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FROM THE

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“Watchman, what of the Night?”

WE are just entering another year, should the Lord tarry, not knowing what may be before us.

But amidst the momentous events happening from day to day in connection with this, the greatest war the world has ever seen, it is truly a solace and stay to the soul to remember that there is a hand which controls and overrules every circumstance which can arise. There is One who can say, “I am God, and there is none else; I am God and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times, the things which are *not yet done*” (Isa. xlv. 9, 10). All is known to Him beforehand; and He is *our* God and Father, through Christ Jesus our Lord.

We do not desire to assume the rôle of a prophet, as this would be presumption indeed, but we cannot, and indeed we ought not, to be indifferent to the events taking place in the world in these solemn and critical times. Everything seems to point to the near coming of the Lord and the close of the present dispensation.

But let us never forget that what is set before the Christian is the *heavenly* hope of the rising of the bright and morning star, that is, the coming of the Lord into the air and our being caught up to meet Him in the clouds (1 Thess. iv. 13-17). *We* have not to wait for the fulfilment of signs and events, which are connected with the Jewish hope of the coming of the Messiah as the Sun of Righteousness to bring deliverance and peace to the godly remnant of Israel in a future day. Truly, as we have said, ours is a *heavenly* hope, centering in Christ Himself (“Christ Jesus, our hope”), and the true and proper aspiration of the Christian’s soul, as well as the natural outgoing of the divine life he

has received, leads him to "wait for God's Son from Heaven . . . even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. i. 10; 1 Tim. i. 1).

Nevertheless when we look abroad on the world as it is, what momentous events transpire almost daily! How do these stand in the light of the prophetic word, which is God's lamp shining in the dark place of this world? (2 Peter i. 19).

We see Russia in a state of anarchy and collapse, like a sick man in a fever. Will it end in a military despotism as the French Revolution did? God only knows. But one thing prophecy makes clear, is that Russia will, sooner or later, break off from the Western confederation of Powers with which she is now allied. Another fact is that "Gog" (or Russia) and his allies of that day will be the *last* enemy who will come up against Israel, who will then have been settled in the land, and once more owned of God as His people.¹

Then another significant event is the advance of the British forces in Palestine and the official announcement by England that she fully approves of the settlement of the Jews in their own land. No doubt the other *Entente* Powers also fully approve of this. The Scripture plainly shows that they will return in unbelief and the mass of the nation will fall under the power of the Antichrist and the Roman beast of Revelation xiii., before the Lord appears for the deliverance and blessing of the remnant of that day.

Still another remarkable circumstance of recent date is the closer grouping together of the Western Powers, which are ultimately to form a confederation under the head or chief of the revived Roman Empire.

¹ We have not gone into Scripture proofs or references in this article; these can be seen in Dr Rossier's booklet noticed on back cover of this Magazine.

The way in which nearly the whole of North and South America, as well as the colonies, have been constrained to ally themselves with these Western Powers is certainly striking also. The present set back in Italy will not, we may be assured, hinder the development of this future confederation when the time for it comes, any more than the many reverses of the old Roman Empire did not hinder it from reaching the pitch of power so accurately foretold in Daniel ii. and vii.

But we must bear in mind that this re-formation of the Roman Empire with its ten subordinate kingdoms, forming a confederation of Powers of the West under a chief or head, described in Revelation 'xiii. 1-10, and Daniel vii., will not take place till *after* the Lord comes for His saints. When it does arise, it will have a directly satanic origin, and will be Satan's last, but futile effort, to hinder the accomplishment of God's purposes in the setting of His King on His holy hill of Zion (Ps. ii.).

Northern Germany, which never formed part of the Roman Empire may, quite possibly, be allied with "Gog" (or Russia) in the end.¹

It is well, however, in view of all these things, that we should pay particular attention to the closing word of the Lord to the disciples after His prophetic reference to the events of the last days given us in

¹ Gomer, mentioned in Ezekiel xxxviii. 6, as associated with the Northern Powers, was one of the seven sons of Japheth. "'Gomer,'" says Delitsch, "'is most probably the tribe of the Cimmerians . . . from whom are descended the Cumri or Cymry in Wales and Britain, whose relation to the Germanic Cimbri is still in obscurity.' Valuable information is given in the Talmud; Gomer is there stated to be the Germani, the Germans. That the descendants of Gomer moved northward and established themselves in parts of Germany seems to be an established fact."—*Our Hope*.

Mark xiii. 37, "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch." Solemn and searching word for every true servant of God *now* as well as then!

The awful events transpiring in the world to-day, the shadows of the coming apostasy which are even now falling upon Christendom, but above all the fact of the near coming of the Lord, ought to impart a seriousness to our whole life and conduct. Are we really "*like* men that wait for their lord," with girded loins and burning lamps waiting and watching for our beloved Lord and Saviour? It ought, too, to cast us upon the Lord in constant prayer and humble dependence, so that we may be found "well pleasing to Him" and "in peace, without spot and blameless" in the day of His appearing.

F. G. B.

Scripture Notes and Gleanings.

TAKE no Thought.—"Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." That is, our Lord prepares us for this, that the anxiety which dreads an evil thing on the morrow is nothing but unbelief. When the morrow comes, the evil may not be there; if it comes, God will be there. He may allow us to taste what it is to indulge in our own wills; but if our souls are subject to Him, how often the evil that is dreaded never appears. When the heart bows to the will of God about some sorrow that we dread, how often the sorrow is taken away, and the Lord meets us with unexpected kindness and goodness. He is able to make every sorrow to be a blessing. Whatever He wills is good. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

W. K.

“The Scripture cannot be Broken” (John x. 35).—These remarkable words came from the very lips of the Son of God. “The scripture” is a term which our Lord used some ten or twelve times, both before and after His resurrection. They were the very Old Testament scriptures recognised by the Jews then, and which we have to-day. Mark how very strong and decided is the word “*cannot*.” There is no vagueness or uncertainty. No hesitation as to the unquestioned authority of the scriptures, ever found a place in the words or thoughts of Him who was “*the Truth*.” Surely this ought to be enough for us!

Jesus Asleep—i.

(*Mark iv. 35-41.*)

THE interesting paper on “Two Men and two Ships” in the September number of *Words of Help* turned one’s mind to another storm-tossed company, namely, the Lord Jesus and His disciples on the Sea of Galilee. In the graphic account of this in Mark iv., two things of prime importance to us stand out: the Lord Jesus as the *Pattern* and the *Guardian* of His people. Let us consider it briefly from this standpoint.

i. The Lord Jesus as our Pattern in Life’s Pathway—Those were busy days for Him. Preaching the gospel and teaching the people fully filled His time. The day they sailed, they heard Him say that the Kingdom of God is as if a man should cast seed into the ground, should sleep and rise night and day, till the blade, the ear, and full corn in the ear should spring up; and then, at the harvest, he puts in the sickle to reap the fruit.

Having thus spent the day in sowing, He said

unto them, "Let us pass over unto the other side," and "they took Him, *even as He was*, in the ship." All was said and done so simply and naturally that nothing called for remark or explanation. Like the true sower, and truly man as He was, Jesus quietly retires into the hinder part of the boat and falls asleep on the pillow.

A hurricane suddenly arose, and the waves swamp their ship. Many able expositors state, with the late J. N. Darby, that this storm was raised by satanic power, for Satan is quite as able to raise physical storms in our course as moral and spiritual ones (Job i. 19; ii. 7, etc.). Son of God though He were, Jesus took His place amidst the ups and downs of human life on land or on sea. He faced its storms and discomforts, and fully learned what grief, tears, sighs, fatigue, hunger, thirst, weariness, and bodily exhaustion meant. Slights, slanders, neglect, misrepresentation and the active opposition of others filled His cup even more than ours (Ps. lxxix.).

But what is most beautiful to see here, is, that although He felt the tempest, perhaps more than the disciples did, unlike them, He knew how to repose on a pillow, and sleep contentedly, though the waters filled the tossing boat; as they also filled their hearts with fears.

Why this difference between His attitude and theirs? He was not what they implied, either careless or indifferent to their dangers; neither was He lacking in love to them. The difference was not because of His being (unlike them) the almighty Son of God, but because He rested on, and confided in, God's power and care for Him in that storm (which they could and should have done) as really as anywhere else. "To His beloved one He giveth sleep" (Ps. cxxvii. 2, New Trans.).

Here is the perfect pattern of christian simplicity, of dependence on God, the "finisher of faith" in all its parts (Heb. xii. 2); who could truly say, "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep, for Thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety" (Ps. iv. 8).

What a rebuke all this is to our restlessness and worrying, as it was to theirs! Their fears and terrors did not make their position or condition any better or worthier than His, rather the reverse. "Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit unto his stature?" (Matt. vi. 27). We can say reverently: If they were to drown, so would He: if God's care failed them, it would fail Him too. But He knew better, inasmuch as He had implicitly committed His life into His Father's hands, as we may do ours to-day.

How this was done, and the happy results of it, we see in Psalm xvi. He prays, "Preserve Me, O God, for in Thee do I put My trust"; and, as the outcome, He testifies, "The Lord is the portion of Mine inheritance and My cup: Thou maintainest My lot, the lines are fallen unto Me *in pleasant places*, yea, I have a goodly heritage. . . . I shall not be moved . . . My flesh shall *rest in safety*" (New Trans.). No human life had ever compressed into it more trial and bitterness than Christ's. For succour and support to meet this He had just what we, poor feeble saints, now have—Jehovah as His portion. Identified with His own in trials and besetments, as also in the resources He ever found in God, He could say, in the stormy sea of Galilee, as in everything else, "The lines are fallen unto Me in pleasant places."

The conduct of two aged servants of the Lord used, at one time, to surprise one somewhat, though it does not so much now. One of them, after his earnest labours in ministering the word on the Lord's day,

could roll himself up in the railway compartment on his way home, and, like a child, quickly fall asleep: the other though pressed with his work for the Lord, as well as the sorrows and divided condition of His people the world over, could sleep soundly in all kinds of places, quoting Psalm iv. 8, realising fully that God cares about His own and that was sufficient for him.

May the Lord enable us to awake, and to sleep too, not the sleep of the careless or the stoic, but that of one whose confidence and repose is altogether in the power of God; then the storms of the war will be blessings in disguise, to strengthen our faith and brighten our testimony, till we reach the other side.

W. M. R.

Sketches in the Apocalypse.

XIII.

THE SEALS OPENED.

WHEN we come to consider for a moment the opening of the seals in chapter vi., it is hardly needful to remind the reader, who has attentively followed the two chapters preceding, that we enter into a wholly new scene, because it now becomes a matter of dealing in *judgment* with *this world* (1 Cor. v. 13). John has his place in heaven, where the Church is, together with the Old Testament saints, all represented by the "twenty-four elders" around the throne; and as yet, no distinction is made with reference to their varied positions in the future. The chapters iv. and v. are all occupied with *heaven*, and the sealed roll or book is "in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne." In chapter v. the "Lamb" is introduced. He is seen "in the midst of the throne,"

and is found to be the only One worthy to open the seals, and thus disclose what is still future.

We must ever bear in mind that the number of redeemed saints up to that time is absolutely *complete*. The Old Testament saints, with whom John the Baptist was counted, do not form a part of the "Bride," as he himself was given to state prophetically (John iii. 29). The Bride is composed *alone* of those who are sealed by the Holy Ghost, sent down on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii.), and whom the Lord Himself will "raise" or "change" when He comes in the clouds. That is definitely explained in 1 Thessalonians iv. 15-18. In his first Epistle to the Corinthians, written a short time afterwards, the Apostle Paul calls it a "mystery" (chap. xv. 49-54). Death will then be "swallowed up in victory." So far, that special glory of Christ as "the first-begotten of the dead" will be complete (1 Cor. xv. 20-23; Rev. i. 5). And the Lord will present His Bride to Himself "a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle" (Eph. v. 25-27).

But that in no way prevents others being present when this heavenly scene takes place. Many "blessed ones" will be "called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb," as we read in Revelation xix. 9. The saints of the Old Testament times will, no doubt, be found in that company, and also others who become objects of the sovereign grace of God during the period of judgment which will follow the removal of the Church, as we shall see presently; for God delights in mercy, and judgment is His "strange work" (Isa. xxviii. 21, 22).

From the moment that the saints are called to heaven, or rather taken thither by the blessed Lord Himself, uninterrupted worship goes on there to "Him that liveth for ever and ever" (chap. iv. 10). The "living creatures" of Ezekiel's vision, which have also

the characteristic features of the "seraphim" (Isa. vi.) are seen there, intimately associated with the throne of judgment, "in it and round about it" (Rev. iv. 6). And the moment the Lamb is introduced, all, including the glorified saints, fall down before Him in worship. They all have harps of joy and vials of prayers agreeable to the divine presence, and they sing a new redemption song, to celebrate the infinite value of the precious blood which is the purchase-price of their eternal blessing. That had been also the case on earth, as soon as the name of the "Faithful Witness" is mentioned, in view of His "coming with clouds" to execute the judgment which has been committed to Him alone, Son of God and Son of man (John v. 22, 27; Rev. i. 5-7).

All that regards believers is "settled in heaven," as the word of God ever was and is (Ps. cxix. 89). But at length, after prolonged patience, the time has come to make evident and display divine rights in government over this earth, which a giddy and selfish world ever seeks to ignore and despise. Even at such a moment, there is, however, no haste; for there are purposes of grace to be unfolded with reference to this earth, in view of the establishment of the long promised kingdom in Israel, God's ancient people. They are still "beloved," though now rejected, in consequence of their rejection of Christ. They are not "cast away" for ever (Rom. xi. 2-29). The Lamb is now about to set up His own kingdom, as promised, in their midst; but they will have to experience the persecution to which He Himself was subject here below, previously to the manifestation of His power on their behalf "in righteousness" (Isa. ix. 6, 7; xxxii. 1, 15-17). We perceive that, when the fifth seal is opened; for it evidently refers to them (compare Rev. xii.).

The subjoined extracts from the Synopsis (Vol. V. pp. 523, 524) may well find their place here, in reference to the "new song" of chapter v. to celebrate the Lamb:—

"What seemed His dishonour and rejection on earth was the ground of His worthiness to take the book. He who at all suffering and cost to Himself had glorified all that God was, is able and worthy to unfold the governmental dealing which sets it forth, and is the display of His power not merely in Israel, but in the whole earth. . . . He does not yet "come forth," but His work is the worthy instrument, the divine motive, for the display of God's power. The redemption song takes place in heaven, whence the judgment flows: what is to follow on earth now begins, when the seals are opened. . . ."

The living creatures introduce successively what follows on the opening of the first four seals: first, imperial conquest; secondly, internecine wars; thirdly, famines; and then pestilence which affects "the *fourth* part of the earth." The last summarises the "four sore judgments" spoken of by the prophet Ezekiel as about to fall upon Jerusalem at the time when the temple was destroyed by Nebucadnezzar, King of Babylon (chap. xiv. 21).

We may notice here in passing, that in chapter ix. 15, the "*third* part" of the remainder is mentioned. Always supposing that the *same* part of the earth is affected in the two cases, the actual number that perish in each of the visitations would be the same, though relatively the second would exceed the former one in violence, as is generally the case in excessive judgments of this nature, when the opportunity allowed for repentance is despised and disregarded (compare chap. ii. 21).

It is thought that in all this part of the book, including chapters vii. to ix., the Roman earth is in question, as well as the mass of unbelieving Jews who are more or less protected by those in power there (compare chap. ix. 4 with vii. 3, the "seal in the forehead" being noticed in both cases). My own impression is that the whole of professing Christendom is included, and that would extend beyond the limits of the ancient Roman empire, especially on the northern and eastern sides. Besides this, the colonies in all parts of the world would naturally follow suit with the mother-countries, and the growing influence of Papal domination wherever Christianity has reached, seems to make this more than probable.

The opening of the fifth seal calls for special notice, inasmuch as we find here "under the altar, the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." Here we are on familiar ground: their prayers are such as we find in the Psalms, which proves that their thoughts are inspired by that external relationship with God which characterises the Old Testament. They have Jewish hopes and expectations, knowing that Jehovah is a God of judgment as well as of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed. Hannah states it in her prayer, which for the first time in scripture, introduces the "anointed" of the God of Israel (1 Sam. ii. 1-10). Prophetically, it refers of course to Christ.

All this would confirm the thought already stated, that we are in presence of a Jewish remnant, amongst which God is working by His Spirit, when the Church's testimony on earth is closed for ever; for the world, left as it will be then, without any testimony for God, is seen to be hastening on in infidelity to the judgments about to fall upon it. Have we not also the fulfilment

of the Lord's words to His disciples in Matthew x. 23, when, in one short verse at the close of His sketch of all service for Him during the time of His absence, He shows what will take place "in Israel," *after* the Church is gone?

The martyred remnant participate in Messiah's sufferings, as did the early disciples; and the Apostle Paul, who naturally had occasion to glory in being of the stock of Israel, felt, in writing his second epistle to Timothy, that such a portion must be his also (Phil. iii. 3-5; 2-Tim. iv. 6). Paul departed "to be with Christ," but "the souls of those that are slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held" are told to wait until others in like circumstances should also be put to death, during the last three and a half years of Satan's power, displayed in his two instruments, the "beast" and the antichrist of chapter xiii., who claim worship on pain of death for any refusal to obey them. Both companies are mentioned in chapter xx., verse 4.

The opening of the sixth seal brings a subversion of the order of created things, affecting the relations of the whole earth with the heavens, on which it is dependent, not only for light, but for the ordering of those times and seasons promised by God to Noah, on the occasion of the burnt-offering offered by him, on leaving the ark in order to repopulate a renewed world (Gen. viii. 21-22). When this judgment takes place, both governors and their subjects think the final judgment has suddenly come about, and they flee to hide themselves if possible. Compare Isaiah xxxiv. 1-4; Matthew xxiv. 29; Luke xxiii. 30; and also Joel ii. 10, 31; iii. 15; Hosea x. 8.

Finally, there is a pause before the seventh seal is opened.

W. J. L.

New Birth and Eternal Life—i.

HAS every one who is "born again" got eternal life?—Yes, certainly. It has been said that being "'born again,' 'born of water and the Spirit,' is the actual communication of divine life."¹ Scripture bears ample testimony to the truth of this statement. There is no middle position in which the soul can be, between being dead in trespasses and sins, and possessing life eternal.

There is really no mystery about eternal life, as some would lead us to suppose. Our Lord Himself has said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me *hath eternal* life. I am that bread of *life*" (John vi. 47, 48). Nothing can be plainer or more decisive than this statement, introduced by a solemn "Verily, verily."

New birth, as John iii. teaches us, is the sovereign action of God by the word, of which water is a figure, applied by the Holy Spirit. We are born again by the Word of God (1 Pet. i. 23; James i. 18); the word being the instrument or means used by the Spirit to bring about this moral change.

Now it is of all moment to see that new birth is not any mere improvement of man as he stands; but, when one is born again, a new and divine life and nature is communicated to the soul; "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," we are "made partakers of the divine nature." Hence, in this connection, Peter speaks of loving one another with a pure heart fervently, and James adds "that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures"—evidences of the new nature. So also John, in chapter v. of his epistle, in answering the question raised at the close of the previous chapter, "Who is my brother?" says that every one who

¹ "Collected Writings," J. N. D., Vol. XIII., p. 325.

believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. Thus the simplest and weakest believer is my brother, and what marks the possession of the new nature here is love to the brethren and obedience.

It is remarkable that John, the last of the inspired writers, speaks more about eternal life than anyone else; in fact "life" is one of the key-words of his gospel and epistle. But it must be evident to anyone who looks into the matter with an unprejudiced mind that the addition of the adjective "eternal" in no way changes the character of the life itself; this is shown by the way in which the apostle frequently brings together both the terms "life" and "eternal life" in the same passage (see John iii. 36; v. 24, and 39, 40; vi. 47-48; 1 John v. 11, 12). Thus the whole fabric which some have built up on a supposed difference comes to the ground. No, there is but the *one life* given to believers, though the Spirit of God sees well, for good reasons, to emphasise it as being "eternal" in some cases.

The apostle Paul was raised up of God and set apart as a chosen vessel to testify of a glorified Christ, and the church or assembly as united to Him by the Holy Ghost sent down at Pentecost. But John, who outlived Paul by about twenty-five years, bore witness to the truth of Christ's person as divine, and life eternal as manifested in Him and communicated to us. These are great truths which no failure of the Church, no ruin which man or Satan can bring about, can possibly touch or affect.

This eternal life is so permanent in its character that it would be impossible for a sheep of Christ to perish or to lose it, because he is indissolubly bound up with the Shepherd Himself, who is the source from whence the stream of life flows down to the believer here (John x. 28 and xiv. 19). And the *knowledge*

that we possess the life rests, not on man's word or man's thoughts, changing as they are, but on the testimony of the written word of God (1 John v. 13). What a comfort to the simple believer!

Again, we read, "This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood." Scripture proof is plain that man, as such, has no part in the divine life, he is dead in trespasses and sins. If this inestimable blessing was to reach any, it could only be through Christ coming into the world *and dying*. The water which flowed from the side of a dead Christ is figurative of the word, applied by the Spirit, on the ground of His death. Thus there is the moral cleansing which is effected by the Word of God, and the communication of a new life.

Now this meets the question of our *state* by nature: there is, at new birth, this communication of a new and holy nature, which answers morally to God Himself who is holy. The other need of the soul, man being a sinner, is expiation; this is effected by the blood, which meets the requirements of God's justice, and which likewise flowed from the side of a dead Christ.

But it is important, in considering the question of eternal life; that we should distinguish between life itself—the life *by* which we live, and the outgoings and associations of life—the life *which* we live. As is well known, there is but the one word in English to cover both these meanings, whilst the Greek, in which the New Testament was written, has two words. The word used, when "eternal life" is spoken of, is always the primary one, meaning life *inward*, the life *by* which we live—not merely the manner or sphere of life. We merely refer to this to avoid confusion which may sometimes arise as to the question of divine life.

F. G. B.

“Repent.”

WE find this word in five out of the seven addresses to the churches in Revelation ii. and iii. In the case of Smyrna and Philadelphia, there was no special call for the exhortation to repent: the former was a poor and persecuted church, and as such receives a word of encouragement from the Lord; the latter, though weak and feeble, had kept Christ's word, and not denied His name.

Now why does the Lord use this word “Repent” so often in His addresses to the churches? It is because, when decline or failure has come in, there is but one way of restoration, and that is by repentance. But it is not repentance in word or from the lips, but deep down in the heart and conscience. And it is not only “repent,” but “repent *and . . .*”; there will surely be the fruits meet for repentance wherever the work is deep and genuine. There are no short cuts on the way to restoration of soul, if decline has taken place; the only path that leads to true restoration, either as individuals or assemblies, is the path of humble contrition, shown by its practical fruits.

And if the call for this was needed in the days of the seven churches, it is equally or more needed now. If we are at all in the presence of God as to the state of the church of God, we must sadly own the decline which has taken place even within our own times. Have we not to deplore a lack of separation from the world, a want of heart for Christ and His interests, a lack of desire for the word of God and prayer?

To-day, even true Christians look for something which will make the things of God attractive to the natural mind. In preaching, it may be someone with a name

or "enticing words of man's wisdom"; in writing, something scrappy, and which can be grasped without much time or effort; even in the way truth is presented in print, it must be set out in some attractive manner so as to please the taste of readers, and not to give trouble. It is just the spirit of the age, which is so prone to ease and self-pleasing. But not one of the devices made to suit the popular taste can for one moment make up for real spirituality, and the unction and power of the Holy Ghost.

How touching that word of the Lord to Ephesus, so applicable now, "Thou hast left thy first love!" How solemn the word to Laodicea, "Thou art neither cold nor hot . . . thou art lukewarm!" The Apostle Paul yearned over the saints with a longing perhaps even deeper than that of Moses in his day, that he might present them "as a chaste virgin to Christ," that the church which He loved, and for which He gave himself, might reflect a little more of His character, and answer better to His grace.

Let us not try to meet the decline by accommodating ourselves to worldly methods and worldly plans, but let us each begin with ourselves, and judge ourselves for the many inconsistencies and wrongs which have led to the present state of things in the church of God. This is the only way of restoration either collectively or individually.

F. G. B.

Scripture Notes and Gleanings.

I NTELLIGENCE.—Spiritual intelligence, instead of puffing up the loving heart, produces an increased feeling of our own littleness. Where it is not so, we have reason to fear that the mind outruns

the conscience, and that both are far from being subject to the Holy Ghost.

* * * * *

Testing.—It is an easy thing to set sail and get fairly out into the ocean; but when many days have passed and no land is in sight, one is apt to weary. If the heart is not fully occupied with the Lord, something is taken on board to fill up the void.

Five Words.

Brief Notes of an Address by J. A.

I WISH to draw your attention to two short passages of scripture. The first is in Philippians iii. 10, "that I may know Him." Service for the Lord, work for Him, preaching the gospel, are very good in their place, but the one great thing before the apostle was "that I may know Him." His great desire was to know more of the One who had saved him when an enemy and a persecuter. Oh, beloved, is it so with us? Is it your great desire to know more of Christ?

The circumstances in which the apostle was were not at all pleasant; he was speaking from his prison at Rome, where he had been for some years chained to a soldier; yet in this very epistle he speaks more of joy than anywhere else. It is the epistle of joy, and you do not find the mention of sin, nor of righteousness, except to contrast it with the righteousness of the law which he did not want.

Now turn to chapter i. 23; there we see his desire was "to be with Christ." His service to the saints and all else, however blessed, must give place to this earnest longing *to be with Christ*. And as the Lord looked

down into Paul's heart and saw this longing desire, how precious it was to *His* heart to see the place He had in the heart of His servant!

We know not whether we shall ever gather here again; ere another Lord's Day some of us may be gone, but we do not sorrow as those who have no hope, because, even if such were the case, it would be only to be gone a little before, to be "with Christ." Or else He may have come, and then we shall meet Him in the air, and many we have companied with who have gone before. Oh, it *is* a blessed privilege to be permitted to come together on an occasion like this—an occasion provided by the Lord Himself in His love—to remember Him in His death "*till He come.*" And what has struck me as exceedingly precious is this: no ruin of the church, no failures or breaks up, can hinder this, *till He come*; He has Himself taken care that it should be so.

I was struck with what was said here to-day, that we join our praise and worship with *the whole church of God*. How could it be otherwise?—for we must, in our worship, take in *every saint*, and we shall praise Him eternally, when we see Him in glory, together with *all saints*. And oh, how soon it may be—sooner than we sometimes think!

As I walked along the road very early this morning and saw the morning star shining in all its brightness, I thought, how good of the Lord to give us that illustration of Himself as the "bright and morning star." I can tell you it made me feel joyful, as if I could skip as I passed along and gazed up at it.

May He give us to know more of Himself, and to be more in earnest in our desire to be with Him and to see Him as He is.

Jesus Asleep—ii.

(*Mark iv. 35-41.*)

HAVING already spoken of Christ as our great *Pattern* (see p. 5), and as the quiet sleeper on the Galilean Sea, we will contemplate:—

II. *The Lord Jesus as our Guardian in Life's Storms.*—Whether we think of the disciples as abandoning all to become His companions, or crossing the tempest-tost sea with all its attendant anguish, the responsibility from first to last was *His*. He, however, went with them, “*even as He was*, in the ship.” As they rowed, the gale arose and threatened to swamp their boat. It came on them unawares, found them unprepared, and greatly shook their faith. *They* could see nothing before them or their boat but the bottom of the sea; while *He* whom they had trusted seemed indifferent to their danger, fast asleep on a pillow.

We can well understand their running, in their alarm, to the stern, rudely awaking our blessed Lord, and saying, with reproach, “Master, carest thou not that we perish?” As much as to say, “We are more concerned than Thou art as to our safety. Why dost Thou not awake, call for peace, and save us from perishing?”

How vividly that scene pictures the condition of the world, and of God's people in it at the present time! The restless sea well typifies the Gentile nations, now, alas, lashed by the fury of war. That we are the Lord's—in the world, and yet not *of* it—is entirely His doing, as also the purpose and proposal that we should leave this world and pass over to another shore—the shores of the kingdom of His Father. And, as surely as He went with them, “*even as He was*, in the ship,” so He is with us in all His power and grace to meet the storms and bitternesses of the way.

Now church and country, hearth and home, are hard pressed; breaking and aching hearts multiply apace. The only One who has power over it all is, to many, out of sight, as if once again asleep on a pillow. The world is saying, Why does He not stop it? and many a breaking heart cries, Why has He brought me to this? We may rest assured, however, that He whom the Psalmist salutes as making "the storm a calm," who stilled the wind-driven waves of Galilee, will stay our storms also in His own appointed time. "So He bringeth them unto their desired haven."

As Satan was behind that hurricane then, so by God's permission is he behind this war, and much else in our lives; but poor man, his willing tool, is now impotent to stop what has been once set going. But the Lord Jesus is as mindful of His own now as then. "Lo, I am with you alway" are still the words of His lips to us. He permits the distress for some wise cause, yet feels all we suffer, and in "due time" will say once more, "Peace, be still."

Their dangers were His dangers. Would He let them sink and save Himself? Did the storm make Him love them the less? Did their fears better their case, or increase their security and happiness? Were they more safe when He awaked than when He slept? A thousand times, No! If we imagine ourselves in their place, and answer these questions in the Lord's presence for ourselves, we would find that He is just the same with us to-day, and we would say in the words of the lines—

"I cannot always trace the onward course my ship must take,
But looking backward, I behold afar its shining wake,
Illumined with God's light of love, and so I onward go,
In perfect trust that He who holds the helm the course must
know."

We may have hard and difficult lessons to learn,

which no other school would accomplish, but His power is equal to the task. He is "girded with power, which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people" (Ps. lxxv. 7). Yes, the Man of Galilee is now the Mighty One on high, who will soon still the tumult of the nations, as well as every ripple in His people's hearts (see Ps. lxxxix. 9; xciii. 4; cvii. 29, 30).

As man Jesus slept. As God He stilled the storm. Soon, as Son of God and Son of man, His foes will be made His footstool; and the peace which filled His heart, and which can be ours now through faith, will be established "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." The trial of a believer's faith is "more precious than of gold . . . tried with fire" because it produces "praise and honour and glory" to the Lord Jesus at His appearing (1 Pet. i. 7). Whatever contributes to this all-glorious result is to be welcomed, though the testing may often be dark and mysterious to us; yet, the greater and deeper it is, the more it will prove that His love and power is able to deliver and even to bring glory to God out of it all.

When the trial came to the disciples, Jesus had to say to them, "Why are ye so fearful? How is it ye have no faith?" (Mark iv. 40). Fearfulness is natural to us in danger, but there was unbelief in their fear. *Faith* and *fear* are never bed-fellows. Faith is a seed of God's planting which He nourishes and strengthens so as to dominate our lives. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John v. 4). To this end He may, for a time, allow tumult without and tempest within; but as truly as the Lord once said, "Let us go over to the other side," to be safely landed, so will His coming be soon a present reality, when He will say, "Peace, be still," and we shall know the "great calm" of the Father's house for ever. W. M. R.

Sketches in the Apocalypse.

XIV.

"COME" (Rev. vi.).

IT may seem somewhat a return to the subject of the last sketch (see page 13), but it is not easy to give in a limited space the many-sided features of this wonderful book, which our hearts should not merely be desiring, but *expecting*, from the opening words of the Spirit of God, "Blessed is he that *readeth*, and they that *hear* the words of this prophecy, and *keep* those things which are *written* therein: for the time is at hand."

Those words, "at hand," written more than eighteen hundred years ago, surely go to prove that it is not a matter of reckoning the *whole* period historically, as we are in the habit of counting "time"; but that all that is therein set down, is so traced out as to *form* in the believer's heart that spirit of *waiting* upon the Lord, and looking for Him personally, which characterised the gospel preached by Paul to the Thessalonians.

They were turned to God from idols, to serve Him alone, "and to *wait* for His Son from heaven" (chap. i. 9, 10). It was to be the unvarying attitude of their souls, and to be so continually, throughout the history of Christendom. Consequently, we should expect to find *moral* features all through the book of Revelation which suit the reader at any particular time throughout the whole period treated of.

Besides this, it is a fact that special judgments have occurred continually from time to time, reminding people forcibly of what it will be, in increased intensity, at the close of the present period, and more especially

when *every* really converted soul shall have been removed from it, at the moment of the Lord's coming in the cloud to raise the dead saints, and change the living ones, who shall together meet Him in the air (1 Thess. iv. 15-18).

At the present day, real Christians are comparatively few and far between; but what will it be at the critical moment we are now contemplating in our review, when, at the Lord's coming just referred to, *not a single saved soul* will be left in the whole of this world? That is indeed the state of things when these judgments *begin*, in chapter vi. We ourselves are accustomed to deplore the presence of careless and often infidel preachers in Christian pulpits; but what is that compared to the time we are speaking of, when, if there should be any church-going at all, it will be for amusement only, and vast multitudes, if they give vent to their ideas, will boast that they have got rid of the Bible? As time goes on, such spirits, under the guidance of Satan, "the god of this world," get blinded, and shamelessly bolder (2 Cor. iv. 4; 2 Tim. iii. 13). Is it surprising, then, that *judgment* should at last begin?

In the days of the emperor Diocletian, at the very beginning of the fourth century (A.D. 303), after half a century of comparative peace, the last of the "ten" persecutions began, and went on for ten years. He sought to get rid of all their literature, and destroy every copy of the scriptures,—at that time, of course, *all* written by *hand*. God did not allow it; and He will surely prevent it in the day that is coming. But we may certainly expect that the effort will be made just as the judgment is beginning at the opening of the seven-sealed roll. But let us not forget that the action which follows the opening of the seals is con-

fided to the "four living creatures," which we may describe by the familiar name of "cherubim."

All through the Old Testament the cherubim never speak. In the book of Revelation they combine the character of the seraphim (see Isa. vi.); this is a detail previously noticed. But let us for a moment trace their action. Their intervention at this time coincides with *all* previous history, proving that the *judgment* is administrative or providential. It began at Eden, where their flaming sword "turned every way" to prevent any access to "the tree of life," when Adam was driven out of paradise (Gen. iii. 24).

When the children of Israel left Egypt, and the tabernacle was made, their outstretched wings formed the throne, or seat, over the ark, in the most holy place. The tabernacle was ordered to be constructed by the people, and placed in the centre of their camp. Over it rested the "cloud" of God's presence, during the forty years that His people sojourned in the "waste howling wilderness," where He kept them "as the apple of His eye" (Deut. xxxii. 10). Day by day He provided for all their needs. The people had no cares, no work to do, but simply to prepare as they liked their daily fresh provision called "angels' food" and the "bread of heaven" (Ps. lxxviii. 25; cv. 40). It was, however, most important that they should recognise the divine government, implied by the throne whence came the judgment, when the people provoked God to anger by their inventions (xcix. 8; cvi. 29). Notwithstanding, all judgment was His "strange work," as Isaiah expresses it (xxviii. 21); for God ever delights in showing mercy.

When the kingdom was established in glory under Solomon's extended rule, the position of the cherubim is changed. In the temple which he built they stand

erect, and look *outwards*, their extended wings just touching and covering the whole breadth of the temple (2 Chron. iii. 10-13). That attitude surely sets forth the character of God's government for the time being, not only of the people, but over all the territory they occupied. It was a "kingdom" set up on earth, in a chosen place of extending blessing, in the land promised to Abraham. As usual, failure came in, and at last, after years of patience, final judgment fell, when both ark and temple disappeared, and the land was also given up to desolation. Jeremiah shows that the ark is not to be replaced on earth (chap. iii. 16). Jerusalem itself is to be called "Jehovah's throne" (ver. 17). And the ark, in a new form, will be found in heaven, being "seen" there in "the temple of God" (Rev. xi. 19).

Some other things need a notice in passing. Through David's repeated victories over the Syrians, the extent of the territory appropriated by the tribes of Israel, when they first divided it out, became very greatly increased toward the north, so that Solomon reigned over all the kings and kingdoms from "the river" (that is, the Euphrates) even to the border of Egypt (1 Kings iv. 21; 2 Chron. ix. 26).¹ This agrees with God's first promise to Joshua after Moses' death (Josh. i. 4). Compare also God's word to Abraham in Genesis xv. 18.

After the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar, power over the whole earth was committed to him, and he himself had to learn that after all, the heavens ruled, and that in a novel way, after the warning given by Daniel. For seven years he lost his reason, and was practically transformed into a beast. On his recovery he had to write his own history, and dropped the title of king when he became a worshipper,

¹ It is interesting at the present time to observe the progress of the British troops at both ends of this territory.

in Daniel iv. 33-37. A new form of the cherubim was at that time communicated to the prophet Ezekiel, himself a captive in Chaldea, who saw things from the point of view of God's people, scattered as they then were, but still "beloved" in spite of their rejection, as Paul also testified later on in their history (Rom. xi. 1-5). The "cherubim," described in Ezekiel's first chapter, were accompanied by "wheels" to run on the earth in a novel way, to show that both heaven and earth were under God's directing and ruling hand—all judgment proceeding from Him, *through the cherubim*. They are found again, in chapters ix.-xi., executing it; and lastly, are seen to return, in the future promised day of glory which ushers in Christ's millennial kingdom, in chapter xliii.

This rapid review must suffice to show why the apocalyptic judgments proceed from the "four living creatures," as the **Lamb** successively opens the seals. Each one in his turn says "Come," and John records what *he saw*, as the result of the divine order.

The reader will notice that, in the official Revised Version, the words "and see" are in each case dropped. This is quite correct. The available early manuscripts are more or less confused, evidently because the true meaning was not understood.¹ In the third verse, where John's "I saw" is *also* omitted, there is no authority for the addition at all. The living cherubic creatures give the governmental order, which is their regular duty, and the apostle simply records what *he saw* in consequence of the order given. It is the habitual character of the cherubim, as we have seen, all through Scripture, and most important, though very little understood. The whole passage becomes easy and natural to grasp when the words "and see" are left

¹ See also "Lectures on the Revelation," by W. Kelly, p. 108.

out. The judgments are providential, that is to say, that the effects observed on earth are the result of the *unseen* working and ordering in heaven above, where the twenty-four elders are enthroned also around the Lamb.

Notwithstanding all, judgment is still God's "strange work"; for the opening of the *fifth* seal shows nothing fresh to "come," but is a blessed interruption to reveal the Lamb's secret working in a few who love Him and suffer martyrdom (chap. vi. 9-11). W. J. L.

New Birth and Eternal Life—ii.

ETERNAL life is not merely something that came into being, a thing of *time*; it is *eternal*, it existed in God Himself before the world was. It dwelt ever in the Eternal Word (John i. 4), it had its source in God Himself, and was the subject of promise before the ages of time (2 Tim. i. 1; Titus i. 2). It will exist after this world (the scene of man's responsibility and failure) has passed away. Such is the life, both as to its nature and character, which is given to the believer.

The features and characteristics of this divine life are shown us in John's epistle; namely, love, obedience, righteousness, etc. Now where am I to look for a true expression of these traits of the life which God has given us? I may see them in some measure in the saints; but, alas, how often marred by the flesh or the world. There was but one true and adequate manifestation of that life here on earth, and that was in Christ. What lowly grace, what perfect submission to the Father's will, what absolute unselfishness, what righteous indignation against those who sought to

bring dishonour on the name of God, I see in Him. He was indeed "God manifested in flesh," *the* heavenly man on earth.

We may follow every step of His path here below, and we shall see the full meaning of that simple and sublime statement given us at the opening of John's epistle, "*The life was manifested.*" It was none other than that eternal life which was "*with the Father,*" in all the blessed intimacy of that relationship.

Now let us remember that this is the very eternal life which is given to us. And so it could be said, "which thing is true in Him and in you"; "as is the heavenly [One], such also the heavenly [ones]"; and we are exhorted to be "imitators of God" and to "walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us." Does it not make us feel ashamed when we think how little we come up to the standard?

Another beautiful testimony as to the features which belong to the divine life came from the lips of Jesus Himself as He poured out His soul in prayer to the Father just on the eve of His departure (John xvii. 2, 3).¹ After having said that He gives eternal life to those whom the Father has given to Him, that is, to every one of His own without exception, He proceeds to speak of what belongs to that life, what it is in itself. It was henceforth to be known and realised, it was to be exercised and expressed, not in the old relationship to God as Almighty or Jehovah, but in the entirely new and intimate relationship of *Father*. The possession of that life, which is the common and enjoyed portion of all His people, carried with it the

¹ The words, "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent," are not a definition of eternal life: but "eternal life is what *characterises* and *belongs to* the true knowledge of those names" ("Letters," J. N. D., ii. 212).

knowledge of the Father, the only true God; and of Jesus Christ Himself, the sent One of the Father. And this is to be known, not merely when we get to heaven, but here and *now*. So the Saviour Himself, in the last verse of this wonderful chapter, said concerning the *Father's name*, "*I will make it known*," which He does now by filling the heart of the saint with the sweetness and joy of this relationship, by the word, and the Holy Ghost whom He has given us, and who is the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry "Abba, Father."

Thus it is an undeniable fact revealed in Scripture, and to which the writings of John bear special and peculiar testimony, that the truth of new birth and eternal life go together. The first meets our need as regards a nature suitable to know God and enjoy communion with Him, the second gives us a life not only eternal, but which has demonstrated its victorious superiority over death in Christ Himself. He could say, "*I am the resurrection and the life*." It is, indeed, the resurrection-life of Christ, who "*is our life*."

Closely connected also with the truth of new birth is the truth of "new creation," so little understood by many Christians. Every one who is "born again" belongs to the new creation; "If any one [be] in Christ [there is] a new creation" (2 Cor. v. 17, new trans.). "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but new creation" (Gal. vi. 15). And the blessed and practical outcome of this new creation is brought before us in Ephesians iv. 21-24. "As the truth is in Jesus; [namely] your having put off . . . the old man . . . and having put on the new man," etc. (new trans.), and it is of the greatest importance that we should remember what the manner of life, and walk, and conduct is which

becomes those who, being born again and having eternal life, are created anew in Christ Jesus.

Let us, then, recount these blessings, which belong to every true believer: he is born again and is thus made a "partaker of the divine nature," he has eternal life as the gift of God, he belongs even now to the new creation where "all things are of God," he has received the Holy Ghost who is the Spirit of adoption (sonship), and who gives him the conscious enjoyment of knowing God as *Father*—the relationship which specially characterises life eternal—and he has Christ as the *object* as well as the source of the divine life which he has received (Gal. ii. 20). Wonderful and ineffable grace which has enriched us with so many fruits of divine love; may we answer to it better in our daily life and walk!

These God-given blessings are not the portion of some advanced Christians only. They belong to the new-born babe in Christ just as truly as to the most mature saint of God, though, of course, the babe has not yet entered into them experimentally. Our attainments are never the measure of God's grace, which (praise His name!) flows out from His own heart, acting for the glory of His beloved Son, and for our fullest and deepest blessing.

In this short sketch we have purposely refrained from touching upon that aspect of eternal life in which it is looked on as the reward at the end, as this would carry us beyond the purpose of this article.

F. G. B.

“The Whole Heart.”

A CORRESPONDENT, referring to the state of general weakness amongst believers, says he attributes much of it to the low spiritual character of their walk—knowing a great deal of truth, but not walking in the truth, or up to their knowledge of the truth. This, no doubt, is quite true, and we need to take it seriously to heart.

There is a remarkable word in Deuteronomy iv. 9 which may well claim our attention, “Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart *from thy heart* all the days of thy life.”

Moses, that beloved servant of God, who was “faithful in all God’s house,” yearned over the people of God with a true and earnest desire for His glory and their blessing. They were to seek the Lord, to “keep” and “do” His commands, to “love” and “serve” Him with *the whole heart*. Knowledge is very good in its place, but it is the state of the heart and soul which influences our whole life and conduct, hence the danger lest the heavenly things with which our God has so richly endowed us should depart “from thy heart.”

Failure and decline amongst the children of God invariably begins, not from without, but from *within*. If Christ loses His place in the heart and affections, the path of faith becomes, in our minds, narrow, difficult, and irksome. On the other hand, if He fills and satisfies the heart, that very path becomes one of joy and blessing where the sunshine of God’s love is known and realised. A soldier wrote from abroad lately, “Give Jesus Christ in your heart the place God

has given Him in Heaven." This is a good and needed word.

Not that there will not be trials and difficulties to be met and overcome in our pathway—there surely will be such. If we go in with the world and its ways we may have an easy time, but the Christian who is really decided to follow Christ and serve Him faithfully, cost what it may, must experience constant and unceasing conflict. Hence the value of that encouraging exhortation of the apostle, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

We have a Saviour whose power never fails, a High Priest whose intercession never ceases, and a hope that maketh not ashamed; let us earnestly seek to answer better to all His love and grace, and cleave to Him with our "whole heart."

F. G. B.

Prayer.

(Recollections of a Brief Address by J. A.)

IT is on my mind to say a little on four instances of prayer—I feel increasingly the importance and value of prayer.

Individual Prayer.—I would ask you to turn to 1 Kings xvii. and James v. 16, 17. You would never know that it was in answer to prayer that God sent the drought for three and a half years, and that he afterwards sent the rain, only that the Spirit of God has told us so in James. I want you to notice the way in which God kept His servant Elijah completely dependent upon Himself. He sent him first to the brook Cherith, where He commanded the ravens to feed him, and then to Zarephath, where He commanded a widow woman to sustain him. And you will notice

also that, though the barrel of meal did not waste nor the cruse of oil fail, yet neither the meal nor the oil increased, so that there was just enough, and they were kept in constant dependence on God. He will always meet our need and help us in our difficulties, but He will always keep us dependent on Himself. It sometimes happens that if you are in a difficulty, and God hears your prayer and delivers you out of it, that is just the time that Satan would take advantage of you, and you are in danger of taking things easy instead of going on waiting on God and looking to Him.

But how little we are able to comfort sorrowing ones as we ought! I have felt at times when I have met a saint in trouble, and reflected on how poorly I had been able to comfort them, that I could just go and make it all known to the Lord and tell Him how I failed in it, and ask Him to take such a one to His heart and comfort them in His own way. This is one of the blessed privileges of individual prayer.

Collective Prayer.—I would just like to say that there will not be much collective prayer if there is not individual prayer. It is only in as far as you are alone with God in your closet, that there will be power and blessing in the prayer-meeting.

Now turn to Daniel ii. 17-23; that is, as far as I know, the first prayer-meeting in the Bible. You find Daniel, in a case of very serious difficulty, calling together his three friends—and what is a friend? A friend is one whom you can take into your confidence, and to whom you can tell your inmost troubles and difficulties. Well, these four men came together for prayer, and God answered their prayers and delivered them out of their difficulties.

Look at verse 23, "I thank Thee and praise Thee, O God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and

might, and hast made known unto me now what **we** desired of Thee: for Thou hast now made known unto **us** the King's matter." You see he was expecting God's answer to what they asked for in prayer together, and now he could give thanks. It is a wonderful privilege to be able to get together for prayer, and to know that we have a God who is so ready to hear and to answer.

Now look at Acts i. 14, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren." Here was another prayer-meeting, and it was at the very beginning of the history of the Church, when everything was so bright and fresh. You will notice that the sisters were present also; and I can tell you that it has often been a comfort to me to know that the sisters add their "Amen—Lord grant it." You must have a signature on a cheque if it is to be of any value, and here the sisters as well as the others added their signatures, their amen, to the prayers which went up to God from that prayer-meeting at the very start of the Church's history.

The last instance I would refer you to is that of the prayer-meeting in the house of Mary the mother of Mark (Acts xii. 12-17), where they were gathered together to pray for Peter's deliverance from prison. When Peter's knock came to the door they could not believe that it was he; but here again God heard and answered united prayer.

I might refer you to many other instances of prayer, and you know we find the Lord Jesus praying about ten times in the gospel of Luke—what an example for us! But I would repeat what I have already said, that I never felt the importance of prayer, both individual and collective, more than to-day.

The Coming of the Lord.

(1 *Thessalonians iv.* 13-18.)

“**B**UT I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep” (ver. 13); one thing concerning which they were still in ignorance was yet lacking to the precious truth they had received. They did not yet know that at the coming of the Lord to take them to Himself without passing through death, all those amongst them (as well as all the saints of all ages) who had “fallen asleep in Jesus,” would be raised, in such a way as to form, with them, but one company. They did not doubt about the eternal blessing of those who slept, but they thought that such had lost something, and would perhaps have a long time to wait for the day of resurrection; whilst the living would be caught up to heaven at the coming of the Lord. But from this epistle they learned the comforting truth that the living would not take precedence of those who slept; and that, on the contrary, these latter would precede them, in the “twinkling of an eye.” They thus learned a new truth well calculated to fill their hearts with comfort.

The coming of the Lord comprises two acts: the first, in which Jesus takes the saints up to meet Him in the air; the second, in which He comes back with His saints. It is to this second act that the apostle alludes when he says, “If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.” Such will be the lot of those who have fallen asleep.

But, in a parenthesis comprising verses 15-18, the apostle teaches us that these raised ones will have the *first* share in the blessed portion which belongs to the

living ones, at the first act of the Lord's coming. They will then all be together, both those changed and those raised, at the day when the Lord will come *with* all His saints to judge the nations, and to manifest His glory in those who have believed. This explains the reason of the parenthesis from verse 15 to verse 18; chapter v. follows on directly after chapter iv. 14.

The first act of the coming of the Lord consists of two events: the resurrection of the saints who sleep, and the translation of those who are alive and remain. The second act of His coming embraces likewise two events; the judgment of the living nations, and the glorification of Christ in His saints. The first act is His coming in *grace* and in *power*, for power is necessary in order that "death may be swallowed up in victory"; but it is the triumph of grace and of nothing but grace. The question of our responsibility will not be raised there; but, as we have seen, it will be raised when the Lord, having "caught up" His saints, will take them into the glory with Himself. The presentation of the bride, the marriage of the Lamb, the Father's house, the judgment seat of Christ, are all mentioned in other passages, but not here. When our chapter treats of the coming of Christ, it has only one word to add, "so shall we be for ever with the Lord." This was enough for the Thessalonians; is it enough for us?

But, as I have said, we find here nothing but *pure grace acting in power*. The "shout," the "voice of the archangel," and the "trump of God" will not alarm the living saints any more than the sleeping ones. The crowns, the rewards for their faithfulness (or, solemn thought! their loss consequent on unfaithfulness) will not be given at that moment, which will be a moment of nothing but pure grace in its consummation.

Thus, at that particular event, it is not a question of

our love to Christ nor of *our* conduct, but of *His special love to us*. It is entirely a question of His love, who has paid our debt and has redeemed us by the death of the cross; of His love, who desires that you and I should share His glory. How His grace will be shown out to be in perfect harmony with His righteousness, at the very moment when, in order that we might be saved, they kissed each other! It is His design to have His beloved ones—His own for whom He has long waited in patience till He could possess Himself of His treasure—in perfect accord with all that His grace could desire.

And of what value are *we* to Christ—how are *we* His treasure? Have *we* any value in ourselves? Truly we have not; but to His eyes we have the value which His love gave us when He laid down His life to possess us; the value which His unchanging love has put upon us, when He desires that we should see His glory. To His eyes we have the value of the price He has paid in order to possess us, the value of the work by which He has made us worthy of Himself for ever, the value of the ceaseless care which His love takes to present His bride to Himself without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

Righteousness will be the character and result of His *appearing*, that is, of the second act of His coming. As in the case of “grace,” this “righteousness” will be manifested *in power*, in giving the rest of glory to those who have witnessed for Christ, and in executing judgment, with them, on the world which caused them to suffer. This second act is necessary, for, without it, the character of the holy and righteous One would not be fully maintained and demonstrated. He must glorify Himself by His judgment, after being glorified by His grace. Those who have refused the glory of

His grace will be compelled to bow under the glory of His judgment.

But let us ever remember that what *we* are looking out for and what *we* await during the night of His absence is, as I might say, the first and early glow of the rising of the bright morning star. The traveller who has seen this star arise—precursor of the dawn—when already midnight has passed, cannot forget the lustre which illuminates the whole horizon. So, when Jesus comes, that will be the *full* manifestation of His grace in all its purity, and in its blessed and eternal results.

From Notes by H. R.

Sketches in the Apocalypse.

XV.

THE THRONE

SHOWN TO JOHN IN HEAVEN.

WE closed the last article with a glimpse at the martyred souls under the altar, who cry for just vengeance on those that “dwell upon the earth,” an expression which indicates a class of earth-lovers and God-haters who have no thought of heaven in time or for eternity. These are first mentioned in chap. iii. 10, and are found a dozen times in the book, including xiv. 6, where a still stronger word, “settled upon,” is used.¹

The cry for judgment on their persecutors, proceeding from these faithful souls, reminds us of many such appeals in the Psalms, beginning with the well-known words, “How long?” In presence of that, we find ourselves on Old Testament ground, which

¹ The passages are : iii. 10 ; vi. 10 ; viii. 13 ; xi. 10 ; xiii. 8, 12, 14 ; xiv. 6 ; xvii. 2, 8.

proves that these sufferers do not in any sense belong to the "Church" which is represented by the "elders," already crowned and glorified in heaven. They have a place apart as experiencing personally the treatment measured out to their blessed Lord and Saviour, in the days of His ministry on earth, during the three and a half years that it lasted.

To return now to that which is more especially before us, there were, as we have seen, three things spoken of at the beginning, which John was told to "write in a book" (chap. i. 11): first, the vision he saw in the Isle of Patmos, of the Lord *judging* in the midst of His churches on earth; secondly, the messages sent to each one of the seven churches mentioned; and in the third place, the *vision* concerning what was to take place on earth *after* all that concerned the Church was concluded, since all those who had formed part of it on earth were *now* seen to be around the throne, enjoying the "place prepared" for them in heaven.... Such was practically the portion promised by the Lord Himself, which He announced to His disciples just before He suffered for them (John xiv. 2, 3).

To set forth adequately the events which were about to transpire upon earth, John is invited to go through "a door opened in heaven" (chap. iv. 1), in order that, from this heavenly stand-point, he might see and describe all that was about to take place. Two things must thenceforth be borne in mind; first, the words "I saw," which characterise all that follows as soon as the third section of this wonderful book begins; and secondly, the "**throne**" from which all judgment proceeds.

In even a cursory reading of chapter iv. it will be noticed that the word "throne" occurs *twelve* times over (not to speak of the "seats" of the twenty-four

elders in verse 4, which in the original is the same word as is elsewhere translated "throne," only there, of course, in the plural). That serves to emphasise the fact of divine government, in which in a measure the elders participate. Compare 1 Corinthians vi. 2.

Besides this, in the following *three* chapters, v., vi., and vii., the "throne" is again mentioned *twelve* times, not counting once in vii. 15, where it is called the "throne of God." In the following chapter, viii. 3, we find the *altar* mentioned for the first time, as being "before the throne"; the reference is evidently to the golden altar in the tabernacle of old, where the *incense* was habitually offered by the priests. That is indeed stated in the same verse; also in ix. 13 it is called "golden." The other references to it are xi. 1, xiv. 18, and xvi. 7. The allusion to sacrifice in chapter vi. 9 would indicate the brazen altar in the court of the tabernacle.

The prominent figure, then, in these three chapters, v., vi., and vii., is the **Lamb**, the blessed Lord Himself, known in this special character by the "elders," who represent the whole company of the redeemed up to that time, and who enjoy in heaven the fruit of His atoning work. He is no more mentioned by that term until after the close of the first half of the book, which finishes at chapter xi. 18.

The last verse of that chapter (xi.) more properly belongs to chapter xii., and thenceforward, all that follows being occupied with various details, until we come to xix. 11, when at length heaven is "opened," and the Lord Himself, in a new character, comes forth from it (see chaps. xiv. 17 and xvi. 17, which also speak of the "temple" therein. The Greek word used in each of the three cases indicates the holy place itself).

In the passages where this blessed name of "Lamb"

is found, we can always trace the connection with the *redeemed* who know Him in this most precious character. Hence we find His "blood" (xii. 11), His "book of life" (xiii. 8; xxi. 27), His "song" (xv. 3), His "marriage" (xix. 7, 9; xxi. 9), His "twelve apostles" (xxi. 14). He is both the temple and the light of the heavenly Jerusalem (xxi. 22, 23), and is finally associated with God on "the throne" (xxii. 1, 3). Two passages only in the latter half of the book refer to the history there given: these are xiv. 1, 4, 10, and xvii. 14.

How blessedly the final mention of the "throne," in verses 1 and 3 of the last chapter, confirms in closing all this portion of the book, which includes the communications of the angel sent to John to show him beforehand all these things (chap. xxii. 8, 9). No wonder that a particular blessing should be conferred on those who *read*, and who *keep* the words of this prophecy (xxii. 7-10).

We have given these details in order that each attentive reader may have definitely before the mind the remarkable character of all this part of the inspired book. There is no need to insist upon the fact that the **throne** indicates government; and when it is a question of the sinful state of this world which rejected and crucified Christ, the governmental administration necessarily means judgment.

It will be noticed that, in chapter iv., no divine name is mentioned as filling the throne, unless it be, in a general way, understood in the unceasing cry of the "living creatures" (ver. 8), and in that of the twenty-four elders which follow their incentive, as they fall down before Him that sits upon it, and worship "Him that liveth for ever and ever." God and Christ are, so to speak, merged into one.

It is in no wise a question of the revelation of the Father, but of judgment, which is all "committed to the Son," as explained to the Jews by the Lord Himself. And that is true both as to judgment and life-giving power (John v. 17-36). The three names are those found in the Old Testament: "God" in Genesis i. 1; "Almighty" in God's revelation to Abraham (Gen. xvii. 1), as also to Isaac and Jacob; and finally "LORD," that is Jehovah, made known to Moses, in Exodus iii. 14, 15; vi. 2, 3. That carries us through the whole of the Old Testament (see Deut. xviii. 13; Mal. iii. 6).

It is well to remember also that, in the closing verse 11 of chapter iv., the words "and our God" should undoubtedly be added after "our Lord." This is done in the Revised Version, and is supported by the best authority in the Ancient Manuscripts. It falls in admirably with all the preceding verses.

Let us not omit to notice also, in verse 9, the added words, "who liveth for ever and ever." They are repeated in verse 10, and are applicable in every sense both to God and to Christ, here associated most intimately, as Jesus Himself said, in referring to His care of His sheep (John x. 30). How precious also is this attribute, in relation to the "eternal life" communicated to the believer, a life of which the Lord Himself is the personal and divine expression (John x. 28, vi. 57, and xiv. 19).

The keynote of the worship is given by the cherubim from the throne itself, and is then taken up by the twenty-four elders, as above noted. The "elders" represent the whole company of those saved from among men up to that time; but they do not here speak of redemption, as we find in the following chapter v., verse 9. They are occupied with God as Creator, everything that exists being according to His

blessed will and pleasure. In this we know that Christ is identified with Him, as the apostle shows, both as to the object in view, and its accomplishment in perfection (Col. i. 16, 17).

We do not repeat what has been already noticed on pages 12, 13, concerning the martyred remnant, whose souls are seen "under the altar" of burnt offering, in chapter vi. 9; but it is well to remember that they are martyrs *after* the time when the complete company of the redeemed are seen enthroned in heaven. Their righteousness is recognised in the white robes given to them, but they have to wait until the full number of others, in more or less similar circumstances, shall have been completed. The "word of God" had been everything to them in their lifetime, "and they loved not their lives unto the death" (chap. xii. 11). God cares for His precious Word, though many a Diocletian may in future arise, determined to get rid of every copy.

In connection with the worship initiated by the living creatures or cherubim, in chapter iv. 8, 9, it is important to take note of the order of the words, "which was, and is, and is to come." In this case it is a question of *time*: "was" comes first in the sentence. When we compare that with chap. i. 4, we see at once the difference, in that *essential being* is put *first*, "who is." Then time past and time to come is added, as if to remind us that God is ever and always unchangeably the same. There is an expression or name of God, of somewhat similar import, found some half-dozen times in the Old Testament, and generally translated "I *am* HE" (Isa. xli. 4).

In Psalm cii. 27 it is applied in the second person to Christ, "Thou *art* HE," given in our Bibles, "Thou art the SAME." When time is taken into consideration,

“who was” naturally comes first. But how precious is it for us to know that there never is, nor can be, any change in Him; and His love to each one of the redeemed is measured by the Cross, and what He there suffered on our behalf.

The “coming One” in verses 4 and 8 of the first chapter is therefore characteristic of Him who never changes. This is for His Church on earth to know and rejoice in. When *time* is brought in, and “was” precedes “is,” it refers to all that follows the Church’s *history* on earth, when that is finally concluded.

There is no redemption-song in chapter iv. That comes in its proper place in chapter v., and is called a “new song,” *after* the **Lamb** has been introduced in verse 6, as having been “slain.” But again the cherubim initiate the song, which is triumphantly taken up by the elders. The **throne** is ever kept in view. Angels are not mentioned in chapter iv. They come in with a seven-fold expression of worship in chapter v. 11, 12. And all *creation* follows suit. That is also the case with the angels in another scene, in chapter vii. 11, 12, at a time when God again is working in marvellous grace, not only in Israel but in all the nations. But the redemption-song of chapter v. 9, 10 is lacking there.

W. J. L.

Hold Fast.

IT is agreed amongst us generally that the seven letters in the second and third chapters of Revelation contain, among other things, a sevenfold historic presentation of the professing church from apostolic times to the coming of the Lord for His saints. The addresses to these seven churches are understood to cover, in order, the seven or complete periods of the history of Christendom.

It is necessary to distinguish between these epistles in the Book of Revelation and the epistles of Paul. In the latter it is easy to see that in the main real Christians are addressed, while in the former, all that in any way profess, or have professed, the name of Christ are evidently included.

But while these letters to the seven churches in Asia, in their order, are characteristic of the seven periods of church history, the principles they expound are not limited to those periods, but in their various teachings are applicable to the professing church in general from its beginning to its end. Like the word of God elsewhere, in these epistles, it is always "quick and powerful." Thus, saints in Thyatira (Rev. ii. 25), distinguished as being free from the evil teaching of that corrupt system, are charged by the Son of God to hold fast their burden of holy separateness "till He come." This shows that, though Thyatira had its own special period in the general history, Thyatira conditions are in existence now, and they will continue in existence until the Lord's coming; and further, that the increasing confusion and difficulty of the true Christian position is no excuse for yielding to, or compromising with (now, or in the past or the future), anything contrary to the will of God as revealed in the Scriptures. Hence the Lord does not say, Hold fast until you find the position has become untenable, or, hold fast until the position has improved, until there is no longer the burden of separateness to be borne, but "*Hold fast till I come.*"

In Thyatira there are, at least, four types of professing Christians. First, there are those who have no real Christianity, but only the name; those who are represented by the woman Jezebel — unconverted persons who wickedly seduce the Lord's own servants.

Secondly, the servants of the Son of God, who are taught and seduced by the aforesaid false teachers. These are owned by the Lord as His servants, though they are more or less led away by the error of the wicked. Thirdly, there are those who *suffer* the woman Jezebel to pursue her wicked ways, being themselves individually free from the false teaching, though tolerating it. Fourthly, there is the remnant in Thyatira, noted as such by the Son of God, who are free from the evil charged upon the mere professors. This last class are exhorted to hold fast what they already have.

It is manifest that one must have something worth keeping before one can be told to hold it fast; and this the remnant have. It is understood that they are free from the spiritual unchastity which is corrupting the previous classes mentioned. And further, that they are intolerant of it, that they will not suffer it. You will note that the Lord does not say to this remnant what he says to the third class as described above, namely, "I have against thee, that *thou sufferest* the woman Jezebel."

Are you, dear reader, even in principle, suffering the woman Jezebel to teach and to seduce Christ's servants? If so, notwithstanding your works, love, service, faith, and patience, and these in abundance, the Son of God has this sin of tolerating spiritual unchastity against you.

Is it not a mistake to limit what may be described as Thyatira conditions to the Church of Rome? Is not every State Church in Christendom (not to mention others) chargeable with this unchastity? Every State Church contemplates the whole nation with which it is identified as "Christian"; this is just such a union of the church and the world as is condemned as un-

chastity in this message to Thyatira. And the outcome of this union is certain judgment. Speaking of the false prophets, which are the product of this state of things, the Son of God says, "I will kill her children with death."

Moreover, we must not limit the "great tribulation" threatened in this letter to the distant future. Are we surprised at the terrible calamity overtaking the world to-day, when we remember the wickedness of the professing Christian Church which has preceded our times? It is possible to take much too amiable a view of the judgment the Son of God has given here respecting the Church. He says, concerning the progeny of Jezebel, in His righteous indignation and holy anger, "I will kill her children with death!" Is it not serious to tolerate or suffer what provokes the anger of the Son of God? It is even possible to become eloquent about Christ, and to admit many orthodox truths, and yet all the while to be "suffering" the woman Jezebel.

The position to be "held fast" here is plainly that of being free from what this Church is charged with, including, of course, the faith in general. What an inheritance the Christian inherits! But, at present, it is in the tenure of faith; and our possessions are being constantly assailed. The enemy will rob the Christian of the joy of his possessions if he can. Let us be like Naboth (1 Kings xxi. 3); he was ready to die rather than surrender. Ahab said, "Give me thy vineyard . . . and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money." And Naboth said to Ahab, with fearless decision of character, "Jehovah forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee." Naboth had the best authority, even the word of the Lord, for not parting with his

inheritance to the wicked king. This refusal cost Naboth his life.

Christians suffer to-day, as they have suffered in the past, for being intolerant of evil like that in Thyatira; but if they have to bear the burden of opposing "this doctrine"—and what they are pressed to hold fast here is, in this connection, viewed as a burden—they have the assurance of the Son of God that He places no other burden upon them; "But unto you I say . . . I will put upon you *none other burden*. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come." T. H.

Small Things.

"For who hath despised the day of small things?"

Zech. iv. 10.

ONLY a rod! By power divine,
In Moses' hand the seal and sign,
To lead a host by grace divine,
From slavery.

A trumpet, lamp, and pitcher frail:
For warfare—things of no avail;
Yet these in Gideon's hand prevail,
For victory.

Only a simple stone and sling!
In David's hand deliverance bring;
While Israel's hosts triumphant sing,
Of victory.

Only a little pot of oil?
Yet, bless'd of God, it yields much spoil;
Sets free the widow's sons from toil,
Of slavery.

Only *five* loaves of barley bread!
Of fishes *two*!—five thousand fed,
For He who was the living Bread,
Gave full supply.

And in *our* hands, what power have *we*
 Simply His word and Spirit free,
 That souls may learn through you and me,
 God's way to Heaven.

M. E. B.

“Hold Fast.”

TO the young Thessalonian believers Paul gave this word of exhortation, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” Is it not a word in season for to-day? If that which is good is held fast, that which is evil must be let slip. Good and evil are absolutely opposed. It was so then, it is so now, hence these words, “Hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil.”

To Timothy, his son in the faith, Paul wrote, “Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.”

Young believers, young men in the faith, now as then, need these watchwords, as they come with weight and worth from such a faithful watchman, who had fought a good fight, finished his course, kept the faith, and was ready to be offered. The time of his departure being at hand, he therefore says, “Hold fast.”

Three times in the second and third chapter of Revelation we find these words, “Hold fast.” To Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia they are given by the Lord Himself. If needed then, when these things were sent and signified to the aged and exiled John, how much more does the word apply now. “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Assemblies.”

“Hold fast” is thrice repeated; the last time it is linked with the coming quickly of the Lord Jesus

Christ. "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

U. G.

Notes of Christian Soldiers.

W. L. before being obliged to go into the Army, was a godly bricklayer's labourer, and a great help to the little company of believers with whom he used to gather to the name of the Lord Jesus. He, like many more, has recently been killed in France. One writes of him, "He was a bold and faithful witness for Christ wherever he was, and I know of several distinct cases of blessing through him amongst the men he was with."

The very first night he was in barracks, after all had retired to bed, one man shouted in mockery, "I say, lads, have you all said your prayers?" At once W. L. said, "In case any of you might have forgotten, I'll pray for the lot," and he there and then prayed audibly for them all. He would be greatly grieved when chaplains or others failed to preach to the men the unadulterated gospel, and would not hesitate to take them to task at the close. He said that what he had seen of the work of God amongst the soldiers made up for all he had suffered in the war, though he felt keenly leaving his wife and child.

W. M. R.

The foregoing sad but interesting account should impress upon us the great need for constant and earnest prayer for the many Christian young men in the army, that they may be kept and enabled to testify for Christ in the trying circumstances in which they are placed.

EDITOR.

“The Hour of Trial.”

IN almost every part of the world at the present time the effect of the war brings its bitterness and trial. There are sorrows and bereavements in many homes; the dear prices also press heavily upon the poor. And the end is not yet in view. How precious the Word of God ought to be to the Christian, especially at such a time!

In the address to the Church at Philadelphia, the Lord speaks of “the hour of trial which is about to come upon the whole habitable world to try them that dwell upon the earth” (Rev. iii. 10, new trans.). We do not believe that this “hour” has come yet, nor do we know exactly what form the trial will take, but the present time is not unlike a foreshadowing of it. Nor is it the same as the “great tribulation” of which the Lord spoke (Matt. xxiv. 21), which is to take place in the land of Judea.

Now the Lord gives us a precious and encouraging promise in view of this special time of trial; He says that because they had kept the word of His patience, He also would keep them from, or out of, that “hour.” What is the word of His patience? It is, indeed, that which we should dearly value: He is *patiently waiting* until the moment when it is the Father’s will He should come. Till then He will not take the Kingdom.

Are we keeping the word of *His* patience: content to wait for our portion till then; or are we looking for place and position in the world now? See how close the Lord brings the saints to Himself in this address; He says *My* God, *My* name, *My* word, *My* patience, for He had walked the path of faith before them as the perfect example in all things.

Moreover, the promise He makes is most suited and

blessed. "I," He says, "will keep you out of the hour of trial." They could not keep themselves, but *He* keeps them; their place, in heart and spirit, was "out of" the world even then; but when He should come and take them to Himself, they would be actually out of it altogether.

And so He adds the word, "*I* come quickly." It is *Jesus Himself* who is coming; the One who says in the last chapter, "I Jesus," and this it is which adds all its joy and sweetness to that blessed hope. Then He says, "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." See how the Lord connects the holding fast with His coming; for, in truth, nothing lifts the heart out of the world, and makes all truth a fresh and bright reality, more than that hope realised and enjoyed in the soul.

Thus, as we feel the seriousness of the times, and as we see the shadows of the "hour of trial" coming upon the world, may our hearts be kept in communion with the Lord, and in the constant expectation of His return!

F. G. B.

"Consider Your Ways."

THE remnant of Jews of whom we read in Haggai had been opposed by the enemy in the work of building the Lord's house; they had grown weary and had settled down in their own sealed houses. The call now came, through the prophet, "Consider your ways" (chap. i. 5 and 7). There is surely much for us to learn from this, as well as from the message sent to them.

Why was there no blessing amongst them? It was because they were running every one to his own house, and Jehovah's house was lying waste. Alas, how well

this applies to-day—every man seeking his own, not the things of Jesus Christ!

Then we find Zerubbabel and Joshua and the remnant of the people *obeying* the voice of the LORD and *fearing* before Him. At once the message is sent to them, "*I am with you*, saith the LORD." What an encouragement this is to simple obedience!

Again, in chapter ii. 4, although the work was not much to look at—just like the ruin and weakness of the present day—yet the word is, "Be strong . . . and work: for *I am with you*, saith the LORD of hosts." This comes very suitably to us now in spite of all the ruin; for we know that Christ will present the Church to Himself, glorious, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Then, from verses 11 to 14, he reminds them that the conditions of service (although the work was meagre) were the same as when they first received His precepts. Touching holy things would not make them holy, and if they touched that which was unclean they would still be unclean. This is so now, as 2 Timothy ii. 20, 21 teaches us. In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth, some to honour and some to dishonour; and the responsibility rests on each of us to purge ourselves from these latter, that we may be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

And what an encouraging word we find at the close, "from this day will I bless you!" They had considered their ways, they had obeyed the word of the LORD, and laid the foundation of His house; and although it was so plain and humble that the aged men who had seen Solomon's temple wept when they saw it, yet he would encourage them with these words.

A. W. R.

The Day of the Lord—i.

(2 *Thessalonians ii.*).

THE apostle had already shown that at the "Day of the Lord" He would come in glory for the punishment of the wicked, and the Thessalonian believers, who were passing through much persecution, were troubled by the enemy who sought to deceive them by leading them to suppose that that "Day" was already come. The false teachers told them that the "Day of the Lord" had come, that it was not now a question of the Lord taking His saints to be with Himself, and that they had been deceived in their hope.

In order to meet this and safeguard the believers against these attacks, the apostle shows them that three events must precede the Day of the Lord: (i) the coming (*parousia*, or presence) of Christ, (ii) the apostasy, or total giving up of Christianity, (iii) the appearing of the "man of sin." So long as these three events had not taken place, the *appearing* of the Lord Jesus would not be. For, just as it is a truth found in the Word that no event must necessarily precede His "coming," so it is also true that quite a series of events must take place before His "appearing."

The day will come when the Lord, who looks upon His saints as that which is most precious to Him, will execute vengeance on those that trouble them; and will give reward and rest to those who are troubled. It is *then* that His saints will appear *with* Him in glory, and that glory will shine forth in His redeemed ones; as it will be also seen in His judgments, without which the righteousness and holiness of God, who is abhorrent of evil, would not be vindicated and made

good. Men forget that God is "light" as well as "love," and light can have no fellowship with darkness.

The second proof that the Day of the Lord was not yet come was that "the apostasy," which must precede that day, had not yet taken place. The apostasy is the complete giving up of the Christian faith and doctrine, in a word, of Christianity. These subversive principles are already largely developed; however, the full apostasy has not yet come in our day, but we see the way being prepared for it more and more. The denial of the inspiration of the Bible is the fatal commencement, the denial of the deity of Christ and of the existence of God the Father is the point at which it will ultimately arrive.

The third proof that the Day of the Lord had not yet come was that the "man of sin," who will be the embodiment of the apostasy and will represent it on earth, was not yet revealed. This man of sin is called the Antichrist in the first epistle of John, a name which is given to him there only. The Antichrist, such as John presents him, is the embodiment of the spirit of opposition to Christ, and teaches doctrines subversive of Christianity. That is why it is said, "even now are there many antichrists," whose false doctrines prepare the way for the coming of this man.

We find this same personage in Revelation xiii., where he is presented as the second beast. The first beast, the head of the Roman Empire, will come out of "the sea," that is, the state of anarchy of the peoples. The second beast will come out of "the earth," that is, the organised state of the world. He will have two horns like a lamb, being both a temporal and religious power.

We know that Antichrist will cause himself to be worshipped at Jerusalem, that he will establish his

spiritual power over all the apostate world of that day, in alliance with the first beast, the head of the Roman Empire revived under the form of a Latin confederation. He will introduce on the one hand the idolatrous worship of the State, represented by the image of the beast, and on the other the idolatrous worship of man in his own person. He will do great miracles by which the Jews, who "desire a sign," will be seduced. Usurping the power of God in this world, he will cause fire to come down from heaven in the sight of men, so as to lead them to suppose that he can dispose of the power of heaven. In the end both the beast and false prophet will be cast into the lake of fire when the Lord descends from heaven in judgment upon the nations (Rev. xix. 20).

All these principles which characterise the Antichrist are at work to-day. The doctrine which exalts and deifies man is accepted now by thousands of souls. When it is manifested in its full satanic development, men will bow themselves down before the "superman," who will pretend to be God. It is then that the Lord will appear in heaven, in solemn and terrible judgment on these two representatives of the final apostasy; then also His glory, who will show forth His righteousness and His holiness in retributive judgment, and His grace, will be manifested in the rewards He will bestow. Then, too, the entire creation will be set free from the bondage of corruption, in order to enjoy the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

From Notes by H. R.

Fragment.—A broad path does not necessarily mean a broad heart, but a broad conscience.

Sketches in the Apocalypse.

XVI.

ACTION OF THE THRONE.

SPEAKING generally, there are two features of the Throne which we need to distinguish carefully, namely, that which is *characteristic*, as being always true of it, and that which is *special*, as applying to God's "strange work" of judgment, when it is carried out in fact, after a period of long forbearance (Isaiah xxviii. 21, 22). His government has been based upon mercy, ever since the fall of Adam, that is, from the very beginning of man's history, when "death entered into the world," as yet unspotted in its created beauty (Rom. v. 12). Then "death passed upon all, for that all have sinned." But throughout man's history, sad as it is, His mercy, and the fruits of it, shine forth in numberless details, giving rise to the blessed chorus, "His mercy endureth for ever" (Ps. cxxxvi.).

We must therefore expect to find both of these features, oftentimes linked up together in the closest way, in the wonderful book which we are reading, and which is so written as to serve the saints in all time, since the apostle's days. But that does not interfere with its particular application to the period immediately subsequent to the removal of all true believers from this scene, *before* the judgments indicated in chapters vi. to xix., which begin when the sealed roll is opened.

All this portion of the book is providential, that is to say, carried out by various agencies, seen or unseen; for the Lord does not take the judgment into His own hands (chap. xix. 11-14), until He comes forth in majesty, "followed by the armies which are in

heaven" (xix. 10-14). Immediately afterwards we read that Satan is bound, and shut up in the bottomless pit for the thousand years of Christ's reign over this world (chap. xx. 1-6). Then also the first resurrection, in its three distinct operations, will have taken place.

We give these here, in detail, inasmuch as our Authorized Version, in spite of its general beauty, does not clearly distinguish them. The first sentence of verse 4 refers to all who will be raised when the Lord comes to claim all who have "died in faith" (Heb. xi. 13, 39, 40; 1 Cor. xv. 51-57). The next phrase, "*The souls* of those beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God," refers verbally to the martyred remnant mentioned in chapter vi. 9, and seen "under the altar." And finally, the third company are found described in chapter xiii. 15-17, as having been "killed," because they "would not worship the image of the beast," nor "receive his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands." All of these "will live and reign with Christ a thousand years."

Do we sufficiently realise that it is the fact of the sealed roll being taken by the **Lamb** Himself, which calls forth the praise of the "elders," as led by the cherubim, before any hint is given as to what the roll contained? One of the elders, already in the secret, had made known to John that "the Lion of the tribe of Juda, and Root of David, had prevailed to open the book, and loose its seven seals"; but it is in the character of the Lamb slain, and yet alive, that He does it. That is a sufficient guarantee that the contents of the book could only be a confirmation of what He was, and is, as well as of what His death had wrought.

The redemption song follows at once; it is indeed "a new song," fully entered into by the "elders."

Then angels celebrate His resurrection power, in seven-fold praise, and all creation joins in associating "the Lamb" with "Him that sitteth upon the throne," as being, so to speak, in this case, identified. But the "elders" have a higher and more intimate place of blessing than the angels, based upon their own personal redemption; consequently, with their harps of praise, they can present also their "golden vials full of odours," which are the prayers of others¹ still in the place of suffering. That is seen indeed, when the fifth seal is opened, in chapter vi. 9, 10.

Oh for grace to be enabled to join more definitely in the "Amen" of the living creatures (ver. 14), which fitly closes their initiative given in verse 8, clearly showing that such is God's will and purpose for all His saints. It was Peter's desire for the saints before he left this scene, with the blessed Lord's transfiguration definitely before his soul, in order that an "abundant entrance" might be realised by them "into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. i. 11).

It is very easy for us to settle down into a routine which may have an outward appearance of piety, without any of the vigour which must characterise those whose hearts are centred in the personal glory and self-sacrifice of the **Lamb**. Those who will enjoy their place and portion with Him by-and-bye, must have

¹ The word "us," in the Authorised Version of chapter v. 9, should be omitted, and "them," which follows in verse 10, should be substituted for "us," as in the Revised Version. This is followed by "*they* shall reign over the earth." The confusion of the pronouns arose from not observing that the "elders," already crowned in glory, do not sing about themselves, but about *others* not yet glorified, seen under the altar in chapter vi. 9. "Hast redeemed" and "hast made" are in the past tense, whereas "They *shall* reign" refers to the future reserved for them.

their hearts and thoughts engaged with Him while still on this earth, where He made Himself "of no reputation." Do we think of this as we ought?

We do well to recall another fact which helps to illustrate the song of the "elders," namely, that the two witnesses, specially raised up of God in the three years and a half of Antichrist's power, have to pass through martyrdom, like those mentioned in chapter vi. 11. Their enemies rejoice over their death, and will not even allow their bodies to be buried; but in spite of their rage and madness they are made to be witnesses of their ascension to heaven, which was not the case with those who were determined to crucify their Lord. And the very fact of their refusal to allow the two dead bodies to be put into graves only serves to prove the reality of their personal resurrection, a fact which all infidels have the greatest disposition to conceal, even going so far as to deny its possibility. In this case, the rage of their enemies gives the needed opportunity for making manifest the true nature of their testimony. It was divine; so we find it recorded that "their enemies *beheld* them."

In chapter iv., verse 5, we notice "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne," doubtless an allusion to the golden candlestick in the Tabernacle of old, with its seven lamps. It is explained as expressing the action of the Spirit of God in its governmental character,—very different from His indwelling of the saints now on earth. But in chapter v., they are seen as the "eyes of the Lamb" in all the earth, a further blessed assurance that nothing can possibly take place there, but as He Himself sees it in connection with His sacrifice offered once for all. In every way the hearts of all interested on-lookers are set at rest, and they can give vent to their praises before anything is

done in consequence of the successive opening of the seals.

Let us not forget that, in answer to the appeal, "How long . . .?" of the faithful martyred remnant, in chapter vi. 10, they receive individually their "white robes," showing that their righteousness is recognised *before* they take their place in heaven. They have to "rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." The word "until" shows clearly that time is still given to allow the inhabitants of the earth to show what man, under the direction of Satan, can do against God, and in spite of His grace to sinners. The whole company of the redeemed has to be completed *before* the Lord comes personally in judgment upon the wicked still living.

It would, however, be depreciating the character of this book to suppose that it is simply, or exclusively, a historical record of things to come. The main object of all the third part is to show that eventually the Lord will "reign for ever and ever" (chap. xi. 15); but it is so written, that the language may cover events which take place singly or successively, during the whole time of His absence, for the comfort of those who wait and look for His coming.

Take for instance the opening of the seals, of which six are given in the sixth chapter. Can we not trace, in the account, an epitome of the *order* of events that have transpired during the present war, which has already lasted more than three years and a half?

We find first the lust of conquest, in answer to the first appeal to "Come." Secondly, peace is taken from the earth, and, in spite of themselves, nation after nation is drawn into the war. Thirdly, we are met with a scarcity of necessary food, graphically described in

verses 5 and 6. Fourthly, have we not heard of the indiscriminate slaughter of unoffending people, besides famine, pestilence, and possibly an increase of wild beasts in many parts? What is to follow before long is a persecution of the faithful, sooner perhaps than we expect it, and may be also, earthquakes or other indication of God's judgment. Verses 12, 13 are in figurative language found in several places of Old and New Testaments. Have we not cause to thank our God for the divine light He gives, in this book? W. J. L.

“Those Who Have Not Known.”

IN a previous article dealing with Thyatira, attention was called to four classes of professing Christians: those who were not converted; those who were apparently converted, but allowed themselves to be defiled with spiritual unchastity; those who knowingly suffered or countenanced this unholy defilement; and those who may be considered as free from all complicity with evil. But there is still a class about which a word should be written; they are referred to in Revelation ii. 24, as not having known “The depths of Satan.” This phrase, “The depths of Satan,” probably refers to the system of religious corruption carried on in the name of Christ. The craft and subtlety of the serpent showed itself in the garden of Eden, and while evil in general in the world is through him, he reaches his depths of deceit and wickedness in coming as an angel of light, within the bounds of the professing Church, and working in deep and insidious ways there. Using for example, the activity of the false “prophetess” in Thyatira, in this manner.

Let us consider these words: “Those which have

not known the depths of Satan." Have we not here, dear brethren, plainly revealed, the Lord's tender regard and consideration for Christians, simple-hearted, and true, who have not been made aware of the depths of spiritual wickedness in the midst of the christian profession? Are we not in danger, when we get fresh light on any portion of Scripture, and perhaps have acted on it, of unreasonably expecting all other Christians to see as we see? It so often happens that what is clear to one is far from being clear to another. Let us beware of inflicting a responsibility on any that the Lord has not inflicted.

In judging the ecclesiastical position, the Son of God discriminates between those who have known and those who have not known, just as God considered those who did not know their right hand from their left in Nineveh. What makes Belshazzar's crime so serious, as seen in Daniel v., is the fact that he had rejected light given from God; "Thou . . . O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, *though thou knewest all this*" (Dan. v. 22). This king was not suddenly destroyed for a sin of ignorance; no one ever is. Repeated warnings were given to Pharaoh before divine judgment overtook him. Israel was detained in Egypt four hundred years because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full.

Notice, too, how patiently God bore with Israel before they were carried away into captivity (2 Chron. xxxvi. 16); they had no cloak for their sin. So it was with the Jews who rejected Christ. So it will be when men in the gospel regions are destroyed at the end of the age. They will be rejected, not because they did not know, but because they would not receive the truth which had been plainly made known to them. Adequate light was given in all these cases. They knew what to

do, yet they did not do it; they knew what they ought not to do, yet they did it.

God's judgment of the nations is also in accordance with the light He has given them. If we study the book of Amos (chaps. i., ii., iii.) we shall find an illustration of this fact. To select a few cases: Damascus was punished, "Because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron." Edom was punished, "Because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity." Moab was punished, "Because he burned the bones of the King of Edom into lime." But when we come to Judah the difference is noteworthy; Judah is punished, "Because they have despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept His commandments." - These instances agree with the words of Romans ii. 12, "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned under the law shall be judged by the law."

God deals with men in such a way as to leave them without excuse, when they are finally punished for their sins. The heathen will be punished, amongst other things, not for rejecting a message that was never offered them, but for worshipping false gods, after the light as to God's eternal power and Godhead, as seen in creation, had been rejected by them. All such persons will have no excuse for saying they did not know.

On the same principle, in judging the condition of things in the professing Church, the Son of God takes into tender consideration those who have not known the depths of Satan, and exempts them from the censure of guilty tolerance of that insidious evil. He alone can truly judge as to who have known, and who have not known. He does not call all Christians to

pass through the same exercise of soul. The Spirit of God exercises the mind of one servant with truths concerning the Church; but this servant must not hastily judge others who fail to see these truths as clearly as himself. The Spirit of God exercises the mind of another servant of God with the solemn needs of perishing souls. Let not God's servants undervalue each other's labours; "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit."

Understanding aright as to this will help our hearts to go out in fervent christian love to many who do not know what we think we know, or even what we may truly know; and it will rightly justify our christian sympathy with them, without forgetting, or condoning, evil things. Conscience is an individual thing; and no one can go beyond his own faith, nor does the Master ask him to do so.

Christian life is a matter of growth. We know, and occupy ourselves at one stage of our career with different truths from those which concern us at another stage. Christians are finite men, but God's Word is infinite. If we remember these things, and are wise, we shall be slow to condemn others, even in thought, or to press them unduly with truths of which we ourselves may be fully assured. It is obvious that the Son of God judges according to what people know; "If ye *know* these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Thus, in Thyatira, those who have not known the depths of Satan are exempt from bearing a like burden to those who have known them; "I will put upon you none other burden; but that which ye *have*, hold fast till I come."

T. H.

The Church of God—i.

As it was and as it is.

WE may rightly say that not till after Pentecost was the starting-point of the Church, and that the coming of the Lord will be its terminus. Consequent on the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and the refusal of the testimony of the Holy Ghost by the Jewish people, God began an entirely new work in gathering out of all nations a people for His name. The wall of partition between Jew and Gentile was henceforth to be broken down, and the enmity that once existed was to be abolished (Eph. ii.).

The Church, then, is a body formed on earth, and united by the Holy Spirit to the glorified Head in heaven. In another aspect it is a spiritual building, "fitly framed together, growing unto an holy temple in the Lord." God dwells there by His Spirit. It is clear, therefore, that the Church could not exist on earth until Christ, the Head, had taken His place in heaven; and so the Lord Himself said, in reference to Peter's confession of Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God, "upon this rock I *will* build My Church"—it was *then* a future thing.

The apostle Paul was a chosen vessel, specially raised up and qualified, to unfold the truth concerning the church; indeed the fact of the union of the Head in heaven, and the members on earth was already contained in the Word of the Lord to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *Me*? . . . *I am Jesus* whom thou persecutest."

The epistle to the Ephesians gives us, perhaps, the richest unfolding of "the mystery," that is Christ and the Church. In other ages this mystery was not made

known unto the sons of men; from the beginning of the world it had been "hid in God," not hid in the Scriptures; and, as Romans xvi. 25 tells us, it was "kept secret since the world began." Manifestly it was something altogether unique, and entirely different from all that preceded it in God's dealings with His saints.

Hence the apostle says in Ephesians iii. that it was God's purpose that, "to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be known by the Church the all-various wisdom of God." Those heavenly beings had seen various displays of God's wisdom, but here was something altogether different—poor sinners, saved by grace, brought into the closest place of nearness and union with a glorified Christ, all national distinctions being done away. Wondrous fruit of the divine counsels and of the purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord!

Chapter v. 25-27 of the same epistle lets us into another secret of the marvellous blessing and privilege which belongs to the Church. What was the origin, the motive spring, of all the care and solicitude which Christ has lavished upon it? It was *love*—love in the heart of Christ. Love from beginning to end—from the *giving of Himself* for it in the past, all through His present ministry, right on to the crowning act of His grace and devotedness, when He will present the Church to Himself, glorious, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

No wonder that the apostle "agonised" for the saints at Colosse (chap. ii. 1), lest the enemy should make a spoil of them through philosophy or tradition, and lest they should fail to realise the completeness and sufficiency of the Head and their completeness in Him. The danger was, lest, deceived by human

religion or philosophy, and grasping after shadows instead of being satisfied with Christ in whom all the fulness dwells, they should lose the consciousness of their living union with the Head in heaven, from whom all the supply is ministered to the members here below.

Alas, it is just what the Church did, and what we too are in danger of: not being satisfied with Christ, not realising His fulness and sufficiency for every longing and need of the heart, and then turning to seek a resource elsewhere.

Oh, to rise to the height of God's thoughts about His church, with all its heavenly associations and privileges; how it would lift the hearts of God's people above the vanities of this dying, fading world, as well as help them to meet its varied difficulties, trials, and sorrows!

We hope to say a little on the Church's responsibility next month.

F. G. B.

The Breaking of Bread.

THE meeting for breaking bread in remembrance of the Lord's death is, to the Christian who is walking in communion with God, one of the most precious—perhaps we might say *the* most precious—occasion of assembling together. He does not come there to make confession of sin or failure; if he has anything on his conscience about which he ought to judge himself, all this should be done *before* he comes to the Lord's Supper. Nor does he come there to hear a sermon or a discourse, but to meet the Lord, to remember Him in His death, to bless and praise, and worship Him.

It is true that a word of exhortation or ministry, when spoken to profit, is quite in place after the

breaking of bread which is the real object of the meeting; but to make this meeting the occasion for exploiting self, or gift, or ministry, as is alas sometimes the case, is a sad lowering of the whole object in view, and a fatal denial of the Holy Spirit's leading in worship, praise, and thanksgiving. We commend the following extract to the reader's careful consideration:—

There is a point in your letter I would just touch upon, and that is respecting *the exercise of gifts*. When the object in going to the Lord's Table, and to meetings for worship, or for prayer, is to "exercise gift," it is plain that the true character of such meetings is not understood. I do not go to exercise gift, but to break bread, to worship, to meet Him who has said, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them"; and "Do this in remembrance of Me." The very expression shows a wrong thought in the mind, giving one the idea of a performance, which it too frequently resembles. This was the case with the Corinthians. "They came behind in no gift"; but instead of using them in subjection to the Holy Ghost, to the glory of God, and the edification of His children, they were exercising them (*i.e., glorifying themselves by them*).

I do not know anything more sorrowful or dishonouring to the Lord, or that has brought more sorrow amongst gathered saints than this. Real subjection to the Holy Ghost, with a sense of the *Lord's presence*, would at once put a stop to the thought of "exercising gifts." A sense of *His presence* at once displaces all thoughts of self. It is indeed most grievous, when we go to wait upon the Lord and to enjoy His presence, to find some forward self-sufficient one making himself the centre of the meeting, occupying the time, filling the minds of his brethren with painful thoughts about himself, instead of happy thoughts about Christ, thus marring communion, interrupting worship, and hindering blessing in every way. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty"—a liberty in which the Spirit leads (and not the energy which is of the flesh), then the Lord alone will be exalted, for no flesh shall glory in His presence. Then God is everything and

man nothing. May the one object of all our hearts be, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever! Amen.

Bible Treasury, August 1867.

The Midnight Hour.

In the deep and gath'ring darkness,
When the day is growing dim,
He, the One who sought and found us,
Bids us still to look to Him.

In the darkest hour of midnight
Just before the dawn of day,
He, the Christ whose blood has bought us,
Chases all our gloom away.

He who sought and found and saved us
Speaks from glory in our ear,
Saying, "I have dearly loved thee,
Why then sigh, or grieve, or fear?"

"Have not I from sin to save thee
Died upon the cross of shame,
Am not I who paid thy ransom,
Now in glory, still the Same?"

Shall we not, then, heed with gladness,
Listen while we hear Him say,
"I will keep thee, guard thee, guide thee,
Till the night gives place to day?"

Let us, then, together praise Him,
Blessed, precious, glorious Lord!
Till in heaven we join the anthems—
Every note in blest accord.

There *our* joy shall have its fulness,
His, that we His glory share;
All displayed in love's full measure
When we shall His image bear.

S. H.

“Lukewarm.”

THE above is the word which the Lord applies to the last phase of the Church's history on earth (Rev. iii. 16); and as we are now, no doubt, drawing to the close of the present dispensation, we may expect to see a serious development of that dark feature of the end.

A correspondent writing recently says:—“The general departure from the truths we have learned seems appalling, and as appalling is the utter insensibility on the part of those most intimately concerned, to the true state of affairs.”

What characterised Laodicea was, not want of mere knowledge, of a human sort, or want of privileges and opportunities to become acquainted with the truth, but the worst of all evils—*want of heart*. Now there is no lack of preaching and religious activity (such as it is) to-day, and we have only to turn to the publishers' lists to see that there is no lack of Bibles and books, so that the privileges are indeed great; but, alas, is there not much to show how prevalent is the spirit of indifference to Christ Himself expressed in the words, “thou art neither cold nor hot . . . thou art lukewarm?”

And oh, it is a solemn thing, and one we much need to say a word of warning about, to ourselves and others, especially in these serious times in which we live. The very knowledge of the truth, which through grace has been so fully brought out by valued servants of God in the past, carries with it a most solemn responsibility. As some one has said: “The brighter the light, the darker the shadow it draws in its train, if there is a turning back from it.”

Loss of heart for Christ is well described in the words, “neither cold nor hot,” which, of all things, is

most nauseous to Him. It opens the door to pride and self-complacency, saying, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing"; and along with this there is the most utter incapacity to discern the Lord's mind, or their own real state, for they lacked everything that was good, even eye-salve to see. Besides this, there is a pandering to the world and its ways, to make up for the lack of spirituality, and a lowering of the whole tone of meetings to suit the natural man.

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent," such is the Lord's own word to the Church. He chastens, but in love; and in unlimited grace He still appeals for repentance.

Do we not each need to take these things seriously to heart? How little we rise to *God's* thoughts concerning His beloved Son; how little *His* glory and *His* claims are the controlling power and motive of our life! Does the very mention of His name call forth adoring worship and hom  ge from our souls, as it should; or has the spirit of Laodicea come in and weakened our appreciation of the attractiveness and sufficiency of Jesus as our object and our hope? If so, let us remember the word, "Be zealous, therefore, and repent."

F. G. B.

Scripture Notes and Gleanings.

"**C**ANNOT" and "Will Not."—"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear" (Isa. lix. 1, 2, R. V.). It is well for us to reflect upon the principle set forth here; perhaps it would explain why our prayers are

sometimes unanswered. God's hand is not shortened nor His ear heavy, and He is *able* to do what is best for us; but if our ways are contrary to His word, He *will* not hear. Can we rightly expect that He would? (see Jas. i. 5-8; v. 16).

* * * * *

Home Life.—The exhortations to husbands and wives, fathers and children, masters and servants, found in the Scriptures, demand our most careful consideration and attention. Who has not noticed that when things are sixes and sevens in a man's home, his testimony as a Christian, or his usefulness as a servant, must suffer greatly thereby?

“The Scripture Cannot be Broken.”

READER, have you not thanked God for the abiding fact of the above five words? The Bible, being the word of God, endureth for ever, “For ever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven.” Heaven and earth will pass away, but not one jot or tittle of His word will ever pass away.

“The Scripture of Truth” is immutable, imperishable, and infallible. It has been assailed and attacked for centuries, bound, burned, and blasphemed, denied, discussed, and disobeyed; yet it remains unscathed and untouched, impregnable and irresistible, God's citadel of truth for time and eternity.

God has magnified His word above all His name, it is seven times pure, the incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever.

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” is quoted by the Lord Jesus.

“Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read,” said Isaiah.

"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart; for I am called by Thy name, O LORD God of Hosts"; said Jeremiah, in his despair.

"I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food"; was said by Job.

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified," was Paul's closing word, at Miletus.

"I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one"; said John (ii. 14).

"As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby," was Peter's exhortation.

The Lord Jesus Christ said—"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me."

The Bereans "searched the Scriptures daily." Who will do likewise? U. G.

Sketches in the Apocalypse.

XVII.

DEATH AND LIFE.

AS often remarked, the successive opening of the seals, which gradually unfolds the book or roll of judgment, by "the Lamb," who alone can execute it according to God's mind at the predetermined moment,—carries us on to the end of chapter xviii. The following chapter, xix., presents "heaven opened," not by a *door* to let John in, but in order that He who is "Faithful and True," and whose "name is called the Word of God," may come forth from it, followed by

His armies, all on "white horses," to execute the fore-announced judgment on the great ones of this earth.

There is an interruption between the sixth and seventh seals; for chapter vii. serves to enlarge upon the matter in hand, and then, after a solemn "silence," introduces the seven angels with their *trumpets*. Similarly also, there is an interruption between the sixth and seventh trumpets, for the better understanding of the following scenes of judgment, through the pouring out of the *vials* of the wrath of God upon a guilty and unrepentant world. There are seven of these, which all follow in succession in chapter xvi. Chapters xvii. and xviii. then take up the details of the "mystery, Babylon the great." Every thing is thus sketched out beforehand in perfect order.

We must, however, always remember that judgment is God's "strange work." It is habitually *delayed* as long as possible, and increases in severity when there is no repentance. This is three times noticed, in chapter ix. 20, 21 and chapter xvi. 9-11, as well as in the case of Jezebel (ii. 21).

The exhortation *to repent* occurs five times over in the addresses to the seven churches (ii. 5, 16, 21; and iii. 3, 19). That ought to impress us with its solemnity and importance, in order to reach the state of our own hearts and consciences before God, to whom every thought is known (Ps. cxxxix. 1-4, 23).

When judgment does come to be executed, in chapter xix., it is remarkable that the Lord is not designated as "the Lamb"; He is there seen as One who is "Faithful and True," coming in majesty from heaven, as we have noticed above. His name of "Lamb" occurs ten times over in chapters v., vi., and vii.; in that character He opens all the seals. But, except for the special vision recorded in chapter xiv. 1-4, and the

warning contained in the following verse 10, He is no more *personally* mentioned as "the **Lamb**" till we come to chapter xvii. 14, when we find that the great personalities, raised up by Satan's last efforts in a godless world, and who are all subject to "the beast," as he is called, "*make war with the Lamb.*" This is surely another most remarkable instance of God's long-suffering patience, when it becomes a question of dealing with the iniquity of this world, fast ripening for its final manifestation and rebellion. He allows man's wickedness to be matured before judging it finally.

His *blood* is mentioned in chapter xii. 11; and also His *book of life* in connection with His own *death*, without which there never could have been any "book of life" at all for fallen man (see xiii. 8 and xxi. 27). He is also presented as the Lamb in the resulting "song" of those redeemed by Him in chapter xv. 3. Finally, His "marriage" is recorded as that of "the Lamb," in chapter xix. 7-9; with the added testimony, "These are the true words of God." The future glory of the Lamb is described in chapter xxi., as is "the throne," in chapter xxii. 1-3, in which He is associated with God; for He is the One in and through whom God can only be known. In all these cases He is presented as "the Lamb."

This brief sketch will serve, we trust, to throw light on the contents and orderly construction of this wonderful book, of which He is the Centre, and always, as first mentioned in chapter v. 6, "in the *midst* of the throne and of the cherubim," and also "in the midst of the elders"—a lamb *standing*, but "as slain." His *death* is the source of all the blessing that flows from Him to fallen creatures, such as we are. He is ever the "Firstborn *from the dead*"—so revealed and known to John (chap. i. 5). The song of chapter xv. 3 is

rightly due to Him, the only One who could secure to us every promised blessing. May we never forget the force of the words just quoted as characterising Him—"standing," and yet "as slain."

This is indeed seen all through the book, from the opening clause of the salutation, following on the title given to it, which is "the Testimony of Jesus Christ" (chap. i. 2). The three Persons of the Trinity are first mentioned in verses 4 and 5,—God in His eternal Being; the Holy Ghost in testimony and judgment, indicated by the number "seven," in the first place as lamps of fire "before the throne" (iv. 5), but seen also as the "eyes of the Lamb," in chapter v. 6; and lastly "Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the first-begotten of the dead" (chap. i. 5).

In this way, having gone through death, He is able to take His long-desired place as Centre and Chief of those who were naturally, as sinners, under the sentence of *death* (Rom. vi. 23; John xii. 24). He was indeed "straitened" in His spirit until He had gone through it; for previously He could not call His disciples "brethren" (Luke xii. 50; Matt. xxviii. 10; John xx. 17). Only through *His* death could *they* possess eternal life.

Let us now, for a moment, turn back to the Old Testament to notice how this character of life *out of death*, and not considered merely as the result of God's creative power, shines out all through it, though in different ways and degrees.

If we consider these divine records at the beginning, even in an elementary way, is not the entry of *death*, through Adam's disobedience, the first thing that brings a cloud over the brightness and beauty of God's perfect creation? His own original verdict upon it was "very good" (chap. i. 31). Adam was put into the responsibility of governing, as the appointed head of it all; but

as such, he was of course subject to his Creator's judgment of his ways, and first of all as to his *obedience*.

When he failed, through setting at naught the one prohibition not to eat of "the tree of knowledge of good and evil," death, as a matter of course, must needs follow (chap. ii. 17).

In quite another sense, a little further down in that chapter, there was another prefigurement of death in the formation of the woman during Adam's "deep sleep" (vers. 21, 22). There is clearly a reference to this in Ephesians v. 30, and, as to responsibility, in 1 Timothy ii. 13, 14. His "sleep" foreshadowed the way in which the Church, considered as Christ's "body," could be brought into divine relationship with Himself: for if Christ had not gone through death, He must of necessity have abode "alone" (John xii. 24).

In Genesis iv. 1-9, we find another most remarkable type in the death of Abel, referred to in Hebrews xi. 4 and xii. 24. Again, in Genesis v. 21-24, we have, in contrast with that, the wonderful case of Enoch, taken up to heaven without dying; and that took place while all of Adam's descendants, mentioned in the chapter, were still living. Enoch was caught up to heaven fifty-seven years after Adam's death, so that he must have had three hundred years in which to watch Enoch's spotless life.

His history is summed up in three words: he "walked with God." What a precious testimony it would be if our histories, with all the additional light and knowledge of the Lord's coming which we have, could be equally so described! In his day he had to testify to the surrounding evil, which is, alas, quite as bad, or worse, at the present time (Jude 14, 15).

We are next arrested with Noah's sacrifice on leaving the ark, which was the most remarkable burnt-offering

ever presented to God; for it embraced the whole creation, represented by "*every* clean beast and bird" (Gen. viii. 19). God took knowledge of it in that very way, and we live securely through His covenant then made for our benefit.

As a rule, almost every one of importance mentioned in Genesis is said to have "died," and Joseph's "coffin" closes the book. Redemption through *blood*, however, is *first* learned in Exodus, when all of Israel's first-born in Egypt were delivered from death and consecrated to God.

W. J. L.

Prayer and Piety.

IN Hebrews v. 7 we read of Christ, "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save from death . . . was heard in that He feared," or as a new translation puts it, He was heard "for His piety."

It may occur to some that His unique relation with the Father was sufficient to secure an answer to His prayers. Some might say, "Oh! He was the Son of God, He was truly Divine, and therefore His prayers were sure to be answered." Or another might say, "He was God's Elect, and it was in accord with the eternal purpose of God that He should be heard in answer to His strong crying and tears." This is all true, but the things of God are not mechanical, but living; and the humanity of Christ was a very real humanity, sin apart. The strong crying and tears mentioned in this verse proves this. Christ Himself was the expression of what is true in every way. He could not allow Himself to be called a man, and yet be, in the facts of His human life, only a man in appearance—a phantom.

Christian life in the Christian must be real also. A Christian only in appearance, is not pleasing in the sight of God.

Thus we read that He whom we worship and adore as Lord of all was, as a man on earth, heard for His piety.

The lesson we may learn from this is, that if we would have our prayers answered, piety becomes us. We shall find, too, if we examine Scripture, that piety is expected in the case of those who draw near to God: even man expects it. The man whose eyes had been opened in John ix. had a very sound understanding on this subject. He said, "Now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth." And this verse expresses, in a measure at least, what true piety is. Jesus also, in the highest sense, was a worshipper of God, and a doer of His will.

Of course, if sinners repent, God will hear them too, and teach them in the ways of godliness. But no one can expect God to answer his prayers if he goes on in sinful ways. Is it not written, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps. lxvi. 18).

When God invites His saints, in Psalm l., to call upon Him in the day of trouble, He makes use, in advance, of these words—"Offer unto God thanksgiving and pay thy vows unto the Most High." He does not, in this Psalm, invite the wicked to call upon Him. The wicked there are viewed as still impenitent. On the contrary, "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare My statutes, or that thou shouldest take My covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest My words behind thee."

If we come to the New Testament, and to the teaching which is directly christian, we find that the principle is the same. Piety is what characterises

successful prayer: "The effectual fervent prayer of a *righteous* man availeth much" (Jas. v. 16). A truly righteous man is more than a justified man. Is he not a man whose walk corresponds in some degree with his position of acceptance in Christ before God?

Christ, in His teaching, makes success in prayer to depend upon our abiding in Him. "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Then again, there can be no mistaking 1 John iii. 22, "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." We see from this verse what should characterise those who have to do with God.

May He grant that we, too, may do those things that are pleasing to Him, and thus may our lives be marked by answered prayer.

J. H.

The Church of God—ii.

As it was and as it is.

LAST month we considered briefly the Church of God as that which existed in the counsels of God and as the fruit of His grace, in its place of blessing and privilege. We now desire to turn the reader's attention to the Church in its place of responsibility—a responsibility flowing from the privileges conferred—as set here to witness for Christ during His absence.

In 1 Corinthians iii. we find a building, of which Paul as a wise master-builder laid the foundation, and on which others built. He brings before us the responsibility of those who built upon that foundation, "every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall

declare it." Here it is "man's work" which is the subject of judgment, and some of which is real, some is not. In this it differs from the *Lord's work*, to which we have already referred, "*I will build My Church.*" Needless to say, *He* does not build anything but that which is genuine, and *His* work is not the subject of judgment. But in the building as committed to man's responsibility, there is not only that which is real, likened to "gold, silver, precious stones," but that which is mere profession, "wood, hay, stubble." Thus Christendom, the great professing body, has grown up.

We see failure in the Church from the earliest times. Self, not Christ, soon became the ruling power, and the world and its ease and luxury asserted their claims, so that the apostle has to say to the Corinthians, "Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us," while he was suffering all sorts of trials and privations for Christ's sake. In spite of all their gifts, disorder reigned at Corinth; but this very fact became an occasion for the giving of those instructions so valuable to us to-day.

One cannot read chapters xii. to xiv. of this epistle, which give us the principles and ordering of the assembly when gathered together (where room was left for the exercise of the various gifts under the guidance of the Holy Spirit), without being struck with the beauty and suitability of God's original purpose. It was the one Spirit who ordered all, who gave the gifts sovereignly "as He willed," and "*God* had set" some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, etc. The divine thought was not a human arrangement, or a man-made ministry or order, but simple subjection to the Spirit of God, who sovereignly gave to each according to the will of God, for the blessing and edification of the whole Church.

In the first epistle to Timothy we have instructions given to an individual servant of God as to how to behave himself in the "house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth." Let us ever remember that we are responsible for our conduct in God's house—His church; and, as we read elsewhere, "the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Cor. iii. 17). It is even now true of the Church, in spite of its fallen condition, that it is still the pillar and base of the truth.

When it is a question of judgment, God begins with that which is nearest Himself, as being most responsible, hence "the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God" (1 Pet. iv. 17). And so in Revelation ii. and iii., before the judgment is poured out on the world, we have the judgment of the Church. The Church was set as a witness for Christ in this world, and it is an invariable principle in the ways of God that He always holds us responsible for the blessings and privileges conferred.

Now this very fact has a solemn voice for our souls. The calling and privileges of the Church were far higher and greater than anything ever conferred upon man before, hence the responsibility to answer to those privileges was equally great, and failure to do so was equally grave and solemn. If God had to say to Israel, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos iii. 2), what has He to say to His Church? "Remember, therefore, *from whence* thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works"; these are the words of the Lord to Ephesus. May He, in His infinite grace, produce true repentance and devotedness in His people!

We hope to consider the Church *as it is* next month.

F. G. B.

The Day of the Lord—ii.

(2 *Thessalonians* ii.).

THE Antichrist, the man of sin, the lawless one, has three characteristics. First, he is the "son of perdition." Perdition has, so to speak, brought him forth; he is the immediate product of hell, and will return to perdition, from whence he came. In the second place, he poses and exalts himself above all that is "called God," or that is "worshipped." We do not doubt that these terms include (as do those of Dan. xi. 36) idolatrous divinities as well as the true God.

The man of sin desires to do away with all existing religions, in order to substitute in their place a new "religion" of which he is the author, the object, and the centre. He suppresses all that is an object of veneration, in order to replace it by his own person. He does not even allow men to bow down to their idols.

In the third place, he *sets himself up against God*, so that he sits in the temple of God (at Jerusalem), showing himself that he is God. Having cleared away all religion, he supports only one, the worship of himself—man become God; of which German philosophy has introduced the idea into the world. In Revelation xiii. he is said to put the mark of the beast on the forehead and the hand of all his worshippers. Those who will not receive this mark will be the martyrs of the end, who will form a part of the "first resurrection," and will be received into heavenly glory, where the saints and the Church will have preceded them at the coming of the Lord.

"And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time" (ver. 6). This was an important point; they were suffering tribulation, but *they knew* what prevented the manifestation of the man of sin. In Paul's day there was an authority established

by God in the world, having—however wicked it might be—the power of restraining the final development of satanic power, the appearing of the man of sin. This man could only appear, under a new *regime*, at the time predetermined of God.

The Thessalonians lived under Roman rule, under this last monarchy of the nations, to which God Himself had committed authority. Although the persecution which the Thessalonians were suffering had been in part authorised, if not initiated, by this same empire, yet at the same time God, who had given the sceptre of government to Rome, maintained it. In our day it is not the Roman Empire which has the power, and this will explain the somewhat vague words “what withholdeth”—words which can be applied at any time. And we know what restrains *now*, for we find, in general, organised governments which are recognised (even in spite of the horrors which are taking place), by which He holds in check the final development of evil.

After these organisations, which at the present day tend rapidly towards their end, and will degenerate into a state of anarchy (of which Russia is an illustration to-day), there will reappear the Roman Empire, which was, in fact, “that which restrained”; but it will no longer be established of God, but raised up by Satan; and then, in place of “restraining,” it will favour and support the Antichrist. Under this revived Roman Empire, there will no longer be any restraint to the revelation of the man of sin.

“For the mystery of iniquity doth already work” (ver. 7); this is the secret of all iniquity which will prevail in the world, and the way is being prepared for it already. Man, independent of God, is taking the place which belongs to Him, and is giving up Christ, with whom is identified the “mystery of piety”. He

has been preached; we know Him and we believe in Him, and our relationships with God depend on this knowledge. The mystery of iniquity has not yet been revealed, but God has warned us that it will be. Christendom speaks now much more of moral and humane works than of the person of Christ; it also ignores revealed religion more and more. This evil has already taken deep root in the world around us.

When we shall have been taken up to meet the Lord in the air, this mystery of iniquity will be fully revealed. It works already, only "He who now letteth will let, until He be taken out of the way" (ver. 7). There are two things: "*that which*" restrains, and "*He who*" restrains. The former is the authority recognised by God in the world, however weak and corrupt it may be, and varying at different times. Yet it hinders the coming of the day of Antichrist before the moment predetermined of God. But if, at the present day, we may sometimes find it difficult to distinguish it, there is "*He who restrains*," and we know Him perfectly well. It is the Holy Spirit—the Spirit in and with the Church; for He is never separated from the assembly, the body of Christ, any more than from the individual Christian. When He shall have ascended again into the heavenly place from whence He came, He will be "taken out of the way"; but He will not return there alone, for He came to form the body of Christ and to dwell in the Church and in each child of God. When He will be gone, all believers will be gone with Him. Such is, I believe, the reason why the word says "*He*" in place of "*the Spirit*." The bride of Christ, from which He is inseparable, will be gone, and will, so to speak, be led by this third person of the Trinity to meet the Lord in the air.

From notes by H. R.

Questions of the Day.

IT may be helpful to some to say a little as to questions which are occupying the minds of many at the present time. But before doing so we feel constrained to remark that, in view of the solemn and awful events taking place, it surely becomes all true Christians to be much before God in prayer and humiliation, and this both individually and collectively. If the men and women of the world are satisfied to go on without bowing under God's hand, this should not be so with the Christian, and one is thankful to hear that a good many are acting accordingly. May the Lord awaken His people to what becomes us just now; as well as to the need of prayer for the many tried and bereaved ones, and of sympathy with them in their losses.

If people have honest difficulties we ought to meet them from the Word of God so far as we can, and many are asking to-day, Why does God permit evil to prosper? Why does God allow this war? etc.

The psalmist was troubled and perplexed on account of the prosperity of the wicked (Ps. lxxiii.); when he sought to know how it was, the matter was too painful for him, until he went into the sanctuary of God and there, in the presence of God, considered their latter end. Then he found that though they prospered now, yet they would surely be brought to desolation in a moment when God intervened in judgment (see also Ps. xciv.).

Now it is only in the presence of God that we can see things aright or discern the enigma of this world as it is. *There* we view the evil from His standpoint;

not merely as it affects us, but as it affects God's glory and the honour of His name. And if God has patience with it, why should not we? Of old He waited four hundred years because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full (Gen. xv. 13-16). James and John, in their day, wanted to call down fire from heaven, but the Lord was not come for this; they knew not what spirit they were of. How wondrous the patience of the Lord Himself in all His path through this world!

But God's righteous judgment *will* surely come; in His own time and way. So we read twice over in the prophet, "Behold, the tempest of the LORD, even His fury, is gone forth, yea, a whirling tempest: it shall burst upon the head of the wicked. The anger of the LORD shall not return, until He have executed, and till He have performed the intents of His heart: in the latter days ye shall understand it perfectly" (Jer. xxiii. 19, 20; and xxx. 23, 24, R. V.). Doubtless God allows this war for the chastisement of the nations, as the Old Testament abundantly shows He did in the past. Can we wonder, when we consider the state of the world and of professing Christendom? But the Christian can take it in another way and seek humbly to learn, in His presence, what God has to say to *him* in these terrible events.

Does the reader feel disposed to ask, When will God's patient forbearance with evil come to an end? It will come to an end when Christ comes to claim dominion over the world, as He will yet do. We find Him figuratively represented as a "mighty angel," in Revelation x., descending from heaven to the earth. When He thus comes, there will be "no longer delay," but "the mystery of God will be finished." On this subject we would like to draw attention to the following remarks:—

“God will put a stop to the present delay : ‘the mystery of God’ will then be finished. This I take to mean the secret of His allowing Satan to have his own way, and man, too (that is to say, the wonder of evil prospering and of good being trodden under foot). God checks, no doubt, the evil in a measure, partly through human government and partly through His own providential dealings. And indeed it is an immense mercy that there are such restraints upon the evil of this world. For what would it be without them, when, even in the midst of God’s providential checks, wickedness is often so triumphant, and godliness thrown to the ground.

Still there is an influence for evil that no government can root out, and good that is belied and so has comparatively little influence. That is what seems so mysterious a thing to us, when we know God and how He hates evil. But it is soon coming to an end. God is about to touch all that is contrary to Himself, to bring in all that has been promised from of old, and to give credit for all that has been done according to Himself. And He is going to do this by His Son. The One whom man despised and rejected is the very person whom God will send to reduce all into holy order and beauty out of the existing mass of confusion.” (*Lectures on the Revelation*, by W. K., page 207.)

The knowledge of this brings a calm into the soul, for God’s hand is over all and nothing can happen but what He permits. Meantime we realise that “the days are at hand, and the effect of every vision.” And we wait for the fulfilment of better hopes and a brighter prospect ; for “yet a very little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” F. G. B.

Scripture Notes and Gleanings.

GOD Revealed.—It is the Son of God who revealed God Himself, and thus becomes the centre of God’s counsels, the *manifestation* of His glory, and the *object* of His ways.

* * * * *

Revolution.—At the French Revolution man emancipated himself—to have what? Uncertainty in everything, and a ruin from which he found no resource. Conscience and the Bible, under God's good hand, emancipated at the Reformation — imperfectly, but really: man's will, without the Bible, at the Revolution.

* * * * * * *

Do we forget that (1) this world is guilty of the blood of Christ; (2) that God has to say to the world,—What have you done with my Son? (3) that the whole world lies in the wicked one; (4) that he that is the friend of the world is the enemy of God?

Do we remember that (1) we are not our own but are bought with a price; (2) that we are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ; (3) that we are not of the world, but passing through it on the way to the glory; (4) that our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour?

* * * * * * *

Prayer.—“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed” (Mark i. 35). What is so blessed for us and so instructive, too, is this lovely feature that we find in the Lord as the Servant on earth—prayer.

Occupied though He had been, early and late, with the sorrows of others, yet here we find Him long forestalling the dawn, whilst it was yet the dark of night, in order to hold intercourse with His Father. And what were the communications between such a Father and such a Son? The Old Testament tells us: “The Lord Jehovah hath given me the tongue of the

instructed, that I should know how to succour by word him that is weary. He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth thine ear to hear as the instructed" (Isa. l. 4). The New Testament tells us how He went a great while before day into a desert place, and there prayed. And if He thus retired to be with God, Himself the Lord God, before He entered upon the work of the day, can we wonder that we fail so much in outward labour, who fail yet more in this inward intimacy with our Father? Be assured, the secret of holy strength and endurance in service is found there alone.

Sketches in the Apocalypse.

XVIII.

DEATH AND LIFE (*continued*).

WE were noticing some of the remarkable instances in Genesis, of Life coming, as it were, out of death, and, in its application to us, as the necessary result of the blessed Lord's suffering for us. The Psalms, in a similar way, set forth the same truth, in constant reference to the Lord Himself.

The first two psalms, without titles, are introductory to the whole collection which consists of five books, each one closing with a doxology or word of praise. This is followed with "Amen" twice repeated, at the end of the first three books, *i.e.*, xli., lxxii., lxxxix. The fourth book ends in Psalm cvi., with an exhortation calling on "all the people" to add their "Amen" to Jehovah's praise. The last psalm in the book calls for praise in every verse; it begins and ends with "Hallelujah," and consequently needs no "Amen" at the close. There is thus a sevenfold repetition of Amen in the complete collection.

The first one of all sets forth the "blessed Man," whose delight is in obedience (Ps. xl. 8), an obedience which, as the apostle states, was "unto death" (Phil. ii. 8); and the second psalm presents Him as God's "Anointed One," and on that very account, the object of the enmity of those who have power in this world; but He is the One who will be set as universal King on the "holy hill of Zion," and that in answer to His own prayer, *not yet* uttered (see John xvii. 9), for the appointed time for it has not yet come.

Psalm iii. begins the history, as we say, with the most critical event in the whole of David's life, when all Israel, under the direction of his own son Absalom, were minded to get rid of him; and if Ahithophel's counsel had been followed, they would, humanly speaking, have succeeded. David knew of it, and commissioned his friend Hushai to overthrow it. The psalm gives us his prayer, showing quiet confidence in God alone, so that he was enabled to say of the night in which they thought to have slain him, "I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the LORD sustained me" (iii. 5). The LORD answered his prayer, and Ahithophel, the clever counsellor, who was sure that only his counsel, if followed, could secure the throne for Absalom, went home and hanged himself. He thus foreshadowed the end of Judas Iscariot (see 2 Sam. xv. 13, 14; 31, 32; xvi. 15-23; xvii. 1-23).

The following Psalm iv., after mentioning "sacrifices of righteousness," elevates that special occasion of sleep into a divine principle, through quiet rest in God's unfailing goodness, with peace assured in His presence, and under His care. It becomes in this way a blessed custom in the believer's life (compare Ps. cxxvii. 2).

The whole collection, as is well known, besides special ones as lxix. and cii. abounds with continual references

to our blessed Lord's life of suffering. Thus we find Him asking for life in Psalm xxi., and going through the agonies of the cross in Psalm xxii.; all that, as God's anointed "king," which is the theme of the two preceding psalms. "Heard," as indeed He was, and "saved from the lion's mouth," He was able, in resurrection power and glory, to declare Jehovah's name unto His brethren (xxii. 22); for in view of that joy, He had been "straitened," as He said, until the moment of His resurrection, which alone rendered possible the *unfolding* of the *new* relationship with His Father *and theirs*. Except for His *death* on their account, it was not possible for them to be introduced into it. And none of the disciples thought that He would die.

We may note in this connection that the first *revelation* of this divine brotherhood, as an accomplished *fact*, was given to women. Similarly of old, Deborah was the first to mention in her song the "sun-rising" for those that love God (Judges v. 31, and compare 2 Sam. xxiii. 4). Again, Hannah it was who first introduced prophetically the "Anointed," at a time when there was "no king in Israel" (Judges xvii. 6; xviii. 1; xix. 1; xxi. 25; 1 Sam. ii. 10). Our life lesson is, strength out of weakness (2 Cor. xii. 9).

In the accounts given of the Lord's resurrection, we notice that the women who had followed Him from Galilee were the *first* at the sepulchre (Luke xxiv. 22). Mary Magdalene, who was with them, was so unnerved at seeing the stone rolled away, that she went off immediately to tell Peter and John of the fact. The Lord showed Himself first of all to the other women who had accompanied her, and a little later, to Mary Magdalene herself; for she had remained desolate at the empty sepulchre, after Peter and John, in her absence, had taken note of the way in which the

shroud and napkin (both still folded) were lying—as the clearest possible proof of the Lord's resurrection. They then returned home, but Mary, still unsatisfied, could not leave the spot, and wonderfully was she recompensed through the Lord's communications made to her alone.

Matthew's account of the resurrection is, in spite of its brevity, the most noteworthy from the point of view of the facts, such as the "earthquake," which he alone mentions, in the first eight verses; the rest of the chapter is peculiar to himself. In it, we observe the Lord's appearance to the *women* whom Mary Magdalene had left, in her hurry to see Peter and John, then the account of the *watch*, in verses 11 to 15, and finally, the special meeting "in a mountain of Galilee," convened by the Lord Himself. The commission to the eleven as to their preaching, and the assurance of His presence with them "to the end of the age" (thus confirming the meaning of the name **Emmanuel** from *their* side, as it were)—is not found elsewhere. Compare chapter i. 23, and Isaiah vii. 14.

If we recall the early history, referred to by the apostle more than once, we are reminded of the expression as to Isaac's birth through one "as good as dead," and that it was "the children of the *promise*" that were *counted* as "the seed," to which all blessing is attached. In Christ's person the promise is thus guaranteed for eternity (Rom. ix. 7-13; Heb. xi. 12). Life *out of* death is everywhere maintained in principle. How important then is it for us, in practical walk with God in this world, to bear about in the body "the *dying* of the Lord Jesus," in order that His spotless life may be in some measure, however feebly, reproduced for the glory of God in His redeemed people (2 Cor. iv. 10-11).

All the outward advantages from which men derive their glory have at length to end, as did Joseph's in Egypt, "in a coffin"; whereas, all that belongs to *faith* is reserved for the day of Christ's future glory, when His redeemed will reign with Him for ever.

The eighty years of Joseph's power and wise government in Egypt had nothing to do with the promises of God to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the land of Canaan. That did not prevent his being, in many ways, a remarkable type of Christ, both personally in suffering, and as foreshadowing His future glory, in reference to this world and the prospects of the children of Israel. But he had no place in the sepulchre at Machpelah, which was finally closed when he placed there the body of his father (Gen. l. 9-14).

Many years after, the children of Israel definitely left Egypt under the leadership of Moses, and they were then careful to take Joseph's body with them, according to his own order (Exod. xiii. 19); it was finally placed in the parcel of ground which Jacob had bought for himself and his family at Shechem (Joshua xxiv. 32).

Jacob had indeed erected in that field an altar, to which he had attached his new name of "Israel," given to him by the angel at Peniel (Gen. xxxii. 25-30); but it was surrounded by all that recalled his old human ways and arrangements, which were in contrast with Bethel where he had the *heavenly* vision, and vowed his vow to Jehovah his God (Gen. xxviii. 11-22). So it was to Bethel, that is the "house of God"—for such is the meaning of the word,—that he had to return.

That history is surely an indication morally of God's purposes for the Church, all connected with Christ *now* glorified in *heaven*, in *contrast* with the future millennial blessing to be *afterwards* made good on earth during

Christ's reign, when the children of Israel will have the *first* place.

Life out of death, *now* revealed to faith in Christ's person, is the secret of the believer's present walk, in communion with Him, whom the world cast out and crucified. Let us not forget that this was done by those who, humanly speaking, had most to look forward to, in connection with the setting up of His earthly kingdom.

Faith enjoys these things *now*, in His person, as the "Lamb, *standing*," but yet "slain" (see page 79). In that character He will open the seals of the roll committed to Him. And those who in martyrdom will have "gotten the victory" over the awful powers of evil to be manifested in the last days, though they do not form part of the "Church" now being made up in its completeness, will nevertheless have their heavenly portion assured to them. They are seen standing on the "sea of glass" corresponding to the "laver," between the altar of burnt offering (which answers to the Cross), and the door of the tabernacle or temple.

In a similar connection, chapter vii. of the Revelation shows us two companies, one of "sealed saints," Jewish in character, and the other "innumerable," gathered out from all nations, but both having their portion "before the Lamb" in heaven, while being quite distinct from the Church.

W. J. L.

The Church of God—iii.

As it was and as it is.

IN the two preceding articles we endeavoured to bring before the reader briefly the truth of the Church as it existed in God's thoughts, and as it was set up through apostolic ministry at the beginning.

We now desire to look a little at the Church, not as it *was* but as it *is*. It is clear, however, that we cannot form any just estimate of its present condition, except in so far as we understand what it is according to God's thoughts and purposes, apart from human failure. If I study a beautiful picture of an edifice now in ruins, and compare what it is with what it was, I get a more just idea of the ruin by the very fact that I have before me a true image of the original.

Now the Church of God, like all else committed to man's responsibility, has failed in his hands as a testimony for God. And the very height and heavenly character of its calling according to the mind and counsels of God, has made its fallen and ruined condition all the more solemn and serious before Him.

What is the condition of the Church at the present time? The professing body, Christendom as it is called, includes within its wide limits all sorts of corruption and error under the fair name of Christianity. The Scriptures, especially the later epistles, fully prepare us for this. The *order* of the "house of God," as given in 1 Timothy, has become the *disorder* of the "great house" in 2 Timothy. Second Peter, Jude, and John's epistles draw a dark picture of corruption and apostasy, and the book of Revelation gives us, in chapters ii. and iii., a brief but admirably accurate history of the professing Church, which is there the subject of judgment, and which ends with the sad state of lukewarm indifference to Christ described in Laodicea.

The Church, as seen in this world, is broken into fragments composed of numerous sects and bodies; true children of God being found in almost every one of these. Even those who profess to own no sect, are broken up by divisions into separate groups of assemblies. Such are the facts as they exist to-day.

What is the right position to take in such a state of things? We can only here briefly indicate some general principles, which it is hoped, may be helpful; the reader is of course responsible to act before God according to the light he has from Him, seeking wisdom in the *application* of the truth, as far as practicable, to the circumstances of our day.

Undoubtedly the first thing to do is just what we find Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel did in the ninth chapter of each of those three books, namely, humble themselves before God, confessing their sins, and the sins of His people as their own. Only let it be *true* and *real* confession, not from the lips merely; and surely every one that has any real sense of what the Church is *to Christ*, must feel real sorrow of heart, calling for humiliation, when viewing its present condition.

Then let us remember that there are certain truths connected with the nature of God Himself which never change. He is a God of holiness and truth, He is light as well as love, and holiness becomes His house for ever (Ps. xciii. 5). And further, Christ, who is the holy and the true One, has said, "Where two or three are gathered together to My name, there am I in the midst of them." Let us not take these words in a sectarian or ecclesiastical spirit, but listen to them in all the blessed simplicity in which they were spoken by the Lord. Two or three or more, truly gathered together to His name, apart from all pretentiousness, can claim the inestimable blessing of His presence, true to His word. Faith can always count upon this, and it is truly an encouragement to us.

Moreover, God has met and responded to the faith of His saints at all times; we find a striking illustration

of this in the case of the returned captives. However great their weakness, their faith embraced *the whole twelve tribes* of Israel, albeit only two tribes (with rare exceptions from the other ten) were then in the land (Ezra vi. 17; viii. 35). So too, as Scripture abundantly proves, the Church of God is one, though the enemy has scattered the sheep; yet there is but one body, formed by one Spirit, and united to one Head in heaven, even Christ.

The truth, as found in Scripture, is neither the idea of independent assemblies, nor a federation of assemblies, but the simple fact of one body, each assembly being a local expression of that one Church. The apostle could write to the Church at Corinth and say, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular," they were the local expression of it at that place.

How far the Church has got away from this now we have sadly to confess, but faith will own the truth and endeavour to give effect to it as far as practicable.

But let us ever remember that this must be done in a humble spirit and with mutual forbearance, as it is written, "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit" (Eph. iv. 2-4). Partyism and sectarianism are a sad denial of the truth as found here. But it is only in so far as Christ is really our object and centre; and as we think of His people according to what they are *to Him*, that we shall be kept from the sectarian spirit which is so natural to us.

In view also of the apostasy and corruption which has come into the professing Church, it is well to remember that Christ Himself remains ever the same, there is no change in Him: this is the sure resource for faith.

The person of Christ is the great central truth of Christianity, to which the apostle John, the last of the inspired writers, bears special witness. Hence, in his epistles, he largely insists upon "the truth." And further, there is the fact that the believer receives, as a present possession, eternal life—a life which dwelt ever in the eternal Word, before all time, which never can change or decay, and which will be ours eternally. These great truths remain untouched, whatever the condition* of the Church, looked at as a witness for Christ on the earth, may have become.

And, finally, there is the great encouragement for our souls that Christ's love to His Church *never fails* and *never changes*. It is a love, not dependent on the Church's condition; even His rebukes and chastenings are in love. He gave Himself for it in the past; He washes and cleanses by His Word in the present; and when the time comes, He will present it to Himself, glorious, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

F. G. B.

The Day of the Lord—iii.

(2 *Thessalonians ii.*)

"**A**ND then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming" (ver. 8). This will take place when the Lord will come out of heaven with all His saints to execute judgment on the earth and to establish His reign there.

The apostle then describes the manner of the coming of the Antichrist: "Whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders," etc. Remark the contrast between the coming

of Antichrist and the coming of Christ. Jesus *came* a first time into this world, the lowliest of men; dependent, obedient, taking His place in the midst of sinners, in divine and absolute devotedness, in order to be their Saviour. At a given moment, when He who restrains shall have been taken out of the way and the hour shall have come for the appearing of the Wicked one, then he, too, will *come*.

When the Lord Jesus came into this world, He made Himself known by miracles of grace and love; and it is said of Him, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you" (Acts ii. 22). The world rejected Him; but another man, a creature of Satan, comes in His own name and men will receive Him. They will say, "This is the expected Messiah, our Messiah, our Christ," and he will be the object of admiration to all. He will work before the people, in appearance, both "miracles and wonders and signs" as Christ did, but they will be lying miracles, proceeding from the father of lies. The Lord set forth by His miracles the grace and power of God; the Wicked one will do his, in his unbounded pride, in order to exalt himself and make himself the object of worship.

All the miracles of the Saviour bore the impress of love and truth, without any taint of deceit. They all showed forth the truth as to the state of man and the presence of God in grace. The miracles of the Antichrist will be characterised by fallacy, with an appearance of reality, and their object will be to seduce and deceive souls. These miracles will seduce "them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."

The "love of the truth" is love which belongs to the

truth. God never gives up His character as the "True God" in order to be the "God of love," nor His character of love in order to be the God of truth. When the gospel had been preached to these apostates of the last days they did not receive it, nor did they wish to receive it. They had refused the obedience of faith to the truth which condemned, and to the love which saved, sinners. The resources of grace offered to lost sinners had not won them. This "love of the truth" we, Christians, have received, as we see in the second part of this chapter, verse 13.

The means of receiving salvation is to "believe the truth," in a word, it is *faith*. Nothing else is required. Souls who are eternally lost might have received this salvation by simple faith, but not having believed the truth, it will be too late for them. The Word of God—let us note it well—does not make any exception for all responsible beings who have not obeyed the truth by faith.

The last word concerning the Antichrist and his adherents is that they perish, without a single one being spared. What an urgent thing it is, therefore, to present "the love of the truth" to sinners, so that they may be "plucked as brands from the fire" and sheltered from the wrath to come!

From notes by H. R.

Fragment.—"The patience of Christ" (2 Thess. iii. 5) is that patience of which the Lord Himself has given us the proof. It is *His* patience, which we learn to know in communion with Himself. For more than 1900 years He has awaited the moment when He will have His church with Him in His glory.

The “Coming” and “Appearing” of the Lord.

NO one doubts that the present period in the history of the world is critical and solemn in the last degree. Events hitherto unheard of have taken place, and the daily apprehension of new events weighs heavily on the spirits of men. One frequently hears the fear expressed that the present commotions are but the forebodings of others still more tragic. Many people, however, delude themselves with the hope that a lull will be brought about, and that the world will enjoy a peace which, if not final as they hoped at the beginning of the war, will at least offer some guarantee of being lasting. These people think that victories, leading to a more favourable grouping of the nations, with equitable treaties amongst themselves, will shelter the world from the murderous conflicts which now shake it almost to its foundations. . . .

But those who are acquainted with prophecy cannot doubt that any lull which may take place will be but of short duration. . . . Every intelligent reader of the Word of God knows that an event of great importance will separate the present period, already so troubled, from a future tribulation still more terrible, which will come upon “the whole habitable world.” . . . That event is, the “coming” of the Lord, in grace, to take His own to Himself. . . .

It is well that we should understand the difference between the Lord’s “coming” and “appearing.” The *coming* of the Lord is the moment when He will gather in all the fruits of His grace; His *appearing* is the moment when these fruits will be manifested in their

brilliancy, when He will associate His own with Himself in the glory of His reign, and will bear public testimony to His entire approval of those whom the world has despised and caused to suffer because they bore the name of the crucified One.

However precious may be the awakening now being produced by the Spirit of God in the world, it is well to point out to our brethren in Christ the weak points in it. The enemy is ever on the watch to avail himself of our ignorance or lack of dependence on the Word, in order to hinder the work of God. Many of the writings which come before us confound, in many respects, the Lord's "coming" and "appearing." Others even place certain prophetic personages and events before His coming. This confusion risks the losing sight of our Christian responsibility on the one hand, and on the other it is likely to hinder the free and full joy of our hope.

To-day the Lord is acting manifestly in gathering together His own. May we be amongst those who are daily waiting for Him, and may the hope of His coming deliver us from every association which is out of keeping with it. May we be also amongst those who *love* His appearing, and who live, not only in the attitude of awaiting the fruition of the "blessed hope," but *in view* of "the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." And may all the dear children of God who are interested in the present awakening insist continuously on these two sides of the truth.

Between the "coming" of the Lord, and His "appearing," nearly all the great series of future prophetic events intervene. This is most important to bear in mind. . . .

For us, Christians, the "coming" of the Lord has a

supreme interest, and *does not in any way belong to the series of future prophetic events although it is the crowning-point of the era of grace.* It surpasses in importance every other event; for it is then that we shall see Him, our beloved Saviour, as the bright and morning star, in the splendour of His heavenly beauty, and that we shall be like Him. Those that sleep in the night and are drunken in the night will not see that star. Enoch, after he was taken up, was sought, without doubt, but was no more *found* than Elijah, who was taken up to heaven in the chariots of Israel, or than the Church, caught up in the clouds. When the Lord arises as the Sun of Righteousness, in the day of His *appearing*, what joy it will be for His saints to gaze upon Him in His glory, and to be associated with Him as His companions in that glory, and as His beloved bride on the throne of His kingdom!

O Lord, give to all Thy beloved ones to keep the "word of Thy patience" to the end! Dost not Thou wait patiently Thyself to have us with Thee? Thy desires go out towards Thy bride, and to the moment when, having united her to Thyself for ever, Thou shalt present her to Thyself glorious! But, as to those of Thine own who have not yet entered into and laid hold of this hope—may their ears and their hearts be opened now to these words which Thou dost address to them, it may be for the last time, "Surely I come quickly!" Give also to all Thy redeemed ones the strength and courage to hold fast that which they have, Thy Word and Thy name, until Thou dost come, and to walk in holiness in view of Thine appearing, so that they may not lose their crown, in the day when Thou shalt be revealed!

From a recent Paper by H. R., Vevey.

Sketches in the Apocalypse.

XIX.

SYMBOLS AND TYPES.

ONE of the difficulties which serious readers find in the Book of Revelation, especially in that part of it which follows the middle of chapter vi., consists in the right application of the symbols which abound therein, *after* the opening of the fifth seal.

The first four seals, on being opened, refer to providential judgments, simply set forth as in corresponding prophecies of Jeremiah, and more especially of Ezekiel. (Compare Jer. xv. 2, 3; xxi. 9; xxxviii. 2; Ezek. xiv. 12-21.) The judgments spoken of cannot be mistaken, summed up as they are in verse 8, that is "sword, famine, pestilence, and the wild beasts of the earth," called, in Ezekiel xiv. 21, God's "four sore judgments." They will affect "the fourth part of the earth," possibly that portion of it known as the Roman earth.

The living creatures, or cherubim, are thenceforward silent, and a new character is given to what follows, which has nothing whatever to do with the Church, or with the heavenly calling of the believer, since *all* who believe, and who form the "Church" in this present time, will have been *already* caught up to heaven, where they are represented by the "twenty-four elders," clothed in white raiment. These will no doubt include the Old Testament saints, also raised at the same moment, though not specially so mentioned.

Hence it is important for us to consider the application of the symbolical language we now begin to meet with; though in one sense the language is full of symbols right through the book, as for instance, the

description of the Lord, when He appeared to John, in the first chapter.

In a general way, without going too much into detail, may we not say that a symbol conveys a moral idea by means of some object with which we are familiar? A type, on the other hand, consists in a reference to some known person or event in past history, capable of a spiritual application to other circumstances. Hence we say that in many ways David was a type of Christ. Similarly, we recognise without difficulty such allusions to the Old Testament as the "tree of life, in the paradise of God" (chap. ii. 7), or the reference to Balaam and Jezebel in ii. 14, 20; again, the "rainbow" in chapter iv. 3 was the sign given to Noah (Gen. ix. 12-17), and is referred to in Ezekiel i. 28, and Revelations x. 1.

The "Lamb" is not mentioned until chapter v. 6. The praises of the "elders" are addressed to the Lord Himself without any title, whereas those of the angels and of all creation are given to the "Lamb," who is addressed in the *third* person. Let us note this.

An early instance of symbolical language is in the use of the word "star," such as we read of in Balaam's prophecy, against his own intentions: "There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel" (Numbers xxiv. 17). It presents no difficulty to the oriental mind, accustomed as they are in the East to observe the stars in cloudless skies night after night. Previous to this, Joseph, in his youth, saw in his dream "the sun, and the moon, and the eleven stars," which made obeisance to him; his father had no alternative in explaining the dream, and though questioning it, he "observed the saying" (Gen. xxxvii. 9-11).

Again, in David's last words, we read as to the

coming Ruler, that is, the Messiah or Christ—"He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds" (2 Sam. xxiii. 4). Every word in the sentence is pregnant with meaning, and conveys a distinct impression. Those who had the scriptures in later days were of course expected to use them; but none had them before Moses' time. The language, though often symbolic, is quite simple to a godly, instructed soul.

We might quote many expressions, such as "*key of David*," God's "*book of life*," a "*door opened in heaven*" (Rev. iv. 1), "*white garments*," "*crowns of gold*," etc., etc. Our guide in the interpretation of symbols is their previous use in the Scriptures, to which, more or less clearly, the revelation of John alludes. Those who trust to the reasoning of their own minds will be constantly at fault, whereas Daniel was comforted concerning the "*sealed*" character of the prophecy committed to him, by hearing that "*the wise shall understand*" (Dan. xii. 8-10). Through mercy, such possess the Book, and rely on the Holy Spirit for its needed interpretation.

On the opening of the seals, the first four are attended with individual horsemen, invited by the living creatures to "*come*." They lead to providential judgments, familiar in Old Testament times, which are to be more universally applied. Peace and prosperity are taken away "*from the earth*." In verse 8 the "*fourth part of the earth*" is specifically dealt with; but in verse 9 we notice the persistent care of the Lamb for His persecuted saints, no doubt from amongst the Jews, *after* all the church's special ministry has been finally concluded by the removal of every believer to heaven (1 Thess. iv. 14-17).

But that does not prevent His caring for others also,

who do not form part of the "hundred and forty-four thousand 'sealed' belonging to all the tribes of the children of Israel," on whose behalf the opening of the seventh seal is delayed until the divine mark has been put upon their foreheads (chap. vii. 4-8).

More than this, an innumerable company from *all nations* is also set apart for eternal blessing, and they know it; for they ascribe "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the LAMB" (chap. vii. 9, 10). These are not *around* the throne, as the glorified "elders" are seen to be, but are "before it." And the angels who surround it fall on their faces and worship God, adding their "Amen" to this further unfolding of His grace on behalf of fallen man. One of the "elders" explains to John whence they have come, namely, *out of* "the great tribulation," which the church, at the close of its history, was to be kept from entering into (see chap. iii. 10).

Even this company does not exhaust the Lord's care on behalf of those who are faithful to Him; for we find still another one of martyrs who "die in the Lord" during the terrible time of the Antichrist, acting under the immediate direction of Satan, after he is cast out of heaven (chap. xii. 9-11; xiii. 15). All these will have their place in Christ's millennial kingdom, together with the martyred saints of chapter vi. 9 (see chap. xx. 4). For it is a divine principle that all who suffer for His sake will have their corresponding place in glory (Rom. viii. 17).

How precious it is for us to be enabled thus to trace the working of God's sovereign *grace* in spite of all that the enemy is able to accomplish in leading people astray, and getting them more and more under his power as time rolls on. We may at the same time notice how the Lord, in His sovereign mercy, con-

tinually puts off the final judgment, in order that as many as possible may become objects of His mercy. We thus find many repeated illustrations of the word in James ii. 13, "Mercy rejoiceth against judgment."

To return now to the opening of the sixth seal, we find an interference with all the established order of creation to which we have been accustomed since the days of Noah, after the flood. When this takes place, the great majority of people think that the final day of wrath is come, and they seek to hide themselves as best they may. Many prophecies refer to it, such as Isaiah ii. 19; xiii. 9, 10 (which also mentions sun, moon, and stars); Hosea x. 8; Zephaniah i. 14-18, etc. And the Lord uses the same language on the way to Calvary, speaking of what would take place in coming days of judgment (Luke xxiii. 28-31). In such cases the sun would represent supreme authority, the moon being subordinate to it; and the stars, individual distinguished persons in evidence at that time.

As a matter of fact, the great people of this world are all mistaken in their appreciation of the occurrence, though there is enough to show how uneasy are their consciences. Worse things follow on the opening of the seventh seal, when many desire to die and cannot do so, but chapter ix. closes with the twice repeated statement that they "repented not." (A similar refusal to give heed is noted in chap. xvi. 9-11). The interruption of the judgments gives occasion for the fresh manifestations of God's grace towards a more openly rebellious world, as we have seen.

In chapter x. the Lord Himself, in angelic form, begins to take matters in-hand, but in such a way as is known only to those who can take the little book, and feed upon it as John has to do, even as Ezekiel had previously done, when outside the land of Canaan

and already in captivity (chap. ii. 9, 10 ; iii. 1-3). And similarly John was ordered to prophesy again as to peoples, nations, and tongues, and many kings (Rev. x. 11). God waits till the last moment that any who can may hear and be delivered from the impending judgment.

W. J. L.

“There’s Something Wrong Somewhere.”

WHAT IS IT?

SUCH is the conclusion to which many are driven by the serious happenings of the present day.

Besides the awful destruction of human life, the wastage of the manhood power of so many countries, and the immense drain upon their resources, serious problems are constantly cropping up at home, food and labour questions not being the least of them.

It therefore forces itself upon us from all quarters that there is something wrong with the world. What is it? The answer is found in few words. It is astray from God. Sin has entered into the world, and death follows in its train, “and so death passed upon all, for that all have sinned.”

But is there no remedy? Are we to settle down to the present state of chaotic confusion until things right themselves, or come to an end by sheer exhaustion? Nay! “God is our refuge and strength”; His resources are not exhausted.

Then why does He not step in and put an end to this misery and ruin, or show the way out?

Now we believe God has shown the way out, and that the fault is not in Him or His ways, but man will not heed His voice so long as there is a human chance of doing without Him, and so the struggle goes on.

Let us appeal for a moment to history. There have been great wars in the past, and great conquerors;

men who, satiated with the lust of conquest, have "sighed for fresh worlds to conquer." Where are they, and where are the great world-powers that once swayed the destinies of many nations besides their own? Of Nebuchadnezzar it is written:—"Whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up, and whom he would he put down." Other monarchs succeeded to almost similar power, but they have passed away. And has the present age no lesson to learn from this? Surely experience can teach us something. Is science, education, or culture in any of its boasted forms, unable to deliver the world from such appalling disasters as the present war with its accumulated horrors? It is declared that "science is the best friend war ever had. It has made slaughter possible on a scale never dreamt of before, and it has enormously increased man's capacity to maim and disable his fellow-man."

Yet in the face of all these undeniable facts, and "man's (acknowledged) inhumanity to man," there are many who still ask us to trust in man, and not a few who think the remedy is in the power of the democracy. "Vox populi, vox Dei" (the voice of the people is the voice of God) is still their theory, while others pin their faith to the brotherhood of man, and think they have found "a panacea for all the ills that flesh is heir to" in the spread of so-called brotherhood doctrines.

Again we say, Can man be trusted for this? One of England's great men has said that this war has put back the clock of civilisation and progress a hundred years; and if peace is at length secured, what is to hinder another war, and another set back?

The Lord Jesus once said that all the law and the prophets hang on the two commandments, "Thou shalt

love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," and "thy neighbour as thyself." Has the world, civilized or uncivilized, Christendom or heathendom, done this? We know the very opposite is the fact, and that man under the law before Christ came, and man under grace since His death and resurrection, has done neither, nor will any associations or combinations of his devising bring about a better result. The desire is all right, but the power is not there.

But God has a remedy. He is still saying, "Look unto *ME*, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else beside Me, a just God and a Saviour." Instead, then, of asking the oft-repeated question, "Why does God allow all this?" why not listen to His remedy found in the great basic truths of the gospel—"Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"? We know man naturally hates the idea of repentance, nevertheless that is the first essential step towards deliverance. As with the prodigal son, so with us individually, and with the nation that would get right with God—"I have sinned," "We have sinned," must come from the conscience convicted of its true place before Him.

The Lord Jesus instances Nineveh and its repentance at the preaching of Jonah as an illustration to Israel of what was required from it. Nineveh repented in sackcloth and ashes, "from the greatest of them even to the least of them," and "the king laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes." Where is now the sackcloth and ashes, in this or any other of the countries involved in the present gigantic struggle? And it is written that Nineveh believed God, notwithstanding that they were nationally idolaters, whereas the contending nations to-day are

professedly Christian, the countries on whom the highest favours have been showered, and where the light and truth of the gospel have been most abundantly spread.

But let us remember another word from the Lord Jesus, "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required," and he that knew his Lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes (see Luke xii. 47, 48).

If God were to interfere, it must necessarily be in righteousness. He may, apparently, be silent up to a certain point, but He cannot be indifferent to all that is passing at such a time as the present. By the scriptures alone can we understand any of God's ways; so judging by what is there written, and in no wise wishing to speak as if God's ways needed our vindication, we believe, as we have said, that the proper place for a nation that would seek His aid, is to take its true place in **repentance before Him**. Scripture plainly teaches that God is doing two things—taking out from among the Gentiles a people for His name on the one hand, and by government restraining the evil that is in the world on the other. To speak as if the gospel had failed, because the nations professing Christianity will not, or cannot, live in peace, is to misunderstand the plain teaching of the Bible. Moreover, it is perfectly clear that if all professing Christians were truly converted followers of Christ, there would be no wars or envious longing for the lands or possessions of others.

The complaints so frequently heard because the nations at war are professedly Christian, only emphasises the difference between profession and real vital godliness, where a true sense of sin and sinfulness has brought us to God.

True morality and true religion are closely allied;

they both have their basis in the conviction and confession of sin ; and by this simple test we can differentiate between a true (that is a God-given) religion and all others, whatever their pretensions may be.

The only possibility of universal and *lasting* peace is in the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ. His kingdom will be the answer to the oft-repeated prayer, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as in heaven." But it will be established *in righteousness*, and consequently it is said, "They (the angels) shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity" (Matt. xiii. 41). Meanwhile God lingers in longsuffering grace over the world that rejected His Son when He first came, "not willing that any should perish." And grace reigns *through righteousness* unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

T. R.

Issachar.—i.

LEADER AND WARRIOR.

THE story of Issachar is intensely interesting, and to piece it together forms an instructive study, and one that cannot fail to be of much blessing. It has seven striking phases :—

1. **Issachar and Jacob.**—The first is in Egypt, where on the day of his death Jacob gathered his sons together, "that"—to use his own words—"I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days." When he came to his ninth son, Issachar, he said, "Issachar is a strong ass, couching down between two burdens ; and he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant ; and he bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute" (Gen. xlix.). This, his blessing, is quite in keeping with his name, which means "Hire" (Gen. xxx. 18).

He had evidently grown up strong, self-willed, and intractable, yet easy going, like the ass couching among the sheepfolds. What appealed to him, as being a restful, pleasant calling, was a farmer's life, and he would be prepared to pay tribute to others to be allowed to follow it.

2. Issachar in the Wilderness.—After four hundred years or so, Jehovah appoints Issachar, with Judah and Zebulun, a leader of God's people in their pilgrim marches. "These shall first set forth" (Num. ii. 5, 9; x. 15).

Between these two dates lies the story of bondage in Egypt, of shelter from judgment behind the passover blood on their doorposts, of salvation by God's power from Pharaoh's hosts and the Red Sea. And how vividly does it all portray the position of true believers to-day?

By nature obstinate and stiff-necked, like the ass, yet loving the pleasant things of life, we keenly cultivated our tastes and hobbies, till at last we found they became sin to us—task-masters which led us bound to bondage and judgment. But now we can rejoice that the blood of God's Lamb has put even *our* sins away, and that His power has surely delivered us from sin's service; for, "If the Son shall make you free ye shall be free indeed."

Two important things are suggested by Issachar's divine appointment to leadership in the wilderness. *First*, that God's leaders among His people must first be delivered from the guilt and power of sin by the blood of Christ, must know assuredly that they "have passed from death unto life." If therefore that spiritual guide, to whom we have hitherto looked up, is not a saved man, if he cannot say that he has eternal life and peace through the blood of Jesus, he has no divine right to occupy his high position. *Secondly*, the fitness

to lead God's flock is not social position, a sound education, or human ordination. He who leads must, like Issachar, be one called of God to it, and set apart by the Spirit of God (Acts xiii. 2; 1 Cor. xii. 11).

The broken heart-breaking condition of the Christian Church, as we see it, is the outcome of men pushing or being pushed into it as professional leaders who are neither fitted nor ordained thereto of God; hence the worldliness of the Church at large, the rapid advance and wide tolerance of evil teaching and practice within its pale. But for this, Russia would never have had her past horrors nor present afflictions; nor Germany, once the home of Protestantism, her canker of rationalism and militarism.

Let the reader and writer, then, beware of being led, in spiritual matters, by those—and they are, alas, many—who have not been set apart as guides by God's Spirit. But where men are raised up of God, let us heed that word, "Remember your leaders who have spoken to you the Word of God; and considering the issue of their conversation, imitate their faith" (Heb. xiii. 7, new trans.). We may rest confident that, as long as the Church is on earth, her glorified Head will provide for her both gifts and guides (Eph. iv. 11-14). But we must not forget, withal, that each believer is to be an "example," and a "pattern of good works" to his fellow.

3. **Issachar and Moses.**—Moses also, like Jacob, blessed the sons of Israel before *his death* (Deut. xxxiii.). From his lips, Issachar, after forty years of trying leadership, hears this benediction. "Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and, Issachar, in thy tents. They shall call the peoples *unto the mountain*; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand" (ver. 18, 19).

Safety of tenure and commercial prosperity resting on that righteousness which exalteth a nation was jointly before them, but foremost of all, they would summon the peoples to the mountain of God's inheritance to offer worthy praise to Him (Exod. xv. 17; Isa. ii. 3).

This is very suggestive. No one can truly worship who is not at peace with God, and walking righteously. Further, no one delights more in holy worship than he who has taken his full share in the labour of caring for and guiding the saints. His training, his deep exercise of heart in his work, coupled with acquaintance with God's gracious aid in it, all tend to fill him with thanksgiving. A true leader will lead others to true worship. He will initiate their praise, and lead them upward, and godward, "unto the mountain," to offer it.

4. Issachar the Warrior.—Now, after many years in the land, enjoying the fertile vale of Jezreel for his possession, Issachar, with the rest, is "called up" to war. With Deborah and Barac he takes the field, and is "sent on foot *into the valley*" to fight (Jud. v. 15).

What a contrast this is to our last notice of him. From being a leader of worship in the mountain, he becomes a leader of war in the valley. Worship, as well as war, however, have their place in God's plan for us. Both are needful for His glory, and our blessing. To be absorbed with one at the expense of the other makes us self-centred, and fills us with either spiritual pride or spiritual poverty.

As Sisera was a foe in *their* midst, so now we are called to wrestle against spiritual wickedness and the rulers of the darkness of this world. Without fighting there is no enjoyed possession for us any more than there was for Israel. "Wherefore," says the apostle, "take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to *withstand* in the evil day, and having done all *to stand*" (Eph. vi. 11-19).

W. M. R.

“The Riches of His Grace.”

EVERY Christian who is going on in communion with God must be interested in the blessing and salvation of souls. The very gospel which we preach is the glad tidings of the love of God, flowing out from His heart, to a lost and guilty world. He is a Saviour God, “who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”

Not that every one is called or gifted for the work of an evangelist, but even if we have not that gift in any marked degree, we can support the going forth of the message by our presence at meetings, by our prayers, and in many other ways. There is also a vast field, and one which is not availed of as it should be, for the distribution of gospel magazines, books, tracts, etc.; this is open to many who may not be called to speak from a public platform.

To lack hearty sympathy with the going forth of the message of salvation to sinners is sure to lead to narrowness and to becoming self-centered, because, if that sympathy be lacking, our hearts do not go out to others as God's heart does; we are out of the current of His thoughts and desires.

And further, it leads to the hard and selfish spirit, of which we see an example in the prophet Jonah. When sent of God to Nineveh, he did not wish to go, and when at last he went—and that, too, under the most extraordinary circumstances, well calculated to act on his conscience—he was completely out of sympathy with a God of grace, who was ready to own any real repentance and turning of the heart to Him. Instead of being thankful that the Ninevites repented and owned God's hand in judgment, he thought only of himself and his reputation as a prophet—such was

the selfishness of his heart. He could not look outside himself and rise to the height of *God's* love, and grace and compassion towards poor sinners beguiled and deceived by Satan, as well as towards a suffering creation.

It is well we should ponder over these things, and pray earnestly that we ourselves and God's people generally may be more in the current of *His* thoughts and desires for the blessing and conversion of souls. There are, of course, difficulties and disappointments in the work, but let us not be discouraged, but seek out new fields and new places where we may be able to carry the glad tidings to sinners. There are many sorrowing and bereaved ones at the present time, and this should open the door more widely for access to such with a word of sympathy, as well as giving opportunity for telling them of a Saviour's love.

F. G. B.

"Until the Day Dawn."

THE night is far spent, the day is at hand. The coming of the Lord draweth nigh. The Morning Star will soon appear. The Sun of righteousness will arise with healing in His wings. The day of God will be ushered in with its everlasting blessings, bright and brilliant—"a new heaven and a new earth," "no more sea." And so the Word of God says, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Again, "Behold, I make all

things new." Such is the eternity of bliss before those who know and love the Lord Jesus.

- "All taint of sin shall be removed, all evil done away,
And I shall dwell with God's Beloved, through God's
eternal day."

"Somewhere in France," in one of the British military burying grounds, over a grave, is an inscription with the words, "*Until the day dawn*," marking the spot where one of the good soldiers of Jesus Christ, who fell in this great War, lies buried. Having been "called up" to active service, by the powers that be which are ordained of God, he was ordered to the Front; then the report came of his being "wounded and missing," and for many months no further tidings reached his anxious and distressed family and friends.

A christian friend, called up later, whose duties gave him opportunity to trace "missing" soldiers during inspections of the British military burying grounds, found the identification disc of his missing friend, and had an inscription erected over the grave to mark the spot, adding the words, "*Until the day dawn*." This he did to denote, in the midst of death, a coming "day" of resurrection life and glory, when death shall be swallowed up of life, the dead in Christ raised first, those who are alive and remain being caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so to be for ever with the Lord.

This christian friend communicated the tidings of their loved one being "with Christ which is far better" to the family and friends, who sorrow not as those which have no hope, but await that blessed reunion, when those which sleep in Jesus, God will bring with Him. A favourite hymn of this departed brother was—

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“I am not skilled to understand
What God hath willed, what God hath planned ;
I only know at His right hand
Is One who is my Saviour !

I take Him at His word indeed,
‘Christ died for sinners’—this I read ;
For in my heart I find a need
Of Him to be my Saviour !

Yea, living, dying, let me bring
My strength, my solace, from this spring,
That He who lives to be my King
Once died to be my Saviour !”

U. G.

Sketches in the Apocalypse.

XX.

DELAY IN JUDGMENT.

WHEN thinking or writing of judgment, we have ever to bear in mind that it is God’s “strange work” (Isa. xxviii. 21). But the more we carefully consider what is unfolded in the Scriptures of truth, the more we are impressed with the fact of its *necessity*, because of what man ever was and continues to be, as characterised by his short history in the garden of Eden. He had to be driven out thence, “lest he should put forth his hand and take of the tree of life,” and thus prolong an unending existence in a state of independence and rebellion against God (Gen. iii. 22-24).

That very fact of his expulsion shows, however, that God had purposes of blessing in store, which could only be realised by the Lord Himself condescending to become the woman’s seed, and as such to die for us.

Only thus could He have His "*heel* bruised," as prophetic language expresses it, before the enemy was finally crushed and his *head* bruised in irrevocable judgment.

Though our first parents were driven out of Paradise, God has, however, never forgotten "the tree of life"; for we find it again at the close of the book, in connection with those who have granted to them the right to enjoy its fruits (Rev. xxii. 14). And that is only because the Lord Himself undertook to bear our judgment, and go down into death, "even the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 6-8).

Do we think of, and meditate upon it as we ought? Does it constitute the sum and substance of our preaching of the gospel, as was the case with the apostle Paul, and more particularly so when he had to deal in Europe with those who were distinguished for their human learning and advantages?

See how earnestly he writes to the Corinthians in his first epistle, which must have been sent to them shortly after the two epistles to the Thessalonians had been written; for at the time of writing it, he was with Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus (Acts xviii. 26; xix. 1; 1 Cor. xvi. 19). Notice how he appeals to them in his first epistle (chap. i. 17-24; ii. 2). He would not use wisdom of words, "lest the *cross* of Christ should be made of none effect."

That particular kind of death indicated more than any other its character. The terrible enmity of the Jewish leaders proved it by their arranging for the two malefactors to be *crucified* at the same time. And that served to bring more definitely into evidence the *judgment* represented by it, while at the same time we observe how the violence and hatred of the Saviour's enemies was overruled. For one of the objects of their

violence found, *through the cross*, an entry into the Paradise of God! How passing wonderful are God's ways! Who could have ever imagined or foreseen such an issue of so shameful a death? His grace and wisdom became all the more evident.

Do not these facts serve to emphasize and explain "the loud voice of the strong angel" in Revelation v. 2, inquiring, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" Seeing that its purport is *judgment*, who is competent to open it, but one who is himself free from any imputation which could possibly bring him under its condemnation? The Lord Himself as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," had alone *prevailed* to open it, a fact which in itself showed that there were purposes of grace still to be made known to those marked out for blessing, in spite of their own personal shortcomings and failures.

It is then the lamb with "seven horns," implying fulness of power, as well as "seven eyes," setting forth perfection of intelligence and all the energy of the Holy Spirit in government, from whose inquiry nothing can possibly be hid, who now comes forward to take the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne (vers. 6, 7).

All through the book of Revelation the Lord preserves the character of a Judge, and necessarily so, as everything must, sooner or later, be subject to God's scrutiny. Without that, no rewards could be given, and verse 12 of the final chapter of the book would have no meaning: "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

The vision of the first chapter recalls vividly that which Daniel was given to record in his chapter x. 5, 6, while it combines some features of "the Ancient of

days" (Daniel vii. 9). Both were needful for John's special ministry of "the **Word**" become flesh, in order to dwell amongst men (John i. 1-3, 14; 1 John i. 1-3). And the Lord Himself had said, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son"; and He added, "Because He is the Son of **man**" (John v. 22, 27).

We must remember also that every distinction or advantage which God in His goodness has committed to mankind for their blessing must necessarily be a matter for His scrutiny and judgment. David felt this strongly when he was given to write Psalm cxxxix. As redeemed through grace, we are not mere automatic machines, but marvellously endowed with body, soul, and spirit, and withal, possessed of a *conscious* knowledge of good and evil. That began at the moment of Adam's fall (Gen. iii.).

When John saw the vision of the Lord in chapter i. 10-17, he "fell at His feet as dead." But the Lord comforts him, though not at all by any assurance of what John might naturally have to say for himself or his own faithfulness. On the contrary, the Lord delivers him from all *fear* by the assurance that He, the **Judge**,—"the first, and the last, and the living One"—had Himself *gone through death*, and was now "alive for evermore." He was the unchanging Amen, the "Faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God," who so presents Himself to the Church, in the last phase of its decline (chap. iii. 14).

Even then, as to the church, there is, with the threat of its being altogether disowned—"spued out of His mouth," because of its untrue, though boastful condition,—an offer of the most touching intimacy with any who might be found really disposed to hear His voice, and to open the door in answer to His knocking.

Besides that, there is for the "overcomer," in such an evil day, an assured place with the Lord Himself on His *throne*, when He, as the true Overcomer, is set down with the Father on His throne (chap. iii. 19-22). Such is the last word of comfort to the church on earth, as regards any faithful testimony for the Lord now absent.

John is then invited to leave earth and go to heaven, in order to find the church already there in a new character, *before* the beginning of the judgments prepared for a Christ-rejecting world. It is represented there by the "elders" *seated* on thrones, engaged in peaceful worship, well able to join in the initiative of the "living creatures," who form an essential part of the throne itself, in its governmental character.

Such is the explanation given by Ezekiel's testimony in his chapters i. and x. We may note in passing that the "elders" address the Lord personally, saying, "*Thou art worthy . . .*" (chap. v. 9), whereas the angels and all creation use the third person in speaking *of* Him as the Lamb slain. There is, in their case, less intimacy than that enjoyed by the elders.

As the seals are opened, providential judgments begin; but the *fifth* seal undone turns us aside for a moment to consider God's faithful witnesses or martyrs, "slain for the word of God and the testimony which they held." God does not forget them, though they have to wait for others who would be called to the same experience later on (chap. xiii. 15). Both companies are referred to in chapter xx., verse 4, in association morally with the saints already glorified and seated on their thrones.

The interruption which follows the opening of the *sixth* seal affords, as already noticed, an opportunity for introducing various companies of Jews and Gentiles

marked out for blessing, in spite of all the wickedness which goes on unchecked in the world. As James says, "Mercy rejoiceth against judgment" (ii. 13). The interruption itself is short as compared with the following one in chapters x. and xi. before the seventh and last trumpet is sounded announcing that Christ is taking the kingdom; but even then it only brings us to the last half week of Daniel ix., when the last scenes of rebellion are enacted as soon as Satan himself is cast down from the heavenly places.

We have already noticed the confusion and disorder, as well as the mistaken thoughts of the godless, who seek to hide themselves from "the wrath of the Lamb," at the close of chapter vi. But the fears then expressed produce no permanent effect, nor do they lead to *repentance*, which was the keynote of John the Baptist's ministry (Matt. iii. 2; Mark i. 15).

The same ministry accompanied with works of power, showing what the "kingdom of heaven" implied morally, was continued by the blessed Lord Himself (Matt. iv. 17). And it was then committed to His disciples (Mark vi. 12).

In the book of Revelation we find it eight times over in the letters to the seven churches, and again emphasized twice in the course of the book by the repeated fact that no judgment had the effect of producing it (ix. 20, 21; and xvi. 9, 11). Neither judgments nor intervals of relief had any moral effect for good on man's rebellious heart, and when Satan is finally expelled from the "air" (Eph. ii. 2), he will have it all his own way with the inhabitants of the world.

W. J. L.

Issachar.—ii.

THE TEACHER AND WORKER.

HAVING already looked at *Issachar as the Leader and Warrior*, the next phase of his history brings him before us as *the wise Teacher and devoted Worker*.

5. **Issachar and David.**—We read of this tribe 250 years after (1 Chron. vii. 5 ; xii. 23, 32-40), that “they were valiant men of might,” “were ready armed to the war, and came to David, to Hebron, to turn the Kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the Lord.” They “were men that *had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do* ; the heads of them were 200, and *all their brethren were at their commandment*,” “they could *keep rank*,” and “came with a *perfect heart* to Hebron (which means *fellowship*), to make David king over all Israel,” and contributed much to the abundance of bread and wine, “for there was joy in Israel.” What a magnificent record !

Taught of God, they understood the times, to know what Israel ought to do, and in their turn taught this to their brethren, who followed their teaching. This led to work and effort. So, shutting out all else as of minor importance, they unitedly bend to the task of turning the kingdom of Saul to David, and make him supreme. In this service God abundantly cared for their needs, and gave them joy.

Can it be said of us that we understand the times, to know what God’s people ought to do to-day ? If we, who read our Bibles, do not know, how can we expect the world to know, who don’t read them ? As Israel’s choosing and planning, in Saul’s day, had issued in disappointment and failure, so have we also

grievously failed. And we cannot rightly expect God to set up again Pentecostal times, since the Church has never really repented and taken her true place before Him. God's hand is heavy in discipline and correction on both the Church and nation. The times are indeed most serious, and the question is, What ought we now to do?

Such a grave question is not very easily answered; yet we humbly venture to suggest to the exercised reader, that Issachar's striking conduct here provides—at any rate in its outlines—an answer to it. As they knew, in David's case, that he was anointed to be Israel's King, so do we know that it is God's purpose to turn to the Lord Jesus the kingdoms of this world; for He will soon be revealed in glory, and lay every enemy in the dust. But preparatory to this, the present, and perhaps other, wars and upheavals are inevitable. In the meantime, God is now gathering out the Church as a Bride for His Son; and we, who are so richly blessed and provided for, are called on to take up a very definite attitude in view of the place He has given us in Him.

We are nowhere told to meddle in the conduct and arrangement of things in the world—He will see to that—but to be like the men of Issachar in 1 Chron. xii. in joining ourselves valiantly and devotedly to the rejected Nazarene; to stand for Him and with Him; to give ourselves, with united ranks and oneness of heart, to win souls for Him, that they may be delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of His beloved Son (Acts xxvi. 18; Col. i. 13).

In such blessed service He will see to it that our souls, like those of the men of Issachar and his brethren, are richly fed and filled with joy; and “the crowning day is coming by and by.” Are we really holding

fast His word?—loyally owning Him in our lives?—cleaving to His blessed name?—faithfully preaching Him as the crucified, glorified, and soon coming Saviour? And are we teaching all this to others? This surely is what these serious times demand. Nothing else counts with God, if this Issachar-like service is lacking; but with it, what a host of the difficulties and troubles which now beset individuals and assemblies, would be effectually removed.

6. Issachar and Jeroboam.—The next page in the history is much less to the credit of Issachar. David's kingdom had been established in splendour, but, alas, divided through Rehoboam's graceless, tactless conduct. Issachar had joined Jeroboam, and now, a hundred years after, Baasha, one of his tribe, kills Jeroboam's son and usurps his throne; and like him, deeply sins against Jehovah. Baasha is an example of how God uses one wicked man or nation to punish another. The word to him was, "I exalted thee out of the dust and made thee prince over my people Israel" (1 Kings xvi. 2); but, after reigning twenty-four years, he was succeeded by his son, killed by Zimri two years after.

The only remark we desire to make here is, that it is of the greatest comfort to the believer to see how God, in this day of grace, lifts up, in His mercy, not one man simply, but poor sinners everywhere, from the dust and the dunghill (1 Sam. ii. 8; Ps. cxiii. 7-8), and makes them inherit the throne of glory with Christ. And, as eternal debtors to His grace, it is theirs to walk, not in the ways of sinners as Baasha did, but in the ways of the Lord, and so to be true leaders and helps to His people.

7. Issachar and Hezekiah.—The last notice of the house of Issachar is in 2 Chronicles xxx. They, with others, came to Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time to

keep the passover ; but without being purified for that holy occasion. In answer to the king's prayer the Lord healed them ; so that they were enabled to keep the feast "with great gladness," "making confession to the Lord," "so there was great joy in Jerusalem," and their united prayer was heard on high.

Like them, *we too* have a gracious, forgiving God and Father ; known, too, in a much fuller and deeper way, through Christ. And though *we* have failed, His word assures us that, "If *we* confess *our* sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," as well as to fill *us* with joy, and hear *our* prayers (1 John i. 4, 9 ; iii. 21, 22).

W. M. R.

Prophetic Studies.

IN studying prophecy, the first thing to remember is that Christ is the One in whom all the counsels and purposes of God centre. His glory, the establishment of His Kingdom as the Messiah King of Israel (Ps. ii.), as well as the Son of man who is to be set over *all* the works of God's hands (Ps. viii.), is the point towards which all the working out of God's plans and ways is directed.

It is helpful to bear in mind, in considering the future events of which prophecy speaks, that there are *three* chief actors in the scenes of the last days, with whom, however, are many subordinate ones. These three are :—

1. The head or chief of the revived Roman Empire (Rev. xiii. 1-10), who rules the Western confederation of Powers, the seat of whose authority is at Rome.

2. The Antichrist or false prophet, who is in league with the former, the seat of whose power is at Jerusalem (Rev. xiii. 11-18).

3. The Assyrian or Gog, with whom is linked up the "King of the North," and the Northern and Eastern confederation of Powers.

Of these, the first two will be antagonistic to the third, and all will, in the end, take an active part in corrupting and oppressing the Jews, who will be once more restored to their land in unbelief as they now are.

At the appearing of the Lord all these enemies will be put down, though not at the same time. The third, that is Gog or Russia, will not be judged till *after* Israel, having been once more settled in their land, have been again owned of God as His people. The godly remnant, of whom we read so often in the psalms and the prophets, will then be delivered; and finally the ten tribes will be brought back so as to complete the restoration of the people for the millennial reign, under the Lord Himself.

To go into details would lead us much beyond our space, but the following note, bearing chiefly on the last, and perhaps the least understood of these three, may, it is hoped, be helpful.

Gog, whose original dominion gradually extended itself to the centre of Russia and of Asia, is the descendant and successor of the Assyrian spoken of in prophetic history.

The Assyrian confederation, of which prophecy speaks, includes all the territories which are under the dominion of Gog. The "King of the North" rules over Asia Minor, which originally formed part of the country under the sway of the Assyrian spoken of in history, but which became a separate country under Seleucus, one of the four successors of Alexander the Great; then under several of the kings named Antiochus.

Without being identical with Gog, the "King of the North" identifies himself with him, acts conjointly with him, and plays an important *rôle* as chief of his armies. The Assyrian of Isaiah is the one of past history, reappearing in the last days long after Babylon, which, in historical

times, had subjugated and absorbed the Assyrian kingdom, causing it to disappear entirely. . . .

Under the direction of Gog, head of the Russian Empire, the Assyrian confederation will be the great antagonist of the Western Roman Empire revived, and of its ally, the Antichrist, the false Messiah and false prophet, King of the apostate Jewish people. It is the Assyrian who, in the final conflict, will invade Palestine, and especially Judæa and Jerusalem.

The Assyrian confederation of the last days has Gog as its political head (Ezek. xxxii. 22-30; xxxviii. 1-6). It is of him that God says, "I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them." Now the prophets of Israel announced the Assyrian, which proves that Gog and the Assyrian are the same personage.—(*From Notes on Joel by H. R.*)

If "Gomer and all his bands" (Ezek. xxxviii. 6) points to Germany, as seems to be the case, it would show that that power will be part (perhaps a leading part) of the eastern confederation in the last days. This may explain why God has allowed the present collapse and disintegration in Russia, which has given Germany such a large accession of power in the East. Let us remember, however, that this Northern and Eastern Confederation is the *last* enemy who comes against Israel, and it is when the judgment upon that enemy has been executed that the peace and blessing of the millennial reign begins.

Whatever may be the final issue of the present terrible conflict in the West, there can be no doubt that Germany will not ultimately hold the territories south of the Rhine which once formed part of the Roman Empire. But whether she will be driven from those territories during the present war, or subsequently through the agency of the future head of that (the Roman) Empire, to whom we have already referred,

it would be difficult to say. In any case it is clear that this head or chief of the Western Powers, described in such a remarkable manner in Daniel vii. 23-28, and Revelations xiii. 1-10, does not arise till *after* the rapture of the saints at the coming of the Lord.

On considering the whole bearing of prophecy on the present situation in the world, both as to the moral state of things and the momentous events now transpiring, one is more and more impressed with the conviction that the Lord's coming for His saints is now near at hand.

F. G. B.

Questions for the Conscience.

Extract from a Letter.

ONE cannot but be impressed by what appears to be the wide and special activities of the Holy Spirit in our day. The energy of the spirit of evil is, alas, also rampant, but for this the Word of God prepares us.

A question arises with regard to our position—Are we, in our habits and associations, such as to be fit vessels for Him to first fill and then use? If in our practice ecclesiastically we run counter to the unity of the Spirit, can there be any progress? Apart from the Spirit and the word leading us to and holding us to Christ, there can be no progress. And if no progress, there must be decay and disintegration. Which is it among us?

Do we believe that failure is a mark of fidelity to the truth?—that weakness is a proof of the presence and power of the Spirit?—that indifference to our low state is consistent with the Lord being in the midst?

A Word for the Times.

IT is well that we should realise the seriousness of the times in which we live, especially as the present dispensation draws to a close. The war with all its attendant troubles brings sorrow to many a home, but the future is in God's hands, and we can thankfully leave it there and look to Him for daily strength to meet the difficulties of the way.

But there are other things which must touch the Christian deeply if he has the interests of Christ really at heart. We cannot witness with indifference the rapid advance of the apostasy in Christendom; the spirit of infidelity and unbelief in the Bible on the one hand, and the growth of Romanism, Ritualism, and many other errors on the other. It is just what the epistles of John, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 Timothy, and the book of Revelation show us as indications of the closing days of this present period of time.

Not less serious, and touching us very closely, is the decline of spiritual power amongst those who have had much precious light and truth, recovered from the rubbish by which it had been overlaid for ages, and clearly taught from the word of God by gifted men now gone to their rest. This decline leads to general weakness, as well as to a disintegration as regards a united testimony for Christ which no efforts on the part of those concerned seem able to prevent.

One thing we cannot fail to perceive is, how little this decline seems to be felt and realised in the presence of God. We read of Samson, after he had slept on Delilah's lap and had lost his Nazariteship, that he said, "I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself"; but, as the scripture significantly adds, "*He wist not that the LORD was departed from*

him." Alas! he had to find it out by bitter experience when too late.

Is not this just like the blinding and deadening power of the world over the Christian's soul? The world in its many shapes has come in amongst the Lord's people, and those who had much truth given them of God are in no wise exempt from its snares. Has it deprived us of spiritual eye-salve and so blunted our perception that it might be said we "wist not" what our real state is?

Of Ephraim it is said in Hosea vii. 9, "Strangers have devoured his strength, *and he knoweth it not*: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, *yet he knoweth not*." It was the result of having a "divided heart."

Why the lack of an overflowing spirit of worship in meetings gathered to remember the Lord? Why the looking to great men and great names instead of dependence on God? Why the pandering to the world and its methods to make up for the loss of real spiritual power?

Would it not be well to take heed to the word—"Consider your ways," and to see if we have not declined from that "first love" to Christ without which nothing is of real value in His sight? Oh, that we might practically prove and realise that Christ is indeed "all in all" to our souls!

The true way of restoration and revival is to take the place of repentance and humiliation: "Repent," says the Lord, "and do the first works." Christ is ever the same. His love, His care for His church, has never changed; it is *we* who have changed and declined. It is the world, and self, and other motives coming in which turn the heart away from Him who is alone worthy of our best affections.

Let us keep before us the true Christian maxim of

the apostle Paul—however far short *we* may come of such an experience as his—"To me to live is Christ." Again—"I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Phil. i. 21; iii. 8).

F. G. B.

The Rapture of the Saints at the Coming of the Lord.

DEAR BROTHER,—In answer to your question respecting the three words contained in 1 Thessalonians iv. 16—the "shout" [or "assembling shout," for the Greek word has this double sense], the "voice of the archangel," and the "trump of God"—I believe that in order to give an explanation of them, one must take into consideration the words "the last trump," in 1 Corinthians xv. 52.

Although these two passages may not have an absolutely identical sense, they agree in this, as to their form, that both make allusion to military customs.

1 Corinthians xv. 52 speaks of the practice in force at the Roman camps. For the rising of the camp, the trumpets sounded three times. At the first signal they struck their tents, at the second the soldiers got themselves ready to depart, and the third signal, that is the *last trump*, indicated the rising of the camp. It is only the last signal which is in question in this passage, for it insists on the fact that the departure of the saints who are raised or those who are changed takes place *in the twinkling of an eye*.

In 1 Thessalonians iv. 16, that event, presented also under a military figure, has a more elevated character—more complete and *less sudden*: the Lord Himself descends from heaven to take His own up to meet Him

in the air. Their departure is not presented to us as being effectuated in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye; but the scene divides itself, so to speak, into three parts:—

First, the word of command is uttered by the Commander-in-chief Himself. It is He alone, the Lord, who had a right to utter that “shout” and to appoint the moment of assembly.

Then the archangel, the authority who occupies, in the army of heaven, a subordinate place, but immediately after the Chief, causes his voice to be heard in order to transmit the order.

On these two calls being given, *the soldiers who had been dispersed are assembled.*

Finally, the trump sounds forth and the complete departure takes place.

This military scene of 1 Thessalonians iv. may have a somewhat Jewish aspect, and not the Gentile aspect of 1 Corinthians xv.; but it has, above all, an entirely *heavenly* character. The “shout” uttered by the Lord comes from on high; descends, so to speak, from heaven with Him. The voice of the archangel is that of the leader of the angelic armies of heaven. The archangel has an important place in the history of the people of God (Dan. x. 13, 21; xii. 1; Jude 9; Rev. xii. 7), and the *rôle* which is assigned to him here causes no surprise, seeing that his angelic army takes an active part in removing the saints. In fact, the means of their removal is *the clouds*, a word which often indicates the angelic hosts (see, for example, Matt. xvi. 27, xxiv. 30, xxv. 31; Mark viii. 38, xiii. 26, 27; Luke ix. 26; Rev. i. 7).*

* *The cloud* has also another sense. It is the place where the glory dwells, where it is hidden, and from whence it can manifest itself.

Finally, the trump is the trump *of God*. Does it not carry back our thoughts to the silver trumpets used for the calling of the assembly, for the journeying of the camps, and for the calling of the people to remembrance before the Lord (Num. x. 1-10)? When the trump of God sounds, the saints who are raised and those who are changed are caught up together *in the clouds* to meet the Lord, and so to be for ever with Him.

Thus all this scene has a heavenly origin and a divine character. Is it not in His character of *Son of God* that the Lord effectuates the first resurrection?

H. R.

Sketches in the Apocalypse.

XXI.

THE LAST "WEEK" OF DANIEL IX.

WHEN Daniel had learned from Jeremiah's prophecy (chap. xxv.) that the **Lord** "would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem," he must have felt that the time of his people's deliverance, as well as his own, was very near at hand, though, at his age, he could scarcely expect to have any personal share in the enjoyment of it. But it led to that earnest intercession, accompanied by the acknowledgement of national sin and failure, which has ever been an example and encouragement to God's saints at all times, in circumstances more or less similar.

Ezra's prayer in the ninth chapter of his book, about eighty years afterwards, was of a similar character; it was followed by another intercession of the Levites, twelve years later,—both of these being in *Jerusalem*

itself, on behalf of the captives who had returned during the long reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus, king of Persia. We find it in chapter ix. of Nehemiah's "words."

Of all these, Daniel's was evidently the most thrilling, being on the very eve of the return of those captives who were really interested in the reconstruction of the temple, though it were on a greatly reduced scale, but according to the order given by Cyrus, the king of Persia. It was, of course, quite impossible for them to do anything to compare with Solomon's glorious temple constructed at the time of the nation's greatest prosperity and glory, after David's reign.

Daniel's heart was set upon Jehovah's "sanctuary," which was at that time "desolate,"—his one desire being that the God of Israel would again recognise and restore it, causing his face to shine upon it (chap. ix. 16-19). His intercession brought an immediate answer, even "*whiles* he was speaking in prayer"; and the angel Gabriel was sent to let him into the deep secret of the remission of sins, through Messiah's coming and *death* (verses 24-26). Then, in the closing verse of the chapter, he was carried on to the last "week" of the "seventy" referred to in verse 24, and which is separated from the others on account of the all-important fact of Messiah being "cut off."

Each "week" represented *seven* years. The whole number dated from the decree "to restore and to build *Jerusalem*" (verse 25), that is the *city* itself, which was quite different to Cyrus' order to rebuild a "*house of God*."

The *temple* was restored by Zerubbabel and Joshua, as we read in the book of Ezra.

The order as to the *city* was given by Artaxerxes to Nehemiah ninety years later, B. C. 446. Adding to this

four years for the difference in chronology, marked in our Bibles, and thirty-three and a half to the Cross, the term of our blessed Lord's life on earth, we have roughly 483 years, which leaves just seven years for the final "week," or 490 in all, *i.e.*, seventy sevens.

But the last "week," or period of *seven* years, has evidently two interpretations, according to the way in which we recognise the "causing of sacrifice and oblation to cease," as mentioned in the closing verse of our chapter. For those who see in it, as every Christian ought to do, the *effect* of the Lord's *death*, it has practically *passed*; so that only three and a half years remain to be accounted for, the first "half-week" having been filled with the Lord's ministry in Galilee. He had been seeking "fruit on the fig-tree" for "*three years*" (Luke xiii. 7). Then, after spending three months visiting numbers of places, warned beforehand by the "seventy" (Luke x. 1), we notice finally three more *months* which elapsed between His two visits to Jerusalem, one in the "winter" (John x. 22), the other at the last passover in the following spring (John x. 39, 40; xi. 55; xii. 1).

In confirmation of this way of considering the former "half-week" as *passed*, it is very remarkable that in the book of Revelation only *one* remaining "half-week" is mentioned. That is in chapters xi. and xiii. It is given as "1260 days," in chap. xi. 3, and xii. 6; then as "42 months," in chap. xi. 2, and xiii. 5. *No other* definite period of time is indicated in the whole book.

Putting these two things together, we find on the one hand the blessed Lord's public service, closing with His death on the cross, which alone opens up salvation to us, sinners; then, in contrast with it, there is the counterpart of *evil*, which will also have its chief centre in Jerusalem, and will be characterised

by the personal presence of Satan, already "cast out of heaven," together with his two earthly coadjutors, or confederates, designated as "the beast" and "the false prophet" (chaps. xix. 20; xx. 10). For those who definitely and finally refuse God's offer of grace there will be reserved this trinity of evil, when the day of judgment is about to overtake a Christ-rejecting world. Terrible indeed is the prospect!

Some may object to this method of considering the scriptures referred to; but have we not a very definite illustration of it in the dying thief upon the cross? Externally, there was no difference between him and his companion: the Jews had evidently kept the two criminals, the worst they could find in the city or its neighbourhood, in order to give a public intimation of what *they* thought of their rejected Messiah.

The worst of the two felt the *justice* of the fate decreed in his case: "*We* indeed *justly*," was his word to his companion in crime, careless and indifferent, and no doubt, from a human standpoint, less guilty. But when his own conscience was reached, he was enabled to confess his true state, in receiving the "due reward of his deeds," and consequently to own that the rejected Nazarene (John xix. 19) was no companion of theirs. Light, divine light, then broke into his soul, to which he gave expression in the prayer, "**Lord** remember *me*."

Paradise was opened up to him there and *then*, without any judgment at all. But we must not forget that the supreme blessing is contained in those blessed words of the Lord "**with ME**." That is far beyond what the garden of Eden might have proved for Adam, had he been able to keep it. Paul, in his joyful hope, habitually so expresses it: "absent from the body, and present *with the Lord*" (2 Cor. v. 6-9; Phil. i. 23).

Speaking metaphorically, in the dying thief's case the first "half-week" was already passed, and himself with Christ for ever. The last "half-week" remains for those who have no part in Christ's atoning work. That will have to be spent with Satan, and will be characterised by relentless persecution of any who are faithful to the Lord. For all those who truly trust in Him, judgment *is past* since Christ bore it.

In whatever way the first half of verse 27 is understood, the second half is perfectly clear, in showing what is still to take place in this world, after the church is taken out of it. The judgments indicated by the words "consumption determined" will run their course (Isa. x. 23). May we all be found amongst those who are truly "watching," having the character of a "porter" ready to open the door to the Lord at *any* moment of His return, according to Mark xiii. 33-36; Luke xii. 35, 36.

How precious and encouraging to us is the *immediate* answer to Daniel's prayer and confession! His thoughts were set upon "the holy mountain of his God" in Jerusalem, and the "desolate sanctuary" here on earth (ix. 17-20); but Gabriel was sent to make known to him deeper mysteries of God's grace and power, in order "to make an end of sins," and "bring in *everlasting* righteousness." For that, the full price had to be paid by the only One who could pay it, in becoming thus Himself the "slain Lamb," into whose hand all judgment will be committed (John v. 22-23). Blessed indeed is it for us to have that assurance!

In the four verses of Gabriel's message we thus find, *first*, in verse 24, the accomplishment of *all* prophecy guaranteed, and the anointing of the "Most Holy," represented by Aaron in figure (Lev. viii. 12; xvi. 2-21); *secondly*, the introduction of Messiah as the one true

Prince of His people; *thirdly*, His *death*, which alone could satisfy the demands of divine righteousness if the promised blessings were to be realised; and *finally*, the confirmation of the covenant in His own way, as the result of His death; but this is accompanied with the intimation that it will be imitated by the enemy, in a false way, at the moment when he is cast out of heaven, "knowing that he has but a *short* time" in which to carry out his designs against the Lamb of God, and those who are the objects of His gracious care (Rev. xii. 7-13). For, as soon as the Lord takes the kingdom, Satan will be put into the bottomless pit for a thousand years (Rev. xx. 1-3). The inhabitants of this earth will thus be delivered from his temptations until its close.

W. J. L.

Possessing Our Possessions.

THE language of Scripture quite justifies the thought that it is possible to have possessions without possessing them. For instance, as to Israel's future we read, "But upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall *possess their possessions*" (Obadiah 17). We are assured in Romans ix. 4 that the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises, all belong to Israel—all these things may be considered in a certain sense as the possessions of Israel at the present time—and yet, paradoxical as it may seem, Israel is not possessing these blessings now, though "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. xi. 29).

But what concerns us more to know as Christians is, How far we may have spiritual possessions now without reaping the full immediate benefit of them?

We fall into a positive snare if we forget that Christian truth is not Christian experience, except in so far as we make it so by faith. Happily we are not excluded from Christian blessings, as Israel is excluded from their Jewish possessions, for the time being, by the solemn judgment of God. On the contrary, "to-day" is the day of salvation for the Christian as it is the day of rejection, dispensationally, for the Jew.

But this only makes it all the more imperative upon us to see that we lose nothing of what is really ours. There is ample opportunity for us now to live and move and have our being in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel, just as there will be every opportunity in the future for Israel to possess what Scripture assures us is theirs. There is no cherubim or flaming sword turning every way in these days to keep us from access to Christ, but rather the Christian who has washed his robes has a right to the Tree of Life.

There was a day when no judgment of God barred the way to Israel's blessing, but they provoked Him by their unbelief in the day of their dispensational privileges, and had to wander in the wilderness forty years for their sins.

Now we are distinctly told that the things that befell Israel in those days were for ensamples, or types, and they are written for our admonition, warning us to-day against the unbelief and sin which had such very serious results for Israel. The word of God in all dispensations addresses itself to faith; whether in the Old Testament or in the New, it was spoken and written to be believed, and we may rightly adapt many of God's messages to Israel as a living word to ourselves. For instance, in Deuteronomy ii. 24 we read, "*Behold I have given into thine hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land: begin to*

possess it, and contend with him in battle." The gifts of God precede their reception, but it is always the privilege and the responsibility too of faith to take what God gives.

Our possessions are of a different character from those made over to Israel, but they come to us on the same principle of faith. A promise of God is not an order to sheath the sword, but a call to conflict; not a divine permit to slothful ease, but a trumpet-call to believing endeavour. We must exert ourselves with the energy of faith to lay hold on what God gives, otherwise it will never be ours. The most free of God's gifts always carry with them the obligation on our part of a ready, an intelligent, and a believing acceptance. The enemy ever stands between God's gifts and ourselves, waiting to challenge our possession of the things which are freely given to us of God. Many are poor where they ought to be rich, gloomy when they might be made glad, tottering when they should be standing securely; standing in sore need of help themselves, when they should be able to help others, only because they do not in simple faith take possession of the spiritual blessings with which they have already been blessed in heavenly places in Christ.

We read in 2 Peter i. 3 that "Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness," and in ver. 4, "exceeding great and precious promises are given unto us"; yet in the same chapter (verse 9) we see how possible it is for us to lack the very things which the Word of God tells us are already ours. We can only avoid the paradox being true in our own individual case by diligently appropriating these resources revealed to faith in the scriptures. It is ours to add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to

temperance patience, and so on, with the same unquestioning confidence as the man who is consciously the owner of an adequate deposit in a bank signs his cheques to meet his financial obligations. May the Lord thus enable us for our profit to make diligent use of His word which He has given us. T. H.

The Unsearchable Riches of Christ.

WHAT a difference it would make in our preaching of the gospel if we carried with us the sense that it is not only the presentation of certain truths adapted to meet the need of man, and the only true remedy for his condition; but, important as these things are in their place, the messenger is also freighted with that most precious of all burdens, "*the unsearchable riches of Christ.*"

Looking at the message in this way we can understand something of what the Apostle meant when he said to the Galatians, "I travail in birth until Christ be formed in you," and his great conflict over the Colossians and the Laodiceans; why he longed after the Romans, to impart some spiritual gift that they may be established; and again, how he reached out to "the regions beyond" in his zeal for souls. We think of him as the man that had "seen that Just One and heard the voice of His mouth," and feel how this explains his consuming love for souls, and his deep desire that they might know what so fully satisfied his own heart.

It may not be true of us, in the same way, that "it pleased God to reveal His Son" *in* us, although certainly He has been revealed *to* us, or how could we speak of Him to others? We sometimes hear the gospel preached in almost an apologetic way, or com-

pared with other so-called gospels as if there were any possible degree of comparison. True it is that it meets the need of man, and it is the only thing that really does meet the need of both conscience and heart. It is also the setting forth of God's love for man—for the world—as expressed so concisely in 1 John iv. 9, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him." It is, moreover, the revelation of the righteousness of God (Rom. i. 17).

But there is even more than this. In the words before us the Apostle does not say he taught this to the saints, or unfolded it to the church, but preached among the Gentiles (nations) the unsearchable, inexhaustible riches of Christ.

Charged with such a mission, and himself drinking deeply of the blessedness of the treasure, we see this untiring servant reaching out in the desires of his heart to province after province, country after country, to make known these riches. No dry theological discourses, or disquisitions on the ethics of Christianity, could satisfy him. It was Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God; Christ raised from the dead, the glorified man at the right hand of God; Christ in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, Christ in whom the love that passeth knowledge is perfectly expressed, Christ whom he lived, and Christ whom he longed to be with in glory: this was the Christ whom he preached.

Surely it was something of the reality of this that forced itself upon king Agrippa on that memorable day when he listened to the notable prisoner at Festus' request, and that drew from him the admission, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Neither the appearance of the war-worn prisoner before him,

nor the eloquence of his discourse, extorted from the king this surprising confession; it was the conviction in his conscience that here was a man that had something worth having, that had found a treasure which he (the king) had not got—something or some one that satisfied his soul whatever his condition might be.

Oh, for something more of this! May the Lord grant to His servants in this day, as we seek according to our measure of gift and in our limited spheres to reach souls, that we may so drink at the fountain head, and be so filled by the Spirit who takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us, that we may be able to preach "*the unsearchable riches of Christ.*" T. R.

Confidence.

"In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, and His children shall have a place of refuge" (Prov. xiv. 26).

HE who hath kept thee hitherto,
Will keep thee still;
Fear not to trust Him, for He must
His word fulfil.

What though thy path be often rough,
And drear thy lot;
Lay down thy burden at His feet
Who changeth not.

Yes! those who trust Him surely prove
That God is true;
Though mighty foes thy path surround,
He'll bring thee through.

Confide in *His* almighty strength—
Thou shalt prevail,
Because thy hope is anchored sure
Within the veil.

M. E. B.

Extract from a Soldier's Letter.

" I FEEL it my duty to write and thank you for the precious little Testament you gave me when I attended at your house in the latter part of 1916 and beginning of 1917. . . . I again thank you for the many happy Sunday nights you so honestly gave, for the good of us poor soldiers, in singing praises and meditating on the Word of God. I carry the little Testament in my pocket, or else have it on my table, near my bed. I often read it, and it has been a blessing to my soul."

INDIA, 28th April, 1918.

[Our brother, Mr U. Goss, is again taking up the work of distributing Testaments amongst soldiers. Any who desire to help with the expenses will please communicate with him at Park View, Brentford, England.—Ed.]

Scripture Notes and Gleanings.

Compassion.—In each of the five places where this word occurs in the psalms we have the words "full of" prefixed, so that it reads "full of compassion." What a comfort in days of trouble to know that "His compassions fail not; they are new every morning" (Lam. iii. 22-23).

* * * * *

The Glory of God.—The believer, who had once "come short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 23), now "rejoices in the hope of the glory of God" (Rom. v. 2). The glory of God will illuminate the holy city, Jerusalem above; and the centre and source of that light is the Lamb (Rev. xxi. 23).

Comfort in Times of Trouble.

AMIDST the many and varied troubles of our times, it is well we should turn to the Word of God and find that comfort which we need. One is more and more struck with the admirable variety of the Scripture and the way in which it speaks not only to the *intelligence* but to the *heart* of the believer. By so doing it develops and fosters those feelings and affections towards Christ Himself which help to lift the soul above the difficulties of the way, to brighten the path, and make the hope of His coming a more living reality to His people.

Let us turn to three expressions found in Solomon's Song.

(1) "My beloved is mine, and I am His" (chap. ii. 16). When the soul is first acquainted with Christ, I find in Him a Saviour, a Redeemer, One who gives me peace and rest of conscience and heart. I can say, "He is mine." And, thank God, "I am His." I belong no longer to the world, to self, to the scene through which I am passing, but to the Saviour who has bought me with His blood.

(2) "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine" (chap. vi. 3). Here there is, it would seem, a deepening of the affection awakened in the heart of the bride. The first thought here is—*I belong to Jesus*. What infinite grace that has found delight in such an unworthy object! It is *His* thoughts, *His* grace, *His* love, in its desires towards its object, that is before the soul. It is the value *He* has seen in the pearl of great price, in the treasure hid in the field. It is what the Church is in *His* eyes which touches and awakens in the heart those desires after Himself.

(3) "I am my beloved's, and His desire is toward me" (chap. vii. 10). This is perhaps even a deeper expression of His grace. *He* has found in His Church, in His saints, the object of His delight. His desire towards His Church, His love, finds expression in many ways. It led Him to give Himself for the Church in the past, to exercise His constant care and ministry in the present; and finally to present the Church to Himself glorious, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. And this desire will never rest short of His coming again to take His own to share the joys of the Father's house above.

What powerful motives these are to awaken within the heart of the Church, and to keep in constant exercise, those affections which must necessarily go out in response to His own! No wonder that Paul could say, "To me to live is Christ," "He loved me and gave Himself for me." And John says, in that beautiful outflow of the heart of the saint given us in Revelation i., in suited worship, in response to the mention of the name of Jesus Christ, "Unto Him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Amidst the ruins of Christendom, the failure of the dispensation, the worldliness which is so fast coming in even amongst true Christians, how sweet it is to turn to Him who loves us with a love which has never failed or declined, in spite of all our coldness and lukewarmness. And surely *we* too can give expression to a note of worship as we think of the ineffable grace which has made His Church precious in His eyes; as it is ours also to find in our Lord Jesus the "chiefest among ten thousand," the portion and object for our hearts.

F. G. B.

Practical Holiness.

IN our days the proclamation of the coming of the Lord, urgent and present truth as it is, has as its object, in the thoughts of God, to separate Christians from the world and unite them in a common hope. If, then, the cry, "Behold the Bridegroom!" is making itself heard with special force, may the true witnesses for Christ be quick to spread the sound of it, as well as the entire circle of truths which the Lord has committed to them.

We have already remarked that without practical holiness and separation from the world in its diverse aspects, a faithful testimony to the Lord never can be rendered, and that where these things fail, the testimony will fail also. In fact one cannot but notice that it is with holiness in the walk, in the conduct, in the habits, that the path of true witnesses was *always begun*.

Moreover, God has never entrusted His witnesses with new truths¹ when their conduct no longer corresponded to His holiness; and one must not forget that He does not reveal a new truth to the soul except when the truth previously received has been realised in practice in the daily walk. The history of Abraham and his testimony is a striking example of this. He was *called out* to the path of separation from the world in which he dwelt, and he maintained it all through.

Worldly Christians never are, and never will be, witnesses for God. When the children of God are found in the path of true separation to Him, the truths

¹ By "new truth" is meant truth hitherto unknown to those who had not up to that time discerned it in the Word of God.

Truth, in itself, of course, never can change or vary, and it is all contained in the Scripture.—ED.

in relation to God and His work become as the special privilege belonging to the path itself in which they walk, and are entrusted to them. If they give up holiness, these same truths soon lose their value and no longer exercise a vivifying and reviving effect upon those around them; they let them fall to the ground either in part or in whole.

They also forget the principle of grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, substitute clerical forms in their place, and return to the law as a rule of life. Or, it may be, they accustom themselves to laxity of discipline, replacing the unity of the body by independent assemblies; or, perhaps, they no longer wait for the return of the Lord, and confound His coming in grace with His coming in judgment.

We know that these things have come to pass with many Christians who had once been instruments blessed in the testimony of God. Some have returned to the various systems from which the Holy Spirit had led them out; others, indifferent to the attacks directed by the enemy against the person of Christ, have retained certain truths but have forgotten the sanctifying power of them; others, again, remain stationary in the knowledge of the soul's deliverance.

But, on the other hand, habitual holiness in the walk leads to a deeper knowledge, not of one truth, but of *all* the truths contained in the Word, and consequently to a brighter testimony for Christ..

(From the French.)

Fragment.—Christ's perfectness was the very reason why He felt the sorrows of the path down here as He did.

A Contrast.

Thoughts suggested by a brief Address by J. A.

WILL you turn with me first to Genesis ii. 8 and 15, and chapter iii. 22-24. There you see the first man set up in a garden in innocence, with everything surrounding him which could minister to his happiness.

Now you know there are three kinds of humanity—innocent humanity, fallen humanity, and holy humanity. The state of innocence lasted but a very short time, man fell, lost that state, and had to be turned out of the garden. I need not follow the sad history of the Fall, and all its terrible consequences up to the present time; but man never regained his place in an earthly paradise, and never will.

But now let me leave the history of the first man and call your attention to the second man, the last Adam, the One whose humanity was holy humanity. In John xviii., you find Jesus going forth over the brook Cedron into a garden with His disciples. And oh, what scenes that garden witnessed!—sleeping disciples, weakness and failure on man's part; but perfect dependence and obedience on the part of Christ. The first man fell through disobedience and self-will, the second man overcame by perfect obedience and submission to the Father's will. Satan gained a victory over Adam because he wanted to be independent of God; Christ gained the victory over Satan, walking in the path of obedience, and could say, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me."

In Luke we find Him sweating as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground, as He thought of the cup of God's judgment against sin, of which He was about to drink upon the cross.

And I would ask you, dear friends, as such scenes pass before us, What think you of Christ? What is He to you? He has died to save us; He has delivered us from the wrath to come; and oh, what a blessed truth it is for our souls, that it is the same Jesus who is the coming One!

Amidst the trials of life, at your work—it may be in the company of ungodly men—can you not lift your heart and thoughts above it all to the glory where He is, and find that, in spite of all the difficulties of the way, Christ is *everything to your heart*? Paul could say, “To me to live is Christ,” and we ought to be able to say it too in our measure.

Sketches in the Apocalypse.

XXII.

TWO FAMILIES.

THE scene of our blessed Lord's crucifixion, referred to last month (page 144), serves in itself to open up a general truth of scripture in regard to man's history from the earliest times, namely, that the whole race is practically divided into two families, the one *saved*, the other *lost*. There is in God's sight no intermediate class, whether it be viewed as outward position or condition of soul.

This is well illustrated in the short account we have of Cain and Abel in Genesis iv.: “Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained *witness* that he was righteous, God testifying of his *gifts*: and by it, he, being dead, yet speaketh” (Heb. xi. 4). On the other hand, “Cain was *of the wicked one*, and slew his brother” (1 John iii. 12).

The details of their lives up to that moment are not given; but their personal relationship to God, and approach to Him in worship, are set forth in three verses. The following four verses show the result in hatred and murder, when God's appreciation of true approach to Him was made manifest.

The two families are thus absolutely distinguished and separated for all time. Christ, the head of God's family, was crucified. The worst man in Jerusalem, who, at the point of death, owned Him as "Lord," was the first to be received into the Paradise of God.

The Lord's parable of the "rich man" and Lazarus (Luke xvi. 19-31) illustrates both sides of this separation of the human family into the two classes, not only in time, but for eternity, showing that there can be *no future* remedy for the difference already established in this world; for, as Abraham answers the "rich man," then in Hades: "Between us and you there is a great gulf *fixed*: so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." Both of them were in the disembodied state; but the quondam sufferer was now in Abraham's bosom, and the rich man in torments, which not even a tiny drop of water could relieve.

Now the Book of Revelation confirms this distinction in a striking way. It opens with the "slain Lamb," in chapter i., verses 5, 7, 18; and the difference between the two families we are speaking of is clearly seen in the person of John himself, who is invited to *heaven*, in chapter iv., verse 1. He thus represents all those who are saved by faith, and surely for all time, in order that he may see and learn what follows in the way of *judgment*, from that divine standpoint. The Church's history on earth is practically closed in chapters ii. and iii., and every saved soul is represented in figure

by "the twenty-four elders" clothed in white raiment, crowned, and seated round the throne in a way which shows their association with it. We recognise, in their persons, the whole company of those redeemed *up to that time*. Their blessing is seen to be complete, before any mention of the roll about to be unfolded.

The roll is one of *judgment* on those left upon the earth, *after* that the company of the redeemed have been taken out of it; and the first question is, Who is to open it? An answer had been already furnished by the Lord Himself in John v. 22, 27; but as, in all God's ways with man, judgment is tempered with mercy, who can be competent to declare it, but He who took the dying thief to paradise? It is as the "slain Lamb," but also as the "Lion of the tribe of Judah," that He has *prevailed* to break its seals; consequently, there is bound to be special mercy shown to the tribes of *Israel*; for "unto Him must the "gathering of the people be" (Gen. xlix. 9, 10). And that, in a short time, is seen to be the case.

We may then expect such an exercise of mercy as is set forth in the "new song" of the elders in heaven, who are initiated in the knowledge of God's ways; for the Lamb's worthiness to open the book is by them ascribed to the fact of redemption being secured through the shedding of His blood (Rev. v. 9, 10). *

They do not speak of themselves, but of God's grace towards *others*, very soon to be realised. As it is a question of a lapse of *time* for the execution of judgment, there is room also for the exercise of *mercy* in an unexpected way.

Consequently, that is exactly what we read of. When the first four seals are opened, we find those

* Verse 10 should read, "And made *them* unto our God kings and priests, and *they* shall reign over the earth."

providential judgments of which Ezekiel speaks, "sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts" (chap. xiv. 12-23; Rev. vi. 1-8); but, as the Lord told Ezekiel, a *remnant* was to be left unhurt; and that is precisely the case here; for when the fifth seal is opened the martyred souls under the altar of burnt-offering call for John's attention. Their *righteousness* is recognised in the *white* robes given to them, though they have still to wait for their final deliverance. For the Lord Himself is revealed to John as the "*slain* Lamb" (chap. i. 18), and *they* will have their portion with Him.

The two families—spiritual descendants of Cain and Abel—are thus seen all through this book. Those "slain," as Abel was, are kept under Christ's care, until the time appointed for them to enjoy that place in glory which He has already prepared for them. In the meantime, judgments *begin* on Cain's family; for when the sixth seal is opened, it brings about the upsetting of all recognised order and of the government of this world. Every one tries in vain to hide himself "from the wrath of the Lamb," but we read of no turning to Him, in whom alone salvation is to be found.

It is just here that chapter vii. comes in, as an interruption, *before* the seventh seal is opened. Grace still reigns (Rom. v. 21), for God's work of salvation is going on, and many are turned from darkness unto light, being delivered from Satan's power. A numbered company, twelve times twelve thousand of the tribes of Israel, and subsequently a crowd from the Gentiles "which no one could number," are recognised as standing *before* the throne and *before* the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palms of victory in their hands. When these ascribe their salvation to God and to the Lamb, the angels in heaven worship; and, in answer to John's question, they are seen to come "out of *the*

great tribulation," reserved for the "dwellers upon earth," the first time this particular class is mentioned, in chapter iii. 10 (compare chaps. vi. 10, viii. 13, and xi. 10, where these are mentioned again). How comforting for our souls it is thus to find that, in the midst of wrath, God can and does, as the prophet says, "remember mercy" (Hab. iii. 2).

But the seventh seal has to be opened before a final answer can be given to the prayers of all saints, associated as these are with the *incense* offered at the "golden altar which is before the throne" (chap. viii. 1-4). The allusion is, of course, to the priestly service in the tabernacle, especially on the great day of atonement (Lev. xvi.). Then the seven angels with the trumpets prepare themselves to sound. The *judgments* are more severe than before, and affect the *third* part of the world and that which remains in it, after the fourth part had been already dealt with in chapter vi. 8. The last three are specially designated as "woes."

When the fifth angel sounds, the darkening influence of Satan and his instruments torments those who have not the seal of God in their foreheads, as mentioned in chap. vii. 3, 8; ix. 4. Consequently it would affect more especially the ungodly Jews, in contrast with those of Israel sealed in chapter vii. 4. The Hebrew name, Abaddon, being given as well as the Greek word, Apollyon, for "destroyer," in verse 11, would confirm this.

The sounding of the sixth angel leads to the loosening of the restraining influence mentioned at the beginning of chapter vii., so that a tremendous invasion from the far east bursts upon the Roman or Latin Empire in its then condition. The *third* part of men are slain; but no repentance is produced.

Again there is an interval in chapters x. and xi.; and, when the seventh angel sounds, the Lord takes the

kingdom, and the ark of the covenant is seen, not on earth, but in heaven (xi. 19).

All through these terrible times and woes the Lord's eye is ever upon those that fear Him; and the two families of *believers* and *unbelievers* are kept distinct, the former ever watched over and cared for by Him.

“Perfected for Ever.”

MANY souls who have not settled peace with God are troubled because they still find the working of the old nature within with its evil thoughts and desires. They do not see how fully Christ has met the whole need of the believer in every respect.

In the sin offering (Lev. iv.) we have, typically, Christ made sin for us. The offerer laid his hand on the head of the victim in token of identification, and the sin was transferred to the victim whose blood made atonement for it. This offering, however, had to be repeated constantly, for “the law made nothing perfect”; the offerings were but types and shadows, the substance had not yet come.

But the contrast with this, which is so admirably brought out in the epistle to the Hebrews, serves to set forth all the more forcibly the unspeakable value and efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ. In virtue of that sacrifice, offered up once for all and never to be repeated, the one who believes is “perfected for ever,” that is, he has a perfect and unchanging standing before God. He has, too, a perfect or purged conscience, knowing that no charge of sin could be brought against him, since all has been fully met by the “one sacrifice”; and the One who offered it has taken His seat at the right hand of God.

The priest of old "stood daily" ministering and offering oftentimes; Christ "sat down" in perpetuity or continuously, His work being done. Therefore the believer's conscience is perfected in perpetuity or without a break.

Such is the result, for faith, of the efficacy of that sacrifice which is of everlasting and unchanging value before God. To doubt this is to fail to rise to the full value of the sacrifice as the epistle to the Hebrews presents it to us.

Does this give the believer any liberty to be careless in his walk or conduct? Far be the thought!

It is here that another truth comes in, which is connected with the *perfectness*, and especially with the *grace* of our Lord Jesus. That truth is, His advocacy for us on high if we do fail.

It is of this that the epistle of John speaks, as also the gospel, in the symbolic act of the washing of the disciples' feet (chap. xiii.): "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John ii. 1). The very sin which we have to deplore brings into exercise His advocacy, to lead to repentance and restoration according to the love of His heart, which could not allow anything which would break communion between His redeemed and the Father, into whose presence we are brought in virtue of His finished work. Christ is ever *the* Righteous One, our advocate with the Father; and even if the believer does sin, the *relationship* to God as his Father still remains unchanged.

And so God our Father, if we confess our sins, is faithful and just, on the ground of the shed blood and the prevailing intercession of Christ, to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

We have an illustration of this restoring grace in

the case of Peter. He had denied his Lord with oaths, and the Lord turned and looked on Peter (Luke xxii. 61). How that look must have pierced Peter's heart! But it was not till after the interview, recorded in John xxi. 15-18, that there was full restoration; for then Peter learned, from the One who was perfect love itself, what it was to have the deepest recesses of his heart laid bare; and with complete self-judgment on his part there came complete restoration.

How blessedly *our* Saviour has met the whole case of the soul's need, whether as to settled and assured peace with God, or restoration if failure has come in!

F. G. B.

The Three Appearings of Christ.

IT has been remarked that the three great prominent outstanding facts or truths declared in the word of God are—first, that Christ, the Son of God, was *to come*; secondly, *that He has come*; thirdly, *that He will come again*.

The revelation God has been pleased to give of Himself radiates from and revolves around the Christ of God. His person as the eternal Son imparts infinite value to His death; and His resurrection, ascension, and glorification at God's right hand, to which He is exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, was God's answer to a sacrifice which so glorified Him.

The last five verses of Hebrews ix. present three appearings of Christ. In verse 27 we read, "But now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." The "end of the world" here should read "end of the age." It was the age or period of time during which man was on his

trial, and at the end of the age Christ appeared to put away sin. His death upon the cross closed one age and brought in another, in an infinitely greater degree than the flood in Noah's day ended one period and opened a way for another.

When Christ "appeared" to put away sin, it was an open manifestation; and when He "offered up Himself," heaven, earth, and hell were made aware of that great transaction sealed by His words on the cross, "It is finished." When he bowed his head and gave up the ghost, the work of atonement was done. *Once* in the end of the age hath He appeared—never again will He appear "to put away sin," and He is now in the presence of God for us.

In verse 24 the place where Christ now appears is stated—"in heaven itself." Thus, for all who believe in Him, He *now* appears in the presence of God. He once took the place of greatest distance, when on the cross, forsaken of God. *Now* He is gone up to appear in the presence of God; nearer He could not be. And He is there to exercise His priestly intercession for us, for His people down here, and that according to all the glory and value of His person: "Therefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (chap. vii. 25).

Finally, in verse 28 we read, "And unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." When Christ appears the second time it will be without or apart from all question of sin. In the past He was "once offered" to bear the sins of many; His next and near appearing will be unto them that look for him, "unto salvation." It will be a salvation including spirit, soul, and body; *then* we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

All who are saved look for Him who has saved them at such a cost, whom not having seen they love, and He will not disappoint them. Once, upon the cross, He bore their sins; now He appears for them as their great High Priest in the presence of God; and when He comes again He will introduce the many sons to glory—those of whom he could say, “Behold I and the children which God hath given Me.” U. G.

“Thy Word.”

“For ever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven”
(Psalm cxix. 89).

THE Holy Book reveals God's mind
In words divinely given,
That we upon its page may find
Life, light, and truth from heaven.

There in the perfect light of God,
In His rich grace is shown
The past, the future, in that word,
E'en now to faith made known.

Christ as the bright and central Sun
In every page doth shine,
And links its many parts in one,
In harmony divine.

Jehovah-God, the great “I Am,”
Revealed in Christ the Lord,
Is there made known as Son of Man,
Himself the Living Word.

The Father, too, is there declared
In the beloved Son;
Come from His bosom, He who shared
Heaven's blest, eternal home.

But how could any finite mind
In suited words portray,
Truth, wisdom, knowledge, all combined,
In wisdom's perfect way?

It could not be. 'Tis thou alone,
 Whose *judgments* none can trace,
 Whose *ways*—in every part Thine own—
 Are now revealed in grace.

'Tis Thou, O God—the God all-wise
 (Fulness of love Thou art),
 Hast op'ed to our anointed eyes
 The treasures of Thy heart!

Like manna in the desert given
 As heavenly food and light,
 Thou giv'st us here the bread of heaven,
 To cheer, both day and night.

Help us, blest Father, daily more
 To prize Thy precious word;
 To feed upon its boundless store,
 Laid up in Christ, the Lord!

* * *

Scripture Notes and Gleanings.

Communion with God.—When we slip out of communion with God, how wretched we are, and how we contribute to the unhappiness of others! Whereas, in communion with God, there is power to enable us to resist the Devil, to enjoy the Lord, and to promote the true blessing of His people. The Lord give us to have our Lord Jesus very simply and constantly before our hearts! We shall never go wrong with Him as our object, but we are sure to stray if anything else slips into His place.

* * * * *

The Lord's Coming.—The nearness of the Lord's coming is of all importance, and the enemy naturally seeks to turn souls aside from it; but that will only draw the attention of those who are taught of God to it. The present expectation of the Lord is connected with all the feelings, all the duties, and all the relationships of the Christian.

“In the Midst.”

NOTHING can exceed the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in His promise, given to His disciples, “Where two or three are gathered together in [*or unto*] My name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. xviii, 20). He would give them to know that, though no longer with them bodily, and though unseen, yet He would be in the midst of even two or three gathered to His name. This speaks to us of two things—of our *responsibility* that everything should be in keeping with the name of Him who is the Holy and the True One; and of our *privilege* to have Himself to gather to, in spite of all our feebleness and failures.

And as we reflect upon it, is not His presence an unspeakable blessing, especially now at the close of the Church’s history? The promise is one which faith can count upon at all times, *till He come*. What greater blessing had His people even in the primitive times and brightest days of the Church?

But, blessed as the promise is, there is in connection with this, as with every other privilege, a danger which we do well to beware of. In principle, it is the same danger to which Israel was exposed consequent on the place of privilege God gave them as compared with the other nations. When they got away from God, and imitated the ways of the world around them, they were found boasting of their privileges while their moral state was bad in the extreme.

Thus the prophet has to say of the leaders in Jerusalem, “The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money; yet will they lean upon the LORD,

and say, Is not the LORD in the midst of us? no evil shall come upon us" (Micah iii. 11, R.V.).

Nothing could show hardness of heart and insensibility as to their real state more than to suppose that, because the Lord was in the midst of them, they would for that reason escape His judgment for their evil ways. They forgot God's holiness and truth, and thought that He was such an one as themselves. "Therefore," adds the prophet, "shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps," etc. When God judges He begins at His sanctuary, at that which is nearest Himself as being the more responsible, at His house.

The application of this truth to the Church of God, and to each assembly, is both solemn and needed. No one who weighs things in the presence of God can doubt that it is true to-day, not only that, "The LORD hath a controversy with *the nations*" (Jer. xxv. 31), but that "The LORD hath a controversy with *His people*" (Micah vi. 2). May He lay it upon our hearts and consciences so that there may be true self-judgment and humiliation.

But it is refreshing to turn to the brighter side of the picture, and contemplate the true spirit of the remnant as seen in Zephaniah iii. 12, "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD," etc. Lowliness, humility, practical godliness, and separation from the world and its ways, are amongst the things which must characterise the remnant at all times. If these things are lacking with His people, they are no testimony for God, and He cannot own them as such.

And to this very remnant the most encouraging words are addressed by God Himself in the close of the prophet, "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is

mighty," etc. Conscious weakness and dependence brings in God's strength; He delights to take His place in the midst of these feeble ones, and to bless them with every blessing He can bestow. F. G. B.

The Love of Christ and its Effect.

Recollections of a Brief Address by J. A.

I WOULD ask you to look with me at some short Scriptures in connection with the verse of the hymn we have just sung.

"His is love, 'tis love unbounded,
Without measure, without end;
Human thought is here confounded;
'Tis too vast to comprehend:
Praise the Saviour!
Magnify the sinner's Friend."

In John xi. 1-5, you see how Martha and Mary counted on the Lord's love. They sent a message saying, "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." It was just as if you go to inquire for a sick friend, and when one of the family opens the door you say, "How is he?" It is not necessary to mention the name, as he is well known as the object of affection. You will notice that it says the Lord loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus—all three are mentioned separately as objects of His love.

And it has often struck me, as Mary walked with the Lord to the grave of Lazarus, what a moment that must have been for her. "Jesus wept"; I am not going into the question now as to *why* He wept; I have often heard that spoken of. What I wish to call your attention to is the *heart* of Him who wept.

Now turn to the beginning of John xii. There was just one place on earth where the Lord felt at home—

that was in the little home at Bethany; and what a remarkable company was around that supper-table! I do not go into details now, but you well know the scene in that house where Mary poured upon His head her box of spikenard, "very costly." You will find that it was Judas who told what was the value of the ointment; Mary was not thinking of that, but of Christ: He was everything to her heart.

Oh, beloved, what one desires is that our hearts might be in close touch with the Lord Himself; that is what He values above everything. It was because Mary was so absorbed and taken up with Him that she broke this box of spikenard, and the result was, "the house was filled with the odour of the ointment"—every one was the better for it.

I have been struck with verse 9 of Mark xiv., "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." He took care that it would be known everywhere; her testimony went all over the world, and the key to it all was her devotedness to Himself. This is the true key to a testimony—you have not to be thinking of *your* testimony at all, but of the Lord Himself.

Now look for a moment at the close of Luke x. Martha was careful and troubled about many things, but Mary was sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to His word. To her, every word He spoke was as a nugget of gold; she had an ear open to hear every word that fell from His lips. I believe you will find this is the secret of the whole matter: she had a deep love for the Lord, and that is why she was found at His feet drinking in His words. May the Lord give us to have a deeper sense of His love, and to keep in close touch with Himself.

Sketches in the Apocalypse.

XXIII.

THE OPENED ROLL AND THE TWO WITNESSES.

THE "book" or roll in the right hand of Him who sits upon the throne (chap. v. 1) is, as it were, the Royal Deed of the "kingdom, prepared from the foundation of the world," when all power passes into the hands of the Son of man (Matt. xxv. 34; xxviii. 18). It is the realisation of God's purpose as to the "elect," according to the Lord's word, when "the King says to those on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." All is made ready beforehand, and the seals, as they are removed, introduce it. When the temple of God in heaven is opened, the "ark of the covenant" is seen there (Rev. xi. 15-19). God's gracious relation with His people is unchanged; while time lasts they are cared for by Him on earth, and finally introduced to their heavenly portion with Himself.

How precious it is for us to notice the "silence" which follows the undoing of the last seal! It gives time to manifest the Lord's interest in His earthly saints, showing also how much depends upon their prayers. They may have but small intelligence in what is going on; and, doubtless, it is for that reason that the angel in heaven above is supplied with "much incense" to give efficacy to the prayers of "all saints" on the "golden altar which is before the throne." This is, of course, an allusion to the Tabernacle, around which the tents of the Israelites were pitched in the wilderness, and, no doubt, very especially also to the great day of Atonement, when Aaron carried the in-

cense into the Holy of Holies, in order to sprinkle the blood upon the mercy-seat and before it.

It is that censer which is filled with fire *from the altar*, and the fire cast upon the earth. Then the judgments begin, not all at once, but at intervals, according as the seven angels who stood before God (chap. viii. 2) successively sound with their trumpets—another instance evidently of God's gracious *delay* in judging. How encouraging these things should be to us all, in a time like the present, to go on praying, and with increased fervour!

The importance of this seems all the greater when we recall the two companies on earth (already mentioned on pages 161, 162), who are specially marked out as the objects of God's care; that is, first, the numbered company out of Israel; and secondly, an innumerable one from the Gentiles. Neither of these belong to the Church, which is already represented by the twenty-four "elders" in heaven, enthroned around the Lamb.

These two companies will have known what the terrors of "the great tribulation" or "hour of temptation" mean, sent especially to try the "dwellers upon earth"—so characterised morally,—and which shall come upon the inhabitants of the world (chap. iii. 10). Those who remain faithful in the midst of it all are watched over and cared for by the Lamb, their robes being washed in His blood; like Anna in the earthly temple (Luke ii. 37), they are priestly intercessors, who, in prayer, have access to the throne. Their blessings are "consolations," not proper heavenly joys. The Lord has His eye upon them for the carrying out of His final purposes, and He dwells among them in anticipation of it, or, more exactly, "He spreads His tabernacle over them" (chap. vii. 9-17). The angels

add their "Amen" to the protection thus accorded to them (vers. 11, 12).

After the two companies, set apart for protection and blessing, have been provided for, as we have seen, the angels with the trumpets prepare themselves to sound (chap. viii. 6). The first four, as compared with the first half of chapter xvi., are evidently premonitory, that is, judgments warning of worse things to befall the earth later on, but affecting it in the same order; that is, earth, sea, rivers, and sun. When the vials are poured out, the judgment is *total*. At present, in chapter viii., the *third part* only is affected. But, instead of producing repentance, we find that the inhabitants of the world have their hearts hardened, like the Egyptians when Israel was first brought out from amongst them. In that case, the final effort of their task-masters and oppressors of God's people brought upon them their own destruction in the Red Sea, when *all* the chariots of Egypt weré destroyed (Ex. xiv. 23-28). That will be, as it were, repeated at the end. Temporary respite in the days of judgment has no effect whatever in softening the human heart, and leading men to profit by a door of grace still kept open.

What a solemn picture all this part of the book affords as to the real character of the human heart, untouched by the grace of God! And yet, dark as it all is, it serves to bring into greater prominence God's thoughts and ways of patience towards mankind, hardened in sin and rebellion against Him. He is "long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"; and we have to "account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation," so that we may *grow* in grace and the knowledge of Him. Such is Peter's last word

before his martyrdom (2 Pet. i. 14: iii. 4-9, 14-18). The Lord enable us each one to make full use of His precious word, as milk for babes, "that we may grow thereby" (1 Pet. ii. 1-3).

The closing verse of chapter viii. insists upon the terrible character of the "woes," which successively will fall upon this scene when the three last angels sound their trumpets, in chapter ix. 1, 13, and xi. 15. There is again an interruption by the whole of chapter x., and first thirteen verses of chapter xi., somewhat similar to chapter vii., which intervenes between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals.

The tenth chapter is of special interest as introducing the Lord Himself, not openly, but in angelic form, readily to be recognised by those who are familiar with the Old Testament, to which the Revelation constantly refers. Both the "cloud" and the "rainbow" are seen in Ezekiel's first vision (chap. i. 4, 28), and the "little book" or roll is seen in chapters ii. and iii.; but in both cases there is a difference, in that the rainbow is now seen not about the loins, but as a garland or crown on the head, and the "little book" is "open," as forming part of well-known prophecy. In the first vision of the Revelation, chapter i. 16, the countenance of the Son of man was "as the *sun* shineth in its strength," and the feet "as if they burned in a furnace," so that all contact with this earth had taken the form—not of humble devoted service little thought of, and unobserved, as "in the days of His flesh," but now come in judgment, to try every man's work of what sort it is (1 Cor. iii. 13).

When He cried the seven thunders were heard, but their import is withheld until a further testimony in grace has been given, universal in its character, "before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings"

(ver. 11). In Ezekiel iii. the testimony was given to the "hard-hearted" house of Israel.

The eleventh chapter introduces to us the *last* "half-week" of Daniel's prophecy, when "sacrifice and oblation cease," in order to give place to "the overspreading of abominations," or idolatry without let or hindrance. There is no longer any opposition, or any prevention of Satan doing his work, through the two great and remarkable instruments then raised up, as explained in chapter xiii. of the Revelation. The secular ruler is there called "the beast," and the spiritual one, who outwardly imitates the Lamb, but *speaks* as the dragon, and who performs the miracles, even to "making fire to come down from heaven," is the "false prophet" of chapter xix. 20. Both of these are cast together into the "lake of fire" at Christ's coming in glory, a thousand years before the judgment of the "great white throne" set up at the conclusion of His millennial reign.

We repeat here what has been previously mentioned, namely, that in the book of Revelation the *only period of time* distinctly defined is the three and a half years of Satan's rule on earth, after being cast out of heaven in chapter xii. 8-9. It is called "forty-two *months*" in chapter xi. 2, when Satan's work is spoken of, thus leaving room for its being somewhat shortened in mercy; but in the next verse, which introduces the *testimony* of the "two witnesses" corresponding in character to Moses and Elijah, it is counted in *days*, 1260.

The "two" witnesses are a sufficient and competent testimony to God's title to the earth, at a moment when apparently Satan has it all his own way there. The "two" together is a well-known expression of competence in this matter. The "olive-tree" is a

figure of what Israel ought to have been as evergreen and fruitful (see Jer. xi. 16), but they failed in it, and were taken captive far from their land.

The testimony of Moses, who was commissioned to give the law, was to show what God's people ought to have been; and Elijah was, as we know, raised up to bring them back to their allegiance, after Ahab's marriage with Jezebel had brought the worship of Baal into Israel. The well-known scene at Mount Carmel was the most remarkable instance of the kind in Scripture; then the people acknowledged that Jehovah was God, and the *priests* of Baal were put to death. The worshippers were all assembled by Jehu a score of years later, and exterminated, together with the great temple that Ahab had built under Jezebel's direction (1 Kings xviii.; and 2 Kings x. 21, 25-28). But alas, the evil got into Judah, and when they dealt with it, all they did was to kill Mattan the priest of Baal before the altar (2 Kings xi. 18), and the worship of Baal went on secretly.

Let us note in closing the names of God in chapter xi. 17—Jehovah, Elohim, Shaddai. Elohim, God as Creator; Shaddai, the Almighty as revealed to Abraham in Genesis xvii. 1; and Jehovah, in connection with Israel, revealed to Moses in Exodus iii. 14, 15, and vi. 2, 3.

W. J. L.

“My Word,” “My Name,” “My Patience.”

“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (Rev. iii. 11).

THE nearer the coming of the Lord, the greater will be the decline and departure of the “many” from the path and precepts of the Lord and His truth: “And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.”

Recently, at a meeting, some Christians were searching and studying the scriptures. An elder brother who was present remarked to the effect that, though he had to say it with regret, it was his deliberate conviction that there was a great lack of love to Christ among the saints; this was shown in the meetings. This is humbling indeed, but it is painfully true.

Lack of love to Christ necessarily produces lack of love to those who are Christ's, and lack of devotedness and diligence in the interests of Christ; while it tends to being self-complacent and self-centred as to personal and party connections within the limits of a certain circle.

"Thou hast left thy first love"—this, as discerned and declared by the Lord Himself, gives the *first* secret spring in the church at Ephesus, of the now swollen stream of departure and disregard of the claims of Christ in the assembly. The last of the seven churches, Laodicea, gives us the full expression of this evil, which is now surging in on every hand.

The remarkable revival of long-forgotten truths, which took place well-nigh a century ago, was a far-reaching work of God. Then, through the grace of God, by His Spirit and His Word, his saints were aroused, and rallied in all parts of the world to simply obey and own Christ as Saviour and Lord, and as Head of the Church which is His body. They also learned that every believer on earth is a member of His body, united to Him and to each other by the Holy Spirit, who has sealed and indwells each, thus forming the only membership recognised in scripture. The Church of God is thus constituted as a company gathered together by the Spirit and the Word of God to Christ's name. It is their privilege to remember Him in His death at His table, in partaking of the bread and the

cup, as we read, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come."

The scriptural simplicity and sacredness of this revival, which began so many years ago, carried back the hearts and minds of His saints to the first institution of the Supper by the Lord Himself, and to the revelation of it from heaven through the apostle Paul, who passed it on to the Christians at Corinth. Had this simplicity and freshness which then marked this revival been maintained through grace, in obedience to and dependence on the Lord and His Word, the enemy would have been defeated, and divisions would have been avoided.

But, alas! division after division has been brought about, the enemy has succeeded in sowing the seeds of suspicion, and strife and separation followed; so much so that now some seem to look upon separation as a necessity, and even a virtue!

The sheep and lambs of Christ's flock are bleating, bewildered, and needing pasture. Many of the shepherds are not shepherding or feeding the flock of God as they should. Oh, for "fathers" and "nurses," as Paul was to the young Thessalonians! Surely pastors are needed everywhere, and shepherds to care and tend the flock.

The last six verses of Jude are a splendid and sure resource and resting-place amidst all the upheavals in the Church, and in the world. As someone remarked recently, verses 20-21 give us what each and every one is to do for themselves; verses 22-23, what is to be done towards others; and verses 24-25, what the Lord is able to do and will do for all His own, with exceeding joy, calling for the closing note of praise, to which, indeed, we can add our "Amen."

U. G.

The Supply of a Deficiency.

ADAM was created a perfect man, there was no defect in him personally, but he was the only one of his kind. Apparently this peculiarity did not exist in the beginning among the inferior orders of creation over which he was placed. It would therefore appear that he specially felt his own loneliness in his dealings with that part of the living creation which was not lonely like himself. "Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; *but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him*" (Gen. ii. 20).

Though perfect, Adam was in a certain sense incomplete. He needed a companion, a fellow-being with a nature capable of thinking, feeling, and acting like himself. One with whom he could share a common experience. He had affections too, which, before he could naturally bestow them, needed that their proper and suited object should be brought into being, and be presented to himself. In due time God supplied that need. The LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be *alone*; I will make him an help meet for him."

In this simple account of Adam finding his complement, we have a divinely prepared type of the place the Church is called to fill in the purpose of God. From the divine side Christ could have no lack. As the Son of God, whose being is in the bosom of the Father, His communion was ever complete. But from the human side, as a man upon the earth, His loneliness was very real. He found no human help-meet in the days of His flesh; His disciples at that time were far from filling this place, though in grace He does say

to them, "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations."

His human nature craved intelligent companionship, but did not find it. We know how He chose men that *they might be with Him*. On the mount, when transfigured, He was accompanied by Peter, James, and John; but though these three disciples formed the innermost circle of those who companied with Him, they were far from entering into His experiences on the holy mount.

Again, in Gethsemane, we find Him saying, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with Me." The opportunity was thus given for that kind of communion which, in the hour of His agony, would have been inexpressibly sweet to the heart of our Lord; but, alas! what was the result? "He cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What! could ye not watch with Me one hour?" (Matt. xxvi. 40).

The case of Mary, in John xii. is a solitary exception to this want of fellowship with Christ, and verse 7 shows how deeply He appreciated any who could even in measure enter with Him into the thoughts of God concerning Himself.

But whether we think of Him in His early days, in His home surroundings, or later with His disciples, we see that fellowship and sympathy which He so much desired, almost entirely lacking, and we learn that, as a man, He was indeed unique. The Psalms teach us that He felt this loneliness (Ps. lxix.; cii., etc.). Moreover, He was referring to Himself when He said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth *alone*."

But can there possibly be a sweeter thought than this, that the Church is called to make good this

incompleteness—to be the complement of Christ? (Eph. i. 22, 23). And this not as any afterthought, but as chosen to this end before the foundation of the world.

To refer for a moment to the type, we read, “And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept.” The anti-type to this sleep is the death of Christ. Further, what could not be true of the disciples during His earthly days is now true of us who believe, seeing we have been quickened together with Christ, and not only so, but God has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Such is the greatness of His power to usward who believe.

Let us think of this wonderful relationship as it affects our Lord Himself, and see how near and how dear we must be to Him! And “Adam said, This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Gen. ii. 23). So we read in Ephesians v. 29, “No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church.” This blessed relationship—His body, the Church, which is being formed—is “the *fulness* of Him that filleth all in all,” and it is awaiting its full completion. Christ is longing for the hour of His return for us, when the Church will be complete. It is, and will indeed be ours to be like Him, to share His glory, and to enter perfectly into His rest; to be able to say, “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine.” But what a satisfaction for Him, to see the whole Church in maturity, made perfectly like Himself; His loneliness for ever past, and His Bride associated with Him, who is the Head over all things. May our faith and walk constantly anticipate that day!

T. H.

The Land of Promise.

THE recent remarkable advance of the Allied armies in Palestine and the complete defeat of the Turks brings that country once again prominently under our notice.

It is interesting to remark that the boundaries of the land, according to the covenant with Abraham, were "from the river of Egypt (the Nile) unto the great river, the river Euphrates" (Gen. xv. 18). That promise was unconditional.

The promise given through Moses was that the Lord would "set thy bounds from the Red Sea even unto the sea of the Philistines (the Mediterranean), and from the desert (of Sinai) unto the river (Euphrates)." This promise was conditional on Israel's obedience; but they failed to drive out the idolatrous nations (whom God left to test them), and followed their ways.

In grace God raised up David, who conquered most of the promised territories (2 Sam. viii.), and Solomon "reigned over all the kings from the river (Euphrates) even unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt" (2 Chron. ix. 26).

The extent of the land under the dominion of the Lord Himself in the millennial day will be "from sea to sea, and from the river even unto the ends of the earth" (Zech. ix. 10; Ps. lxxii. 8; Acts xiii. 47). His will be an extended dominion, "Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him" (Ps. lxxii. 11). He will reign, not only as Messiah, King of Israel, according to Psalm ii., but as Son of man, over *all* the works of God's hands.

Meantime, all the efforts to bring lasting peace to this poor distracted world will end in failure. May the Lord hasten the day of His coming again! F. G. B.

“In My Name.”

AS a fitting close to another year, and one so fraught with solemn and momentous events, let us turn for comfort and help to those three words of the Saviour, “In My name.”

The Lord Jesus, in His love and care for His own, so blessedly brought before us in John xiii.-xvi., speaks of the resources which would be theirs when He would be no longer with them, but gone to the Father. These chapters, therefore, come with special suitability to us to-day; they are, indeed, the outpouring of a heart which delights to do its best for its objects, and which, having loved His own which were in the world, loved them *unto the end*.

Amongst the privileges and resources which He provides for His people in view of His absence, one of the most blessed is prayer—prayer to the Father *in His name*. “*Whatsoever* ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask *anything* in My name, I will do it” (John xiv. 13, 14). Precious promise, and so wide-reaching! So that we may come to the Father with fullest confidence about *every* trial, *every* difficulty which besets our path. We have all the power and grace of the Father and the Son enlisted on our behalf.

But this promise, we believe, assumes that the request is according to His will and not for our own selfish ends and interests. To put it in the words of the Epistle of John, “If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us” (1 John v. 14).

Our Lord Himself could say to the Father, “I know that Thou hearest Me *always*”; but He could also say,

"I do *always* those things that please Him." Blessed example for us ; how far short we come of it !

And is it not encouraging to remember when we pray, that we have all the value of His name to plead before the Father ? What could be more powerful, more all-prevailing, than the name of Jesus, which the Father delights to honour ?

In chapter xv. 16, the Lord again speaks of asking *in His name* ; and here it is not, as in chapter xiv., that He (Jesus) will do what is asked, but that the *Father* would grant the request. Thus His people are objects of solicitude and care both of the Father and the Son.

And, lastly, in chapter xvi. 23, He, so to speak, anticipates their feelings when He would be gone, knowing that their hearts would be filled with sorrow. But His absence would be fully compensated for by the knowledge that He was ever watchful over His loved ones though at the Father's right hand, and by the presence of the Holy Ghost, the other Comforter, who would take His place here.

Here, in chapter xvi., He once more tells them to ask *in His name*, and the Father would grant the request, in order that their joy might be full.

Blessed and glorious Saviour, we thank and praise Thee for all Thy love and grace ; may we be enabled to go to God our Father in more unwavering faith and more earnest prayer pleading all the value of Thy name, as we pass through the storms, trials, and difficulties of this world ; until we see Thee face to face. Amen.

F. G. B.

“Like unto Men that Wait for their Lord.”

(*Luke xii. 36.*)

AMONGST the signs of the times, and one that is encouraging while many are otherwise, is the awakening on the part of great numbers of believers to the truth of the personal return of the Lord Jesus as the proper hope and privilege of the Church. Attention has often been called to this revival in the pages of this magazine, and it may surely be regarded as an answer to that scripture: “And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand” (Rom. xiii. 11, 12).

At a large meeting in London, called to consider this subject of the “Second Advent of the Lord Jesus,” a well-known speaker said, after referring to this awakening: “That which is current in all the Churches, and almost universally preached to-day is, that somehow by the ministry of the Church and the Gospel, the world is to become better and better, making continual progress towards the light, until all its governments and civilisations are ultimately captured by the Spirit of Christ, and we have an ideally human fellowship which is called the Kingdom of God. . . . I do not know a single theological college in this country where students are ever taught one thing about the coming of the Lord, except it be in derision of the views advocated here to-day.”

Now here is food for thought and deepest exercise in those that, in view of the speedy return of the Lord Jesus, would desire to be found in a path acceptable to Him. It is written, “He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure.”

We have put capitals to the "Him" and "He" in this verse because these words refer to the Lord Jesus, and point to the practical effect of the hope in him who has it; if we have this hope in us of soon being with the Lord, to see Him and be like Him, will it not affect more or less everything we touch? Nor must it surprise us if our fellow-Christians, who share it not, look very differently on many of the things concerning this "present truth."

If, for instance, I believe there will be no hope of universal peace, and no hope of the end of *all* war, until the Lord Jesus comes, will not that colour all my view of the future. And will it not make a wide divergence between me and a Christian whose hope is that by the gradual betterment of man by human agencies the era of millennial peace and blessing will be brought about?

Again, if I believe the Lord's personal return to be the next thing to be looked for at any moment, and that He will call up to meet Him in the air all "those that are Christ's at His coming," what of all that vast system which bears His name, which we call Christendom?

The truth that has been recovered from the Scriptures, like the wells that were unstopped in the days of Isaac, clearly teaches that this Christendom will, when fully developed, be the Babylon of Revelation xviii. And if I understand aright, many of those attending the Advent meetings referred to above accept this as the truth.

Now, if this be so, should it not exercise our souls before God as to whether we are personally associated with this Babylonish system, or in any way helping to maintain a state of things where the truth is a subject of derision by teachers and taught? Does not Revelation

xviii. 4 apply here in principle to those who have ears to hear?

Some years ago a Christian, who had a lively recollection of the ministry of those men of God to whom the Lord entrusted the revival of these forgotten truths, was asked by a younger Christian what it was that was so remarkable in the ministry of these servants of the Lord, which drew so many Christians out of their worldly and religious associations. The answer (speaking from memory) was something like this, "It was not their shining eloquence, for many of them rather dreaded, than otherwise, the effect of human cleverness, but they gave you the unmistakable impression that they *lived what they taught*." And another testimony, from one early attracted by their ministry was to the same end, "They prayed for light and guidance, and God gave it because they walked in the practical power of what He gave them" (John vii. 17).

Does not this convey a lesson to us all in these days of general decadence? Other men laboured, and we have entered into their labours, but should not the same truths have a similar effect, whatever may be the peculiar character of our day? It is no small thing that we anticipate with joy the advent of the One whom once we only thought of as coming to be our judge. And in addition to the light of life and glory that shines upon our daily path from the place where our risen and glorified Saviour now is, the hope of His return will have a threefold effect.

It will have a purifying effect, as already pointed out, the only limitation to which is given in the striking words, "As *He* is pure" (1 John iii. 3). It will also have a separating effect, drawing to Christ Himself as a magnet attracts certain particles to itself out of all surroundings, and it will make a definite line of demar-

cation between those awaiting their Lord with girded loins and lamps burning, and the scoffers who say, "Where is the promise of His coming?"

Then also it would have what we might call a *stimulating* effect, for what can so powerfully move our hearts in prayer for the unsaved, and to labour in the Gospel, as the sense vividly before our souls that this advent of our Lord, which we are expecting at any moment, will for ever close the "door of hope" to the millions of souls around us that have not obeyed the Gospel—that have refused to receive the truth in the love of it that they might be saved?

So again as to separation from the world and all unscriptural associations, as well as the moral effect on our walk and ways. If the hope of Christ's coming *holds* us (and not only that *we* hold *it* as a part of our confession of faith), it cannot but be manifest in our every day life.

If, for instance, I tell my neighbour that I am daily expecting the Lord Jesus to return, and take me, with all that are "His own," out of this scene, I must not be surprised if he looks to see how a man with such a hope conducts his household and his business. And if he sees me just as anxious as others to secure every present and future advantage for myself and my family, I need not wonder if he regards my profession as only another evidence of the powerlessness of faith in those that profess it.

Another has said, speaking of Luke xii. 44-48, "It is not *doctrinal* denial, but the wicked servant says in *his heart*, 'My Lord delayeth His coming.' . . . To expect the Lord detaches from the world; putting it off, left the servant to his own will." Fellow-believers, may the word of the Lord arouse us to be more "like unto men h at wait for their Lord."

T. R.

Sketches in the Apocalypse.

XXIV.

CHRIST TAKES THE KINGDOM.

IN as far as the history is concerned, we may say that it is closed with the sounding of the seventh angel which introduces the third "woe." Christ then takes the kingdom, and clears the whole scene with unsparing judgment on the final wicked powers which have corrupted the earth and ruled over it. That concerns chiefly the Roman kingdom in its last form—the "ten toes" of the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. ii. 34, 45), confirmed by Daniel's dream in chapter vii. 26, 27. And it practically closes the historical part of Revelation (chap. xi. 15-18). The four-and-twenty elders fall upon their faces in worship, and give thanks to Jehovah-Elohim-Shaddai.

The time of patience, so often prolonged, comes to its end, but the part which we may call historical is now closed, though various details remain to be unfolded in the chapters that follow. The first place in this is of course given to Israel, "of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever" (Rom. ix. 5). This is seen in the following chapter xii., represented by the woman "clothed with the sun," or supreme authority in God's purpose; subordinate authority, expressed by "the moon," which reflects the sun's light, is "under her feet"; and upon her head is the "crown of twelve stars," doubtless referring to the tribes of Israel (see chap. vii. 4-8).

Satan's enmity is, of course, chiefly directed against her seed,—“Christ,” the “man-child,”—in order, if possible, to defeat His purposes and spoil His work. That is seen in the Gospel history (Matt. i. and ii.).

But He is "caught up" to God and to His *throne*; for He is now about to reign, whereas Satan and his angels are cast out of heaven.

The enemy vents his anger against the faithful "remnant of her seed" (ver. 17). But God protects them providentially, in part by means of people favourably disposed towards them, as expressed by the "swallowing-up of the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth" (ver. 16). She is cared for in this way during the last "half-week" of time, here reckoned as "1260 days" (ver. 6), probably to emphasise the intimacy of God's protection during this whole period.

Chapter xiii. sets forth the two last agents of the enemy, then raised up, who, with Satan cast down from heaven, form a trinity of evil on this earth. Wickedness thus goes on increasingly through the last three years and a half, under the form which the government of this world will then assume in the Roman kingdom. The head of it, called "the beast," rises up out of the "sea," a state of general uncertainty and confusion. He is supported by another, of less importance outwardly, but of greater spiritual or Satanic power, evidently the Antichrist, or acknowledged head of the Jewish people, in their unbelief and rejection of Christ. Both of these are finally cast alive into the lake of fire at the moment of Christ's appearing (chap. xix. 20).

Chapter xiv. presents first of all a beautiful picture of those redeemed from the earth during the last phase of its history, before the wrath of God is finally poured out upon it. That comes in chapter xvi. after the prophet's vision, in chapter xv. of a faithful, martyred remnant, standing on the laver here represented as a sea of glass.

There are seven pictures in chapter xiv. The first

is the vision of the redeemed standing around the Lamb on Mount Zion, their "new song" occupies all the attention of the elders and the cherubim who form part of the throne itself (see chap. iv. 6). This company is found "blameless," redeemed from among men, the "first-fruits" to God and to the Lamb before Christ comes to the earth. Afterwards we find two groups of three angels in each, separated by verse 13, which proclaims the blessedness of those that "die in the Lord": "Their works follow them."

In the first group an angel with the everlasting gospel, in its most fundamental feature, calls on all men to acknowledge the God of *creation*. A second announces the fall of Babylon; and the third, a last warning to those who worship the "beast" and his image. "The smoke of their torment will go up for ever and ever" (ver. 11). See Isaiah xxxiv. 10.

In the second group an angel personifying the Son of man, with a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle, awaits the order of another, who comes out of the temple, to reap the harvest of the earth which is over-ripe. It may be an allusion to Isaiah xxi. 10, and Habakkuk iii. 12. Finally there are two more, one from the temple, the other from the altar, having power over the fire of judgment, giving the order to reap the vine of *the earth*, which has the pretension of taking by succession the religious place which properly belonged to the vine of God's planting (1 Cor. iii. 9; see Ps. lxxx. 8).

Chapters xv. and xvi. present the "seven last plagues, or judgments of God upon the earth, Babylon having a prominent place at the close, before Christ comes to deal in person with it all. But, as always, the saints are first seen in safety, on a "glass sea mingled with fire," as having come through the judgments now

beginning. There is evidently here an allusion to the laver in front of the Tabernacle (Ex. xxx. 17-21). They had "gained the victory over the beast and his image, and the number of his name." They seem to be the martyred remnant from amongst the apostate Israelites; they too glorify Jehovah-Elohim-Shaddai, as in chapter xi. 27.

In verse 5 of chapter xv. "the temple of the tabernacle of witness in heaven was opened" (see xi. 19). From thence the seven angels with their golden vials full of the wrath of God go forth, in obedience to a great voice, heard from the Temple itself, calling on them to pour out their vials upon the earth (xvi. 1). The whole circle of symbolic nature, as in chapter viii. 7-12, is again the object of these judgments, earth, sea, rivers, and sun, and the altar celebrates the righteousness of Jehovah-Elohim-Shaddai, in thus judging.

That which follows, in chapter xvi. 10, deals specifically with the votaries of the beast and his image, and prepares the way for the final conflict in Palestine at Armageddon, or the mountain of Megiddo, near Carmel. The powers of Asia, beyond the Euphrates, will evidently be there, the waters of the great river being dried up in anticipation. It is the close of the last three and a half years of tribulation.

In verse 10 the seat or throne of the beast is especially dealt with when the fifth vial is poured out; and the sixth, in verse 12, dries up the waters of the Euphrates in preparation for the final conflict just mentioned. In verse 17, the seventh and last vial deals with Babylon itself, with all the objects of its corruption; it is then shattered by the earthquake and terrific hail, never previously seen or felt. This is referred to in Isaiah xxxii. and xxxiii., when "the people shall be as the burnings of lime" (ver. 12).

In chapter xvii. "Babylon," religious and political, is described in detail. It represents the whole Romish system, with its idolatry and blasphemy, the centre of its power being in the city of Rome. The following chapter, xviii., describes its overthrow, affecting every kind of commerce amongst mankind. "In one hour it is made desolate," and all those that have been the objects of its enmity are invited to rejoice over its judgment, "in the day of Jehovah's vengeance" upon all nations (see Isa. xxxiv. 1-10; 2 Pet. iii. 5-10, and Jude 4-7, 13-15). All this enables us to understand the final gracious invitation in Revelation xviii. 4, "I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." The judgment is put off as long as possible, but when it does come, it is complete.

The next chapter, xix., sets forth the hallelujahs to which this judgment gives expression. There is no such celebration of joy elsewhere. Verse 2 details the aspect or character for which "the great whore" is judged—idolatry, corruption, worldliness, and persecution of God's saints. Then we find the marriage of the Lamb; those who have a share in the joy of it are called "blessed." His "wife" is the church, concealed up to that time in heaven.

In verse 11, Christ comes forth in power to take the kingdom, and judgment is executed on the beast and the false prophet, who are both cast alive into the lake of fire, a thousand years before anyone else (ver. 20). There are three characters in His name. It is "Faithful and True" as a Witness of the truth, and the "Word of God," as the Revealer of all truth, which can only be known in and through Him, as Man. Besides that He has a personal glory which is un-

revealed, as it is written, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father" (Matt. xi. 27).

He comes to execute judgment, and, in this character treads the winepress of God's wrath, righteous vengeance on the wicked (see Isa. lxiii. 3, 4). This is different from the "harvest" spoken of in Matthew xiii. 30, in which there is discrimination between the wheat and the tares, when the Son of man takes His earthly kingdom. Compare also Revelation ii. 27, as to the millennial kingdom on earth, when the saints are associated with Him.

Chapter xx. describes the millennial kingdom, when the saints will reign with Christ for a thousand years. Satan is then bound and shut up in the bottomless pit, so that he is no more able to deceive the nations during that period. Three companies are mentioned in verse 4, as sitting on the *thrones*, seen by Daniel (chap. vii. 9), but unoccupied at the time he saw them. Now we find those who had that honour; first, the saints previously departed, and associated with the church (see chap. iii. 21); secondly those martyred in chap. vi. 9-11, and finally those who perish in the persecution spoken of in chapter xiii. 15. They are all raised to have part with Christ.

Satan is finally let out of his prison, in order to manifest the true state of those dwelling upon the earth in the last days. He stirs up the nations under Gog their *leader*, and Magog the *company* (see Ezek. xxxviii. 2, 3), numberless, wonderful to say, "as the sand of the sea." Fire comes down from God to devour them (ver. 9). The devil is then cast into the lake of fire, and the closing verses, 11 to 15, give the judgment of every one according to his works in presence of the "great white throne."

Chapter xxi. to xxii. 7 describes the millennial kingdom with a figurative picture of the church in verses 10 to 27, followed by "the river of water of life" proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Then we find the conclusion of the book, with the assurance of the Lord's speedy coming. May every one of us be found of Him heartily responding to it, with our "Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus!" W. J. L.