Revelation 19–21:8 — The Marriage of the Lamb, the Reign of Christ, and the Eternal State

Notes on The Revelation with Practical Reflections

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Chapter 19 – 21:1-8: The Marriage of the Lamb, the Reign Of Christ, and the Eternal State

We had the joy in heaven alluded to in the previous chapter. It is not now joy in the presence of the angels of God over repenting sinners, but it is a time of heavenly rejoicing, because the great harlot is judged, and brought under God's everlasting wrath. Those who seek their rest in the world's religion, and look for earthly glory, will find their end to be bitterness and wailing. The Church's hope is the coming of the Son from heaven. We expect to partake of the glory of God and of the Lamb. We cannot rest till we see Him who is the object of our heart's joy. Our place here is to be rejected with Christ, to suffer for Him and with Him, knowing that we have infinitely better in Christ; and in a little while it will be seen that it is so. But the world is already judged, and is only waiting the execution of the sentence. Men are labouring busily to set this poor doomed world in order, but it is labouring in the very fire for vanity; for that setting in order is reserved for Jesus to accomplish by His personal appearing: for He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet, and then the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Christians, too, may most perseveringly try to evangelize the world, in order to bring in a spiritual millennium, and court the world's help in furthering their endeavours, but it only produces confusion -Babylon the Great, which is so soon to have the heavy judgment of God. The truth is, that the Church of God is perfectly distinct from the world. No two things can be more opposite. Many try to harmonize them, but the Scripture declares that all that is not of the Father is of the world. It is, then, the judgment of the mystery of the great whore which is here accompanied with such rejoicing in heaven; and in the scene different companies are brought before us. We have -1. A great voice of much people in heaven, and their song is, Hallelujah! the salvation, and the glory, and the might belong to our God, because true and just are His judgments; for He hath judged the great whore which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand. And again they said, Hallelujah! {see Rev. 19:1-3}.

This ascription of praise and glory to God was the utterance of much people in heaven. 2. Then the four-and-twenty elders and four living creatures worship. They do not, as I judge, thus worship God on the ground of redemption, for we have not hitherto seen any proof of the latter being redeemed; but they fall down and worship God as ascribing praise and honor to Him for His judgment of this unchaste woman; they, worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Hallelujah {Rev. 19:4}!

Thus the saints, who, as we have before seen, have been previously caught up to meet the Lord in the air (or, according to the 20th verse of the last chapter, the saints, and the apostles, and prophets), prostrate themselves before Him that sat on the throne, and, like all others in heaven, give praise and

glory to God. This is the last time “the elders” are named in the Apocalypse; for “the Bride,” the Lamb’s wife, now becomes distinctively owned. 3. A voice from the throne is then heard commanding all the servants to praise God; for although much people {Rev. 19:1}, elders {Rev. 19:4},

and living creatures {see Rev. 19:4},

had rendered praise and worship, it seems as if there are other occupants of the heavenlies at this time who have not done so. Therefore the Seer tells us that a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, ALL ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great (Rev. 19:5).

The consequence is, that -4. A great multitude respond to this command with an outburst of loudest praise, as if all intelligences of heaven joined in one song of joy. It is such a crash of heavenly rejoicing, that it is compared to the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings. All, all in heaven unite in one loud Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth {Rev. 19:6}.

But let us not mistake the character of the praise. It is not that Christ reigns, but that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

The Lord Jesus will come forth as the King of kings, and Lord of lords; but here it is God reigneth. Neither is it a song of praise for the triumphs of grace through the death and resurrection of Christ; but it is praise for the righteous vengeance of God upon Babylon, the mother of harlots. It is not, therefore, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain {Rev. 5:12},

but, Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

What a difference this scene presents from the sorrow and trouble that many of the previous chapters have unfolded to us. This look into heaven is very happy and joyous. And I would here ask, Do not the opening verses of this chapter again plainly show that there are different companies in heaven? It seems to me impossible to

identify the various visions of redeemed ones that are brought before us in this book. Who could reasonably regard the elders of the fifth chapter as identical with the great multitude of the seventh chapter, though both ascribe all their salvation to the blood of the Lamb? for not only do the elders ask the question, who they are, and whence they came, but we get all the particulars of the throne and those surrounding it in both chapters, and in the seventh the great multitude is an additional company. Look also at the fifteenth chapter. There you have a redeemed people in no wise corresponding with the elders of the fifth chapter, or the great multitude of the seventh chapter; for they stand on a sea of glass, which was unoccupied in the fourth chapter, and their song of Moses tells us of their having been on Jewish ground. Again, the two witnesses that are seen in the eleventh chapter ascending up to heaven in a cloud in the sight of their enemies (Rev. 11:12), give a testimony that would be quite inconsistent for us who are members of the body of Christ, and called to suffer for Him, and to love our enemies as He did. (See Rev. 11:5.) And so in this nineteenth chapter, where the joy of heaven is opened to our spiritual intelligence, we have much people, elders, and living creatures,

and a great multitude,

saying, Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth {Rev. 19:6}.

Thus we see the joy of heaven when God takes matters into His own hand. Now it is man's day. Evil prospers. Christ is still rejected by most. The world lieth in the wicked one; Satan is still its prince. True it is that God exercises His restraining power, pours down His providential blessings, and publishes and uses, in His great mercy, the gospel of His grace. But when God interferes as claiming subjection, and holding man accountable for his course, after His various warnings and witnesses have been unheeded, of course it can only be in terrible judgment. Now, blessed be God, Divine mercy lingers, and His wondrous long-suffering patience is lengthened out; grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life {see Rom. 5:21}.

Therefore, it would be quite out of character to say now, in a dispensational sense, that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

We who have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, know that we stand in grace before Him, we rejoice in hope of the glory of God, we look forward to the time when God will take the things of earth into His own hand, and send Jesus to put all enemies under His feet. There seems to be a fitting propriety in God judging the false woman before the marriage of the Lamb, and His coming forth in glory; for when He is manifested His Church will be with Him. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory {see Col. 3:4}.

Thus God justifies the title of those who rest on the blood of His Son, puts honors on Him who alone is worthy, and condemns those who have despised the gospel of His grace, and trodden under foot the blood of atonement.

The pretender -- the unchaste one who used the name of Christ for selfish purposes, and loved Him not -- being judicially set aside as the object of God's eternal indignation, the Lamb's wife is now for the first time introduced. She is the object of God's wondrous grace, and for ever united to the Lamb as partaker of His changeless love; and sharer of His honor and glory. Afterward she is manifested; for in the ages to come God will show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:7). We therefore find that the praise in heaven for the judgment of the great whore is immediately followed with shoutings of joy and gladness, because the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready {Rev. 19:7}.

Hitherto the saints had known the joy of being with Christ around the throne of God; but now the Church is to have her distinctive place, the wife is to be presented. The Lord had spoken of a certain king, who made a marriage for his son; and now the time is come, and we are told that His wife hath made herself ready.

"By which," said a much loved brother, now with the Lord, "I understand this, that the saints, or redeemed, have till now been in heaven, as children of the Father's house, but that now they are embodied to shine together in the glories of the golden city as the Lamb's wife (Rev. 21:9). He has now

presented to Himself a glorious Church (Eph. 5). The saints are now ready to be manifested in the Son's kingdom, as they had till now been hidden in the Father's house." There is reason to believe that the bema, or judgment-seat of Christ, of 2 Cor. 5:10, the place for manifesting saints and adjudicating rewards, will take place prior to this, because it seems as if Christ came forth in glory just after the marriage, and then we know we shall be manifested with Him. The next action after the marriage shows us the opened heaven, and the Lord's glorious appearing. But however this may be, it is well to notice that we are here reminded that all our blessings are not of works, but the sovereign actings of Divine grace from first to last. Her spotless beauty is a gift. Her fitness for the glory is all through rich mercy. To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright [margin]: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints: (Rev. 19:8).

Thus all is to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved. This the saint well knows, and therefore delights to sing, -"When I stand before Thy throne, Dressed in beauty not mine own; When I see Thee as Thou art, Love Thee with unsinning heart; Then, Lord, shall I fully know -Not till then -- how much I owe."

But this is not all. There are those who are called or bidden to the marriage, and they are blessed. Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9).

Who can these be? Are they not guests? They seem very joyous, as if the marriage of the Lamb were connected with blessings to others; for they say, Let us rejoice {see Rev. 19:7}.

But it is not they who speak of those who are called to the marriage, but another -- the angel perhaps who showed him these things. John says, HE saith to me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.

And to this is added, These are the true sayings of God {Rev. 19:9}.

Now, as we have judged in our meditations on this wondrous book that the elders represent the heavenly saints -- all that are caught up to meet the Lord in the air at His coming -- and that in this 19th chapter those who compose the body, the Church, have their special place as the Lamb's wife, we can easily understand that there would be others there who might be guests at the marriage supper. They may, like John, be those who rejoice greatly, because of the Bridegroom's voice, and be friends of the Bridegroom rather than be the Bride. The Baptist said, He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom; but the friend of the Bridegroom, which standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled (John 3:29).

We should expect also from other Scriptures that the Church of the firstborn would be distinguished from other individual saints who lived prior to the formation of "the body." For instance, in Hebrews 11, after the apostle had recounted the blessed actings of many a true believer from Abel downwards, he tells us two things: 1st. That God has provided some better thing for us; and 2nd. That those who lived before us could not get into their state of perfection until we enter upon ours: that they without us should not be made perfect {Heb. 11:40}.

In Hebrews 12, the apostle mentions more than one class of redeemed ones. Besides “the Church,” we have just men.

We are spoken of as come to the Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect (Heb. 12:23).

It is remarkable that John should now fall down to worship the angel who had showed him these things; whether he thought it was Christ Himself, or he was overcome with the joy and the gladness, glory and brightness of the scene which he had been contemplating, we are not told; but the angel quickly forbids his idolatry, and assures him that he is but a servant, and that God is the true object of worship. See thou do it not. I am thy fellowservant, and [a fellowservant] of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God {Rev. 19:10}.

He does not say that he is a saint, but that, like the saints, he too is a servant of God. The testimony of Jesus,

that is, the testimony which proceeds from Jesus, whether through me, or you, or the prophet, is the spirit of prophecy, or, as others read it, the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.

This chapter is full of contrasts. Here are two women, two suppers, two armies, and two kings. The great whore stands in

contrast with the Lamb’s wife, the supper of the great God with the marriage supper of the Lamb, the armies of heaven with the armies of the beast, and the beasts and kings of the earth with the King of kings, and Lord of lords. John sees heaven opened. He had seen a door opened in heaven in the fourth chapter, and heard a voice calling him up to witness things in connection with the throne of God; but now the heaven is opened for the full display of the glory and power of the Lord Himself, and His hosts, in judgment upon living persons. The wrath of the Lamb is now really come. Every eye beholds Him coming in the clouds of heaven, and they also which pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth wail because of Him. The period of God’s dealing with the nations by providential judgments, and special outpourings of His wrath, brought no repentance, but called forth more thorough blasphemy and daring impiety; it is time, therefore, that Christ, the Lord of all, should assert His rights as Heir of all things, and the rightful Head of all principality and power, and that He should have those who have suffered with Him and for Him -- His joint-heirs -- with Him. The Lord is thus symbolized as sitting upon a white horse, the emblem of power in the earth, in the attitude of taking vengeance, and putting all enemies under His feet. It is a deep reality, and very, very awful. What solemnity of soul we should have when we give utterance to such lines as -“Lo, He comes! from heaven descending, Once for favoured sinners slain; Thousand thousand saints attending, Swell the triumph of His train! Hallelujah! Jesus comes, and comes to reign.”

He is not now seen with visage marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men; not now emptying Himself, and making Himself of no reputation; not now to be spit upon, or made sin and a curse for us, in being nailed to a tree; not now seen in ignominy, poverty, weakness, and desertion; but manifesting His own glory and power, asserting His own rights. As another has said, “He

is here seen putting on all the glories He has acquired, and all the honors befitting such an occasion." As to His titles, we may notice first of all that He is called FAITHFUL AND TRUE {Rev. 19:11};

for He proved Himself emphatically to be the faithful witness, always doing those things which pleased God, and always faithful to man. He never failed. He alone could say, I am the truth {John 14:6};

for He only was ever true to God, and true to all else. No other witness on earth than Jesus could be deservedly called Faithful and True.

He was faithful and true in humiliation; He is now faithful and true as a great High Priest in heaven; and -- oh, how solemn! -- He will be faithful and true in judging the world in righteousness. We find, too, that He had A NAME WRITTEN WHICH NO MAN KNEW BUT HE HIMSELF {Rev. 19:12}.

What mortal could ever know the name of Him who was God manifested in the flesh? Who can conceive the name of Him whose love passeth knowledge? How can we, then, venture to express ourselves on that which we are told no man knows? But of this we

are assured, that He was glorified with the glory which He had with the Father before the world was; that it was given Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, and to be Head of all principality and power; also, that all judgment is committed unto Him, because He is the Son of man. The children of Israel had to carry certain parts of the tabernacle which they dared not uncover; and we will not attempt to unravel what God has not revealed. Perhaps it is the most fruitful source of deadly error. It should be enough for us to be told, that

He shall yet then wear His many crowns, and all shall pay homage to Him. As King of Israel, King of nations, King over all the earth, King of kings, His worth and supremacy shall be manifested and acknowledged. While we anticipate this glorious display of Him who was once mocked with a crown of thorns, we can heartily unite with another in singing -"Our longing eyes would fain behold That bright and blessed brow, Once wrung with bitterest anguish, wear Its crowns of glory now."

no man knoweth the Son, but the, Father (Matt. 11:27).

This mystery seems to refer to the divinity of Him who is thus brought before us, who had a name written which no man knew but He Himself.

We are told also that His name is called THE WORD OF GOD {Rev. 19:13}.

He is the embodiment of the written word. He could say, Thy law is within my heart {Psa. 40:8}.

It is He who was in the beginning, that was with God and was God, by whom all things were made. The Word was made flesh, whose glory John beheld -- the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. It shows us His divine, eternal character, and His fitness for carrying out the purposes set forth in the Word of God. He also bears on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS {Rev. 19:16};

for He will be manifested as the only Potentate, to whom all powers, dominions, and authorities must be subject. Now His Lordship is denied; but then every knee must bow. Still the world's cry is, We have no king but Cæsar {John 19:15};

but then it will be seen that all power is given unto Him, and that His dominion is universal and everlasting. In the judgment which ushers in His kingdom, as well as during His millennial reign, He will show that faithfulness, and truth, and universal supremacy belong to Him. The Lord's aspect is one of judgment -- strict, righteous indignation according to the word of God. He will not then preach, pardon and salvation, and go into every city and village preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God as He once did, but, as we are solemnly reminded, in righteousness He doth judge and make war {Rev. 19:11}.

Alas! who can stand when the Lord marks iniquity? Who can meet His angry frown? Who can escape His flaming eye? No creature can avoid His searching; nothing can be covered from His sight. On His head were many crowns (diadems), (Rev. 19:12).

The stupendous work that He accomplished on the tree witnesses that He is worthy of all honor, and glory, might, majesty, and dominion. Man has failed in every responsibility, and corrupted everything with which he has been entrusted; but Jesus obeyed and honored God in every circumstance, and could truly say to His Father, I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do {John 17:4}.

He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood (Rev. 19:13)

tells us of His treading the winepress of the wrath of God. How different is this scene to that of His being nailed to the tree, when all forsook Him, and He poured out His soul unto death; when He shed His blood for many, for the remission of sins. When He is revealed from heaven in flaming fire, His vengeance must fall on those who know not God, and obey not the gospel. The two-edged sword of His mouth must rebuke the nations, and His fiery indignation devour the adversaries. The Lord will not be alone when He comes to exercise judicial power. We are told, that when He comes out of heaven, the armies which are in heaven followed Him upon white horses {Rev. 19:14}.

This we should have expected from the Scriptures -Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? Know ye not that ye, shall judge angels? (1 Cor. 6:2, 3).

But there are other reasons why we consider that the armies which follow Christ out of heaven are saints. 1. The Lord's promises. He that overcometh, and keepeth my works to the end, to Him will I give power over the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessel of a potter shall they be broken to shivers even as I received of my Father (Rev. 2:26, 27).

Again: To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne (Rev. 3:21).

The vision we are considering describes this very scene; for we are told that the Lord will smite the nations, and rule them with a rod of iron. (Rev. 19:15). It is the same scene, too, that is contemplated in

the second Psalm, in connection with Christ as King in Zion, where Jehovah says, Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash themn pieces like a potter's vessel (Psa. 2:8, 9).

From these Scriptures we expect the saints to be with Christ when He comes to judge. 2. It is positively stated, that when Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory (Col. 3:4).

3. The armies which follow Christ out of heaven not only reign with Him in power and glory, as symbolized by their being on white horses, but are clothed in fine linen, white and clean, which in the eighth verse is said to be

the righteousness of saints (Rev. 19:8).

4. But if any doubt should remain on the mind, we find in Rev. 17:14, where the same scene is alluded to, that those who are with the Lamb, the Lord of lords, and King of kings,

are called, and chosen, and faithful (Rev. 17:14).

No one, I suppose, would doubt that the words, "called," "chosen," and "faithful" must apply to saints. We never read of angels as "called," though we doubt not that "mighty angels" will accompany the Lord on certain occasions. Whenever the circumstances are connected with formal judgment, then we have angels (Matt. 25:31). We know how often the word "called" is used in the epistles in reference to saints, and sometimes "chosen" and "faithful" also. The supper of the great God {Rev. 19:17},

or, as most critics prefer, the great supper of God, is then brought before us. The fowls seem summoned in readiness to feed upon the carcases as soon as the people are slain. An angel stands in the sun, the most central place for summoning the visitants of this great supper. It is very, appalling. He cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great (Rev. 19:17, 18).

What a supper! How wide the contrast with the marriage supper of the Lamb! The prophet Ezekiel refers to it; and it is interesting to observe that, like other prophets, he shows us that Israel's blessing on the earth is preceded by judgment. He first tells us that the feathered fowl and beast of the field shall eat the flesh and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, and then adds, I will set my glory among the heathen, . . . and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel . . . neither will I hide my face from them any more (Ezek. 39:17-29).

Our chapter then speaks of the great battle of Armageddon referred to before. The apostasy and wickedness of man have now culminated to the highest pitch of daring outrage against Christ. This is where the present denial of the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, will lead men. The beast, and

the kings of the earth, and their armies, are confederated together to make war against the Lamb, and against His army. The result is as we might expect; the Lord consumes the wicked one with the spirit of His mouth, and destroys him with the brightness of His coming {see 2 Thess. 2:8}.

The beast, and the false prophet who wrought miracles before him, fall under special judgment, and it is executed at once; both are cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone, so that they are there a thousand years before Satan. The remainder, that is, the kings of the earth and their armies, fall under the vengeance of the Lord -- they are slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse; then the great supper of God takes place, when all the fowls are filled with their flesh. This is a judgment of the Lord Jesus on living persons; their bodies will be raised again, with others who have died in their sins, at the close of the millennium. The treading

of the winepress may be the judgment of false professors. It is referred to in Rev. 14:18-20. But the judgment of the beast and false prophet seems not only summary, but final. It is not the judgment of the sheep and the goats of Matt. 25, which is one on living nations at the commencement of the millennium. Thus we have seen the whole system of Babylon, the beast and false prophet, the kings in league with him, and their armies, judicially set aside; the next chapter shows us the binding of Satan, the reign of Christ, the first resurrection, and eventually the final judgment of Satan and the wicked dead. How little do men think where they are rushing! What madness to pursue the course of this world, which ere long will have such a termination! How immense is the difference of being with Christ and against Him! Events are rapidly rolling on towards this awful crisis. Time flies, oh, how swiftly, and with what amazing speed circumstances are culminating towards this terrible climax! What spiritual mind can fail to perceive the present practical denial of the Lordship of Jesus, the wide-spread spirit of insubordination, the ready way which men have of accounting for almost everything, as if there were no God, the popularity of the confederating principle, the almost universal effort to exalt man, the rapid increase of Christless religion, and all, too, connected with vast worldly prosperity and advancement! Thus the eyes of many are blinded to the precipice they are eagerly rushing over, and souls are insensible to the fiery indignation and vengeance so soon coming. Blessed are they who have to do with Christ Himself, who know what it is to commit the keeping of their souls to Him who died on the Cross to save sinners, but is now on the right hand of God. We cannot too often testify to those around us that the Savior of sinners is a person -- the Son of God; He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and be that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:36). “Thou precious Lamb of God, We do believe Thy love; We rest upon Thy word, And hope to reign above In realms of never-ending bliss -With Thee, our perfect righteousness.”

Satan, who had been thrust out of heavenly places in the 12th chapter, and who had come down and given his mighty energy to the beast and false prophet, is now chained and imprisoned in the abyss for a thousand years. (Rev. 20:1, 2). An angel is the instrument used. John says, I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no

more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled, and after that he must be loosed for a little season {Rev. 20:1-3}.

Satan will be then under restraint for a time, and what an immense difference this will make to the world. Now he is mighty in power. He is called the Dragon, because of his terrible power: Satan, because he is man's adversary: Devil, because he is the great accuser: and old Serpent, because he had been the seducer from the beginning. His power is very great, so that he is called the prince of this world, and is said to be going about as a roaring lion,

seeking whom he may devour. He is called the god of this world, and as such blinds the eyes of the children of men, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of God should shine unto them. He sows tares where the Lord's good seed springs up, and thus makes false professors. He is the accuser of the brethren, and deceiver of the whole world, the father of lies -- a liar and murderer from the beginning. He tempts the children of God, seeks to hinder their communion with the Father and the Son, and with one another, and endeavours to seduce from the simplicity of Christ; and to accomplish his purposes, transforms himself and his servants into angels of light. He is still the prince of the power of the air, has access into heavenly places, tries to hinder believers from coming to the mercy-seat by the blood of Jesus, and works in the children of disobedience. These terrible ways of Satan are to be stopped, and this earth, prior to the eternal state, is to know the peaceful effect of the absence of this great enemy, and the presence and reign of Christ. All Christians are agreed that this time of universal blessedness will take place, but many are looking for its introduction by the gradual spread of the gospel, instead of by the Lord's judicial interference, taking out of His kingdom them that offend and do iniquity, and leaving a people on the earth for blessing. It need scarcely be noticed how important it is to gather from the Scriptures the Lord's mind on the subject, and how much it must necessarily affect our walk and service. If the Lord's coming be our true scriptural hope, and that the object of the gospel is not to convert the world, but to gather out an elect people both of Jews and Gentiles, until the one new man {Eph. 2:15}

is complete, and those who are Christ's at His coming are caught up to meet Him in the air, how detached from the world, and how much in heaven must the soul be, that has this blessed hope in real exercise and power! He that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself even as He is pure {see 1 John 3:3}.

Thus the binding of Satan, and judgment of the living wicked, which we have been considering, usher in "the day of the Lord." Other parts of Scripture show there will be other judgments also at the Lord's appearing. In fact judgment, and terrible vengeance characterize it, though mercy accompanies it. The Old Testament Scriptures abound with prophetic announcements of "the day of the Lord"; but the coming of the Lord Jesus to receive us unto Himself -- to be caught up to meet him in the air, is a New Testament revelation. By the word of the Lord {1 Thess. 4:15}

and Behold, I shew you a mystery {1 Cor. 15:51},

tell us this. In the day of the Lord many events will take place, and some widely differing from each other. The day of the Lord has got its morning, midday, and evening. The fearful judgments we have been considering occur in the morning. This is followed by the reign of peace. The Lord will then fulfil His promises to Israel, of arising upon them as the Sun of righteousness, with healing in His wings, and will number up His jewels, the remnant of the Jews that have been serving Him in a day of such fiery persecution. Israel shall then know Him whom they pierced to be their Savior and Deliverer; they shall be all taught of God, all righteous, a nation born at once, and shall

blossom and bud, and fill the face of the whole earth with fruit. Creation, too, shall be delivered from its present bondage of corruption, and universal homage shall be paid to Jesus the Lord; for as we saw in the fifth chapter, every creature in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth, will be saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever {Rev. 5:13};

or, according to the last Psalm, when everything that hath breath shall praise the Lord. Thus shall the day of the Lord have its meridian glory and brightness. We can scarcely conceive the immense results of Satan's being bound, and of Christ's presence, power, and glory. But immense as they will be, the dispensation will still be marked with imperfection. Sin will be there, though kept down by the rod of Christ's power. The marks of sin and curse will be there too, for dust shall be the serpent's meat {Isa. 65:25}.

The perfect eternal condition will not take place till after the millennium. Yet the blessing will be very wonderful, for Christ shall be King over the whole earth. Satan will be bound, and the rule will be perfect: thus two evils fraught with misery to our race will be taken away: but man's heart will not be thoroughly subjected to Christ, thus there will be room for the temptation of Satan when he is let loose again. The Church, though associated with Christ in His reign and kingdom, is, properly speaking, always regarded as belonging to the heavenlies. "Oh what a bright and blessed world This groaning earth of ours shall be, When from His throne the tempter hurled, Shall leave it all, O Lord, to Thee. "Come, Savior, then, o'er all below Shine brightly from Thy throne above; Bid heaven and earth Thy glory know, And all creation feel Thy love. "But brighter far that world above, Where we as we are known shall know; And, to the sweet embrace of love, Reign o'er this ransomed earth below. "O blessed Lord, with longing eyes That blissful hour we long to see; While every worm and leaf supplies Proof of the curse, and calls for Thee."

But, alas! there are the dark shades of evening belonging to this day. Satan will be let loose, and many will be again deceived; and such bold rebellion against God will be manifested by man as shall bring down fiery wrath from heaven. Lastly, the wicked dead, and Satan, will receive their final sentence. The effect of Satan's being loosed for a little season proves again the utterly bad condition of man, and that nothing short of being born again of God's Spirit can fit him for the enjoyment of God. Here are myriads of human beings, countless as the sand upon the sea shore, who have long known the Lord's rule and presence as King over all the earth, have outwardly enjoyed the blessedness of His reign, have beheld the pleasantness and wisdom of His ways, the brightness of His glory, and the peace

of His government; but no sooner is temptation presented by Satan, than men hearken to his lie, and turn against God and His people. The “nations” which will then be on earth will welcome the devourer’s

falsehood, refuse the truth of God, and go up against the camp of “the saints,” and the beloved city; but God’s fiery judgment from heaven will quickly devour them. This shows us what man is. Man had been tried in the presence of Christ in humiliation, and then he will be tried after having known the personal reign and glory of Christ, and will be again proved to be thoroughly bad. Like every other test, it shows that the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; so that they that are in the flesh cannot please God {Rom. 8:7, 8}.

And that except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God {John 3:5}.

The test again reminds us that nothing can endure that is not based on the blood of the Lamb, and that the blood is the foundation and security of all blessing, and the spring of all our joy and worship. How precious this should make Jesus to us! “Thy name we bless, Lord Jesus Thy name all names excelling; How great Thy love, All praise above, Should every tongue be telling. “Thy Father’s loving-kindness In giving Thee was shown us: Now by Thy blood Redeemed to God, As children He doth own us.”

Now let us turn to the more pleasant part of this vision. John saw thrones, and many who lived (or came to life), and they reigned with Christ. The reign extends over a thousand years. The first resurrection is defined. It is the only part of Scripture wherein the words first resurrection {Rev. 20:5, 6}

are found. It is therefore very important that we should understand it. There are three companies of persons here included in the definition of first resurrection. They are clustered together in the fourth verse. John says: -1. I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them {Rev. 20:4}.

These seem to me to be the saints that had been caught up to meet the Lord at His coming. This view is supported by the fact, that the only redeemed company sitting on thrones in the Revelation are the heavenly saints symbolized by the four and twenty elders. 2. John saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God {Rev. 20:4}.

Now, I ask, can this company be any other than that described on the opening of the fifth seal? There we had souls under the altar {see Rev. 6:9}

who were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held. They are evidently those of the Jewish remnant who go forth with the gospel of the kingdom, after the Church is gone, and in the first half of the week before the Man of Sin is fully developed. 3. John saw others: the next clause may be read,

And such as had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived [that is, lived again in resurrection] and reigned with Christ a thousand years {see Rev. 20:4}.

In this last company we have those in Rev. 13:15, who were put to death after the rising up of the beast, that is, after the midst of the week of Dan. 9:27, because they would not worship the image of the beast. Observe that each of these companies has previously been brought before us in the Apocalypse, that they follow in chronological order, and that one is off the scene before the other that follows is brought into existence. For instance, the first company on thrones are in heaven before those represented by the souls under the altar are put to death; and it is after these are slain that the abomination of desolation is set up, and consequently many martyred for not worshiping the beast. Again, it is very important to notice that all these companies are said to be the first resurrection. After a short parenthetic sentence, we are plainly told this is the first resurrection {Rev. 20:5}.

Here, then, we have a Scripture definition, and nothing can be more necessary, in seeking to understand the word of God, than accepting Scripture definitions. Many mistakes occur for lack of this. There is another remarkable definition in Ephesians 1. We are there told what the Church is; it is said to be the body {Eph. 1:22, 23}

of Him who is ascended far above all heavens. We need not question, then, what the Church is, nor what the first resurrection is -- both are defined. Neither must we confound the two; for the first resurrection comprehends, as we have seen, more than the Church. The first resurrection is distributive. At the close of the reign of Christ, others will live again, or rise from the dead; for all that are in the graves must hear the voice of Jesus, and come forth; but the resurrection of damnation, as it is called, will not take place till the thousand years are completed. The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years are finished (see Rev. 20:5).

But that there might be no question as to the eternal happiness and blessing of those who live and reign with Christ a thousand years, we are further told that those who have part in the first resurrection are blessed and holy {Rev. 20:6}; the second death, the lake of fire, which will operate eternally on the lost, hath no power over them; and not only have they the negative mercy of the everlasting deliverance from that, but the positive blessing of happy relationship to God -- they shall be priests of God and of Christ (Rev. 20:6). The devil receives his final judgment at the close of the thousand years. We are told that the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever (Rev. 20:10). Our destiny, then, is to be for ever with the Lord {see 2 Cor. 5:8; 1 Thess. 4:17};

as Jesus said, Where I am, there shall also my servant be {John 12:26}.

Our place now is one of suffering with and for Him -- sympathy with a rejected Christ. To have fellowship with Him in suffering now, and fellowship with Him in glory by-and-by, properly belong

to us who are members of His body. We should, then, be always bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus, knowing that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. “The way may be rough, but it cannot be long”;

for yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. “And though there intervene Rough seas and stormy skies, Faith will not suffer aught to screen Thy glory from mine eyes. “There shall all clouds depart, The wilderness shall cease; And sweetly shall each gladdened heart Enjoy eternal peace.”

Nothing can be more plainly set forth than the difference between the first resurrection

and the resurrection of the rest of the dead {Rev. 20:5}

described in this chapter. The period of a thousand years intervenes between them. Those in the one live again and reign with Christ; the others rise not till the thousand years are completed, and are then judged every man according to their works {Rev. 20:13};

so that every one who is not found written in the Book of Life is cast into the lake of fire. We must remember that death is never presented to us in Scripture as annihilation; for not only do men live again, body and soul, after the first death, but those who will be in the second death are described as tormented day and night for ages of ages. There is that existing principle in man which renders him capable of receiving everlasting punishment {Matt. 25:46}.

Hence, we read not only of God being able to destroy both body and soul in hell, but oh, how solemn! that process of punishment is described as an everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power {2 Thess. 1:9}. The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal {2 Cor. 4:18}.

And we may be assured that our Lord would not have mentioned five times, within the compass of a few verses, the dreadful miseries of hell-fire as the fire that never shall be quenched, and where their worm dieth not, if He had intended us to understand that death is annihilation, and that the punishment of sinners will be limited and temporal. (See Mark 9:43-48.) Does not our Lord here, in speaking of the Gehenna, or hell-fire, refer to the valley of Hinnom, where the people burnt their children alive? 11It is called also the valley of Tophet, from the fire-stove in which the children were burnt. This valley was the scene of those wicked sacrifices; and after Josiah’s time it is commonly believed that the valley of Hinnom (Geennan, Greek) continued to be the place of abominable filthiness and pollution,

11. Gehenna is the Greek for the Hebrew word Ge, a valley, and Hinnom, the name of the possessor -- the valley of Hinnom.

where offal and carcases and filthiness were burnt by fire, and worms were seen preying upon the unconsumed pieces. Is there not a contrast drawn by our Lord between these fires which are quenched, and the worms which have died, and the eternal condition where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched (Josh. 18:16; 2 Kings 23:10; 2 Chron. 28:3; Jer. 7:31, 32; 19:5, 6; 32:35).

(See Parkhurst's Lexicon.) It is worthy of remark, that the same word is used by our Lord, in Matt. 25, for "everlasting life," and "everlasting punishment," as is used for the King eternal, immortal, invisible, and only wise God. (1 Tim. 1:17). Note also, that this word translated "punishment," is necessarily translated "torment" in 1 John 4:18, for fear hath torment.

Happy those who, in child-like simplicity, consent to wholesome words, even to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. We should not forget that man, at creation, was distinguished from every other being which God fashioned, not only in being made after the image of God, but also in receiving the breath of life, and thus he became emphatically a living being. We read that the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground;

and it is added, that God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (Gen. 2:7).

This distinguishes man from every other creature. Nor can we find a single passage in Scripture which speaks of one general resurrection. We hesitate not to say, that the idea is entirely opposed to the word of God. The parable of the sheep and the goats, in Matt. 25, which is so often referred to in proof of it, if carefully examined, will not be found to contain any idea of resurrection at all. There is not a person there said to be raised from the dead. It is a judgment of nations {Matt. 25:32}

on the earth by the Lord, when He sits on His throne as King, in relation to the testimony of "the gospel of the kingdom," which will yet go forth by a remnant of Jews. There are, therefore, not only sheep and goats, but a third party, the King's brethren {Matt. 25:40}.

The parable of the wheat and tares, and also of the good fish and bad, in Matt. 13, are also without any reference to the resurrection either of believers or of unbelievers. It is Christ, when He is revealed from heaven (though angels are occupied in the work), clearing the living wicked out of His kingdom by executing judgment upon them: severing the wicked from among the just, and establishing His kingdom in the earth. The prophet Malachi, in speaking of this time says, that He shall tread down the wicked, and arise as the Sun of righteousness, with healing in His wings, unto those who fear His name (Mal. 4:1-3). The people of Israel always get into their blessings through judgment. The only passage I know, that appears to give the least colour to the thought of one general resurrection, is that found in the 12th chapter of Daniel. At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a

time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt, etc. (Dan. 12:1, 2).

But here note, -1. That it is Daniel's people, the Jews, to which this prophecy refers: Thy people {Dan. 12:1}

and many of them {Dan. 12:1}.

2. That it is connected with the great “tribulation” -- the time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation (Dan. 12:1)

-- which we know from 2 Thess. 2, Rev. 19, and other Scriptures, will precede the millennium; whereas the chapter before us positively states that the resurrection of the dead, small and great {Rev. 20:12},

is not till after the reign of a thousand years. 3. We have been delivered from the wrath to come long ago by the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; but Daniel’s people have not yet been delivered. Christ will close the great tribulation by coming as their Deliverer, and judging the wicked -Thy people shall be delivered {Dan. 12:1}. (See also Rom. 11:26.)

the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:14).

as the time of reward to His disciples. 2. He spoke of some being accounted worthy to obtain the resurrection from the dead (Luke 20:35). Mark, from the dead

-- from among the dead ones. The idea of resurrection of the dead was not a difficulty with our Lord’s disciples; but when our Lord spoke of rising from the dead, they questioned one another what the rising from the dead should mean (Mark 9:9, 10). Our Lord’s was a resurrection from the dead. The prescribed order of resurrection is, first, Christ the firstfruits;

next, they that are Christ’s at His coming {1 Cor. 15:23};

then cometh the end, etc. 3. Jesus also spoke of a resurrection of life, and a resurrection of judgment (John 5:29). 4. The apostle Paul sets the truth of the resurrection of those in Christ before the sorrowing Thessalonian believers for their comfort (1 Thess. 4:16-18). 5. In this twentieth of Revelation we have, Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection {Rev. 20:6},

and the resurrection of the dead, small and great, not till a thousand years afterwards.

This passage in Daniel may not refer to the literal resurrection of the body at all; but if it did, the scene occurring before the millennium, cannot refer to the judgment of the great white throne, which is after the millennium. It is most probably a political resurrection of many of the Jewish people hidden among the nations. They will have a new existence, and in that state some will awake to everlasting life, and some to shame. Isaiah seems to refer to the resuscitation of Israel in language something like the prophet Daniel. He says,

We might make other quotations in proof of the different orders of resurrection, but enough, we trust, has been produced to refute the popular thought of there being only one general resurrection. It is the resurrection of damnation, or judgment, that we are now about to consider, which, if I mistake not, consists of those only who have died without Christ. Jesus said,

Thy dead shall live: my dead body [or carcase, that is, Israel in her spiritual deadness, called by Jehovah “my dead body,”] shall arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust: for thy dew is as the

dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead (Isa. 26:19).

Those, therefore, who are in the resurrection of damnation or judgment, are not only persons who have actually died, but who are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins.

To show that it is connected with a time of vengeance on others, the prophet adds, Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity [Are not these the living wicked?]: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain (Isa. 26:20, 21).

Ezekiel speaks of the future resurrection and restoration of Israel in the well-known vision of dry bones (Ezek. 37:12). But suppose we could not answer every question that may be proposed in favour of one general resurrection, we have positive teaching in Scripture of the reverse, and it is always happy to get upon the ground of positive and revealed truth. 1. Our Lord Himself spoke of

He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation [or judgment] (John 5:24).

At the close of the millennium, the present earth and heaven flee away before the great White Throne, and Him that sat on it. This is an important point, because it proves that the Lord coming in the clouds of heaven, when every eye shall see Him, when Israel, and all the tribes of the earth, will mourn because of Him, cannot be at this time, but must be pre-millennial, because Israel's restoration and the earth's blessing follow the judgments then executed upon the living. The time we are contemplating, of the great White Throne, seems connected with the created heaven and earth passing away, as if it were to make room for this great Throne and great judgment. Not a word, therefore, is here put forth about the Lord's coming, but about One sitting upon a great White Throne. It is not the throne of grace which we now know, nor the throne of peace which the millennial glory will know, but it is the throne of final and eternal judgment; and although myriads may be brought before it, there shall not be a single case that will not have its special investigation; for we are told that John saw in the vision, that

Notes on the Revelation they were judged every man, according to their works {Rev. 20:13}.

The throne is described as "white" to show its infinite holiness and unsullied purity; and the awful extent and eternal importance of the business it will transact are enough to show why it is called "great." The class judged are the dead, small and great {Rev. 20:12},

and the character of the judgment is according to their works. The Lord Jesus is, doubtless, the Judge; for while we know that God is Judge of all, we are further told that the Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son. From His face the heaven and the earth flee away. His Church will not be before the throne to be judged; for she has already been reigning with Christ a thousand years, and the judgment of her sin and guilt the Savior bore for her in matchless grace upon the cross. This judgment will be but a continuance of the regal power and authority of Christ; for He will reign till He hath put down all authority and power; and the last enemy which shall be destroyed is death. We expect,

therefore, to be associated with Christ, sitting on His throne with Him in this concluding part of His reign and execution of His mighty power (see l Cor. 6:2; Rev. 3:21); It is, I say, a judgment of men according to works -a final judgment of sinners. They had died Christless, and now they must render an account to Him who is able to judge righteously. And who can stand such a process? If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand {Psa. 130:3}?

The hidden things are now made manifest, and the secrets of men's hearts judged by Him from whom no secrets are hid. The small and great stand before God {Rev. 20:12}.

Wherever their bodies had been, they can be detained no longer. The sea, which has long swallowed up in its liquid grave multitudes of the human family, is made to give up every one of its dead. Death -- whether the corrupted elements of its many victims lie either in the trackless desert, the Alpine snows, the pathless forest, the unfrequented valley, or elsewhere -- is made to deliver up each one of Adam's family that its chilly hand had seized. And Hades, -- the place of departed spirits, too, must now own that Jesus is the only Potentate and Lord of the dead as well as of the living, and yield up every soul of man. There can be no possibility of escape. Almighty power commands; the omniscient eye of God sees that not one is wanting. He, from whose presence none can flee, and no place exclude His search, ranges all the dead, small and great, from Cain down to the last link in the chain of sinners, before Himself. Those who once despised Jesus, and set at nought the glorious testimony to the priceless value of His all-cleansing blood, now see Him with His wounded hands and feet as their Judge. Those who prided themselves on their own imaginary goodness, and sought to cover their nakedness with the fig-leaf apron of self-righteousness, now find its thorough failure to hide the leprous spots of a foul and fallen nature before the Lord. Ah! who can stand before God to be judged according to his works? What can satisfy God's eye, but that which is based on the sinatoning efficacy of the precious blood of Christ? The character of the judgment is detailed, and so just and pure and perfect will it be, that not a soul shall be ever able to complain; every conscience shall be so convicted, and every case so thoroughly weighed in the balance of truth and justice, that all shall be speechless, and hang down their heads in unutterable

remorse and despair at the just sentence of the Judge, which shall silence every tongue, and bring everlasting glory to the power and faithfulness of God. The books were opened {Rev. 20:12}.

This is more than one book -- what books can they be? We read of a book of remembrance. What could this be for, but to convict those standing at the bar of Divine justice? for God needs not to be reminded of anything -- all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him. A man will then read at a glance the whole history of himself. God will set his sins in order before his eyes; his secret sins in the light of his countenance. It will be a dark, black catalogue, without one good thing to shed a ray of brightness on the dismal page; for they that are in the flesh cannot please God {Rom. 8:8}.

The Bible will doubtless be "opened" too, as another witness; for, according to the Scripture, in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established {Matt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1}.

The Savior said, The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day (John 12:48).

Those who knew nothing of the stern requirements of the law, or the shadowy testimony of oft-repeated ritualism and sacrifice, will find that as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law (Rom. 2:12);

and that the laws of nature, and the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are so clearly seen, and the eternal power and Godhead of the Creator understood, that they are without excuse; and it shall be proved that they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts, etc., and changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen (Rom. 1:25).

Others will be there who had long, more or less, boasted that they were Moses' disciples, but were lawbreakers; and it is written, that as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law (Rom. 2:12);

this is another Bible testimony. And who can possibly escape the condemnation of this witness, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ? for by the law is the knowledge of sin {Rom. 3:20}.

Instead of the law of Moses giving any shelter to a Christless soul, it has always been the ministration of condemnation and death. Now we know,

says the apostle Paul, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight (Rom. 3:19, 20).

Again, we are told, that as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse (Gal. 3:10).

What madness and folly it is for men to take refuge in law-keeping, or any deeds of the flesh, for justification before God! The very thing that many are vainly hoping in, as giving them superiority over some of their neighbours, is that which justly proves their guilt and condemnation; in fact, the religion to which they so tenaciously cling is the death-warrant of their eternal perdition. But others will be there who have called themselves Christians, or at least have come under the gospel's joyful sound. The Bible is a witness to them. Its many warning voices against a name to live while being spiritually dead, the judgments threatened on mere professors, or those who had no love of the truth, and obeyed not the gospel; the Savior's oft-repeated testimony against Pharisaic hypocrisy; the sound of alarm against "tares," "foolish virgins," and all others who received not that blessed Savior, who is alone the Way, the Truth, and the Life; the oft-repeated testimony of the inspired page, of the impossibility of the unrighteous entering into the kingdom of heaven; and of any escaping who neglect so great salvation; and such terrible declarations as, He that hath not the Son of God hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him {see John 3:36},

and He that believeth not shall be damned {Mark 16:16};

most justly settle the eternal doom of those who acknowledge but obey not the Holy Scripture. But there will be another book opened -the book of life {Rev. 20:12}

-- another swift and solemn witness against the Christless part of the human race. It seems opened to show that their names are not there. It is a balance by which they are weighed, and found wanting {Dan. 5:27}.

It is the book of Divine sovereign grace, in which they had no interest. It is a final test: for whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15).

Though great and small are in this judgment, the fact of each being judged according to their works prohibits the thought of infants being here. In time of old, Jehovah said by Moses, Your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it. (Deut. 1: 39).

But further. Death and Hades must be dealt with judicially too. Some one has said that “Heaven and earth will pass away but to be revived; but Death and Hades never.” Christ has power over death; and after Satan is cast into the lake of fire, death has to be judged, but of course after the wicked dead are raised. Then Christ asserts His rights, and Death and Hades are cast into the lake of fire, so that after this there will be no more death. Can any triumph be more mighty in its operations, or more complete in its accomplishment? It is Christ subduing all things unto Himself. All must acknowledge that He is glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. He is Lord of all. This is followed by the eternal state. We may real the first eight verses of the twenty-first chapter as completing the section which commenced with the judgment of the great whore in the

nineteenth chapter. The order is the same as we find in 1 Cor.15, which tells us that Christ must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death; for He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith, All things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted which did put all things under Him; and when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that did put all things under Him, that God may be all in all {see 1 Cor. 15:25-28}.

Here we find in the Revelation, that the casting of Hades and Death into the lake of fire concludes the subjection of everything by the Lord unto Himself. The kingdom, therefore, must now be delivered up unto God, that God may be all in all. The first heaven and earth having passed away, we have now a new heaven and a new earth. Peter tells us that the present heaven and earth are reserved unto fire, that the elements will melt with fervent heat, and that the earth and all things therein shall be burned up. He also tells us that this will take place in the day of the Lord. Other Scriptures show that it will be neither at the dawn nor the meridian of that day, but at the close of that day, or, as we have before seen, at the termination of the millennium. We further learn from the apostle Peter, that this eternal condition will be characterized by righteousness dwelling. Now, we have righteousness preached and imputed to them that believe, and righteousness suffers; in the millennium righteousness will reign -in righteousness He doth judge and make war {Rev. 19:11};

but in the new heaven and new earth righteousness will dwell, for it is final and changeless in its character. John also informs us, that, after the destruction of the present heaven and earth there will be no more sea {Rev. 21:1}.

In our present constitution, natural life could not be sustained on the earth without sea, and the broad ocean flowing between different countries often acts as a restraint upon man's evil passions, checking war and bloodshed. But then, sin and curse will no more be known. John sees the holy city descending from God out of heaven. Though still prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, she is not presented in relation to the Lamb, as in the millennial state; for the kingdom is delivered up unto God. Still the bride is distinctive, as Ephesians tells us that it will be throughout all ages (Eph. 3:21).

The Church may be the tabernacle in which God abides, manifesting. His glory to us. We get no longer "nations," but "men"; for nations which owe their origin to sin, though they exist in the millennium, are no longer known after the Lord has destroyed the works of the devil, and subdued all things unto Himself. But man, whom God created upright, in His own image, and placed in the earth -- a creature with whom He could come down and hold converse, is, in the eternal state, to know God coming down to dwell with them: For they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God (Rev. 21:3).

Death, as we have seen, being cast into the lake of fire, is taken away for ever; so that we are told,

Notes on the Revelation God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away (Rev. 21:4).

It is quite clear that this is post-millennial, because in that dispensation we are told that a sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed, and the child shall die a hundred years old. (Isa. 65:20). This great change in the eternal state is accounted for in the next verse by a voice from the throne, saying, Behold, I make all things new {Rev. 21:5}.

The seer is commanded to write that these words are true and faithful; and they come to us attested by Him who is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End {Rev. 21:6}.

The description of this state concludes with two thoughts in widest contrast, but running side by side -- namely, the eternal happiness of the saved, and the eternal misery of the lost. The former inherit all things, drink freely of the fountain of the water of life, and stand in love before God as His sons. The latter, consisting of the fearful and unbelieving, the abominable, etc., have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death (Rev. 21:8). Thus, after the passing away of the present heaven and earth, and the judgment of the great White Throne, we are permitted to look at the saved in their eternal inheritance of full, unmingled blessing, and the eternal misery and torment of the wicked and unbelieving. Moreover, let us not forget that the distinction is still preserved, as it has been all through Scripture, between the heaven and the earth. The Church is always seen in connection with heaven. Her calling, standing, and eternal destiny are heavenly. She is made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in

His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6, 7).

And she is seen here again, coming down from God out of heaven. But Israel's calling, blessings, and destinies are earthly; and, as it seems, for ever. How, when the earth is being burned up, that people will be preserved, and brought into the new earth, I know not; but it appears that they will have a place in the new earth: For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain (Isa. 66:22).

The people of Israel and their name are, therefore, to be as enduring as the new heaven and earth. This is deeply interesting, and if in that perpetual state of blessing the land shall be specially marked out, and the place where our Lord was crucified had in everlasting remembrance, it is no more than we should expect, that an act so stupendous, and connected with such everlasting results, should be recognised in the new earth. Scripture seems to favour the thought; for God made covenant with Abraham, and His oath unto Isaac, and confirmed the same unto Jacob by a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant, saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan (Psa. 105:9-11);

and Isaiah says, They shall inherit the land for ever (Isa. 60:21).

It is also an interesting question, whether the deliverance of creation from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God or the liberty of the glory of the children of God (Rom. 8:21), can have its full accomplishment in the millennium? How blessed it is to see all things subdued by Christ, and brought under the power of God! Celestial glory and terrestrial glory preserving each its separate qualities, and yet both to the praise and glory of God, and such as He can rest and delight in. Death destroyed, curse no more known, and every creature, whether in the new earth or in the new heaven, realizing the presence and blessing of God, who is all in all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen {Rom. 11:33-36}.