

REVELATION

REVELATION 1 — “THE THINGS WHICH THOU HAST SEEN”

In this book we return to the atmosphere of the Old Testament, at least after the third chapter, at which point the apocalyptic part begins with a narration of events synchronizing with The Day of the Lord.

The authorship is ascribed to John, who wrote the Gospel and three epistles bearing his name, and who at this time, about A.B. 95, had been banished by the Roman Emperor, to the Isle of Patmos in the Aegean Sea (1:9). The date is in dispute, some placing it as early as Nero, A.D. 64 or 65, but the preponderance of opinion is in favor of the later period of Domitian.

THE PREFACE (VV. 1-3)

A few questions will put us in possession of it. Whose revelation is it? Of course, the reference here is to Jesus Christ considered as the God-Man. Whence did He receive this revelation? For whom was it given to Him? And for what purpose with reference to them? To which of His servants was it representatively sent? And through what agency? What did this servant do with the revelation thus committed to him (v. 2)? "Things which must shortly come to pass" has puzzled some, and given rise to the opinion that the predictions have been fulfilled in the course of history from that time. However, while some of them have been fulfilled in the history of the seven churches of Asia, for example, the bulk of them are still future. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years."

(2) THE SALUTATION (VV. 4-8)

The seven churches in Asia were probably those over which John had particular charge. But it would be a mistake to suppose that the readers were limited to those churches. The number seven itself can hardly have been chosen except as symbolical or universality, according to the writer's practice throughout the book.

Observe the allusion to the Trinity. "Him Which is, and Which was, and Which is to come," identifies God the Father. "The Seven Spirits before His Throne," God the Holy Ghost; "Jesus Christ the faithful witness," God the Son. Compare for the Seven Spirits, ^{<2310>}Isaiah 11:2-5.

Candlesticks	^{<6001>} Revelation 1:20 ^{<0154>} Matthew 5:14-16
Clothing	^{<2310>} Isaiah 11:5; 61:10 ^{<0164>} Ephesians 6:14 ^{<6008>} Revelation 19:8
White Head and hair	^{<2009>} Daniel 7:9 ^{<0170>} Matthew 17:1-2 ^{<0206>} Acts 22:6-8 ^{<6016>} 2 Peter 1:16-18 ^{<6205>} Revelation 22:5
Eyes of fire	^{<5007>} 2 Timothy 1:7-8 ^{<8129>} Hebrews 12:29
Feet of brass	^{<0024>} Proverbs 1:24-28 ^{<3404>} Isaiah 48:4 ^{<2125>} Luke 13:25-27
Voice of many waters	^{<7006>} Daniel 10:6 ^{<6442>} Revelation 14:2-3; 19:6
Seven stars	^{<7108>} Daniel 12:3 ^{<3007>} Malachi 2:7 ^{<6001>} Revelation 1:20, 12:1
Two-edged sword	^{<0167>} Ephesians 6:17 ^{<8042>} Hebrews 4:12
Keys	^{<3221>} Isaiah 22:20-22 ^{<0169>} Matthew 16:19; 28:18 ^{<2152>} Luke 11:52 ^{<6007>} Revelation 3:7; 20:1 ^{<8102>} John 20:22-23 ^{<6104>} 1 Corinthians 12:4, 8

PREPARATORY VISION (VV. 8-16)

The vision John received constituted his authority to write (vv. 8-16). This vision was that of the Person of the glorified Christ. The table (left) shows how much scriptural imagery is involved in John's vision.

THE VISION'S CONCLUSION

The vision concludes with the general command to write (vv. 17-20), in the terms of which (v. 19) there is outlined the three major divisions of the book. "The things which thou hast seen," refer to the Patmos vision just considered; "the things which are," refer to the things existing, i.e., the churches, and particularly the seven churches of Asia; "the things which shall be hereafter," or literally "after these," means, we think, after the church period ends. As the first division covers chapter 1, so the second covers chapters 2-3, and the third the rest of the book. The last division falls into a series of six sevens with five parenthetical passages making, with the church division, seven sevens. The six sevens are:

1. the seals, 4:1-8:1;
2. the trumpets, 8:2-9:19;
3. the personages, 12:1-14:20;
4. the vials, 15:1-16:21;
5. the dooms, 17:1-20:15;
6. the new things. 21:1-22:21.

QUESTIONS

1. What peculiarity about interpreting Revelation is stated in this lesson's first paragraph?
2. What is said about its date?
3. State the four main divisions of the chapter.
4. Have you examined its symbolism in the light of the parallel passages named?
5. Name the three major divisions of the book as indicated in verse 19?
6. Name the six sevens of the third division.

REVELATION 2-3 — THE SEVEN CHURCHES

This section might also be entitled "The things which are."

No agreement exists as to the application of "angel" in the address to each of these churches, but as the word means "messenger," it may refer to

those sent by the churches to interview the apostle at Patmos (see ~~¹⁰⁸~~Philippians 4:18).

Of course, the seven churches existed at this time in Asia, and yet the epistles have not only a local application to them, but apply representatively to the whole church everywhere at that time.

Many also think they have an application prophetically to "the spiritual history of the church at large from that day to the end of this age," when the true church, which is the body of Christ, will be caught up to meet him in the air. In this respect, they bear a close relation to the seven parables of ~~¹⁰⁹~~Matthew 13 to which the student will refer. The apostasy in Christendom outlined in that chapter in Matthew, began in the apostolic days (~~¹¹⁰~~2 Thessalonians 2), and has been increasing ever since, and will culminate in the "man of sin" at the end of this age after the true church has been translated. It is the course of this apostasy that is thought to be again outlined here prophetically in the epistles to the seven churches. One reason for this view is that we discover a gradual decline from the fervor of the first love of the Ephesian church, or the Ephesian period of the church, to the lukewarm, spewed-out-of-the-mouth condition of Laodicea.

SEVEN PERIODS IN THE CHURCH

The seven periods in the history of the church as outlined in these epistles have been interpreted thus: The epistle to the church at Ephesus represents the spiritual condition of the first period of the church universal from the ascension of Christ to the close of the first century, the apostolic era. The epistle to Smyrna represents the second period, or the martyr church, from the death of John to the rise of Constantine, A.D. 100-311. The third, Pergamos, from the state church under Constantine to the rise of the papacy (Pope Gregory 1), A.D. 311-590. The fourth, Thyatira, from the rise of the papacy to the reformation, 590-1517. The fifth, Sardis, the Protestant churches from the reformation to the rise of Methodism, 1517-1755. The sixth, Philadelphia, the missionary period, 1755, to somewhere near the present time. The seventh, Laodicea, from the present time to the Second

COMING OF CHRIST.

"Nicolaitanes" (2:6-15) has been taken to mean an early heretical sect by that name, but the application is doubtful. The word comes from *nikao*, "to

conquer," and *laos*, "the people" or "the laity," and may refer to the earliest notion of a priestly order of the "clergy," separating the equal priesthood of all believers into a few who were "priests," and the great majority who were not. In the earlier period represented by the epistle to Ephesus it was only "the deeds of the Nicolaitanes" which were referred to, but in the later period represented by Pergamos, the "deeds" had developed into a "doctrine." "The doctrine of Balaam" (2:14; ~~6015~~ 2 Peter 2:5; Jude 11), was his "teaching Balak to corrupt the people who could not be cursed" (~~4015~~ Numbers 20:5, 23:8, 31:15-16), by tempting them to defile themselves by marrying the heathen, and represents the union of the church with the world which is spiritual adultery. "Satan's seat" is in the world (2:13, compare, with ~~6121~~ John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11). "That woman Jezebel" (2:20) brought idolatry into Israel, and suggests Romanism with its pagan ceremonies. "Sardis" stands for the Reformation period or Protestantism which grew out of it, in the sense that it is so largely profession without life. "Philadelphia" is the true church within the professing church, whose history overlaps that of Laodicea, or rather runs parallel with it for a while.

Little space is left to speak of the structure of the epistles, but quoting Archbishop Trench, it will be seen that there are certain forms fundamental to all of them:

- (1) an order to write,
- (2) a glorious title of the speaker,
- (3) an address to the church,
- (4) a command to hear, and
- (5) a promise to the faithful. It is further interesting that the title of the speaker, Christ, has in every instance two main features. First, it is taken from the imagery of the preceding vision, and secondly, it always seems to harmonize with the state or condition of the church addressed.

QUESTIONS

1. What may the term "angel" mean in these epistles?
2. In what sense are the epistles to be regarded as prophetic?
3. Have you referred to ~~4011~~ Matthew 13?

4. How usually have been divided the seven periods in the history of the church?
5. Give the interpretation of "Nicolaitanism," "Balaamism," and "Jezebelism."
6. Which two epistles find a realization in the present church period?
7. Describe the literary form of the epistles.

REVELATION 4-8:1 — THE SEVEN SEALS

This section might also be entitled "The things which shall be hereafter." It is assumed that the true church is not upon the earth at the beginning of chapter 4, but that the translation of ^{<SM16>}1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 has taken place. Christendom is here, but the church is with the Lord in the air. To some this may seem a bold assumption, but not to those who have pursued the study of the earlier books in this commentary. To them it will appear natural and proper that the church should have been "caught up" before the judgments herein enumerated are poured forth. We cannot rehearse the proof of this, but it is significant that after chapter 3, the word "church" is not again found in this book. At the close of that chapter (v.21), Christ appears seated with His Father on His Throne, "from thence expecting till his enemies be made his footstool" (^{<SM13>}Hebrews 10:13). The call to John to "come up hither" (4:1), is also indicative of the fulfillment of ^{<SM16>}1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, and, in a figure, set before us what will be true of the whole church in that day.

THE THRONE, THE LAMB AND THE BOOK

Coming to the text we have in chapters 4-5, the vision of the Throne, the Lamb and the Book, which constitutes an introduction to what follows. The vision of the Throne is limited to 4:1-3, the enthroned elders verses 4 and 5, and the four living creatures (vv. 6-8 RV). It is commonly felt that the elders represent the glorified church, but there is no agreement as to the interpretation of the living creatures. It is notable however, that in this chapter both the elders and living creatures worship the Lord because of creation (vv. 9-11), and that redemption is not named until the next chapter. The seven sealed book (5:1-4), is the revelation of the judgments to follow and seems even to be identical with the judgments themselves. This last thought is suggested by what follows, when Christ in His kingly

character comes forward and opens the book (vv. 5-7). It is He only who prevails to open the book either in the sense of making its contents known or bringing its judgments to pass. His adoration follows on the part of the living creatures and the elders (vv. 8-10), the angels (vv. 11-12), and the whole universe (vv. 12, 14). Redemption is here praised, for it is as Redeemer of men that He has obtained this prerogative to judge men. Verse 9 should be read in the RV, which does not include the living creatures in redemption but limits it to men.

SIX SEALS OPENED

The introduction is followed by what Erdman calls the Progression, or advance movement of the narrative (chap. 6), in which the judgments are seen actually to take place. "Come and see" in each case should be limited to "Come" (RV), for the words are not a command to the seer, but to the judgment. He is not called upon to observe what is about to come, but that which is about to come is commanded to "Come." The rider on the white horse (v. 2) was identified with Christ in Synthetic Bible Studies, but the author now considers it more consistent to identify him with the "man of sin," and at that particular period in his career when, at the beginning of Daniel's seventieth week (²⁰²⁴Daniel 9:24), he takes the power into his hands as the head of the federated nations of the Roman Empire. As the result of his rule peace is taken from the earth as symbolized by the red horse (vv. 3-4); famine follows the black horse (vv. 5-6), and pestilence and death "over the fourth part of the earth" (vv. 7-8). All this time there are faithful witnesses for Christ, who will not bow the knee to the impostor, and who suffer martyrdom in consequence (vv. 9-11). Their day of vengeance is coming, but not until their number is complete. The opening of the sixth seal brings this hour near (vv. 12-17). The student is requested to compare this chapter with ⁴¹⁰¹Matthew 24, where the same period is covered prophetically, and the same events referred to.

SAVED REMNANTS

We now reach the first "parenthesis" mentioned in the first lesson (chap. 7). There is no progression in this parenthetical part although it is both retrospective and prospective in its application. It tells of certain "sealed" ones, and others, who were in the Great Tribulation and came out of it, and in that respect it is prospective; yet it points back to the fifth seal, in which respect it is retrospection. In other words, according to the law of

recurrence with which we became familiar in the Old Testament, chapter 7 gives in detail what verses 9-11 of chapter 6 gave in outline; it tells who the martyrs are and figuratively, how they are preserved. There appears to be a saved remnant of Jews (vv. 1-8), and also of Gentiles (vv. 9-17).

THE GREAT TRIBULATION

This is that period of unexampled trouble predicted in so many places in the Old Testament. It involves the whole earth (^{<6180>}Revelation 3:10), and yet distinctively applies to the Jews who in a national capacity will at this time have returned to Palestine, though still unconverted so far as their acceptance of their Messiah is concerned (^{<2407>}Jeremiah 30:7). Its duration is 3 1/2 years, or the last half of Daniel's seventieth week (^{<2704>}Daniel 9:24-27). The "man of sin" will be in power (^{<4185>}Matthew 24:15; ^{<5104>}2 Thessalonians 2:4) for Satan will have come down to earth having great wrath (^{<6122>}Revelation 12:12; 13:4-5). And yet it will be for some a time of salvation as chapter 7 shows, a salvation brought about by the suffering no doubt, and by the transcendent event of the church's rapture which will have previously taken place. At the close of the tribulation Christ will come in glory with his saints, delivering Israel, judging the Gentile nations, destroying the "man of sin," binding Satan, and introducing his millennial reign on the earth.

QUESTIONS

1. Where is the true church supposed to be at the beginning of this lesson?
2. Give some reasons for believing this.
3. What do chapters 4 and 5 constitute?
4. What does the seven-sealed book represent?
5. What word describes chapter 6?
6. With what earlier chapter in the New Testament is this compared?
7. What word describes chapter 7?
8. Name the two classes of saved ones in the Tribulation.
9. Define The Great Tribulation.
10. What great event follows that period?

REVELATION 8:2-11:19 — THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

We have here another illustration of the law of recurrence, for in these chapters we are going over the ground of the last, though certain features are being added which were not then revealed. In other words, it is still the Tribulation Period.

INTRODUCTION (8:2-5)

In the previous lesson the Introduction included the vision of "The Throne, the Lamb and the Book," while here it is the revelation of the angel and the incense. There is no satisfactory interpretation of this feature any more than of the "silence in heaven" revealed previously. Some would say that "the prayers of all saints" are those of the martyrs of the earlier chapter crying out for avenging, not for their own sakes but that the honor of God might be maintained in the face of His enemies. The incense is identified with the intercession of Christ on their behalf, and the answer is symbolized in what follows not only in verse 5, but all which results therefrom in the remainder of this chapter and the next.

PROGRESSION (8:6-9:21)

The first trumpet (8:7) symbolizes a judgment falling on the earth through the ordinary powers of nature. The "blood" may be caused by the destructive power of the large hailstones. The second trumpet (vv. 8-9) symbolizes judgments resulting from extraordinary acts of nature, volcanic and marine? The third (vv. 10-11), seems to point to suffering superinduced by superhuman agencies — "a great star from heaven." Is it identical with the allusion to Satan (12:7-9)? The fourth (vv. 12-13) is suffering caused by the diminished influence of the heavenly bodies, while the fifth and sixth trumpets (9:1-21) again specifying superhuman agencies, indicate their tormenting power as particularly directed toward men. In the other instances while humanity felt the infliction yet it was indirect, whereas here it is direct.

PARENTHESIS (10:1-11:14)

In chapter 10, the revelation of the "mighty angel" and the "little book" does not easily lend itself to any definite interpretation. Some identify the "angel" with our Lord Himself, and make the "little book" mean the supplemental revelation of the "beast" soon to follow (v. 13) together with the whole story of the awful period of his reign. Chapter 11 is plainer. It refers to Jerusalem during the reign of the "beast" or "man of sin," "forty and two months" being equivalent to the last 3 1/2 years of Daniel's seventieth week already referred to. The two witnesses testifying with supernatural power during this time have been identified with Moses and Elijah returned to the earth in the flesh for that ministry. Verse 6, strikingly parallels the illustrations of their earlier power, while the mysterious manner in which they were taken away from earth, the one buried by God's own hand and the other translated having never seen death, add their contribution to the probability of this application of the chapter.

CONSUMMATION (11:15-19)

Corresponds somewhat to the ending of the revelation of the seven seals (8:1); i.e., it seems to bring us up to the end or final climax, and yet to halt just short of it in order to retrace the ground for fuller detail.

Throughout these visions frequent allusions are made to the destructive forces of the heavens, "the power of the air," and also to conflicts of armies on the earth which suggests modern methods of warfare. Military airships stagger men not so much by their spectacle as by their slaughter. They seem to be faint gray linear objects silhouetted against the sky, but some of them carry torpedoes, and are able to pursue a battleship and send it to the bottom. Was Tennyson "also among the prophets," when he wrote:

Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something new;
 That which they have done but earnest of the things that they shall do;
 For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
 Saw the vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;
 Saw the heavens filled with commerce, argosies of magic sails,
 Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales;
 Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rained a ghastly dew
 From the nations' airy navies, grappling in the central blue;
 Far along the world-wide whisper of the south wind rushing warm,
 With the standards of the people plunging through the thunder storm.

Till the war drum throbbed no longer, and the battle flags were furled
In the parliament of man, the federation of the world.

QUESTIONS

1. What familiar law of rhetoric is illustrated in this lesson?
2. How do some interpret what we call the Introduction?
3. Interpret the six trumpets.
4. How do some interpret the "little book"?
5. Locate the forty and two months.
6. With whom are the two witnesses identified?
7. What modern invention of warfare is suggested by a part of the vision?
8. What modern poet is quoted?

REVELATION 12-14 — THE SEVEN PERSONAGES

INTRODUCTION: THE WOMAN AND THE DRAGON (CHAP. 12)

The seven personages of this division as identified by Erdman, include the woman, the child, the dragon, the archangel, the remnant (of Israel), the ten-horned beast, and the two-horned beast or false prophet, the first four being found in this chapter. The woman represents Israel it is believed, and the man-child to whom she gave birth, the Messiah. The dragon is Satan, whose ten horns represent the 10 kingdoms of the Roman Empire when in that day they shall be federated under the "beast" of the next chapter. The seven heads are not so easily interpreted, though it may be thought that they stand for seven systems: commercial, industrial, social, military, educational, political, and ecclesiastical, which will contribute to the unity or federation just named. The rule of the man-child refers to the millennial reign of Christ, and his being "caught up," to His ascension including in the thought the translation of the church to be with Him as the body of which He is the Head. The "wilderness" is the Gentile nations among which the faithful remnant of Israel will be preserved during the tribulation, 1,260 days. Verses 7-12 call for little comment as the event of which they speak synchronizes with the period of the Tribulation, and indeed accounts for it.

Satan's enmity against Israel is revealed in verse 15, the aid she receives from some of the Gentile nations, verse 14, and his futile attempts at her destruction, chapters 15-16. When Satan sought to frustrate God in His plan for Israel in Egypt he "cast out of his mouth water as a flood," i.e., the Egyptian army, but "the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the flood," and shall we say that the closing verses of chapter 12 point to an event not dissimilar from that of the Red Sea?

PROGRESSION: TRIBULATION PERIOD (CHAP. 13)

The sea represents the Gentile nations, and the first Beast, the last form of Gentile dominion in the earth. In the first three verses we have the ten-kingdom empire, but in verses 4-10 the emperor himself is designated, who is emphatically the "beast." The three animals, leopard, bear, and lion, recall ~~2001~~ Daniel 7 as symbols of the empires which preceded the Roman and all of whose characteristics entered into the qualities of that empire, and will be reproduced in the final form of Gentile rule. The "wounded" head which "was healed," the same authority refers to one of the ancient forms of government of the Empire, that of absolutism, which for a period ceased to exist and will be revived again at the end. But consistency demands that if the seven heads be taken to represent seven influential systems contributing to the federation of the empire under the beast, then the wounding of one head must be the temporary destruction of one of those systems, and its healing the restoration of it again to its former place. We regard this as the ecclesiastical system, and as pointing to the time when all religious influences will be suddenly swept away, while Satan has another system ready to be substituted for it, whose great high priest is the second beast now to be described.

The second beast (13:17-18) is the last ecclesiastical head of the federated empire as the first "beast" is the last civil head. Many regard the second beast otherwise known as the False Prophet (~~1663~~ Revelation 16:13), as the Antichrist, rather than the first beast, and probably this is true. For purposes of persecution he is permitted to exercise the power of the first or emperor beast. "666" is man's number in distinction from seven, which is God's number, and the reference to it is designed to comfort the remnant in that awful day, when they may take heart in the thought that powerful as he is, yet he is a man only and not God.

PARENTHESIS: THE FIRST FRUITS AND THREE ANGELS (14:1-13)

The 144,000 on Matthew Zion are another picture of the saved remnant of Israel (see chap. 7). The mission of the first angel with "the everlasting gospel" is interpreted to mean that gospel which will be proclaimed at the end of the "Tribulation" immediately preceding the judgment of the nations (~~4253~~ Matthew 25:31). As Scofield says,

It is neither the gospel of the kingdom nor the gospel of grace. Its burden is judgment, not salvation, and yet it is good news to Israel and others who, during the Tribulation have been saved (~~3940~~ Psalm 96:2-13; ~~23504~~ Isaiah 35:4-10; ~~4228~~ Luke 21:28; ~~4009~~ Revelation 7:9-14).

The mission of the second angel will be seen in fulfillment in chapter 18, and that of the third in chapter 19.

CONSUMMATION: THE HARVEST AND THE VINTAGE (VV. 14-20)

The "harvest" (vv. 14-16) is thought to refer to the judgment on the Gentile nations, while "the vine of the earth" is applied in the same way to Israel. For the first compare ~~4253~~ Matthew 25:31-46, and the second, ~~4249~~ Matthew 24:29-51.

QUESTIONS

1. Name the seven Personages of this lesson.
2. Give in your own words an interpretation of the imagery of chapter 12.
3. Do the same with chapter 13.
4. Do the same with chapter 14.
5. What two views are given of the symbolism of the seven heads?

REVELATION 15-16 — THE SEVEN VIALS

The law of recurrence finds a further illustration here for we are still in the Tribulation period, the latter half of Daniel's seventieth week, and are looking upon the features of that day of judgment.

The Introduction includes the whole of chapter 15, being the revelation of the "overcomers" and the seven angels. No one can read this without being struck by its likeness to the song of Moses after Israel's deliverance from Pharaoh at the Red Sea. (~~1250~~Exodus 15).

The Progression is set before us in the revelation of the six vials (16:1-12), which are doubtless literal plagues to be visited upon the followers of the "beast" and upon his throne, and which also suggest the story of Israel's deliverance from Egypt (~~1100~~Exodus 5-11).

The Parenthesis is the gathering of the Kings (vv. 13-16). The drying up of the Euphrates may be taken literally, though it is difficult to say just who are meant by "the kings of the east." Some regard the passage as paralleled by Ezekiel, chapters 38-39, which reveal the rising of Russia and her allies against the Roman federation sometime during the period, or approximate to the period, we are now considering. It is to be noted here that the great battle of verse 14 is not described, although its issue is announced (vv. 17-21, compare also ~~3140~~Zechariah 14:1-3).

The Consummation (vv. 17-21) synchronizes with the judgment on the city of Babylon — literal Babylon, rebuilt as the seat of the beast on the plain of Shinar (~~2300~~Isaiah 13-14).

QUESTIONS

1. What law of rhetoric is again illustrated in this lesson?
2. What Old Testament parallel is suggested?
3. How may the six vials be interpreted?
4. What Old Testament prophecy is recalled by chapter 16:12?
5. Have you re-read the passage in Zechariah?
6. Have you reviewed our lesson on ~~2300~~Isaiah 13-14?

REVELATION 17-18 — THE SEVEN DOOMS

The seven dooms are those of Babylon, the beast, the false prophet, the kings, the dragon, gog, and the dead. This lesson will be limited to chapters 17-18, both of which speak of Babylon but in different ways, and to understand which, it is necessary to keep in mind that every city may be conceived of from two points of view, material and moral. The streets and

parks, the buildings, the docks and market places, these are Chicago; but her politics and government, her commerce and industry, her educational and religious systems, these things which have made her what she is, constitute Chicagoism. The one is the city materially, and the other the city morally considered. This distinction is seen in Babylon and Babylonianism; verse 15:3 revealing the doom of the city material, and chapter 17 that of the city moral.

INTRODUCTION: THE HARLOT AND THE BEAST (CHAP. 17)

The Harlot is Babylon from the moral side, i.e., Babylonianism, or in other words, the summing up in that figure of the prevailing worldly systems that enter into the final federation of the Gentile nations. The waters represent those nations (see vv. 1 and 18). The beast we have already identified as the federated Roman Empire, though sometimes the personal head of that empire himself, verses 3 and 8. The mystery is interpreted in the sense that the nations contribute to the supremacy of the harlot, i.e., to Babylonianism, and benefit by it, and yet do not recognize it. "Drunken" is explained by the circumstance that the latitudinarianism, the breadth, the laxness of Babylonianism tolerates all schools and theories of religion inimical to God and the Bible like Romanism, Mohammedanism, Hinduism, and so on, which have shed the blood of the saints in all the centuries. The seven mountains are related to the woman as the seven heads are to the beast, i.e., the systems of authority or power, the politics, government, commerce, industry, education, religion, etc., making the one totality. The seven kings is explained by the remark that God has allowed "executive power" in the prophetic earth to be exhibited in seven different forms, although there will be yet an eighth form before the end comes. By the "prophetic earth" is meant the nations clustering around the Mediterranean which, with their allies and dependencies, constitute the Roman Empire of the Caesars, and will constitute the federation at the end under the beast. The history of this "executive power" commenced with Nimrod and concludes with the beast, both of whom stand connected with Babel or Babylon. The whole of these seven forms of "executive power" include, "the native Monarchy of Nimrod, the theocracy of Israel, the despotism of Nebuchadnezzar; the aristocracy of Persia, the military monarchy of Alexander, the empire of the Caesars, and the constitutional monarchies of modern Europe. The sixth, that of the Caesars, was existent when this revelation was given ("one is," v. 10), the seventh is now in vogue, and the

eighth (v. 11) will be that of the beast. The teaching of verses 16-17 seems to be that the kings reigning over the ten kingdoms that will form the federation at the end, will find Babylonianism, i.e., the systems which control in their several kingdoms, to be a hard yoke upon them, especially so as these systems increase in influence with the increase of democracy which is always hateful to kings. It is to be rid of Babylonianism that they temporarily unite to "give their power and strength unto the beast." Gladly will they take refuge under the arm of one whom Satan strengthens for dominion, and join in destroying a system which has really made them its slaves. The system of Babylon will be destroyed (chap. 17), but the city itself with all its wealth of greatness will for a time continue (chap. 18), the beast reigning over it until the hour of its dooms and his doom shall come together.

PROGRESSION: THE DOOM OF THE MATERIAL CITY (CHAP. 18)

But a pause should be made here to prove the application to a literal city of Babylon rebuilt on the plain of Shinar. This is necessary when so respected an authority as the *Scofield Bible* says, "The notion of a literal Babylon to be rebuilt on the site of ancient Babylon is in conflict with ²³¹⁹Isaiah 13:19-22." Those who have studied that chapter in this commentary will have seen reasons for the opposite view. The language of ²³³⁰Isaiah 13-14 seems to demand the rebuilding of Babylon for their fulfillment. But the reason the *Scofield Bible* holds this view, is partly explained by its interpretation of the preceding chapter. "Two Babylons are to be distinguished in the Revelation," it says, "ecclesiastical Babylon which is apostate Christendom, headed up under the papacy; and political Babylon, which is the beast's confederated empire, the last form of Gentiles world dominion. Ecclesiastical Babylon is 'the greatest harlot' and is destroyed by political Babylon." This commentary agrees that two Babylons are to be distinguished, and that the Babylon of chapter 17 is "apostate Christendom." But it holds that "apostate Christendom" includes Protestantism as well as the papacy, and is in fact, the sum of the seven systems already indicated, one of which is ecclesiastical. It may be that ere the "beast" comes into power, Protestantism will become effaced and the papacy be the only ecclesiastical system to be reckoned with, but as to this we have no light. "The language of Revelation 18," the *Scofield Bible* goes on to say, "seems beyond question to identify 'Babylon' the 'city' with

'Babylon' the ecclesiastical center, viz: Rome"; but we do not see it that way, and are inclined to believe that there will be a certain logical conclusion of the history of the times of the Gentiles. The civilization and culture of the world will again become atheistic and man centered, and having described a circle, its cradle (Babylon) will become its grave.

In the study of chapter 18 one is impressed with the large place commerce is to hold in the greatness of that city. The merchants and ship masters are her chief mourners (compare ~~<XFB>~~Zechariah 5:5-11).

QUESTIONS

1. Name the seven dooms.
2. In what two ways is Babylon to be conceived of?
3. Define the terms "Babylonianism," "mystery," "drunken," "seven mountains," and "seven kings."
4. What is meant by the "prophetic earth"?
5. Name the seven forms of executive power.
6. Why is Babylonianism destroyed by the Beast?
7. Have you reviewed the lesson on ~~<XIB>~~Isaiah 13-14?
8. Have you reviewed the lesson on ~~<XIB>~~Zachariah 5?

REVELATION 19-20 — THE SEVEN DOOMS — CONTINUED

Continuing the last lesson we begin this with what we have come to recognize as the Parenthesis (19:1-10), and which in this case is composed simply of four "alleluiahs." Two are retrospective and refer to the fall of Babylon, and two are prospective, touching on the marriage supper of the lamb and the inauguration of the kingdom. The Lamb's wife (v. 7) is the bride (~~<620>~~Revelation 21:9) or the church, identified with the "heavenly Jerusalem" (~~<822>~~Hebrews 12:22-23), and is to be distinguished from Israel, the adulterous and repudiated wife of Jehovah yet to be restored (~~<250>~~Isaiah 54:1-10; ~~<800>~~Hosea 2:1-7), who is identified with life on the earth (~~<823>~~Hosea 2:23). A forgiven and restored wife could not be called either a virgin (~~<710>~~2 Corinthians 11:2-3) or a bride.

The consummation of this "seven" covers the remainder of the lesson (19:11-20:15), the first event being the coming of the Lord in glory (19:11-16). We have seen Him as already come for His church which has been caught up to meet Him in the air, but this vision is that of His departure out of heaven with His church and His holy angels preparatory to the judgment on the Gentile world-power headed up in the "beast" (~~2024~~Daniel 2:34-35). "The day of the Lord," of which the Old Testament prophets speak, now begins. The second event in this period is the battle of Armageddon (vv. 17-19, compare vv. 16, 14). Armageddon refers to the hill and valley of Megiddo, west of the Jordan in the plain of Jezreel. At this place the Lord will deliver the Jewish remnant besieged by the Gentile world-power under the beast (compare 16:13-16; ~~3811~~Zechariah 12:1-9).

The third event is the doom of the beast and the false prophet (chap. 20). For the prophetic history of the beast compare ~~2024~~Daniel 7:24-26, 9:27; ~~1095~~Matthew 24:15, and ~~3104~~2 Thessalonians 2:4-8. The false prophet has been previously referred to as the ecclesiastical head of the federated empire as the beast is the political head, and some would identify in him the Antichrist of 1 John 4, and other Scriptures. The fourth event is the doom of the kings (v. 21). The fifth is the binding of Satan during the Millennium (20:1-3). The sixth, the first resurrection and the millennial age (vv. 4-6). "The thrones and they that sat upon them" represent the raised and glorified saints in their capacity as judging and reigning (compare ~~1098~~Matthew 19:28, ~~4112~~1 Corinthians 6:2; ~~4621~~Revelation 3:21). "The souls of them that were beheaded" are the martyrs of the Tribulation period united to the church in Millennial glory. The "thousand years" is the Millennial period intervening between the first and second resurrection (~~2143~~Luke 14:13-14; ~~4622~~John 5:29; ~~4152~~1 Corinthians 15:52).

The seventh event is the loosing of Satan at the close of the Millennium and the doom of Gog and Magog (vv. 7-9). Here Satan is again seen (this time in his own person) at the head of a final effort to overthrow the kingdom of God on earth. In the Millennial age sin still will be in the hearts of men except as they are regenerated, and Satan will find good soil to work in when his liberty is restored. The identity of Gog and Magog is not revealed, but their purpose is clearly indicated in verse 9. The eighth event is the doom of Satan (v. 10) who, being cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, is not to be conceived of as then reigning in hell. This idea, borrowed from Milton, is not in the Bible. The ninth event is the doom of the unbelieving dead and the last judgment (vv. 11-15). The "dead" in this

case exclude all the redeemed at least up until the translation of the church, who have been in glory with God during the thousand years. But they include all the wicked dead from the beginning of the race until the end of the world, for this is the last judgment.

Note the distinction between "books" and "another book." The wicked and unbelieving have always chosen to be justified by their deeds rather than by faith in Christ, and the "books" represent the record of those deeds. The outcome (v. 15) shows the fallacy of their trust for the deeds of none were sufficient to justify. Only those "found written in the book of life" are saved.

There are three great judgments of mankind to be noted:

- (1) That of believers when Christ comes for His church (⁴⁷⁵⁰2 Corinthians 5:10) when not their salvation, but their rewards in glory are to be determined;
- (2) that of the living Gentile nations on the earth at the beginning of the Day of the Lord (⁴¹⁵²Matthew 25:32), with which is closely connected the judgment of Israel (³¹⁸⁷Ezekiel 20:37); and
- (3) this last judgment with which the history of the present earth ends.

"The second death" and the "lake of fire" are identical terms (⁶⁰¹⁴Revelation 20:14) and are used of the eternal state of the wicked. It is "second" relatively to the preceding death of the wicked in unbelief and rejection of God; their eternal state is one of eternal "death" (i.e., separation from God) in sin (⁴¹⁸¹John 8:21, 24). That the second death is not annihilation is shown by a comparison of ⁶⁸²⁰Revelation 19:20 with 20:10, for after one thousand years in the lake of fire the beast and false prophet are still there, undestroyed.

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the "Alleluias,"
2. Distinguish between the wife of the Lamb and the wife of Jehovah.
3. Name the nine events in their order listed under the head, "The Seven Dooms — Continued."
4. Give the history of Armageddon.
5. Describe and distinguish the last judgment.

6. Define the "second death."
7. What proves that it is not annihilation?

REVELATION 21-22 — THE SEVEN NEW THINGS

The seven "new things" are the new heaven, earth, peoples, city, temple, luminary, and paradise.

The "introduction" in this case covers the first two, the new heaven and the new earth (vv. 1-8). Observe the sequence of events suggested by verse 1: In the present time, we have the church, in the Millennium will be the kingdom, and after that the new world where God shall be all in all (see ~~1~~1 Corinthians 15:23-28). Man's soul is redeemed by regeneration through the Holy Spirit now, his body shall be redeemed at the resurrection, and his dwelling-place at the creation of the new heaven and earth. "And there shall be no more sea." The sea is the type of perpetual unrest, and its absence after the metamorphosis of the earth answers to the unruffled state of solid peace which shall then prevail. A river and water are spoken of in the next chapter, but no sea.

The descent of the holy city upon the earth as the tabernacle of God (vv. 2-8) reveals some wondrous and precious things. Always distinguish between this New Jerusalem out of heaven, and that earthly Jerusalem in which Israel in the flesh shall dwell during the Millennium. The one will be done away with when the other comes. This new Jerusalem will be God's dwelling place with men in the new earth. It is the antitype of the tabernacle in the wilderness, using the same Greek word as that used of Christ's tabernacling among us (~~4~~John 1:14). He was then seen in the weakness of the flesh, but at the new creation he shall be seen in the glory of his Godhead.

The Progression in this instance is the revelation of the New Jerusalem (21:9-22:5). All the details of this city suggest glory, beauty, security and peace. In the Millennium, literal Israel in the flesh dwelling in Jerusalem, is the antitype of the Old Testament earthly theocracy; but in this, the eternal age, the heavenly Jerusalem is the antitype of the church, composed of Jews and Gentiles. This idea seems to be suggested by the names of the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles written upon the gates and the foundations. The fact that no temple is seen in this city is remarkable, and

suggests that the means of grace cease when the end of grace has come. Uninterrupted, immediate, direct communion with God and the Lamb will then be enjoyed. The student will be struck by the comparison between the picture in 22:1-4, and the story of the garden of Eden and the expulsion of our first parents.

The Consummation is the epilogue of the book (vv. 6-21), in which there is nothing more solemn than verse 11, which emphasizes the thought that "the punishment of sin is sin, just as the reward of holiness is holiness." Eternal punishment is not so much an arbitrary law as a result necessarily following in the very nature of things as the fruit results from the bud. Notice the allusion to the eternity of sin (v. 15). May God quicken us who know these things to do our duty in bearing witness to them, that some by all means may be saved. This duty is set before us (v. 17), and "He which testifieth these things saith, surely, I come, quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

QUESTIONS

1. Name the seven new things.
2. Give the sequence of events as outlined in ~~4:1523~~ 1 Corinthians 15:23-28.
3. Interpret the reference to the sea.
4. How would you distinguish between the earthly and the New Jerusalem?
5. Of what two things is the latter the antitype?
6. How is this suggested?
7. What significance may be attached to the absence of a temple?
8. What two awful things about sin are here taught?