

Musings on the Apocalypse

by J. G. Bellet

Revelation 5

That now becomes the question, and accordingly it is raised in Revelation 5 immediately after the exhibition of the supreme throne in Revelation 4, and the answer to it from every quarter is this, the lamb that was slain, the lion of the tribe of Judah. He who sat on the throne joins to give that answer by letting the book pass from his hand into that of the lamb.

The living creatures and elders join in giving it by singing their song of gladness in the prospect of the earth being soon the scene of their glory. The hosts of angels join in giving it by now ascribing all strength and glory and faculty for dominion to the lamb. Every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and such as are in the sea, in their order and measure, join in giving it by uniting the name of the lamb with that of their creator and Lord, and they all at once feel as though their groans were already turned into praises.

For as soon as Adam fell, creation was sensitive of the cause and became a prisoner of hope, Romans 8, 20 to 22. But now that the lamb takes the book, she becomes at once equally sensitive of deliverance and glories in the liberty of the children of God. Thus is the question settled in heaven.

The title of the lamb to take dominion in the earth is owned and verified in the very place where alone all power and dominion or office could righteously be had, in the presence of the throne in heaven, for power belongeth to God.

Messiah owns that in Psalm 62, and here he again owns it by taking the book out of his hand, for that is an action which confesses on the part of the lamb

that powers are ordained of God, that the Lord in heaven is the foundation of office. Thus it is in heaven, and from the ancient of days, that the Son of Man takes dominion, and the nobleman receives his kingdom, Daniel 7, Luke 19.

Jesus would not take power from the God of this world, Matthew 4, 9 through 10, nor would he take it from the heated desire of the people, John 6, 15. He waits to take it, for then alone could it be righteously received from the hand of the God of heaven and earth, from whom Adam of old had received it. And as the lamb here owns God on the throne to be the source of power, so God on the throne owns the lamb to be his ordinance of power.

This action of taking the book has this concord of sweet sounds in it, for the lamb goes up to receive it, and the Lord allows it to pass from his hand. God's glory as supreme and only potentate is thus vindicated, and he commits power in the earth again to the hand of man, as fully sanctioning it then, and all the exercise of it, as of old he did in Adam, delighting again in this other image and likeness of himself. And this governs all the subsequent action of this wondrous book, for the title to the kingdom being thus approved in, and from, the due place, it only remains to clothe that title with possession.

The inheritance is the lamb's by purchase of blood. That blood sealed him as the fully obedient one, and therefore God could thus highly exalt him, Philippians 2. And that blood had also reconciled all things in heaven and earth, Colossians 1. And the inheritance being therefore thus purchased, he has now only to redeem it. His blood as the lamb slain had given him the title to it.

His strength as the lion of the tribe of Judah must now give him possession of it. In Israel there was the ordinance of redeeming the inheritance, as well as the heir or person, Leviticus 25. If either an Israelite or his possession had been sold, it was both his duty and right to ransom him and it.

Now Jesus has approved himself our kinsman in both ways. The Son of God became the Son of Man, and thus showed his kinsman nature. He died to purchase us and our inheritance by blood, and thus showed his kinsman love, and in this book of the revelation we get him, I judge, perfecting his acts as such kinsman, and redeeming our inheritance out of the hand of its corruptors.

The kinsman in Israel had title to redeem the inheritance, but then he had to do it on condition of discharging the debt that was on it. Jesus has paid his blood, a full and more than adequate value as is here owned, for the book, or title to the redeemed possession, passes into his hand, and hence the action flows. But the usurper of the inheritance is still to be removed, the enemy to be made the kinsman's footstool, and whether the action be properly that of God or that of the Lamb himself, the character of the action, I judge, is equally clear and certain.

The action is the redemption of the inheritance flowing from the Lord's acknowledged title. The book taken by the Lamb is the title deed, and that it is so, and not a book of instruction to him as the prophet of the church, or anything but this title deed that concerns the church's inheritance of the earth, appears to me from several considerations. First, because it lay in the hand of God Almighty, the Creator of all things, before he receives it.

Second, because it is taken by the Lord as the Lamb slain, and as the Lion of Judah, characters of purchase and strength. Third, because on the taking of it, the church sings in the prospect of her dominion over the earth, the angels who had been previously ministers of power in the earth, then transfer all that to the Lamb, and creation ends her groans in praises. These witnesses will establish in my mind the character of the book which the Lamb takes, and the book of the Revelation is in concord with this.

It is the history of the redemption of the inheritance. I mean, of course, the second part of it, after the third chapter. It is the Joshua of the New Testament.

It occupies the same place in the history of the acts of the Lord in the New Testament as that book of Joshua does of the acts of the Lord in the Old. It records the manner of redeeming the inheritance, as that did, and without his acts as recorded in Joshua, the Lord's ways in old time would have been imperfect. He had redeemed the heir out of Egypt by the hand of Moses, educated and trained him in the wilderness, and thus prepared him for rest in Canaan.

But he had still to redeem Canaan out of the hand of the Amorite, and this act of his is recorded in Joshua. Then, but not till then, the Lord went through the whole course of his mercy and strength, and so without the book of Revelation, the record of the Lord's acts would in like manner have been incomplete. The Gospels and the Epistles tell us, like the book of Moses, of the redemption of the heir and his education in the wilderness of this present evil world.

But now it is this closing book of Revelation that tells us of the redemption of the inheritance, and thus properly closes and completes the perfect acts of the Lord in behalf of the church of God.

Note, if no kinsmen were found able or willing to redeem the inheritance, it returned to the heir in the jubilee. The Lord of Israel thus kept in his own hand the means of restoring all things. He acted as Lord of the soil and said the land was his, Leviticus 25, 23. He created, as it were, a tenantry for forty-nine years, in the fiftieth year resuming the land and then settling it anew on his family according to his own mind. And so with this earth, of which the land of Israel was the sample, man may take it into his own hand for a time, and by his covetousness on the one hand or idle habits on the other, disturb God's order in it. But a day is coming, the promise shall be brought back to God again, and he will resettle it on his family according to his own holy and righteous principles. I might here observe that

sacrifices may be allowed among the Jews in the kingdom to keep in memory the blood of the lamb which was the price and purchase of the kingdom.