

The Lord Will Reign

- A Series of Papers on Prophecy

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Table of Contents

Preface.....	1
The Olivet Prophecy.	1
The Times of the Gentiles.....	7
The Future of Russia.....	14
Babylon and the Beast.	19
The Bride, the Lamb's Wife.....	26
Christ Millennial Reign.....	33

Preface.

This volume completes the series of "Papers on Prophecy," which have been published at intervals during the past twelve months. The nearness of the return of the Lord makes even the smallest contribution to the already extensive literature upon prophetic subjects, of some value to souls. It is our earnest desire that many who already love our Lord Jesus may be helped and blessed as they read these papers; and if they fall into the hands of any who are still unprepared to meet the Bridegroom, may the gracious Spirit of God lead them to a saving knowledge of Christ. This is our desire and prayer.

W. W. F. September, 1898.

The Olivet Prophecy.

Matt. 24 & Matt. 25.

Probably no student of the prophetic word will deny the great importance of the prophecy that we are now to consider. On all hands this is regarded as one of the most comprehensive utterances found in the Scriptures; which, if rightly apprehended, will materially help to the elucidation of many other parts of the Inspired Word. It must be evident to all that this prophecy covers a wide area, giving us a very large view of the ways of God with the earth and His own people in it.

This prophecy, spoken by the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Olives, cannot be rightly understood, unless the object of the Spirit of God in the Gospel of Matthew is clearly seen. Matthew differs from all the other evangelists in the style and arrangement of his Gospel. The evident aim of the Holy Spirit by his means is to present the Lord Jesus to us as the Messiah of Israel. The incidents recorded, the manner of their introduction into the narrative, the parables related, and the Old Testament Scriptures quoted, all combine to make this perfectly plain to such as examine the Divine Word with care. He is brought upon the scene as the Son of David and the Son of Abraham (Matt. 1), unlike what is found in the Gospel of Luke, where His genealogy is traced back to Adam and to God (Luke 3).

Matthew's Gospel is really the record of the trial of the great question whether Israel would receive their Messiah or not. Alas! the story is well known to us all. "He came unto His own (things) and His own (people) received Him not" (John 1: 11) He found no welcome in Israel, though He came among them with hands full of blessing. He was despised, rejected, and abhorred, as the Prophet foretold. Therefore He spoke constantly of changes to be brought in. In the seven parables of Matt. 13: He unfolded "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," showing the form the kingdom was about to take through the sin of the chosen people. In Matt. 16, after the remarkable confession of Simon Peter, He went further, and spoke of the Church — "Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell (Hades) shall not prevail against it." Israel's setting aside was at hand, and God was about to give effect to other purposes and plans.

The twenty-third chapter of Matthew's Gospel is exceedingly solemn. First, the Lord denounced the leaders and teachers of the people, exposing their hypocrisy and iniquity; and then poured out His sorrow and lamentation over blinded Israel heedlessly rushing onward to ruin, forsaking their own mercies. He loved His people — they were the chosen seed of Abraham, the friend of God; He felt the position keenly. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. 23: 37-39).

The force of these words must be seen in order to have a true understanding of the prophecy which follows. Three things are shown, or at least implied, in them: (1) His going away because of Israel's condition; (2) The resulting desolation of the people and sanctuary; and (3) His future appearing when Israel will welcome Him with joy. On this the Olivet Prophecy is based.

Having poured out His lamentation, the Lord departed from the temple. The disciples drew His attention to its costly buildings, and got in reply, "See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." This drew out the three questions found in verse 3: "Tell us when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world (age)?"

It is of moment to grasp what was in the minds of the disciples when they put these questions to the Lord. Many readers of Scripture persist in regarding them as representatives of the Church of God in this matter, accepting all the resulting counsel as for our own path. But it is plain that the Twelve had not the Church in mind at all just then. It is freely admitted that they became subsequently part of that wonderful unity, but they stood in no such position and relationship when with the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Olives. They were Jews, with minds full of earthly hopes and prospects, founded upon the prophecies of the Old Testament. They firmly believed Jesus to be Israel's Messiah, and they counted on Him to remove all difficulties out of the way and set up His throne in Zion. This was more or less in their minds all through their companionship with Him, even beyond death into resurrection (Matt. 20: 21; Luke 24: 21; Acts 1: 6). Hence their inquiries. If Jerusalem and the temple were to be overthrown, where would be the promised kingdom? And if the Lord was really going away before the setting in of the kingdom glory, when would He return?

These beyond all just controversy were their difficulties. The prophecy on Mount Olivet was intended by the Lord to meet them. Thus Israel is in view throughout, as we shall see even more plainly as we proceed with our examination of it.

At this point the reader should remark the difference between Matt. 24 and the parallel chapter in

the Gospel by Luke (Luke 21). It is one of the most striking proofs of the Spirit's inspiration of the Word of God. Both evangelists record the Lord's prophecy, but Matthew was led to dwell on the Lord's replies to the second and third questions, relating to the time of the end, whilst Luke gives prominence to the first question with its answer.

It is important to observe this carefully. Man would not have ordered matters thus. But God, not man, is the real Author of the Scriptures, and had different designs in using the various vessels, whether understood by them or not. Thus Luke dwells on the overthrow of Jerusalem and the temple, saying very little indeed about the trials and sorrows at the end of the age. It should be remarked that the Christian period comes in between Luke 21: 24 and 25 as a timeless gap.

Now let us briefly survey Matthew 24 and Matthew 25. The prophecy naturally divides itself thus

Part 1 — Matt. 24. 4-14.

Part 2 — Matt. 24: 15-31.

Part 3 — Matt. 24: 32 — Matt. 25:30.

Part 4 — Matt. 25: 31-46.

Part 1. is general. The Lord describes the general circumstances of His servants until the end of the age. That which follows is, in a certain sense, the expansion of these verses. The same principle may be observed in Rev. 11: 15-18. There we have Christ's appearing with all its results, reaching through the kingdom on to the time of the judgement of the dead. All the rest of the Book of Revelation is really summed up in those few words. It is so in Matt. 24: 4-14. The servants of Christ must be prepared for deceivers, for tumults in the world, and for persecution for His Name's sake. All this is more dwelt upon in Mark's account of the prophecy. His special theme is Christ as the Servant of God; consequently anything bearing on service has a large place in his Gospel.

These counsels are unquestionably of value to those who serve the Lord Jesus during the present time, but in their strict application, they are for the witnesses in the latter-day crisis. "The gospel of the kingdom" will be their grand theme. It will bring them suffering and rejection assuredly, but those who endure to the end, until the Son of Man appears, shall be delivered and rewarded by Him.

Part 2. enters more into details. In verse 15 we read, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation." This is a very plain mark, leaving no doubt as to the scene of the sorrows described. This will be set up in "the holy place." Where in all the earth does God own such a place, save in Jerusalem? When in the past was an idol (abomination) set up there? Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed a few years after the Lord's words were spoken, and the temple has never been restored since. But plainly it will be set up again, and the Lord's words mean nothing less than a serious attempt to introduce idolatry into it.

"How will this be?" some may say. The Word of God answers the question clearly. A false Christ in the last days will be welcomed by the Jewish people, as the Lord solemnly warned them in John 5: 43: He will apparently find a number of them in their land, with their temple and ritual restored (Rev. 11: 1, 2). He will present himself to them, and will be received. All will go on well for a time, but in due course, he will manifest his true character and designs. Backed up by the new power of the West, he will stop the daily sacrifice, and set up an idol in the sanctuary, and even sit there himself as God (Dan. 12: 11; 2 Thess. 2: 4). Then will begin a reign of terror for the godly. At that juncture Satan will be expelled from the heavens, and will come to earth filled with great wrath, knowing that he has but a

short time (Rev. 12: 7-12).

The Lord's counsels now before us refer to this solemn period. The godly are to flee, not staying even to get their clothes. The mountains of Judea are to be their hiding-place, their Zoar. So compassionate is the Lord for them in their trial, that He bids them pray that this may not happen in the winter, or on the Sabbath day. Either would be serious. A winter flight, without time to fetch an overcoat, would be attended with much suffering on the one hand; and on the other a conscientious Jew would be in a serious dilemma if the signal were given on the Sabbath day. But these are Jewish marks, beyond doubt. What has the Church of God to do with the mountains of Judea, or the Sabbath day? All this is followed by the great tribulation, already considered in these papers. So violent and severe will be the onslaught of the enemy, that but for divine intervention, no flesh would be saved. How comforting it is for suffering saints to know that God holds the reins!

The fugitives must be on their guard against deceptions in their hour of distress. If thwarted in his designs by their flight, Satan will devise another course, and seek to persuade them that their longed for Deliverer has arrived at some point. This the saints must watch against. Their agonised hearts will be yearning for Christ to appear in accordance with the testimony of the prophets. The character of their hope, in contrast with that of Christians, will expose them to the snare. Whilst Christians look for Christ to descend into the air only, the Jew looks for the Lord to come to the earth. How easily therefore might these bewildered and perplexed ones be deceived! They are not to heed such reports. Such are of the Serpent. When the Lord Jesus really comes, they will not need to be informed of the fact, for as a lightning flash He will manifest Himself to Israel, and every eye shall see Him. "The carcass" helps further to fix the scene of these sorrows (Matt. 24: 28). It is Israel (Isa. 24: 19; Ezek. 37: 11); the vultures being her many enemies.

The Lord's appearing will be attended by solemn signs, in the heavens and on the earth. Sun, moon, and stars will be affected. "Then shall all the tribes of the earth (or land) mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (verse 30). This is not His coming as Bridegroom for the Church, but His public manifestation with His saints, as Col. 3: 4 speaks. All who have been previously caught up will come with Him in the solemn day of which we are speaking. This will be the Father's proof to the world, that He loves us as He loves His Son (John 17: 23).

The great trumpet is then blown, and the angels are employed for the gathering together of God's elect. Who are these? The ten tribes of Israel, I believe. The two tribes are the only sufferers in the land at the end; the ten tribes will be brought home at the Lord's appearing. Isa. 27: 1-2, 13, speaks of their gathering together. The following Scriptures speak of them as God's elect, and as His saints, Isa. 65: 9-22; Ps. 1: 5. At this point in the prophecy, the Lord leaves the main subject, and turns aside into a lengthy parenthesis, resuming the thread at Matt. 25: 31.

Part 3. is, as remarked, a parenthesis, extending from Matt. 24: 32 — Matt. 25: 30. It consists of six parables, containing moral instruction and warning. But they are evidently divided into two sets of three each. First we get three parables bearing strikingly on the circumstances of the godly remnant of the Jews: (1) the fig tree; (2) the days of Noah; and (3) the thief in the night. *The fig tree* (verses 32-35) is the well-known symbol of the Jewish nation (Matt. 21: 18-20). When the events described in this chapter are seen, the godly are to understand that the Messiah is near at hand. Some find difficulty in the words, "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (verse 34), supposing the Lord to mean that all must be accomplished within the life-time of those who then heard Him. This has led some to interpret this chapter as referring to the overthrow of Jerusalem, which has had the effect of

throwing them entirely off the track. "Generation" is used here in a moral sense, as in Ps. 12: 6, 7, and simply means that the unbelieving, Jewish people shall not cease to exist as such until all these words be fulfilled in them. Compare also Matt. 12: 43-45. Hence their existence amongst us to this hour, in spite of all their vicissitudes and sufferings.

The days of Noah (verses 36-42) are eminently parabolic in connection with the Jews. This patriarch was not translated to heaven before the judgement fell (as Enoch), but was left to pass through it, though preserved by God. Thus it will be with the Jewish remnant. They will be here, as the chosen of God, in the midst of a corrupt and apostate world. When the Lord Jesus appears, there will be a discriminating judgement in Israel; some will be cut off in anger, others will be left for kingdom-blessing.

The thief in the night (verses 43, 44) follows, showing the need of vigilance. This is the manner of the Lord's coming in connection with the ungodly, not His descent for the Church (1 Thess. 5: 1-10). These parables close with, "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh."

The parables that follow present an entirely different line of instruction. *The faithful and evil servants* (Matt 24: 45-51) furnish rather a picture of Christendom than of anything in Judaism. From this point until we reach Matt. 25: 31, all reference to "the Son of Man" is dropped, the insertion of the words in Matt. 25: 13 being an error, as probably most Bible readers are aware. The parable of the servants speaks of service amongst the household of God. The talents show a wider character of service, but the Lord Jesus commences with this. Does it not show that He greatly values care bestowed on His own during His absence? Many in this day speak and act as if the Gospel were everything. This is to miss the mind of God seriously. The Gospel is highly important, no doubt, and has a very large place in the divine heart; but God will have His own cared for and fed, nevertheless. This is what we get in the first of the second series of these parenthetic parables. Such as have served well in His house will be rewarded for it at His return; but evil servants who have served ill will be solemnly judged. What a correct portraiture of what has happened in Christendom! When the hope leaked away, and men began to say, "My Lord delayeth His coming," all sorts of evil entered, to the Lord's dishonour. Both leaders and led dropped into the world, and a long dark reign of priestly domination and tyranny followed, in sad accordance with the words of the Lord in this place.

The parable of *the ten virgins* (Matt. 25: 1-13) follows very aptly. If the parable of the servants shows how the leaders have acted during the Lord's absence in heaven, this reveals how the whole mass of professors have declined from the Lord. The number is expressive, "ten" speaking to us of human responsibility. Man, as a responsible creature, always fails, whether in Israel, the Church, or elsewhere. Such is the humbling story, wherever we turn in the Word of God.

The picture here is very striking, yet simple. "The kingdom of heaven" during the present time is the sphere of Christian profession. Later, the kingdom will take a different form, and be the scene of the display of Christ's earthly glory. Christian professors, then, are likened to virgins, who went forth, lamp in hand, to meet the bridegroom. Such was the ground taken at the first. Those who bore the Lord's name stood apart from the world as belonging to Christ, and looked for His return from heaven. How much sorrow and shame would have been spared had this position and character been maintained throughout! "But while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept" (verse 5). Not only the foolish — the merely nominal professors — but the wise also, possessed of the oil of the Holy Spirit though they were. It is sadly true. For many dreary centuries the hope was lost completely. Let the works of post-apostolic writers be examined, and it will be found that all lost the distinctiveness of the

Christian hope, merging it in the coming of the Lord to judge the world at the end.

Dr. Burton in his "Lectures on Ecclesiastical History" speaks of one Papias (A.D. 163) as holding some peculiar opinions." He believed that, previous to the final judgement, there would be a resurrection of the just, who would reign with Christ upon earth for a thousand years. Eusebius, who acquaints us with this fact, is probably right when he says that Papias misinterpreted the apostolic declarations, and misunderstood their figurative expressions." This is sufficient to show how the mass had declined. In Papias' ideas, we discern the remains of the truth concerning the Lord's coming, which to those of his time were but peculiar opinions, and this less than a hundred years after the departure of Paul!

But the Lord would not suffer His own to remain in this condition until His coming; so we read of the midnight cry, "Behold the bridegroom: go ye out to meet Him." This undoubtedly took place at the commencement of the present century, when the Spirit of God drew the attention of many to some of the truths of Scripture long overlooked, and among them the true hope of the Church of God. What a shaking it caused! What a putting aside of things unbecoming to Christ! What devotedness of heart to His precious person and work! Would that we could see the same freshness and fervour now! Let us examine our hearts, beloved. The Lord looks for affectionate desire after Himself — ardent longing for His coming again. He prizes this more than anything we can render to Him.

The great separation is coming. The foolish, with their oil-less lamps, will soon find themselves outside for ever. The Lord knoweth them that are His. How is it with the reader? Your profession of His name may be ever so loud, and your religious reputation among men ever so high, but if there be not living faith in the Son of God, He will disown you in the coming day. All who have been cleansed from their sins by His precious blood, and sealed with the Holy Ghost, He will take in with Him to the marriage, and the door will be shut.

The talents (Matt. 25: 14-30) speak to us again of service during the Lord's absence, but of a more varied character than the parable of the faithful and evil servants. Here He entrusts His goods to His stewards, to each according to his ability. The principle is similar to that in Eph. 4. There we have the gifts of the risen Head for the edification and blessing of His members below. Gift and ability are distinct. A man may have natural ability as a speaker; we can readily understand the Lord entrusting him with the gift of an evangelist, provided, of course, that the other necessary qualities are there also.

The Lord's servants should keep before them their Lord's return, when all that they have wrought will be inquired into. "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them" (verse 19). This corresponds with 1 Cor. 3: There we have some commended and rewarded, and others who have missed the reward; and a third class of servants, who, because evil, are destroyed. Service does not affect the salvation of our souls, that being founded on the accomplished work of Christ; but it will materially affect our reward at the Lord's return, and our place in His millennial kingdom.

The Lord graciously notes all the good of His saints. Every little act of loving service is faithfully recorded by Him. It is sweet to observe that He said the same words to the one who had traded well with the two talents, as to him who did well with the five. The measure and capacity were different, but each was faithful with what he had, which is all that the Lord looks for in any of us. But are we thus doing our best for Him?

The evil servant is cast out into outer darkness. His hypocritical excuse betrays plainly that he never knew his Lord at all. Would any who have ever tasted His love and grace call Him "a hard man"? Certainly not. The doom of the false servant is certain. With all his privileges and religious status, he is not the Lord's, and is thus rejected solemnly. What a warning for all who venture to serve Him and to

preach His word, never having really known Him!

This brings us to the close of the parenthesis in the Lord's prophecy. We will now only consider

Part 4. On this part, extending from Matt 25: 31-46, we can afford to be brief, having gone into it at some length in a previous paper. The thread of the prophecy is resumed from Matt. 24: 31, where it was dropped in order to bring in the parables. There we have the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; here we have what will follow that solemn event. "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations (or the Gentiles): and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left" (Matt 25: 31-33) . This session is not the final judgement of the dead, but the King's inquiry into a particular matter. How have the Gentiles treated those whom He graciously styles "My brethren"? These are the Jewish preachers of the Gospel of the Kingdom during the sorrows of the last days. Some will treat them well, receiving their message, and will be spared to enjoy the blessings of Christ's millennial reign; others will treat them scornfully and with cruelty, to their own solemn judgement. Their punishment is everlasting, their conduct having plainly manifested the enmity of their hearts to God and Christ; the righteous will pass into life eternal, though in an earthly condition.

This brings us to the door of the Lord's glorious kingdom, when the age of the law gives place to the age of Messiah; and here this remarkable prophecy ends. The Lord grant understanding of it to every reader, for His Name's sake.

Hallelujah! for the Lord
God omnipotent shall reign:
Hallelujah! let the word
Echo round the earth and main.
See Jehovah's banner furled,
Sheathed His sword: He speaks, 'tis done;
And the kingdoms of this world
Are the kingdoms of His Son.
He shall reign from pole to pole
With illimitable sway;
He shall reign, when like a scroll
Yonder heavens have passed away.

The Times of the Gentiles

This is a term used by the Lord Jesus to denote the period of Gentile supremacy in the earth (Luke 21: 24). It covers the whole period from the overthrow of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar until the glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus for the deliverance of the people of Israel and for the establishment of His own millennial kingdom.

It fell to Daniel's lot to give us the particulars. His book has a unique place in the inspired volume, and is, in consequence, of a very important character. It traverses ground not pursued by any other prophet. The prophets in general pass over in silence the time of Gentile dominion. They dealt with the consciences of the people in Israel and Judah, as to their moral state at the time of their testimony, and then pass on to the coming of Christ, when all God's purposes concerning the earth, delayed by the failure of the chosen seed, will be fully and gloriously accomplished.

But Daniel's line is quite different. He had no direct word for the people as to their state and prospects, but was entrusted with revelations as to the intervening period between their setting aside and their final restoration in grace. His book is in two parts. Daniel 1-6 record visions granted to the heathen monarch, Nebuchadnezzar, with Daniel's interpretations of them, some connected historical events being also added. Daniel 7-12: give us the visions vouchsafed to the prophet himself, wherein the same ground is gone over as with Nebuchadnezzar, But in a much fuller way, and with special reference to the people of God, i.e., the nation of Israel.

Daniel 1 opens with the solemn statement that the king of Babylon besieged and took Jerusalem, taking king and people captive, and removing the vessels of the House of God to Babylon. This is very important to observe, as it gives us the ground on which the prophecies of Daniel proceed. The throne of David was the throne of Jehovah (1 Chron. 29: 23), and Jerusalem was the city of God, the city of the Great King (Ps. 48: 2, 8). God's intention from the first has been to administer the earth by means of the people of Israel. They are the centre of His ways as regards the earth. "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel" (Deut. 32: 8). Here we learn that the division of the earth among the descendants of Noah, recorded in Gen. 10, 11, was no mere matter of chance, but regulated by the Most High in view of His future purpose. Israel, as we have said, is His centre. Jerusalem is His divinely chosen seat of government, and the house of David its earthly administrators.

All this failed of old, as, alas! everything does that is entrusted to the responsibility of man. Israel forsook Jehovah their God, and proved an unfaithful witness to the surrounding nations. The house of David turned away from Him — its choicest representative, Solomon, leading the way in evil. God cannot be a party to His own dishonour. Israel having sunk to the level of those around, if not in some respects even lower, it was impossible for God to maintain them in the high position in which He had set them, more especially as every faithful testimony by means of the many prophets raised up was of no avail. The result of all was that Jehovah overthrew the throne which He had established, banishing the house of David and the guilty nation from the good land, and granted supreme power to the Gentiles for a season. This power has been abused by its Gentile holders, even as by Israel of old, but it will remain with them till the coming of the Son of Man, whose right is the dominion and glory.

Daniel 2 gives us the vision vouchsafed to Nebuchadnezzar. It was at once a prophetic unfolding of the future and a testimony to him personally. He was now supreme in the earth. Every foe had been put down, and he had reached the summit of earthly glory and majesty. How would he use his power and position? The dream was sent that he might learn that his position had not been reached by mere skill or might, but that the hand of Jehovah was in it. Hence he was responsible to act as His steward on the throne of the earth.

It is not necessary to dwell on the king's agitation of mind after seeing the vision, nor on his unreasonable demand on the Chaldeans, &c., whereby the impotence of merely human wisdom was made manifest. Nor need we dwell on his tyrannical decree, or Daniel's exercise of heart before God about the affair; but will proceed directly to the vision and its interpretation. The prophet said, "Thou,

O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (Dan. 2: 31-35). "This is the dream." In this vast image composed of four metals, Gentile monarchy is viewed as a whole, with its various deteriorations. We will dwell more fully on the different powers presently; it will suffice now to name them — Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. They are all brought to an end by the crushing violence of the stone cut out without hands, which then becomes a great mountain, filling the whole earth.

Some have thought this stone to be the Gospel, but a moment's reflection will convince any thoughtful reader that this is a mistake. The Gospel of God's grace is not designed to overthrow and scatter the kingdoms of the earth, but to save individual souls in order to have part with the Son of God in heaven. The Gospel leaves earthly power where it finds it, calling those who believe out of the world to be pilgrims and strangers in it until the Lord comes. The stone is Christ, coming in kingdom, power, and glory, to put down all rule authority, and power. God intends to place all things under His feet, and to give Him a kingdom which shall rule over all (Heb. 2: 6-8; Ps. 8) This will be brought in by judgement. His path to the throne will be resisted when He appears, to the discomfiture and ruin of His foes, and to the destruction of their kingdoms for ever (Ps. 45: 3-5; Dan. 2: 44; Rev. 19: 11-21). The whole scene will then be placed under the hand of One whom God can trust, unlike Nebuchadnezzar, or even Solomon with all his wisdom and glory.

Turn now to Dan. 7, where the unfolding of these matters is fuller, and with special reference to the people of God. This vision was granted to the prophet "in the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon." It is well to note this. Men do not like the thought that God knows the end from the beginning, and is able to speak of those who are not, as though they were. The Babylonish power was not yet broken, yet God made known to His servant its successor in the dominion, pursuing the theme right on to the coming of the Son of Man.

"Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another" (Dan. 7: 2, 3). Here the different Gentile empires are viewed, not as a whole, as in Daniel 2, but separately. The sea is an emblem of the nations, the winds being disturbing elements in general. Thus each of these empires arose out of the upheaval of the nations. Some may ask, "Why are they shown as wild beasts?" We learn in this figure their moral character in the eyes of God. Beasts live for the gratification of their lusts, without any sense of responsibility towards God. The figure is a true one. Neither Babylon, nor Persia, etc., ruled for God; love of power and greed of conquest marked each and all of them in a greater or less degree.

The first beast is easily recognised. It was "like a lion, having eagle's wings." This is the power of Babylon. Jer. 4: 7 alludes to it under the figure of a lion, and Ezek. 17: 3 as an eagle. Jer. 49: 19-22 unites the two figures. In Nebuchadnezzar's vision it was shown as the head of gold. This was the power to which God committed dominion after the setting aside of Israel and the house of David. It is a remarkable fact that while Israel was still owned by God, no power was permitted to attain supremacy in the earth. Both Egypt and Assyria aspired to it and contended for it, but neither obtained the coveted position. But when the due time came for the overthrow of the throne of David, the rising power of

Babylon was permitted to subdue both the ancient empires named, and so became supreme among the nations. The continuance of this depended on faithfulness to the trust committed by Him who rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will. Babylon proved unfaithful, and consequently was set aside. In Dan. 7: 4 we have its humiliation shown in a very striking way. The prophet beheld the lion's wings plucked: "and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it." Another prophet had some time previously given the limits of its dominion. Jehovah said through Jeremiah, "And now have I given all these lands into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come," etc. (Jer. 27: 6, 7) How comprehensive is the word of God!

Babylon's destroyer and successor was shown to Daniel as a bear raising up itself on one side, having three ribs in its mouth between its teeth (Dan. 7: 5). This is the Medo-Persian power, the well-known captor of mighty Babylon. The figure used aptly sets forth its ferocity and greed of conquest. In its one-sidedness we may observe the accuracy of the Spirit of God in the details of Scripture. In the next chapter, where the same empire is expressed by a ram with two horns, we learn that one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last (Dan. 8: 3). This is a reference to the fact that this was a two-branched power, and that the leading branch — the Persian — was the younger. Thus does the Spirit of God take notice of a simple and well-known historical fact.

The Medo-Persian power was shown to Nebuchadnezzar as a breast and arms of silver, and pronounced "inferior" to his own (Dan. 2: 39). This inferiority was not in extent of dominion, but in character of rule. Nebuchadnezzar was an absolute monarch — "whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up, and whom he would he put down" (Dan. 5: 19). The succeeding power was more limited as to this, the princes, etc., playing an important part in the government. Thus Darius found himself unable to save an innocent man from the den of lions, though he greatly wished to do so. The empire that followed — the Grecian — was more military in its character, its ruler being, to a large degree, under the influence of his generals; while the Roman empire, shown as iron in the Babylonish king's dream, was a strange blending of the imperial and the democratic.

The third monarchy appeared before Daniel as a leopard having four wings on its back, and four heads (Dan. 7: 6). This, as already observed, is the Grecian. Here it is important to make a few remarks as to the interpretation of these figures. It has been asserted that, in order to understand the visions of Daniel aright, the student must be well acquainted with the facts of ancient history. It has even been said that these throw light on the Word of God! Let the reader beware of admitting such an idea into the mind. The Word of God needs no human compositions to throw light on it — it is light itself, shining brightly for the blessing of our souls in the midst of darkness. It is admitted, of course, that historical facts confirm the Word of God when its prophecies have been fulfilled, but God has given His word that His saints may know His mind before the things come to pass, and are patent to everybody. If the student will but compare Scripture in prayerful dependence on the Holy Ghost, he will be able to grasp its import, even though he may be very deficient in his mind, as to many of the great historical events of the past.

To proceed with our chapter. The first of the Gentile powers was still running its course, yet the Spirit of God goes on to speak of the third and even the fourth. Who could declare such things but God Himself, who knows the end from the beginning, and to whom time is nothing, everything being to His mind one eternal now? Thus in Daniel 8: 21, the Grecian power is expressly named as the conqueror of the Medo-Persian. Its rapidity of conquest is set forth by the figure of a leopard (one of the swiftest of

beasts after its prey), with the addition of four wings of a fowl to accelerate its movements. So rapid was its progress, that when shown as a goat in chapter 8: 5, it is said it "touched not the ground." In such a way the Spirit of God takes notice of the campaigns and victories of Alexander the Great. After his death, his kingdom was divided between his four great commanders, as we read "it had four heads." The great horn of the rough he-goat being broken, in place of it came up four notable ones (Dan. 8: 8, 22).

The fourth wild beast particularly attracted the notice of Daniel the prophet. "After this, I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly, and it had great iron teeth, it devoured and brake in pieces and stamped the residue with the feet of it, and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns" (Dan. 7: 7). This cruel nondescript is the power of Rome. We need not go outside the covers of Scripture to interpret it. In the opening of the New Testament we find, not Babylon, Persia, or Greece, supreme in the earth, but Rome, and under its government (Christ was born into the world (Luke 2: 1; Luke 3: 1).

"It had ten horns," these being ten kings (verse 24). Never was this true in the past. The Roman empire was under one government. True, in the latter days of its supremacy many of the emperors associated others with themselves in the administration of their vast dominions, but never was there anything of the kind described in Daniel's vision. Here we have ten horns — ten kings, and one arising among them becoming their leader and head. What does this prove? Most assuredly that this vast power, so long scattered and broken, has a history yet before it, for Scripture cannot be broken, its every word must be fulfilled.

Now this is exactly what is revealed in the Book of Revelation 13: 1, John saw a strange beast arise out of the sea (the tumult of the nations), combining in itself most, if not all, of the features of the various Gentile monarchies spoken of by Daniel. We learn more still in Revelation 17: 8. "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition, and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not and yet is" (or "shall be present "). This fully explains the matter. "The beast was" — i.e., it existed in the past, "and is not." There is no such power now, but it will be revived by the power of Satan in the last days for the accomplishment of his evil designs against Christ and His saints. He will succeed in bringing together once more the atoms of that mighty power that has been in a state of dissolution since the days of Honorius.

The little horn is its last head. Three of the first horns were plucked up by him before the eyes of the prophet. This probably means that the beginning of his great power will be the subjugation of three kingdoms, which leads to seven others uniting together under his presidency. This may be judged advisable when the time comes because of the serious growth of democratic principles, making it well-nigh impossible for rulers to hold their people in check. But however it may be brought about, the general fact is plain that the Roman empire of the future will be a confederacy of ten kingdoms, each ruled over by its own sovereign, but all submitting to the general leadership of the little horn.

This personage must not be confounded either with the Antichrist, on the one hand, or with the little horn of Dan. 8: 9, on the other. Antichrist is a religious rather than a political leader, his kingdom-power apparently being confined to the land of Israel, where he will be accepted as the promised Messiah (Dan. 11: 36). He will be in league with the Western Chief, undoubtedly, but must not be confounded with him. Rev. 13: shows both the distinction and the connection. The little horn of Dan. 8 is expressly stated to arise out of one of the four divisions of Alexander's empire, and is identical, I

have no doubt, with the king of the North in Dan. 11.

The Roman head is solemnly described in our chapter by the Holy Spirit. "He shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High (or high places), and think to change times laws, and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time" (verse 25). Here we have three things stated of him. (1) He is a boastful blasphemer. Compare Rev. 13: 1-6. Having received his throne and authority from the dragon, he defies and blasphemes the God of heaven. (2) He is a persecutor. He and his coadjutor, the Man of Sin, will seek to stamp out all confession of God and His truth, and thus will come about the unparalleled great tribulation, of which we have already spoken in these papers. (3) He will seek to overthrow the Jewish order and institutions, which are what is meant by "times and laws." This he will be permitted to do for the space of three years and a half, to the sore affliction and sorrow of the godly in Israel.

In this connection the remarkable prophecy of the "seventy weeks" should be carefully examined by the prophetic student (Dan. 9). We have only space for a few words here. It is the term of Israel's and Jerusalem's servitude and desolation, commencing with the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem (see Neh. 2), terminating with the final blessing and reconciliation of the people. It is divided into three parts — seven, sixty-two, and one. The seven weeks were occupied with the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the added sixty-two making 483 years in all, bringing the Prophecy down to the manifestation of Messiah the Prince. How literally as to time this was fulfilled probably every Bible reader is aware.

But Messiah was not received, consequently we read, "And after the threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, and shall have nothing" (for so verse 26 should read). He was entitled to a throne, but the unbelief of His people did not suffer Him to have it. In wondrous grace He accepted the cross instead, where faith sees, not only human unbelief and sin, but the accomplishment of redemption. His soul was made an offering for sin, and on this foundation all who believe are forgiven and justified. The cutting off of Messiah is followed in the prophecy by the overthrow of the city and sanctuary, with war and desolation until the end.

The language of the verse is very precise, and should be carefully noted. "The people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and sanctuary." Every one knows that the people in question were the Romans; they under Titus captured and destroyed guilty Jerusalem. "*The people*" have come and done their part; "*the prince that shall come*," arising from their midst, has not yet appeared.

Then we observe a chasm in the prophecy, which is not an unusual thing in the prophetic Scriptures. "And he shall confirm a covenant with the many for one week" (verse 29). Who is meant? Clearly, "the prince that shall come"; and he is a Roman head, this very passage being witness. The whole period from the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 until the time of the end is ignored in this place. The sixty-nine weeks expired when Christ was present in Israel; there remains but the seventieth, i.e., seven years, to be accomplished. Its events are here briefly set before the prophet. "And he shall confirm a covenant with the many for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and because of the overspreading of abominations there shall be a desolator, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." This passage is admittedly a difficult one, and translations vary, but I have given that which furnishes us with the sense most simply. We have no space here to discuss the verse, on which very much might be written; briefly the following is its meaning. The future Roman head (the little horn of Dan. 7: 8) will form a treaty with the mass of the returned; Jews, confirming them in their possessions and worship. In

the midst of the term (seven years) he will break his word, and in league with the false Christ in the land, will suppress their worship. The mass will accept his substitution of the worship of "the abomination of desolation," and because of this, God will permit the desolator - the king of the North — to chastise them, the Jewish people continuing thus to suffer, in the government of God, until they have received the measure of punishment divinely meted out to them. Jerusalem is here called "the desolate." Compare Isa. 62: 4.

Now let us carry back to Dan 7 the light thus furnished in chapter 9. We have seen the blasphemy and cruelty of the last Gentile head; next we see his overthrow and judgement. Daniel beheld a session in verses 9-12; the thrones set up and the Ancient of Days sitting in judgement. The result is, that dominion is taken out of Gentile hands and given over to the Son of Man. "I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him; His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that shall not be destroyed" (verses 13, 14).

How refreshing after all that has passed before us! God has One in store whom He can entrust with universal dominion, and who will rule and act for His glory. The house of David has failed, the Gentiles have failed; but this blessed One can never fail. He sits now at God's right hand, and faith beholds Him there crowned with glory and honour; soon He will have all things placed beneath His feet (Heb. 2: 6-9). When He comes forth in power and glory, the last head of the Gentiles will be consigned to the lake of fire, in company with the man of sin (Dan. 7: 11; Rev. 19: 20). Well may the Apostle say, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"! (Heb. 10: 31.)

Christ's kingdom will fill the whole earth. Nebuchadnezzar saw it under the figure of a stone cut out without hands becoming a great mountain, and filling the whole earth, after crushing all adverse powers (Dan. 2: 35). In this rule the saints are associated, and in His judgement also. "Judgement was given to the saints of the Most High (or high places), and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom" (Dan. 7: 22). What a privilege and dignity for us who believe in His name! Yet how ready we are to forget it, and to sink to a merely human level! The Corinthians are painful proofs of this. In forgetfulness of the mighty fact that the saints are to reign with Christ by-and-by, they accepted ease and honour in the present world; and overlooking that the saints are to be the world's judges in the coming day, they were taking their complaints against one another into the world's courts to be tried by the unjust! (1 Cor. 4: 8; 1 Cor. 6: 1-3.) It is a solemn warning for our souls, we may be assured.

In view of the approaching kingdom, and our place in it in association with the Lord Jesus, our God would have us follow humbly in the footsteps of His beloved Son, accepting the cross, and letting the world go by for His sake. Christ's pathway to the throne was the cross; God has set no other way before His saints.

Hasten, Lord, the glorious time,
When, beneath Messiah's sway,
Every nation, every clime,
Shall the Gospel's call obey.
Then shall wars and tumults cease,
Then be banished grief and pain;
Righteousness, and joy, and peace,

Undisturbed shall ever reign.

The Future of Russia.

In our paper on "The Times of the Gentiles," we considered the history and future doings of the powers represented in the great image of Dan. 2: We will now inquire into the actings of a vast power of which the prophet Daniel says nothing, but which is destined to play a very important part in the latter-day crisis. We refer, of course, to Russia. There was no "Russian empire" in the days of the Old Testament prophets, yet its doings are minutely described by the Holy Spirit in the Word of God.

It is worthy of remark that God only takes notice in His Word of the powers of the world in so far as they are connected (either for good or ill) with His own people. Dominions and movements that men count great are suffered to pass entirely unnoticed in the inspired Word, if they do not happen to fall within the line of God's dealings with His own beloved people, the seed of Abraham, His friend. Israel is His earthly centre; everything therefore that affects them is of the deepest interest to the Spirit of God.

Russia's future bold and profane doings are unfolded in Ezek. 38 & Ezek. 39. The prophet was told by God to set his face against "Gog, the land of Magog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him." We cannot state fully here the reasons for accepting "Rosh" as a proper name, our space not permitting. It must suffice to say that the translators of the Septuagint so rendered it many years before Christ; and the English revisers of 1881 have adopted it in their work. "Meshech" and "Tubal" represent the Moschi and Tibareni, two ancient tribes long ago incorporated with the empire of Russia." They were in fact three great tribes, by the ancients called Scythians, the first of them apparently deriving its name from their proximity in those days to the river Rha, or Volga (though some think the Araxes), and supplying that of the modern Russ, as the others are reproduced in Moscow or Muscovy and in Tobolsk. There is, of course, no difficulty in supposing migrations northward from the original seats, supposing that they may have been the races in the north of Asia Minor during the days of Ezekiel, and familiar to us as the Moschi, Tibareni, and perhaps other tribes named in later authors of Greece."

{(W. Kelly, "Notes on Ezekiel.") Any reader who is desirous of fuller information as to these tribes may refer to Smith's "Bible Dictionary" and Rawlinson's "Herodotus."}

How wonderful in its comprehensiveness is Scripture! Who could have imagined in Ezekiel's early day that in the north parts would exist a mighty empire full of schemes of self-aggrandisement, and full of enmity to God's land and God's people? Yet such a power has for some time been before us, with just the aims and purposes foretold in the Word of God.

The time referred to in the prophecy is clearly given — "in the latter years"; "in that day when My people Israel dwelleth safely" (Ezek. 38: 8, Ezek. 314: 16). This is very plainly the time when God sets His hand the second time to recover the remnant of His people. Israel has never dwelt safely in their own land since Ezekiel uttered his prophecy; indeed, Israel as such has not been in the land at all. Those who returned to Palestine under Zerubbabel and Ezra were but a feeble remnant, and mainly of the two tribes Judah and Benjamin. Ezekiel's prediction therefore looks onward to their future ingathering. Thus no sooner are they restored to the land of their fathers, the power of the Western and Eastern enemies being completely broken, than their Northern foe, who has been watching their re-establishment and blessing with envious eyes, swoops down upon them with his vast hordes. The hatred of Russia to the Jewish people is well known, and has been painfully proved before our eyes in

recent years. This will manifest itself even more malignantly by-and-by, as we shall see. But when the God of Israel makes inquisition for blood, it will all come up in remembrance before Him.

The Gog and Magog of Ezekiel must not be confounded with those of Rev. 20: 8. The latter Scripture refers to a gathering together of enemies from *all quarters* at the *close* of the thousand years' reign; the other speaks of an invasion from *the North* at the *commencement* of that period.

Nor must the Gog of Ezekiel be confounded with "the king of the north" of Dan. 11: 40. This is a very common mistake with even careful students of prophecy. The king of the North (identical, I have no doubt, with "the king" of Dan. 8: 33 and "the little horn" of Dan. 8: 9) will invade the land when the man of sin is in power there, and will be suffered (at least at first) to carry all before him. He will pass through "the glorious land" as an overflowing scourge.

Gog's invasion is a little later, when Israel is dwelling safely, and just beginning to enjoy the many blessings brought in for them by the appearing of Christ and His heavenly saints. These two enemies come from the same direction — "the north" — and their policy is the same; still they are distinct powers. "The king of the north" will probably be urged on, and even helped, it may be, by Russia; as we read, "his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power" (Dan. 8: 23). Russia will probably instigate the lesser antagonist to move before she judges the right time has come to move herself. "The king of the north" of old ruled over Syria; we may therefore reasonably expect to see ere long a new state formed of some of the Asiatic provinces of the Sultan, and placed under the protection of Russia. This power will prove, as Russia, a determined opponent of Israel's blessing at the end of the age.

But who can really hinder when God rises up, and works on behalf of His people?

"When He makes bare His arm,

Who shall His work withstand?

When He His people's cause defends,

Who then shall stay His hand? "

Puny man may set all his forces in array, and even defy the Almighty to His face, as Pharaoh of old, but it is only to be overthrown and broken himself. God intends Israel to lead the nations of the earth, and to enjoy His own presence and blessing; the mightiest powers of the world are utterly unable to prevent it. If man had faith, he would not attempt an enterprise so hazardous, but would bow to God's purposes; but, alas! man has not faith, and so rushes blindly on to his own destruction.

This is what Jehovah says about the movement of this great enemy: "Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal; and I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords, Persia, Ethiopia, Libya, with them, all of them with shield and helmet, Gomer and all his bands, the house of Togarmah, of the north quarters, and all his bands, and many people with thee. Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them" (Ezek. 38: 3-7). Here we have the vast array. Gog is leading on his hosts, with those of his many allies and vassals, against the people of the Lord. If it were simply a question between Israel and the enemy, the seed of Jacob would now be finally wiped out. They can surely then say, with the Psalmist, that were it not that Jehovah is on their side, with such a rising against them, they would be swallowed up quick (Ps. 124). But Jehovah will not give His chosen a prey to their teeth,

but will turn upon their enemies in righteous fury and indignation. We observe a little Divine sarcasm in the words, "Be thou a guard unto them." The hosts of Gog will find their leader unable to protect himself when Jehovah rises up to defend His people's cause.

Israel's unwall'd villages and want of practice in the art of war will attract the envious eye of their unscrupulous foe. Their great wealth will appear to be within easy reach of his rapacious hand. But he forgets that the eyes of the Lord run to and fro in the earth. His eye is upon Gog; He notes the thoughts that arise in the heart, and the plans that result.

He turns to the enemy thus: "After many days thou shalt be visited" (or "mustered"): "in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste; but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely, all of them. Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm; thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou and all thy bands, and many people with thee. Thus saith the Lord God: It shall also come to pass that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought; and thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwall'd villages: I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, to take a spoil and to take a prey, to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land" (Ezek. 38: 8-12).

Russia has always been desirous of possessing the land of Palestine, but has never been able to accomplish the design; and if so eager now, while the land is largely a waste, how much more eager and desirous when the desolate places are inhabited once more, and that by a people with vast possessions, and apparently without protection! Ah! God is not in all his thoughts. His love to Israel for the fathers' sakes is neither known nor believed, hence the disastrous enterprise, undertaken so confidently.

Poor Israel! What distress this terrible invasion will plunge them into! After all their vicissitudes and their dreary centuries of banishment and suffering, is everything to be snatched from their grasp just when all looks so bright and fair? The Western hosts have not been able to stand, but have been Divinely judged and overthrown; the king of the North and his array have met with a judgement equally solemn; and is the Northern enemy to be allowed to spoil all for them?

Isaiah 33 seems to speak of the same time and circumstances. It follows the chapter that deals with the establishment of Christ's reign of righteousness and peace (Isa. 32). It pronounces woe on an enemy who comes up treacherously to spoil Israel, yet never having been so treated by them. We believe this refers to Gog, of whom Sennacherib was an early type. Israel's distress is vividly described in verses 7-9: "Behold, their valiant ones shall cry without; the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly. The highways lie waste: the wayfaring man ceaseth; he hath broken the covenant; he hath despised the cities; he regardeth no man. The earth mourneth and languisheth; Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down; Sharon is like a wilderness, and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits."

But, as often remarked, man's extremity is God's opportunity. This has been blessedly proved on many occasions by the people of God. Israel will prove it gloriously when Gog's alien hosts swarm into their land. They have no might wherewith to beat down the foe; but God is near at hand and will intervene on their behalf. "Now will I rise, saith the Lord; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up Myself." Woe to the oppressors of the people of God when this is so! Here is His word to the boastful invader: "Ye shall conceive chaff; ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath as fire shall devour you. And the people shall be as the burnings of lime; as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire" (Isa.

33: 10-12).

Jehovah will make of Gog and his multitudes a permanent warning to the nations of the earth not to meddle with His chosen. No people have ever prospered that have ill-treated Israel, in strict accordance with the word: "No weapon formed against thee shall prosper" (Isa. 54: 17). Jehovah will sanctify Himself before the eyes of the Gentile world at large by His terrible dealings with Gog and his army. His fury will come up in His face, and there will be a great shaking throughout the land of Israel, resulting in a frightful destruction of the enemies of His people. Israel will not need to fight: Jehovah will fight for them, and, as on the shores of the Red Sea, they have but to stand still and see His salvation. He will dispose of their enemies in the coming day with the same ease as He disposed of Pharaoh's legions in the distant past. He will first create confusion in their ranks and turn their swords against each other (Ezek. 38: 21). This is no new method of warfare with God. He used the same means in Gideons day. (Judges 7: 22)

This will be followed by more direct Divine visitation: "I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood, and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain and great hailstones, fire and brimstone" (Ezek. 38: 22). Such, proud Russia, will be the end of thy mighty hosts in the day when thy hand is lifted up against the people of the Lord! As in the days of Joshua Jehovah cast down great stones from heaven upon the enemy, and as in Deborah's time the very stars in their courses fought against Sisera, so will it be in the day to come. His thunderbolts will work fearful havoc amongst the enemies of His people (Joshua 10: 11; Judges 5: 20). The very windows of heaven will be opened, as it were, to pour down destruction upon them.

Who can stand when God rises up? Frail, yet daring, man may assemble all his might, and kings and rulers may take counsel together, but the blast of the Almighty's nostrils is sufficient to scatter them all. Yet the lesson is never really learned, so evil and deceitful is the heart of man. In the Russian hordes, Jehovah will magnify and sanctify Himself, and all the nations shall know that He is Jehovah.

Immediately following this tremendous overthrow will go forth a summons to the fowls and beasts to feast upon the slain: "And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord God: Speak unto every feathered fowl and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves and come; gather yourselves on every side to My sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan; and ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of My sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. Thus ye shall be filled at My table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. 39: 17-20).

What fearful scenes of judgement and desolation this poor earth is to witness before everything settles down into the holy calm and rest of Messiah's reign! Only a little while before this ghastly summons a similar call will be made to the fowls of the heavens to feast upon the carcasses of the Western armies, under the leadership of the beast and the false prophet (Rev. 19: 17-21); now they are invited to gorge themselves with the Russian hosts. Is this what Russia is training her vast armies for at the present time? Terrible thought! fearful contemplation!

So numerous will be the weapons left upon the field, that the children of Israel will not need to cut firewood for seven years afterwards. A solemn lesson of righteous retribution, surely, before all eyes during the opening years of the millennium! "And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years, so that they

shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down any out of the forests, for they shall burn the weapons with fire, and they shall spoil those that spoiled them and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. 39: 9, 10). Little do the superintendents of the Muscovite arsenals know the ultimate future of the vast stores under their hands.

After the birds and the beasts have performed their ghastly work, there will be nothing but bones to bury, but this will be a gigantic task. The whole house of Israel will be engaged some seven months in this dismal service. Gog will come up thinking to possess lands and much spoil, but will only find a grave: "And it shall come to pass in that day that I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea, and it shall stop the passengers, and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude, and they shall call it the valley of Hamon-gog. And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land, yea, all the people of the land shall bury them, and it shall be to them a renown the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord God" (Ezek 39: 11-13) .

There was no need to insert the word "noses" in verse 11 in the Authorised Version. The Revised Version omits the word. The addition of it obscures the sense. It is not so much that there will be an offensive smell as that this vast burying operation will cause all who pass by to stop and consider. Thus will God read a solemn lesson to many. His own people, as they pause and behold, may well say: "So let all Thine enemies perish, O Lord; but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might" (Judges 5: 31).

The seven months not being sufficient to purge the land entirely, at the expiration of that time a staff of men will be told off to complete the work. The land is to be Jehovah's land, and glory is to dwell there; therefore nothing inconsistent with His holy presence, however apparently trivial, must be allowed to remain. "And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing through the land to bury with the passengers those that remain upon the face of the earth, to cleanse it; after the end of seven months shall they search. And the passengers that pass through the land, when any seeth a man's bone, then shall he set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamongog. And also the name of the city shall be Hamonah. Thus shall they cleanse the land" (Ezek. 39: 14-16). Thus all who move about in the land will be expected to co-operate in the work of cleansing by setting a mark against stray bones that meet their eyes, that everything offensive may be completely removed. A bone is quite sufficient to defile the land in the eyes of Jehovah, as Num. 19: 16-18 shows.

Jehovah will then carry the war into the invader's own land: "And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles, and they shall know that I am Jehovah" (Ezek. 39: 6). We cannot tell precisely what form this will take; it is sufficient to know that God will not only overthrow Gog's hosts, but devastate his land in retributive judgement. Such is the future of Russia according to the word of the Lord by Ezekiel.

Micah 5 apparently refers to the Russian invasion also. "The Assyrian" finds his antitype partly in the king of the North, and partly in the Gog of Ezekiel. Micah 5, in our judgement, refers to Gog. Christ, the true Judge of Israel, is then in the land; He who once was born in Bethlehem Ephratah, and whose goings forth have been from everlasting, is then in the midst of His people, to feed, bless, and protect them. This makes the expedition of Gog and his hosts the more grave. "And this Man shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land; and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds and eight principal men. And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof; thus shall He deliver us from the Assyrian when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders" (Micah 5: 5, 6).

This is the final settlement of the Eastern question. This great question, which has perplexed all the leading men of Europe so long, Christ Himself will then set at rest for ever. None shall possess Zion and the glorious land but His elect; all other aspirants shall be disappointed, and all objectors and opponents shall be destroyed. Jerusalem, instead of being a burdensome stone to the nations, will be the centre of the earth, all dominion and glory flowing from thence.

Both Israel and the nations will learn a solemn lesson from all these appalling events. As regards Israel, we read, "So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward" (Ezek. 39: 22). Their hearts, now so cold and obdurate, will ere that day be turned to the Lord; they will then be teachable scholars in the school of Jehovah. The nations, too, will then learn their lesson, that Jehovah will not suffer Israel to be tampered with by others, but will deal with them Himself in His righteousness, that their evil may be purged away in order to receive His lasting blessing: "The heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against Me, therefore hid I My face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies; so fell they all by the sword. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions have I done unto them, and hid My face from them."

After these words, Jehovah proceeds to speak of their blessings, closing with the gracious assurance, "Neither will I hide My face any more from them; for I have poured out My Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. 39: 23-29).

How privileged is the Christian to be in possession of all this knowledge beforehand! Nothing is withheld from the heavenly joint-heirs of the risen Christ. Though our own proper portion is unquestionably in the Father's house on high, and not on the earth, we are permitted to know all that will transpire in this scene both prior and subsequent to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. May this lead us, not into a spirit of merely idle curiosity, than which nothing is more serious and dangerous in the things of God, but into earnest separation from the world, while faithfully bearing testimony to it. May our hearts ever be set on Christ in heaven, that when we hear His gracious voice saying, "Surely I come quickly," we may be able joyfully to respond, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22: 20).

There shall come a night of such wild affright
As none beside shall know,
When the heavens shall shake, and the wide earth quake
In its last and deepest woe.
What horrors shall roll o'er the godless soul,
Waked from its deathlike sleep,
Of all hope bereft, and to judgement left,
For ever to wail and weep! "

Babylon and the Beast.

Rev. 17, Rev. 18.

We picture before us in these chapters is a peculiarly solemn one to the Christian. It is not now the judgement of the ungodly world for its many sins and rejection of the Son of God, but of her who has for ages pretended to be the true spouse of Christ in the earth. It is His utter and final rejection of

the vilest system that has ever darkened the earth — a system which, in spite of its manifold corruptions and evils, has all along claimed to be the true Church of God, outside of which there is no salvation.

The judgement of Babylon evidently occurs under the sixth vial, and is spoken of in that connection (Rev. 16: 19); but the brief notice there given of it was not sufficient for the Spirit of God. The subject being one of unusual gravity and importance, He pauses, ere proceeding with the prophecy, to devote two whole chapters to the details of it.

We will first examine Rev 17. It consists of two parts. Verses 1-6 furnish us with the vision; verses 7-18 give us the angel's interpretation of it. The vision is opened in a very remarkable manner: "And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgement of the great whore that sitteth on many waters" (verse 1). No careful reader can fail to be struck with the similarity of the language here to that in Rev. 21: 9. In the latter place the true bride, the Lamb's wife, is shown in all the beauty and glory with which she is to be Divinely arrayed; in the chapter before us we have the devil's evil and offensive counterfeit. We believe the Spirit of God purposely used almost identical language in introducing both, that the contrast might be fully before our minds. Assuredly our souls may gather profit and instruction from the consideration of both pictures, though so widely different in character.

The widespread influence of the harlot is declared in the fact that she "sitteth upon many waters." These are expressly explained to us in verse 15: "The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." Local influence has never satisfied the false Church; she has always claimed to be "Catholic." Her evil arms have been extended north, south, east, and west, to the demoralisation and injury of all who have sunk beneath her sway, and, above all, to the dishonour of Christ, whose name she has professedly owned. Her ceaseless activity by means of her many agents and societies is well known to us all. Would God we were as earnest in spreading the precious truth of Christ!

Next, her evil character is declared as the holy eye of God sees it: "with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication" (verse 2). "Fornication" is frequently used in a symbolical way in Scripture. The following are a few instances among many: 2 Chron. 21: 11; Isa. 23: 17; Ezek. 16: 29. It means evil intercourse with the world. Alas that this should have been true of any bearing the name of Christ! The Church is the deeply loved spouse of the absent Christ, and belongs to heaven, not to this dark and corrupt scene at all. Her path should ever have been that of a stranger, simply passing through on her way to meet the Bridegroom in glory. But so early as Paul's day the world crept in amongst the saints. He watched with deep concern the working of this at Corinth and elsewhere. To the Corinthians he wrote: "*Already* ye are full, *already* ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us, and I would to God ye did reign that we also might reign with you" (1 Cor. 4: 8). There was a disposition to accept ease and honour here rather than to cheerfully bear the cross of Christ.

Observe the yearning of his faithful heart in 2 Cor. 11: 2, 8: "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ; but I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." Babylon knows nothing of such sentiments as these, but has trafficked with the great ones of the earth for her own evil ends, and has simply stupefied with her corruptions the mass of those beneath her baleful influence. To fall into her snare is to lose all spiritual sensibility, and even conscience itself.

"So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness; and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns" (verse 3). This point of view is very striking. When the angel showed John the bride of the Lamb, he carried him away "to a great and high mountain" (Rev. 21: 10). To get into God's thoughts about the true Church, we must be lifted above the mists and clouds of this world into the clear atmosphere of His own blessed presence. But the seer was carried "into the wilderness" to see the great whore! Thus would the Spirit of God remind us that all her surroundings are barren, even though her wealth and splendour abound. Do not genuine souls prove this? The impressive and gorgeous ceremonies of her ritual may captivate and overawe the senses, but they leave the soul unsatisfied and unfed. Ritual is not Christ, and He alone can satisfy the hunger and thirst of the soul.

In connection with both visions, John tells us he was carried away "in the Spirit." It is important to note this. On the one hand, heavenly things can only be truly learned when we are under the influence of the Holy Spirit; on the other, we only really discern the evil character of such a system as Babylon as He instructs us. With such deceitful hearts as ours, it would be hardly safe to gaze upon the glory and splendour of the harlot under any other guardianship. We might be attracted and ensnared.

Observe the woman's seat. She rides a scarlet coloured beast, with seven heads and ten horns. We will say more about this when we come to the angel's interpretation of the vision; we merely say now that it is the revived Roman empire. The harlot has always loved and striven after earthly supremacy; here she has it fully.

The Spirit of God next dwells on her gaudy attire: "And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colours, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication" (verse 4). Here we have every mark of earthly glory and even royalty. How utterly opposite to all that God has declared as His mind and will for His Church! Her heart is plainly in the world, not heaven; present and seen things are everything to her, not the unseen and eternal.

Now examine the contents of her golden cup: "full of abominations." The Spirit means by this idolatry (compare 1 Kings 11: 5, 7). How awful that such an evil should ever have crept into the profession of Christianity! Such is the poor human heart that it yearns for an object that may be seen. This is fully shown in heathendom. In Christendom such things came in first as aids to worship and as memorials of the departed; they soon became full objects of adoration to superstitious minds. Babylon has helped this enormously by means of her priesthood and hierarchy. This is in plain defiance of *the Law* (Ex. 20: 3-5); how much more is it opposed to the spirit of *Christianity*!

Alas, idolatry will assume an even graver form still in the days to come! When the true saints of God quit this scene for the Father's house, and the presence of the Holy Spirit is withdrawn, the full height of human evil will be reached. We refer, of course, to the days of antichrist. Then it will not be a mere image or crucifix; but man, energised by Satan, will assume God's place and title, to his utter and fearful ruin.

The harlot's cup contained also "the filthiness of her fornications" (verse 4), speaking to us of the awful moral corruptions which have resulted from her guilty intercourse with the world. The two ingredients of her cup appear in their early form in the epistles to Pergamos and Thyatira. In addressing Pergamos, the Lord rebukes her for dwelling where Satan's throne is — i.e., in the world - and then proceeds to speak of "the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication" (Rev. 2: 12-14). In Thyatira we note a further advance in departure and evil, for Jezebel is brought before us, which calleth

herself a prophetess and teacher, and seduces Christ's servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols (Rev. 2: 18-22). The whole epistle to Thyatira should be carefully pondered in connection with our subject, and it will be seen that Babylon the Great is really Thyatira fully developed.

Now let us look into the name and character of the great whore. It is on her forehead; there is no effort at concealment. Names in Scripture are declarative of character. Accordingly in this instance we have corruption unblushingly displayed. Evil as her history has been in the past, there are darker developments at hand. Her full character has not yet been told; but the day of her complete manifestation is near upon us. "And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth" (verse 5).

Satan always imitates the work of God. God has spoken of a "mystery" — Christ and the Church (Eph. 3); Satan must needs have a mystery also. So at about the same epoch, when God is about to bring in His King of kings and Lord of lords, Satan brings forward his king of kings in the person of the Beast.

It may be asked, "Why is the false Church named *Babylon*?" It is an interesting but solemn study to gather together from the Old Testament Scriptures the various features that concentrated themselves in the city of this name of old. In Gen. 11: 1-9, we have its foundation as the expression of man's pride and independence of God; in Gen. 10: 8-12, in connection with Nimrod it becomes the seat of oppression and violence; later it becomes known for its splendour, even Israel being ensnared (Joshua 7: 21); and, finally, it was the very centre of idolatry, into which the people of God were carried captive because of their sins and unfaithfulness to God (Isa. 44, etc.). These are some of the leading characteristics of Babylon in the Word of God. It is exceedingly solemn therefore that when the Spirit of God would select a name whereby to describe the professing Church in its last stage on earth He judged no name so suitable as *Babylon*. The sober and reflecting reader has but to consider and look around, and he will see all these features before his eyes under the holy name of Christ.

There can be no real doubt that *Rome* is here before the mind of the Spirit of God. Two marks are given — one geographical, the other political — which the reader should observe. The woman is said to sit on seven mountains (verse 9), and stated also to be "that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth" (verse 18). Rome, as a seven hilled city, is well known; her political ascendancy was no less apparent when the vision was vouchsafed to the Apostle in the isle of Patmos.

Papal advocates have frequently endeavoured to turn away the keen edge of this Scripture by applying it to Pagan Rome, but all to no purpose. It is but to do violence to the Word of God. Better far own the truth of it, and separate from the evil before the judgement falls (Rev. 18: 4). Such is the Divine path for all who really desire to do the will of God.

On the other hand, Babylon must not be confined to the papal system. We are firmly convinced that it includes a great deal more. We have heard and read much of late years about "the reunion of Christendom," which appears to be the cherished ideal of a very large number of professing Christian people. We believe this will come about yet, but it will be reunion in darkest evil. No doubt, while the true saints of God remain in the world, such a calamity will be averted. Not a few find considerable difficulty in surrendering or sinking all that they believe they have learned from God, and thus a great barrier is raised by conscientious souls against the accomplishment of such a project. But when all the saints are removed to the Father's house, those who remain in the various ecclesiastical systems will doubtless sink their doctrinal and other differences, and unite together for the common weal, as they fondly suppose. In this way will ambitious Rome preside over the religious destinies of Europe once

more, with the results that this chapter declares. No thoughtful observer can fail to see that this is the direction in which everything is now tending. The religious bodies are not to-day where they once were. Things have greatly changed during the last half-century. Doctrines that were regarded as vital realities then are viewed as mere matters of opinion now, to be held or surrendered at pleasure; principles for which earnest men contended and suffered in the past are waived and very lightly regarded to-day. The various systems are gravitating towards each other in a way that cannot be overlooked or denied. The Established Church is not now divided from Rome by such an impassable gulf as formerly; and the Dissenting bodies have followed in her wake to an alarming degree. We are not now speaking of the increased fraternizing of Christian men apart from denominational differences, but the gravitation of the various systems towards each other. This, we believe, will culminate in Babylon the Great, fully developed. At least, let the Christian reader pause and consider.

One more mark remains to be noticed before we turn from the vision to the angel's explanation of it: "And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus, and when I saw her I wondered with great admiration" (verse 6). The seer wondered, and well he might! He knew Jerusalem to be thirsty for the blood of the saints (Matt. 23: 34-37), and at the time of the vision he was suffering under the persecuting hand of pagan Rome, but he was here shown a symbol of the professing Church, and she drunken with the blood of the saints! It has been painfully verified. Pagan Rome slew its thousands, but Christian Rome (so-called) has slain its tens of thousands. What a day of reckoning is at hand! The sighs and tears of the helpless and the suffering have gone up to God. In His book all is faithfully recorded, and the tears are in His bottle. Righteous retribution will yet fall. Babylon will be overthrown and judged, to recover herself no more for ever.

In the interpretation of the vision some important particulars are added (quite a usual thing in Scripture), but the interpretation is chiefly occupied with the Beast. On this we shall be brief, as we remarked on this when dealing with "the times of the Gentiles." Three things are stated as to the Beast: "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit and go into perdition" (Rev. 17: 8). That is, it has had a past history, it is at present non-existent, but will yet be revived by Satanic power and energy. Of no power but Rome could this be written. Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece have each had their day and have fallen, never to rise to an imperial place in the earth again. But Rome will rise once more. The mighty power of the West will be brought together again by Satan just about the time when God will bring his First-begotten into the world.

The Beast's seven heads and ten horns are carefully explained by the angel. The heads have a twofold signification. First, they represent the seven mountains on which the woman sitteth, wherein we recognise the well-known fact that Rome is a seven-hilled city; secondly, "they are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come, and when he cometh he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition" (verses 10, 11). "Seven kings," or forms of government. Five had passed away before John's day: kings, consuls, decemvirs, military tribunes, and dictators; the sixth, the imperial, was then in power. The seventh is thought by many to have been the empire of Napoleon 1. Satan's aim by his instrumentality was evidently to revive the old empire of Rome, but God's time had not come, so he continued but a short space. The eighth, which is of the seven, we believe, will be the imperial revived. In Rev. 13: 3, where the same power is before us, the wounded head of the Beast was healed, by which we understand the revival of the imperial authority.

The horns are kings, as the angel tells us: "And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet, but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast" (verses 12, 13). It is very clear

that this is still future. Never in the past did the Roman empire consist of ten kingdoms welded together, as this prophecy plainly describes. In ancient times Rome's vast dominions were under one government, and since the early part of the fifth century it has been in a state of dissolution, and many smaller kingdoms have arisen on its ruins. But in the future ten distinct kingdoms will be cemented together, each retaining its own sovereign, yet all under the general leadership of one head.

The harlot, then, will ride the beast. This is not true at the present moment, but Babylon will attain to this once more. The pontiffs chafe now because of their limited political power as compared with the past ages, and are always intriguing in order to possess more. Their dreams and desires will be abundantly realized at the time of the end, though but for a short space.

The harlot meets her judgment from those whom she has ruled. Weary of her charms, themselves being saturated with infidelity (rapidly working today), they turn upon her and destroy and despoil her: "And the ten horns which thou sawest and the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled" (verses 16, 17). We quote here from the Revised Version. "*And* the beast" is correct, not "*upon*." The Beast, the imperial chief, and his satellite kings will be of one mind in their outburst of indignation and rage against the harlot. Superstition will fall before infidelity, never to have a resurrection. This will be disestablishment with a vengeance. All profession of the name of Christ will be abandoned, and the great wealth of Babylon seized and appropriated by the rulers of Christendom.

But though her fall will be brought about instrumentally by means of the powers of the world, the hand of God is in the matter. He has a long score to settle with the great corruptress and bloodthirsty persecutress of His saints. God's side of the affair is shown in Rev. 18, and this explains Rev. 17: 17, which tells us that "God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His will." In Rev. 18: 1, 2, we read, "After these things, I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power, and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird," etc.

Jerusalem of old met her doom at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, but God was in it, and so here. God will permit the lawless hands of men to despoil and crush the whore, but it is His hand nevertheless. There is a solemn sequel to this overthrow. Flushed with their achievement, the Beast and his confederates will turn upon the Lamb at His appearing, to their own ruin, it need hardly be said (Rev. 17: 14).

The summons to "come out of her" has puzzled many readers of these chapters. We believe the Spirit of God intended the call to have influence with the people of God at all times, and not merely at the time when all is in process of fulfilment. Thus, wherever the anointed eye of the saint discerns any of the features of Babylon, it is incumbent on him to depart out, that he may have no fellowship with her iniquities, and so be clear of her plagues. "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2: 19).

The downfall of Babylon fills the kings of the earth — i.e., those outside the Roman empire — with sorrow and dismay. Their bitter lamentation is vividly described by the Spirit of God in Rev. 18: 9-14. The merchants and the shipmen take up the wail also: "And they cast dust on their heads and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate." Well may they weep and lament. The grievous departure from the simplicity of the apostolic upper room has caused the false

Church to be the best customer the traders of the world have ever had. But this, when once overthrown, will never be restored; her ruin is final and irrevocable.

A mighty angel significantly took up a great millstone in the presence of the seer and cast it into the sea saying, "Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all." Israel, on the contrary, after her long career of evil, will be restored by God to His favour in sovereign grace and mercy.

Heaven and earth are at utter variance as to all this, as, alas! about many other things besides. While earth is bemoaning the ruin of the splendid harlot all heaven is filled with rejoicing. "Alleluia" resounds through the courts of heaven that so foul a blot has been at last removed from before God, that so great and long-standing a dishonour to His truth has been brought to an end. The marriage of the Lamb follows, to the joy of God and His saints.

"Crown the mighty Conqueror, crown Him,
Who His people's foes o'ercame;
In the highest heaven enthrone Him,
Men and angels sound His fame!
Great His glory!
Jesus bears a matchless name,"
"BREAK FORTH, O EARTH, IN PRAISES."

The Church.

Break forth, O earth, in praises
Dwell on His wondrous story;
The Saviour's name and love proclaim —
The King who reigns in glory —
See on the throne beside Him
O'er all her foes victorious,
His royal bride, for whom He died,
Like him for ever glorious.

Israel.

Ye of the seed of Jacob!
Behold the Royal Lion
Of Judah's line, in glory shine,
And fill His throne in Zion.
Blest with Messiah's favour
A ransom'd holy nation,
Your offerings bring

to Christ your King,
The God of your salvation.

The Gentiles.

Come, O ye kings! ye nations!
With songs of gladness hail Him,
Ye Gentiles all, before Him fall,
The Royal Priest in Salem.
O'er hell and death triumphant
Your conquering Lord hath risen;
His praises sound, whose power hath bound
Your ruthless foe in prison.
Hail to the King of Glory
Head of the new creation —
Thy ways of grace we love to trace
And praise Thy great salvation.
Thy heart was pressed with sorrow
The bonds of death to sever,
To make us free, that we might be
Thy crown of joy for ever.

- Sir E. Denny.

The Bride, the Lamb's Wife.

How refreshing it is to turn away from the dark sin of man and contemplate the magnificent grace of God! We have seen the awful evil of the false Church and the divine judgement upon her; it is now our pleasure to consider the glorious future that is in store for the true Bride of the Lamb.

God has His own wondrous purposes of grace, formed in His own great heart before time began. These He will assuredly accomplish for His own glory, spite of all human failure and the hostility of Satan. But He allows man first to show what he is. Thus the past six thousand years have revealed a long story of human sin and shame, whether in the world, in Israel, or in the Church of God. When man's sad story is fully told, God will come in, setting all aside and accomplishing His own eternal counsels in rest and glory. This is due to Christ, who suffered all in this scene that God might be glorified.

In pursuing our present theme we will first ask the reader's attention to Eph. 5: 25-32: There we have the affection of Christ declared for the Church. The Apostle in this place is really giving practical exhortations to the saints as to their conduct in the different relationships of life. But he was so full of the great theme that he had been commissioned to everywhere unfold that even when exhorting thus he

could not refrain from bringing in Christ and the Church.

The Christian wife is bidden to consider the Church's position in relation to Christ and to render due obedience to her husband. The Christian husband, on the other hand, is directed to keep before him Christ's affection for the Church as his pattern of behaviour to his wife. The Spirit of God would lead us into God's thoughts and show us heavenly patterns, that they may have their due effect in our daily walk on earth. May the spirit of heaven enter into our various earthly relationships more and more!

Let the reader weigh well before the Lord the precious statement in verse 25: "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it." This is fuller and deeper than the statement in Matt. 13: 46: "Went and sold all that He had and bought it." It was one thing to surrender all His earthly rights as Son of David and Son of man, but quite another to lay down His own life. "Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed unto him but a few days for the love he had to her" (Gen. 29: 20). But Christ did more than serve. He suffered and bled that the Church might be His own possession for ever. Was ever love like this? But it could not be otherwise. Sin stood in the way. Divine grace must have a righteous foundation, so He accepted the cross with all its unutterable agony and shame, that every righteous claim of the Throne of God might be met. For the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross and despised the shame (Heb. 12: 2). Now all barriers are removed, and His grace and love flow out richly and blessedly to all who believe in His name.

Let it be distinctly understood what Scripture means by "the Church" which Christ so loved. Many are vague as to this, having a general idea that the term includes all the saved from the beginning to the end of time. We sometimes meet with the phrase, "The Church in Jewish times," &c. But we are firmly persuaded that this is a great mistake. We find no mention of the Church in the Old Testament at all. There we find God dealing with an elect nation, blessing them after an earthly manner in the Land of Canaan. The godly in the midst of that nation and elsewhere appear as so many units looking up to God in their own individual faith, but a scheme for forming them into a corporate body nowhere appears. When but Lord Jesus was here in flesh He spoke of the Church as a future thing to be built upon Himself, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16: 18). Clearly He did not regard it as then existing in any shape whatever. The birthday of the Church of God was the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended from heaven according to the promise of the Lord Jesus (Acts 2).

Even then the full character of the new company was not revealed. It is questionable whether any of the first Christians knew at the beginning into what a wonderful sphere of heavenly blessing they had been introduced. The unfolding of this was reserved for Paul — one born out of due time. To him, by special revelation, was made known God's eternal counsel concerning Christ and the Church. Hitherto it had been an unrevealed secret — "hid in God" (Eph. 3). Then it came out that God was forming believing Jews and Gentiles into "one new man" — to be the body of Christ the Head, and, as we shall see shortly, to be His Bride in the day of glory.

Into this those who lived and died prior to the Pentecostal outpouring do not come. Those who follow us in testimony on the earth are again a distinct company of saints, with a portion peculiar to themselves. It is no question of merit or superior godliness, but of God's own sovereign intentions. If He has chosen to keep the best wine until now, none do well to complain; and if He has seen fit to provide some better thing for us than for other companies of saints, who dare find fault? If the Church's portion, like Benjamin's mess, is really five times as much as that of others, let us see to it that we enjoy it, and not endeavour to explain it away (Gen. 43: 34). The Old Testament worthies will certainly find their place in heaven for ever (Heb. 11: 16), but will not stand in the same relation to Christ as the believers of the present dispensation, though their blessings, of course, as ours, is founded on His

blood. Through His grace, all who are saved now are called into a special place of honour — a peculiar character of blessedness.

Christ displayed His love in the past, then, by giving Himself up for the Church. His affection is proved in the present by His constant and unwearying care. We read "that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word" (Eph. 5: 26). He applies His own gracious Word to her who is to be His companion in bliss for ever, that her thoughts and desires may be formed suitably to Himself, and that she may be weaned from every attraction that Satan and the world present. He brings Himself and His glory constantly before her heart, and thus she is not only cheered and helped in the desert path, but she is able to put from her everything inconsistent with the One to whom she is going. This is the aim and object of all His present care and attention. He would have His beloved Church heavenly practically while waiting to see His face.

Such is His love and grace; but what shall we say as to the response of our hearts to it? "So much to be loved, and so little to love." We have not been all we should have been for Christ. The Church has not kept herself as a chaste virgin for Christ, but has trifled with many lovers, to her hurt and loss. Nothing is so painful as unrequited love. How Solemn to read "I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love" (Rev. 2: 4). Let us confess our failure. Let us frankly own that we have not appreciated and responded to the heart of Christ as we should. In the days that yet remain, ere all is closed in glory, let us cultivate earnest affection for Him. This can only be as we keep near to Him and learn the deep secrets of His wondrous love to us.

The next step is the presentation to Himself, and for this we wait: "That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5: 27). This takes place when He descends into the air to receive His blood-bought Bride to Himself. The last Adam is to have a partner in His dominion, even as the first. She shall sit with Him on His throne, even as He now sits with the Father on His throne.

Thou too shalt reign —
He will not wear His crown of joy alone;
And earth His royal bride shall see
Beside Him on the throne.

What a transformation His grace will effect in that day! The Church will then be glorious; each member of it bearing His own heavenly image. No spot or wrinkle will be seen. Every bit of worldliness is a stain on the garment of the Bride. Wrinkles are signs of decay. Alas! there were many to be seen before the great Apostle of the Church went to his rest. He saw love declining, zeal waning, and the world creeping in on every hand. But the holy, yet loving, hand of the Lord Jesus will remove all in that day. Every thing that would remind of wilderness, failure, shall be obliterated. The Church will then be holy, not only in nature, but in ways. She will be without blemish also. In the midst of much that grieves and disheartens now, how joyful and elevating is the contemplation of it! After showing that in doing all this Christ loves the Church even as Himself, well does the Apostle close by saying: "This mystery is great: but I speak; in regard of Christ and the Church" (Eph. 5: 32).

Turn now to Rev. 19: 1-10. There we have the marriage supper of the Lamb. It must be carefully observed that this is a heavenly scene preparatory to the appearing of Christ with all His saints. This scene is therefore entirely distinct from that which is described in Ps. 45. There we have the Messiah present on earth with His sword girded upon His thigh for the subjugation of all His foes, and for the establishment of His glorious kingdom. At His right hand stands the Queen in gold of Ophir, but we

must not understand her to be the Church of God. It is Israel, the earthly associate of the Messiah, as the Church is the heavenly Bride of the Lamb. To Israel it will then be said, "Thou shalt no more be termed forsaken, neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a man marrieth a virgin, so shalt thy sons marry thee, and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Isa. 62: 4, 5). The mutual affection of Messiah and Israel will be found fully expressed in the Song of Solomon.

But the Church's association with the Lamb is heavenly in its character; the nuptials are brought before us in Rev. 19. We do not regard this as the presenting to Himself spoken of in Eph. 5: 27. That is the first thing after the meeting in the air, and is entirely between the Bridegroom and the Bride. The marriage supper is the public event when all the friends of the Bridegroom are called together to share in the general joy.

This apparently immediately follows the judgement of Babylon the Great. When the false woman is thus dealt with, all heaven is filled with triumph and praise. While earth is mourning over her overthrow, the courts of heaven are resounding with Alleluias. Then the true Bride is seen: "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of many thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice and give honour to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready" (Rev. 19: 6, 7). From this point we hear no more of the four-and twenty elders. We believe them to represent the whole company of the heavenly saints, i.e., the believers of Old Testament times and the Church of God. Now that the Bride is brought forward as such, the symbol of the elders is dropped. The different classes of saints fall into their respective places, and are henceforward shown in their own particular relation to Christ.

What a moment of joy that will be for Christ and for us! He will see then of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. He will see, at least in measure, that He has not laboured in vain nor spent His strength for nought. His blessed heart longs for the time when He will surround Himself with all those for whom He died. He will not rest until He has finished the thing and has us all at home in the Father's house in glory. In contemplating future glories, we are apt to think principally of the bliss that will then be *ours*. But let us think of *Christ's* part in the matter. It is the day of the gladness of His heart. His was the sorrow and woe; His shall be the blessedness and joy. He is worthy of it all.

The marriage supper is not described in detail. It would not accord with the general character of the Book of Revelation. A few sentences are written, but that is all. We read "His wife hath made herself ready." This does not imply any sort of human fitness, which could have no place in heaven, but simply (so we judge) that she has put on the garments which divine grace has provided. According to His riches in glory all is given, that the heavenly Bride may be found a suitable companion for the Lamb.

But though there is no such thing as human fitness, the excellent deeds of the saints, wrought on earth through the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, are had in remembrance at the wedding feast. "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness (*lit.* "righteousnesses") of the saints" (Rev. 19: 8). Never will Christ forget the good works of His own. His eye notes and His hand records every little reproduction of Himself, whether in general walk or in active service. Even a cup of cold water given for His sake will be remembered above, no small encouragement, surely, for all who really seek the honour of His Name. In this sense, we are weaving our garments now. Solemn, yet blessed, thought for us all!

There are guests at the supper. "And he saith unto me, write, Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. 19: 9). Who are these? Not angels, for they are never said to be "called." The term is only used of objects of redeeming grace, i.e., of men. Are not these the friends of the Bridegroom, as John the Baptist said in his day? (John 3: 29.) Heb. 12: 22-24 comes to mind also. There we have the different companies in "the heavenly Jerusalem," and among them "the spirits of just men made perfect" as distinct from "the Church of the first-born ones." These are plainly the saints of the Old Testament dispensation. They will share in the common joy of the marriage-day, though not included amongst the myriads who form the Bride.

Need we wonder that the angel thought it necessary to add, "These are the true sayings of God"? The glory of the scene is so wonderful, the relationship so intimate, the blessedness so vast, that the heart needs, as it were, to be assured that it is really God's intention to make it all ours. Oh, that the thought of the future acted more powerfully upon our lives in the present! Seeing that we look for such things, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness!

We will now pass to Rev. 21. There we have the Bride shown under the symbol of a city — the holy Jerusalem. Many figures are borrowed from the Prophet's description of the earthly city, and are here given a heavenly turn by the Spirit of God. Every reader should carefully observe that this chapter does not describe the Bride's home, but herself. This is necessary to remark, as many have read these glowing utterances as referring to heaven. Some may wonder why such a symbol should be used of the Bride of the Lamb. We must remember that she is to be associated with Him in all His future government. When He administers the government of the earth, His Bride will share in His honours. Viewed as in connection with the earth, she is set before us as a city, radiant in glory, and illumined by the divine presence.

How full of meaning are the words "the Lamb's wife." The title "the Lamb" reminds us of the sufferings and death of the Blessed One. The Church is called to have fellowship with His sufferings during the present time; and, in consequence, shall participate in His glory. The suffering comes before the glory. Let us remember this. It may help us in some of the circumstances through which we may have to pass for His Name's sake.

It should be carefully observed in Rev. 21, that verses 1-8 speak of eternity, and that verse 9 carries us back to the millennial condition of things. Verses 1-8 follow the description of the great White Throne, which will be set up at the very end of time, when the heavens and the earth are no more. The language of the verses clearly refers to a condition settled for all eternity, whether for the blessed or for the lost. But the succeeding verses carry us back to the time-state. Does not the mention of the vials and the plagues prove this? And if confirmation be needed, we would refer the reader to the mention of "nations," "kings," and "healing" (Rev. 21: 24-26; Rev. 22: 2). Such expressions would not be used if the eternal condition were being described. Rev. 21: 9 - Rev. 22: 5, we have no doubt, shows the Lamb's wife in her millennial attire.

To behold this glorious vision, John was carried away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain. It is good to get far above all the mists and swamps of this poor world, and to enter into God's thoughts. The Spirit of God delights to show what the Church is to be in the future, that it may have power over our souls during the present. It was a fairer sight that was shown to John than Moses beheld when with God on the heights of Pisgah. The one was earthly, the other heavenly; the one was soon marred by the sins of God's people, the other will retain its God-given perfection for ever.

In describing the Holy Jerusalem the Spirit uses a great many charming figures, all very full of meaning. Our space will not permit of a detailed examination of them all; we must content ourselves

with a few brief remarks. But we earnestly commend the study of this chapter to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ. It will amply repay care and patience. The Spirit of God is here showing the glories with which divine grace will invest the Church in the coming day. What more pleasing or elevating study for our hearts? What more sanctifying in its effects'?

First, she is said to have "the glory of God." Hope has given place to realization, expectation to possession. For this the Lord Jesus prayed to the Father, and for it we rejoice in hope. Then the Church will be a perfect light-giver. "Her shining was like a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." Her shining has been sadly marred here. She has suffered the world and other things to come between her and her Lord. It is only as He shines on His own that they are able to reflect His glory before the eyes of others.

Next we read of "a wall great and high." This suggests the twofold idea of separation and security. Alas! the Church has not been careful to exclude all evil during her sojourn on earth; but in the glorified state "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth." Separation from evil will then be perfectly carried out. Also, what security is there! No more thieves and robbers occurrent, and the roaring lion no longer going about seeking whom he may devour. And, what is even more blessed, no more evil hearts of unbelief to lead us astray!

There are gates, implying intercourse with the outside world. The heavenly redeemed will not keep to themselves the blessings of God, but will gladly dispense them to all around. Angels are at the gates. Their place is not to rule, but to serve. They are content to be the heavenly porters of the city. No jealousy is in their hearts. They know their place, and fill it for God; and they admire the grace which has called redeemed men to an incomparably higher place and relationship. God is glorified in it all, and that is sufficient for them.

The gates bear "the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel." This fact has been viewed by some as showing that the earthly Bride is contemplated in these chapters. But there is no need thus to understand the statement. The names are on "*the gates*" which, as we have said, speak of intercourse with the outside world. Now it is plain that God will administer the earthly part of the inheritance by means of Israel. We regard this connection with the heavenly Bride to be as follows: The latter will be the inner circle of government and in closest association with the King; Israel will be the outer circle of government, and will be in direct contact with the people of the earth. Even in present day administrations these differences may be seen; the Cabinet being the inner circle in connection with the Sovereign, lesser officers forming the outer circle who come into more direct contact with the people.

The wall of the city has twelve foundations, and on them are inscribed "the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb." This reminds us of Eph. 2: 20. The Church is built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets. They were the vessels inspired by God to bring out the truths, far in advance of Old Testament revelation, that are needed for the present dispensation.

When the city was measured with the golden reed its length, breadth, and height were found to be equal. Tested by divine righteousness no inequality or unevenness is detected. How different now! We often see much unevenness, if not positive crookedness, and it causes our hearts pain. But how complete the change in the day of glory! Christ's own perfection will be everywhere seen, to the delight and admiration of all. "And the building of the wall of it was of jasper," speaking of divine, though not Godhead, glory (Rev. 4: 3); "And the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass" - divine righteousness everywhere seen. The precious stones follow, into the details of which we cannot now enter. They show that every kind of beauty will be displayed in the glorified. God's own character will be seen in

all; all His excellencies will be manifested as never on earth.

Each gate was of one pearl. This reminds us of the well-known parable in Matt. 13: 45, 46. From whatever point the holy city is viewed, there is the memorial of the deep love of Christ — that love which led Him into unutterable depths that we might be His for ever. "The street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass." "The street" is emblematic of intercourse. How sweet and perfect will this be with each other in the glory! Our intercourse is frequently marred here, through the unwatchfulness of our hearts. In glory it will be according to divine righteousness, agreeable to God, and a delight to us.

No temple was seen in the Holy City, in contrast with the earthly. Israel's metropolis will possess the Temple of God once more (Ezek. 40. &c.); at once a privilege and joy. But this cannot be for the heavenly saints, who are to enjoy a nearness to God peculiarly their own, through Christ's redemption. No part of the heavenly city is more holy than another; the presence of God and the Lamb fill it throughout.

Nor is there any need of created light, for the glory of God is there, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof. The homage of the kings of the earth will gladly be paid to the Lamb's wife, and the nations shall walk in its reflected light. Not only so, but from the Throne of God and of the Lamb, through the city, a river of blessing will flow, for the benefit of all. Eternally fruitful the glorified will be, and, during the millennial age, will minister to the nations for their healing. Creation's scars shall all be removed.

These are some of the glories that await us. Every sentence in Rev. 21, 22, is divinely full, and, blessed be God, divinely true. His own matchless grace will make it all good in all His own, for Christ's glory. These are glories and joys that will never fade. It is refreshing to contemplate the Bride in her eternal condition, after considering her millennial relationship and connections. When all things are made new, the Holy City, New Jerusalem, will come down from God, out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (Rev. 21: 2). Still a Bride. The freshness not departed, the first glow of love not vanished. The Bridegroom's love perfect for her, and hers perfect for Him, and that for ever and ever.

He is coming, coming for us;
Soon we'll see His light afar,
On the dark horizon rising,
As the Bright and Morning Star,
Cheering many a waking watcher,
As the star whose kindly ray
Heralds the approaching morning
Just before the break of day.
Oh! what joy, as night hangs round us,
Tis to think of morning's ray;
Sweet to know He's coming for us,
Just before the break of day.

He is coming, coming for us;
Soon we'll hear His voice on high;
Dead and living, rising, changing,
In the twinkling of an eye
Shall be caught up all together,
For the meeting in the air;
With a shout the Lord, descending,
Shall Himself await us there.
Oh! what joy that great foregathering,
Trusted meeting in the air;
Sweet to know He's coming for us,
Calling us to join Him there.
He is coming as the Bridegroom
Coming to unfold at last
The great secret of His purpose,
Mystery of ages past,
And the Bride, to her is granted
In His beauty now to shine,
As in rapture she exclaimeth —
"I am His, and He is mine."
Oh! what joy that marriage union
Mystery of love divine;
Sweet to sing in all its fullness —
"I am His, and He is mine."

Christ Millennial Reign.

In our consideration of future judgements and all glories, we have now arrived at that happy and glorious period which has been the theme of the Holy Spirit almost since the world began — the millennial reign of the Second Man, our Lord Jesus Christ. At various times, and in many ways, has the Spirit of God spoken of that epoch in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Sometimes He presents us with a striking picture which, by the light of later revelations, the instructed mind cannot fail to understand; as for example, the appearing of Melchizedek, King of Righteousness, and King of Peace in Gen. 14. On other occasions, we find Psalmists breaking forth into rapturous song, and depicting in glowing strains the glorious time that is coming for this poor sin-stricken earth; and later, especially in the days of Israel's declension and ruin, we find the Prophets borne along by the Spirit of God, and

sublimely describing the glories and blessedness of the same wondrous period. Not that all who thus spoke fully understood their own utterances. They were frequently carried far beyond what their own minds could enter into. As we read in 1 Peter 1: 11, "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit Of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow." But whether Moses, Psalmists or Prophets wrote, it was one Spirit speaking through all, for the rest and joy of faith, and for the warning of the ungodly.

Our present subject is immense, and, if fully considered, would require a considerable volume to itself. As this cannot well be, and as it is important to be concise, we propose to deal with the coming millennium in the following order. We will endeavour to show what that glorious time means: —

1. For Christ.
2. For the Heavenly Saints.
3. For Israel.
4. For the Nations of the Earth.
5. For the Creation in General.
6. For Satan.

1. It will be the hour of CHRIST'S supremacy as Man, not only over the heavenly part of the inheritance of God, but over the earthly also. This consideration should make it clear to every mind that there can be no millennial blessing until Christ comes. It used to be vaguely thought by many that the millennium will run its course prior to His appearing; His coming for judgement being placed by such expositors at the close of that period. But a Christless millennium is, to say the least, a very unsatisfactory idea, not at all sustained by the Word of God. If any of our readers have any doubt as to this important point, we earnestly beg them to consider carefully Acts 3: 19-21. We quote from the Revised Version: "Repent ye therefore, and turn again that your sins may be blotted out (it is Peter's appeal to Israel), that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus: whom the heavens must receive until the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of His holy Prophets which have been since the world began." This shows that Christ will remain in the heavens until the hour of Israel's repentance, and then will appear for universal blessings. His coming is therefore clearly pre-millennial.

The foregoing passage refers, of course, to the earth only. To understand the full glory of that day, Eph. 1: 9, 10, should be consulted. "Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, for the administration of the fullness of times; to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth." (J. N. Darby's Translation.) Here we learn that God intends to make Christ the Head and Centre of a united system of heavenly and earthly glory. *Everything* is to be His. God has made known to us beforehand what His will and pleasure is, because of our connection, through grace, with Him who is to inherit it all.

Ps. 8 will then receive its full accomplishment. The Son of man there spoken of is not Adam, but Christ. The divine purpose is there declared to set Him over all the works of God's hand. The first man had this grant of power from God (Gen. 1: 26-28), but failed to act for His glory. He sold himself into the hand of the enemy, and became his tool and slave. When the Second Man takes up the reins of universal government in God's due time, He will glorify God perfectly, and bring in full blessing for all

beneath His sway.

Perhaps the earthly glory that is in store for Christ is not sufficiently thought of by the saints at large. It is, of course, thoroughly believed and understood that He has present glory in heaven, and every redeemed soul owns gladly that He is worthy of it; but His future glory in the earth has not the place it should have in the minds of many. Yet it is due to Him as an answer to His humiliation below. It is not sufficient that He is glorified in heaven. He never was dishonoured there. But it is a perfect delight to those who love His name that He is to be glorified and adored in the very scene of His rejection and shame. God will see to this. Here where: His royal claims were scorned, every knee shall bow to Him; here where He was reviled and insulted, every tongue shall own that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. His Name shall be excellent in all the earth.

After all man's failure and sin, it is a relief to the heart to know that God has a Man in store to whom He can entrust universal dominion, and who will use it for His glory. The house of David, for whom God intended supremacy in the earth, miserably failed in the person of its choicest representative; the first great Gentile head (Nebuchadnezzar) to whom power was divinely entrusted after the failure of David's house, misused his might and authority; but God has One in reserve Who will succeed gloriously where they and all others have painfully failed.

The kingdom of Christ will be brought in by power and judgement. It is vain to cling to the notion of a peaceful subjugation of the whole world by means of the Gospel. Scripture nowhere countenances the idea, though, blessed be God, it everywhere proposes blessing for all, if they believe the Gospel. Ps. 45 vividly describes the coming of Christ to reign: "Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most mighty, with Thy glory and Thy majesty. And in Thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness: and Thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the kings enemies; whereby the people fall under Thee" (verses 3-5) . This is not Gospel progress, but unsparing judgement of enemies. David and Solomon together typify Christ in His reign. The first was a man of war. He was ever shedding the blood of his enemies, with the result that his son succeeded to a peaceful throne, and was enabled to reign in rest and glory. Thus will it be in the day to come. "By fire and by His sword will the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many" (Isa. 66: 16). Then peace will follow on a righteous ground.

Righteousness and peace, therefore, will be the two great characteristics of the reign of Christ. Melchizedek shows this typically. His personal name means king of righteousness, and the name of his city means peace (Heb. 7: 2). "Behold a King shall reign in righteousness . . . and the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever" (Isa. 32: 1-17). Evil will be promptly put down, instead of being borne with in long-suffering as now (Isa. 65: 20), and peace will flow universally. Righteousness will then be exalted, and iniquity will hide its head.

2. THE HEAVENLY SAINTS are to have part with Christ in this dominion. By "the heavenly saints" we mean not merely the Church of this dispensation, but all whose portion is above.* We observe at least four classes of these in Scripture: (1) The Old Testament believers; (2) the Church of God; (3) the latter-day witnesses who lose their lives for the testimony of Jesus and for the Word of God; and (4) those who refuse to worship the beast and his image. The first two of these classes will be removed to heaven at the Lord's descent into the air, in order to their coming with Him at His public appearing (1 Thess. 4: 13-18; 1 Cor. 15: 23, 51-55; Col. 3: 4). The third and fourth classes will apparently be raised at His appearing, in time to have part in His administration of the kingdom (Rev. 6: 9-11; Rev. 15: 2-4; Rev. 20: 4). All these are to share the reign of Christ. "The Saints of the Most High (or, high places) shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and

ever" (Dan. 7: 18).

{*The saints of the present period will, of course, have a closer and more intimate association with Christ than others. When He fills all in all, the Church, His body, has a special place (Eph. 1: 22, 23).}

Here a difficulty may present itself to the minds of some of our readers. It has been asked: "Are the heavenly saints to be actually on the earth during the kingdom?" By no means; our home is above. Even Christ Himself will not be personally present on earth throughout that period, else where the need for a "prince" to represent Him in Jerusalem? (Ezek. 44: 1-3; Ezek. 45: 7-25, &c.). Matt. 13: 41-43, may help us here. First we read of "*The kingdom of the Son*, out of which all evil will be purged. This is the earthly part evidently. Then we read of *the kingdom of the Father*, and it is in that we are to have our place; "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Our position in relation to the earth is thus compared to that of the sun. We shall be the world's light-givers, and dispensers of divine blessing. We shall visit the earth with Christ at His appearing, and probably afterwards; but our own proper habitation is the Father's house above.

The thought of such dignity should influence our walk in the world now. This is what the Apostle brought before the Corinthians, when, in utter forgetfulness of what they had been called to, they carried their grievances against each other before the world. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?" (1 Cor. 6: 1-3). Our association with Christ in the coming kingdom is thus referred to as a truth well-known in that day. How grievous the fall when Christians not only lost sight of their own future place as the world's rulers and judges, but even admitted the idea of standing before the Great White Throne to be judged themselves! The notion of a general judgement, to which we refer, is a serious dishonour to the accomplished work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ere we leave this point, another important consideration must be briefly noticed. Our respective places in the coming kingdom will be allotted according to our walk and service in the present age. To the faithful servant the Lord will say, "I will make thee ruler over many things" (Matt. 25: 21-23). This is frequently brought forward in the epistles as an incentive to godliness of walk and diligence in service (2 Tim. 4: 1,2; 2 Thess. 1: 5; 2 Peter 1: 11). Let every Christian reader lay this seriously to heart. Suppose any to deliberately choose a path of ease and honour in this world, as the carnal Corinthians of old, will they — can they stand well in the approaching kingdom? (1 Cor. 4: 8-14). Impossible. But if, on the other hand, any are willing to let the world go by for Christ's sake, content to bear the cross day by day, will He fail to reward them suitably in the day of His glory? In this way David acted towards the companions of his distress when he reached the throne. The Greater than David will be equally mindful of every bit of faithfulness to His Word and Name.

3: ISRAEL'S PART in the millennial kingdom will, of course, be in the earth, according to the terms of Jehovah's promise to their fathers. The Land of Canaan is to be theirs for an everlasting possession, and Jehovah will plant them in it with His whole heart and with His whole soul (Jer. 32: 41). All their backsliding shall be forgotten and their sins forgiven, the law of God being henceforward divinely written in their hearts and minds. Ere these blessed results can be attained, Israel (the whole twelve tribes) will have to pass through terrible discipline in righteousness, Judah in the land and the ten tribes outside of it. But the remnant that shall be left after the sifting will be converted to God. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by

the watercourses. One shall say, I am Jehovah's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto Jehovah and surname himself by the name of Israel" (Isa. 44: 3-5).

When the nation is thus right with God He will be able to use them as His instruments in dealing with others, and this in a twofold way. First, He will by their means put down enemies — Edom, Moab, and Ammon in particular escaping the devastating hand of the King of the North for this purpose (Dan. 11: 41; Isa. 11: 14). Then He will make them channels of blessing to all that are left of the nations. Micah 5: 7-9 is very interesting in this connection: "And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a dew from Jehovah, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man nor waiteth for the sons of men. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off." Here we have Israel's twofold mission; as a lion among the beasts they put down foes, and as a dew from Jehovah they dispense blessing all around.

Jerusalem in that day will be the metropolis of the earth. It is Jehovah's chosen dwelling place, the spot that His heart desires as His settled abode and rest (Ps. 132: 13, 14). He has spoken glorious things of it, and intends to make it an eternal excellency, the joy of many generations (Ps. 87: 3; Isa. 60: 15). His presence will cause it to be called "Jehovah Shammah" ("Jehovah is there"). To that centre the representatives of the nations will annually go up to pay their court to the great King and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles (Ezek. 48: 35; Zech. 14: 16).

The sanctuary of Jehovah will be restored to Israel in the millennial day. Many particulars as to this and the redistribution of the land among the tribes will be found in Ezek. 48. Well may all who behold Israel's blessing then say, "Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee" (Isa. 12:6).

The prosperity of Solomon's day, when all Israel sat peacefully every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, eating and drinking and making merry, was as nothing compared with what God will vouchsafe to His people in the reign of David's greater Son (1 Kings 4: 20-25). David was led of the Spirit to describe the blessedness of that time in Ps. 72., and was carried far beyond himself into rapturous worship and praise. Faith, as it contemplates the future, breaks out into: "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel"; while the enemy from without can only say with sadness, "Alas! who shall live when God doeth this?" (Ps. 72: 18; Num. 24: 23).

4. THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH will then receive their full portion of blessing in connection with the people of Israel. God's mercy to His chosen will be abundantly spread abroad. His way will be known upon earth and His salvation among all nations. The name of Jehovah will be excellent in all the earth, and all nations will call Him blessed.

Israel will not then be the coldly conservative people that they have been in the past, but will gladly share with others the rich blessings vouchsafed to them by God. But universal blessing cannot be until the millennial day. In vain do Christians speak of the whole world being converted by means of the Gospel as at present preached. The thought is well-intentioned, we are sure, but it is nevertheless a great mistake. Ethiopia will doubtless soon stretch out her hands unto God, but not as the result of Christian labour. It will be brought about by Jewish instrumentality, when Christ is here reigning on His throne in Zion. The divine intention by means of the Gospel of the grace of God is to "take out" from among the nations a people for His Name. The body of Christ is still in course of formation, and

is being composed of believers from among both Jews and Gentiles.

In the Church, the distinctions of Jew and Gentile have no place (Col. 3: 11). In the millennium they will reappear, though in blessing. The Jew will have the chief place in the earth; the Gentile will be blessed subordinately. "Thus saith Jehovah of hosts; it shall come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities; and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before Jehovah, and to seek Jehovah of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek Jehovah of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before Jehovah. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech. 8: 20-23). Their kings will be their leaders in this. The nations will have their respective kings in that day, but they will all recognise the supremacy of the Lord Jesus, as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 21: 24-26; Ps. 72: 10, 11).

Conversion, if not absolutely universal then, will be very nearly so. "All Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 11: 26), and apparently the great majority of the surviving Gentiles also. The words of Zechariah quoted above, point to this, and we are told elsewhere that "the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together"; also that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea"; and that the Spirit of God shall be poured out upon *all flesh* (Isa. 40: 5; Isa. 11: 9; Joel 2: 28). Yet we read in Ps. 18: 44, 45, "As soon as they hear of Me, they shall obey Me; the strangers shall submit themselves (marg. 'yield feigned obedience') unto Me. The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places." Compare with this Ps. 66: 3; Ps. 81: 15. From these, and other passages, it would appear that some will bow falsely, and merely because they are in the presence of a power that it is impossible to withstand. It was so with some in the early days of Solomon's kingdom (1 Kings 1). Such, with others, perhaps born during the Lord's reign, will be only too ready to listen to the suggestions of Satan when he is released for a little season at the close (Rev. 20: 7-9). What is man! Grace does not attract him; and even glory will not permanently convince him!

5. We will now consider briefly what God will do in that day for the CREATION IN GENERAL. Man, by his sin, has not only brought ruin on himself, but has marred his home, and dragged down all the creatures dependent upon him. Thorns and thistles are marks of man's sin, much more the groans of the brute creation (Gen. 3: 18). Man, unlike angels, was constituted by God the centre of a system of things. The whole of this lower creation either suffers or rejoices with its head. This is its time of suffering. "We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom. 8: 22). We who believe groan also in sympathy, our mortal bodies forming a link with the old creation. But we alone are in God's secret, as to where deliverance will come from, and when. Though it understands it not, "the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestations of the sons of God." When Christ comes upon the scene, bringing with him the whole glorified family of God, then the creation will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

What a change will then pass over this poor earth! Think of the wolf casting aside his savage instincts and dwelling peaceably with the lamb; the leopard lying down with the kid; the calf and the young lion feeding together; and a little child leading them all! (Isa. 11: 6-7; Isa. 65: 25.) Think also of the sucking child playing on the hole of the asp, and of the weaned child putting his hand on the cockatrice's den, and getting no harm! What days of peace and quietness for man and beast! There will be one solemn exception to this general deliverance — the serpent. "Dust shall be the serpent's meat" (Isa. 65: 25). The reason is not far to seek. Under this form the tempter seduced our first parents? and thus brought in all the misery; this God will never overlook or forget. The curse pronounced in Eden

will not be revoked in this case (Gen. 3: 14). There will be physical changes also, at least in the land of Israel. Thus we read of a river flowing from under the threshold of the house of God, parting into two heads, going east and west, and fertilising wherever it goes (Ezek. 47.). We read also that "the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose," and that "instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree" (Isa. 35: 1; Isa. 55: 13). Barrenness will be practically unknown in the day of Christ's supremacy in the earth. Wonderful jubilee for this long-enlaved scene! Well may believers say "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."

6. SATAN will then be placed under restraint. For a thousand years men will be spared temptation from without. If sin appears (an exceptional thing, it would seem, Isa. 65: 20), men will not be able to blame any but their own evil hearts. During the whole period of the reign of Christ, the great adversary will be confined to the bottomless pit (or the abyss, Rev. 20: 1-3). This should not be confounded with Gehenna — the lake of fire. The one is a place of temporary confinement, the other is his eternal portion, in common with ungodly men. Satan and his agents well know what is in store for them. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, demons recognised Him as their tormentor, and on one occasion besought Him not to consign them just then to the abyss (Matt. 8: 29; Luke 8: 31). The time for this is Christ's appearing, and it is in order that the whole earth may know peace and rest under His holy and beneficent sway.

Thus will the tide of blessing roll on. Earth's deep scars will be divinely effaced, and human sorrows and afflictions will cease. Though the population will enormously increase, there will be plenty for all, for the earth will be prolific as never before. There will be no want for *His* subjects; every need will be abundantly supplied. Surely such a term of blessedness and peace will convince men that the service of Christ is better than that of Satan! Alas, no! No sooner will Satan be released from his prison than he will succeed in stirring up rebellion. A vast hosts will be got together to make war on the camp of the (earthly) saints and the beloved city (Jerusalem). Divine retribution will fall at once, without warning or mercy (Rev. 20: 7-10). Nothing remains to be done but the judgement of the dead at the Great White Throne, which will follow in solemn sequence. On this we need not now dwell, having already considered it in an earlier paper. The reign of Christ as man being over, and all foes having been subjugated, Christ will deliver up the kingdom to Him who is God and Father. "When all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15: 24-28). Here we pause. Time is no longer; eternity is come.

Christ is coming! let creation
From her groans and travail cease
Let the glorious proclamation
Hope restore, and faith increase:
Christ is coming!
Come, Thou blessed Prince of Peace!
Earth can now but tell the story
Of Thy bitter cross and pain;
She shall yet behold Thy glory
When Thou comest back to reign
Christ is coming!

Let each heart repeat the strain.
Long Thine exiles have been pining,
Far from rest, and home, and Thee
Soon in heavenly glory shining
Their Restorer shall they see:
Christ is coming!
Haste the joyous Jubilee!
With that blessed hope before us,
Let no harp remain unstrung:
Let the mighty advent chorus
Onward roll in every tongue:
Christ is Coming!
Come, Lord Jesus, quickly come!