

## Outline of the Revelation

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It is important to remark, first of all, that the Revelation is a book of judgment - judgment on the earth (in the interval between the church and an owned state on earth, the secret springs being shewn in heaven, where alone the earthly acts could be understood) first, of the professing church as a system on the earth, where it is responsible to maintain the truth and testimony of God, and then, of the world. In the latter case, the church is no longer at all in question. The only places in which the church is seen in its Christian affections and position is in the beginning and at the end of the book, before the subject of it is opened and after it is closed. In the first case it is seen in its members, in the last as a whole (I refer to Rev. 1: 6 and Rev. 22: 17).

Further, it is important to remark, that the character in which Christ reveals Himself in the opening of the book, is wholly earthly - heaven is excluded. He is the faithful Witness, the First-begotten from the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. The church knows Him in all these characters, and is associated with the last two. She ought to have replaced the first; but she is never seen here in that position. John does not even set himself on the ground of the church's witness and heavenly place; he is in the tribulation, kingdom, and patient expectation of Christ. The first time the church is addressed, it is with warnings and threatenings, as being already fallen. If seen in her own character, it is only to look for Jesus.

Christ judges divinely, though as Son of man (a name of judgment and government), also in the midst of the church seen on earth and responsible to bear light there. He is eternal, searching in judgment and consuming, in firmness of power, having in His own hand the symbolical representatives of the churches or states of the professing church which He addresses. The word of sharp judgment proceeded out of His mouth. Sovereign authority shone in His visage. However, He had the power of life (and that out of death) to him that bowed to Him; and John therefore was to write what he saw - not merely to be confounded by it, but to make known this character of judgment to the churches - "the things that are" (for that was now the real relationship of Christ to the body here below, standing in the position of testimony) and "the things that were to happen after them"; for only after these Christ and the church would take their place in manifestation of glory and testimony. Hence the rapture of the church, unless it be in mystery, is not known here, because this is testimony on the earth or that which governs the earth both secretly and publicly (and so judgments there); and the church's taking up to heaven forms no part of this. That is its portion in its own relationship to Christ of privilege and affection. We see testimony looked for in its earthly state at the beginning, and what is needed for its public manifestation at the end. In the first it had already failed; but the second (blessed be God!) cannot; for it is accomplished by divine power. The former first presents itself, there is no promise of inward grace, no supply of strength. Motives, promises, encouragements, warnings, threatenings, and judgments announced . . . all these the Son of man holds out; but never an inward supply of grace, never one word such as "my grace is sufficient for thee," "my strength is made perfect in weakness." He was dealing with the responsibility of the church as a profession in the earth - as a position to be maintained, not in His affection for His beloved saints, nor for His bride the church.

234 This, it is evident, gives a very important character to these addresses and is easily verified by the reader; we are on earth with a Judge, not in heaven, nor in communion with a Saviour. It is not a mere judge - that is for the world - but One who rebukes and chastens because He loves (still that is in a certain sense judicial) - One who is patient, gracious, pains-taking, vigilant to warn and shew the

failure, and the path to follow, the sentiments that become the state of those He addresses Himself to; but who can spue out of His mouth that which, after all the pains taken, does not answer what He has a right to and must expect and require. This is not the church of His elect, though they may be there. It is the body which has a public responsibility to maintain its testimony in the earth. The churches then present Christ's judgment on, and dealings with, the professing body, or at least those who have ears to hear when their first decay attracts His vigilant and bounden care, till they are utterly rejected as a witness on the earth: patient but judicial in its character, and failing in no one warning which, if listened to, might have led to the avoidance of the judgment, and adding every promise which could encourage and sustain faith. It is not the Spirit in the church acting for the preservation of the body, by maintaining in the conscience and in the heart the testimony of, and dependence on, Christ, putting away the evil and drawing down the good, but the Spirit from without addressing itself to the churches or professing body in its various states, and informing it of Christ's judgment of that state - an entirely different thing.

235 To the world, as we shall see, all is simple judgment; till the time of glory, graduated judgment, but only judgment, though a remnant may be preserved through it. What we have previously enlarged upon constitutes "the things that are" - the characteristic state of the church, with Christ's judgment upon it while it continues a public - the public - witness on Christ's behalf in the world. Various and even contemporaneous elements may enter into this; but together they prove the judicial history of what the church has been as a professing witness from beginning to end. I may perhaps enter into some details further on. These "things which are" close, however: God no longer recognises the professing church as a public witness, even a blamable one. The moment is not stated nor the manner. He ceases to speak (for His words are the warning of, not the execution of, judgment), when He said, "I am about to spue thee out of my mouth." It may continue to the eyes of man, when, every saint of the true church being gone, it is no longer in any way the object of Christ's care, even judicial, and may be left to Satan to make any use he pleases of it. Perhaps some awhile drag on in self-delusion their association with its existence. I say this, not to lead to speculation on what may be, but to arrest conclusions as to what is not, that is, the accomplishment of the act of cutting off. There is no candlestick which God owns, nor light at all. The carcase may be there which hindered and corrupted; the soul is fled.

After these things another order of events begins. There is nothing which God owns in the earth as a corporate testimony. God, dealing with the earth itself, begins His government of it. And the prophet sees a door open above; and the voice like a trumpet, which had previously led him to turn round and see the candlesticks on the earth, now calls him up to heaven, where he sees the scene and throne of power which is to begin to act on the earth - a God manifested as Jehovah the creator on the throne, in characteristics in general in which He had carried on the government of the earth, and more particularly among the Jews upon the earth. The covenant with them (which, if it had failed on earth on their part, was maintained intact in nature and purpose in heaven) was not yet referred to, but would be further on. But the sovereign pledge which secured the blessings of creation till the earth should be no more, was plainly seen; of this the rainbow was the sign; and, further on, the cherubic throne, the temple, and the ark of the covenant were the expressions of the one; and the well-known rainbow was the assurance of the infallibility of the other. But the features with which John saw the throne surrounded require more special mention; for none of those attached to the covenant with the Jews (unless we consider the cherubim such) were the first associations of it. It is only at the close of chapter 11 (i.e. of the whole of the first series of visions, and of the succession of events to the end, viewed in their general history), or more properly at the beginning of chapter 12, that the temple and the ark of the covenant are introduced. We find typical parts of the temple used as being in heaven with the scene

suitably attached to them, and the multitude worship in this temple; but the temple itself is not brought into view. The idea is a throne in heaven, centre and source of the government of the world, and One who was there, whatever man might think, to exercise it. There was a sitter on it. That is, we have, first, the state of the professing church, or what God noticed as the specially responsible and characterising part of it; secondly (after that, when that was out of view, God having no longer anything to say to it on earth) we have the throne of government in heaven, and God declaring or recalling His pledge of the blessing and security of creation, whatever chastenings and judgments there might be. It was still a mystery of God; for to none but faith was it known that all the terrible things which were coming in were the direct and detailed effect of a government of God, which was not yet manifested, though it acted on the earth. This continues to the end of chapter 11 except the little open book. Thirdly, we have then the signs of the covenant and government of Israel on earth again brought to view, not in public acknowledged result, but that God held it good in heaven, though He could not yet publicly give it place on earth; but there was with Him an object of covenant on earth, an object on earth in respect of which, not merely on which, He acted.

236 What were the features which characterised the throne? First, divine glory - the manifestation of the divine character.\* After this (which was His intrinsic character and manifestation) we have the bright and early sign of His covenant with creation;\*\* but the Lord had associated other thrones with His. This was the third feature. I say associated thrones, for there was nothing which entered into connection with the first throne itself; but it was equally remarkable that there were other thrones besides the central one. They have a position given to them apart from, though associated with, the throne of the Lord, endowed with wisdom from, and experience of, the ways of God for government according to their knowledge of Christ and God's thoughts and ways in Him. They were clothed in the raiment of righteousness as personally worthy, or clothed with Christ in their knowledge of righteousness; and the crown of righteousness, made good through conflict, was upon their head. God had placed them there. Such was their character, intelligent, holy, confided authority: but the manifestation of the terror of God's power flowed forth from the throne itself.

{\*The jasper is used in the city which had the glory of God, as light, strength, and security. Sardius was the last (the *omega*) of the foundations, as the jasper was the first (the *alpha*).}

{\*\*It also had the precious stone character.}

237 In presence of it was the manifestation of the various and searching, yea, consuming perfections of the Eternal Spirit, through which it could be reached, if man could. And who could abide them? Established purity, unalterable in character, was there. It was not that which washed filth, but which implied its absence; and the standing there was where there was none. This was what characterised the throne in the way up to it. In fine, we have this heavenly throne thus doubly characterised.

It was a manifestation of the invisible God - there was a sitter on it, God in manifestation and government; next it was in the manifestation of that glory which, though fully divine, is communicable. The city had the glory of God, as we rejoice in hope of the glory of God; but this was, in its light - its wall - its first foundations, jasper. That is what He who here sat on the throne was in manifestation, together with the last of the foundations, as we have seen, completing what the city was founded on. It was the millennial glory - the manifestation of God in power, evil being put away, or in that moral character which resulted from, or was displayed in, its being put away, after all manner of moral exercise, displayed while it existed, whether in the patience of power, or the forming a character intelligent of God, thus displayed. Next, it was the security of the blessing of creation on that day. And

further, there were the associated thrones of conferred power in the maturity of intelligence, and an administration, not of mere sovereign royalty, though thrones they were, but of interest, intelligent interest, and care over, as associated with, on God's behalf, those whom the Lord would bless. But then, besides this, the present character of the throne, not as connected with the elders, was Sinai-terror and power. The consuming power of the perfections of the Spirit, and the immitigable requirement of unchangeable purity. This is not a throne of grace. And connected with this were four living creatures, not on conferred thrones; but entering so to speak into the composition of the throne itself, the power, firmness, intelligent nature, and rapidity of action necessary in the judgments of Him who governed in a world which had ceased to heed Him, and where what He could recognise in testimony, in grace, so as to deal with it in patient moral display of what He was, subsisted no longer. These ways of God in judgment were swift and rapid in their power, and saw, not in outward appearance, but with the perfections of internal discernment; and glorify - not as Jesus, the Father, but - the Lord God Almighty, Jehovah Elohim Shaddai. When the Eternal God is thus glorified, the four-and-twenty elders worship Him they know on the throne, and recognise the Eternal in Him, the God of providence and creation; for they have understanding in the character and reasons why glory can be given to God, and to suit their praises to the character in which He is manifested. The others manifest His attributes. These know Him that has them, what His rights and worthiness are - His sovereign title to dispose of the creation, the creature of His will. There is intelligent adoring of Him who has associated them with His glory.

238 Such is the power in exercise here: we have now the knowledge of that in which it was to be exercised - the book fully written out, but as yet absolutely sealed. God's ways with the church are ways of revelation, full gracious holy communications to act morally on those intelligent by the new nature and the Spirit. Now we have the unrolling, as an object of intelligence, of His judicial dealings with that with which He was not in this relationship, communicated to the church prophetically, not in communion about itself. Who could do this? Of these purposes of God there was no moral intelligence founded on principle merely. He who could wield the title and power of judgment, who, having suffered perfectly for God's glory and gained the title to the inheritance, when tried to the uttermost - God's power in holiness and judgment being in exercise - He could, and this the elders understood; for intelligence is theirs. The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, had prevailed to open the book. He who was to wield divine power in the house chosen of God on earth, to sit on the throne of the Lord, as is said of Solomon; He who was even the source of all this power and promise - He had prevailed to open it; but it was by perfectly glorifying God in suffering, it was redemption-glory. Also, He has hence much wider that Judaic or David glory even, as the strength and source of it; for there is a double character of the Lamb, as there was of the throne. The millennial glory on earth should be His in the title of His Person: but, having His place in the power of divine government, encircled by the glory, invested with the power, and characterised by it, which belonged to the present power of the throne and the intelligence of God's ways in conferred glory, the result of the moral ways and dealings of God in the midst of the throne, the beasts, and the elders, a Lamb standing as slain, with full perfect power and intelligence in all their forms, and that in the exercise of them in God's ways\* upon earth in government. "And he came and took the book." So that we have the two-fold character of the Lamb also, what He will be in the millennium, what He is in the present character of His power - this last connected with His sufferings and death. On His taking the book, a new song begins; joy belongs to the whole, beasts and elders, and another element discloses itself. There are yet saints on the earth in whom heaven is interested; a new song is sung in heaven, based on redemption - not merely power and holy title to glory, but all the dealings of God in power, in creation, as well as the joint-heirs of glory, are interested in this; all things in heaven and earth are the subjects of reconciliation, as well as the church.

{\*In general, the eyes are seen in providential government (2 Chron. 16: 9), subsequently

established in the foundation of the Lord's seat in the temple of Jerusalem in the millennium (Zech. 3: 9; 4: 10), and here exercised by the Lamb, as having the fulness of the Spirit in this character.}

240 Hence, though I doubt not that the elders are particularly in question here, still all could sing "us." The difference of "us" and "them" is not a difficulty here, because as the singers recognise their being subjects of redemption as all the rest, so the assurance that the suffering saints whose prayers they presented would reign and be a kingdom of kings and priests was of the highest interest and utmost propriety - just what was important to be brought out here, the grand point to result, after Christ's glory, from all the scenes of this book, for the church scene we have seen closed; but there were saints in connection with the government and providence of God with the eyes of the Lamb running through the earth, in the scene of the judgments on a heedless world, which this book was to unfold, whose lot it was all-important to point out.

Round the throne and the beasts, and elders, who gave it its character, the heavenly host praise Him that sits on the throne and the Lamb, and all creation echoes it, with the "Amen" of the living creatures. This embraces the subjects of chapters 1 and 2: and the four-and-twenty elders worship. The living creatures do not worship. They render testimony to the glory of Him on the throne, and to the redemption by the Lamb, but they do not worship. This belongs to the elders - precious privilege!

We now enter on the scene in which those saints are placed who had learned to look up to heaven, according to the character of God here displayed; not the church, as we have seen, but yet heavenly in the source of their hopes. It is precious to know that, whatever may be the terrible progress of the divine judgments, not only are we of the church hid in the hollow of His hand, and, if we keep the word of His patience, kept from the hour of temptation, and an open door meanwhile (what grace for such!) set before us; but it is the Lamb who opens the course of judgments to which men themselves are exposed, so that for the saints found there there is a sure warrant of guardian care through the trial. I do not enter into details of the first four seals; they are the historic progress of God's dealings with the world which has not known Him in grace. Favour shewn to the wicked has been of no avail. Will the lifting up of God's hand produce any effect? But all this seems nothing more than the ordinary course of events; only that the hand of God waxes heavier and heavier in judgment - war of conquest, mutual destruction, famine and sword, famine and pestilence and the beasts of the earth, God's four sore providential plagues. (See Ezek. 14: 21.) Hence we find that the four living creatures with the voice of God's power call the prophet to come and see. These temporal providential judgments are thus complete. And this is the subject of the book. But we have seen suggested the existence of recognised saints, but in no formally recognised place as regards the church; because the known things were the saints reigning in heaven, and the world judged on earth, because we have left the church as a witness on earth. And here we find there have been some of them put to death,\* offered up as burnt offerings to God; and the cry proceeds from under the altar, which demands the execution of the judgment directly on the inhabitants of the earth. This is not the church's cry, but of those that are in relationship with judgment and the throne, and have their thoughts associated with it - a necessary consequence of their position; for it is their only refuge. "Despot (Master)! holy and true," is the tide they appeal to. They are clothed with the fruits of their sorrow and faithfulness; but for judgment they must wait, till another body of sufferers have filled up the number which requires the judgment of God. But this forms a moral epoch, and the demand is followed by an utter convulsion of all existing institutions and ordinances, so that the kings of the earth, rich and poor, great and small, think that the day of judgment is come, though it be not really so. And thus things were ripened up for what was more truly final; for the previous judgments had been but a beginning of throes. Hitherto it was more like the ordinary circumstances of trial, though with increasing aggravation, and till the cry for

judgment arose against a persecuting and unrepenting world.

{\*Compare Matthew 24. Though it is probable that part of it may be more general, at any rate it is the same thing.}

241 But the more direct judgments of God were soon now to begin to blow upon the earth, and those owned of God must be sealed. And immediately on this Israel reappears on the scene as the object of God's sure and unceasing care. "Say that they are Jews, and are not," is all that could be said of Judaism while the church was on the scene: now they are noted and numbered, as the people of God, not delivered indeed, but marked. He who saw from heaven could see it as the mission of the four horses, though in earth nothing of it appeared. This closed this portion of the vision. But a new scene bursts on the prophet's sight, a vast multitude in a position as yet unseen. This crowd had no place in the scene in the beginning. It is now first and in special manner introduced in the scene; but the chapter itself, it is to be remarked, is not the course of historical events, but an interruption, to let us into certain purposes of the divine counsel. The former part seals in the earth the election of the earthly people. In this we have a present assemblage of a multitude from among the Gentiles who stand before the throne and the Lamb as victors brought into the fruits of their toil. The God that they knew of, to whom they ascribe salvation along with the Lamb, is God as we see Him displayed in this book, not as He was known to the church, the Father and the Son in communion by the Spirit, but One who, on the throne, had been their Saviour. Historically the church had only seen Him exercising His righteous judgments in the earth, because He could own nothing at this period in the earth. Still here there is found a vast multitude who had been saved through and out of all this, and who were found and owned before the throne that had saved them. They were not indeed in such a position as sitting on thrones crowned, nor did they celebrate the merits and title to glory of the Lamb that they knew, but they could speak of a salvation which had been granted them, ascribing it to God and the Lamb, accomplished in the midst of the fire. Note, the beasts and elders are excluded here: these saved ones could not stand around them and ascribe salvation (though the angels may be in this position, when it is only a question of place and honour). But the elder interests himself in them, and would have John to know, and draws his attention to them. John refers back to him, for the elders are ever they that have understanding. "These are they who have come out of the great\* tribulation." Now I do not believe that it is the time of trouble of Matthew 24 which applies more particularly to Judea and the Jews - the time of Jacob's trouble. This is far more extensive in its sphere, and precedes it in time; for that takes place on the setting up the abomination of desolation in the holy place, that is the last three years and a half. But there is a time of temptation which is to come upon all the world to try them which dwell on earth, from which the true church had been preserved, and from which these had not. This is, I apprehend, "the great tribulation," from the midst of which these have been saved. Thyatira had been threatened that Jezebel should be cast into great tribulation. It is very likely this also is the same. I judge that it refers rather to what follows than to what precedes, up to the time of the rising of the beast out of the bottomless pit when the scene changes, and we have another set of subjects. They have profited fully by the purifying efficacy of the blood of Christ, so as to stand before God. They worship in His temple. They are relieved by His presence from every sorrow and sufferance, but they are not with Him and the Lamb in intelligent glory as the crowned elders on the thrones. They are the subject of their interest, and their explanations - touching witnesses of His tenderness, and patience, but not of intelligent association in His glory, as far as that may be to creatures.

{\*Some persons lay great stress on the adjectives coming after the substantives, "the tribulation, the great," without reason, I judge. The adjective is more emphatic, in my judgment, when it comes before than when it follows, which is very natural, the strong expression coming first: still, I judge, it is

the great.}

243 These once set in their place as manifesting the securing power of God's love, the history is resumed. This will not require here much detail. The last seal is opened; and after a short delay in the action of heaven, the seven angels prepare to sound. The first four give rise to the smiting the earth in the four great sources of its riches. The earth (properly speaking), the sea, the rivers, and the sun, moon, and stars. This was not by apparently natural causes, as the famines and the wars of the earliest judgments, but by what made them evidently judgments or plagues: only we have to remark here that these judgments broke forth as the result of offering up the prayers of saints. The censer, in which the great High Priest had offered up his incense, was filled with fire from the altar - God's consuming judgment, and then cast on the earth.

But these plagues in the earth cease, only to give way to bitterer woes on the inhabitants of this hardened world. The first is the letting loose the locusts which came out of the smoke of the bottomless pit, a Satanic darkening of human understanding, the taking away the light of the natural path of man, the shutting out divine and heavenly influence. Out of this darkness go forth those whose business and power is to pass through, pervade, and destroy, not now mere prosperity, but all peace and rest of spirit - to torment men so that they should desire death. It is not an outward plague which touches prosperity, the means of enjoyment - nor life, the loss of which, if it closes pleasure, makes pain cease as to this world. The springs of joy were poisoned in the heart, in the life left there, by this Satanic mischief; but it was the portion of those only not marked by God. The next plague is more outward chastisement - the killing by the power of the Euphratean horsemen. Still Satanic power goes forth out of their mouth, and in their tails lies and poison were found. But men repented not, neither of their sins nor of their idolatry; such, thus far were the effects of the sounding these terrible trumpets. Diabolical principles and human energy, imbued however with what was Satanic, succeed each other in the desolation of those who have chosen this earth as their portion.

244 But now a new publication of the last importance comes forth from heaven. The messenger of God's power, clothed with a cloud (the sign of His presence of old among His people), the rainbow (pledge to the creation) on His head, and His feet in consuming judgment, having an open book in His hand, puts His feet, one on the sea, the other on the land, thus claiming all the earth in judgment. When He cried, the whole utterance of divine power gave forth its voice; but the details were not revealed. However, there was to be no longer any delay, but in the days of the seventh trumpet when it should just now sound, the mystery of God would be complete; afterwards it would be open manifest government or revealed glory. The prophecy was to re-commence. The book here is open, it was the dealing and ways of God Himself with a known object, and on known and revealed principles for a short period also, and on a confined scale.

Accordingly we find ourselves evidently at once on Jewish ground, and direct reference to the historical records of their conduct. Another immense difference appears, too, here; the whole character of the scene changes. It is no longer mysterious agents inflicting on carnal men the judgments of God, the question of witness in the world being entirely withdrawn. On the contrary, we are on the earth with witnesses to the God of the earth; and, on the other hand, plain definitely characterised wickedness, rising up to destroy the true witnesses whom God avowedly owns, and up to a certain time maintains untouched by their enemies. The nature of the scene is thus wholly changed; the book is effectually an open one. First, we had the church on earth; then, dealing in judgment by providential power, and nothing measured by God; now, we have renewed objects of His dealings on earth. He resumes His ways with the Jews\* during forty-two months; then the city and outward court of the temple are given up to the Gentiles. But there are true worshippers in the temple and at the altar of God - worshippers on

a Jewish ground of hope by faith, not, I judge, marked merely literally by the temple and altar, but those who really understood approach to God, as priests might who were within, while the general mass were given up to be trodden down, with everything holy in the nation, by the Gentiles. But, besides the priests' reserved worship, there was the power of prophecy, guarded by such power as Moses had and Elias; and with reason, for they had the difficulties of both, the hostility of Gentiles to whom the people were captive, and the apostasy of the people given up to idolatry who had sold themselves to them. But with the forty-two months, the time of their mission closed; and the beast, ascending out of the bottomless pit, kills them, and their bodies remain unburied in the great street of the city called Sodom and Egypt where their Lord was crucified - in principle, and probably in physical reality, Jerusalem. But, revived by the spirit of life from God, they stand up and go up in a cloud in the sight of their enemies. Judgment and convulsion accompanied this; and a full class of men were killed, for seven thousand is a complete set destined to that. The city may be still naturally supposed Jerusalem; but if taken in a wider sense I do not object, as "the city" is so used. This part gives a definite place to these prophecies. I have no doubt this was the first half week. This is necessarily introduced to give it its place in the general history and connects the two. We have then the second woe closing with the closing of the first half week; it would appear probable (I am inclined to suppose) beginning also within it, but this I leave. The seventh trumpet is the signal of closing all, as had been said, but the events are not related under it, no more than on the opening of the seventh seal; all in which God would, on to the end, display His power, is celebrated as now to take place.

{\*The Jews are not necessarily a publicly redeemed people, because God deals with them emphatically. They may be in captivity as in Egypt, and in apostasy with a remnant as in Elias' case, and yet God, in a certain sense, owns and deals with them. And this is just the case here. Still it is an immense change to begin thus again with the Jews. It is just introduced to connect it with its place in the general history before the final actings of the seventh trumpet; in what follows it is the grand scene and subject of these latter. See note page 32.}

246 And now, before the history is continued, the thoughts of God in the *dénouement* of it all, (Rev. 10: 7) and Satan's opposition, are brought into view, and then the history as the way towards it. Still all flows now on intelligible Jewish ground of interpretation. The blessing is not yet manifested on earth, but it is secured in heaven. Hence the temple is opened in heaven; and the prophet sees the ark of the covenant, God's sign of unchangeable purpose of blessing, and the voice of His power in judgment accompanies the vision. The counsels of God then appear themselves in connection with the Jewish people. They are to be clothed with supreme glory to bring forth Messiah to reign over the nations in power. In God's view, the old covenant glory, or mere Mosaic estate, is to be under their feet; and, clothed with the supreme authority, the perfection of human administrative authority crowns their head. But in the bringing forth of the reigning strong man, there was (if not as to the fact, at least as to the accomplishments of the purpose) an interruption. Satan in direct hostile power (his form the Roman government) seeks to destroy this Jewish king of iron sceptre. He is caught up to God and His throne, hidden for the time; and Israel's place is of God in the desert, seen and acted on in the remnant according to God in the latter day. Meanwhile, as I doubt not, the church is associated with the male child (compare the promise of Thyatira). There is war in heaven; Satan is cast out, and then persecutes the Jews as objects of promise, and the woman flees into the desert where God takes care of her. This casting out of Satan is the beginning of the active energy of Christ's kingdom and God's power in it. Heaven was for ever freed from the accuser, to the joy of those who dwelt there and rejoiced in the deliverance thus accomplished of their brethren who had been in conflict. Their combat is now closed - they have overcome. Blessed those who dwell in heaven! but woe to earth and sea, because of the wrath of him who knows that his remaining time is short! This important event, the casting down for

ever of Satan from heaven, where he shall no longer be the adversary of the saints, introduces the last three years and a half, the peculiar character of which is his power, and working, and rage upon earth in consequence. Not merely the saints of the church long since out of view, but the saints in conflict in the immediately preceding epoch are out of his reach. They have overcome, suffered, and their victory is celebrated; but if God had not shortened the days, no flesh would be saved of those subject to his violence on earth. The woman (the Jews as objects of God's purpose) and her seed are the great object of his malice; but the woman is secured, and he makes war with the remnant of her seed, characterised as having the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus (that is, as being faithful in obedience, of which the commandment of God, the law, was the measure, and walking by the light and spirit of prophecy); for the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.

247 Satan's plans in that terrible time are then unfolded; a beast rises, as to its providential existence, out of the mass and confusion of the nations; its form was that of ten kingdoms, distinct governments, yet a corporate body which had had itself seven forms of government, and embraced the qualities of power of all the previous empires, and to which Satan gives his throne and power. He blasphemes against God, his tabernacle (I suppose his heavenly one in the church), and against those that dwell in heaven. It is an essentially earthly beast exalting man and what is seen, and filled with hatred of all that was above him and that was heaven. Save the elect, he has empire given him; and those who have their portion on earth worship him. He had one of his forms of existence wounded to death, but this was healed; it was a Satanic imperial power and body, formed however of the union of several kingdoms. But there was yet another instrument of the enemy's; if he set up the first beast on the throne in power as an object, he wrought in another as an agent. The second beast arises out of the earth. It is in the already formed and ordered system. He is a power, and the form of his power is Christ's (not Christianity but Christ's); but his voice was Satan's. He does ample signs also to prove himself the prophet sent of God, doing that which Elijah did as the test between Jehovah and Baal. He has the claims in form of Christ's royalty, and works peculiar signs as a prophet; but all this in the service of the beast, all whose power he exercises in its presence, and causes man to make an image to it, and forces his adoration, or at least submission to it. It is Satan's power in full energy, in the form of a false Christ and prophet, but who maintains the authority of the throne Satan has set up. I do not doubt the centre of the false prophet's work is in Judah. I do not say exclusively. Such are the formal instruments of evil.

248 Next, we have God's workings in the midst of all this. First, the faithful remnant of Judah, who have known how to suffer like the Lamb during the power of him who had His appearance. It is not yet Solomon glory, but David on Zion between Shiloh and the temple, as in Chronicles, and those who have suffered with him there. Hence they have not their name, as children, but His Father's name who had been faithful to Him in His life, so suffering; and counted on His name in their measure, as Christ had. These were not in heaven, but associated as an anticipative remnant with all Christ's glory when He takes it, like David's worthies, not entering into it when it is taken, but with Him into it in its fullest display on earth, with Him the Lamb in His earthly royal state wherever He goes; and this being sovereign grace, they can catch the heavenly air they are so near to, though they are not in heaven. These first secured in their place as ever, the gospel of God's creation-glory and swift-coming judgment is sent forth - a last message, that man may escape, as Psalm 96. Then the fall of Babylon is announced; then the final solemn warning against the beast: and then it is announced that it is closed, and the dying in the Lord are thenceforth happy. None are now to be thus put to death, for all is now turned. And the harvest or distinctive judgment, where the good are spared, and the vintage, where it is all destruction of the apostate Judaism, take place. Much of this last may have even had the form of Christianity (for aught I know it is probable); but it is now idolatrous apostate Judaism.

This wholly closes this part of the scene. The proper judgments of God in the earth, which fill up His wrath, are given as a description apart. Revelation 11 - 14, were all in connection with Jerusalem and the Jews, though there were agents whose actings perhaps extended beyond it; but the subject of the chapters, the guiding key of intelligence, is their connection with God's purposes as to the Jews and Jerusalem.

249 These chapters are not so. We return to the present judgments of God in the earth on the general state of an apostate world, with its particular results and features. Hence we have no longer the ark of the covenant, but the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony. The throne exercises its power according to the righteous testimony of God; but there is no question of covenant. The typical features are used of the temple. Those who would not worship the beast are seen on a sea of glass mingled with fire. They had been purified with the moral power of the word, but accompanied by tribulations - they had passed through the fire. Now they were seen triumphant on unchangeable purity before God. It is well to remark, that Revelation 15 is in no way the historic continuance of Revelation 14 which had closed with the winepress judgment. It returns back to recount the judgments that fall on the Gentile part of the wickedness, beginning as ever by setting the saints in resulting triumph, so as to assure their hearts through it all. They sing somewhat as Israel at the Red Sea. The judgment is made manifest; but also how true these ways of judgment are of Him whom they characteristically own here as the King of nations! It will be found, as before in the trumpets, that the four great symbols and indeed real sources of prosperity are smitten (only in a much severer way, and with especial application to the kingdom of the beast) - the earth, sea, rivers, and sun. It was the wrath and vengeance of God Almighty. The fifth comes closer. The vial is poured on the throne of the beast; and darkness and anguish seize on his kingdom, but without repentance; and final judgment is prepared. On the sixth vial being poured out, the Euphrates is dried up. The barrier of the beast's empire is destroyed; but I am not prepared to say who the kings, from the rising of the sun, are, if it be more than laying open the empire to the inroads of the powers beyond. After this, three unclean spirits (Satan's direct blasphemous rebellious power, that of the empire raised up in the latter day, and the false prophet of Judaism) assemble the kings of the prophetic world to the battle of the great day of God Almighty. Armageddon alludes, I suppose, to Judges 5: 19, 20. The Lord now, too, as a warning recalls to those that have ears to hear His thief-like coming on the world. The seventh angel pours out his vial in the air (the universally pervading influence that men inhale and live by), the signs of God's terrible power break forth, and such convulsion of all established on earth as never had been known. The great Gentile city is divided into three parts. The city embraces, I apprehend, the whole organised civil relationship of the western Gentile world. Elsewhere this, as independently constituted, came to nothing; and Babylon, the Roman system and influences and order, came up before God for wrath, for hitherto it had subsisted. Judgment severe and terrible fell on men from God; but they only blasphemed the more.

250 Thereupon, we have the description and judgment of Babylon. All this is the judgment of God, not of the Lamb, and precedes His manifestation on earth. Rome had long carried on her idolatrous intercourse on earth, and exercised her influence over the nations, and had her dalliance with the kings of the earth. Every adulterous departure from God in associating the church with the world, was her daughter. Her system had been sustained by and ministered to every luxury, and the sale of everything; but what characterised her was spiritual fornication and idolatry. "The beast which was and is not," I take to be a characteristic name, not designating any given epoch. "The beast that was, is not, and shall be present" is the revived Roman empire; but in this last character it is entirely from beneath; and we recognise the one that slew the witnesses at the beginning of the three years and a half, the same as the first beast of chapter 13, but there as the established power of Satan on the earth, here in association with corrupt Babylon. Thus, here accordingly we have the ten kingdoms who received their

power during the same period with the beast, as there they were crowned during his existence. But at last they all hate Babylon, and burn her with fire; the corrupt idolatrous system is insupportable.

Note, the false prophet subsists in the same period with Babylon - a remarkable fact as to the state of things at that time. But the false prophet subsists after Babylon is totally destroyed - a strong evidence, be it said, in passing, that it is a different order of things. The city is, I doubt not, Rome.

All the rest now flows easily on. After the judgment of the great whore, long falsely calling herself the church, left to the rage of those she had long imposed on, room was made for the manifestation of the true. The marriage of the Lamb takes place, not the rapture, but the full union of Christ and the church, at the same time that the reign of the Lord God Almighty is celebrated. Those called to assist at the festival of the Lamb's marriage-supper are noted as blessed: I suppose rather a different class from the wife - what, I am not prepared to say; but it is a time of blessedness, and blesses all who are near it, or under its influence. Subsequently to this heaven is opened (for the church's place with Christ was within); and the Lord comes forth on the white horse of victory, and the saints with Him, and the judgment is executed on the beast, and the false prophet, and on their armies. The two are cast alive into the lake of fire - terrible counterpart of the Enochs and Elijahs of old, and plainer even its result.

251 The next step is the binding of Satan in the bottomless pit; this closes all that part of judgment. Verse 4 begins that of another character, and not following the order of time - the judgment of the throne, not as making war, but as ruling. In principle this continues till the great white throne has pronounced its fiat. But here on these millennial thrones the saints are associated. It is not precisely here the royal priests surrounding the throne, and worshipping, but thrones of judgment, such as Daniel 7 alludes to. We have, in general, the thrones; and as it might have been supposed that the beheaded, whom we have seen under the altar, and the persecuted of the beast, had lost their share, they are specifically named as found alive, though the body might have been killed; and they live and reign with Christ. Satan is let loose, that the inhabitants of the millennial earth may be put to the test, and alas! found to be men; and then the close in Christ's final judgment of the dead, and all things new.

From Rev. 21: 9, we have the connection of the heavenly Jerusalem with the earth during the millennium, including its own blessedness from which the blessing flowed; and the book is closed by warnings of Christ's coming to those concerned in the prophecy, "to every man," and then by the revelation of Himself to the church, which awakens her desire that He come, with her possession of the living water of grace meanwhile; to which He answers with the assurance, that He comes quickly, and the prophet adds his "Amen."