

THE REVELATION

THE EXPOSITION

Paragraphs 41-77

41

There are two princes spoken of in the ninth chapter of Daniel, the first in verse 25 and the second in verse 26. In verse 25 the words are, "Messiah the Prince," so that we know that the prince referred to is Christ. In verse 26 the words are, "the people of the prince," so that the personality of the prince is not described. It would be natural to suppose, at first sight, that the prince of verse 25 is that of verse 26, and it would be right, even after consideration, to come to this conclusion if nothing forbade it. But several facts seem to point in the direction of there being two personages in view instead of one. The Prince of verse 25, we are told, is Christ. But certain things are stated concerning the prince of verse 26 which were not and never will be true of Christ. In the first place, this second prince with his people destroys Jerusalem and the sanctuary (Dan. 9:26). In the second place, he confirms the covenant with many (the Jews) for a "week," that is, for seven years (Dan. 9:27). In the third place, he breaks the covenant in the midst of the "week," that is, just after the first three and a half years and just before the second three and a half years (Dan. 9:27). In the fourth place, he makes the sacrifice and oblation to cease (Dan. 9:27). And lastly, he keeps the temple desolate until the consummation, that is, until he, the desolator, is desolated (Dan. 9:27). Now, none of these several events is connected in the Scripture with Christ, either as related to His first coming or second. But all of them are connected in Scripture with the Antichrist (Dan. 8:9, 11-13; 23-25; 11:21, 22, 28, 30-32; 12:11). We conclude, therefore, that the first Prince is Christ and the second is Antichrist, the second one being a usurper who wears falsely and blasphemously the Other's name and title.

42

The Scripture nowhere gives the before mentioned seven years of the Antichrist--except by implication in Dan. 9:27--in figures. It confirms the measurement of the period, however, in several ways. First, in the Daniel passage, it divides the "week" into halves by the phrase "in the midst of the week" (9:27). Second, it gives in Daniel--as judged by the context--the latter half of the "week" in three terms, namely, "a time, times and a half" (7:25; 12:7), "a thousand two hundred and ninety days" (12:11), and "a thousand three hundred and five and thirty days" (12:12). Third, it presents in the Revelation in various phrases the same period--as judged by the context--in exact measurement, namely, "forty and two months" (11:2), "a thousand two hundred and threescore days" (11:3; 12:6), and "a time, and times, and half a time" (12:14). It will be seen that all of these measurements have in view three and a half years, which, manifestly, is the half of the prophetic "week" (Dan. 9:26, 27); and these three and a half years, being the half, necessarily signify that the full "week" is one of seven years. Just what the difference of time which is noted in Dan. 12:11 and 12:12 indicates is impossible to say. The three and a half years amount to "forty-two months" (Rev. 11:2), or--reckoning thirty days to a month--"a thousand two hundred and

threescore days" (Rev. 11:3; 12:6). In the first of the Daniel passages mentioned (12:11), there is an excess beyond the twelve hundred and sixty days of thirty days, and in the second (12:12) one of seventy-five days. Some events, therefore, must follow the three and half year period, one of which ends in thirty days thereafter and the other in seventy-five days. But what these events are is not revealed.

43

The Authorized Version expresses the commandments given in verses 6:1, 3, 5 and 7 by the words, "Come and see," as if the living creatures were speaking to John. The Revised Version changes this reading and expresses the commandments by the one word, "Come," thus signifying that the living creatures were addressing, not John, but the four horses, one by one. The latter form of words, as evidenced by the best Greek texts, is to be preferred. Accepting this as a fact, two things become at once evident; first, the high place of authority God gives to the living creatures, they being the official communicators of the divine decrees; and second, the absolute control which the One who sits upon the throne of heaven has over both the unseen and seen worlds. This last truth, as related to these present days as well as to those to come, brings to the fearsome heart great comforting. If God controls all of the unseen and seen forces; if He has His powerful hand not only upon earth's good but also upon its evil; if He is the One who can say to Satan, "Thus far and no farther;" if, as here, Antichrist cannot come forth upon his mission of hellish hate and destruction until he is permitted and bidden by God; what then may His children fear, even "though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof?" (Ps. 46:2, 3). All that any saint now needs to do, all that he will then need to do, will be this--to be still and know that God is GOD! (Ps. 46:10). Satan may prove himself, by divine permission, to be mighty; but God is always and in all things ALMIGHTY. So then, the Devil may never go beyond the length of his chain. Whatever he may do, he will, after all, but fulfill the will of Him who has staked him fast (Joel 1:6-22).

44

All of the seals spoken of from the sixth chapter onward lie within the first half of the prophetic "week," that is, within the first three and a half years of the reign of the Antichrist. The breaking of the first, which calls forth the Man of sin, begins these years, and the breaking of the other seals continues them. By the time that the seventh seal is broken, the first half of the "week" is well advanced, though it is not finished, for the seven trumpets also lie within the first portion of the "week" period. As to the horses, they stand for the Antichrist and their coloring symbolizes the events which occur in connection with their appearing. Thus, the white horse represents the Antichrist as a man of peace and of victory through peace (Dan. 6:1, 2; 11:21-24); the red horse represents him as a man of war where, peace having failed, he has recourse to the arbitrament of battle (6:3, 4); the black horse represents him as the one who, through war, brings famine upon the earth, food being so scarce that it will have to be carefully weighed out and so high in price that a day's wage will not be sufficient to pay for a man's daily portion (6:5, 6); and the pale horse represents him as the one who, through continued and more extensive wars, produces widespread death, so much so that there are not enough men left on earth to keep

the wild beasts from multiplying and devastating inhabited parts (6:7, 8). The description of these four horses occupies little space in the text, and their advent is told in simple language. But the words used are pregnant with meaning, setting forth the most momentous events which, up to the time in view, have ever blackened and reddened the pages of history.

45

The opening of the fifth seal in the sixth chapter suddenly reveals a heavenly scene, which is the counterpart of a concurrent earthly experience (6:9-11). As we have seen, the previous four seals have brought upon earth, first, the Antichrist, and then his devastating wars (6:1-8). The war calamities are widespread, involving a fourth part of the earth (6:8); and it is evident, being this, that they overtake and overwhelm many of God's saints. It is not fully, as yet, a case of persecution and martyrdom; rather, it is one of an involving war, which touches the persons of Christians as well as others. At the same time, there is here a commencement of martyr experiences, because the saints are called upon to stand for the truth and to testify to the same, and as a result of their fidelity they are slain by the sword (6:9). It is thus, as the vision shows, that their souls go up to heaven and rest there beneath God's altar. From that vantage place they cry, asking how long it will be before the divine vengeance will be poured forth (6:10); whereupon they are told that they must rest "for a little season," namely, that portion of the seven years which remains, until their fellow-servants and their brethren are likewise killed (6:11). All this indicates, first, that the resurrection and rapture have not yet taken place, or else these souls would not be waiting beneath the altar; and second, that this martyrdom of saints is not a final but only a preliminary one. Following this vision, as we shall see, there will be other scenes of martyrdom, considerably later in time. In other words, the experiences of this sixth chapter--as has been said--lie within the first half of the prophetic "week." The tribulation has begun. But as yet the resulting suffering is but the "beginning of sorrows" (Matt. 24:8).

46

At the opening of the sixth seal in the sixth chapter God commences to move in judgment, taking His first issue with the Antichrist and his followers (6:12-17). He does not here far advance the judgment which He begins, for at this time, as took place in the time of Pharaoh, He restrains Himself even in His wrath, thus giving men opportunity to repent. His visitation, therefore, is preliminary and partial; and, in order to beget fear of His power, it is manifested by heavenly portents and earthly disturbances (6:12-14). But as happened during the ten judgments in Egypt, God's mercy manifested in the midst of judgment has no other effect than that of hardening men's hearts, making high and low, rich and poor, free and bond to cry out in deadly terror, but nothing more (6:15-17). There is something very appealing in organized society as we see it; kings, nobles, merchants, warriors, freemen, bondmen, the palace and hut, the camp and mart, and all vibrant with life and energy; and we often wonder if, after all, men are so bad where they appear to be so lawfully and innocently occupied with the affairs of daily living. But a scene like this suddenly wakens us from our illusion. In a moment we see what God all along has seen, beneath and within, the spirit and the sin. And thus through a flash of revelation we suddenly realize what we ought to have known from the beginning, namely, that the heart of man, whatever the

gloss, is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9).

47

At the seventh chapter there begins a new time-period, namely, the third, which is that of the seven trumpets. Here as in the two previous periods there is first, the introduction (7:1 to 8:6), and second, the description (8:7 to 9:21; 11:15), this last setting forth the earthly events which take place within the period, that is, while the seven trumpets are sounding. We have not yet reached in the record the divine intimation that the second three and a half years have begun, and hence, we must conclude that the first three and a half years are still running their course. It is to be remembered, however, that the seals, with the exception of the seventh, have been broken, and it is to be concluded from this that considerable progress has been made in the first half of the prophetic "week," this probably amounting to about half of that time, that is, twenty-one months. The seventh seal is broken at the beginning of chapter eight (8:1), it being inserted at that place instead of in the seventh chapter because the latter is but the introduction to the former, the description of the period's earthly incidents beginning at 8:6 and all of its events falling under this seventh seal and being subsequent to it. It will be seen from the foregoing that the record of the seven years is making regular, chronological advancement, developing, in time and episode, in a well ordered and clearly defined fulfillment.

48

We have noted that God's judgments upon sinful men began in the second period, it being that of the seven seals (6:1-8). We must now observe that the introduction before us (7:1 to 8:6) makes it plain that similar judgments are to characterize the third period, this being that of the seven trumpets (7:1-3). The first words of the introduction indicate this last, for the holding back of the avenging angels there described (7:1-3) is only "till" the servants of God have been sealed upon their foreheads, such language implying that afterwards these angels will be loosed and bidden to carry on their destroying work, which is exactly what is found when the description of their activities is given (7:7-13; 9:1-22). As we are coming now within view of God's greater judgments, it will be well to point out a few facts--so that these may be in mind--about all of the divine judgments as they are described in the book of the Revelation. These facts are as follows: first, God's judgments begin with physical sufferings (6:11-17) and end with spiritual (19:20); second, they begin with men who are lesser sinners, that is, men in general (6:15), and end with those who are the greatest sinners, that is, with Antichrist and the false prophet (19:20); third, they begin in grace and mercy, that is, with the intention of leading men to repentance (9:20, 21), and end in wrath and torment, that is, in final punishment of sin (19:20; 20:10, 12-15); fourth, they begin with comparative lightness (6:12-17) and end with terrible intensity (20:10; 21:8); and lastly, they begin in time (6:1-8) and end in eternity (20:10-15; 21:8). As we go on with our study we cannot fail to note this progress in judgment, for the manifestation of it is plain and impressive. There is an important distinction, however, which we need to keep in mind, especially in view of the fact that the saints are involved in those judgments which occur upon the earth. Both tribulation and wrath are the portion of the wicked (Rom. 2:8, 9; 1 Thess. 1:6-9). Tribulation is the portion of the righteous (Acts 14:22; 1 Thess. 3:4; Rev. 7:14), but wrath never is (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9). As to tribulation, it is to be remembered that outwardly it may be much the same in

respect to the righteous (Matt. 24:21, 22; Rev. 6:9) as it is in respect to the wicked (6:12-17; 9:18). There is, however, an essential difference as between the two classes affected by it: the cause in the case of the righteous is devotion to Christ (6:9; 12:11) and the result, a greater godliness and rewarding (Rom. 5:3; 8:35; 12:12; Rev. 7:14); while in the case of the wicked the cause is sin and the result is further sin, settled despair, and destroying judgment (6:16, 17; 9:20, 21; 19:19-21).

49

The seventh chapter begins the introduction to the third, or trumpet period (see the Analysis), and the four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, that is, at the north, south, east, and west positions, indicates that the divine judgments at this juncture are broadening out and are about to involve many peoples (7:1). It is not clear that the phrase, "four corners of the earth," means the whole earth inclusive of the farthest portions of it, for the word "earth" is *ge*, which may signify only the land in view; and, in addition, it may be understood that the Revelation--unless otherwise indicated--has regard to the earth as it was known to the apostles and early disciples, which, for the most part, was the Roman Empire. But, granting a meaning which will be short of the most distant places, it still remains the fact that the four angels were placed in positions widely separated from one another, and that they were looking forward to a judgment of an extensive kind. Here we have something in respect to God's judgments which is frequently true. Divine judgments relate themselves at first to a single person; but presently they may become both national and international. And the reason of this is not far to seek. Sin begins with an individual. But it does not end there, especially if that individual stands high in the nation and is a man of commanding power. The one-man sin, in such a case, soon becomes a many-men one, until, probably God has before Him a problem of judgment which is as wide as the land over which the individual rules. It was thus, of old, in Judah's and Israel's time. It has been so, again and again, in more modern times. And it is evidently the case here in the Revelation. Antichrist has come upon the scene, defiant of all that is holy and good but rich with promises of peace and prosperity; and such is his influence that it takes only a few years to enable him to corrupt multitudes of persons. So then, God at this place has more than an Antichrist to deal with. He must also reach out after the host scattered abroad. It is thus that it comes to pass that the four angels take their places at the four corners of the earth. In a little while now, in the record, judgments near and far will be under way and in full and fearful force.

50

If we were lacking evidence of the compassion of God toward sinful men, we should certainly find it in the book of the Revelation. Again and again, in the midst of the stirrings of His anger toward such, we find touches of His tenderness in respect to them. Here in this seventh chapter the four angels are bidden to hold back, for a little, the four winds of the earth, that the wind may not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree (7:1). A little later, when the angels are sent forth on their errand of vengeance, they are permitted to burn up a third part of the trees and to destroy a third part of the creatures in the sea and of the ships upon it; but two thirds of all these are spared (8:7-9). Still later a great star falls upon the waters, the sun, moon and stars are smitten (8:10-12); but only a third part of these is affected. Still later the locusts are allowed

to torment men; but they are not allowed to kill them (9:3-5). And at the beginning of these judgment times, God commands that the oil and wine--His remedy and solace for physical suffering--should not be hurt (6:6). It is to be noted that the divine compassions in this present instance are not only in behalf of wicked men, but also and particularly of His saints. The four angels hold back the blasting winds until the one hundred and forty-four thousand are sealed, and these are sealed in order that they may not be killed (7:3; 9:4, 5). Nevertheless, the statement made concerning God's compassion toward sinners remains true. God willeth not that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9), and, in consequence, He delays judgment as long as possible; and, when He allows it to begin, He mitigates it as much as possible. We are not to conclude from this that His final judgment does not fall and that it is not eternal. There is an end of grace as touching the sinner, and nowhere is this made more plain than in this very book where mercy is so often and fully expressed. The divine penalties toward the godless move slowly. But they move exceeding surely. And they end in the lake of fire (10:6; 21:8).

51

We shall comment upon the one hundred and forty-four thousand company mentioned in chapter seven (7:4-8) when we come to the fourteenth chapter (14:1-5), so that we may pass by the subject now except as we call attention to a few characteristics of this class of persons. The first thing to notice is that they are Jews, being taken in companies of twelve thousand each from the twelve tribes of Israel, thus making one hundred and forty-four thousand in all (7:4-8). The second thing is, that they are Christians, being sealed with the Father's name upon their foreheads (7:3; 14:1), being the servants of God (7:3), and being those who follow the Lamb (14:4). The third thing is, that they are sealed in relationship with and in preparation for the trumpet period, this time being the latter part of the first three and half years of the prophetic "week," as the seven trumpets are about to sound (8:6). And the last thing is, that the sealing was not to exempt this class of persons from persecution and suffering, but only from the usual consequence of these, namely, death (9:3-5).

52

It is to be kept in mind that we are still, from the standpoint of our study, in the introduction to the trumpet period, this running from 7:1 to 8:6 (see the Analysis). It is this fact which explains what we now meet with at the close of the seventh chapter, the vision of a martyr throng (7:9-17). In the sixth chapter we saw one martyr company (6:9-11), and here we see another, each, in some particulars, being similar to the other (6:11; 7:9). But there is difference as well as similarity so that we are not to conclude that the two companies are the same. First, there is the difference of time, the martyrs of the sixth chapter meeting death in the first part of the first three and a half years and those of the seventh in the second part of it. Second, the martyrs of the sixth chapter are, in a particular sense, war martyrs, being unwilling to follow the Antichrist in his pursuit of fame and power, and suffering death by the sword in consequence of this (6:1-9), and these of the seventh chapter are such as have been persecuted during these same war times for righteousness' sake, having been driven into desert places and having died of hunger, thirst and exposure, their heavenly rewardings being the opposite of their earthly experiences (7:13-17). And third, these martyrs of the seventh chapter are distinctly separate from those of the

sixth in the place the sovereign God gives to them in heaven, the former class resting beneath the outer altar (6:9) and this one standing before the throne and the Lamb, with palms in their hands (8:9). We are to remember that we are considering the introduction to the forthcoming trumpet period (see the Analysis) and that it is not retrospective but prospective, it giving us a divine forecast of what is to take place in that period. In other words, we have here a prestatement of what occurs later when the trumpets are sounding (8:6), God's judgments are multiplying (8:6-13), and the Antichrist's persecutions are increasing in extent and power (7:9, 14).

53

In order to maintain a true scriptural perspective in respect to the various visions of martyred saints, the distinction between the first half and last of the prophetic "week" (Dan. 9:27) must be kept fully in view. Martyrdom characterizes both portions of the seven years, for throughout the Antichrist is a persecutor of the saints. But in the first half, persecution and death are of a general kind, while in the latter they are of a particular one. In other words, in the first three and a half years the saints lose their lives as a result of the Antichrist's wars and because of his aggressiveness in establishing both the Jewish (Dan. 9:27) and an apostate Christian religion (17:1-3), while in the second, the Man of Sin having thrown off his religious mask and proclaimed himself to be God, they are persecuted and killed as a consequence of his demanding their worship and because they refuse to give this (13:4-9). All of the tribulations which result from the persecutions of the Antichrist, whether in the first or second half of the "week," go to make up the final tribulation; but it is clear that the persecutions, steadily increasing both in intensity and extensity, reach their climax in the latter half of the week (Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21; Rev. 2:9, 10, 22; 7:14; 13:1-8). Now it is to be noted that a number of visions is given of the martyr saints, and that these, in spite of the fact that they occur at different places in the book and at different stages of the events described, seem to be repetitions of one another. When, however, it is remembered that martyrdoms occur at different times within the whole seven years, some in the first part of this period and some in the second, then it will be seen that the several visions are not of the same companies of persons, but rather, of different and separate ones. Thus, the first vision of the martyrs, given at the opening of the fifth seal, shows us saints who have suffered death in the earlier stage of the rule of the Antichrist, in the first half of the prophetic week, which explains why they are told that they must rest for a little until their fellow servants and brethren are killed as they were (6:9-11). Again, a second vision of the martyred ones, given in the introduction to the trumpet period (see the Analysis), shows us saints who have suffered death in the trumpet period, and hence in the first half of the prophetic "week" but at a still later stage of the Antichrist's career, at a time when persecutions have enlarged their sphere and taken in a multitude out of every nation and of all tribes and peoples and tongues (7:9, 10). Again, a third vision of martyrs, given in the introduction to the vial period (see the Analysis), shows us saints who have suffered death in that period, and, therefore, at a considerably later stage of the Antichrist's persecutions, this time in the latter half of the prophetic "week," for the image spoken of is erected at the middle of the "week" and this has already been set up (15:2, 3). And finally, a fourth vision of the martyr multitude, given in the judgment period (see the Analysis), shows us all of the saints who have been killed by the Antichrist gathered into the presence of the Lamb, which is after the prophetic "week" is over and the tribulation is fully and forever past (20:4-6). Thus we have vision after vision of the martyrs. But each

time we see a new company of these saints, until at last we behold all of them brought safely and rejoicingly home.

54

At the beginning of the eighth chapter--which is a part of the introduction to the trumpet period--the phrase occurs, "there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour" (8:1). The question arises here, Do the words "half an hour" mean what they say or are they expressive of an uncertain and longer period of time? And this raises a similar question: Are the time measurements given in the Revelation to be taken literally or symbolically? These measurements are used in the following places and connections: "ten days" (2:10); "half an hour" (8:1); "five months" (9:1); "forty and two months" (11:2; 13:5); "three days and a half" (11:9, 11); "a thousand, two hundred and threescore days" (12:6); "time and times and half a time" (12:14); "one hour" (17:12); and "a thousand years" (20:2-7). To place these enumerations in conjunction is interesting. But it is more than this; it proves helpful in answering the question raised concerning literalism or symbolism.

55

It is evident that several of the time measurements quoted above are to be taken literally. For instance, as we have already found in our study, the phrases, "forty and two months" (11:2; 13:5), "a thousand, two hundred and threescore days" (12:6), "a time and times and half a time" (12:14), represent--on the basis of thirty days in a month--exactly three and a half years. This fact, as evidenced by these three passages, seems to put the stamp of literalism upon all of the time measurements given in the Revelation. There is no more reason to suppose that the three passages are more literal than the others; and there is every reason to believe, in case they are literal, that the remaining passages are also such. In other words, all of the time measurements, in respect to literalness, are to be placed in the same category, that is, all are to be rejected or accepted. Three of them may be accepted in exactness; and we conclude that the others may be.

56

An objection naturally arises to the above conclusion as related to such minor time measurements as "ten days" (2:10), "half an hour" (8:1), "five months" (9:1), and "three days and a half" (11:9, 11). At first sight it would seem that such short spaces of time, with a literal interpretation put upon them, ought to find no place in a book of such extensive movements and measurements as the Revelation. But two important facts are to be remembered before a conclusion of this kind is reached: first, the major part of the book has to do with time and not eternity, and this time--from 6:1 to 19:21--is only seven years; and second, it is often the case in history that short spaces of time, not to speak of such intensive days as are portrayed in this section of the Scripture, are immensely pregnant with meaning. The storm in the English channel in 1588 only lasted a few days, but it broke up the Spanish armada and preserved British nationality and civilization. The *coup d'etat* of Napoleon the first, in 1804, took place in a single day, but it changed the history of France and Europe. The pulling of the trigger of a gun aimed at the Austrian heir to the throne by a student yet in his teens, in 1914,

was accomplished in less than a minute, but it altered the course of the whole world. And it is evident that a like time intensity is to be the order of things in the days of the Antichrist. Earth's history will then come to its fruition and will be surcharged with events. In such conditions, a year, month, week, day, or hour will carry with it tremendous potentiality, and out of infinitely small things, in time and episode, will come those which are infinitely great. As a deduction from the fact that the time measurements above referred to are literally exact, we conclude that the longest of these, namely, the "one thousand years"--given six times over in the twentieth chapter--is exactly what it is there said to be. In short, it is our opinion that all of the time measurements in the Revelation are to be understood in a wholly literal sense. As to the phrase with which we began, the silence in heaven of half an hour seems to be the lull before the storm. The trumpet period which follows is to be one of increased and increasing judgments; and before it begins, there is that awesome stillness which, in heaven as well as on earth, presages outbreak, devastation and woe.

57

There were various occasions in the Old Testament when trumpets were used and various purposes to which they were dedicated. It is only necessary in this place to point out the fact that one occasion and purpose--and a chief one--was in connection with the proclamation and propagation of war (Num. 10:9, 10; Judg. 3:26-30; 6:34, 35; 7:7, 8, 17, 18). This seems to be the thought presented by the use of the seven trumpets here in the Revelation (8:2-6). In Joel 2:1 we have the words, "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand;" and in Zephaniah (1:14-16) the words, "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly; that day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness; a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers." It will be noted that each of these scriptures is prophetic, and that each has reference to the day of the Lord, the period in the Revelation which we are considering; also, that in each passage the trumpet is an important factor, and that each ushers in a time of devastating war. These hints seem to be sufficient. They are outstretched fingers pointing to the consummation of divine warfare found in the Revelation. Only here, since it is the consummation, there is not one trumpet but there are seven, which number is the one which indicates fulness and completeness. At the sounding of the seven trumpets, therefore, we see God going forth in His majesty and power to make war against His enemies, to the end that they may be overthrown and destroyed. He begins this progress of judgment at the first trumpet and ends it at the last; that is, He begins His judgments in the first three and a half years (6:4-17) and ends them in the second (19:11-21).

58

In the eighth chapter we are told that the "prayers of all saints" are offered upon the "golden altar which was before the throne" (8:3). There are two interesting facts which grow out of this statement. The first is that the real temple with its holiest of all (Heb. 8:2; 9:3, 8, 10), its brazen altar without (6:9), its golden altar within (8:3), its golden candlesticks (1:12) and its true high priest (Heb. 5:5, 6; 8:1, 2; Rev. 1:13) was not on earth, but was and is in

heaven, the earthly temple being a type and the heavenly the antitype; and the second is, that the prayers of the saints reach that upper and most holy place, are incense upon the golden altar, and become effective in fulfilling the great and far-reaching purposes of God. There is no scriptural evidence which would warrant the conclusion that the saints in heaven pray, the petitions which they might offer there being turned into praise (5:8-10); but there is full evidence here that the saints on earth do pray, that their prayers are heard and answered, and that their intercessions are potent in the hands of God in accomplishing the mightiest effects (8:3-5). This is tremendously solemn. It is a solemn thing to have such power put into one's possession (Matt. 16:19; 18:18); and it is still more solemn to have such committed to us, and then, possibly, either to misuse it or not to use it at all.

59

The sounding of the first angel's trumpet ushers in the judgments of the third, that is, the trumpet period (8:6, 7; see the Analysis). It is to be observed that these trumpet-judgments are not the final ones, the trumpets being in the latter portion of the first three and a half years and the thunder, vial, and judgment periods having to follow (see the Analysis). They denote, however, an increase of judgment as compared with the preceding seal period (6:1-9), and they hold within themselves a further increase of judgment as the seven trumpets, one by one, give forth their notes of divine warfare. It is to be observed also, that the sounding of the trumpets deals with men in judgment in a partial and physical manner (8:7-13; 9:1-19). Mercy is mixed in judgment in order to bring sinners to repentance, and the natural world is dealt with as that upon which man is dependent, in order that the wicked may look up in their bitter need and seek for refuge in God. Thus, only a third of the trees (8:7), a third of the sea (8:8), a third of the creatures in the sea (8:9), a third of the fountains of waters (8:10), and a third of the sun, moon and stars (8:12) are involved in the cataclysms which take place. And thus also, when, a little later, judgments further increase and turn into a scourge of locusts with the sting of a scorpion (9:1-11), the time of this woe is limited to five months (9:5). As evidenced by sacred and profane history, it has always been a governing principle with God to deal after this manner with willful and sinful men. The lesser judgments precede the greater, and judgment times are limited before they are extended. The ultimate issue then depends upon men. If they repent, they are forgiven and further judgments are stayed. But if they do not repent, they remain unforgiven and further judgments fall (Jon. 1:2; 3:1-10; 4:9-11). It is this divine principle which we see being worked out here. God is judging and men are suffering. At the same time God is tempering judgment and men are being given their opportunity to escape increase of suffering.

60

The Greek word, *phrear*, which is translated in the ninth chapter, as in other places, "bottomless pit" (9:1, 2, 11), means primarily a hole in the ground, such as a cistern or well. It thus comes to indicate, as related to scriptural and spiritual issues, the abyss. It is used nine times in the Revelation (9:1, 2(3), 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3), and in each case is associated with evil and the evil one. It seems to be the equivalent of the word *tartaros*, or *tartarus*, found in other verbal form in 2 Pet. 2:4, which signifies the lowest place in Hades, where the fallen angels which are chained have their present dwelling place. Hence, it expressed the deepest of hell's deeps, the prison house of Satan's wickedest

spirits, the source of earth's most calamitous woes. It is significant, therefore, that just at this juncture of human events this pit of pits should be opened and that out of it should come these misshapen, vengeful and death-dealing monsters called "locusts." This is Egypt's plagues over again (Exod. 10:4-19); only now these loathsome creatures have permitted energy and power which the past did not know. Moreover, we are seeing here the realization of men's ambitions and hopes. They are presently seeking, without God, to tear down the veil which hangs between the seen and unseen, the known and unknown, and to penetrate the mysteries of the eternal world. That veil is lifted in this place, and there is a real and large penetration. It is, however, not from the outer side to the inner, but from the inner to the outer; and the connection between the other world and this is established in judgment and through none other than Satan himself.

61

The close of the ninth chapter is one of the saddest portions of holy Scripture (9:13-21). A like sad portion is found in Matthew's Gospel, where the simple but awful phrase occurs, "How often would I"--"and ye would not" (Matt. 23:37). But here the pathos is intensified. There it was in the early past, as related to a single nation and with the prospect of future days and other opportunities. Here it is in the late future, as related to many nations and as God's grace is drawing to its close. Just now, in the record, the divine mercy is expressing itself in manifold ways and most compassionate forms, love seeking to win back wandering souls to forgiveness and peace. But it is all in vain. In spite of heavenly portents, privation and scourge, men repent not of the works of their hands; they persist in their evil worship; they cleave to their idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and wood; and they refuse to forsake their murders, sorceries, fornications and thefts (9:20, 21). A noted English scientist has recently said that the modern man is not worrying about his sins. Here, evidently, the men last on earth--so far as the present dispensation is concerned--are of the same state of mind, loving evil more than they fear God and clinging to it even when fearsome sights and sounds are shaking the hands which clutch their prized misdeeds. All this does not agree with the theory that divine judgment is reforming and regenerating in its effect. In fact, the terrible reality and issue of this scene extinguishes any hope which otherwise might exist concerning the efficiency of purgatorial fires. According to the portrayal, the fires have burned and men have suffered untold agonies. But to their latest breath they reject the living and loving God. It is to be observed that this scene does not fit into the theory of a spiritual evolution among mankind, for this is not the beginning of things but the last, and here, at the last, men are more God-defying than ever in the past.

62

The tenth chapter begins the introduction to a new division, that is, the thunder period (see the Analysis). And this division, as in the case of the other divisions, is begun with an introduction (10:1-3). We have in this case, however, something different from that which has characterized the preceding divisions. In the others we have had an introduction but no conclusion. In this one we have both an introduction and a conclusion (10:1-3; 5-11). That this last is the fact becomes plain by studying the chapter. The first verses (10:1-3) are evidently an introduction to those which describe the seven thunders (10:3, 4); and the verses which follow these are so intimately connected with them that they cannot be looked upon as a part of the introduction to the next period but must be regarded

as a summing up of the thoughts of the past period, and hence, as its conclusion. The whole, it is to be noted, stands midway between the five periods which describe the earthly course of the Antichrist. The first of these is the seal; the second, the trumpet; the third, the thunder; the fourth, the vial; and the fifth, the judgment (6:1 to 20:15); so that two periods stand on either side of the one we are now considering, namely, the thunder period, and thus the last named equally divides between them (see the Analysis). This is more than interesting; it is, as well, significant. For the context makes it clear that the first two periods lie in the first half of the prophetic "week" and the second two in the second half. The thunder period, therefore, standing midway between the two halves of the "week," runs the dividing line of time between them, being located exactly at the end of the first three and a half years and at the beginning of the second three and a half. In other words, the thunder period faces backward and forward over the same length of time. It also, in facing forward, ushers in most solemn events, those which are to characterize the last days of the present dispensation. The sands of time, according to our study, are now running low, there being but three and a half years more before the Lord returns in judgment against the Man of Sin and his followers (19:11-21). We must expect, from this time onward until that event is reached, decreasing grace and increasing judgment.

63

The above remarks correspond with and thus illuminate the statement of the angel which is recorded at the close of the sixth verse of this chapter (10:6). This mighty angel has placed one foot upon the sea and the other upon the land (10:1, 2, 3), thus signifying the universality of his dominion and the finality of his asseveration; and thus located, he solemnly raises his hand and swears by Him who lives forever and ever, who created the heaven and the things therein, the earth and the things therein, and the sea and the things therein, that there shall be "time no longer" (10:6). But it is to be observed, as we pass, while this is the reading of the Authorized Version and even that of the Revised in the margin, that it is manifestly not what the angel said, for succeeding chapters tell us that time will be further extended, it being stated that there will be another "forty and two months" (11:2) or "a thousand two hundred and threescore days" (11:3), and subsequently "one thousand years" (20:1, 2). We may understand then, that the word "time" is an incorrect translation of the Greek word used. The word is *chronos*, which means not simply time, as if it might be a single instant, but a space of time of shorter or longer duration. By implication thus, the word signifies delay, or the opportunity which comes through delay; and the Revised Version has chosen the word "delay" to express its meaning. As judged by the context and the trend of the teaching through the course of these chapters, it is probable that the word conveys the thought both of delay and opportunity. As we have said, grace from this time on steadily and increasingly gives place to judgment. This signifies that God purposes henceforth, rapidly to terminate time-space and the privilege of repentance which such grants. Salvation will yet be proclaimed, as the fourteenth chapter makes clear (14:6, 7); but it will not be largely heeded and its rejection will be followed by fearful and final penalties. In other words, from this point onward the divine events will go with a rush and will end in the direful destruction described both by Paul (2 Thess. 1:7-9) and John (19:11-21). It is this that the mighty angel, standing on sea and land, signifies. God has delayed His judgments in order that men may have opportunity to be saved (2 Pet. 3:9, 15); but now they are fast sinning away their days of grace, and hence the angel declares there shall be delay and opportunity no longer

(10:6).

64

John was about to repeat what the seven thunders had said when he was commanded by "a voice from heaven" to seal up "the things which had been uttered" (10:3, 4). To attempt, under these circumstances, to imagine what the words of the thunders were would be not only idle but also sacrilegious. It may be allowed us, however, to point out what is said in the Scripture about thunder and thundering to make one or two deductions from this. The word thunder, in its various forms, is used forty times in the Old and New Testaments. Ten of these are found in the book of the Revelation (4:5; 6:1; 8:5; 10:3, 4(2); 11:19; 14:2; 16:18; 19:6). In the Old Testament the word is generally associated with divine judgment, either as threatening or producing it, through the lightning which accompanies it (Exod. 9:23; 20:18; 1 Sam. 2:10; 7:10; 12:17, 18; 2 Sam. 22:14; Job 26:14; Ps. 18:13; 77:18; 78:48; Isa. 29:6). In the Revelation this seems always to be the case, the occasions when the word is used being those of judgments prophesied or expressed. When the word, in the Old or New Testaments, is connected with the voice of God, the suggestion is that of power and destruction (Job 37:4, 5; 40:9; Ps. 77:18; 104:7; Rev. 14:2). The sum total of scriptural evidence, therefore, is to the effect that God's thundering is expressive of His liberated wrath and vengeance upon sinful men. Hence, we may judge that the seven thunders of this tenth chapter (10:3, 4) represent the divine power which has already been put forth and which is about to be sent down from heaven in a devastating and destroying manner. Possibly the reason why God commanded the voice of the thunders to be sealed was in mercy to those saints who would read the Revelation record, since the full tale of woe would be too dreadful to be perused. If this is true, it follows that the portrayal of the judgments which follow in the vial and judgment periods is not complete but only partial.

65

In the conclusion which we are now considering and which is related to the thunder period (10:5-11; see the Analysis), there occurs a notable phrase which is to be most closely observed, for it is the key to a rightful interpretation of important events as recorded in the Revelation. This phrase is found in the words, "mystery of God" (10:7). The word mystery comes from the Greek noun *musterion*, which is derived from the verb *muo*, which signifies to shut the mouth. A mystery, therefore, is something unspoken, that is, it is a secret. From a scriptural standpoint, it is a divine thought, purpose or plan which is at first hidden and afterwards revealed (Rom. 11:25; 16:25; 1 Cor. 15:51; Eph. 1:9; 3:3, 4; 6:19; Col. 1:25-27), and which, being revealed, needs the further illumination and interpretation of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 11:25; Eph. 3:3-5; Col. 1:25-28; 4:3, 4). There is thus a mystery of evil, which includes that of iniquity (2 Thess. 2:7) and that of Babylon (Rev. 17:5, 7). There is also a mystery of good, which includes that of God (1 Cor. 4:1; Col. 2:2; Rev. 10:7); that of Christ (Eph. 3:4; Col. 1:26, 27); that of God's will (Eph. 1:29); that of God's wisdom (1 Cor. 2:7); that of the kingdom (Matt. 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10); that of Israel (Rom. 11:25); that of the church (Eph. 3:3; 5:22); that of the gospel (Rom. 16:25, 26; Eph. 6:19); that of faith (1 Tim. 3:9); that of godliness (1 Tim. 3:16) and that of Christ's coming (1 Cor. 15:51-53). Laying hold now upon those mysteries which are most central and important, it is rightful to say that the essential thought of God concerning mystery is related to Christ and the church. In reference to

these, it is clear from two passages (Eph. 3:4; Col. 1:26, 27) that Christ is the primary mystery, this as the Head of the members of His body; and it is equally clear from one passage (Eph. 3:3; 5:22) that the church is the secondary mystery, this as a body made up of Jews and Gentiles united together in the Spirit (Eph. 3:1-6). This review of Scripture brings us to the conclusion that the mystery of God spoken of in the tenth chapter is the church, and that the statement, "the mystery of God should be finished," refers to the completion of that body. If this is a correct deduction, it becomes plain that the church continues on earth up to the tenth chapter, and also, according to the words of the verse, unto "the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound" (10:7). In other words, it will be during the first portion of the sounding of the seventh trumpet that the last member of the body of Christ will be saved, and it will be at the same time that the Lord will return and call the living and dead saints to Himself. As the sound of the seventh angel takes place after the Antichrist has been revealed and during the days of the great tribulation, it becomes evident that the church is continued on earth up to and into the tragic events of the Antichrist's reign (11:15; 12:13-17). In confirmation of all of the above, it is instructive to note that the Greek verb here used for "finished" (10:7) is *teleo*, which means to bring the thing in mind, namely, the completion of the church, to a full end. This is the word, in its noun form, which the Lord uses in Matthew twenty-four to describe the same period of time and the same events of experience (Matt. 24:6, 13, 14).

66

The eating of the little book by John, recorded in the tenth chapter (10:10, 11), was a symbolic act with a great reality attached to it. The apostle was not the first who had been called upon to act his part in this manner, for nearly seven hundred years before Ezekiel had been bidden to eat the roll of the book (Ezek. 2:6-10). And the explanation of the one event is obtained from the other. This then is what Jehovah said to the old-time prophet: "And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear; for they are most rebellious--and when I looked, behold, a hand was sent unto me; and lo, a roll of a book was therein; and he spread it before me; and it was written within and without; and there was written therein lamentations and mourning and woe. Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll and go, speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth and he caused me to eat that roll. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness" (Ezek. 2:6, 7, 9, 10; 3:1-3). So now, the time of the new-time prophet has come and he too is bidden to eat the roll in the same manner and with the same results. In the mouth the words of the Lord are as sweet as honey. But in the belly they are very bitter. In other words, any and every saint soon finds that God's Word has both a subjective and objective effect. To feed upon it is always sweet; to declare it is often exceedingly bitter. And the most strange thing about it is that the centuries have produced no change in these respects. Whether it be Ezekiel, John, or ourselves, it is unchangeably the same. We delight in the Word which others hate, and others hate the Word in which we delight. Evidently then, particularly as related to the objective aspect, human hearts and conditions will remain altogether the same to the end. Back there, men hated the prophet who dared to prophesy according to the word of the Lord (1 Kings

22:1-8); and here, way down in the end-time, the message and the messenger are utterly despised and rejected (11:10). It is significant that John is bidden to eat the book representatively. That is, it was not only true that he himself was to prophesy over, or against "many peoples and nations and tongues and kings" (10:11), but also he stood for those who in the last three and a half years of this age were to do the same (14:6, 7). This means that the office of prophet will find new application and elevation in the days of the Antichrist, with the old-time conditions of suffering re-established and re-enforced (11:3-12; 14:6-12). And as it was in the case of Jeremiah, who was bidden to prophesy against stiff-necked Israel and who quietly replied, "Amen, O Jehovah!" (Jer. 11:1-5), so it will be in the last days. It is a blessed fact that there was never yet a people so hard of face that God did not send a prophet to it. And it is an equally blessed fact that there was never yet a time, however hard of face a people might be, but that God could find somewhere a prophet who was willing to go and speak to them. How great, then, is the grace of God; and also, how great is the honor, either in this day or another, to be bidden by Him, as John was, to eat the roll whether it be sweet or bitter, and especially when it is both.

67

The eleventh chapter begins the introduction to the vial and judgment periods (11:1 to 15:8; see the Analysis). It is the longest introduction found in the Revelation, covering chapters eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen. That this portion of Scripture is an introduction is proven by the fact that the next seventh division of the book, namely, that of the seven vials, does not begin until the second verse of the sixteenth chapter, which indicates that all which lies between the close of the thunder period (10:11) and the beginning of the vial period (16:1) is introductory to and explanatory of the last named period (see the Analysis). In addition, a close study of this long introduction reveals this fact, that it is introductory not only to the vial period but also to the judgment period which follows, the purview of the introduction reaching up to and including the events of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth chapters. We are to keep in mind as we pass onward in our studies, therefore, that what we find in this introduction is not the actual description of the events of the vial and judgment periods, but the divine, heavenly and spiritual foreview of the same. This understanding of the introduction will explain certain repetitions which occur as between the introduction and description, the one being a pre-statement of the other. Thus, for instance, we have in chapter fourteen--which is a part of the introduction--a portrayal of the coming of Christ (14:14-20), though this event does not actually take place in the development of the record until chapter nineteen (19:1-21). In our further study we shall keep these thoughts in mind, and our comments will be in accordance with them.

68

It seems plain, as has been already pointed out (see Paragraph 24), that the old-time setting of things, geographical, national and political, will again be in evidence in the last days of this present age. Indeed, this appears to be the setting of all prophecy, Old Testament and New. Whatever prophet may be speaking, he easily and almost imperceptibly passes from the historic to the prophetic, from the thing which is to that which will be, from that which is most ancient to that which will be most modern. This is notably the case in the eleventh chapter of Daniel, and even more notably in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew. And the

meaning of it is that the old represented the new and that the ancient is to be renewed in the modern. Does a prophet speak of Israel as being in Palestine and then suddenly pass to the last days (Isa. 1:21-24; 2:1-5)? Then, evidently, Israel is to be restored to the land before the last days come. Does another prophet speak of Babylon, saying that it will be destroyed forever, that it will never again be inhabited and that no Arab shall pitch his tent there (Isa. 13:17-22)? Then by the token of the fact, in spite of past destruction, that Arabs do now pitch their tents there and that the nations are presently planning to restore the great city, Babylon will be rebuilt and then again destroyed. Does another prophet say that in the last days "all nations" will be gathered together against Jerusalem and that at that time there will be a mighty earthquake (Zech. 14:1-4)? Then, as surely as history tells of but one nation besieging Jerusalem in the days of Titus and there being no accompanying earthquake, Jerusalem will be built up and established and again besieged and destroyed. Does Christ speak of "the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place" and foretell that immediately after this the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give her light (Matt. 24:15-29)? Then, as surely as no similar portents occurred when the holy place was desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes, so surely must another desecrator appear and the temple with its holy place be erected in order to make this profanation and its accompanying signs possible. And now does the angel bid John measure the temple of God and the altar, leaving out the court of the Gentiles (11:1,2)? Then, in the time contemplated by the Revelation, Jerusalem, the temple, the altar, the worship of Israel will be as they were, the old order being restored and renewed. In short, the geographic and historic setting of the day in which Christ lived and spoke and this Revelation was written will be completely re-established.

69

The instruction given to John to measure the temple, inclusive of the place occupied by its altar and worshippers (11:1), and the further instruction not to measure the outer court (11:2), implies that at the time in view the Jews have been restored to their land and city, Jerusalem has come again into prominence, the temple has been rebuilt, the old-time temple service has been renewed, and the distinction which existed in the Lord's day in regard to the temple as between Jews and Gentiles, there being a well-defined place for each, has been restored. This makes it clear--which the balance of the chapter confirms--that we are dealing with a scripture which is prophetically concurrent with Daniel 9:27 and Matthew twenty-four. Manifestly the last prophetic "week" has come, and indeed the last half of that "week," that is, the last three and a half years and hence old-time conditions, are again existing. Deriving our thought from Daniel 9:27, the Antichrist has restored the temple and its worship to the Jews--as Herod did in the past--and everything is thus prepared for the final scenes of apostasy on the part of Christless Jews and Gentiles, of faithful witnessing on the part of Christian Jews and Gentiles, and of the persecution of these last on the part of the Man of Sin. And the angel makes it plain to John how long the Gentiles, as empowered by the Antichrist, will tread under foot the court and the holy city, this being a space of forty-two months (11:2) or a thousand two hundred and threescore days (11:3), that is, three and a half years. All this is most important. The fact that the Gentiles are treading the temple court and holy city under foot (11:2) shows that the policy of the Antichrist has here changed from favor to disfavor. In other words, the middle of the prophetic "week" has been reached and the covenant with the Jews has been broken (Dan. 9:27); and the time mentioned, namely, forty-two months, indicates that the middle of the "week" has

been come to and that only three and a half years of Antichrist's activities remain to be fulfilled. We argue from this, and apparently with correctness, that we have now reached in the record the last half of the seven years, and that what follows--from this chapter to the end of the nineteenth--has to do with the closing years of the Man of Sin and the great tribulation which he brings upon the earth (Matt. 24:15-22). In other words--to repeat what was said in paragraph 60--the thunder period ran the dividing line between the first and last halves of the "week," and hence, succeeding events are the summing up of God's dealings with sinful men within the final space of the present dispensation.

70

The two witnesses (11:3-13) are probably Moses and Elijah. This conclusion is reached in view of the following scriptural indications: Moses and Elijah were the two witnesses who stood beside Christ on the mount of transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-4), and it is thus probable that they were the two who stood beside the apostles on the Mount of Olives at the time of the Lord's ascension (Acts 1:9-11). Again, the Old Testament prophesied that Elijah would return to earth before the coming of the Messiah (Mal. 4:5, 6), and while John the Baptist partly fulfilled this prophecy (Matt. 17:9-13; Luke 1:17), it is clear that he did not do so wholly (Matt. 11:13, 14), which indicates first, that the prophet will yet appear, and second, that there is no more likely place for him to do so than the one mentioned in this scripture. Again, both of these prophets have bodies, which make their prophesied martyrdom possible (11:7), Elijah never having lost his (2 Kings 2:11) and Moses having been given back his at the mount of transfiguration (Luke 9:30, 31; Jude 9). And finally, the record states that these prophets have power to shut the heaven that it rain not during the days of their prophecy (11:6), which Elijah did in his time (1 Kings 17:1; Jas. 5:17); and that they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to smite the earth with every plague (11:6), which Moses did in his (Exod. 7:17-21). If it finally proves true that Moses and Elijah are the two witnesses and thus that they revisit earthly scenes to lay down their lives in loving sacrifice to the Lamb of God, it will give us a new conception of the devotion of these saints, and also of the worthiness of Christ to receive the best which man may ever offer to Him.

71

It is evident from the mighty works which are performed by the two witnesses, recorded in the eleventh chapter (11:3-6), that prophetic and apostolic conditions in respect to signs and wonders are, during the last years of the present dispensation, to be largely restored. The scenes here described--the going forth of fire, the shutting of heaven, the turning of water into blood, and the smiting of the earth with plagues (11:5, 6)--remind one of Egyptian episodes and Palestinian experiences. There is, however, a noticeable difference between past manifestations and these, the present showing an increase in divine violence and destruction, this being particularly expressed by the words, "and to smite the earth with all plagues as often as they will" (11:6). The occasion of this supernatural manifestation is, unmistakably, the development of the power of the Antichrist, he having declared himself to be God (13:4-6) and his false prophet having performed many miracles in his behalf (13:11-15). God, therefore, more than duplicates these satanic displays, as He did in the time of Moses as related to Jannes and Jambres (2 Tim. 3:8); and thus he strengthens the faith of persecuted and faltering saints. But it turns out to be a serious matter to

witness against the Antichrist in the days of his permitted power, for the two prophets find that doing this, however great their miracle working, means the ultimate forfeiture of their lives. According to the record, when they have finished their testimony, the beast--the Antichrist--makes war against them, overcomes them and finally kills them, after which their bodies lie in the street of Jerusalem for three days and a half, while wicked men make merry over the fact that they have gotten rid of those who troubled them by their righteous words and acts. This rejoicing, however, is short-lived. For on the third day the Spirit of life from God enters into these martyred frames, they stand upon their feet, and, being called to heaven, they ascend thither in a cloud, all of their enemies beholding them (11:1-12). We have rehearsed these events in detail because it is wholesome for us to dwell upon them. It is well to be reminded, first, that God has not lost His ancient power and can display the same at any time He may please; second, that there is ever a limitation upon mortal man in what he may do and be permitted to do against God's saints, it being seen here that the prophets who are empowered to kill are finally themselves killed; third, that God is manifestly sovereign in all His ways, He making choice of His two witnesses, establishing them as miracle workers of the highest order for a time, and then suddenly appointing them to suffering and death; and lastly, that apparent defeat of good by evil is only apparent and not a reality, this triumphant Antichrist being permitted to work wickedness, but finding himself by so doing only the more deeply enmeshed within the divine toils. It is all a sad chapter so far as the experience of the saints is concerned, especially as coming late in their experience. But as it was in the past so it is here; the process is to be judged in view of its result, and while the one is dark the other is infinitely bright (Heb. 12:2; 2 Tim. 2:12; 1 Pet. 4:12-14; 2 Cor. 4:17. 18).

72

The sounding of the seventh trumpet in chapter eleven is referred to in verse fifteen (11:15). Its natural place would have been immediately after the sixth trumpet in the ninth chapter (9:13). But the supernatural Spirit puts it in this place, subsequent to the interjected portion, because the blowing of the seventh trumpet is introductory to the vial and judgment periods, each of these falling under this trumpet. We judge by this that the sounding of the seventh trumpet is not a short but a prolonged event, it being an episode of a major kind inasmuch as there are many important experiences connected with it. A deduction from this is that the phrase, "in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound" (10:7), does not imply that the "mystery" is finished at the first blast of the seventh trumpet, but rather at the commencement of its being blown as compared with its whole sounding. This commencement may be in itself a prolonged event, for the sounding reaches over both the vial and judgment periods, the last of which does not come to an end until the close of the millennium, as described in chapter twenty (see the Analysis). We judge, therefore, that we are reaching now, in the divine record, the most dramatic and tragic series of events which pertain to the years of the Antichrist, both in respect to the wicked and the righteous. As to the seventh trumpet (11:15), there is good reason to believe that it is the "trump of God" of 1 Thessalonians (4:16) and the "last trump" of 1 Corinthians (15:52), this conclusion being reached by keeping in remembrance that the safe rule of scriptural interpretation is to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture, and also by noting the fact that there is no other series of trumpets spoken of in the Scripture by which to interpret the passages mentioned except the one found in the Revelation. This conclusion confirms the thought, since the 1 Thessalonian and 1 Corinthians passages manifestly concern the body of Christ, that

the finishing of the mystery at the beginning of the sounding of the seventh trumpet (10:7) refers to the completion of the church.

73

According to the words which immediately follow the phrase "and the seventh angel sounded," God regards the sounding of that trumpet as that which leads up to and ushers in the millennial kingdom (11:15). Hence it is, that great voices in heaven declare that "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord, and his Christ" (11:15; see the Literal Translation). This does not mean that Christ's messianic kingdom actually comes here, for the subsequent record makes it plain that this event does not occur until the close of the nineteenth chapter. But, according to this divine foreview of events, God purposes under the seventh trumpet to establish the kingdom on earth, and, this being the case, He considers the thing as already done. Hence, he uses what grammarians call the historical present, putting the future tense into a present one, and thus speaking of a future event as a present fact. The strong trend of the following chapters, therefore, is toward the realization of kingdom events, everything moving precisely and rapidly to this end. All this explains what is described in the following verses (11:16-19). In these, the four and twenty elders fall upon their faces and worship God, giving Him thanks. In doing this they present as the reason of their adoration the fact that the Lord has taken to Himself His great power, and has reigned. They further state that the nations were angry, that God's wrath has come, that the time of the dead that they should be judged and that reward should be given to the prophets, the saints, and those that fear His name, small and great [has come]. And finally they assert that the time has arrived when God is about to destroy the earth (11:16-18). As will be seen, these phrases constitute a foreview of events which are described as taking place at the arrival of Christ (19:1-21). In other words, we are considering the introduction to a description which is given in a later portion of the book, whose view is through the remaining three and a half years and to the end of that period of time. Notable then, is the verse which follows. This portrays the temple of God as being opened in heaven, the ark of God's testimony as being located within the temple, and lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail as proceeding from heaven (11:19). These sights and sounds are God's token that the end of the dispensation is near at hand.

74

The twelfth chapter continues the introduction to the vial and judgment periods (see the Analysis). It begins by presenting to our view a great "wonder" (12:1). This leads us to observe, as introductory to the interpretation of this chapter, that there are three wonders spoken of in the Revelation. There is first, the wonder of the woman (12:1); second, the wonder of the dragon (12:3); and third, the wonder ("sign," in the Authorized Version) of the seven angels having the seven last plagues (15:1). The word "wonder" or "sign" is from the Greek *semeion*, which is derived from *semaino*, which is from *sema*, a mark. Thus *semeion* is an indication, and, scripturally speaking, a divine and supernatural one. Hence, it is a token, a miracle-sign, and thus a wonder. Now, all of these three signs come at the close of the prophetic "week," that is, within the space of the last three and a half years, when earthly events are rushing on under the divine impulse to their appointed end. They signify, therefore, that God is at this time interposing in the affairs of men in a new and striking way, making it plain to

all by their arresting vividness that the hour of judgment upon the wicked is drawing near and that the stroke of justice is about to fall. All this reminds us of Matthew twenty-four, where heavenly portents in the last three and a half years rapidly multiply leading up to the greatest of all signs, namely, that of the Son of Man (Matt. 24:29, 30). We are to understand then, that God is giving us in the twelfth chapter a heavenly portrayal of an important kind, presaging great events which are about to come to pass.

75

It is generally admitted that the interpretation of the twelfth chapter, particularly that of the woman sign (12:1, 2, 6), presents one of the most difficult of prophetic problems. The dragon sign does not offer any difficulty for it is divinely interpreted, the Spirit giving the information that this beast stands for the "old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world" (12:9). But no such interpretation is given concerning the woman sign, and we are thus left to our own consideration in seeking to understand the meaning of the same. In all pursuit of prophetic knowledge we are to avoid imagination and keep to interpretation. Let us note then what facts are before us in this chapter. First, the woman sign--and this is also true of the dragon sign (12:3)--is not in itself a reality but a sign of a reality, the sign being a vision and the reality being the object visioned. Second, the man-child which is born of the woman (12:5) is evidently Christ, for He alone is destined to rule all nations with a rod of iron (12:5; Ps. 2:9; Isa. 11:4; Rev. 2:2, 7; 19:15), and He alone was caught up to God and to His throne (12:5; Acts 1:9; 2:23, 24, 30; Rom. 6:4). Third, the woman in the first instance is the mother of Jesus, for it is affirmed that she brought forth the man-child (12:2, 5). Fourth, it is manifest that the woman, as the mother of Jesus, is to be regarded not so much from an individual standpoint as from a representative one, and therefore as a type, the "woman" afterwards flying into the wilderness (12:6), which was typically true of Mary (Matt. 2:11-15) but is here anti-typically true of those whom she represents, namely, the people in view in this chapter. Fifth, these last mentioned people are beyond doubt those who live in the time of the Antichrist and in the last years of his reign, for they are said to be persecuted by the Man of Sin for "a thousand two hundred and three score days," or three and a half years (12:3-6). Sixth, the people in mind are, like Mary, both Jews and Christians, being called "brethren" (12:10), overcoming "by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony" (12:10, 11), and being identified with those who "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (12:17). Seventh, the persons involved in the prevailing persecutions are driven out of Jerusalem and Palestine into other lands and among Gentile nations, this last being signified by the use of the word "wilderness" (12:6, 14), which is a word of contrast with the scriptural phrase which describes Palestine as "the land" (Gen. 12:1-7). Eighth, there are those among the nations who receive, hold and protect these Jewish Christians, saving many from death, which is portrayed by the phrases "they should feed her there" (12:6) and "the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth" (12:15, 16), this succoring going on for a "thousand two hundred and three score days" (12:6) and "a time, and times and half a time," or for three and a half years (12:14). And lastly, the persecuted saints are assisted, not alone by compassionate persons among the nations, but also by God Himself, this being indicated by the "two wings of a great eagle" (12:14), the eagle being the sign of the divine presence and empowering (Deut. 32:11, 12; Ps. 103:5; Isa. 40:31; Ezek. 1:10; 10:14; Rev. 4:7). All this reminds one of the latter part of Matthew

twenty-five (25:31-46), and gives us the true setting and explanation of that passage. And the whole, apparently, is the sign-evidence of what Jewish Christians will be in the day here in mind, that is, in the time of Antichrist's persecutions. Accepting then this interpretation of the sign of the woman, we may understand that God purposes to make these Jewish Christians, as the doers of God's will in the midst of great tribulation, His highly exalted ones, adorned with heavenly glory, having power over every natural force, and regnant with Himself over all places and dominions, these things being betokened by the symbolism of the first verse (12:1). We thus learn from this twelfth chapter that earthly experiences, as related to the saints, are set forth as drawing rapidly to an end, for the sign is the assurance that now, in a little while the Tarrying One will come (Heb. 10:37), will rescue His darling from the lions (Ps. 35:17), and will place her on high, His bride, wife, co-heir and co-ruler (2 Cor. 11:2; Rom. 8:17; Rev. 19:7; 20:4, 6). It is significant that there was given at the beginning of the Revelation a vision of Christ as highly exalted and dominant (1:9-20); and that here in the middle of the book, concurrent with the self-deification of the Antichrist and the most fearful of his persecutions, a vision is granted of the church, especially the Jewish portion of it, as likewise exalted and dominant (12:1). Such an identification in glory and power between the Head and the members is deeply humbling, and at the same time marvelously heartening.

76

Keeping in mind that the ascended Christ is the author of the Revelation (1:1), it is evident that He believes in the glory as He did on earth that Satan is a real and demoniacal person (12:7-9). According to the record, this august but dreadful being moves to and fro in the evil drama and tragedy of these scenes, the most potent and sinister personage to be observed. His name, in its several forms, actually occurs thirty times, and there is scarcely a chapter wherein his dreadful face is not seen, either in the foreground or background. As elsewhere in Scripture (Job 1:6; Eph. 2:2; 6:12), he has set his throne only a little below that of God and he dominates the forces of evil spirits with master-mind and almost infinite power (Eph. 6:10-12). In the closing scenes, he produces as a last master-stroke a trinity of evil in imitation of the Trinity of good, himself in the place of God, the Antichrist in the place of Christ, and the false prophet in the place of the Holy Spirit; and strangely enough, where men have found it impossible to believe in the divine Trinity, they seem to have no difficulty in accepting this satanic one (13:1-15). But according to the revelation, Satan, here as ever, can never go beyond the length of his chain. There is One whose throne is above his own, whose mind and power are wholly infinite, who dominates evil forces as well as good, and who, at last, brings this monster of iniquity to his knees and casts him down forever (12:7-9; 20:1-3, 7-10). In view of the Devil's end, it is finally seen that the worst that he can do to the one whose life is hid in Christ--as Jesus said (Matt. 10:28)--is to destroy his body; and even this he fails to do in the ultimate sense, for the visions of this book pierce beyond the veil and reveal, at last, all of the saints, including the martyr throng, in glorified bodies and bearing the image of God (21:3-5).

77

It is to be kept in view, in reading the twelfth chapter, that Satan's present dwelling place is not Hades but heaven. This accounts for the war between Michael and his angels and the dragon and his angels being fought in heaven (12:7-12). In

corroboration of this it is to be observed that the Spirit declares that Satan is the prince of the power of the air, which is heaven (Eph. 2:2), and that the principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, and wicked spirits are all located with him in heavenly places (Eph. 6:12 R.V.). The heaven which Satan and his followers occupy is not the first one of the clouds (Acts 1:9), nor the third one where Christ is and to which Paul went (2 Cor. 12:24)--which is the highest one (Eph. 4:10)--but that one which lies between these two, where the planets circle in their courses and which the Spirit calls the "air" (Eph. 2:2; 1 Thess. 4:7; Rev. 9:2; 17:17). It is to this place, then, that God sends Michael and his angels and where the great, heavenly battle is waged (12:7). The divine purpose of the battle is to dispossess Satan and his angels of their high vantage place, where they have ruled over the affairs of this earth so long and successfully (2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2), and thus to cast them down first to earth (12:9, 12), afterwards into the abyss (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:3), and finally into the lake of fire (20:10). These last statements make it manifest that God preserves His right of choice in act and process to the end of His dealings with Satan and his angels. Thus, though he has allowed him and them to exist and largely to have their way for thousands of years past, He now deals with them in judgment, not in an instant of time, but gradually, in successive stages, and only finally when He has accomplished through them great and time-consuming events of judgment toward men which it is His purpose to bring to pass. Satan has pitched his throne high, but God has placed His higher. Satan is mighty, but God is Almighty. Satan can destroy, but God can destroy the destroyer. Satan is free, but God will shut him in, at last, so he may never more harm or even touch His holy ones. In His own time, therefore, God will indisputably enthrone Himself by indisputably dethroning Satan. All this was the vision Christ had when He was on earth, when He said, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:18); and again, "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John 12:31); and again, "The prince of this world is judged" (John 16:11). To the eternal Christ, Satan's downfall was already visible and accomplished. But for mortal men, time had to pass. So it is that it is here, in this twelfth chapter and in these last three and a half years of the reign of the Antichrist, that the event is seen as actually accomplished. But even here, it is to be remembered, we have only the introductory foreview of the event. The real fulfillment of it is later, in the vial period, which is described from the beginning of the sixteenth chapter onward.