen in verse 11. For when all things are thus headed up in Christ by God, we are found to be heirs in Him of the whole inheritance of glory: the very next thought is "in whom we also have obtained an inheritance," or, for it is one word in the original, "we have been made heirs."* And before the chapter closes that which was shadowed forth in the first Adam, set at the head of everything on earth, and who was given Eve to share the position with him, is seen to be gloriously realized in the last Adam: Christ, raised from the dead and set at His own right hand in the heavenlies, above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come; "and he hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the assembly, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Thus He, too, has His heavenly Eve, the heir and sharer with Him of the whole inheritance of glory, as His body and His bride.

*It is to be deplored that the Revisers of 1881, doubtless through failing to grasp the peculiar position of the assembly and its entire distinctness from Israel, have here missed the point of the passage and translated, "made a heritage." That Israel stood in this relationship to Jehovah is continually found in the Old Testament. Deut. 4: 20; Deut. 9: 26, 29; Deut. 32: 9; 1 Kings 8: 5 1; Psalm 33: 12, "the people that he hath chosen for his own inheritance." So Jeremiah often. (Jer. 10: 16; Jer. 12: 7, etc.) On the contrary, we are His heirs — "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." (Rom. 8: 17; Gal. 4: 7.) See Ephesians 1: 14 where, before the time comes for Christ to take the inheritance, redemption being put forth in power to the purchased possession and we inherit it in Him, the Spirit who has sealed us for God, is for us the earnest of the glorious inheritance. If we were God's heritage there would be no room for the idea and fact of an earnest — the earnest would not be for us, but for God — an impossible thought. If it be supposed that verse 18, "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints," involves that the saints are His inheritance, we have only to turn to Daniel 7 to see the

aptness and force of the expression. When the Son of man *comes* to the Ancient of days (vers. 13, 14), and there was given Him dominion, etc., and He is found to be the Ancient of days Himself who comes in verse 22, the saints of the high or heavenly places take and possess the kingdom. (Vers. 18-22.) That is, He formally enters into possession by putting the saints into possession. So the purchased possession, of which we are heirs, can be beautifully characterized as the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and becomes one of the three subjects of knowledge for which the apostle prays for us: (1) His calling in what is infinitely above us according to verses 3-7; (2) the glory of the inheritance according to verses 10, 11, in what stretches out in indefinable glory (Eph. 3: 18) below us, and (3) the power (ver. 19) that has put us into the calling and made us heirs of the inheritance.

We see, too, how the heading up in Christ of all things has had its commencement: He has already become Head over all things to the assembly; the assembly stands to Him in that relationship as its Head, besides owning Him in the Headship over all things which belongs to Him, though we see not yet all things put under Him. But there is His own personal supremacy besides, according to 1 Peter 3: 22, "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him," which took effect when He ascended. It is blessed to see that thus no thought of God fails of its full accomplishment: if man fails, and has failed, in every position in which God ever set him up, all will be found made good and sustained in Christ as man to God's everlasting glory.

The Kingdom and the Assembly to be Distinguished.

It is very important for our souls to see that the assembly is never identified or confounded with the kingdom. In the age to come it will be associated with the king, as we have seen. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. 2: 12). Any connection of the assembly with the world in rule or government now would be the worst unfaithfulness to its calling, Christ being rejected. But when He takes to Himself His great power and reigns, it flows out of the assembly's nearness of relationship to Him, as united to Him as its Head, that its association with Him in His kingdom will be complete. In the measure in which the truth of the mystery has been apprehended, and the assembly known to be wholly heavenly in its origin and calling, relationships and hope — the fruit of God's eternal purpose — it will be seen how entirely distinct it is from the kingdom in its present form; though while the assembly is here, those who compose it are in the kingdom too. It must be said, while the assembly is here, because the parable of the wheat and tares has shown us the wheat gathered into the barn, while yet it remains for the Son of man to send forth His angels to gather out of His kingdom all that offends; so that the kingdom overlaps the assembly.

Another consideration flows from the revelation, through Paul, of the place of the assembly, that the kingdom in its present aspect is not so much in the forefront of the apostolic teaching. The great present work of the Spirit of God is taking out of the nations a people for the name of His Son (as Peter declared, Acts 15: 14), who belong to Him, in heavenly relationship, according to the counsels of eternity. It is not a work that belongs to the history, or ages, of the world in any way, though now being carried out on earth; hence time does not count in it. The assembly belongs to that remarkable parenthesis in time that comes in between the sixty-ninth and the opening of the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 9: 24). Hence

The Hope of the Assembly

is not the yet future kingdom; although, as we have seen, the assembly is so intimately connected with Him who is the King that every interest of His is hers, even before the day that she is called to

reign with Him. The king Himself (though it is not in this relationship she belongs to Him — He is never spoken of as king of the assembly) is *her* hope. The kingdom is Israel's proper hope; hence the Old Testament closes with the arising of the Sun of righteousness, even as Elijah must precede the great and terrible day of the Lord. (Mal. 4: 2.) The New Testament closes with the bright and morning Star; if every promise for Israel and the earth is secured in Him who is the root as well as the offspring of David. But it is not such Jewish relationships that touch the affections of the Bride. The morning star belongs only to those who watch through the night, and is Christ, as we know Him in heavenly glory, and as coming for us — no sign to be looked for — *before* He rises as the Sun. The moment the Lord presents Himself as such the answer of her heart is immediate, "the Spirit and the bride say, Come," and we are given the whole range of her interests, because they are His, in the rest of the verse. The hope of the assembly, then, is the coming of the Lord Himself to receive her to Himself for the Father's house, before He comes to reign. It need not be sought for, at least as formally distinguished from the latter aspect of His coming, save through the apostle by whom her distinct place according to the counsels of divine love is revealed. Save that, when thus revealed, we can look back in the light of the revelation and see how fully it was before the heart of the Lord, specially in His closing intercourse with those who were to form the nucleus of the assembly; and this to satisfy His own heart, as in John 14: 2, 3, and John 17: 24. In the Epistles to the Thessalonians, believed to be the earliest of Paul's writings, we have the revelation of the heavenly side of the Lord's coming, which when revealed is found to run through the whole warp and woof of the assembly's constitution, ingrained as it were into the Christian life; and this, by the way it is assumed and implied, even when not specifically stated, as, for instance, in 2 Cor. 5: 2, 4, 9; 1 Cor. 11: 26, 1 Cor. 15: 23, 51; Eph. 5: 27; Phil. 3: 20; Heb. 9: 28; Matt. 25: 10, 13; Rev. 3: 10, Rev. 12: 5, and other passages.

The connection of the Assembly with the Kingdom in Hope.

There is a connection we have with the kingdom, as we are now looking at it, in the coming day of glory, which has still to be noted. It is the sphere of reward for individual saints and servants, to which their responsible path here looks forward. Thus in the teaching of the gospels, in Matthew 5: 10-12, the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are declared blessed in being persecuted for righteousness: reward in heaven, rather, being presented to those reproached and persecuted for Christ's sake. Reward indeed is never an adequate motive for the saint, but is set before faith — as an encouragement in being true to the Lord; and on the other hand there will be the loss of it where there is unfaithfulness — the kingdom being specially the sphere wherein cognizance will be taken of both by the Lord, and that as the result of manifestation at His judgment-seat. (See 2 Cor. 5: 10; 1 Cor. 3: 13-15, 1 Cor. 17: 4: 5.) Even a cup of cold water given to one of the Lord's little ones in the name of a disciple will not be forgotten in that day. (Matt. 10: 42.) What a Lord we have to serve! who but He would think of recognising anything of such little account? It is when the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels that He will reward every one according to his works. (Matt. 16: 27; Rev. 22: 12.) Thus it would be "in the regeneration" (or "times of restitution of all things," as it is called in Acts 3: 21), when the Son of man should sit on the throne of His glory, that those who had followed Him in His rejection should sit upon thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, if many that are first should be last, and the last first. (Matt. 19: 28.) Rule over many things, which involves the kingdom, is the appointed portion of the faithful servants in Matthew 25, as well as entering into the joy of the Lord. (Compare Luke 12: 42 and following.) The parable of the pounds in Luke 19 specifies authority over ten and five cities for the servants, according to the quality of their service — "faithful in a very little."

The Appearing.

All this prepares us for the place, that the aspect of the Lord's coming, known as His revelation (1 Cor. 1: 1), manifestation (Col. 3: 4), or coming (1 Thess. 3: 13), the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1: 6), and appearing in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, has, as bearing upon the responsible walk and service of the people of God. It is with a view to the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, "who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession," and which in its times God shall show, that the apostle urges Timothy (1 Tim. 6: 13-16) to faithfulness in the charge committed to him; as also in the second epistle, where it is a question of the exercise of his ministry, while yet there was an ear for the truth, he is solemnly charged to preach the word and be instant in season and out of season, and so on; as "before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead, *and by his appearing and his kingdom.*" Even as the apostle, with the consciousness of having fought a good fight and kept the faith, loved the thought of it for himself, and knew that there was laid up for him, in view of that day, a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge should give him, and not to him only, but unto all that love His appearing. (2 Tim. 4) To Titus, in relation to the duty of servants towards their masters, he characterises it as "that blessed hope, even the appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," for which we are set to look under divine training. Thus while our hearts rest in the hope of the Lord's coming for the assembly, in which the counsels of eternity as to her will be accomplished, our responsibilities, as individual Christians and servants of the Lord, connect with the time of manifestation before the judgment-seat of Christ, and His appearing, and kingdom.

No definite link with Time for the Assembly.

Another consequence of the unique place of the assembly as belonging to heaven, though gathered out upon earth, is that there is nothing definitely to connect the moment of its completion, and translation to its own place, with that of the resumption of God's ways with His ancient people, and as preparatory to assuming the direct government of the earth, through the mediatorial kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. We may judge from the analogy of God's ways in the past, that He will not long leave the earth without testimony from Him after the assembly is gone. And this gains support by the fact that the testimony of the disciples to the coming kingdom, when the Lord was upon earth, which was broken off by the Jews' rejection of it, and their consequent scattering amongst the nations, is looked at by the Lord (Matt. 10: 16-23) as to be resumed when Israel is found again in their cities; "For verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come." That the testimony is not to be confined to them we know from Matthew 24: 14: "This gospel of the kingdom" — note, not that of the grace of God or glory of Christ as we now have it — "shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come," "The everlasting gospel" of Revelation 14: 6 may give us the general character of this testimony "to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people," and help us to distinguish it from the gospel now preached.

In Matthew 25 we are brought to the issue of that testimony, which has been so universal, at least, among the nations outside Christendom, that the reception or rejection of the messengers of it, "these my brethren" (ver. 40), becomes the only point in question when the Son of man comes and sits upon the throne of His glory, and all nations are gathered before Him. It determines the difference between the sheep who enter into the blessedness of the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world and eternal life, and the goats who are cursed and go away into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For the judgment of the living being by Christ in person is as definitive and

everlasting in its consequences as the judgment of the dead in Revelation 20, with which it has too often been confounded.

The Last Half-week of Daniel's Seventy.

In Revelation such a testimony from God may cover and include the whole of the last week of Daniel's severity. But there is nothing definitely to mark the commencement of that epoch. So careful is scripture to furnish no date that would connect the assembly with the course of things on earth, either as to the Lord's coming for it or the starting-point of the testimony which is to succeed the assembly's. It is very different with the last half of the seventieth week. The Lord gives us a very unmistakable mark by which that is determined, quoting from the prophet Daniel 9: 27, Daniel 11: 31, in Matthew 24: 15. It is the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place. There may have been before that frightful event the beginning of sorrows (ver. 8); but "then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world, no, nor ever shall be." (Vers. 21, 22.) "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it," as Jeremiah had testified (Jer. 30: 7): "it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." And so the Lord speaks of it, as it will affect the Jew in verses 14-20; also indicating that, if sharp, the tribulation would be short. "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." (Ver. 22.)

But that it has a wider application scripture leaves us in no uncertainty. Psalms and prophets alike point to it. See for the latter Amos 5: 18-20; Zephaniah 1: 14, 15. But in Revelation 3: 10 the promise to the overcomer, while still the assembly was on earth, is conclusive. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee out of the hour of temptation, which shall come upon the whole habitable world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." To be kept out of the hour of it is to be taken out of time altogether, according to the assembly's hope. See as to those who go through it, Rev. 7: 9-14 proving its universal character; while Revelation 12: 12 tells, at least, of its limited duration. It is variously computed as "time, times and half a time" (Dan. 7: 25, Dan. 12: 7; Rev. 12: 14); "forty-two months" (Rev. 11: 2, Rev. 13: 5); and "twelve hundred and sixty days," specially counted, as to the very days, because of what the witnesses should have to go through in Revelation 11: 3, and of the preservation of the woman (Israel) who brought forth the man-child who had been caught up to God and His throne from the enmity of the dragon, now directed against her and the remnant of her seed. (Rev. 12: 6 and following.) All indicate three years and a half, and evidently the same last half-week of Daniel's seventy.

The period closes with the coming of the Lord, as Matthew 24: 29, 30, tells us. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory." This brings us to the close of the seventy weeks. See also Revelation 1: 7 as to the effect on the nations when the moment has actually come; very different from the delusions which, conscience being hardened by the progress of providential judgments, ever increasing in intensity, under the seals, trumpets and vials of Revelation, they had buoyed themselves up, saying, "Peace and safety," when sudden destruction was coming upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape. (1 Thess. 5: 2, 3.) Contrast their earlier impressions under the seals (Rev. 6: 16), when they said the great day of His wrath had come, though it had not, and called upon the mountains and rocks to fall on them and hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. But the effect of judgment upon the proud heart of man that will not bow before God is only to harden. (Rev. 16: 9, 10)

Providential judgment is over now. The Lord comes to execute the last stroke of judgment in person. But this is to anticipate.

To turn back a little: though it would be impossible in a brief paper to bring forward all the testimonies there are as to what will characterize that fearful time, whether as to the objects of judgment, or the judgments that fall upon them. Daniel must be studied to give us the aspect of things in the East mainly, while Revelation is principally concerned with the West, though neither exclusively.

The Beast and Antichrist.

As to the last, there will be the Satanically revived Roman empire, in the beast, the first of Rev. 13, and given to us in more detail in Rev. 17, with seven heads and ten horns. By its heads it is identified with the various phases the Roman empire of the past has passed through, though now revived in a form in which it never existed before, with a head and ten associated kings. Of these we are told that they had received no kingdom as yet (ver. 12), so that it is in vain to look for them in any past or present distribution of the map of Europe. But besides the first beast of chapter 13, there will be another (ver. 11), with lamb-like horns, but speaking as a dragon. It is plainly Antichrist, who exercises all the power of the first beast in his presence, playing into his hands in the West, at least, by enforcing, on pain of death, the worship of the image of the beast he makes. In the East, we know from 2 Thessalonians 2: 4 *et seq.*, that he sets himself up as the object of worship in the temple of God.

There we learn also that, if the mystery of lawlessness was already at work in the apostle's time, before it could be headed up in this lawless one, whose coming was after the working of Satan (ver. 9), there must be the removal of a hindering thing (ver. 6) and a hindering Person. (Ver. 7.) The first would be, doubtless, the ordered government of the world, "the powers that be that are ordained of God," and that act as a barrier to the full outbreak of the lawless will of man; the second, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the assembly. When the assembly's hope is fulfilled in the coming of the Lord and our gathering together unto Him (ver. 1), the Holy Spirit will be no longer here; the restraint will be removed. "And then shall that lawless one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of his mouth, and shall bring to nought by the manifestation of his coming." (Ver. 8.) Thus we have Satan's two chief instruments, the Beast and the false prophet; while from Daniel 8 and 11 we know that the ancient struggle between the kings holding territory north and south of Palestine will be renewed, and that land itself will become the battle-field of their contending forces, which will thus bring the last scourge of God — the most terrible that there could be — upon the land, and the nation restored in unbelief.

As to the once professing assembly, all that are Christ's being taken out of it at His coming, it is spued out of His mouth (Rev. 3: 16) as the most nauseous evil ever manifested on earth; for the corruption of the best good must ever be the worst evil. And it becomes the fitting tool of Satan to help to build up, by its corrupt alliance with the world, that masterpiece of his, Babylon. It is the apostasy fully come. (2 Thess. 2: 3.) And there will be the dark, judicial blinding of God, where the light of testimony from Him had been so long maintained. Now, instead of sending the truth, "God shall send men strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Besides this, there will be the awful display of direct Satanic power: his place found no more in heaven (where, note, it is still), "the great dragon was cast out, the old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels with him . . . having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short

time." (Rev. 12: 8, 9, 12.) As the result, in Rev. 16: 13, 14, we find unclean spirits issuing from the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet (a Satanic trinity of evil) spirits of demons working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty.

Such are some of the elements of the scene with which the Lord will have to deal when He comes from heaven. For if the forces of the world under Satan are thus arrayed against Him, the Lamb shall overcome them; for He is Lord of lords and King of kings, as we see in the next chapter, Rev. 17: 14: "And they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful, the heavenly saints." The details are given more fully in Rev. 19: 11-21. For He comes to establish His kingdom like David by conquest and judgment,* before He reigns as Solomon in peace. The multitude of the nations gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army that came with Him from heaven, perish by the sword of Him whose name is called the Word of God — come as such to make good the nature of God by judgment upon all who would not have the full revelation of it in grace — and who treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." While Satan who led them was cast bound into the bottomless pit, that he should deceive them no more, till the 1,000 years of the kingdom should be fulfilled.

*And to this character of the exercise of His power belong several passages in the psalms that, mainly by an alternative rendering in the margin rejected by the text, have been used to give a distorted conception of the kingdom when established in peace. I refer to Psalm 18: 44 (2 Sam. 22: 45): Ps. 66: 3; and Ps. 81: 15. (See for the Heb. Deut. 33: 29, "found liars," with marg. "subdued.") The verse that follows in Psalm 18 helps to bring out the force of the expression: it is really as in New Trans., "strangers come cringing unto me." The Hebrew, I quote from Delitzsch, to deny, lie, dissemble, is said here, as frequently, of the enforced submission, which the vanquished show, to the victor. It in no way *characterizes the reign* of the Lord Jesus.

We may not be able to put together all the passages that, in the Old Testament, foretold such a confederacy of the nations; nor to identify them, and their overthrow, with the later prophecy of Revelation 19. Jerusalem would appear to be the objective in those referred to. And when the Lord was about to resume relations with His ancient people, and Jerusalem would come necessarily into prominence, it is quite enough to account for the assemblage of the nations against it, under Satan's blinding influence. See Ps. 83, Ps. 118: 10 *et seq.*; Isaiah 17: 12-14; Joel 3: 11-16, compared with ver. 2; also such passages as that referred to already in Zeph. 3: 8; Micah 4: 11; Zech. 14: 2 *et seq.* (comp. Zech. 12: 2-9), which show, the design of God in thus gathering the nations, and His direct intervention in their destruction.

The ways of God with the nation in connection with these events will have resulted in a remnant of them turning to Him in true repentance, made willing in the day of His power (Ps. 110), as they were not in that of His grace, while the apostate part will be cut off in judgment. Zechariah 13: 8, 9 tells us of them; and of the third part left, who will be brought through the fire and refined as silver and tried as gold, whom the Lord will own as the nation, saying, "It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God." Also Zechariah 12: 10-14 tells of their repentance and its source, when they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn and be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.

If there is one last assault of the nations under the Assyrian, the Gog and Magog of Ezekiel 38

(and of other prophecies, ver. 17) and Ezekiel 39, it will be after the Lord has come to Zion and Jerusalem; and by His presence and power manifested on their behalf it comes to its end. (Micah 5: 5.) Warrior judgment when "in righteousness he doth judge and make war" is over, if it may be so distinguished from the sessional judgment which takes place when the day, so long before appointed, has come in the which God "will judge the habitable world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." Then the Son of man shall come in His glory and sit upon the throne of His glory, and the living nations of the world shall be gathered before Him to receive their judgment; which depends, as we have seen, upon the character of their treatment of the brethren of the king, sent out to them with the warning that the hour of His judgment is come, and that results in those who are counted to have received Him in receiving them, entering into the blessedness of the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, the rest being sent away to the lake of fire. (Matt. 25: 31-46.)

The Heavenly Sources of the Blessedness of the Kingdom.

We may now be prepared to contemplate the blessedness of such a kingdom, in so far as God has been pleased to reveal it to us, only first looking at it in the heavenly sources of the glory and power of it. The time has come when He to whom all power is given in heaven and earth (Matt. 28: 18), who has so long been set down with His Father in His throne, is to take His place on His own throne. (Rev. 3: 21.) Nothing could help us better to enter into the effect of the point thus reached in the ways of God than the scene opened to John anticipatively in heaven in Rev. 4, 5, when the Lamb has established His title to the inheritance of all things upon which He was about to enter. The Spirit leads on our hearts to the full result in an universe of blessing, before we are given the judgments that were necessary to clear the way for it, as from chapter 6 on. The central object of the whole scene of glory is the "Lamb as slain, in the midst of the throne, and of the living creatures, and in the midst of the elders." His taking the roll out of the right hand of Him who sat upon the throne was the signal for the outburst of the new song of those who formed the nearest circle round the throne: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed* to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made them unto our God kings and priests: and they shall reign over the earth." Myriads of angels in outer circles take up the glad refrain, celebrating His power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing; though they cannot sing the song of redemption, nor indeed are ever said to sing in Scripture. And then we have every creature, in heaven, and on the earth, and even beneath the earth's crust, as well as such as are in the sea, in their ordered place and blessing, and celebrating the praises of Him who sits upon the throne, and of the Lamb by whom all was brought in. The attributes of the throne, of which the living creatures are representative, add their Amen, while the elders fall down and worship — their privileged place throughout the book.

*For so it must read, omitting "us" and substituting "them" and "they" for "us" and "we" in verse 10. It is not of themselves they are thinking as the subjects of redemption, absorbed as they are with the glory of Him who wrought it: and this is true worship.

It is to be noted, too, the place that from this out the elders have in connection with the living creatures: the elders are the representatives of all who are Christ's, not only the assembly, but the saints of Old Testament times as well, seen in Rev. 4 enthroned around the throne of God, with kingly crowns and priestly robes: the living creatures are symbolic of the attributes of the throne in government. These have been administered by angels hitherto, in the unseen providential government of the world. Hence angels do not appear in chapter 4: they are at their work. But "unto angels hath he not put in subjection

the world to come," of which the apostle speaks in Hebrews 1 and 2. This was reserved for Christ and the heavenly saints associated with Him. Thus the moment the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, is seen, as a slain Lamb, in the midst of the throne, with His undisputed title to all declared, the elders are moved up into association with the living creatures, a place they ever after keep in the book, and angels take their place in outer circles. Christ will henceforth administer the kingdom by the saints; not unseen, as angels had been, but in glorified bodies, everywhere radiating the glory of Christ who is displayed in them, as they carry out the government of His throne.

For in that day the Lord "will be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe." (2 Thess. 1: 10) According to His own wonderful words about us to the Father in John 17, "the glory which thou gavest me I have given them: that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one: and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." We shall be displayed in the glory of Christ to the astonished world, and do not wait till then to know how dear we are to the Father, for we have heard Him say it, and verse 26 makes full provision for our enjoyment of it now as a present reality. Again, in Colossians 3, if Christ is our life, and we are now hid with Him in God, the moment He is manifested we shall be manifested with Him in glory.

Of this manifestation with Him in glory the remarkable appendix to Revelation, which comes in after the eternal state, but before the book closes, from Rev. 21: 9 to Rev. 22: 5, gives us in symbolic representation the wonderful details. John is shown the bride, the Lamb's wife, as the holy city Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God; and thus to shed the light of that glory on the earthly Jerusalem, and the nations generally, who will walk in the light of it. There is no temple in it, a clear difference between it and the earthly Jerusalem; the whole city is a sanctuary. The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, thus making it the heavenly metropolis of the kingdom, which the kings and nations own by bringing their glory and honour to (not "into") it. While the assembly preserves its character of grace; for the leaves of the Tree of Life in the midst of it were for the healing of the nations.

How direct is the association of the assembly with the kingdom when it becomes the Lord's. The power and rule over the nations vested in Him according to Psalm 2 He confers on the overcomers in Revelation 2: 26, 27. And in Revelation 3: 21 they are even given to sit with Him in His throne, "even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." In Revelation 20 we learn that all who are of the first resurrection shall be priests of God and of Christ, and reign with Him a thousand years, which gives us the first full intimation of its destined duration: in the Old Testament this had been only expressed in general terms, as measured by the continuance of the heavenly bodies, the sun and moon, as Ps. 89: 36, 37; Ps. 72: 5, 7, 17.

But there are other passages still that are needed to help us in our apprehension of this great subject. Peace was to characterize the long-expected kingdom according to the abundant testimony of the prophets. The fulfilment of it had been presented to the nation in a Saviour, Christ the Lord, born to them in the city of David; as the heavenly host proclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good pleasure in men." (Luke 2: 11-14.) But He whose coming might have brought in peace was rejected, and the proffered peace taken from the earth (Luke 12: 51) can only be celebrated as to be established in heaven (Luke 19: 38). The fact was, that He, in whom all the fulness was pleased to dwell, had to lay the only possible ground for peace in such a world by the blood of His cross, and so, by Himself, reconcile all things to Himself, whether they be things on earth, or things in heaven. (Col. 1: 19-22.) We know that the reconciliation has begun with the leaders of the revolt — with us who, alone of all His creatures, were alienated from Him in heart, mind and will: "You, that were sometime

alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death" — sweetest fruit for us of the wonderful work of redemption, with all its satisfaction for God.

But the moment was come when the reconciliation should be extended to all things, even as He had tasted death for everything. Long had the whole creation groaned and travailed in pain, subjected to this as its lot by the fall of him who had been set at the head of it; but it was "in hope that the creation itself should be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." (Rom. 8: 19-22.) "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." This is the point to which we have been brought according to the wonderful purpose of God. "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together" (Isa. 40: 5), and we shall be manifested with Him in that glory. It is the occasion of that celebration in heaven recorded for us in Revelation 11 when "there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned." (Vers. 15-17.)

Now we may turn to contemplate the earthly scene of the kingdom thus established, as the Old Testament presents it to us, in a few passages. And first as to the

Inhabitants of the renewed earth,

the *subjects* of the kingdom. The first place must be given to the 144,000 of Revelation 14: 1-5, who had gone through the awful time of the ascendancy of the Beasts of Revelation 13: they had endured to the end, not only to be saved into the blessing of the kingdom, but to be specially associated with the Lamb on Mount Zion and have His Father's name written on their foreheads. Redeemed from among men, the firstfruits unto God and the Lamb, they come nearest to the portion of the heavenly saints; they sing the song of heaven though on earth, and not of course in glorified bodies as they of heaven. Those of the true remnant of His people who had been slain for their faithful testimony, whether in the beginning of sorrows (Rev. 6: 9-11) or later on under the severer testing of the last sore troubles, having lost their lives after the assembly was gone and before the kingdom was established in power, get the yet better portion of the heavenly saints, and are found in Rev. 20: 4 — both companies of them (see R.V.) — as of the first resurrection, kept open, as it were, to include them; and instead of being subjects of the kingdom they, as well as the saints that came with Him from heaven, "lived" (because they had been raised from the dead to do so) "and reigned with Christ." (Vers. 5, 6.) In glorified bodies, alike with all who are of that resurrection, they will never have their localised habitation on earth again, but will be available for Christ in the administration of His kingdom, as we have seen.

But to return to the inhabitants of the earth besides those of Revelation 14 there will be the elect remnant, not merely of Judah and Benjamin who had gone through the tribulation, but of the ten tribes who had never had the responsibility of the rejection of Christ, and will be dealt with separately (see Ezek. 20: 30-44) — 144,000 of all the tribes of Israel who are scaled as the servants of God in their foreheads. (Rev. 7: 1-8.) "He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to another," as the Lord says in Matthew 24: 31. These will form the nation, brought into the enjoyment of the promises made to their fathers, in the land, now to be possessed in the full extent of it, under the new covenant — the

characteristic blessings of which are the law written in their hearts, their sins and iniquities remembered no more, and the Spirit poured out upon them. They are blessings with which we are familiar in God's infinite grace; for though not under covenant, and having a far richer portion according to God's everlasting counsels in Christ, all the blessings of the new covenant are ministered unto us by the Spirit. (2 Cor. 3)

Then again, Revelation 7 tells us of a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, who have come out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Doubtless they are the fruit of the testimony, that was to be sent out to the nations outside Christendom, after the assembly was gone: the sheep of Matthew 25, who enter into the blessing of the kingdom as prepared for them from the foundation of the world. Here we learn something of what the blessing is. They have their place "before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple (compare Isa. 66: 21): and he that sitteth on the throne shall tabernacle over them They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall shepherd them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

It is well to have the whole description before us; for coming nearer to the realisation of the kingdom-blessings, as we might expect, it concentrates the light of them more fully perhaps than any one passage of the Old Testament, full and rich as its testimony is as to the world-wide prosperity and peace to be enjoyed under the sceptre of the Lord Jesus Christ. Three things go far to secure this: the manifested glory and power of the throne of the Lord; the Spirit poured out upon all flesh (Joel 2); and the absence of Satan, bound in the bottomless pit. Thus although children are born to the saints that inhabit the earth, all else having been cut off by judgment, and inherit the flesh from their parents in its unchanged evil, there is nothing to act upon the flesh to draw out its evil. Or if, in exceptional cases, there is an outbreak of the will of the flesh, the sceptre of righteousness, that characterises the throne of the Lord, secures its suppression by instant judgment. The sinner being a hundred years old is devoted to judgment, though in the prevailing length of life, dying at that age, he will be accounted a child. (Isa. 65: 20.) Moreover, there will be a standing witness of the consequences of transgression for the warning of others: "They shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." (Isa. 66: 24.)

There will be no death otherwise in the millennium. "He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces." (Isa. 25: 7, 8.) Those who have died in the Lord — in what past multitudes by grace! — have ceased as a characteristic class; hence their blessedness as a whole is declared, when the number of them is complete, in Revelation 14: 13: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."*

*This would be special and needed consolation at the moment contemplated in the passage, when those who were dying in the Lord, cut off for their faithful testimony, did so after all that were Christ's had been raised at His coming, and before the kingdom was set up, to which they had borne testimony. It might have seemed that they had lost everything, though, as we have seen, it is their gain, in being raised to form part of the heavenly company who reign with Christ. (Rev. 20: 4.)

Government in man's hands.

But now we must take up a link with the past ways of God, if only to bring out the contrast. Government had been first entrusted to man in Noah, but his fall was immediate and complete through failing to govern himself. There had been the government of the throne of God in Israel, but preferring to be like the nations, God had given them a king after His own heart, in whose seed the kingdom should be established for ever; though meanwhile the trial of royalty in man became a complete failure, in his responsible descendants; and the throne of the world was committed to the Gentiles in Nebuchadnezzar, with apostasy as the result, and the development of its bestial character; and thus the times of the Gentiles began to run their course.

Now at last the government was to be upon the shoulder of a Son, counted to Israel indeed, but "whose name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." (Isa. 9) "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give him the throne of his father David." (Luke 1: 32.) Although, as we have seen, when He takes throne He does so by a wider title, even of universal sovereignty as Son of man — "His name made excellent in all the earth." (Ps. 8) "Fairer than the children of men," "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of equity is the sceptre of thy throne. Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." (Ps. 45) Nor are we left in uncertainty as to who these "fellows" are that are so wonderfully associated with Him in the day of His glory: "we are become fellows of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end." (Heb. 3: 14 uses the same word as in Heb. 1: 9 — quoted from the psalm.)

A multitude of passages in the Old Testament set forth the effect of such a government on earth as had never been known, or, but for them, conceived by the heart of man. It may be helpful to put together a few of them under different heads. First, as descriptive of the King and the character of His reign; then of the special place Jerusalem and the nation of Israel have in the kingdom; and lastly, the way the whole earth is brought into the blessing.

The King.

We have already looked at Ps. 2, Ps. 8, Ps. 45.

Psalm 72 gives the character of the rule established: "he shall judge thy people with righteousness" — it is the great prevailing characteristic of the kingdom everywhere — "and thy poor with judgment." The subordinate authorities from the highest to the lowest, too, are in their perfect place — "the mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness." "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth: in his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace." The character of the rule He sets before Himself when He receives the kingdom is found in Psalm 101. Isaiah 9 has been referred to. In Isaiah 11 we find the Spirit in seven-fold perfection for government resting upon the Rod out of the stem of Jesse, making Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears, but with righteousness shall He judge, with the result of peace between animals that naturally would prey on each other, "and a little child shall lead them." "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." In Isaiah 32, "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes rule in judgment," with results set forth in verses 2-5, and then, with the Spirit brought in as

"poured upon us from on high," in verses 15-17, the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, etc.: "Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." In Isaiah 42: 1-4 He is "my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him," and the result — "he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles . . . and the isles shall wait for his law." See also the connection of Isaiah 61: 1, 2 (quoted by the Lord in Luke 4: 18, 19) in the earthly blessing resulting in the land, when "the day of vengeance of our God" is fulfilled, closing with the remarkable testimony of verse 11. See also Jeremiah 23: 5, 6.

The place of the Nation in the Kingdom.

As to the place the nation, with Jerusalem and Zion, will have in the kingdom, only a few passages out of so many that there are can be referred to. Deuteronomy 15: 6 will not fail of its accomplishment in the supremacy of Israel among the nations, though long deferred through their failure on the ground of responsibility. Then "the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath." "He shall subdue the peoples under us, and the nations under our feet." (Ps. 47: 3. See also Isa. 60: 12-14.) But this will be brought about by the resources of God's sovereign grace, connected with the establishment of royalty in God's king in Zion, when under law and even priesthood they had utterly broken down. See Psalm 78 for the record of their failure, and the place that Judah and Mount Zion and David have at the close as the new ground of the blessing of the people, also Psalm 132: 13 *et seq.* This is ever the significance of Zion in Scripture. God sets His king there. (Ps. 2) The salvation of Israel is looked for to come out of it (Ps. 14); and Isaiah 66 celebrates the accomplishment of it. In the psalms that follow the introduction of the king in Psalm 45 (as, for instance, (Ps. 48: 2), Zion is the joy of the whole earth, the city of the great king. (See also vers. 8, 11, 12.) Again, out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. (Ps. 50: 2.) "In that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. . . . The Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously." (Isa. 24: 21, etc.) "There shall the mountain of the Lord's house be established, and out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Isa. 2: 2, 3; Micah 4: 1-3; Zeph. 3: 14-20.)

Morally it will be as new heavens and a new earth, when the Lord creates Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy. "And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying." (Isa. 65: 17-19 and following.) All that love and mourn for her are called to rejoice with her, and be delighted in the abundance of her glory, in Isaiah 66. (Compare Jer. 32: 39-42; Jer. 33: 7-16.) No language can exceed in beauty the consequent effects set forth in Isaiah 60 - 62, when it can be said, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee," following upon Isaiah 59: 20, when the Redeemer comes to Zion and to them that turn from transgression in Jacob. "Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified." (Isa. 60: 21.)

The blessing of the nation will rest upon the new covenant, to be made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. But it will not be according to the covenant made with their fathers, when the law was imposed on the flesh that was contrary to it. It will be put in their inward parts and written in their hearts: there will be no more need of teaching every man his neighbour and brother, saying, Know the Lord, "for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jer. 31: 31-34.) The subjective change wrought in them, when gathered out of the countries wherein they had been scattered and brought into their land, is further expressed in Ezekiel 11: 19, 20: "I will give them one heart, and I

will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh: that they may walk in my statutes," etc.; while Ezekiel 36: 25-27 adds the Spirit put within them as the power to enable them to do so: and see the following verses, for the blessed work of repentance and establishment resulting — they shall remember their own evil ways and shall loathe themselves in their own sight for their iniquities and abominations. And thus morally cleansed, their waste cities should be built and inhabited, and the land that was desolate become as the garden of Eden. Nor shall they be two nations, for in chapter 37: 22 the Lord says: "I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all." (See Ezek. 34: 23-31.) One blessed consequence is, that the guilty wanderings of the people are over for ever, and this according to the covenant of the Lord with them. (Isa. 59: 21. See also Ezek. 14: 11; Ezek. 39: 7, 29.)

The Millennial Blessing world-wide.

It is not easy to divide between the blessing of Israel and their land, and the world-wide aspect of it. they are so closely connected. For, as we learn from Romans 11: 12, "If the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?" "Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the whole earth with fruit." (Isa. 27: 6.) Compare the call of grace (Isa. 45: 22), "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," with the answer to it, and the way of its accomplishment in Isa. 49: 6: "It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth." (Also Isa. 52: 9, 10)

Thus, if as we have seen (Isa. 2) the house of God will be there, it will be the centre of the world's worship. So Isa. 66: 23, "from one new moon to another . . . shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord." It is the house of prayer for all nations. (Isa. 56: 7; see (Ps. 22: 27, Ps. 48: 9, 10 and Ps. 86: 9.) And this will be enforced by judgment. (Zech. 14: 16-21.) "At that time" Jeremiah witnesses "they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord," no more to walk after the imaginations of their evil heart. (Jer. 3: 17.) Psalms 96 - 100 celebrate the universality and glory of the kingdom, following on the moral restoration of Israel in Psalm 95; also Psalm 145 and the closing hallelujah psalms: "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord." But other testimonies abound. As long ago as Numbers 14: 21 we find Jehovah pledges Himself — "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." (See Hab. 2: 14; Isa. 40: 5.) "Blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory" (Ps. 72: 19) closes "the prayers of David the Son of Jesse," for what more could he ask for? But now we must pass on from the fulness of testimony, to what the world will be when the kingdom of it becomes the Lord's, and everything is subdued to Him — the whole created universe owning His rightful sway — to see what scripture tells us of its close.

The close of the Kingdom.

It would be a mistake to build anything upon the types, apart from the doctrine of the word. But in the light of what we learn from scripture of what takes place on earth at the close, it is surely significant that, in Numbers 29, where from verse 12 we have the offerings on the occasion of the feast of tabernacles, which were to be the expression of joy and worship on earth when every word of promise had been fulfilled and blessing spread everywhere, there are marks of decline. Beginning with an outburst of joy that was almost perfect on the first day — thirteen bullocks (besides the two rams

and fourteen lambs that remained the same throughout) - there was a steady decline in man's appreciation of the blessing during the ordinary seven days of the duration of the feast; for the bullocks dropped down by one each day to seven on the seventh day, God securing this testimony of its completeness on His part to the end. The eighth day would give what was apart from the earthly blessing, leading into what was heavenly and eternal.

What then does the word testify as to what is before the world, after the enjoyment in undisturbed peace of ten centuries of blessing under the sceptre of the Lord Jesus? It would be a terrible surprise if we had not learned what the heart of the flesh is towards God in the cross.

First, as to the action of God, whose voice at Sinai had shaken the earth but now we learn from Hebrews 12: 26, 27 that "He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this yet once more signifieth the removal of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain" — that would be the heavenly side of the kingdom which we have received. (Ver. 28.) How unaccountable it seems, without further testimony as to the causes of it, that this is what is before the earth and the heavens connected with it,* after it had been the scene of the magnificent display of the glory of God, made good and maintained throughout the kingdom by the Son of man, everything in heaven and earth having been subjected to Him.

*It may be noted also, because it has been a difficulty to some, that heaven is used in at least three ways. There is the atmospheric heaven that is necessary to life on the earth: thus, "the heavens and the earth" go to make up one complete sphere of existence. (See Gen. 1: 1; Gen. 2: 1, 4; 2 Peter 3: 5, etc. These are shaken and removed, as in Hebrews 12: "kept in store reserved unto fire against the day of judgment," etc. (2 Peter 3: 7, 12); and give place to new heavens and a new earth (ver. 13), such as we see in Revelation 21: 1-8. They are not two distinct spheres but one, in which God dwells with the redeemed for ever. But there is besides the heaven of God's throne, and government of the earth. Here the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan among them. (Job 1: 6.) Here, in the heavenlies at least, as contrasted with the earthly scene of which the heavens are a component part, is the sphere of the assembly's conflict with the wiles of Satan, with "spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies." (Eph. 6) Here he is the accuser of the brethren night and day before God; whence he will be cast out into the earth, and his angels with him. (Rev. 12: 9) It is for this reason perhaps — of Satan's defiling presence, or because of its connection by government with earth and man, that "the heavenly things themselves" need to be purified with better sacrifices than of bulls and goats. And lastly there is the heaven of God's presence: "the third heaven" it may be supposed to which Paul was caught up — "paradise" — and heard unspeakable words which could not be expressed in human language. (2 Cor. 12: 2.)

But Peter goes further (2 Peter 3), for he reminds us that, if the world is wilfully ignorant (because it has been plainly revealed) of the appalling interruption of the ordered course of nature in the past by the word of God, when the world that then was being overflowed with water perished, worse is in store for it: "The heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." And more (ver. 10) he develops that in that day "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." And he shows the practical bearing of all this upon the walk of Christians now. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting the day of God"; and again he insists on the tremendous reality of the cataclysm, "the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." Thus we learn

that, if never again by water, the solemn dealing of God by fire is analogous to the flood God brought in upon the world of the ungodly. It is "the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

But prophecy is more specific still as to the character of the ungodliness that leads to the closing up of all God's earthly ways of government, including the mediatorial kingdom of Christ, by a judgment of fire from heaven. See Revelation 20: "When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog" — symbolic names given them from the last up-rising of the nations against God (Ezek. 38, 39) at the commencement of the millennium. But there never had been before anything to compare with this gathering of the nations to battle, whether judged of in the magnitude of their forces — "the number of whom is as the sand of the sea" — or in the light of the blessing enjoyed for so long, under the manifested glory of Christ, from which they have revolted, to range themselves under Satan's banner the moment he appears.

It is the last expression of what had been fully proved long before in the cross, of what the heart of man is in its irreconcilable enmity against God: "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about," Those with whom the kingdom had begun had been kept faithful throughout its course, a mere handful now as compared with the teeming millions of their descendants, in a thousand years when no wars had decimated (Ps. 46: 9; Isa. 2: 4), or sickness or death had been known amongst them, save where transgression had brought it upon them. Grace is not inherited: though there had been no test throughout the long course of the kingdom to bring out the unregenerate condition of the mass. Now it was come, in Satan's presence once more; and the saints and "the beloved city," which for so long had been the place of the throne, and the sanctuary, and the centre of light and blessing flowing out to the earth's utmost bounds, are the objective of the hostile array of the whole earth; till "fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone," where his former instruments "the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

The last Enemy that shall be destroyed.

The next scene, opened to us in the prophecy, is the momentous one of the last act of the Lord Jesus in judgment; for all judgment is committed unto Him. It is that of the great white throne. From His face that sat on it "the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them." This is as we have seen from Paul in Hebrews, and Peter. They are removed by the voice that shakes not the earth only but also heaven: "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." The time scene is over: the dead are raised in God's eternity. Death was the last enemy to be subjected to Christ by, God, and in being subjected is destroyed. (1 Cor. 15: 25, 26.) Death and hades deliver up the dead that seemed to be most firmly held within their grasp, namely, those that died in their sins, from Adam till the end of time. Then cometh the end, "when he delivers up the kingdom to God, even the Father." (1 Cor. 15: 24-28.) There had been no domain of man or Satan that had not felt the power of Him who subjected all to Christ. The declared purpose of God in the kingdom had been accomplished. "For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet"; and all things had been so completely subjected, that the only exception was God Himself who had subjected them to Him. And now the astonishing revelation is made to us, that He who had reigned as man, till none were left to dispute His title, delivers up the kingdom to God, the Father; and the Son also Himself becomes subject unto Him that put all things under Him. He gives up His reigning place as man, to take His own place of predilection — blessed, adorable Lord — as Son subject to the Father, "that God may be all in all."

Then will be produced the full result of the work of the cross. The new creation, where no trail of the serpent or trace of sin ever came, will be founded on the perfection of that work and be the manifestation of it for ever. "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." "Now once in the consummation of the ages hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." All the value of that work was needed to remove a single sin from our guilty souls, and, blessed be God, was effectual to remove all our sins, and us who had sinned as well, for God and for faith: here God founds a new heaven and new earth upon it, where sin can never come.

The Eternal State.

It unfolds to John in Revelation 21: 1-7: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea" — no part not brought into order and blessing. The divine name, being the way God reveals Himself, gives its character to every dispensation; and thus is of the deepest moment for our souls, as we know well from the name of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in which is contained the sum of all possible and infinite blessedness, now forming Christianity. In Revelation hitherto it has been God and the Lamb: this is the way God is known in the millennium. But when the dispensations of time are over, and the whole sphere wherein the ways of God in government unfolded themselves is passed away for ever, in a new heaven and new earth it is God. God Himself is the fulness of the eternal joy. And He rests in a sphere perfectly suited to His own heart — God is all in all.

No distinctions that came in by sin in time are found. There are neither Jew nor Gentile nor nations. The assembly is there, both as "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride" — not for display now, as in the millennium, but — "adorned for her husband," for His eye and heart alone. It is the assembly's relation to Christ, according to eternal counsels of God for His glory and joy. So also is it found in its relation to God as His dwelling place. A great voice out of heaven calls attention to the tabernacle of God with men. (Ver. 3.) For He reverts to His own original thought of a tabernacle, so wonderfully realised when "the word became flesh and tabernacled amongst us." "And he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." But what a chord this reference to an only too familiar past touches in our hearts! These things were the governmental consequence in time of sin, when Adam and Eve had to be driven forth from Eden, and sorrow be the prevailing characteristic of the condition of each. Long since, God Himself, in Christ, in unfathomable grace, had followed them into the sorrow, stooping down to be characteristically the "Man of sorrows," to take part in them, as never had been the lot of man or woman before. As God, on the threshold of a new creation, He now wipes away all tears from their eyes, and removes the source of them. He that sat upon the throne, the eternal throne of God surely, for He is "the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end," can survey a scene so perfectly suited to Himself, and say, "Behold, I make all things new." And John is directed to write the true and faithful words that tell us "It is done." He who knew what thirst was once, where nothing could satisfy, has been brought where the fountain of the water of life flows freely in eternal refreshment.

One more link with time of unutterable sweetness declares "these things" to be the inheritance of the overcomer. The conflicts of the past are over for ever now, recalling humbling failure and defeat on our part; but His only remembrance of them is the final overcoming, fruit of His grace and power. "And I will be his God, and he shall be my son," in all the intimacy of an individual relationship enjoyed by all. And then there is the solemn and decisive pronouncement of the last verse (8), of the

fixed, unalterable condition of those who were only raised from the dead, when time was over, to find their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

This last passage referred to, Revelation 21: 1-8, does not properly enter into the scope of the kingdom, save as it is viewed as the power of God in contrast to man's evil, a power that will never cease. It is the eternal state. If the kingdom was the result of the ways of God in government in time, the eternal state is the fruit of the perfection of His nature. There is a sense in which Christ reigns for ever, and so the saints; but it is not a human mediatorial kingdom any longer. That, Christ, having held as man for the purpose of all authority and power being subjected to Him, gives up to the Father, that all may be God's exclusively. But God, who is all in all, is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, so that in no sense has the kingdom come to an end, or passed to another. Only that the thought of a kingdom, in its proper sense, assumes subjects to be reigned over; and this is not what is presented to us in Revelation 21: 1-8. The reign of righteousness is needed no longer. God dwells with men for ever, and righteousness has found its familiar home there; it is the new heavens and new earth that we have been taught to look for in such wonderful grace, wherein dwelleth righteousness. (2 Peter 3: 13.)

But I close, painfully conscious of how defective and cursory is such a presentation of so large a subject; yet in hope that by God's grace the attempt to gather from scripture how these things are set before us may be as interesting and helpful to others as it has been to the writer. J. A. T.