

BIBLE STUDIES

"Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17. **11**)

A STUDY OF REVELATION

Chapters 1-11

NOTES ON THE PSALMS

VOLUME **40**

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ERRATUM

Page 174, line 18: "sixth seal" should read "sixth trumpet".

BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11).'

VOLUME 40

JANUARY, 1972

EDITORIAL

By the time this first number of *Bible Studies* 1972 appears in print fellow-students in study groups will be well immersed in our exploration together of the first eleven chapters of Revelation, and already, we should hope, be finding both a challenge and a blessing in so doing. No doubt we often wish that publication of the magazine could approximate more closely in time to the group's study of the particular month's passage or subject. Unfortunately editorial processing cannot be speeded up further in this kind of work, but perhaps groups who have not previously done so might consider devoting a little time each month to relating their earlier discussion of a subject to printed contributions in the magazine. In this way the group may glean more from looking at other students' views and comments than purely individual reading would afford. It may also stimulate more written debate on points raised, something which editors would welcome.

Because of the obviously inherent difficulties of interpretation of the Revelation, some expositions over the years have tended to construct very rigid patterns of interpretation. Thus we find cropping up in commentaries such terms as "preterist", relating the book exclusively to the period in which it was written; "futurist", relating it equally entirely to end-time events after the first three chapters; and there are other terms. Whilst the latter concept mentioned may strike us as much nearer the truth than the former, we are probably well advised to avoid such rigid frames of reference and to remember that the unveiling of Jesus Christ is the theme of this book, and its message "what the Spirit saith to the churches". Helps in the form of the fruit of others' studies cannot be neglected here, but we must also strive for an ever fresh spirit of submission to the Holy Spirit for guidance through a study at once perplexing and spiritually exciting. As ever, the most arduous labour offers the choicest rewards.

J. D. T.

JOHN THE APOSTLE

Of the early years of John the apostle the Scriptures furnish no definite information, but we know that he and his brother James were sons of Zebedee, a fisherman on the sea of Galilee; and that before the Lord called them they worked with their father as fishermen (Mark 1. 16-20). Zebedee had hired servants, and so was apparently sufficiently prosperous to engage labour. Also, the standing of the family may be indicated by the fact that John was known to the high priest (John 18. 15). These considerations suggest that John was brought up in a fairly prosperous family in comfortable circumstances.

John's mother would appear to have been a disciple of the Lord Jesus, for she asked that the Lord should command that "these my two sons may sit, one on Thy right hand, and one on Thy left hand, in Thy kingdom" (Matt. 20. 20-23). She was ambitious that her sons should advance in spiritual things and be prominently placed in the kingdom. However injudicious her request may have been, she must, at least, be credited with godly concern for those near to her by natural ties. To that extent she is worthy of commendation: we today ought to be much concerned about the spiritual progress of our younger ones in the churches of God. Comparison of Matt. 27. 56 with Mark 15. 40 and 16. 1 would suggest that Salome, one of the women that loved the Lord Jesus and ministered to Him, was the mother of John, and, if John 19. 25 refers to four women, she may well have been the sister of Mary the mother of the Lord. If this reading of these scriptures is sound, John may well have enjoyed the love of the Lord Jesus for some considerable time before he was called to discipleship.

John is commonly taken to have been a mild and gentle person, but it is not without significance that the Lord called James and John "sons of thunder" (Mark 3. 17). With this we should associate the fact that John was one of those who sought to silence one who cast out demons in the Lord's name but did not follow with them (Luke 9. 49). John, further, was one of those who spoke of calling down fire from heaven to consume the inhospitable Samaritans (Luke 9. 51-56). There was then an impetuous and severe trait in John's character, at least in his earlier years. But when we examine John's writings, he appears to us as a man of loving disposition and who rejoiced in the love of his Lord, an unmistakeable

evidence that John's character was much mellowed by his close walk with the Lord.

It is reckoned that John lived to a very ripe old age; even so, the dates commonly advanced as the probable time of his death suggest that he was called to discipleship as a very young man (perhaps a little over twenty years of age). If Acts 1. 21, 22 is a statement of necessary qualifications for apostleship, then John must have been baptized by John the Baptist, and would be one of those awaiting the coming of the Christ; hence his readiness to follow at once when John the Baptist said, "Behold, the Lamb of God" (John 1. 35-40). We know that Andrew was one of the two of John's disciples who followed Jesus on that day (John 1. 40), and there can be little doubt that John was the other, for it is characteristic of John that he avoids specifically naming himself, preferring to use such terms as "another disciple" and "the disciple whom Jesus loved". John's formal call to discipleship was later (Mark 1. 19, 20), and is an instance of what the Lord said about the Good Shepherd, for there we see the Good Shepherd calling His sheep by name, and the sheep, knowing the Voice, followed the Shepherd (John 10).

Soon after John's call to apostleship (Mark 3. 77), the outstanding place among the apostles that was to be his became apparent. He is, on certain occasions, seen as one of three to whom the Lord gave prominent place. With Peter and James he witnessed the raising of Jairus's daughter (Mark 5. 37), the transfiguration of the Lord (Mark 9. 2) and the agony of the Lord in Gethsemane (Matt. 26. 37; Mark 14. 33). As one of the favoured four (Andrew being the fourth) he was present when the Lord prophesied on the mount of Olives (Mark 13. 3-8). As one of two, Peter and himself, John followed the Lord Jesus to the house of Caiaphas after the betrayal (John 18. 75), and was therefore a witness of some at least of the indignities suffered by the Lord at the hands of the Jews and Romans. The same two, on hearing from Mary Magdalene, ran to the tomb and found it empty, and thus were among the first to learn the good news that the Lord was risen indeed (Luke 24. 34). Peter and John are again seen acting together in the healing of the lame man and in suffering the consequent persecution (Acts 3 and 4). We note too that they were later sent to Samaria to further the work of the Lord there (Acts 8.

14-25). There is no need further to multiply instances; but we should observe that, as can be seen in such passages as these and Acts 15 and Gal. 2. 1-10, the position of these outstanding men amongst the apostles did not change after the Lord had ascended to the Father (though it should be observed that in the last two references James is the Lord's brother, not the son of Zebedee). During the days of His presence the Lord had made clear indication of His chosen vessels and their special responsibilities, and after the Lord was taken up the Lord's choice was honoured among the saints. We do well to follow that pattern. If it is shown that a man is called and fitted of God for responsible service in His house, we should recognize the work of the Lord the Spirit in that man and do all in our power to facilitate his work for God.

God has given us through John a considerable portion of the New Testament, consisting of the Gospel that bears his name, three brief epistles and the Revelation. The second and third epistles are very brief personal letters to fellow-believers with whom John shared a loving concern for the spiritual welfare and progress of others. The first epistle is general in character and longer than the others; like them, it is in harmony with John's Gospel. They are all palpably by the same writer, obviously a man well acquainted with the Old Testament Scriptures (Hebrew version rather than Septuagint), and having an intimate knowledge of Jerusalem and of the Holy Land. Consequently, though his Gospel consists largely of the Lord's discourses, the presentation remains graphic. A like principle applies to our preaching of the gospel today: it will gain much in every way if we have a full knowledge of the Scriptures and a clear vision of the cross of Christ. In his Gospel and his three epistles John appears to be a single-minded believer in God and His Christ. As led of the Spirit he uses the simplest of language to express some of the most profound teachings of the Scriptures, and the reader gathers the distinct impression that the writer has accepted these deep things with all the simplicity of a child in its unquestioning trust in its parents. This tone of high faith is seen too in the Revelation, which provides the little that we know from Scripture of the end of John's life. By the time the Revelation was shown to him, he was an aged man, of high standing in the Fellowship, suffering persecution and bonds for the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 1. 9). But prison bonds cannot hinder divine revela-

tion, and so there was delivered that wonderful message for the seven churches in the Roman province of Asia and for us today.

Such then was John the apostle; a man fitted of the Lord to bear outstanding responsibility among God's people, a man to whose care the dying Lord could trust His beloved mother (John 19. 27), a man happy to call himself in truth "the disciple whom Jesus loved".

J. Baird

A STUDY OF REVELATION

CHAPTER 1

From Tees side, —Consideration of this book must first begin with the title. This *is* obtained not by inspiration but by tradition. The Revisers in our present version expressly state that it was not part of their remit to revise the titles of the New Testament books, so they are still as given in the Authorised Version of 1611. (We noted that the revelation was not *of* John, but *unto* John, as indicated in verse 1.) "Revelation", derived from Latin, means *un-veiling*, and another old title was "The Apocalypse", from the Greek, meaning *an uncovering*. These hidden things unveiled to John for the benefit of the churches are the subject which we shall consider in coming months. The noun *revelation* is peculiar to the New Testament and is used for the disclosure of divine things by the Father, the Son or the Spirit; concerning things previously unknown, duty specially required (Gal. 2. 2), or the manifestation of persons or events previously concealed. This latter is the meaning in our study book. The book is addressed by John to the seven churches in Asia. The "seven" may signify all the churches that remained in existence at this time (stated by some to be A. D. 69 or A. D. 96, depending on different assessments of external and internal evidence). On the other hand, the *seven* may signify completeness, indicating that the book was for the whole church. [Comment 1]

The Lord's appearance was of One exalted and glorified, not the lowly Man of Sorrows. We considered that the feet of burnished brass were, however, a reminder of the Lord's path on earth, where He was tried, as in a furnace, and came forth purified. [See Comment 4]

The seven lampstands, it was agreed, represented the seven churches, with the Lord in the midst of them. The precise meaning

of "the angels of the seven churches" we could not determine, various suggestions being made but none being more than tentative. Discussion also centred on whether the lampstands were seven-branched (as in the Tabernacle and Temple) or single-branched as representing a single church. Lack of evidence curtailed this line of thought also [See answer to Question from Derby],

W. C. Taylor

From Birkenhead, —It appears that John was not in the Isle of Patmos by his own choice, but had been placed there because of his preaching of the Word of God. Whilst he was there he became "in the Spirit". This experience was considered to be something comparable with that of Stephen in Acts 7. 55 when he saw things not visible to those around [See Comment 5]. This is the only occurrence in Scripture of the phrase "the Lord's day" and although we have come to use this term for the first day of the week, it seems that Scriptural support for this is lacking. We need to rely on secular history which shows that the link between the two is apparent in writings in the second century. Two theories that we discounted were (i) that this phrase could refer to our experience at the Remembrance and (ii) that an alternative reading for "the Lord's day" could be "the day of the Lord" [Comment 2].

The Lord was seen moving amongst the lampstands and in this central position was able to see all that was going on. His appearance was such that John fell at His feet. The long garment gave us the thought of His perfect love and authority; He was "girt about at the breasts" indicative of affection; perfect holiness is brought to mind by the white head and hair; the eyes indicate His perfect knowledge; the feet of smoothly polished brass speak of perfect judgement and can be linked in thought with the altar of burnt offering. His right hand holding the stars shows Him exercising control over the churches. The sharp sword represents truthfulness.

The seven golden lampstands were seven churches (verse 20). They were linked together and yet had individual responsibility. A lampstand is that which holds the lamp in a set place and allows the light to shine out to the world around. We linked this with the thought in Phil. 2. 75 which declares the saints to be lamps. Accepting these thoughts made it impossible for us to associate the lampstands of Rev. 1 with the golden lampstand found in the tabernacle, since the light of this was not seen by those outside.

The Lord in the midst is the One who is able to remove the lampstand. It was noticed that the Lord may cease to recognize a church of God before those in other churches are aware of the decline which has taken place. This may well account for no letter to the churches at Colossae, Troas or Hierapolis [Comment 3].

R. D. Williams, A. Hyland

From Methil. —Revelation is a revealing or uncovering. This is the revelation of Jesus Christ to John the apostle while he was a prisoner on the isle of Patmos. He was there for the Lord's sake, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

John says, "I was in the Spirit in the Lord's day". We would understand that the Lord's day is the first day of the week, and not the Day of the Lord. John was in such a condition, "in the Spirit", that he could receive this first vision of the Lord. (John's perception of Jesus of Nazareth was vastly transformed.) It was His voice that made him turn, and then he saw the Son of Man, not the humbled Man of Philippians 2 but a glorified Man, seen now perhaps as the Shepherd-King. His head and his hair were white as white wool, reminding us of the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7. 9). This was the One who was constantly the I AM, the same yesterday, today, and for ever (Heb. 13. 8). His *eyes were* as a flame of fire. He is the Light of the world; in Him was no darkness. His feet like unto burnished brass speak of judgement; yet He was girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle, revealing divine affection. Out of His mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword, the word of God (Eph. 6. 17).

In the presence of such majesty John fell down at His feet until the Lord raised him up saying, "Fear not; I am the first and the last". Only God the Son could say that. "I was dead" refers to past sufferings, whereas "Behold, I am alive for evermore" refers to the glorious and resurrected life.

The Lord was in the midst of the seven golden lampstands, the churches of God in Asia. Possibly these were the only churches of God in existence by A. D. 90. Seven speaks of divine unity. We thought that the seven stars, representing angels (messengers) would be the correspondents of the churches. John was instructed to write to them the things that he had seen (past) and the things which are (present) and the things which shall come to pass hereafter (future).

Neville Coomer

From Melbourne. —To whom more appropriately than to John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, could have been revealed the glory of the One upon whose breast, in the days of His flesh, that disciple had leaned in holy intimacy?

Before the majesty which causes heavenly beings to veil their faces and cry "Holy, Holy, Holy" John had no such means of covering and fell at His feet as one dead. But the grace and compassion of the Lord was sufficient to reassure him and enable him to stand in His presence. Thoughts of wonder must have flooded the mind of the aged apostle as he looked upon the One with whom he had walked and conversed in close communion, whom he had seen scourged, then nailed to a felon's cross; whom he had seen and with whom he had conversed in resurrection. Great assurance must have been his as he heard Him say in a voice as the sound of many waters, "Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades".

The description of this One as given by John was calculated to cause great searchings of heart on the part of those who were in the seven churches of Asia, and also by all who would thereafter read that which he was instructed to write.

We suggest that here He is revealed as the Great Priest over the house of God, walking in the midst of the churches. He is clothed in a garment down to the foot, and girt about the breasts with a golden girdle, thus engaged in actual ministry on behalf of His people. The girdle worn by the ordinary priests on their robe, or coat, and that worn by the high priest on the robe of the ephod during ministration (apart from the high priest on the Day of Atonement) was worn around the breast, and not upon the loins. The expression "golden girdle" appears to be a further indication of His high priestly work, as the garments worn by the high priest on all occasions, save that noted above, have been called "the golden vestment".

His head and His hair as white wool, would be indicative of the majestic One described in Dan. 7. 9 as "the Ancient of Days". As He walks in the midst of the churches, His eyes are as a flame of fire, reminding His people that "all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do". Nothing can be hidden from those eyes. They penetrate to the innermost

thoughts that prompt the actions. Things hidden from the eyes of others and thought to be secret are laid bare before those eyes. This was made manifest as He analysed the spiritual condition of the churches one by one. His feet were like unto burnished brass (or copper). This metal is usually associated with the thought of judgement; and judgement must begin at the house of God (1 Peter 4. 17). There was sin in the churches of Asia, calling for judgement, and it had not been executed. Therefore the One whose feet were as burnished copper had to step in and execute it. The sharp sword proceeding out of His mouth describes the Word of God, by means of which He will judge and smite the nations; but as judgement begins among His people, it must first be used there by Him. That Word is quick and powerful, or living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and is quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. His countenance was as the sun shining in its strength. Who could look thereon? Moses was told, as he pleaded to be permitted to see the glory of the God of Israel, "No man can see Me and live". It was no wonder that John fell on his face! The description of the awful majesty of Him whom he saw in glory forms a solemn preface to the book about to be sent to the churches. In that preface is emphasized the grace and reverence needed by those who would serve Him in His dwelling place.

T. W. Fullerton

From Glasgow (Parkhead).—In his brief introduction the apostle John describes the book as "the Revelation of Jesus Christ". The personal name and official title joined together had become the most commonly used designation of the Lord among the early disciples, displacing the single name "Jesus" of the Gospels. John goes on to describe Him as "the faithful witness", "the firstborn of the dead" and "the ruler of the kings of the earth" (Rev. 1. 5). The triple title applied to Christ corresponds to the three basic ideas of the Book, "Christ the revealing Prophet, the life-giving High Priest, and the real Ruler of mankind" (Ellicott's Commentary).

(1) *Faithful Witness*—He who, as the Eternal Son, alone knows the Father, came to reveal Him (Matt. 11. 27), and in this title John affirms that our Lord indeed fulfilled that purpose, not only in respect of this revelation, but as concerning the whole truth of God. John's first emphasis, at the very beginning of the revelation

of Jesus Christ, is that He came from the Father to make Him fully known, and that He perfectly did so.

(2) *Firstborn of the dead*—Others before Jesus had been raised from the dead, but none to *eternal life* and none as the life-giving One (1 Cor. 15. 45; Col. 1. 18). In this arresting phrase, the apostle declares that He triumphed over death as Man, in order to share that triumph with man, so that men who are dead in trespasses and sins can find eternal life in Him.

(3) *As Ruler of the kings of the earth*—Absolute sovereignty is claimed for Him, not only in the age to come, but now; He is Ruler of the kings of the earth (Rom. 13. 1). The whole Revelation foretells His future dominion over all; but it also underlines the teaching of the entire Scriptures, that even now, "He is Lord of all" (Acts 10. 36). It is by Him that kings reign, and through all the tangled web of human history He is effecting his sovereign will. This glorious One is also He that loved us and washed (or probably more correctly "loosed" as in R. V.) us from our sins by His own blood.

(4) *Alpha and Omega, the first and the last* (Rev. 1. 11 in A. V.) This is one of the several titles ascribed in this book both to God the Father, and to Christ (1. 8; 2. 8; 21. 6; 22. 13). He who is the First and the Last is our eternal unchangeable Lord. By His grace we fallen creatures receive, through faith, the gift of everlasting life and the assurance of an eternal inheritance among the saints in light (Col. 1. 12; Heb. 9. 15). *Fred Harvey*

IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

Papers were also received from Aberkenfig and Barry, Atherton and Leigh, Birmingham, Crowborough, Denmark Hill, Derby, Nottingham, Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria B. C., and the following are impressions from these.

Rev. 1. 5-6, 17-18 present Christ in three-fold descriptions. Firstly He is the faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. The second grouping presents Him as the lover of men, the cleanser of sins, and the establisher of the kingdom of priests. Moreover, He is the first and last, the Living One that was dead, and the holder of the keys of death and Hades. The first statement in each of these triplets is one of eternal nature.

The second expression takes us to the supreme phase of Christ's life, as far as man is concerned, His death and resurrection.

The description "faithful Witness" may direct our attention to the years of our Lord's ministry on earth, yet as the eternal Word He expressed God in the creation. Hence it was suggested that the witness of Christ is wider than His earthly testimony.

Consideration was given to the nature of John's experience in verses 9-20. On the basis of Acts 3. 21 and Rev. 1. 9, 12, 17 it was concluded by some that the Lord Jesus was in heaven, while John was physically on earth, but received a very vivid spiritual vision of the exalted Lord. As one of the writers of the sacred Scriptures, John received revelation here in a particularly wonderful way, which could perhaps be compared with the vision (Dan. 10. 5) given to Daniel, also a man greatly beloved. It was observed that the phrase "in the Spirit" refers to the Holy Spirit, but the phrases "baptized in the Spirit", "filled with the Spirit", and "He shall be in you" do not appear to be synonymous with it. The experiences of Ezekiel (Ezek. 1. 1, 3. 12) and Paul (2 Cor. 12) were considered similar. Again the phrase "in the Spirit" was seen to be different from the constant indwelling of the Holy Spirit as seen in 1 Cor. 6. 19 and from being born of the Spirit (John 3. 6) and "in the Spirit" (Rom. 8. 9) which take place at salvation and are once for all. John's heart and mind were in tune with the Spirit of God, and the same expression appears again in Rev. 4. 2, 17. 3, 21. 10.

The words "for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (verse 9) were explained in two ways; that John was banished to Patmos because of his faithful witness; or the words may also describe the purpose of his sojourn, that he might receive the revelation of the word and testimony.

John had reclined on Jesus' bosom, but before the majestic figure now presented to him, he fell as one dead. The Lord's appearance here would accord with the One who is a Judge not only to the churches, but also as in Rev. 19. 11-16 (cf. Isa. 11. 3).

Some features of the presentation of the Lord in Rev. 1. 9-20 were thought to be symbolic rather than literal. In connection with the figurative symbol of the lampstands we see Christ in the midst of the churches, as it were overseeing their activities. None escape His notice or His guidance. The lampstands are luminaries (c. f.

Phil. 2. 15) and the illumination comes from the Spirit of God. In this chapter we see the close association of the Lord with divine testimony on earth. Who would tend the lamps but the One walking in the midst?

The descriptive sequence in verses 13-16 is not from head to feet, but begins with the breast, the seat of affection and of love (see Rev. 3. 9), though some suggest love restrained. An alternative idea was expressed that the golden girdle represents judgement controlled.

Although the seven churches had been established through the labours of men such as Paul, yet the Lord could claim absolute authority over them and had the right to hold them responsible to Himself for their actions. The fact that we have yielded ourselves to His lordship is regarded very seriously. As Son over God's house, He channelled His words to the churches through John and the "angels of the seven churches". John was a partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and patience in Jesus, the fellowship of whose sufferings is the experience of those who truly seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness (see Acts 14. 22).

Some thought of the garment as portraying the Lord's righteous character, an attribute precious to those for whom He laboured. The whiteness of His head and His hair seemed to represent pureness of mind such as to demand respect, and a maturity of thought in accord with His character as the Ancient of Days.

His eyes with their searching gaze (Rev. 2. 18, 23) penetrated to the truth, as does His holy Word (Heb. 4. 25), which is the basis of true judgement, being represented here by the two-edged sword. His feet of burnished brass speak of walking in righteous judgement, proved in its refinement and enduring unaltered. The voice was one of divine glory (Ezek. 43. 2), and of impelling force when uttered in judgement (cf. Heb. 12. 20).

The stars, representing the angels of the seven churches, were taken to be men, and the fact that the stars were in His right hand shows His authority over the churches. His countenance once so marred was overpowering in its majesty (cf. Acts. 26. 13).

One paper referred interestingly to the three main parts of the Lord's person: - His head (mind); His body, or torso (emotions); and His extremities (action). *Eds.*

THE LORD'S DAY

The word translated "Lord's" is an adjective in Greek (*kuriakos*). This Greek word appears only in 1 Cor. 11. 20 and in Rev. 1. 10. The first day of the week was called the Lordly day because of its association with the Lord's resurrection, and the eating of the Lord's supper is proper to the Lord's day. This day was especially precious to John because in it he "saw and believed" (John 20. 8). The use of the adjective in Greek sets the "Lord's day" apart from the expression "the Day of the Lord", which always has a noun in the possessive case, but not an adjective. E. Archibald

COMMENTS

1. (*Teesside*): Is there not some danger in suggesting some kind of symbolic significance in either the number of the churches or their state? This is touched on elsewhere and may arise further next month. Also the expression "the whole church" raises the question of the validity of so designating the community of the churches of God; they did not comprise the entire Church (Body of Christ). J. D. T.

2. (*Birkenhead*): See above note on "The Lord's Day" by E. Archibald. Help will also be found in a fuller treatment of the subject by our late brother S. Burrows (B. S. 1952 Volume, page 108). Presumably our friends mean that the expression "in the Spirit" does not refer in an identical sense to our experience in the weekly remembrance of the Lord Jesus. It is generally understood that this does take place on the Lord's Day. G. P. Jr.

3. (*Birkenhead*): Acts 20. 6, 7 and Col. 4. 13 would certainly seem to indicate that there were churches of God in existence in Troas and Hierapolis, both in Asia, and their rejection as such by the Lord prior to the Revelation seems equally indicated. J. D. T.

4. (*Teesside*): Most contributors have related the feet of bur-nished brass to the Lord's work of judgement among His people (cf. 1 Peter 4. 17). This view does seem more consistent taking the passage as a whole. For most features of the Lord's appearance are related to His exaltation, and it seems out of harmony to isolate one feature and link this with His earthly experience.

Great care is also needed in referring to the Lord. In what sense did He "come forth purified"? There was nothing in Him that needed to be purified. We are sure that our friends are clear about this, and perhaps may have in mind such a scripture as Heb. 5. 8 But this deals with the Lord's experience in obedience as Jehovah's Servant, it does not imply purification. *G. P. Jr.*

5. (*Birkenhead*): See "Impressions" for suggestion that Ezekiel and Paul also had comparable experiences.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

From Birkenhead: Does Rev. 1. 2 refer us back to John's previous writings in his Gospel?

We could readily agree with the suggestion advanced from Birkenhead that this is indeed a reference back to John's gospel record; all, of course, on the assumption that the gospel of John was written before the Revelation! The varied dates advanced for the writing of both books leaves this uncertain. Otherwise Rev. 1. 2 could simply refer to John's faithful recording of the Revelation itself. *J. D. T.*

From Birmingham: We were interested in the significance of the golden girdle about the breasts. Would this speak of restrained compassions?

Would not gold speak of what is pure and enduring, here associated with the seat of love and compassion? The latter are infinite for His own but cannot be fully expressed or appreciated when the divine standard has been breached. This is seen in the messages to the churches. *J. D. T.*

From Derby: The lampstand described in detail in Exodus 25 and 37 with its central shaft and three branches on either side carrying the seven lamps is the only authentic pattern in Scripture. Does the centre shaft speak of Christ, the six speaking of saints (although this number may have no bearing on the number of saints in the assembly, but rather signifies something divinely complete) ?

The essential nature (gold) and purpose (testimony) of a lampstand are common to the lampstand in the tabernacle and to those depicted here, with the individual saint perhaps suggested by the

lamps on the stand. It is more questionable, however, whether it is valid to regard the tabernacle lampstand as a direct type of a church of God (see Birkenhead paper). Its position, purpose and significance in the array of tabernacle furniture have been variously viewed.

J. D. T.

From Aberkenfig and Barry: Were there only seven recognized churches in existence at this time? It seems from secular history that there were other churches in existence. Do we assume that God had withdrawn His recognition of the other churches?

It is hard to reach any other conclusion but that there were only seven churches *in Asia*, recognized by the Lord as such. They were of varying spiritual condition and all existing churches would surely be in the same need of encouragement if not of warning. The expression "the seven churches" (1. 4, 11) seems pretty conclusive [see Comment 3]. The same case is probably also sound in respect of churches elsewhere at this time. It is hard to visualize the Lord "in the midst of the lampstands", presenting so vividly His central relationship with them, yet with the number incomplete. The impending fearful dangers, whether as physical persecution or doctrinal assaults in the form of heresies, threatened the entire Roman-dominated world. It seems right to assume that companies would exist from which divine recognition had been withdrawn. *J. D. T.*

PSALM 69 (*continued*)

They gave Me also gall for My meat;

And in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink (verse 21).

These words had their fulfilment at the Cross. In Matthew 27. 33, 34 we read, "And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, The place of a skull, they gave Him wine to drink mingled with gall: and when He had tasted it, He would not drink". It is said that the gall was to deaden the pain of the crucifixion. Then in John 19. 28-30 we read, "After this Jesus, knowing that all things are now finished, that the scripture might be accomplished, saith, I thirst. There was set there a vessel full of vinegar: so they put a sponge full of the vinegar upon hyssop, and brought it to His mouth. When Jesus therefore had received

the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit". This is yet another proof that this psalm is a psalm of the Christ.

Let their table before them become a snare;
 And when they are in peace, let it become a trap.
 Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not;
 And make their loins continually to shake.
 Pour out Thine indignation upon them,
 And let the fierceness of Thine anger overtake them
 (verses 22, 23, 24).

Some have taken exception to words like these, supposing that God will for ever act in mercy and grace, but He says, "Vengeance belongeth unto Me; I will recompense, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12. 19). Scripture is replete with prophecies that God will in due time deal in wrath with the wicked who in their life refused His mercy and carried on the persecution of His saints. Men will assuredly reap what they sow. God has provided salvation for all, free of all cost to men, but this gift many will not accept. The table of the wicked is both a snare and a trap, but while they would snare and trap others, their reward will be that their loins will continually shake, and God will pour out His indignation and fierce anger upon them.

J. M.

BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11).'

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EDITORIAL

To Joram's question, "Is it peace?" (2 Kin. 9. 22) Jehu replied, "What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?" There could be no rest for Israel until the vileness of Jezebel and her descendants had been expunged by the execution of every member of that evil family (1 Kin. 21. 20-26). In the singular ferocity of the divinely foretold punishment Scripture emphasizes, for our instruction, God's extreme displeasure at the importation into Israel of foreign deities and depraved religious practices. So great was the danger of these alien policies that the very throne of David in Jerusalem was gravely threatened (2 Kin. 11. 7, 2).

What then is the significance of the reference to Jezebel in Revelation 2? She was a false teacher who, by her wiles, persuaded believers to forsake the way of the Lord and to become involved in false religion. "The woman Jezebel" (verse 20) is thus a name which recalls the evil Old Testament character; it is used by the Lord to describe a similar woman and her dupes in Thyatira, probably those heretics who introduced pagan practices into church services in the pretence that Christianity could thereby be improved and made more popular. Irreparable damage was done to the Faith by this false doctrine and it has an even more powerful hold on Christendom today, but punishment will inevitably overtake its adherents (verses 22, 23). Idol-worship, masquerading as Christianity, must be avoided at all costs. "Hold the pattern of sound words" (2 Tim. 1. 13).

L. B.

May we remind contributors that papers on the month's subject must reach Mr. Burrows by the first day of the month, two months before publication. Careful attention to this point will greatly assist editors.

Eds.

A PATTERN OF REVELATION

Few would dispute that one of the hardest tasks before the student of the Revelation is the interpretation of the details of the many visions and images which it contains. This fact alone indicates to us the need for a wide-angled survey of this final book of Scripture, which is so enthralling but so puzzling in parts. Does it present a coherent pattern of teaching which itself might help us in grappling with some of its more detailed aspects? Can we detect a construction whose lines may circumscribe our thoughts when they might otherwise stray into the area of fanciful speculation?

Students, of the Word have always marvelled at the structure of Scripture as a whole, with the remarkable correspondence between Old and New Testaments as in each the elements of divine creative work, history, prophetic teaching, and predictive prophecy unfold. Then within these (and possibly other) primary divisions of Scripture, further patterns may be discerned as in, for example, the Pentateuch or the four-fold Gospel. The whole may be likened to an examination of the physical works of God in creation, further and more detailed examination of which reveals progressively more minute wonders of order and design.

Now it is, of course, into the scriptural corpus of predictive prophecy that the book of Revelation mainly fits. (We may usefully remind fellow-students at this point of the excellent "Study in Prophetic Principles" by G. Prasher, Jr. which appeared in B. S. 1963/64, perusal of which in the context of our study this year would be highly rewarding.) A detailed study of the distribution of predictive prophecy throughout the Scriptures offers itself as an engaging study *per se*; and major portions in Old and New Testaments repay study in relation to one another. Thus it is that, in the course of the current year's study, comparative examination of the context of Revelation with that of Daniel and Ezekiel has been planned within the scope of the special study articles. Within the New Testament we can identify the end-time prophecies of the Lord Himself in Matthew 24 and Luke 21, followed by a limited excursion into this field by Paul (mainly in 1 and 2 Thess.), and culminating in the more detailed treatment of the subject in Revelation. In the Gospels and in the Thessalonian epistles, the standpoint of the prophecy is notably that of men and women on earth

receiving instruction and warning on end-time events. In the case of the Lord's teaching, the nation of Israel is primarily the object of the teaching; and where Paul or other apostle (e. g. John in 1 John 2) are concerned, the saints of their day received the message as relating to themselves or their successors in the Faith. The depiction of future events in the Revelation, however, is heaven-centred, and John finds himself taken up into the celestial realms at an early stage of his great visionary experience to observe the development of the terminal divine purpose for the earth and mankind. It is this view from the heavenly throne and sanctuary which is associated with the complexity of the visions which flow one into the other in the sequences of the seals, the trumpets and the bowls in particular. It is as though we have approached closer than ever before to the thoughts of God Himself in the detailed analysis of His motives and purposes in the final judgement of this world. The resultant imagery presents some of the most difficult problems of interpretation in all Scripture, problems which also arise in varying degree in the books of Daniel and Ezekiel.

Turning now more specifically to the main pattern of the book of Revelation we immediately think of chapter 1 verse 19—"the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter". There is a wide agreement amongst students of this book that this refers firstly to the immediately preceding vision which John had experienced of the risen Lord; then to the messages given for the seven Asian churches; and thirdly to the predictive prophecies which occupy the greater part of the book (from chapter 4 onwards). Even apart from this reference itself the book immediately presents this sub-division to the most superficial reader. "The things which thou sawest" and "the things which are" are themselves intimately related, being concerned with the seven churches as lampstands of divine testimony, with the Lord of the lampstands Himself revealed in such dazzling majesty. We cannot but pause in worship before the arresting wonder of His infinite grace in so relating Himself to these few struggling saints on earth; some beleaguered heroes; some ensnared backsliders; some lukewarm failures; all precious to Him of the flaming eyes and the voice of many waters. These things then form the first section of this Revelation of Jesus Christ. Thus is demonstrated the essential unity of God's purposes for and in the saints of

this dispensation, and for the execution of His judgement upon the world in which they serve and suffer. The God who cares for and judges the saints applies the same righteous adjudication to the world, all through the glorious One presented so variously as divine Lamb, Lion, Word, Bridegroom, King of kings and Lord of lords.

Passing on to look more particularly at "the things which shall come to pass hereafter", we immediately realize that the divine dealings with the earth and its inhabitants, which occupy the remainder of the book, are themselves presented in a discernible pattern. This consists in the main of the three sequences of seven judgements as seen in the seals, trumpets and bowls, with certain events interposed between the sixth and seventh seals and trumpets. Then, between the trumpets and the bowls is placed the quite lengthy passage dealing with the vision of the woman and the dragon, Michael's conflict, the rising of the beast and of the two-horned lamb, and mount Zion of the Lamb and the 144, 000 (chapters 12-14).

Following the out-pouring of the bowls containing the last plagues we are led into the Armageddon narrative and the destruction of Babylon (chapters 15-19). Then the final revelation is of the conquering Word of God, the 1, 000 years' binding of Satan, the final conflict, and the new heaven and new earth.

As we survey this prophetic scene broadly, we immediately face the question as to whether the narrative is truly sequential in its entirety. Clearly this is true of certain parts, notably the final section where a consummation of divine purposes is demonstrated. Then again, within the separate sequences of the seals, trumpets and bowls, a time sequence can hardly be doubted. It is, of course, with regard to these three series of judgements that a large body of expositors has pointed to an overlap or overlay of recorded events.

Two matters in particular might be commented on in this connection. The first is the comparison of the details of the judgements associated with the seals, trumpets and bowls. The correspondence of individual features of first and first, second and second, etc., is often more striking in relation to the trumpets and bowls—for example in the scene of death in earth and sea connected with the second trumpet and second bowl; the mention of rivers and fountains

in the third trumpet and the third bowl. One of the most impressive elements of correspondence affects all three sequences in their final, seventh stages, i. e., the prominence of thunders, voices, lightnings, earthquakes; suggesting in each case a culminating unleashing of the power of the elements. At the same time there are also notable differences between the three judgement series, not least significantly perhaps in their smaller details, e. g., the second trumpet points to one third of sea creatures dying, while the second bowl marks the death of all marine life. (Repeated scripture references have been omitted in these comments since they can only readily be followed with the Scriptures open before one and the narrative followed in the appropriate chapters of Revelation.)

What is perhaps the most compelling factor towards the overlap view of these sequences is the climax of each which seems to point clearly to the event of the coming to earth of the Son of Man (6. 16; 11. 15; 16. 14-16). The temptation to regard everything after ch. 11 or even after ch. 13, where the beast arises in great power, as belonging to the second half of the 70th week of Daniel is probably best resisted. It is certainly difficult to sustain. One feature which does seem significant, however, is the appearance of the temple and sanctuary (11. 19) with further similar emphasis in 15. 5-8 immediately preceding the pouring out of the bowls. Prior to this the standpoint would appear to have been more centred on the throne. Are the severest presentations of the divine judgements associated with God's sanctity and holiness rather than His authority and dominion? For the enemy to challenge His exclusive demand on men's obedience is one thing; their seduction in the matter of worship, another, even more solemn.

The above sketch of the pattern of the book necessarily covers the whole of it, although it is appreciated that our 1972 study covers only the first eleven chapters. An approach based on broad perspective has to survey the whole scene. Perhaps some of the points commented on will be developed in a little depth in monthly papers, and fellow-students' thoughts on the general thesis, or particular aspects of it, will be very welcome to editors with a view to constructive debate within the magazine. *J. D. Terrell*

THE SEALS, TRUMPETS AND BOWLS

In this paper we consider several indications that the three great heptads of seals, trumpets and bowls in Rev. 4-17 refers to events which run consecutively rather than overlap.

1. *The way in which the trumpets and bowls are introduced*—The seven trumpets are first mentioned in 8. 1, 2 within the details of the seventh seal, but it is only after the events of the seventh seal are concluded (v. 5) that we read: "And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound" (v. 6). These two facts combined seem to show that the events of the seven seals will take place *before* those of the seven trumpets [A].

Coming to the seven bowls, we note that they are said to contain "seven plagues, which are the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God" (15. 1). If these are the *last* plagues, then the judgements mentioned before, in the seals and trumpets, must be different from them and indeed must have occurred before them. It is difficult to see how the events of the sixth seal, the seventh trumpet and the seventh bowl overlap, as some suggest, if even the first bowl occurs later (being one of the last) than both previous series of judgements [B].

To summarize, it appears that these three heptads are introduced to us as though they will take place one after the other, not overlapping. Admittedly, much of the language in these series is symbolic, but surely the word "last" is not symbolic; also the way in which features are introduced has significance even in a symbolic presentation [C].

2. *The increasing severity in the series*—It is a worthwhile exercise to construct a comparative list of the seven items in each of the three series of judgements. Very noticeable is the great similarity between the trumpets and the bowls, taken item by item. Not so much similarity is apparent between the seals and the other two series. All three series, however, conclude in an item which refers to thunders, voices, lightnings and earthquakes, indicating some kind of relationship between the three series. Even more noticeable than any similarities between the series is a very definite increasing in the severity of the judgements as we pass from seals to trumpets and from trumpets to bowls. For instance, "a fourth" is mentioned in the fourth seal, but the fraction of "a third part" is mentioned in the

first, second, third, fourth and sixth trumpets, and no such limit at all in the bowls, so "the third part of the sea" becomes "the sea", "the third part of the rivers" becomes "the rivers", etc. In fact it is the close similarity between the trumpets and the bowls which makes the increase in severity so obvious. Do we not see in this increasing severity of divine judgement across the three series some indication of the passage of time as the end-time approaches? It seems as though the three series present three successive waves of judgement, increasing in magnitude [D].

3. *Interposing sections between items of a series*—We refer to ch. 7 which is inserted between the sixth and seventh seals and to 11. 1-13 which is inserted between the sixth and seventh trumpets. The continuity of these two heptads must surely have been broken for definite reasons [E]. We cannot, of course, be certain that all the events mentioned in these two sections will occur after the sixth item or before the seventh item in each case, but it seems safe to say that the details of these interposing sections may provide a clue as to when the final stages in each of the series concerned will take place [F].

In the first interposing section (ch. 7) we have the sealing of the 144, 000 and the eulogy of the great multi-racial multitude. Space forbids any attempts to link together these events, except to suggest that the reaching of the multitude for the Lord may be the result of the work of the 144, 000 who are sealed from various judgements to enable them actively to serve God on earth. It seems to the writer that the sealing of the 144, 000 takes place in time between the events of the sixth and seventh seals. If this is so, the end is not yet, for the 144, 000 have their work to do. Hence the sixth seal cannot refer to events just prior to the Lord's descent to earth, as some suggest. It follows from what we have said that the events in the seven seals probably take place early in Daniel's "seventieth week".

In the second interposing section (11. 1-13) the main feature is the experience of the two witnesses. Mr. J. Miller, in his notes on Rev. 11, gives weighty reasons for his view that this section relates to the first half of the "seventieth week", not the second half (for the sake of space, we do not quote his case). Accepting this view, as the present writer does, what do the words "the third Woe cometh quickly" (11. 14) mean?—the third Woe is, of

course, the judgement of the seventh trumpet. They imply, at least to the writer, that the series of the seven trumpets relates to a period of time which concludes approximately mid-way through the "seventieth week".

There is no argument about when the seven bowls will be poured out—at the end of Daniel's "seventieth week". So we suggest the three series run consecutively rather than overlap.

It remains to suggest alternative interpretations of Rev. 6. 16, 17 and 11. 15-17, both of which passages have been said to refer to the actual or imminent descent of the Lord to earth, the former passage belonging to the sixth seal and the latter to the seventh trumpet. It is said that the events of these two passages overlap with events in the seventh bowl.

Rev. 6. 12 is certainly very similar to Matt. 24. 29 as regards the celestial phenomena. In Matt. 24 these are said to take place "after the tribulation of those days", and following them, "then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven... "However, we read of very similar celestial phenomena in the third and fourth trumpets (Rev. 8. 10-12), which presumably occur some time prior to the seventh trumpet. The context of Rev. 6. 12 must therefore decide whether these celestial happenings are those referred to by the Lord in Matt. 24. To some the words of Rev. 6. 16-17 give a "yes" to this question: "... for the great day of Their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?"

Three points must be borne in mind, however: -

- (i) The passage only tells us what fearful men will say about that day; it does not tell us that they will be right,
- (ii) It is hard to see how the interposing section (ch. 7) is relevant to the sixth or seventh seals if the sixth seal brings us to the Lord's coming to earth [See Note A],
- (iii) The seventh seal includes reference to the further judgement of the seven trumpets, and mentions other minor judgements (v. 5) which seem to result from the prayers of the saints; all of these features seem strangely inappropriate if the previous seal brings us already to the ultimate climax of the Lord's coming.

We suggest point (i) gives the clue to the true interpretation of this section [G].

As to Rev. 11. 15-17, the important words are: "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ... " (v. 15; see also v. 17). Some see in these words definite reference to the Lord's having assumed His authority after His descent to earth. Two problems arise:

(i) This seventh trumpet is sounded "quickly" after the sixth trumpet and the parenthetical events of 11. 1-13, which we have argued belong to the first half of the "seventieth week",

(ii) The seven "last" plagues are yet to come.

May not the true interpretation of 11. 15-17 lie in v. 18?—the heavenly beings are referring to the judging and rewarding of the Old Testament prophets and saints, in which the Lord was at last exercising His sovereignty over human affairs by vindicating His servants and reversing the evil judgements of the nations in respect of them [H],

D. S. Jones

Notes on Foregoing Paper: Seals, Trumpets and Bowls

(A) Are the events of the seventh seal in fact concluded in verse 5? The seventh seal is last mentioned in verse 1, the solemn silence in heaven fittingly concluding the series of judgements represented by the opening of the earlier six seals. "Be still, and know that I am God" is the prophetic word to the nations after Armageddon (Psa. 46. 10). Despite the paragraph arrangement of the R. V., it seems clear that a different aspect of presentation begins in 8. 2 with the introduction of the seven angels which stand before God, to whom seven trumpets were given. The events of the sixth seal (6. 12-17) are so clearly identifiable with the coming of the Son of Man that much weightier evidence would be needed to offset the view that the seven trumpets introduce a review from a different standpoint of the period of judgement already covered by the imagery of the seven seals.

(B) It is not easy to dovetail together various aspects of the divine judgements presented in the imagery of Revelation. But 6. 12-17 and 11. 15-18 so clearly identify the sixth seal and seventh trumpet with the climax of the Lord's return to earth that the pouring out of the bowls must be included within the period covered by the seals and trumpets. The problem does not seem insurmountable if we take the pouring out of the bowls as occurring towards the end of this period, with particular emphasis on the aspect of retribution

upon the beast and his supporters (16. 2, 6, 10, 13, 19). The judgement of the bowls would then be regarded as supplying fuller detail of these final plagues which are more generally presented for example in connection with the fourth and fifth seals.

(C) The word "last" must be understood in relation to its context, the last of the plagues in this great series of judgements. But this does not preclude the view that these plagues will be meted out within the period covered by the seven seals and the seven trumpets. The way in which prophetic features are elsewhere introduced in symbolic presentation rather supports the overlapping of the seals, trumpets and bowls. For example in Daniel chapters 2 and 7 the visions of the image and the beast cover the same period of Gentile rule from different viewpoints. In Revelation itself, 7. 9-17 presents an impression of the great multitude who suffered martyrdom during the great tribulation; chapter 12 emphasizes Satans' attitude to the nation of Israel during that same period. There is overlapping as to time, but distinctive presentation of a particular aspect of God's purposes.

(D) How can the seals, trumpets and bowls represent "three successive waves of judgement, increasing in magnitude" when the sixth seal and seventh trumpet so definitely indicate the coming of the Son of Man? The judgements signified by the trumpets and bowls are not mutually exclusive; in some respects the descriptions may be regarded as complementary. Note also the same defiant attitude towards God in both contexts (9. 20, 21, 16. 9, 11). It is of course feasible that the plagues represented by the seven bowls occur towards the close of the period represented by the seven seals and seven trumpets, but it does not seem essential to include them somewhere before the sixth seal or seventh trumpet.

(E) Is not a more cogent reason for these interposing sections that the Holy Spirit has in this way deliberately asserted God's sovereignty above all the chaos and judgement on earth? In chapter 7 the 144, 000 are sealed and the martyrs of the great tribulation period are seen in triumphant glory. In chapter 10 *is* the mighty declaration that God the Creator will determine the outcome at His own appointed time (verse 9). So after each presentation (in seals and trumpets) of judgements on earth during the final phase of the times of the Gentiles God's dominant authority is confirmed.

(F) Why omit Rev. 10 from the second interposing section? The sixth seal judgements finish at 9. 21. Then starts "the interposing section". In this chapter there is not merely "a clue" but a direct statement as to when the final stage of the trumpet series will take place. For we are told in verse 7 that the mystery of God is finished in the days of the voice of the seventh angel. This ties in perfectly with 11. 15-18 and negatives the argument derived from 11. 1-13. According to this key text (10. 7)—which appears to have escaped notice in the article under review—the seventh trumpet must be at the end of the seventieth week, not "approximately mid-way through".

(G) The three points suggested in explanation of Rev. 6. 12-17 appear quite inadequate. Whatever reasons there may be for the interposition of chapter 7 between the sixth and seventh seals—and a possible suggestion has been offered under (E) above—it is most unsatisfactory to regard verses 15-17 as a misinformed declaration by fearful men! Is it likely that the kings, princes and chief captains of that supremely sceptical era would concede any such declaration unless confronted with the actual appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ as Son of Man?

(H) But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then *is* finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which He declared to His servants the prophets (10. 7). What can answer to this but the fact stated to have been brought to pass in 11. 15? G. P. Jr.

A STUDY OF REVELATION

CHAPTERS 2 & 3

From Methil. —Each of the seven letters to the churches in Asia was contained in one book, which was sent to each of the churches (Rev. 1. 11). While the whole picture is seen in Rev. 1, the facets relating to each church are seen in chapters 2 and 3.

In Pergamum, where Satan's throne was, and Thyatira, wrong teaching and immoral conduct were being brought in, and the Lord in dealing with these adopts a warlike attitude. The Lord called upon the false teachers of Pergamum to repent or He would make war against them with the sword of His mouth, which refers to His word (Rev. 19. 13-15, 21; Heb. 4. 12-13).

To Thyatira the Lord is seen as the Judge. By the light which streamed from His eyes He saw all that had taken place. No evidence needed to be presented to Him before He arrived at judgement. Brass speaks of judgement, and burnished brass would speak of just or true judgement. The sin of this church was that they allowed a woman to come in and literally beguile the Lord's people in the sin of fornication. Not all were guilty, and to those who were guiltless, He said, "That which ye have, hold fast till I come".

The Lord presented Himself to the Laodiceans as "the Amen" and we found Isa. 65. 16 (R. V. M.) helpful here. The Laodicean saints had once been fervent, but now the fire had gone out, and the Lord was about to vomit them out of His mouth. They thought that they needed nothing. They had not learned "that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12. 15). The Lord sought to spread His riches before them like a merchant, but they would not buy. In a last effort He seeks to carry His riches to their homes, but again they shut Him out.

Each church had a different thing to overcome, and to each Overcomer was offered a different reward, like a prize set before him. To obtain the prize he had to repent. The repentant Overcomer in Ephesus was to be given the privilege of eating of the Tree of Life that is in the Paradise of God. We took paradise to speak of the New Jerusalem. In the case of Smyrna the Overcomer is promised that he will not be hurt of the second death; we had some difficulty with this promise and would appreciate help [See answer to question from Edinburgh].

For the Overcomer in Pergamum there is the promise of the hidden manna, speaking of the excellencies of Christ, and the white stone, indicating the Lord's approval. The honour of a place of authority over the nations was held out to the Overcomer in Thyatira, along with the distinction of the Morning Star, which would appear to indicate some special distinction at the coming again of the Lord Jesus (see Heb. 9. 28; 2 Tim. 4. 8). A. R. Smith..

From Derby. —*Ephesus* "He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand". The Lord is in absolute control as He that walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands. The mighty One who holds all things together (Col. 1. 17) is condescending to hold

together these seven churches. Their unity is seen here in that He has all authority in the midst. "Lo, I am with you alway" (Matt. 28. 20).

The Overcomer who adopts again the pure motive which actuated the church's works at the first, that of love to the Lord, is promised: "I will give him to eat of the Tree of Life which is in the Paradise of God" (Gen. 2. 9; Rev. 22. 2). This eating was thought by some to be spiritual, a closer communion with the very Author of Life, the Lord Himself (see John 6. 35, 54, 56). Others took the eating to be in a future literal sense. Adam could have eaten of the fruit of the Tree of Life or of any other tree, just as he did eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 3. 2).

Smyrna To this church, which was to taste of tribulation, the Lord mentions His own sufferings, death and resurrection. So in verse 10 He says, "Fear not... Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life". The Lord promised this crown to them that love Him (Jas. 1. 12). He who overcomes and stands faithful, even if threatened with death (death number one), shall not be hurt of the second death (i. e., the lake of fire, Rev. 20. 14). The first is as nothing by comparison. We do not see two "second deaths" in Scripture.

Pergamum The sharp two-edged sword is the word of His power, the weapon with which He will slay His enemies (Rev. 19. 15; Heb. 4. 12). "He spake and it was done" (Psa. 33. 9). The "white stone" was used of old time as a sign of approval or of acquittal in judicial matters. We do not know what the "new name" will be.

Thyatira "The Son of God... eyes as a flame of fire... feet like unto burnished brass". He will judge according to what He sees and He knows: "As I hear, I judge: and My judgement is righteous" (John 5. 30). Nothing escapes His holy piercing gaze. The secret sins of all mankind are open and naked before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do (Heb. 4. 13).

The Overcomer here will be given, we thought, some authority to rule for the Lord in the coming kingdom. "And I will give him The Morning Star". The Lord said, "I am... the Morning Star" (Rev. 22. 16). We wait for this aspect of His appearing, after which He will appear to Israel and the nations as the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings (Mai. 4. 2).

Sardis "He that hath the seven spirits of God". In Rev. 4. 5 the seven Spirits of God are seen as "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne"; also in 5. 6: "A Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth". Yet there is One Spirit (Eph. 4. 4).

The Overcomer is comforted by the words: "I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life". We thought of God's words to Moses in Ex. 32. 33 "Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book". The thought was expressed that there may be only one book of life, but bearing in mind Rev. 20. 15, it has been suggested that there could be a book of life in which the names of the Lord's serving ones are written, and from this book a blotting out could take place. We also noted Luke 10. 20 and Phil. 4. 3 [see answer to question from Edinburgh],

L. A.H., S. R. W.

From Birmingham. —In the case of Ephesus, the Lord is presented as the One "that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand", and "that walketh in the midst of the seven golden lampstands". It was necessary for the church in Ephesus to be reminded that God had His messengers and that He personally observed their doings.

Relative to the overcomers, to the church at Smyrna it was promised, "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death". Are we to infer from this statement that those who do not overcome will be hurt of the second death (which is the lake of fire) ? God forbid. We felt that this statement concerning the second death was made as a reminder and an encouragement, in the light of the fact that these overcomers were to suffer tribulation, persecution and death in the flesh (the first death) in the process of overcoming.

To the church at Sardis it was written, "He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot His name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels". Again are we to infer that those who do not overcome will be blotted out from the Lamb's book of life? No, a thousand times no! Some suggested that there may be more than one book of life, and that this is not the Lamb's book of life here. Others thought that this statement "I will in no wise blot his name out of the (Lamb's) book of life" was made to remind overcomers of their eternal security

in Christ, whereas the latter clause "I will confess His name before My Father" gives the positive blessing, as also does the opening phrase, "He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments".

D. H. Elson

IMPRESSIONS, FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

Papers were also received from Aberkenfig and Barry, Atherton and Leigh, Birkenhead, Crowborough, Edinburgh, Glasgow (Parkhead), Melbourne, Teesside and Vancouver; the following are impressions from these:

Smyrna: "Which was dead, and lived again"—To know that He had Himself suffered unto death and that death was not the end of all would be a comfort to those about to suffer martyrdom: "Be thou faithful unto *death*, and I will give thee the crown of *life*".

Pergamum: "He that hath the sharp two-edged sword"—Though Pergamum was where Satan's throne was, sin would not be unpunished; the Lord would judge with the sword of His mouth.

Thyatira: "The Son of God"—Although John uses this title quite frequently in his Gospel and epistles, this is its only mention in Revelation. It denotes the Lord's authority and sovereignty.

Philadephia: "He that hath the key of David"—This alludes to the Speaker being of the royal line through David and signifies the Lord's absolute control, particularly in His working for His people amid great opposition; it is impossible, for instance, for the Adversary to close down an assembly which the Lord wishes to maintain.

Laodicea: "The Beginning of the creation of God"—This was compared with "The Firstborn of all creation" (Col. 1. 15), both expressions teaching the Lord's authority over all created things, not that He was created.

The hidden manna (2. 17)—A portion of manna was hidden in the golden pot and preserved in the most holy place in the tabernacle (Ex. 16. 33, 34), an abiding testimony to the Lord's provision for His people in their wilderness journey. The Lord Jesus contrasted that manna with the true Bread of God which came down out of heaven, which a man may eat and live for ever (John 6. 50, 51). The promise of Rev. 2. 17 suggests a special portion of Christ which the Overcomer will enjoy for eternity.

The white stone (2. 17)—A white stone was used in former times as a conferment of honour, or in giving a vote (as in Acts 26. 10)

by those in authority; so a place of privilege in the coming kingdom is suggested by the white stone, possibly comparing with the honours of Matt. 19. 28 and 1 Cor. 6. 2.

Authority over the nations (2. 26) and *My throne* (3. 21)—The context of 2. 26 is very similar to the language of Psa. 2. 9, dealing with the Lord's rule over the nations, supporting the view that overcomers in the present dispensation will rule with the Lord in millennial times. "My throne" may also have a millennial aspect (Matt. 19. 28) or an eternal aspect (Rev. 22. 1). Truly lukewarmness must be banished before we can expect such honours. "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward" (Rom. 8. 18).
Eds.

COMMENT

(*Aberkenfig and Barry*—Extract): "The judgement of the believer at the judgement-seat of Christ might well be in view in this reference to the second death".

We suggest Rev. 21. 8 is conclusive on this point: "The lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is *the* second death". The definite article (which is also in the Greek) indicates uniqueness, and there is no mention in Scripture of another variety of "second death" such as our friends postulate.
L. B.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

From Edinburgh: (1) How can a believer be "hurt of the second death" (Rev. 2. 11)?

This proposition is not necessarily implied by the verse referred to. It may be, as some contributors this month have suggested, that the Lord was reassuring those who were to die a martyr's death that there was no need to fear, for the second death could not touch them.

(2) How can a believer have his name blotted from the book of life (Rev. 3. 5)?

Again, Scripture makes no such implication, but see latter part of paper from Birmingham for two possible solutions to the problem.

L. B.

BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11).'

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EDITORIAL

One important practical outcome of our current study in Revelation 2 and 3 should be to help use maintain a balanced perspective regarding spiritual shortcomings among disciples in churches of God.

"I have seen an end of all perfection;
But Thy commandment is exceeding broad".

So wrote the Psalmist (119. 96). Did this reflect his sadness at human frailty in fulfilling the ideals of God's revealed will? God's commandment is "exceeding broad"; through it "the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3. 17). But in attempting to fulfil it, where may perfection be found? The letters to the seven churches of Asia illustrate the imperfections which emerge in the very nature of things because of human weakness. These seven churches had all been established in accordance with the perfect will of the risen Lord. Their constitution was faultless. The "exceeding broad" commandment covered all their need in united spiritual service. Yet imperfections abounded, in some cases to a degree that threatened the very continuance of certain churches.

So the scriptural directive is clear; to establish churches of God on the basis of the Lord's revealed word, and then within those churches to deal with imperfections of teaching or conduct which may arise. We shall be delivered from the misconception that because saints are prone to various failures the basic scriptural concept of being gathered together into churches of God is thereby invalidated. There should be the spiritual power within each church of God to deal with failure as it arises; where this does not obtain the ultimate "removal of the lampstand" becomes a serious possibility.

G. P. Jr.

GOD THE FATHER AS SEEN IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The Father is so called by name five times in the book of Revelation. Such a comparatively small number of occurrences in a book which abounds with divine titles suggests a careful discrimination which demands close attention, especially since the relevant verses are so strikingly similar. They are: -

- i) He made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto His God and Father (1. 6);
- ii) He that overcometh, and he that keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of My Father (2. 26, 27);
- iii) He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments;... and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels (3. 5);
- iv) He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with Me in My throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne (3. 21);
- v) And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on the mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having His name, and the name of His Father, written on their foreheads (14. 1);

The Father is here always spoken of as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is to say, God is not primarily viewed in these verses as the Creator (e. g. as in Acts 17. 29), nor as Father of children of God (as in John 1. 12); nor as the Father of those children of God who, by the process of spiritual growth, display the character of Christ and are called sons of God (as in Romans 8. 14; or as in the detail of 2 Cor. 6. 18). The Father is viewed as the Begetter of an only and Beloved Son who is like Him in every respect, and in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

Not only do all these verses have to do with this Name but they also all concern the place of the Name. Of all the New Testament writers, the apostle John refers most frequently to "the Father" and "My Father". The purpose of his Gospel is that we might

have eternal life in the Son. His epistles develop this concept in their exhortation to display this life, which is the life of the Son, in the life of the individual who thus will show true sonship. It is therefore fitting that in the Revelation John should deal with the Place where such sonship should be seen, and where the Son of God has ensamplary preeminence.

The first four references are all in the early part of the Revelation and so concern the "things which are". The last reference is more difficult to understand since it concerns "that which shall come to pass hereafter". The first four references have therefore to do with churches of God and the first of these is by way of introduction. Thus "His God and Father" relates to the Lord Jesus, firstly as the perfect Man so standing in relation to His God and secondly as the Son, Only Begotten of the Father. Just as both natures are important in salvation so too are they in service, particularly (as Hebrews demonstrates) in the matter of priestly service. The punctuation of this verse indicates (by way of contrast with Exodus 19. 6) that all in churches of God (the kingdom) are priests. Thus what the Son is, in a measure the saints are too. It is particularly in this way that the verse serves as an introduction to the remainder.

Obedience (to the will of the Father) is the kernel of sonship (Hebrews 5. 8) and none is more obedient than the Lord Jesus Christ. It is exactly this matter of obedience and its corollary, faithfulness, which is most prominent in these five verses in Revelation. Their meaning can thus be explained and expounded by

- i) God is faithful, through whom ye were called into the Fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Cor. 1. 9)
- and ii) Moses indeed was faithful in all God's house as a servant... But Christ as a Son, over God's house (Heb. 3. 5, 6, R. V. M.).

These verses show the Son in His supreme likeness to the Father in the matter of faithfulness. They also show that the Fellowship belongs not simply to the Lord Jesus but to "His Son"; similarly Christ is over God's house "as a Son".

In their overcoming, those mentioned in Revelation will show true likeness to Christ, true sonship, in the Place where it is meant to be shown. They are thus true sons of Zion and may be correctly likened to fine gold; gold which, like that of the Tabernacle, shines

like the effulgence of His glory (Heb. 1. J). [It should be noted however that Heb. 1. 3 refers to the unique glory of the eternal Son. G. P. Jr. }.

The reward for the overcomers who show such sonship has a filial nature in that they are appointed to share that which belongs to the Son whom they have sought to emulate. Compare Rev. 2. 26, 27 with Psalm 2. 2-9, (also Matt. 20. 23); and Rev. 3. 5 with Phil. 2. 8-11 and the numerous verses which speak of the confession before God of the name of the Lord Jesus.

The fifth reference describes men who are the firstfruits of a harvest to be reaped in a future day. We can understand something of the men's significance from what has been said above about the companion verses in the earlier part of the book. By whatever name this group will be called, in practice they will be the fellowship of His Son. They have His Name placed before them, their habitat is Mount Zion. They sing before the throne. They follow the Lamb, their Redeemer, whithersoever He goes. Their virginity, truthfulness and freedom from blemish are their outstanding characteristics which they must have shown in their previous earthly lives. Virginity has no meaning without earthly existence while the absence of blemish characterizes all who dwell with Him (Rev. 21. 27) and so could not be considered outstanding. It would seem then that these men showed these characteristics on earth perhaps desiring to dwell with no other but Him, counterparts in a day to come of those mentioned in 1 Cor. 7. 24 and Matt. 19. 12. Their reward cannot be to be His Bride, for that honour belongs to those of a preceding dispensation, but having shown true sonship and so truly proved themselves to be fit companions for the Bridegroom, they are given that position for ever.

Thus the careful reference to the Father in the book of Revelation draws attention to the importance of the truth of Sonship in relation to the Place of the Name. As He is so like the Father, so those who dwell with Him should be like Him and enter into a reward which is related to the quality of their earthly service.

A STUDY OF REVELATION

CHAPTERS 2 & 3

From Crowborough. —In these two chapters the Lord presents Himself to each of the seven Churches in a special character. To each of the churches He prefaces His message with the words "I know" (*oida*, I perceive, not *ginosko*, I learn). The Lord took notice of all their troubles, so His knowledge was directed towards practical matters of perceiving and discerning.

To the Church in Ephesus He said, "I know thy works, and thy toil and patience". How encouraging to know that the Lord had taken note of these things! Then comes the rebuke in verse 4: "I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love". The Lord graciously praised and encouraged first, before pointing out faults and shortcomings. This would cause the saints to give the more heed to His words and create a desire to put things right.

In His message to the Church in Smyrna He points out not only his knowledge of the condition of the saints, but also about their enemies; and the wickedness and falseness of those "which say they are Jews, and they are not". In verse 10 He shows His foreknowledge, telling them of the things which were shortly coming to pass. With this goes the promise to those who were faithful even unto death.

In His message to those at Pergamum the One that hath the sharp two-edged sword anticipated any excuses that might be forthcoming as to their condition by assuring them, "I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is". In spite of some good points, He had a few things against them (against some in the church who held wrong teaching), and warned of coming judgement unless there was repentance (verse 16). A reward was also here promised to overcomers.

Thyatira receives warning because of false teaching (verse 24) and is exhorted, "That which ye have, hold fast till I come". A different promise is given to overcomers. Sardis, in spite of having the name of being alive, was in fact dead. No works of theirs were fulfilled before God (verse 2). Only a few in this church had remained true. Philadelphia was highly commended, and a present reward was to be granted to them (verse 10).

Laodicea was a church very rich in material things, but lacking spiritual riches. Thus it stood in contrast to Smyrna of which it was said, "I know thy... poverty (but thou art rich)". They thought they had need of nothing—not even the Lord, perhaps; so He represents Himself standing knocking at the door. He is ever gracious to those that want Him, as is indicated by His words, "I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me".

J. Robertson

From Vancouver B. C. — 1. Ephesus. "Thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans". Who were these people? Could they be a sect that followed Nicholas of Antioch (Acts 6. 5)? Did they derive their name from the Greek *niako*—to conquer, and *laos*—the people or laity? [Comment 1]. What were their deeds? Men were being ordained to rule over the ordinary believers. This has developed into the organization of priests and laity as practised today by the church of Rome and others. There are no such special persons in a Church of God. God appoints under-shepherds to care for the Flock, to feed the Flock, and to keep out the wolves. No man has a right to lord it over God's heritage (1 Peter 5. 3). Ephesus hated their deeds but some in Pergamum accepted their doctrine (2. 25).

2. *Smyrna.* "Them which say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan". This church had a group of people who were religious pretenders. They made deceitful claims. Their aim was to persecute Christ and His faithful followers. The Spirit declares they are of the synagogue of Satan [Comment 3].

3. *Pergamum.* "Thou hast some that hold the teaching of Balaam... some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans". Both these groups were tolerated. What Ephesus hated, Pergamum accepted, namely the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. In addition there was the doctrine of Balaam. Peter, Jude, and John specifically refer to Balaam. Two of the sins which brought judgement upon Israel were idolatry and fornication. Paul strongly denounces both these sins. In Pergamum the teachers of these terrible, impure practices were sheltered and protected within the church itself. Anything which occupies the place that God should occupy in the heart and life of a believer may become an idol in the sense of 1 John 5. 21. Illicit intercourse with the world is spiritual fornication (2 Cor. 6. 1446).

4. *Thyatira*. "Thou sufferest the woman Jezebel". The doctrine taught by Jezebel, similar to that of Balaam, existed in Thyatira. This woman assumed the title "prophetess", but she was an adulteress. God is long suffering towards her and her followers. The sad thing is not that she cannot repent, but she will not repent. The teaching of Jezebel was idolatry and fornication [Comment 4].

5. *Sardis*. "Thou hast a name that thou livest and thou art dead". The omniscient Lord knows all things. This church had lapsed into lifeless, cold formality.

6. *Philadephia*. "Thou hast a little power,... didst keep My word... didst not deny My Name". Here there was a group of religious pretenders as in Smyrna. In this weak but faithful Church were counterfeit people who were opposers of the truth and work of God. Eventually these, who composed the synagogue of Satan, would be made to see the truth [Comment 5].

7. *Laodicea*. "Thou art lukewarm". This church had lapsed into a most dangerous state. They were not referred to as being spiritually dead (as Sardis); or spiritually alive. They were indifferent. The characteristics of the Laodiceans are summed up by the Spirit in three words: poverty, nakedness, blindness.

These were all churches of God that existed. The Lord stood in the midst of the seven golden lampstands. His words "this thou hast" have warnings to churches of God today.

John Robinson

From Nottingham. —The One whose eyes were as a flame of fire (Rev. 1. 14) who had in His right hand the seven stars, and was in the midst of the seven golden lampstands which are the seven churches, shows that He is fully cognizant of all that transpires in those churches by the sevenfold repetition of the words "I know". The force of the words would deeply impress the hearers of His intimate acquaintance with all they did, good and bad, with the consequent rewards or punishments. We are reminded of John 2. 25, "He Himself knew what was in man". These matters of the heart were often hidden from men but were always open to the divine One in the midst. He it was and is who could and can pierce any outward form or habit and read the true motives.

Each one of the commendable attributes of the churches has significance. As an example we take chapter 2. 2, "thy labour"

and verse 3, "for My name's sake has laboured and hast not fainted" (A. V.). The thought behind the word "laboured" seems to be of wearisome toil, and it is refreshing to realize that the One who knows all recognizes the problems of the way and the value of those who do not faint. They could not bear false teachers but they could bear the heavy burden of labour.

As ever in divine things we are presented with a balanced picture. There were matters commendable and matters reprehensible. "I have this against thee" (Rev. 2. 4). One of the conditions of the churches that grieved the Lord was the loss of their first love. Service both Godward and manward was probably becoming more of a habit than inspired by love.

In spite of this the Lord commends with the words, "this thou hast", their attitude towards the Nicolaitans. Those at Ephesus hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans, but some at Pergamum held the doctrines of the Nicolaitans. The exact details of their doctrines and practices are uncertain, but that they were both evil cannot be doubted because of the Holy Spirit's use of the comparatively strong word "hate".

R. Hickling

From Birmingham. —We are reminded that what really affects our life and service is our love for our Lord Jesus. We may be lacking in our love for the Lord, and so for each other. We may be able to deceive each other by acting the part, but it is evident by the words to the seven churches that the Lord is not deceived, but can see us in true perspective. The church in Ephesus was told, "I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them which call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false; and thou hast patience and didst bear for My name's sake, and hast not grown weary". But they were told, "I have this against thee, that thou didn't leave thy first love". Though they did all the commendable things in verses 2 and 3 they were warned to remember from whence they had fallen, and to repent and do the first works. Those words "or else I come to thee and will move thy lampstand out of its place", are ever a warning to us today that the Lord will remove our lampstand if we leave our first love.

The church in Smyrna was probably the most commendable of all and was told, "I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty (but

thou art rich)". They were told they would suffer. There was nothing said against them and they were promised, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life".

The church in Sardis heard these sad words, "I have found no works of thine fulfilled before My God". Is it possible that the same record is being made today? Yet there was one glimmer of light, that there were a few names of people who did not defile their garments. Concerning these the promise was, "They shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy". They were the few faithful ones who had not succumbed to the general unfaithfulness.

The Church in Laodicea seems to have been the most severely criticized, they were neither cold nor hot, and were told, "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of My mouth". It is obvious that the Lord would rather that we were cold than lukewarm in our love and service to Him. They were described as wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked, and were counselled to buy from the Lord those things that would turn about that situation. The Lord stirred them to remembrance by His words, "As many as I love, I reprove and chasten, be zealous therefore, and repent".

D. P. Brown

From Atherton and Leigh. —After considering the general outline of each detailed assessment here, we conclude that the Lord refers to the positive before dealing with the negative. The Lord gives priority to the good works of the churches before dealing with their failures.

The expressions "I know" and "This thou hast" suggest a fulness of knowledge which enables the Lord to give a balanced assessment of each church. We notice that there is nothing vague about the issues raised in each of the churches, as the Lord's comments are definite and the Lord's valuation is determined by considering the motives of each church in relation to its works.

The Church in Ephesus, while commendably holding fast, had drifted into a situation of sitting back, described in 2. 4 as leaving their "first love" [Comment 6]. The Church, aware of falsehoods which arose from time to time, dealt with them effectively. They made this their priority and neglected the positive works they had done formerly [Comment 7]. The serious situation of this church is emphasized by the warning given by the Lord in 2. 5 that He

would remove the lampstand from its place if there was refusal to do their first works. In considering the Lord's assessment of this church it appears necessary for a church to continue in its first works, and not to be content with merely holding fast.

The poor and suffering church in Smyrna was very rich spiritually. Little is said of their works, but we can be sure they were a faithful group of Christians, who stood uncondemned before the all-seeing eye of the Lord. In contrast the Laodicean Church with all its material wealth was spiritually poor, having turned its eyes from the Lord to temporal things.

It is encouraging to notice that when the Lord looked over Pergamum He recognized the environment in which the Christians were found. The opposition was very great in this city, and the knowledge that the Lord knew about their situation would greatly help them to be faithful.

The works of the Church in Thyatira are impressive: "Thy last works are more than the first" (2. 19). We wondered whether the works were greater in quantity or in quality. Some felt that the Lord's valuation would be in regard to quality rather than quantity. Others expressed the view that the saints were probably expending themselves further in the Lord's service by taking up more of the opportunities that arose in the normal life of a church [Comment 8]. The wrong actions of an individual are mentioned here in this otherwise successful church. We concluded that the wrong actions of disciples are not covered over by the positive good works of others in a church of God.

The solemn assessment of Sardis calls for further comment. The reputation that they had was worthless. The church appeared to be active but no doubt formality had set in. The statement in 3. 2 is very solemn and a sad reflection on any church: "I have found no works of thine fulfilled before My God". All their effort was wasted by what appears to be a wordly exhibitionist attitude.

R. A. Jones

IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

Papers were also received from Aberkenfig and Barry, Birkenhead, Derby, Hayes and Methil, and the following are impressions from these.

The words "I know" are used by the Lord, who, having experi-

enced life on earth Himself, is touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Heb. 4. 75). Moreover He *sees* real need, where men may not realize it, because human knowledge can be superficial or one-sided. The words "thou hast" offer encouragement. The Lord uses these words to the Church in Ephesus after He has given warning about the possible removal of the lampstand. Similarly the warning to those in Sardis, that they should repent, is followed by the words, "But thou hast a few names".

Each message first revealed that the Lord knows what the saints are enduring. He outlines their commendable points, and after showing their error, gives exhortation which carries His authority. All but two churches were commanded to repent. The two were Smyrna, whose poverty and tribulation were coupled with humility; and Philadelphia, who kept the Lord's word, and did not deny His name.

The Church in Ephesus had learned the meaning of patience, and had no time for evil men. They hated the works of the Nicolaitans. In this matter the Ephesian saints were at one with the Lord, though certain at Pergamum held the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Satan had his strongholds, the "synagogue of Satan" (2. 9), and the place "where Satan's throne is . . . where Satan dwelleth" (2. 75). The first works are works prompted by their first love, the love experienced at the beginning, acting once again upon their hearts.

The word used of the poverty of the saints in Smyrna would indicate something more than lack or distress, coming closer in its meaning to the idea of destitution. Moreover Satan was using the so-called Jews of his synagogue to stir up trouble for those whom the Lord had delivered from his dark kingdom. The Lord would feel the tribulation of His saints, as in the day when He said to Saul, "Why persecutest thou Me?" The further short time of tribulation was to mean their spiritual enrichment. Some would suffer martyrdom, but would receive the crown of life.

The church in Pergamum was surrounded by enemies. Yet they themselves needed correction because they had not dealt with false teaching. The subtle way of Balaam in days of old was shown to have its counterpart in Pergamum. There were those who tried to introduce idolatry and immorality to bring the way of truth into disrepute (cf. 2 Peter 2. 2). The words "in like manner" (2. 75)

indicate that such wickedness was as alien to the mind of the Lord as were the works of the Nicolaitans, "which", He said, "I also hate" (2. 6). It was thought that Satan's throne was marked by a centre of idolatry in Pergamum.

Love, faith and ministry were the good works of the saints in Thyatira. But they also were rebuked for false teaching. Some thought that there was a person among them displaying the characteristics of Jezebel, Ahab's wife. Under the guise of a prophetess she was leading them into idolatry. She had had opportunity to change her ways, but "the Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim. 2. 19). She and her followers could look for swift punishment, because the Lord who knows the hearts will take righteous action where havoc is wrought in the church. The Lord bids His saints to keep His return in view.

The church in Sardis had shown promise, but many were overcome by the world, and few saints brought joy to the Lord. They were to remember former days, and *realize* that in spite of formal appearances, spiritual life was lacking. There were things, however which could be established. White garments were to honour those who kept themselves unspotted from the world (see James 1. 27; Jude 23).

The saints in Philadelphia were encouraged to hold fast what they had, because their Lord would soon come. He knew the imposters too, who claimed to be Jews, but were not (Rom. 2. 28, 29). The open door might suggest opportunity for service, which none could put a stop to, because the Lord Himself holds the key. For their faithfulness, the Lord would save them from the trial, which possibly was a divine judgement on earth just after those days, but may also look forward to the day of the Great Tribulation.

Laodicea was materially the reverse of Smyrna, but lacked true riches (Prov. 8. 18; Luke 16. 11). "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12. 15). The faithful One, who loved them, knew that they were taken up with earthly things, not the things of Jesus Christ (Phil. 3. 19; Col. 3. 1-3). They were lukewarm, lacking the zeal which so characterized the Lord's own works on earth (John 2. 17). He was being kept outside the door, and it lay with the saints individually and collectively to make the appropriate response. *Eds.*

COMMENTS

1. (*Vancouver*): There appears to be no conclusive answer to these questions. Commentators have proposed such explanations as our Vancouver friends suggest, but usually acknowledge that the meaning of the term "Nicolaitan" remains debatable.

2. (*Birkenhead*): "As to whether, in the Church of God in Thyatira, there was a woman named Jezebel, we were not unanimous".

This quote from Birkenhead's paper reflects the division of opinion among expositors as to the true understanding of the passage. At least three views have been proposed—

- a. That there was literally a "prophetess" calling herself Jezebel and numbered with the church in Thyatira;
- b. that there was someone in the church "displaying the characteristics of Ahab's wife";
- c. that the "woman Jezebel" was not actually in the church of God at all, but was from without influencing certain in the Thyatiran church by her evil teachings. The Lord was warning those who had so been misled that retribution was impending.

I personally favour the view that the woman concerned was in the church of God and would clearly be identifiable when the Lord's message was received. See Comment 4 for further discussion of related problems.

3. (*Vancouver*): Is it really clear that those described as a "synagogue of Satan" were saints within the Church of God in Smyrna? May there not have been a Jewish synagogue in Smyrna whose adherents opposed the disciples of the Lord Jesus, and added to their tribulation (verse 9)? This was a familiar pattern in the days when Paul and his associates were pioneering the establishment of churches of God (e. g. Acts 13. 50; 14. 2, 19; 17. 5; 18. 12). If this were in fact the case in Smyrna, the Lord's words, "which say they are Jews, and they are not" could be understood in the light of Rom. 2. 28, 29. Bearing the name of the Jew (Rom. 2. 17) they were but "a synagogue of Satan" in God's sight because of their hardened anti-Christian attitudes.

4. (*Vancouver*): Students will doubtless be aware of the view taken by some expositors that the idolatry and immorality spoken

of in this passage are spiritual rather than physical, i. e., in parallel with such scriptures as James 4. 3, 4 and Rev. 17. 4, J. In support of this view it has been asked, for instance, whether Rev. 2. 22 could really be intended as literal.

Others considered that the language of 2. 14 and 2. 20, relating Balaam and Jezebel of the Old Testament with evils which the Lord discerned in Pergamum and Thyatira, is too direct to be spiritualized entirely. Wrong teaching leads to wrong practice.

Let us suppose for the moment that this was so, and that the influence of the teachings of Balaam and Jezebel had resulted in some cases of literal fornication or adultery in the churches. How then are we to understand Rev. 2. 21? Are we to infer that any who had committed such physical immorality were given time by the Lord to repent, and would therefore not necessarily have to be put away from the churches? This would be out of harmony with the clear and direct teaching of 1 Cor. 5. 1-13, 6. 9, 10. It is important to guard against merely inferential conclusions which conflict with the direct teaching of other passages of Scripture. The repentance must therefore be related to the specific judgements referred to by the Lord—"great tribulation" (verse 22); "I will kill her children with death" (verse 23). Had there been repentance such extreme visitation in judgement by the Lord might have been spared; but "she willeth not to repent", so invoking penalty for wilful sin in the sense of Heb. 10. 26, 27, 30, 31. According to the Corinthian scriptures quoted above excommunication would have to be put into effect by the churches concerned in cases of proved guilt. The awesome visitation in special personal judgement directly from the hand of the Lord was an additional matter, and it was in relation to this that the Lord had given time to repent.

5. (*Vancouver*): I favour the view that as in the case of Smyrna—see Comment 3—those forming the "synagogue of Satan" were not disciples in the church of God, but local devotees of Judaism who opposed the work of the Lord in Philadelphia.

6. (*Atherton*): In view of the "works" and "toil" of 2. 2 it seems difficult to justify the term "sitting back", which implies ease and lack of effort. Would it not be more accurate to suggest that there was still a great deal of activity in the Ephesian church, but a cooling of heart affection towards the Lord, so that activity no

longer sprang from the constraint of the love of Christ (2 Cor. 5. 14)?

7. (*Atherton*): If they had not "grown weary" (verse 3) is there any evidence that the former positive works had been neglected?

8. (*Atherton*): Judging by other occurrences of *pleion*, translated "more" in Rev. 2. 19, it would seem to me that their activities in the Lord's service had multiplied (cf. Matt. 26. 55; Luke 9. 13).
G. P. Jr.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

From Atherton and Leigh: Rev. 2. 13: What does the term "where Satan's throne is" refer to?

The following suggestion from Derby is commended as a probable answer to this question:

"Satan's throne": A temple dedicated to the worship of the Roman emperors was in this city, and these despots claimed divine honours. The Lord said to Satan, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4. 10). Many dear saints were burnt alive in those fearful days. The Lord mentions His faithful one, Antipas, "who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth".
G. P. Jr.

PSALM 69 (*continued*)

Let their habitation be desolate;

Let none dwell in their tents.

For they persecute Him whom Thou hast smitten;

And they tell of the sorrow of those whom Thou hast wounded
(verses 25. 26).

Soon after the death of the Lord the habitation of the Jewish people was made desolate. The Roman emperor Vespasian came with his army and invested Jerusalem. Then he left the command to Titus and after a bitter struggle Jerusalem was taken by him, and he slew the Jews by their tens of thousands and crucified so many of them that it is said that wood failed to make crosses for them. The valuables of the temple were taken and the temple destroyed and Jerusalem was practically left in ruins. This is referred to in the

parable of the kingdom of heaven in Matthew 22. 1-14, particularly in verse 7. For long centuries most of the Jews were scattered from their city and their land. As the weary centuries passed over that desolate land, at length came the first world war, in which Britain took the land from the Turks. It had been in the hands of the Mohammedans for some hundreds of years, and part of it is now in the hands of Israel, and the Jews there are now reckoned the nation of Israel. Thus the door of prophecy is being slowly opened. All these centuries of wandering and of sorrow and suffering and death have been endured by the Jews because they knew not the day of their visitation nor their Divine Visitor, the Christ, the Son of the living God. They persecuted Him whom God had smitten on their behalf and on ours also. See Isaiah 53. 4-6, which tells us that He was wounded for our transgressions.

Add iniquity unto their iniquity:
 And let them not come into Thy righteousness.
 Let them be blotted out of the book of life,
 And not be written with the righteous (verses 27, 28).

The word iniquity is used twice in verse 27, but it has, we judge, a different meaning in each case. The Hebrew word is *AVON*. Its first use is in the sense of punishment. The word is translated elsewhere in the Old Testament punishment or punishments some nineteen times. It is first used by Cain, "My punishment is greater than I can bear", and it is rendered punishment some eight times in Amos 1 and 2. Dr. Young renders verse 27, "Give punishment for their iniquity", which I judge gives the correct meaning of the verse. The second use of iniquity refers to the sin which was committed. They were not to come into God's righteousness, that is, the righteousness of faith, as in Romans 1. 17. They were to be blotted out of the book of life, or of "the living" (those who are naturally alive), as in the A. V. There were thousands of Jews saved at the beginning of this dispensation of grace, but for the leaders of the people in the rejection and crucifixion of the Lord, these words of the Lord in His sufferings undoubtedly had their fulfilment. They are not to be written with the righteous. *J. M.*

BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11).'

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EDITORIAL

As we read Rev. 4 we are at once impressed by the abrupt radical change in the nature of the Book. In chapter 1 we learn the circumstances in which the Revelation was given to John, who describes the Book as a prophecy (1. 5, 22. 7, 19). Chapters 2 and 3 consist of seven letters to the churches of God in the Roman province of Asia, the purpose of these letters being to have wrong teaching and wrong conduct put right. We should note that these seven letters have a three-fold application. Each letter was first of all of direct application in the church to which it was addressed. Also each church was to receive all seven letters that they might be instructed against possible future error. And further, the letters, like the Old Testament Scriptures, have been recorded for our learning, that we may be warned thereby. It becomes us to lay to heart the examples set forth therein.

In chapter 4 there is a complete change of time from the day in which John lived to times after the Rapture of the Church, and a change of content from the current state of the churches in Asia to things that must come to pass hereafter. The prophetic (foretelling) nature of this latter part of the Book makes it the more difficult to study, but we must seek a true understanding as those who will to do the will of God (John 7. 17). The attitude of many unbelievers to the Revelation is little better than contempt, especially for the predictive part, and they regard it as merely fanciful writing with no counterpart in reality. Also many professing Christians, failing to gather a measure of true understanding of the Revelation, explain it away by what they term "spiritualizing" it, a procedure fraught with danger.

Our attitude with regard to the Revelation is definite and positive. It is not the product of the disturbed mind of a very old man, to be dismissed lightly or to be explained away. It is Scripture inspired of God (2 Tim. 3. 16), and the study of it cannot fail

to be profitable. It may be worth observing that the main pattern of the Revelation follows that of the Lord's way of dealing with those who came to Him in the days of His flesh. When Philip brought Nathanael to Him, the Lord revealed His knowledge of Nathanael's natural disposition and then He disclosed His knowledge of the recent doings of Nathanael. In consequence Nathanael was convinced that he stood in the presence of the Son of God, the King of Israel (John 1. 43-51). Again, the Lord revealed to the Samaritan woman His full knowledge of her past and present life and so convinced her that He was indeed the Messiah of whom she had spoken.

Similarly, in the Revelation the Lord spoke to John of conditions in the churches of God as they then were, and some at least of this would probably be already known to John, the more especially likely seeing he held such a high place in the Fellowship. John had no doubts as to the authenticity and the certainty of the prophecy: he had truly learned that "these words are faithful and true" (Rev. 22. 6).

There we stand.

J. B.

THE LAMB IN REVELATION

By type and simile the Son of God is described in many parts of Scripture as a Lamb. This description predominates in the Revelation. It carries the associations derived from such passages as Gen. 22. 7, 8, "Where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, God will provide Himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son", and Isa. 53. 7, "A lamb that is led to the slaughter"; and many other portions.

The original word used in the Revelation means a little lamb, which is perhaps intended to convey not only the characteristic of patient suffering but also a special ability to attract affection from the onlooker. It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word used in the Old Testament passages already quoted means a young lamb. However, the Lamb in Revelation has Lordly attributes and a majestic presence.

The title *is* first introduced in chapter 5, where He is announced as the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, and John writes, "I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and

in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain". Jacob described Judah as a lion's whelp (Gen. 49. 9), but here John beheld the majesty of the adult lion at the centre of the regal splendour of heaven. The Lamb is Lord of lords, and King of kings (17. 14). There follows in chapter 5 the account of how created ones of the most exalted heavenly rank fall down before the Lamb and sing the glorious redemption song recorded in verses 9 and 10.

In chapter 6 the Lamb, having taken the book out of the right hand of Him that sat on the throne (5. 7), opens the seals and with these there is associated the outpouring of divine judgement on the earth. This calls to mind the occasion in the synagogue in Nazareth when the Lord took into His hand the book of the prophet Isaiah and read to the assembly the words of grace which were that day fulfilled in their ears (Luke 4). On that day He stopped reading before the words, "and the day of vengeance of our God". The same One who proclaimed the acceptable year of the Lord in Luke 4 is seen in Revelation 6 opening the seals of the book, which initiated the fearful events indicated in this chapter. In this connection we have the words of 5. 9, "Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with Thy blood men . . ." He was slain for men and therefore is particularly qualified to judge men. The Father "gave Him authority to execute judgement, because He is the Son of Man" (John 5. 27). In considering this sobering aspect of the Lamb please note the expression "the wrath of the Lamb" in 6. 16, and also the terrible consequences for those who worship the beast and receive his mark: "He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb" (14. 10). By contrast there is the beautiful description of the Lamb as Shepherd in 7. 17, where those who come out of the great tribulation with honour are specially cared for. How tenderly the Lamb will deal with those faithful ones who have suffered so much, guiding them unto fountains of waters of life!

We come now to the closing chapters of the Revelation where the Lamb is seen as Bridegroom, and where we have the description of the holy city, new Jerusalem, the eternal home of the wife of the Lamb. In contemplating this glorious vision we must try to free

our minds from the restricted patterns of thought acquired by experience of this fallen world. The city is from heaven (21. 2, 10) and is found in the new earth where all is perfection. "The building of the wall thereof was jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto pure glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones" (21. 18, 19). These materials convey the idea of shining beauty, exquisite workmanship and mature excellence where there is no flaw or defect. Surely our spirits are moved when we observe that in all that scene of bright perfection there is no trace of damage save only the disfigurement implied in the words, "A Lamb standing, as though it had been slain" (5. 6). The word translated "slain" implies a death of violence, nor was it unplanned or unexpected violence. In chapter 13. 8 He is described as "the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world". It was the divine will that He should suffer and die, and for ever carry in His raised and glorified Person the wounds with which He was wounded for our transgressions.

We gladly note, however, that the Lamb is not on this account an object of pity in that glorious city that John saw. Indeed, "the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb" (21. 23). He is the resplendent source of light and warmth in that better country. Unlike the sun which rises and sets, giving to this world day and night, His brightness is undimmed and "there shall be no night there" (21. 25). It is only because of Him that the city has beauty at all. The light which flashes so brilliantly from the sparkling materials of its construction is light from Him, and even the crystal brightness of the river of water of life proceeding out of the throne is but a reflection of Him.

*The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel's land.*

In conclusion, we note that His brightness is not binding to the beholder, for "His servants shall do Him service; and they shall see His face" (22. 3, 4). Even now God has "shined in our hearts, to give the light of knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4. 6).

*But if the little that we know
Of Thee and Thine while here below
Such triumph gives, what will it be
When face to face Thyself we see?*

J. W. Archibald

WITNESSES IN SCRIPTURE

A witness is "one who testifies to that which he has seen or heard or understands" and the keynote is to be found in the dual reference to Christ in the book of Revelation, "The faithful and true Witness" (Rev. 1. 5, 3. 14). In fact, the word "martyr" in the English language, a transliteration of the Greek word *martus*, possibly signifies the ultimate in faithful witnessing. The effect of witnessing is twofold. Firstly, testimony may be borne to a person, event, truth or other matter. Secondly, it may explain or clarify an issue or otherwise shed light upon the darkness.

The use of the word "witness" is extensive in the Old Testament concerning those inanimate things which testified to the making of agreements or covenants: e. g. the pillar and heap of stones relating to Laban's covenant with Jacob at Gilead (Gen. 31. 44-52). The deeper significance is that God witnessed the covenant which had been made. God, in turn, used as His witness the faithful and true word in song and precept, which He skilfully placed in the mouths and upon the hearts of the sons of Israel before entering Canaan, testimony within to act as chastisement from a righteous God in evil days and, perchance, to bring them to repentance (Deut. 31. 21, 26).

In addition, God shows Himself (witnesses) to men through His servants. The Lord said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" John 14. 9; Heb. 1. 1, 2). The need for a witness is often determined by the condition of the people to whom he is sent. God chose Noah and, the condition of the people being one of extreme ungodliness, Noah became a "preacher of righteousness". His witness condemned the world. He was a man who enjoyed communion with God; therefore God entrusted His message to him. Godly men and women, though few in number, interspersed among their fellows, can have a marked effect, the extent of which is known to God alone (Matt. 5. 13-16). In the day of destruction

of ungodly men, yet future, the testimony of the lives of godly men will play no small part. So whether by object, word or servant, "He left not Himself without witness" (Acts 14. 17).

The Laodicean church in the book of Revelation was far removed in condition from the mind of the Lord. They had a false picture of themselves; they treasured false values and consequently were at the threshold of spiritual bankruptcy. Over against these, however, is "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness", in absolute harmony with the mind of God. He sets His riches out and counsels them to buy, that they may become rich, that they may clothe themselves, and that they may see that communion may be restored and that they may enter into fullest fellowship with Christ as overcomers.

In Revelation 11. 1-13 we read of certain events in Jerusalem surrounding two witnesses who, we judge, will prophesy in the first half of Daniel's seventieth week. Although events parallel to those miraculous powers given to the two witnesses are recorded during the lives of Moses and Elijah, we cannot allow speculation to determine their identity. The words, "I will give unto my two witnesses", explain the origin of the powers vested in them (verses 5, 6) and of the message which they will speak. God will fit them for the preaching of a call to repentance, manifested in the reference to garments of mourning (sackcloth), yet it would appear that those mighty deeds and truthful words which will torment men will merely have the effect of slowing down the sinful pursuits of those that dwell on the earth in that day, "a day of pride, fulness of bread and prosperous ease". The witnesses are described as the two olive trees (the tree of oil for testimony) and the two lampstands (that which illumines) and these two features are prime essentials, as has already been stated, to the function of witnessing. They are God's faithful prophets, "standing before the Lord", and in their faithfulness they will experience the ultimate of martyrdom. But after three days and a half, corresponding to the years of their witness, they will be raised and will ascend publicly into heaven *in* the cloud.

In Rev. 7. 1-10 we are introduced to a band of witnesses with a world-wide message. These are the 144, 000 sealed witnesses from every tribe of the children of Israel (except Dan) and they will testify in Antichrist's kingdom concerning the forthcoming millennial reign of Christ. They will have great success by the

help of the Spirit (Joel 2. 28-32), akin to that of the early days of apostolic ministry, for the time is short. The result cannot be measured (Rev. 7. 9) and the reward is great (Matt. 25. 31-46).

As we review the faithfulness and dedication of witnesses gone before and yet to come, the clear lessons must not be lost to those whom He has called to witness for Him in the day of grace.

R. I. Shaw

A STUDY OF REVELATION

CHAPTER 4

THE ENTHRONED ONE AND THE SCENE IN HEAVEN

From Methil. —Rev. 4. 1 tells that a door was opened in heaven and John received the commandment, "Come up hither, and I will shew thee the things which must come to pass hereafter". He had a vision of heaven, and for this he had to be in the Spirit (v. 2). Only those in a true spiritual condition can hope to get a view into heaven.

John, in describing "a throne set in heaven, and One sitting upon the throne... like a jasper stone and a sardius", reveals the glory of Him who is "the Father of lights" (Jas. 1. 17) in whom "is no darkness at all" (1 John 1. 5). Round about the throne was a rainbow like an emerald to look upon. Glorious beauty and majesty are seen in the rainbow, the token of God's covenant with Noah, but what will it be to see the glory of God? We thought that only those in covenant relationship with Him will see the rainbow round about the throne. Some thought that these things refer to the present-day scene in heaven, while others were of the opinion that they speak of a future scene [Comment 1].

The four and twenty elders were arrayed in white garments, and wore crowns of gold; and since white garments speak of righteousness and crowns of rewards, it was thought that these would speak of twenty-four worthy saints who have been overcomers (see Rev. 3. 4) [Comment 2],

We understood the four living creatures to be the same as those mentioned in Ezek. 1 and 10, where they are referred to as cherubim, and in Isa. 6, where they are seen as seraphim. We would, however, like some help here [Comment 3].

It is perhaps not insignificant that the faces of the four living creatures resemble those of four distinct classes of earthly creatures: the lion as king of beasts, the ox as chief of cattle, the eagle as king of birds and man as the greatest of all creation. This would link up with the four characters of the Lord as seen in the Gospels, the lion in Matthew, the ox in Mark, the man in Luke, and the eagle in John.

The words of the elders, "because of Thy will they were and were created" remind us that nothing came into being of its own will or by chance; and such words are important in a day when so much is being said regarding the theory of evolution.

The word "worship" in the Greek indicates bowing down or prostrating oneself. This is clearly demonstrated when the four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sits upon the throne, and the four living creatures proclaim His excellence. When the Lord reveals Himself to man, the proper attitude is one of bowing or prostrating oneself before Him (see Acts 9. 4). A. R. Smith

From Denmark Hill. —If every artist in the world were to paint the scene as depicted in Rev. 4 no two pictures would be exactly alike. Similarly our interpretations of what John saw are surely very varied indeed. The task given to John of describing heaven in earthly terms would humanly be beyond him; the Spirit guided his descriptions of all that he saw and heard. "Man shall not see Me (God) and live" (Ex. 33. 20) is a fact we must not overlook, when we consider that the One who sat on the throne appeared to John as without form, shape, or size—so unlike man [Comment 4]. He saw an effusion of light—"lightnings" (v. 5) —like jasper and sardius. God is light; He is the Father of lights. John also heard voices and thunders. We remember how God spoke in thunders to the Israelites, and how He spoke from heaven when Jesus was on earth. Surely this was none other than God the Father on the throne! The True God is to be seen in chapters 4 and 5, for the Spirit is seen before the throne (4. 5), and the Lamb (the Son) in 5. 6.

Green, which we may associate with God's earthly creation (as in grass, trees, leaves and stalks) is also seen round about the throne in the form of a rainbow. The rainbow also reminds us of the covenant-making and covenant-keeping God. By far the best covenant of all is the new covenant, under which we shelter and in which we trust.

Before the throne are seven lamps of fire burning, reminding us of the golden lampstand which was lit and was not to go out; see Num. 8. 2—"the seven lamps shall give light in front of the lampstand" [Comment 5], The Lord sent the Holy Spirit to illumine the hearts and minds of those who trust Him. He is One Spirit, not seven spirits, although perhaps Rev. 4. 5 could be compared with Zech. 4. 2 where the seven lamps were fed by pipes from one central reservoir.

We could not see how the twenty-four could be from any earthly generation. We were reminded that there are thrones, dominions and principalities in the heavens. We note that each time these elders are mentioned (4. 10, 5. 8, 14, 7. 11, 11. 16, 19. 4), they are always associated with worship. We could not trace any other portion of Scripture where such are mentioned.

The four living creatures have no rest. At their continuous cries of worship the twenty-four elders fall down and cast their crowns before Him that sits enthroned [Comment 6]. God's creation was made to bless Him, to worship Him. We need more visions like this to cause us to worship Him acceptably for His great redemptive work.

Mark McKaig

From Hayes. —Having written "the things which are", John now commences to write "the things which shall come to pass hereafter". The vision of the throne and the symbolism of the things around and before the throne is in respect of "things... hereafter". Although we may gain knowledge by examining the full meaning of each feature, we must be careful to appreciate the overall effect of this tremendous heavenly sight.

The throne was the first thing that attracted John's attention. Everything he saw was set in order in relation to this throne of the Lord, the Almighty, the Creator, God. The "Sitting One" was veiled in the glory that surrounded the throne to the extent that His form could not be distinguished (v. 3).

Two views were expressed concerning the identity of the twenty-four elders, the latter one by the majority: (a) a body of representatives of believers (24 signifying completeness): (b) heavenly beings who have been specially selected to be in the counsel of God in relation to "things... hereafter". Against view (a) were the problems of why "one of the elders" should act on his own (5. 5), and why the elders do not appear to include themselves in their

song (5. 9, 10) [Comment 7]. Against view (b) it was urged that the elders had crowns to cast before the throne (4. 11) (for possible explanation see notes on Revelation by J. M., page 26) and that a distinction is made between the elders and angels (5. 11); if the four living creatures are cherubim (cf. Ezek. 1 and 10), then what other heavenly beings could the elders be? The fact that they were elders implies that they ruled and governed, but the charge allotted to them is not revealed. On the other hand, it was suggested that the term "elder" may be used in a similar sense to that in Isa. 24. 23 ("ancients").

David Parker

From Birmingham. —It is often quite difficult, when reading prophetic writings, to determine whether or not the details are actual or symbolic. John's vision in Rev. 4 can be compared quite remarkably with those of Ezekiel and Isaiah (Ezek. 1; Isa. 6). All three visions show the presence of the four living creatures. Isaiah records the cry, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts..." and Ezekiel describes the four creatures. There is much speculation as to the creatures and the significance of their likeness; are they heavenly beings, or aspects of the four Gospels, or something else? One thing is certain; they hold the closest place to God and are entirely devoted to praising Him [Comment 8].

Rev. 4. 3 is interesting for the way it portrays Christ [Comment 9]. He is like the crystal and the blood-red stone of a sardius. Around Him was the glory of the rainbow, which had been used long ago as a sign of a covenant. It is not apparent who or what the twenty-four elders are, or what is the importance of their number. They are shown throughout the book to be engaged, together with the four living creatures, in praising God (Rev. 11 and 19).

The record of the seven Spirits of God also poses a problem. There is no doubt whatsoever that the Scriptures teach us that there is only *one* Holy Spirit; what then are the seven Spirits? Rev. 1. 4 speaks of the seven churches of God and also the seven Spirits of God. It was suggested that, although there is only one Spirit of God, He may have been manifested to each of the churches in a different way [Comment 10].

P. R. M.

IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

Papers were also received from Aberkenfig and Barry, Atherton and Leigh, Birkenhead, Crowborough, Derby and Teesside, and the following are impressions from these.

Rev. 4 begins the third section of the book of Revelation, dealing with "the things which must come to pass hereafter" (v. 1, see also 1. 19). The second section, chapters 2 and 3, dealing with "the things which are", gives principles and instruction for the period in which churches of God are in existence, right up to the present time. John's vision in chapter 4 then, refers to yet future events, commencing after the Rapture of the Church the Body of Christ.

References to the Son of God and the Holy Spirit in 5. 7 and 4. 5 imply that the enthroned Person of Rev. 4 is God the Father. "The seven Spirits of God" (4. 5) are not seven angels (cf. "ministering spirits" in Heb. 1. 14), as the seven Spirits are mentioned in 1. 4, 5 in such close conjunction with the Father and the Son that only the Holy Spirit could be meant. Daniel also seems to have seen the Father on the throne (Dan. 7. 9, 13).

It was noted that the wonderful visions of God to John, Daniel, Isaiah and Ezekiel were given in dark days for God's people, and each of these men was greatly humbled by the experience. Significantly the Scriptures contain no detailed description of the appearance of God the Father, although such descriptions of the Son do occur (e. g. Rev. 1).

The rainbow around the throne was compared to the one Noah was shown, which symbolized God's covenant with men. The rainbow John saw was green (emerald), possibly denoting the abiding freshness and vitality of the new covenant now in force.

John's description of the arrangement of heavenly beings was compared with that in Heb. 12. 22-24, in which such terms as "the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven" suggest a highly ordered organization of created beings in the heavenly realm.

The four living creatures were taken to be four literal beings of a high order of creation. They were probably created long before the earthly creatures they resemble; before any lion walked on earth, a creature in heaven had a face like a lion. If this and the commonly held view that the four creatures are related to the presentations

of the Lord Jesus in the four Gospels are both true, it suggests that God had in mind the sacred records of the earthly life of His Son when He created the four living creatures.

The Father's throne was conspicuous above the other thrones around it. This vision was an encouraging message for the seven churches. God's ways do not change, His will in creation still operates and His purposes are sure because there is "a throne set in heaven".

Eds.

COMMENTS

1. (*Methil*): Isa. 6. 1-3 would seem to support the view that the scene depicted in Rev. 4 is characteristic of heaven at all times, though there is direct reference to creation. But even so, we must keep clearly in mind that from the beginning of Rev. 4 John is being shown the things that shall come to pass hereafter. This gives a future outlook to the record.

2. (*Methil*): The identity of the twenty-four elders in Revelation is, and may remain, in dispute. The fact that, as our friends in Hayes point out, they do not include themselves in their song is a strong argument against their being "worthy saints who have been overcomers". We should bear in mind that God uses elders in exercising His rule. There were elders in Israel even in Egypt (Ex. 3. 16), during the wilderness journey (Ex. 18. 12) and in the land (Judg. 2. 7, Matt 16. 21). In our day too God rules His people through elders (Acts 11. 30). May it not be that the twenty-four elders arrayed in white and wearing golden crowns are heavenly beings expressive of the righteous rule of God at all times?

3. (*Methil*): It is generally accepted that the four living creatures in Rev. 4 are the same as those seen by Ezekiel (1 and 10): and, if that is a sound view, they are cherubim (Ezek. 10). It may well be that, in spite of the parallelism between Isa. 6 and Rev. 4, the seraphim are not the same as the cherubim. The difference in the number of wings in itself is not, we admit, sufficient to prove this. The little that is revealed in Scripture concerning the heavenly beings clearly indicates that among them there are several different orders.

4. (*Denmark Hill*): This is an overstatement. John was aware of the presence of the One upon the throne, though he does not

describe that One. It would appear that John was in the presence of God the Father, whose presence is veiled in light transcendent and unapproachable (Psa. 104. 2; 1 Tim. 6. 16). Though John does not venture to describe the One upon the throne, we are not entitled to say "without form".

5. (*Denmark Hill*): According to Lev. 24. 2, 3 the lamps were lit in the evening and burned till morning. "Continually" (Lev. 24. 2-4) is not the same as "continuously"; it indicates the permanence of the statute; it was to be kept by all succeeding generations.

6. (*Denmark Hill*): Are the cries "continuous"? It would be more accurate to say "repeated" or "continual". Other things take place in heaven at that time.

7. (*Hayes*): Careful consideration of this fact shows it to be very notable evidence that the twenty-four elders are heavenly beings of high standing in heaven.

8. (*Birmingham*): "Living creatures" (R. V.) and "beasts" (A. V.) are renderings of the Greek *zoa* (singular, *zoon*; a living creature, an animal). The same word appears in such texts as Heb. 13. 11 and 2 Pet. 2. 22, where it clearly signifies an animal on the earth. In Revelation it indicates created beings of notable vitality, to whom is assigned the privilege of serving God in characteristic relation to His holiness.

9. (*Birmingham*): It should be noted that in this issue most of our contributors hold the view that it is God the Father who is presented as the enthroned One in Rev. 4. With this view we agree.

J. B

10. (*Birmingham*): This raises a profound and difficult question. It does seem clear from Rev. 1. 4, 5 that the expression "the seven Spirits which are before His throne" relates to the Holy Spirit, because of the link with the Father and the Son in the greeting to the seven churches. The expression has been said to convey the thought of the perfect activity of the Spirit of God, a thought based on the widely accepted view that seven in Scripture represents perfection. That the Lord is stated in Rev. 3. 1 to have the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars would emphasize the work of the Spirit through the messengers (or angels) of the churches in connection with the activities of the churches of God. The intimate association of the Holy Spirit with the judgements to

be decreed by the Lamb in the day of vengeance of our God is presented by the imagery of the Lamb having "seven eyes" which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth (Rev. 5. 6). Note the widening of the sphere of activity in this context. In Rev. 4. 5 the seven Spirits of God are seen as the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, fitting emblem of the Holy Spirit's perfection, light and purity, here seen in such close association with the Father's throne.

G. P. Jr.

QUESTION AND ANSWERS

From Methil: (a) Are angels winged creatures?

From Isa. 6 and Ezek. 1, 10 and Rev. 4 we may deduce that the cherubim and seraphim are winged. The Scriptures, the purpose of which is to set forth God not the angels, do not provide a complete and decisive answer to such a question. Mark (16. 5) refers to an angel as a "young man . . . arrayed in a white robe", wings not being mentioned possibly because he was not winged. The narrative in Ezekiel suggests that the cherubim, though winged, do not require wings in order to fly. Similarly, angels do not require wings in order to carry out their service (Heb, 1. 14).

(b) What is the distinction, if any, between cherubim (Ezek. 1 and 10) and seraphim (Isa. 6) ?

The number of wings is different (though we hesitate to build on this), and the modes of service are not identical. It is significant that in the Hebrew the words for cherubim and seraphim are quite different. Scripture does not give a full description of them or a definite account of their modes of service.

From Aberkenfig and Barry: (a) Is God not described in the vision of Rev. 4 or elsewhere in Scripture, because he was not seen directly?

God can only be known in so far as He reveals Himself. It is helpful to consider the experience of Moses, who said, "Shew me . . . Thy glory". God said, "Thou canst not see My face: for man shall not see Me and live . . . My face shall not be seen" (Ex. 33. 18, 20, 23). All revelations of the Person of God the Father are subject to this restriction.

(b) How do such visions of God the Father agree with the Lord's words in John 1. 18?

John 1. 18, 6. 46, 12. 41 are not in conflict with the word of God to Moses. Indeed, they extend that same principle to this present day. John had a vision of God the Father within the limits set down in Ex. 33.

From Atherton and Leigh: When men saw God in Old Testament times, was it always God the Son they saw (see John 6. 46, 12. 41)?

Clearly Moses saw the glory of God the Father (Ex. 33 and 34), and Isaiah may have seen God the Father, a limited vision as in the case of Moses and of John. It is held by many that in the Old Testament theophanies it was the God the Son who appeared.

J. B.

Does not John 12. 41 suggest that Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord Jesus rather than that of God the Father. *G. P. Jr.*

PSALM 69 (*continued*)

But I am poor and sorrowful:

Let Thy salvation, O God, set Me up on high.

I will praise the name of God with a song,

And will magnify Him with thanksgiving.

And it shall please the LORD better than an ox,

Or a bullock that hath horns and hoofs (verses 29, 30, 31).

The psalms are like a land of mental hills and valleys; sometimes we see the writer on the hill-top in songs of praise to God, and at other times He is down in the valley of humiliation. He is down in the valley in the words of verse 29, in which He says, "But I am poor and sorrowful", and He asks God to let His salvation set Him up on high. In consequence of being raised on high, He praises God with a song, and magnifies Him with thanksgiving. This He knows will please the Lord better than the sacrifice of an ox or a bullock which hath horns and hoofs. We read of the Lord with His disciples singing a hymn before He went out to Gethsemane. How great is the difference between His singing with them and His agony in the garden!

**The meek have seen it, and are glad:
 Ye that seek after God, let your heart live.
 For the LORD heareth the needy,
 And despiseth not His prisoners (verses 32, 33).**

We have in Psalm 22. 26 an almost similar statement to that of verse 32.

**"The meek shall eat and be satisfied:
 They shall praise the LORD that seek after Him:
 Let your heart live for ever. "**

It seems from these scriptures that seeking after God is a cause of heart quickening, of the heart being actively alive. Too much introspection, or being overwhelmed with life's troubles which surround us, is sure to depress the heart. Paul from his Roman prison sounds out the note of revival, "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4. 4). How could he rejoice himself in his present circumstances? It was because he set his mind on things above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God, and he encouraged others to do likewise and not to set their mind on things upon the earth. What is there in things that are beneath to gladden the heart and to cause us to praise God. Nothing! The psalmist said that the meek were glad when they saw the holy joy of the One who praised God and magnified the Lord with thanksgiving. Let us be glad that the Lord heareth the needy and despiseth not His prisoners, for some of the best of His saints have been prisoners of Christ Jesus as Paul was. Prison walls have heard both the groaning prayers and songs of His prisoners.

M

BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11).'

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EDITORIAL

John's own contribution in **the** book of Revelation is **very** limited compared with **the extent** of his recorded visions **and** his reporting **of the words of the Lord and the** heavenly beings. Indeed **there is** little **except** his introductory doxology **in chapter 1. 4-7**. It is **interesting** to note **how much these few** personal words from **the** apostle owe to **the visions he** records in **chapters 4 and 5**. Note **the thought of** loosing from sins "**by His blood**" to **be a kingdom, priests unto His** God and **Father (I. 5, 6)**; and "**didst purchase unto God with Thy blood... and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests**" (5. 9, 10). **What** captivated John and **became engraved** on **his heart** was not so **much the** amazing power and authority of Christ as evidenced **in His mighty acts of judgement** and vengeance. It was **the glory of the** sacrificial Lamb **whose** infinitely precious blood had loosed **him** from sins **and raised him to a kingdom and** priesthood. It was **the** memory of a thorn-crowned **Sufferer** on a Roman cross **which** John **treasured and revered** above all. *J. D. T.*

ANGELS—THEIR NATURE AND WORK

Introduction

It is **interesting** to note **that in the book of the Revelation angels** are referred to **some 68** times. They are **mentioned in 19 of the 22** chapters. We are told **in the first verse that the Revelation was sent and signified** (or communicated) **by His angel unto His servant John**, whereas **twice in the last chapter, in verses 6 and 16 we have confirmation of the part played by an angel** in communicating this remarkable book.

In **the Old Testament** angels are mentioned **109** times, **and 172** times in **the New Testament**. Contrary to **the popular view, the word** in its **Greek form *angelos*** (angel or **messenger**) is a masculine noun. As far as **the present writer is aware, there is no instance in the Scriptures of the manifestation of an angel in female form.**

The Nature of Angels

What do we mean by nature? The Oxford dictionary defines the word as "essential qualities". In the Authorized Version of Heb. 2. 16, where reference is made to the incarnation of Christ, the words "the nature of" are in italics, and do not form part of the original. These words are inserted to assist the English reader. The Revised Version reads: "For verily not of angels doth He take hold, but He taketh hold of the seed of Abraham". In order that Christ should effect salvation through death, it was necessary that He should be a sharer in blood and flesh, and in His great stoop He passed angels by [see below for alternative view of Heb. 2. 16 Eds.]. We may infer from this that angels do not share blood and flesh, and that they are not subject to death. This latter statement seems to command special note. When the Lord answered the Sadducees regarding those worthy to attain to the resurrection we find these words in Luke 20. 36: "Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection".

The citation in Heb. 2. 6-8 is from Psalm 8. It is understood that "man" referred to in this Psalm is "frail mortal man", and he is of an order lower than that of angels. While Christ, to achieve salvation, was for a little while lower than the angels, He was even then crowned with glory and honour, that by the grace of God He should taste death for every man.

When John, who heard and saw the wonderful things recorded in the Revelation, was later constrained to fall down and worship at the feet of the angel, he was restrained by the angel who said, "See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren the prophets, and with them which keep the words of this book: worship God" (Rev. 22. 9).

That there are different grades or orders of angels, performing different functions, seems to be borne out in the references to Michael and Gabriel. The former is named as "one of the chief princes" (Dan. 10. 13) and as "the archangel" in Jude 9. Michael's activities lie in the field of helping those attacked by Satan, and he will lead the war in heaven described in Rev. 12. 7-12. On the other hand Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, seems to be the revealer or instructor. When Daniel saw the vision and sought to understand it, he heard the command: "Gabriel, make this man

to understand the vision" (Dan. 8. 16). Later when Daniel was praying, Gabriel drew near and instructed him, and made Daniel skilful of understanding. As the revealer, Gabriel appeared to Zacharias (Luke 1. 19) and to Mary (Luke 1. 26).

The Work of Angels

In considering this aspect we are helped by the writer of the letter to the Hebrews who, when referring to angels states, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?" (Heb. 1. 14). The thought is of rendering aid or service, and it is well to note that it is on behalf of them that shall inherit salvation.

The work of angels was fully appreciated by David—

"Bless the LORD, ye angels of His:
Ye mighty in strength, that fulfill His word,
Hearkening unto the voice of His word.
Bless the Lord, all ye His hosts; ye ministers
of His, that do His pleasure" (Psa. 103. 20, 21).

Following a period of deep distress and subsequent deliverance, David wrote one of the choicest words found in his many psalms:

"The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear
Him,
And delivereth them" (Psa. 34. 7).

In this connection we may learn from the experience of Elisha and his servant at Dothan. They were encircled by enemies, and in desperation the servant said, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" Is was then that Elisha prayed, "LORD, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kin. 6. 17).

A few examples follow of the appearance of angels to help men and women in need of succour. To Gideon (Judg. 6. 11), Manoah's wife (Judg. 13. 5), Daniel (Dan. 6. 22), Peter (Acts 12. 7), Paul (Acts. 27. 23). The statement in Matt. 18. 10 regarding angels and children is worthy of special note.

Angels and Christ.

Prior to the birth of Christ the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and conveyed the profound news, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon

thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also that which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God" (Luke 1. 55). On three occasions an angel appeared to Joseph, the husband of Mary, and guided him regarding future movements. The shepherds who were keeping night watches over their flock heard an angel declare the good tidings of great joy—"There is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2. 11).

It is doubtful if we should have realized that the words in Psalm 91. 11 and 12 had a direct reference to the Lord had Satan not cited them in one of the temptations. The omission by Satan of the words "To keep Thee in all Thy ways" is not without significance. From the pinnacle of the temple the adversary challenged the Lord to demonstrate that the words in Psalm 91 applied to Him. "If Thou art the Son of God, cast Thyself down from hence" (Luke 4. 9). The Lord's reply was: "Again it is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God (Matt. 4. 7). When the devil had completed every temptation "angels came and ministered unto Him" (Matt. 4. 11).

The three synoptic Gospels describe the scene in the garden of Gethsemane, and each writer testifies to the sorrow and deep distress of the Lord: "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. 26. 39). At this crucial juncture we read, "And there appeared unto Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him" (Luke 22. 43).

Following His arrest some of the disciples were prepared to defend the Lord, and indeed Simon Peter drew a sword and cut off the right ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest. The Lord's response was, "Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech My Father, and He shall even now send Me more than twelve legions of angels? How then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Matt. 26. 53, 54).

No letter in the New Testament refers more touchingly to the sufferings of the Christ than the apostle Peter's first letter. He describes himself as a witness of the sufferings of Christ. There were others deeply concerned regarding Christ's sufferings. We read in 1 Pet. 1. 12, "which things angels desire to look into". The Greek word *parakupto* corresponds to the phrase "to look into". Dr. Young defines this word as "to stoop alongside of". This definition suggests

that angels looked on in wonder and amazement at the happenings at Golgotha, and wished to probe the mystery. It may on the other hand suggest that angels waited anxiously for the word of command to go to the help of their Lord, but that command was never given.

An angel rolled away the stone from the mouth of the tomb and declared the glorious fact, "He is not here; for He is risen". At the ascension of the Lord two men in white apparel declared to the disciples, "This Jesus, which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld Him going into heaven" (Acts 1. 11).

We have traced the part played by angels from the birth of the Lord Jesus until He was received back to the Father's right hand.
Angels and the book of the Revelation

The fact has already been mentioned that angels are referred to some 68 times in this book, and readers will readily observe that they play an important role. Attention is now drawn to some of these instances. The Revelation was sent and signified by an angel. Each letter to the seven churches is addressed to the angel (or messenger) of the church. It was a strong angel who proclaimed the question, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" (Rev. 5. 2). One hundred million, and thousands of thousands of angels raise their voices, "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain". In chapter 7 we see four angels holding the four winds of the earth and another angel restrained them with the words, "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads". Seven angels with seven trumpets are mentioned in chapter 8. 2, and the blowing of these trumpets and subsequent events are described in chapters 8, 9 and 11. We must not overlook the strong angel with the little book open, standing upon the sea and the earth mentioned in chapter 10. The victory of Michael and his angels over Satan and his angels results in Satan and his angels being cast down to the earth. In chapter 14 there are four angels each with a message, and in the following chapters there are seven angels with seven plagues which are the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God. An angel having great authority and another strong angel who cast a millstone into the sea are mentioned in chapter 18, while in the next chapter we have an angel standing in the sun. The key of the abyss and a great chain are used by an angel to bind the Devil and cast him into the abyss for a thousand

years. Finally, "One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the Bride, the wife of the Lamb" (Rev. 21. 9). W. Bunting

Note on Heb. 2. 16, extracted from *Bible Studies* 1957, page 28: " 'To take hold' is from *epilambano* and is used in the sense of coming to one's help (compare Matt. 14. 31 and Mark 8. 23). Angels did not need to be delivered from the fear of death. The seed of Abraham does. The Lord became incarnate to bring help to men. It is suggested that the seed of Abraham would include all believers of both old and new dispensations—the children of faith. The American Revised renders 'Trie giveth help to the seed of Abraham'. In the sense in which the phrase is used here, we judge it excludes the Gal. 3. 16 reference—Jas. M. "

A STUDY OF REVELATION

CHAPTER 5

From Atherton and Leigh. —The events of Rev. 5, belonging to the third and prophetic section of what John was told to write (1. 19), will take place after the rapture of the Church. The book in God's right hand (*S. I*) contains His purposes for mankind during the seven years of Daniel's 70th week and subsequently, particularly as they affect Israel. The 70th week, like the other 69 weeks, was decreed upon the people of Israel (Dan. 9. 24), and it is highly significant that the One found worthy to open the book is described as "the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David" (Rev. 5. 5).

The contents of the book are not specifically stated in Revelation. However, as each of the book's seven seals is opened, several events occur as recorded in chapters 6 and 8, as though the opening of each seal reveals more of the book's contents. Presumably when all seven seals have been opened the bulk of the book's contents remain to be enacted, so that the book possibly contains much of what is described from Rev. 6 to 20. If so, it is clear that the purpose of the seals is not to keep the book's contents secret.

Rev. 5. 2, 3 seems to mean that God looks for someone who will undertake to carry out His promises and purposes regarding Israel and the nations (cf. Isa. 59. 16, 63. 5) which are contained in the

sealed book. John weeps because no one is found competent or fitted to execute God's judgements on the nations and fulfil His age-long promises to His people Israel. However, Israel's own champion stands forward, David's Root and Heir. What a hope for Israel! She faces fearful experiences in "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30. 7), but a refined remnant will assuredly emerge victorious at last because her great Messiah, a true Israelite, now makes her His personal concern. He whom she rejected as Jesus of Nazareth has been wounded for her transgressions; the Lamb prepares to become her King.

Rev. 5. 7 is one of the great verses of the Bible. It describes the actual transference of responsibility from God the Father on the throne to the Lamb, the great Overcomer [Comment 1]. He will not shirk the dread task He undertakes.

At once the throngs of heaven fall before Him in worship, clearly recognizing His deity; for in the concluding verses of Rev. 5 the Lamb is accorded praise which is due to Jehovah God alone. It is to be specially noted that the twenty-four elders bring before the Lamb the prayers of the saints. For millennia their cries for Israel's salvation and world-wide justice have seemed to receive no answer. Now at last a Person is appointed to put matters right. Like a long petition with thousands of names, every single prayer from a faithful heart will be brought to the attention of the newly appointed King.

We took the words of 5. 10, "they reign upon the earth", to be anticipatory of millennial times, not to refer to the actual times when the elders will say these words to the Lamb. However, some considered that the universal praise of verse 14 refers specifically to the earlier events of this chapter and not to the ultimate admission of the Son's Lordship referred to in Phil. 2. 9, 10 [Comment 2].

L. de Ville, D. 5. Jones

From Barry and Aberkenfig. —Chapter 4 ends with worship of the Creator. This chapter ends with worship of the Redeemer. Man's inability to break free from the consequences of his guilt is illustrated by the seals which no man can open. However, it does not end with the failure of man, for we have presented to us the victory achieved by the Lamb. The seals are opened and God's purpose is worked out. It is inevitable in considering the seven seals that we should ask whether the seven seals, seven trumpets and seven

bowls take place at the same time and at what time; presumably they take place during the seven years preceding the coming to earth of the Son of Man. [See discussion of this matter in February issue].

It has been suggested that the book is in seven parts, each part having a separate seal. It was secret until the seals were opened. What John saw was perhaps what was contained in the book, and it was illustrated so that John would understand. The Lord, by virtue of His death and resurrection, held the future of the world in His hands. These things have not yet taken place but were part of the Revelation given to John.

It is interesting to note that when the angel issued the challenge, he did not ask who was strong enough or who had the skill and ability to open the seals, but who was worthy. It is remarkable in one sense that neither in heaven, nor on earth nor under the earth was anybody found worthy to open the book or look thereon. This was a cause of deep grief to the apostle John. John was told, "Weep not... the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah... hath overcome... He is worthy". John looked for a lion and saw a Lamb as though it had been newly slain. The cross is central. It is as Christ crucified that He is worthy. The seven eyes would speak of His perfect knowledge of God and the seven horns of His perfect power. This expression, "the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah", only occurs here in the Scriptures. It is true that Judah is called a lion's whelp in Gen. 49. 9. The "Root of David" is another expression not found in the Old Testament. These words convey the thought that He was David's Son and yet David's Lord. He gave life to David and yet he was descended from Him. He was also the giver of eternal life. See also Rev. 22. 16; Psalm 110. 1, 2; Matt. 22. 41-45. The Greek word *arnion* (Lamb) is found twenty-nine times in Revelation, and once only in the rest of the New Testament (John 21. 15, where it is not used with reference to Christ). Elsewhere when Christ is called a Lamb the word is *amnos* (John 1. 29, 36; Acts 8. 32; 1 Peter 1. 19). It is striking and unexpected to have such an animal chosen to symbolize Christ, and yet when one considers the meekness and gentleness of Him who came to earth we see how fitting is the symbolism. In addition to this we think of His sacrificial death and appreciate the words, "a Lamb standing as though it had been slain". It is remarkable the number of sevens that occur throughout Revela-

tion. In chapter 1 we have seven lampstands. In chapter 4 are seven stars and seven lamps of fire. Here we have seven horns and seven eyes. The seven eyes are described as the seven spirits of God. In chapter 4 the seven lamps of fire are said to be the seven Spirits of God. We would judge this to refer to the Holy Spirit presented under a different figure. The word new (*kainos*) tends to recur in Revelation. It applies to the new name (2. 17; 3. 12); to the New Jerusalem (3. 12; 21. 2); to the new heaven and the new earth (21. 1) and finally, "Behold I make all things new" (21. 5). The word "new" as used here is "not new in time, recent, but new as to form or quality, of different nature from what is contrasted as old" (Vine's Expository Dictionary). It is translated as "fresh" in Matt. 9. 17, Mark 2. 22 and Luke 5. 38, speaking of the wine-skins. This chapter seems to be a summary of the world's history right on to the end of time, and then in subsequent chapters further details of events leading up to the time of the end are given.

We noted with interest the seven things mentioned in verse 12 concerning the worthiness of the Lamb to receive the power, riches, wisdom, might, honour, glory and blessing. D. H. Butler

From Birkenhead. —As John's vision is captivated with the throne of God, his sight is now centred on the scroll on God's right hand. The writing upon the scroll is under God's sovereign control, it cannot be altered, nothing can be added to it and it is perfectly secret. None of earth, nor any creature in the universe is able to open the book, indicating human and angelic impotence when it comes to unfolding the secrets of God.

John weeps, but is comforted by one of the elders and is told that "the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David", who is in the midst of the throne and the living creatures, is worthy to open the book and unloose its seals. In the completeness of Deity and the perfection of His Manhood, Christ alone is fitted to reveal the contents of the scrolls. It is suggested the book contains the world's destiny, and the knowledge and strength of the Lamb, slain at Calvary, are the credentials necessary for man's redemption.

The beings around the throne immediately burst forth in praise symbolized by the harps, using also the prayers of the saints, precious in the sight of God though counted of no value on earth. The book of Revelation shows that heavenly values are often contrary to what

is praised **on earth**. The **success of the Lamb** gives **rise to a fresh song**, His excellence being attributed to His death, **purchasing men of every group by His blood**. The united **song of heavenly beings** also ascribes **qualities to the Lamb** which only belong to God and to His only Son now at His right hand. The theme of the praise of heaven spreads and every created thing in the universe joins in, leading to a final act of worship by the elders. *A. Hyland*

From Crowborough. —In chapter 5 the enthroned One has a book or a scroll sealed with seven seals. These were such that they had to be opened one at a time. Verse 3 states that no one in heaven, on earth, or under the earth was able to open the book or look thereon. Verse 4 speaks of no one being found worthy. Clearly then ability to open this book was associated with worthiness to accomplish the task. The Lord Jesus Christ, described in verse 6 as "the Lion" and in verse 7 as a Lamb, was both able and worthy to open the Book and the seals thereof.

Some difficulty was experienced over the work of the twenty-four elders in connection with the prayers of the saints. Some felt that when the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each a harp and golden bowls full of incense, they presented the prayers of the saints who are on earth now. Others felt that this must speak of a future aspect of things [Comment 3]. All glory and honour is ascribed to the Lord Jesus Christ for opening the seals of the book, and for His redemption of men of every tribe and tongue and people and nation. Then follows in verse 13 the voice of every created thing giving to God and to the Lamb blessing and honour and glory. We were reminded of what the apostle said in Phil. 2. 10, 11.

J. Robertson

From Derby. —We continue in this chapter with a further glimpse of heaven—God on the throne and those who surround it, with Christ in the midst. He is brought before us here as the Lion and the Lamb. In His capacity as the Lamb He is our Saviour, seen now as the princely One, the magnificent and the sovereign; a great contrast from the despised, lonely Man of Calvary. John weeps much because no one is worthy and he realizes the seriousness of this. Unless the book be opened he knows lawlessness and sin cannot cease. He hears the strong angel giving the challenge and although strong the angel cannot undo the book and the seals, for

it requires a worthy one. Then comes the reassuring voice of one of the elders to herald in the worthy One. As the Lion of the tribe of Judah He completely fulfils the prophecy of Gen. 49. 9-12, He being truly Israel's representative. "The Root of David" brings before us the scripture from Isa. 11. 1-10, showing fully His humanity. Therefore He is a near kinsman of ours through His incarnation, and is able to open the book for us. We thought the book mentioned in Dan. 12. 4 was the same book [See answer to Question 3 from Melbourne].

Christ alone can take the lordship of the world, bringing righteousness, justice and rule where man has failed. The horns of the Lamb spoke of His strength and the seven *eyes* reminded us of the scripture, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place" (Prov. 15. 3). "As though it had been slain" suggests that He will bear the marks of Calvary for ever. His place is now the central one in the midst of the Throne. He alone can exercise judgement as this responsibility has been given Him by the Father (John 5. 22, 27).

Our prayers are important and precious to God and even though seemingly unanswered they will have their significance to Him as coming from a sincere heart. We think of the joy there was in the presence of the angels over one sinner repenting (Luke 15. 10). Now there is this great multitude ever praising Him. All creation will acknowledge Him, even those whose eternal destiny *is* everlasting hell. See also Phil. 2. 10 [Comment 4].

Some thought the reigning on the earth in verse 10, if it refers to the millennium, would only be for those who had suffered for Him (2 Tim. 2. 12; Rev. 20. 4) and for the overcomers of Rev. 2. 26, 27.

G. W. Conway, A. K. Smith

IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

Papers were also received from Birmingham, Denmark Hill, Hayes, Melbourne, Methil, Parkhead, and Vancouver B. C., and the following are impressions from these.

Chapters 4 and 5 have a distinct place in the book, describing the heavenly scene. John is given a wondrous revelation of God's purpose to sum up all things in Christ. The Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Root of David are titles of the Messiah which were cherished by the Jewish nation (Isa. 11). The lion was the symbol

of sovereignty, not, however, limited to the conception of a son of David winning back power from Ceasar. Here was David's Lord who would yet exercise millennial rule with all authority.

The word for Lamb is a diminutive, equivalent to "a precious lamb". The Lamb "newly slain" is yet the Lamb "slain from the foundation of the world" (13. 8). God's purpose was to show redeeming grace to both Jew and Gentile (John 11. 49-52). The seven horns symbolize authority and royal dignity (Psa. 75. 4-7; Zech. 1. 18), and the seven eyes represent perfect knowledge and insight; wherein we see the two-fold aspects of Christ as God and Man, and as Priest and Sacrifice.

John was deeply concerned that someone should be found worthy to open the book. Judgement was due for rejection of that newly slain Lamb. As in John 8. 7 none could take up the task of judgement except the One to whom God has committed all judgement (John 5. 27).

John could have no doubt about the identity of the worthy One (John 1. 29). His worthiness is based on His death as Redeemer (1 Pet. 1. 18). He became Man that He might be the Lamb of God, the newly slain One as the theme of a new song.

It was suggested that the book was a scroll, so sealed that it could be unrolled in seven sections, the judgements becoming known as the seals are broken. Sealed today, it will in that day give cause for lamentation and woe (cf. Ezek. 2. 9, 10). In this may be seen the goodness and severity of God (Rom. 11. 22).

The Revelation makes reference to several books: (1) The book of life (3. 5, 17, 8, 20. 12); (2) The Lamb's book of life (13. 8, 21. 27); (3) The little book (10. 2); (4) Books were opened (20. 12); (5) The book of Revelation itself (1. 11; 22. 9); (6) Here in Rev. 5 the sealed book (cf. Dan. 12. 4-9).

Three paeans of praise resound with ever-increasing force and authority. Firstly there is the worship of the elders in 4. 10, 11. Then in 5. 8-12 the four living creatures and innumerable angels join in the elders' praise, and lastly there is the crescendo of adoration in 5. 13, until all creation is praising God. This was linked with Phil. 2. 10, 11—"every knee" and "every tongue". Those also who refused His salvation will have to acknowledge Him, but it will not save them.

Some associated the commencement of praise in chapter 5 with the opening of the first seal, the song of verse 13 arising after the completion of judgement. The outpouring of praise in verse 13, moreover, looks forward to the future time when "the kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ" (Rev. 11. 15). Most remarkable is the vastness of the praise which ascends. The Lamb who "hath prevailed" is adored as on complete equality with God the Father (see 1 Tim. 6. 15, 16). The effect of this on the apostle John must surely have been prodigious. It is ours also to marvel at the greatness of Christ (2 Cor. 8. 9).

Eds.

COMMENTS

1. (*Atherton and Leigh*): It is difficult to reconcile this statement with such scriptures as Matt. 28. 18 and Eph. 1. 20-22, which would indicate that the Lord Jesus Christ was exalted to a position of responsible authority when He was raised from the dead. The vision of Rev. 5 would rather emphasize that the time had now come when that authority would be manifested in executing the judgements associated with the opening of the seals. *G. P. Jr.*

2. (*Atherton and Leigh*): The expression "every created thing" does seem very sweeping in its inclusiveness and fulfilment of Phil. 2. 9, 10 would seem to be involved.

3. (*Crowborough*): The thought of incense springing forth in fragrance rather suggests reference to the prayers of the saints which are actually being offered at the time these events refer to. Most would assign this to the period after the rapture, and no doubt with special reference to the Great Tribulation.

4. (*Derby*): While we do tend to speak of Hell as the fate of the lost, perhaps it is well to note that the latter is really described in Scripture as the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20. 75) while the word Hell has a different connotation. *J. D. T.*

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(1) *From Barry and Aberkenfig*: (a) Is there any connection between the bowls referred to in verse 8 and those in chapter 15. 7? (see also 6. 9-11, 8. 5-5)

(b) Why is He called the "Root of Jesse" in the Old Testament and the "Root of David" in the New?

(a) **The Scriptures which are adduced in the question suggest that in our friends' mind, the link thought is that of vengeance; with this I would agree. The prayers of the saints at the time of these happenings will certainly contain a strong cry for deliverance from tribulation, and divine judgement follows directly upon their persecutors.**

(b) **Could it be that, by directing our thoughts to Jesse, and in turn, his family, we are led by Isaiah to think of Christ as the outstanding One (the "ensign") of Israel, just as David was the pre-eminent one of Jesse's sons to whose standard the others rallied, both in exile and in exaltation? In Rev. 5 David the monarch himself figures in the title in the context of the dominant thought of the throne.**

(2) *From Derby:* **Could you give us help in describing the book?**

Most authorities appear to regard the book referred to as a scroll of seven sections each in turn revealed as successive seals are opened. The usual method of construction from strips of papyrus apparently left one surface more suitable for writing on than the other. However, sometimes both sides were written upon to produce a compact record in limited bulk. It seems that this was the case here—"written within and on the back". It has, on the other hand, been pointed out that the earliest known fragment of the New Testament in any language, dated in the first half of the second century, is part of John's gospel, a book which, it is claimed, was written in the form of a codex, i. e., a book of folded papyrus leaves, more akin to the kind of book with which we are familiar today. In such a book, sections or quires of leaves could conceivably have been sealed for progressive opening. Both these possibilities of construction would have to be admitted.

(3) *From Melbourne:* **Is there any connection between the book referred to in Daniel 12. 4 and the book of Rev. 5. 1?**

Both Derby and Vancouver friends suggest that these two books may be identical. As the latter put it, "the visions and revelations given to Daniel in chapters 7-12 are in some measure related to the revelation given to John". While this is clearly so, it is a fact that Daniel's revelation of coming events be openly recorded, and we have it to read, as indeed John had it in his day. Does this not

suggest that its "sealing" refers to a suspension of fulfilment until the "time of the end"? Again, the book of Rev. 5 was so fearful that "no one... was able... to look thereon" (v. 4). Is this compatible with its being recorded by a human hand? I would suggest that the above limited quotation from Vancouver's paper might be as far as we should go in this matter.

(4) *From Melbourne:* Who are the redeemed of Rev. 5. 9, 10? See Comment 3.

(5) *From Vancouver:* Verses 7-14: Reference is made to every created thing in heaven, on earth, under the earth, on the sea and in the sea. As this scene takes place after the Lord comes to the air to take to Himself His Church, all the redeemed of this dispensation will therefore be in heaven. Is the Church the Body seen in the chapter before us or will the Church be included in "every created thing in heaven"?

I would certainly think that the Church would be included in the expression "every created thing". Wherever the members of the Church are at this moment they would spontaneously join in such a univereal outburst of praise to the Lamb. *J. D. T.*

PSALM 69 (*continued*)

Let heaven and earth praise Him,
 The seas, and every thing that moveth therein.
 For God will save Zion, and build the cities of Judah;
 And they shall abide there, and have it in possession.
 The seed also of His servants shall inherit it;
 And they that love His name shall dwell therein

(verses 34, 35, 36).

These verses have in view the Millennium, when the prayer that the Lord taught His disciples will have fulfilment, though even now it is the Lord's desire that God's kingdom should be expressed by His saints being together in obedience to Him: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth" (Matthew 6. 10). Then, and not till then, will heaven and earth praise Him, the seas and everything that moveth therein. In the beginning of the Millennium God will save Zion, and also build the cities of Judah. Zion will be the centre of worship and the place from which

God's law will issue forth. Israel will dwell in their land and have it in possession. His servants will inherit it and those that love His name will dwell therein. The blessedness of the work of the Lord on earth and His suffering on the Cross will flow out to Israel and to the nations. The Abrahamic covenant will be fully realised, that in Abraham's seed will all nations be blessed.

J. M.

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BIBLE STUDIES

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EDITORIAL

In our day men have many opportunities to repent. During the Great Tribulation a single moment of personal choice will decide a man's eternal future. The acceptance of the mark of the beast will ensure a short life followed by eternal torment (Rev. 14. 9-11), whereas refusal will entail violent persecution but subsequent rewards, both millennial and eternal (20. 4-6). No one could possibly make a mistaken decision, for the clear-cut issues will be proclaimed worldwide by a great angelic voice.

Those who are killed in this worst of all persecutions are they whose souls John saw underneath the altar (6. 9). Their cry for divine vengeance has a strange ring in our ears, but it is explained by the unique conditions of that day. Stephen's prayer, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7. 60), was no empty form of words; it was answered in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. A similar request during the Great Tribulation would have remained unanswered, for the persecutors were already lost, having made their irrevocable decision which placed them beyond the point of no return and made repentance impossible. Hence the martyrs' cry was in complete accord with the divine purpose, and may be seen as an expression of a longing for that promised restitution which will bring eternal righteousness.

Would that men understood the equally momentous, if apparently less urgent, nature of the challenge which rings out to-day! The issues may be blurred by the Adversary but the choice is the same; serve Satan and die or serve God and live.

L. B.

DIVINE CONTROL AND HUMAN AUTHORITY IN WORLD AFFAIRS

Two related concepts pervade the Bible; on the one hand the sovereignty of God, and on the other the freedom and accountability of man. The Bible maintains that God is sovereign and controls all things so that they are directed ultimately to His glory (Eph. 1. 11).

Scripture, **with its particular reference to man, reveals God's determined and unchangeable plan for his redemption, resulting in the overthrow of the forces of evil which oppose God (Rev. 19 ff) and brought about man's fall, and culminating in God's intention to consummate all in Christ (Phil. 2. 9-11). This plan belongs to the eternal counsels of the omnipotent God, and derives from an unseen order unknown, except by divine revelation, on earth. It is central to this concept that events are neither indeterminate nor random in this great strategy of the ages.**

The Bible maintains equally that man has the power of unconstrained and responsible choice for the consequence of which he is accountable. Man is a physical, temporal and spiritual being whose primary frame of reference is the physical universe of which he is a part. To him the future is largely unpredictable and indeterminate (Prov. 27. 1; Eccl. 9), and so there is an apparent conflict between this fact of human experience and the revealed concept of a determinate and unalterable plan emanating from God who controls all things, causing even the free acts of men to work together for His purposes (e. g. Gen. 45. 8).

Scripture nowhere attempts a reconciliation of the two concepts; they are presented as separate and equally acceptable statements. The source of the apparent conflict is the attempted comparison of the two concepts with quite disparate frames of reference. The Bible maintains that human affairs are under control. Some have sought reconciliation, arguing that events are indeterminate, and without definable direction or end; or else alleging that a deterministic arrangement absolves man from responsibility and frees him to live as he likes.

It is only by faith in the grace of God that we can accept the two concepts simultaneously, and that they meet in the person of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. In Him the eternal and the temporal are conjoined so that God's plan of salvation could be accomplished and opportunity given to man, by his choice, to have a part in the eternal life Christ has purchased.

In the book of Revelation God, by His grace, and through the opening of the seven seals, has revealed some future events, and they are presented in the spiritual frame of reference. Divine control affects both individuals and also the nations of which they are part.

Revelation outlines the events leading to the ultimate overthrow of

evil. The alliances and actions of nations illustrate "that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the lowest of men" (Dan. A. 17). Nations comprise people who are free to give assent either willingly or by coercion to the ruling power or person, or to dissent. Both free choice by the ballot box and the totalitarian system conform equally to the constraints of Acts 17. 26. The rulers of the nations are entrusted with authority and, as men, they exercise it within the temporal reference frame and, like all men, are accountable to God for their actions. They are under the control of God whether they willingly acknowledge His sovereignty or whether through ignorance or in defiance they are unaware of, or deny, His sovereignty. Even to the most powerful of men, such as the beast, the future is largely unpredictable, but his actions, though wholly directed against God, nevertheless are ordained so as to do His will. It is instructive in this connection to note how often expressions like "it was given unto them" are used in Revelation (e. g. 6. 4, 8; 9. 3, 4; 13. 5, 7) 15; 17. 17). Of these 17. 17 demonstrates that in the future, as in the past, individuals with freedom of choice agree in support of a ruler (here the beast) who is under the control of God. Though it might appear that human affairs are from time to time under the control of the malevolent power of Satan, and in particular that in Rev. 13. 2 the beast receives his authority from the Dragon, it is clear that he is no more than *de facto* ruler, as Job 1. 12 and 2. 6 indicate.

The nations too are under the control of God, whether willingly as were Israel in the Old Testament (Ex. 19. 8) and as God's people are today or, as the Gentile nations, in ignorance or defiance. Revelation describes the oppression of Israel by the Gentile nations and is consistent with the mutual antipathy that has long been between them. Their antipathy is ordained of God. The rise of Babylon as a world power coincided with the fall of Jerusalem. The despot Nebuchadnezzar is described as "My servant" (Jer. 25. 9 ff), and the way in which Babylon served the purposes of God is expanded in Ezek. 29. 17-20. The end of the Babylonian empire similarly coincided with the return to Jerusalem of the remnant of Ezra 1. These events presage the time of the end in which the oppression of Israel by the Gentiles during the Great Tribulation is the prelude to the establishment of the millennial kingdom with Israel as its centre. The nations who follow the beast are judged by the Lord Jesus Christ after their

defeat at Armageddon. By contrast Israel, recognizing the Lord Jesus Christ as her Deliverer, is established under His control during His reign on earth.

This overall control of the nations is without prejudice to the operation of human will. Perhaps the most striking example concerns the Lord Jesus Christ (John 11. 47-53). Caiaphas had appraised the situation he faced and came to a decision. He was free to select other courses, but he chose the one in which Christ was delivered up "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2. 23; 4. 25-28). Then, as always, God's foreordained purpose was brought about despite the unfettered exercise of human authority.

A, C. Bishop

HEAVENLY VISIONS

God has spoken in "divers manners" and one of them surely is the heavenly vision. Old and New Testaments contain heavenly visions and we see similarities, differences, lessons and warnings in them. For our present purpose we shall consider three men in the Old Testament and three in the New, all of whom saw heavenly visions; and we shall look at them under the headings: The Man, Main Features, The Message and The Result.

1. THE MAN

Let us consider Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Stephen, Paul and John.

Isaiah

The book named after this man is called "the vision of Isaiah" and for a man to receive such an account of the condition of God's people calls for real communion between heaven and earth. How close the communion was is shown in 2 Kin. 20. Isaiah had just told Hezekiah that he would die and not live. He was walking towards the centre of the city when a new message came from God to Hezekiah. The secret of this communion is made plain in the great heavenly vision of chapter six. Isaiah's basic humility and repentance are seen in the words: "Woe is me . . . I am a man of unclean lips". Only a humble and cleansed man could receive such a vision and transmit it to God's people.

Ezekiel

Here is a man who was among the captives by the river Chebar among the Lord's people. Chapter one tells us he saw visions of God

and the heavens were opened. Not only is Ezekiel among the Lord's people but he, like Isaiah, also humbles himself before the glory of Jehovah and falls upon his face. Two other points to be noted are that he is called a priest, and "son of man". In the matter of communication with heaven, he is used in both directions, as priest from the people to God and as prophet from God to the people. This point, and the fact that he is called "son of man", surely lead us to the conclusion that he is a type of the Lord Himself.

Daniel

This "man of prayer" was greatly blessed with visions of God. He was of royal blood and was in Babylon with a captive nation. As in the case of Isaiah and Ezekiel, Daniel humbled himself before God and in chapter 9 says: "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive".

Stephen

Here was a man full of grace and power, full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. His communion with heaven and its power is seen in his works: "He wrought great wonders and signs among the people".

Paul

Unlike the others, this man is first viewed going in the wrong direction and his heavenly vision was necessary so that he could be turned around and used in the Lord's will. He was blinded and when his eyes were opened he saw nothing. He later testified that he could not see for the "glory of that light"; it blinded him for ever to earthly things and from that time onward the words were true, "For me to live is Christ".

John

An unusual case indeed, for John had personal experience with the Lord on earth before he saw the heavenly vision. In the one case he leaned on Jesus' breast but in the other, when he saw the glory, he fell at His feet as one dead. In the one case he was called "the disciple whom Jesus loved" and in the other he heard the words "Fear not, I am the First and the Last".

2. MAIN FEATURES

The outstanding feature in all these cases is that a Man *is* involved in each vision. Isaiah 53 is totally concerned with the Lord Jesus and His sacrifice. In Daniel 10 after mourning and fasting for three weeks, Daniel saw a vision of a man clothed in linen and girded with gold, surely speaking of the same Person. Ezekiel's first vision ends

with a **Man upon a throne** and we know there is only **one Man on heaven's throne**. **Stephen saw the Lord on the right hand of God in his glimpse into heaven**. **Paul saw the Lord's glory and heard his voice as well, and John's story, all 22 chapters of it, is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ"**. **Another feature of most of the heavenly visions is the throne**. **This speaks of authority and judgement**. **God's authority had been despised by His people**. **Sin and disobedience characterized them in Old Testament times and judgement was called for and prophesied as the result of the vision**. **The New Testament occurrences are not different in essence, Stephen saw the throne and personally bowed to the "all authority" of the One upon it**. **But what about those who were stoning him? They, including Saul of Tarsus, despised the name of Jesus and refused to bow to His authority**. **John, in his first vision, saw the Lord in glory walking in the midst of the lampstands and heard statements of authority and judgement such as: "I will remove the lampstand" and "I have this against thee"**.

3. THE MESSAGE

The prophets and apostles received a message from God which came through a vision and was to be delivered to the people. **What was the message? Firstly it was a call to repentance because of their sin and rebellion**. **Secondly, failure to do this would result in sure and certain judgement**. **But the great God of mercy did not only pronounce judgement, and so thirdly, grace and mercy are considered**. **Part of Isaiah's wonderful vision states: "He was wounded for our transgressions", and wherever possible, God through His grace will solve the sin question**. **Some of the pronounced judgements of course are irreversible, such as the vision of Daniel concerning the end time when "wrath would be poured out", and John's vision of the seals being opened and the words which were written: "The great day of Their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?"**

4. THE RESULTS

This is difficult to assess in relation to the nation of Israel and God's people in this dispensation. **The effect of the vision on the person who saw it however was very real and immediate**. **Isaiah said, "Woe is me", and he recounted his sins and the sins of the nation**. **Ezekiel fell upon his face, the Spirit entered into him and he heard Him that spoke**. **Daniel also fell with his face to the ground and there**

remained **no strength in him**. We have already mentioned that Paul was a **changed man and this caused him to glory** in tribulation. John also **fell at his feet as one dead and was later told to "Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must come to pass hereafter"**. Perhaps the most dramatic result was seen in Stephen's experience. **After he had seen the heavenly vision he could say with the grace of the great Master Himself: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"**.

We are sure that if nations had been affected in the same way as these individuals as a result of heavenly visions, it would have been a different world today. And what about us? Is there a message in these visions? **Yes indeed!** The **One** who walked amidst the lamp-stands is still standing with open arms saying: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: If any man hear My voice..." Have we heard His voice? Have we responded to it? Are we supping with Him? May the visions and their message speak to all our hearts!

N. McKay

A STUDY OF REVELATION

CHAPTER 6

From Vancouver B. C. —The **four horsemen and their horses appear at the opening of the first four of the seven seals**. The unfolding of these seals gives a pictorial preview or summary of what is to come. The **events that succeed one another here seem to have a close resemblance to those in Matt. 24**.

At the appearance of each of the four horses John is invited by each of the four living creatures to come and see the happenings [Comment 1]. This must have been of special interest to John as it was the first time he had seen some activity in his vision. Until now he had been describing only the setting.

The horses are as important as their riders. Horses are the symbol of strength and at that time were one of the mainstays of making war. So at the first sight of a horse the viewer realizes that a war-like event is before him.

The rider of the first horse would seem to be a picture of someone who is a counterfeit of Christ in His purity (white horse). So sure is he of victory that he wears a crown before conquering. Yet no blood is drawn since there is a bow but no arrow, signifying perhaps

a cold war [Comment 2], The rider of the red horse seems to be a picture of the Devil himself or his puppet. He instigates actual battle, blood-letting and widespread hate among the nations. The rider of the black horse is a sure-handed, definite-minded individual who seems to bring some kind of economic stability to the world. The rider of the pale horse is named Death itself, an individual who controls the lives of all. He orders one quarter of the population to be killed by war, famine, disease and persecution. The colour pale signifies the ashen grey of death. All of these incidents are shown in more detail as the picture of the Great Tribulation unfolds in later chapters. Who the riders actually are is a matter of conjecture [Comment 3].

J. C. Bell

From Crowborough. —The significance of the events accompanying the opening of the first six seals of Rev. 6 is shown in broad outline in Matt. 24 which has been said to be the key to prophecy.

The sequence of events seems carefully ordered. The white horse of the first seal speaks of conquest. The rider is not the Lord. The crown here (Gk. *Stephanos*) is not the same as the many diadems (Gk. *diadema*) upon the Lord's head when He rides upon a white horse (Rev. 19. 11, 12), which denotes that He is King of kings. In the second seal the red horse speaks of death and slaughter. The "great sword" could be some terrible weapon of destruction, for we are told that men are to "slay one another".

The third seal unlooses a wave of famine which hits only the working man, for the wine and the oil of the rich are spared. At that time a day's wages will purchase only a scrap of food (6. 6).

The fourth seal is the signal for widespread death. Strife, hunger, disease and wild animals will reduce the world's population. The pale horse speaks of devastation and pestilence. When the fifth seal is opened, martyred souls cry to God to judge and avenge (6. 10). In their cry these souls were expressing a right desire in the sense of God's words to Cain: "the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto Me from the ground" (Gen. 4. 10).

The opening of the sixth seal brings us to the time of events already foretold by Joel and the Lord (Matt. 24) and of the coming of the Son of Man in judgement.

James Robertson

From Teesside. —Rev. 6 is part of a section of prophecy beginning in 4. 1 and extending to 8. 5. It concerns the opening of six of the seven seals. Chapter 7 is then inserted, before the opening of the seventh seal at the beginning of chapter 8.

The rider on the white horse came forth wearing a conqueror's crown. Whom will he conquer, disobedient men or the hosts of evil? [Comment 4]. The rider on the red horse (second seal) brings war and causes men to turn upon one another in a great international slaughter. Following the war, the rider of the third (black) horse comes to mete out a severe famine, an aftermath of war. Staple foods are in short supply, one clay's wage being only enough to feed one man.

The nature of the riders on the first three horses is not stated; they might be angelic or human emissaries. In the case of the fourth seal, the rider is stated to be Death, followed by Hades. Those left by the war and famine are decimated by the terrible horseman on the pale horse, with further battles, disease, famine and wild beasts. When the fifth seal is opened, the time of the horsemen is past. John is shown the martyrs who died in the Great Tribulation and are crying for vindication. They had been faithful, they had borne witness, but their time of revenge had not yet come.

The opening of the sixth seal brings in the events immediately preceding the coming of the Lord as Son of Man, when men in terror seek to hide from the face of God and the vengeance of the Lamb. None is excluded; from the kings to the slave, all recognize their sinfulness and seek shelter from the eye of God as the fearful events of that day continue. Yet we see no sign of repentance in the hearts of the people referred to in the first four and sixth seals.

We compared the horsemen in this chapter with those described in Zech. 1. 8-12 who walked to and fro in the earth, observing the conduct of the nations.

W. C. Taylor

From Denmark Hill. —The setting of Rev. 6 is the heavenly scene of the Lamb accepted as the only one worthy to open the sealed scroll. From the happenings on the earth resulting from the opening of the seals, it appears that the scroll contains God's judgements to follow the Rapture. The correspondence between Rev. 6. and Matt. 24, where the Lord speaks of the Great Tribulation is instructive: -

<i>Seal Horse</i>	<i>Rev. 6</i>	<i>Matt. 24</i>
1 white	v. 2: rider has bow, crown; and he conquers. The conquering power is against God.	vv. 3, 5: false Christs
2 red	v. 4: peace removed; sword given to kill.	v. 6: wars and rumours of wars
3 black	vv. 5, 6: a balance given to ration food; careful in the release of oil and wine,	v. 7: famine
4 pale	v. 8: power to kill	v. 9: deliver up to tribulation and shall kill you.

The association between the colours and meanings is interesting: red for war, black for famine and pale for death. There is doubt, however, about the validity of the association in the case of the white horse. Can some help please be given? [Comment 5].

In **Matt. 24** the emphasis is that the false power is against the Jewish people, whereas in **Rev. 6** it is on God's judgement on the earth. Even the appearance of the false power is at the signal from *heaven*, in the opening of the first seal.

The opening of the fifth seal changes the scene from earth to heaven, and John sees the souls of those who have been killed on earth in the Great Tribulation, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. These had not known resurrection, which for them will be associated with the return of the Son of Man, the "first" resurrection of **Rev. 20. 4-6**.

The souls waiting for vengeance rest "under the altars". "And all the blood thereof shall he (the priest) pour out at the base of the altar" (**Lev. 4. 30**). The altar was the place of public testimony. The saints in **Rev. 6** had been slain for the testimony which they held, and they cried that the holy and true Master should pour out His fury and consume the heathen earth. This is quite a different cry from the plea of the Master at Calvary: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (**Luke 23. 34**). This is a cry of revenge, but they must wait till their fellow testimony bearers have been killed.

The opening of the sixth seal leads on to the time of terror prior to the Lord's coming as Son of Man to the earth in judgement.

C. L. P., M. McK.

IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

Below are impressions from the remaining papers from Aberkenfig and Barry, Atherton and Leigh, Birmingham, Derby, Melbourne and Methil.

With present knowledge it is difficult, if not impossible, to reach finality about the meaning of the details of Rev. 6. All of our contributors agree that the events of this chapter will take place during Daniel's seventieth week, but they are placed by some at the start, by others at the end, of this week. Most consider that the events of the seven seals will occur sequentially as to time, but others that the seals might refer rather to aspects of divine judgements, the events in some cases taking place simultaneously. Again, some considered the horses and riders to be literal, just as the four living creatures with whom they are associated are literal. The four horsemen might be angelic beings, given the task of initiating conflict and affliction on the rebellious earth (see e. g. 2 Sam. 24. 15, 16; 2 Kin. 6. 17, 19. 55). Others viewed the horsemen as figurative, symbolizing various stages of divine judgement.

To some the first horseman symbolizes the Antichrist, his white horse being in imitation of the Lord's (Rev. 19. 11), his crown being given to him by men. Another contributor saw in the omission of arrows that the conquest of the nations will be bloodless. Some attempt at clarification of these points is made in Comments and in Questions and Answers. The third seal features extreme famine; a day's food will cost a day's wages. For an illustration of the dire results of famine, 2 Kin. 1. 13 and its context were cited.

The martyrs of the fifth seal were thought by some to be the same people as those mentioned in Rev. 7. 9-17; They had refused to take the mark of the beast. Their cry to God for vengeance seems to show that they belong to a different dispensation from ours; Luke 18. 7, 8 was thought relevant. The martyrs' position under the altar perhaps symbolizes their safety because of the blood of the Lamb.

The sixth seal was generally considered to refer to the coming of the Son of Man in judgement on the earth at the end of Daniel's seventieth week. Then will be "the day of vengeance of our God" (Isa. 61. 2). It was suggested that at least some of the other phenomena mentioned will be direct results of the great earthquake; e. g.

the sun's darkening might be the result of intense dust-clouds generated by the earthquake.

All these revealed judgements show that men in general do not repent and seek God's forgiveness, but rather try to hide themselves from the wrath of the Lamb. *Eds.*

COMMENTS

1. (*Vancouver*): "Come and see" is found in the A. V. of Rev. 6. 1, 3, 5, 7, whereas the R. V. reads simply "Come". The difference is the result of a variation in the Greek manuscripts, but the latter reading is to be preferred as agreeing better with the context. John was already watching the vision unfold and had no need to move, but the horsemen were revealed one by one. In fact the red horse actually "came forth" (v. 4) so we can legitimately assume that the others came into John's view at the command "Come!"

2. (*Vancouver*): The weapon itself is simply called a bow elsewhere in Scripture (Gen. 49. 24; Job. 29. 20; 2 Sam 1. 18). Hence the fact that arrows are not mentioned may not have the significance attributed to it in this contribution.

3. (*Vancouver*): Most commentators regard the four horsemen as symbolic rather than personal. The crown and the bow (v. 1), the great sword (v. 4) and the balance (v. 5) could hardly be viewed as literal, in which case can, for example, a literal horseman have in his hand a symbolic balance? Angelic beings might be in view, but I would favour the symbolic interpretation. Our friends have made some interesting suggestions about the nature of the four horsemen but these should be carefully compared with what is put forward by other contributors.

4. (*Teesside*) The context of chapter 6 does not seem to favour either of these suggestions as to the victims of the first horseman. The trend of the passage rather indicates the overall succession of events during the Great Tribulation: conquest, world-wide war, famine and death. The objective of the man on the white horse seems to be to subjugate men and nations, not to execute some kind of judgement.

5. (*Denmark Hill*): Some have suggested that white here indicates feigned or imitated purity, suggesting a "holy" warfare or

religious **crusade, perhaps associated with the rise of Babylon the Great, the Mother of the Harlots (Rev. 17. 5).**

6. "The main event of the sixth seal will be a great earthquake (v. 12) . . . The living men of earth will have no doubt that this catastrophic event and the attending phenonema are due to God's wrath, so effective will have been the testimony of God's faithful servants up to that time" (extracted from Atherton and Leigh's paper).

Matt. 24. 29, 30 shows that the natural catastrophes are followed by the "sign of the Son of Man in the heaven" and we must take the plain meaning of Rev. 6. 16 to be that men associate these two events with impending judgement. The testimony of the saints does not seem to be under consideration here. **L. B.**

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. From Teesside: Do the martyrs of the fifth seal die during the Great Tribulation?

These people had been killed and had not yet experienced resurrection, for John saw their souls only. Their persecutors were still on earth and their fellows were still there, but were soon to be killed as they were, and judgement on their persecutors would immediately follow. Here is portrayed a unique situation which fits into the period of the Great Tribulation and nowhere else. It was only during this period that the special conditions prevailed which made appropriate the martyrs' prayer for vengeance (6. 10). See Editorial.

2. From Denmark Hill: Are the heavenly phenomena to be regarded as physical or as denoting turbulence on earth?

The events of Rev. 6. 12-14 seem to be identical with those of Matt. 24. 29 and take place immediately before the appearing of the Son of Man. "The tribulation of those days", that is, the work of men (Matt. 24. 9), is now past and God begins to intervene by means of the power residing in the physical universe, which is under His control.

3. From Aberkenfig and Barry: Why were the oil and the wine "not hurt" (Rev. 6. 6) ?

Melbourne's paper is helpful here: "It was suggested that the rider brings famine to the earth and that the high price of basic foods

means starvation for the masses, whereas the oil and the wine are not touched, possibly indicating that the wealthy are able to survive on the luxuries of life".

4. Is the horseman on the white horse the Lord Jesus Christ (See Rev. 19. 11)?

See paper from Crowborough.

L. B.

PSALM 70

This is a short psalm as compared with the two former psalms. David says that this one is to bring to remembrance.

Make haste, O God, to deliver me;

Make haste to help me, O LORD.

Let them be ashamed and confounded

That seek after my soul:

Let them be turned backward and brought to dishonour

That delight in my hurt.

Let them be turned back by reason of their shame

That say, Aha, Aha (verses 1, 2, 3).

David writes of some incident that he could not forget, when he was beset by men who sought his soul or life. Many there were who sought to finish his life before God's purposes in him were fulfilled. King Saul is an outstanding example. Though he was aware that David had been anointed king and would surely be king, yet he sought his life with uncontrolled and malicious jealousy and hatred. Besides, there were many others who sided with Saul. Abner the captain of the host of Saul was a mighty warrior and he was whole-heartedly on Saul's side, and even when Saul had gone to his account, he still continued to lead the men of the eleven tribes against David, until at last he saw it was useless to seek to establish the house of Saul. Again, Absalom in his rebellion sought with cunning deceit to drive his father from the throne, and all Israel seemed to be heartily at his beck and call. David fled from Absalom with the men who loved him and stood by him through thick and thin. The outstanding days of our remembrance are days of trial and difficulty, and also days of opposition, and one can say that these have not been few. Such are the times we have in remembrance. With few helpers David calls on God for deliverance and help. Those that sought his soul or life would be ashamed and confounded. Those that delighted in his hurt

were brought to dishonour. The word "reason" in verse 3 is from the Hebrew word *EQEB* which means the heel (Gen. 3. 75), the end of anything. It is rendered "for a reward of" in A. V., and similarly in the R. V. margin. Their being turned back is the reward of their shame, because of their saying Aha, Aha, which seems to be something like the sudden expression of the demoniac, in Luke 4. 34, who called "Ah!" in the synagogue.

Let all those that seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee;
 And let such as love Thy salvation say continually,
 Let God be magnified.
 But I am poor and needy;
 Make haste unto me, O God:
 Thou art my help and my deliverer;
 O LORD make no tarrying (verses 4, 5).

In contrast to verses 2 and 3, David calls on them that seek God to rejoice, and them that love His salvation to say continually, Let God be magnified. God will give to them that seek Him cause to rejoice. As an illustration of this, think of the end of the first two kings of Israel, Saul and David. Saul was no seeker after the Lord. He was carnal both in mind and body. He never led Israel nearer to God or into His ways, and on the slopes of Gilboa he ended his days defeated and pursued by the Philistines. It is sad to think that he went from the witch's house to the field of battle; he went a broken man. David in contrast sought God more than most men, as his psalms abundantly prove. At the end of his life he is found delivering the pattern of God's temple in writing to Solomon his son with all the vast sums of gold and silver and other metals and stones which he had gathered together for the building of God's house. He encouraged Solomon and the people of Israel with many wise and godly words as to their conduct, and ended his life full of days and riches and honour (See 1 Chron. 29). His life breathes the words, "Let God be magnified". He is found saying similar words to those of Psalm 40. 16, 17:

"Let all those that seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee;
 Let such as love Thy salvation say continually,
 The LORD be magnified.
 But I am poor and needy;
 Yet the Lord (*ADONAY*, the wealthy Lord or the Lord in blessing) thinketh upon me" (see also Psa. 86. 1, 109. 22).

In the end of Psalm 70 David calls for **God to make haste and to make no tarrying**, for **He** was his help and deliverer.

PSALM 71

This psalm has no heading, but as it continues in the same theme it may be an extension of Psalm 70.

In Thee, **O LORD**, do I put my trust:

Let me never be ashamed.

Deliver me in Thy righteousness, and rescue me:

Bow down Thine ear unto me, and save me (verses 1, 2).

In his utmost confidence David tells the Lord (**Jehovah, the God of Israel**) that he had put his trust in Him, and asks in consequence of this that he may never be ashamed; instead of "ashamed" the A. V. has "put to confusion". The Hebrew word is frequently rendered ashamed, but never again rendered confusion. Gesenius says of the Hebrew word used here, *BUWSH*, "The origin should be sought in the idea of paleness and terror". Dr. Strong says it means "Properly, to pale". David evidently had a conscience void of offence when he could ask God in His righteousness, not in His goodness, to deliver him. He also asks God to bow down His ear to him and save him. The Hebrew word is used again in Psalm 31. 2, "Bow down Thine ear unto me; deliver me speedily". The word is frequently rendered "incline", it is also used in other senses.

BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17, 11). '

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EDITORIAL

Our study chapter (Rev. 7) includes two references to "crying with a great voice" (verses 2 and 10). It is evident throughout the book that the apostle John was deeply impressed by the voices he heard. The voice of the Lord Jesus in the introductory vision was "as the voice of many waters" (1. 15). Angelic announcements were frequently "with a great voice", including occasions on which vital developments of divine purpose were to be declared (e. g. 10. 3, 14. 7, 9, 18, 18. 2). Particularly impressive must have been the united acclamation of many voices, such as the great multitude (7. 9), the great voices in heaven (11. 75), those victorious from the beast (15. 2-4) and the host of the redeemed (19. 6-9). Is it significant, we wonder, that the "voice of many waters" is ascribed to the Lord Jesus in 1. 15, and is included also in 14. 2 and 19. 6, 7? For these latter two references relate to groups of people intimately associated in blessing with Himself. Does the "sound of many waters" in these passages indicate His voice blending with theirs?

The last reference in Revelation to "a great voice" is fittingly the declaration, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men . . . Behold, I make all things new" (21. 5-5).
G. P. Jr.

"SONS OF GOD" (GEN. 6. 4)—ANGELS OR MEN?

This question has frequently been debated and the brief reference to it in *Bible Studies* 1969 Vol. pp. 80-81 led to correspondence with G. K. Kennedy of Sydney, Australia, who put forward a detailed case contending that the reference is to fallen angelic beings. Editors are disposed to the opposite view, but it has been thought helpful to summarize the discussion on each point put forward—see following article by J. D. Terrell. Additional points are submitted by J. Baird in the subsequent paper.

* * * *

In the first place two points are submitted with regard to the Nephilim (R. V. M. -giants). The question is asked, Why should a

union of Sethites and Cainites result in giants? It might be replied to this that, while no reason is indicated as to why this should be so, is there any reason to suppose that a union (assuming for the moment the possibility of this) between angels and humans should so result? Does the text of Gen. 6 not in fact indicate that the Nephilim were present *before* the union specially referred to? Note the words, "and also after that". Attention is also directed to the meaning of Nephilim as given by some authorities as "fellers" and the suggestion made that this indicates the thought of "fallen ones". It could be agreed that this might reasonably be appealed to as supportive evidence of the involvement of fallen angels if a strong case could be made otherwise, but perhaps hardly in the absence of this.

Next with regard to the term "men" (6. 1) and "the daughters of men" (6. 4) it is claimed that "men" should be regarded as applicable to both the Cain and Seth lines; and if "sons of God" were Sethites should not their daughters be referred to as "daughters of God?" The "men" of verse 1 might well apply to both lines. The really distinctive term however which the Holy Spirit uses is "sons of God" and this is the term which requires elucidation if possible from Scripture. It may be claimed that the opening of the passage indicates the whole matter as one arising primarily from human multiplication and the growing complexities of human inter-relationships.

The expression "took wives of all that they chose" is put forward as indicating "forceful acquisition at will". But is there any justification for such an interpretation? Is it not normal human experience that men "take" to themselves wives of their choice? (see Matt. 1. 20). The point has also been made that the "all" is an allusion to widespread polygamy.

Then the question is asked. If all were of faith in the line of Seth, how it was that only Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord? But does the scripture necessarily imply that the designation "sons of God" always indicates persons of faith? Indeed the use of the term in Job (see below) for angelic beings certainly does not carry this connotation. A different use of it in Genesis need not imply persons of faith.

The use of the term in Job. 1. 6. 2. J is adduced by our contributor, understandably, as one of the main planks of the case for the

fallen angel interpretation of Gen. 6. Reference is also made to Psalms 89. 6 (R. V. M.) and it is pointed out that Josephus bore witness to a Jewish belief that angels were referred to; the apochryphal books of Enoch and Jubilees take a similar view; the Septuagint gives "angels of God" in Gen. 6. 2: and many of the early fathers took this view. Any wider use, it is also claimed, conflicts with such a portion as John 8. 44. Now the Job reference alone certainly makes clear that the term "sons of God" may be used scripturally of angelic beings and would raise the question with regard to Gen. 6. —unless other more compelling reasons made such an interpretation untenable. Even apart from the other factors still to be mentioned, however, we would draw attention to Luke 3. 38 where Adam is called "the son of God" in the context of the genealogy of Christ through the Seth line. Moreover is it not significant that Gen. 6 but only on humanity, for its wickedness? In Gen. 1 and 2 judgment gives no hint of divine judgement or evil angels if such were involved, ment fell on Satan and on Adam and Eve.

Reference is also made to many ancient legends associated with "men of renown" and associations of "gods" with women. But do these, often bizarre and unedifying as they are, support the case for angels in Gen. 6? Can it not at least equally well be suggested that they gave rise to an importation of this idea into the story of Gen. 6 —or more likely still that they are completely unrelated?

In Jude verse 7 the word "these" is claimed to refer to the angels of verse 6 rather than to Sodom and Gomorrah mentioned in the immediately preceding context. This is on the grounds of the fact that "these" is here a masculine word. But it is not the cities in fact, but rather the men in them, which are actually involved in the sinful practices listed; and so may not the masculine word be equally appropriate to such?

Angels are spirits (Heb. 1. 7, 14) yet they seem elsewhere to be differentiated from spirits (Acts 23. 8). It is pointed out that Christ is called a "life-giving Spirit" yet He had a body. Angels are introduced in Scripture as men who eat and whose feet are washed, etc. (Gen. 18. 4, 5) and are regularly referred to as males. Now all of this is quite true yet it is clear that the bodies of angels have at least some major differences from human bodies. They are clearly not always "used" or, at least, are frequently invisible. Angelic ministry today on behalf of God's children is undoubtedly real yet invisible.

Again many believe the "angel of the LORD" to be the Lord in Person—yet this was not incarnation. If we assume for a moment angels' bodies not to be sexually differentiated, how would they be referred to? Only two possibilities exist—as "he" or "she". The former is used since their general appearance was of "maleness", but does this of itself necessarily imply male powers of procreation? This does not seem to be invalidated by the fact that a word for "man" as distinct from "woman" is sometimes used.

Which, of course, brings us to Matt. 22. 30 and Luke 20. 33, 36. These are crucial scriptures in the entire discussion and are usually used as prime evidence against the possibility of relations between the sexes in the angelic sphere. It is claimed, however, that this is a heavenly picture and does not necessarily apply to earthly activities of angels. But does this scripture not clearly indicate that relations between the sexes, uniquely associated in God's will with marriage, was a sphere not in God's purpose for angels—something which was outside of their range altogether? There is no positive indication anywhere in Scripture that angels either did, or were meant to, reproduce themselves. (What order of beings would result anyway from a union with humans, and with what kind of relationship to God in terms of sin and salvation—human or non-human?) Why then assume that angels were physically equipped to reproduce simply because their appearance when embodied on earth was of "maleness"? To point to Gen. 6 is, of course, a circular argument; this instance, if valid, would be the only one anywhere in Scripture of such a phenomenon. Why should fallen angels confine their attentions to human females to this particular point in human history? Is not this an activity, if indeed possible, which one would expect to be a constantly recurring incursion into human affairs?

A further scripture referred to, and which may be construed as an answer to the above-mentioned criticism, is 2 Pet. 1. 4. Here sinning angels are spoken of as being committed to the place of darkness, and it has been suggested that it was their marriage to womankind which constituted their sin and consequent judgement. But it seems likely that only a few angels (if at all) could have been involved in Gen. 6. Most condemned angels were surely committed to judgement on other grounds, no doubt mainly their general support of the Devil. It is recognized that the angelic condemnation referred to here is in the context of the sparing of Noah and the destruction of his con-

temporaries; but also, be it noted, of the judgement on Sodom and Gomorrah.

It will be clear from the above that the view of Editors generally is against the interpretation of Gen. 6 which implicates angels as the "sons of God" referred to. This should not be construed as asserting that there is no difficulty about the assumption that the Seth line is so designated here; such is indeed a unique description of the descendants of Adam but this does not seem to us to constitute a difficulty of the proportions presented by all the implications of assumed angelic involvement.

J. D. Terrell

Additional Aspects

First of all, it should be noted that the impression that the angel theory first held the field is quite erroneous. From about 200 B. C. to 100 A. D. the Essenes, a Jewish sect, produced under assumed names a number of books claiming to be apocalyptic and now referred to as pseudepigraphs, because issued under false names. In one of these, the Book of Enoch, is found the first assertion that the sons of God in Gen. 6 were fallen angels; and for this reason it is most important that we bear in mind that the Book of Enoch, like the rest of the pseudepigraphs, is not inspired Scripture, and also that it is distinctly fanciful in its notions about angels.

Next, as to the Septuagint, there may well be a definite link, in time at least, with the pseudepigraphs. The Septuagint is a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, necessitated because Hebrew was rapidly passing out of use as the spoken language of the Jews, while Greek was at that time an international language, the translation being made about 270 B. C. The original has been destroyed or lost, and only copies of copies remain. Of earlier remaining copies the Codex Alexandrinus (5th century A. D.) has "angels" in Gen. 6. 2, 4; certain other late copies have "sons of God".

Thirdly, it is definitely established that the Jewish historian Josephus came under the influence of the Essenes. It is not surprising, therefore, that he should favour the angel theory.

Because Josephus was so definitely influenced by the teaching of the Essenes, reference to his Antiquities does not add weight to the testimony of the Book of Enoch and the pseudepigraphs, which are not inspired Scripture, and do not provide reliable guidance for the solution of difficulties arising in the study of the Scriptures. Further,

their highly fanciful nature leaves them open to the charge that the angel theory is just one of the many very imaginary things contained in them. Indeed, some writers on this subject go as far as to suggest that the angel theory was imported from the Book of Enoch into the Codex Alexandrinus, a suggestion which is in fact quite within the realm of possibility, if not of probability. Finally, those who cite the Septuagint as supporting evidence should indicate which Codex they have in mind, and also whether the other main copies agree. In this case the Codex Alexandrinus (which has "angels" in Gen. 6) is probably not sufficient to justify us in rejecting the evidence of the other manuscripts, some of which are probably more reliable than the Codex Alexandrinus. Further to this, none of the Hebrew texts has "angels" in Gen. 6: they all have "sons of God", as have several Greek texts. Howsoever "angels" may have intruded into Gen. 6 (Codex Alexandrinus), whether by intentional or unintentional importation, the support provided for the angel theory is (to set it at its best) only of the most dubious sort. J. Baird

If any reader considers that there are further points which weigh in either direction Editors would be interested to receive them, but it is not thought desirable to take up a great deal more space on this subject.

A STUDY OF REVELATION

CHAPTER 7

From Atherton and Leigh. —A comparison of Rev. 7. 3 and 8. 7, 8 shows that the sealing of the 144, 000 will take place before the judgements of the seven trumpets are permitted to start. This sealing involves some form of protection from these future judgements (see 9. 4), perhaps with a view to service. Angels are restrained from hurting the earth, the sea and the trees until the 144, 000 servants of God have been sealed; once this sealing is over, the earth, seas and trees are attacked in the judgements of the first two trumpets.

The 144, 000 are Israelites, selected from the twelve tribes mentioned. They are called "the servants of our God" (v. 3) and as such are to be included among God's servants for whose sakes the book of Revelation was given (see 1. 1). In that day, we suggest during the early part of Daniels seventieth week [see Comment 6], these

144, 000 men will understand the book of Revelation very clearly as they see its prophecies coming true before their *eyes*, the phrase "servants of our God" also implies some form of service. Possibly the 144, 000 will have the special task of preaching to the word in those perilous times, as the martyrs of 6. 9 will have done and the two witnesses of 11. J will do. Of these days the Lord Jesus said that the "gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations" (Matt. 24. 14) [Comment 1].

John also saw "a great multitude" (v. 9); the passage clearly distinguishes these people from the 144, 000 by what it says about their great number and their many nationalities. While John saw the 144, 000 on earth, the setting in which he saw this multitude seems to be the same as that described in chapters 4 and 5, namely heaven. It follows that at this stage the Lord has not yet descended to the earth as the Son of Man. However, the elder's words to John (vv. 15-17) seem to refer to earthly experience during the Millennium, but the use of the present tense in v. 15 causes some difficulty. If we take this present tense literally, we must take "the throne of God" and the "temple" of v. 15 to be the heavenly throne and temple (cf. 11. 19); does this mean that these people serve God in heaven before they are raised? [Comment 2].

D. S. Jones

From Birmingham. —In Rev. 7 John *is* first given a vision of the scene set on earth. We judged that this depicts the great tribulation continuing, the restraint being exercised by the four angels (whilst the 144, 000 are sealed) being akin to the work of the black horse and its rider when the third seal was opened in chapter 6 [Comment 3].

The sealing of the 144, 000 Israelites would preclude them from the direct judgements of God (such as the torment of the locusts in 9. 3), but not necessarily from the judgements unleashed at the opening of the second seal, the effect of which was that the people should slay one another. We felt that some of the 144, 000 would be slain during the tribulation, together with those of other nations (the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God). They would then immediately take their place among those with similar commendation who already stand before the throne and the Lamb, crying "Salvation to our God" [Comment 4].

This brings us to the second vision that John saw, which was the scene set in heaven, the vast innumerable multitude from among all

nations **stand in their white garments of imputed righteousness before the throne. An alternative thought was expressed that the two scenes would not be enacted simultaneously, but that the heavenly scene would be some time future to the earthly scene, and that the whole of the 144, 000 would be present among the innumerable host of verse 9 [See Comment 2].**

Ultimately **we recognized that the 144, 000 will stand together unique as God's chosen people Israel in the heavenlies with a unique commendation and a unique service of song (14. 7-5) [Comment 5].**

D. H. Elson

From Melbourne. —The angels of the winds. As the events of the Book of Revelation are not given in chronological order, we must seek to discern from their setting something of the period to which they belong, or to which they are related. The reign of anti-christ will call for unprecedented judgements upon the earth. The four angels of verses 1-3 are said to stand at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds that they should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. They are told by the angel who is seen ascending from the sunrising to "hurt not the earth, neither the sea, or any tree, until the servants of God have been sealed on their foreheads".

Sealing of the 144, 000

Our view is that the 144, 000 of Israel sealed for the service of God, are not all, but representative of, the twelve tribes. We look upon the sealing as being in marked contrast to "the mark of the beast" so soon after to be imposed upon many of the human race. We suggest that whatever be the full nature and extent of the service for which they are sealed, and will render to Him, some, if not all, will go forth as His witnesses to the teeming millions of earth's inhabitants; to every tribe, and nation, and people, and tongue bearing the gospel of the kingdom—the approach of the time when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and combined with this a call to repentance. We judge that what is brought before us from verse 1 to verse 8 is to take place at some time during the first half of Daniel's seventieth week; while as yet men are experiencing a false sense of security, and saying "Peace and safety" [Comment 6]. The witness of those who proclaim the gospel of the kingdom will be to a world which

is rejoicing in a newly found "freedom" such as follows upon the cry of Psalm 2. 3, "Let us break Their bands asunder, and cast away Their cords from us". In our days, this is the attitude of many as the world hastens towards that "liberation" from the restraints of divine law upon human behaviour, which will characterize the reign of antichrist.

The 144, 000 are sealed out of the tribes of Israel. We do not know where the "ten tribes" are today. But the God of Israel knows where and how to find them, when His hour to do so arrives. Neither do we know how the commission of the gospel of the kingdom, which is to be preached unto all nations, will be imparted to those who are to go forth therewith. But it is evident that many faithful witnesses will be required to make it known to the whole inhabited earth. May it not be that those who today engage in spreading the Scriptures, and the knowledge of the gospel of the grace of God to Israel and other peoples, although they may see but little immediate response, are spreading the knowledge of God's dealings with the present and a future generation, to be taken up by the Spirit of God and used in the great stirring of the dry bones, so graphically described in Ezek. 37? Among them the 144, 000 who will arise will be sealed and serve their God. In the sealing of this great number of His servants we suggest that there is also seen at least a partial fulfilment of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee". This sealing is but the dawning of the day when "nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising". A consciousness of Israel's true role among the nations appears in many directions to be awakening among her sons and daughters today [Comment 7].

The absence of the tribe of Dan from among those that are sealed has received much comment from Bible students. We are inclined to agree with those who believe that the idolatry of the tribe, as recorded in Judges 18, while living in comparatively close proximity to the house of God in Shiloh, has a vital bearing upon the omission of the tribe. This principle, seen in action on a number of occasions, is in keeping with God's righteousness. Nevertheless, we find Dan included in receiving their portion of the land in the millennial scene, and also having a gate in the great millennial city. This also emphasizes the fact, also seen so frequently in action

in the Scriptures that in His dealings with His people in chastisement He keepeth not His anger for ever [Comment 8].

The great multitude

In verses 9-16, we are introduced to a great multitude of every nation, and of all tribes, and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and the Lamb. These are identified by one of the elders as having come out of the Great Tribulation, and having washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. These, we believe, are they who have heard, believed and obeyed the witness borne to them concerning the kingdom of God soon to be set up on earth. They had suffered death at the hands of antichrist because of their refusal to worship him. They were failing and sinful human beings; but they had believed that the One who had been put to death at Calvary was the risen and triumphant One, soon returning to take the place which had been usurped by the antichrist. They had heard of the cleansing efficacy of His precious blood. They had called upon the name of the Lord. They had refused to take upon them the mark of the beast. They had been unable to buy or sell, and had suffered hunger and thirst. Finally they had been put to death because of their faithfulness to the God whom they had come to know. Now they are seen serving before the throne of God, His tabernacle spread over them. What they had passed through on earth is emphasized by the contrast of verses 15-17, describing what is now their portion. We would judge that these have not as yet shared in the first resurrection, but are awaiting that glorious day, and serving Him while they wait [Comment 9]. *P. W. A., T. W. F.*

From Methil. —We believe the events of this chapter take place during and just after the Great Tribulation (see v. 14). Note the words of the Lord Jesus in Matt. 24. 75-22.

After the 144, 000 Jews are sealed for their protection, with the seal of the living God marked on their foreheads, 12, 000 out of each of twelve tribes, the apostle John saw a great multitude, so great in fact that no man could number them. This truly international company came from every nation, and was composed of all tribes, peoples and tongues. They were standing in heaven before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were arrayed in white garments and had palms (branches or leaves) of victory in their hands.

With one great voice they say; "Salvation unto our God". Around the throne stood the angels and also the twenty-four elders (see Rev. 5. 8). Those with the four living creatures all fell before the throne on their faces and worshipped God. One of these elders explained to John who this vast company was, that were arrayed in white robes (see also Rev. 6. 9-11, 15. 24, 20. 4-6, Dan 12). These, he said, have come out of the Great Tribulation and they washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. All in this vast host were redeemed. No tribulation would separate them from the love of God.

Now they serve God day and night; their circumstances are changed. They had been through the great tribulation which had come to the earth. Then they were persecuted by men, tempted by Satan, suffered the spoiling of their goods, were imprisoned and even martyred; now in heaven they serve the living God free from all their former deprivations. For them, there will be no more hunger, or thirsting, sickness or pain, nor will they suffer from the heat of the sun. They enjoy the nearness of the presence of the Lamb, for He will shepherd them, and will feed them, and lead them and bring them to fountains of water. They are then completely delivered from all sorrow, for God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. For them the Great Tribulation is over.

Neville Coomer

IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

Papers were also received from Derby and Nottingham, and the following are impressions from these:

Throughout the book of Revelation the word "hurt" is used transitively except in Rev. 9. 19. It bears the meaning "to wrong", or "to injure", and is the word used also in Luke 10. 19. In Rev. 7 it is the hurt which man has brought on himself by his refusal to listen to the voice of God. God willeth that all men should be saved (1 Tim. 2. 4), but men having rejected His offer of mercy, the principle of Gal. 6. 7 must operate.

Micah 5. 7 was taken to refer to this sealing of the favoured "remnant of Jacob" for the great work of world-preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, for a testimony unto all the nations (Matt. 24. 14).

The sealing was not only for service, but for protection. It was thought that the mark would be visible, but that in any case

none of them would be overlooked by the all-seeing eye of God. The numbers 12, 000 and 144, 000 were understood as being literal and exact. Joseph seems to stand for Ephraim.

The witnessing of these chosen ones would be the means whereby the great multitudes would be reached with the gospel of the kingdom. This message incorporates the great purpose of the first coming and atoning work of the Lord whose coming as Son of Man was imminent. See verse 14, "They washed their robes" (thought to represent their ways) and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. In accepting the message they have as a consequence suffered the dreadful punishments that follow the refusal to take the mark of the beast. In this way they are a living testimony to their acceptance of the message of God in that day.

The great multitude (7. 9) in the power of the Holy Spirit refused to take the mark of the beast and had thus knowingly exposed themselves to intense suffering. The gracious promise of God for them is sure.

For Israel nationally, it will be the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30. 7). But the whole inhabited earth will taste of the dreadful wrath of Almighty God, which has been kept in abeyance during this present day of grace.

Eds.

COMMENTS

1. (*Atherton and Leigh*): It does seem feasible to deduce that Jewish believers will be used by God for the word-wide spread of the gospel of the kingdom in view of the background to the preaching of that gospel when the twelve and the seventy were successively sent forth by the Lord. If it can be sustained that the 144, 000 are to "spearhead" the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom at the time of the end, one would assume that their witness would be largely concurrent with that of the martyrs of 6. 9 and the two witnesses of chapter 11.

2. (*Atherton and Leigh*): Are not certain passages in Revelation anticipatory of final situations? For instance the universal homage described in 5. 13 could not be realized until after the final triumph of the Lamb. Yet an impression of that final glorious recognition of the Lamb's preeminence by every created thing is given near the beginning of the book, before the series of visions regarding the intermediate judgements. Similarly we have in chapter seven a

vision of the final triumph of those who maintain their faith despite the intensity of the Great Tribulation. Viewing the passage in this light, discussion about the tenses of certain verbs seems less important; but it will be noted that Melbourne's paper does suggest an aspect of service while awaiting resurrection.

3. (*Birmingham*): There are difficulties about this suggested parallel between the restraint on the angels in 7. 1-3 and the "restraint" exercised by the rider on the black horse (6. 5, 6). The view that the rider on the black horse was restraining judgement seems very doubtful. For following the conquests at the opening of the first seal there is the war and slaughter of the second seal, which would naturally be followed by famine and economic dislocation—hence the need for food control as depicted under the third seal. Moreover, the judgements were delayed in 7. 1-3 but had already been begun in 6. 1-4, so it is difficult to see a clear parallel.

4. (*Birmingham*): Certainly the emphasis in 7. 1-3 is laid upon harm which would come to the earth, the sea and the trees, and this may well have special relationship to the judgements of the first and second trumpets. Against such judgements the sealing would apparently give protection. Yet should a fuller protection necessarily be precluded? May it not be that God will grant special protection to the 144, 000 as they accomplish His service throughout the tribulation? Enduring to the end, may they not be saved out of it by the advent of Messiah?

5. (*Birmingham*): More scriptural confirmation would be needed to sustain this suggestion. Because the companies in 7. 1 and 14. 1 are identical in number it does not follow that the same group of people is referred to. The group in chapter 14 is characterized by special dedication (verses 4, 5). There is no suggestion that it is exclusively Jewish. Indeed they are "purchased out of the earth" (v. 3), "purchased from among men" (v. 4), suggesting wider associations than Israel. There seems insufficient justification to describe this company as standing "together unique as God's chosen people Israel in the heavenlies, with unique commendation and a unique service of song".

6. (*Melbourne*): It is admittedly difficult to determine clearly how the events of Revelation dovetail into each other, but some contributors have expressed the view that the sealing of the 144, 000

takes place early in the second half of Daniel's seventieth week. This view is strengthened by the fact that the four angels of 7. 1 were restrained from releasing the winds to blow on the earth, the sea, or any tree. Once the sealing was completed the sounding of the first and second trumpets led to the earth, trees and sea being particularly affected.

7. (*Melbourne*): While appreciating the suggestion put forward as to a limited application of Isaiah 60. 1 to this movement of God in and through 144, 000 of Israel, some caution is needed here. The context of Isaiah 60 very clearly relates to Israel's national status at the glorious dawning of Messiah's millennial power. The sealing of the 144, 000 and their ensuing witness among the nations belong to the deep darkness of the tribulation era.

8. (*Melbourne*): The suggestion that the omission of the tribe of Dan in Rev. 7 is related to the idolatry described in Judges 18. 29-31 has been put forward by several contributors. The principles of divine judgement and mercy referred to in Melbourne's paper are certainly sound. But are we really satisfied that the omission of Dan was because of this failure so long before? Did not all the other tribes also lapse into idolatry (cf. Hosea 4. 17)? Is there adequate ground for linking Dan's idolatry with Rev. 7? May the omission of Dan's name not rather be due to circumstances obtaining at the time of the end? The 144, 000 sealed were described as "servants of God", and many students share the view that this service will include special witness to the gospel of the kingdom during the reign of antichrist. Both spiritual condition and geographic location would be relevant to this task. May one or both of these factors be involved? For we do not know where the descendants of Dan are located—perhaps in one general area or very widely dispersed. Does the Spirit foresee that at the time of the end their situation will preclude them from this service? Or does He foresee that there will be insufficient of the tribe of Dan whose spiritual response will rise to the requirements of witness in the fearful conditions of that day? Ezekiel 48. 1 confirms this tribe's inclusion in millennial blessing. If omission from those sealed in Rev. 7 was a penalty for ancient idolatry, why this admission to special millennial privilege?

9. (*Melbourne*): Whether all in the great multitude of Rev. 7.

9-17 had suffered death may warrant discussion. Could this scene not envisage the final aggregate of all coming out of the Great Tribulation, whether by way of death or through enduring to the end and being saved out of it by the Lord's coming as Son of Man? See comment 2 for suggestion that this vision may be regarded as an impression of the final triumphant outcome for all who refuse the mark of the beast and suffer for the truth during the tribulation period.

G. P. Jr.

PSALM 72 (continued)

Be Thou to me a rock of habitation, whereunto I may continually resort:

Thou hast given commandment to save me;

For Thou art my rock and my fortress.

Rescue me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked,

Out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man (verses 3, 4).

The A. V. renders "a rock of habitation" as "my strong habitation". The Hebrew word here is *TSUR*, rock, which is first used of the rock smitten by Moses in Horeb, a rock compressed or flinty (Ex. 17. 6). It was the same kind of rock as that on which Moses stood in Sinai (Ex. 33. 21, 22). Note has been taken of the two kinds of rock that David refers to in earlier psalms, *TSUR*, and *CEL A* or *SELA*; the latter is the lofty rock which Moses should not have smitten (Num. 20. 8, 10, 11). Christ is to us both the hard flinty rock and the lofty rock. David calls on God to rescue him from the hand of the wicked, and from the unrighteous and cruel man. There were many such in David's time and there have been many such all down the years of time. "Man's inhumanity to man" fills the history of mankind.

For Thou art my hope, O Lord GOD:

Thou art my trust from my youth.

By Thee have I been holden up from the womb:

Thou art He that took me out of my mother's bowels:

My praise shall be continually of Thee (verses 5, 6).

We may be right in viewing these words as the words of David. Some psalms he wrote which have no heading, such as Psalms 2 and 95, we know from the New Testament were written by him. Here in verse 6 he goes back to the day of his birth. He was the youngest son of Jesse, but though he was the son of an elderly

man, the last of a family of ten children, as he grew up he lacked none of the physical and mental vigour of the children of youth. He speaks very intimately of the matters of birth and of what God was to him then. He also speaks of his trust in God from his youth, and of the Lord being his hope. Those who miss trusting in God from their youth miss a great deal, and often such time lost in youth is never made up later in life. Time is a valuable asset to men whose life on earth is so brief.

**I am as a wonder unto many;
But Thou art my strong refuge.
My mouth shall be filled with Thy praise,
And with Thy honour all the day** (verses 7, 8).

David was a wonder to many, he was commended to Saul as one who was cunning in playing, a mighty man of valour, a man of war, prudent in speech and a comely person, and the Lord was with Him; the last part of the commendation was the most important (1 Sam. 16. 18). It is said that when he came to Saul, Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armourbearer, a very responsible position in those days with warriors, especially royal warriors. Saul was soon to see that he fully filled the picture that he was a man of valour and a man of war. When he offered to go against the giant Goliath he showed his faith and courage, and when he drew near to Goliath he showed his prowess. On that day he became a wonder unto many, and the women sang of him in their dances with their instruments,

"Saul hath slain his thousands,
And David his ten thousands".

That day saw the beginning of Saul's fierce jealousy which continued for some years, until Saul went the way of all the earth, having lived a life of which anyone might be ashamed.

The Lord was David's strong refuge, and his mouth with his sweet voice was filled with God's praise and honour all the day. He was a man who not only sang himself, but he taught Israel to sing, and many others have joined in David's songs over the centuries.

J.

M.

BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11). '

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EDITORIAL

The study of Rev. 8 inevitably raises the question as to whether its terms are to be taken symbolically or literally, and some of our contributors have given their reasons for favouring the latter view.

Consider the wonders that God wrought when He was about to deliver the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt. It was his shepherd's staff that Moses cast down and it became a serpent, a real literal serpent. Further, when God afflicted Egypt with the ten plagues, the waters were turned into actual blood, not just made to look like blood. The frogs, lice, flies and locusts were actual frogs, lice, flies and locusts. The boils with which the Egyptians suffered were the actual malady, as they could well testify. The disastrous murrain on the cattle and the plague of hail were only too literal for the comfort of the Egyptians. Again, in the penultimate plague, the darkness was real enough to immobilize the Egyptians, and yet He gave light in the dwellings of the children of Israel—a most remarkable wonder akin to that of Rev. 8. 12. The record, too, of the slaying of Egypt's firstborn is no mere figment of the writer's imagination. The Egyptians were face to face with that dread enemy death, and were so affected that they thrust out the Israelites from Egypt. If God wrought such literal wonders in the days of Moses, can He not perform like wonders in the times of the end? The plagues in Egypt are mildly parallel to the judgements of Rev. 8. If the former be read as literal (and we believe they are), why not also the latter? They are both the work of the same unchanging God.

The purpose of the plagues in Egypt was to gender a change of heart in Pharaoh unto the saving of Israel; and, because he failed in this respect, plague succeeded plague. May there not be a parallel circumstance in the events of Rev. 8? J. B.

GOD, THE HOLY SPIRIT, AS SEEN IN REVELATION

The Lord Jesus taught His apostles on the night of His betrayal many things concerning the Spirit's work in them and in the world from Pentecost onwards. He also referred to the Spirit's witness to the Son, and His work in revealing to the apostles "things that are to come". He declared, "He shall not speak from Himself; but what things soever He shall hear, these shall He speak; and He shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto you" (John 16. 13, 14). None but the Spirit of God could fulfil this work of guiding, declaring the will of God and glorifying and revealing Christ. These facets of the Spirit's mission indicate the prominence of His work in relation to Christ Himself. From the first reference in Scripture to the activities of the Spirit, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen. 1. 2), to the last, where "the Spirit and the Bride say, Come" (Rev. 22. 17), He is at work, speaking and inspiring men in His sovereign activity. At the close of the first century of the Christian era, the apostle John was commissioned by God to write a book, the content of which is described as things which he saw, things which shall come to pass hereafter, truths which basically centre on the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The book is therefore fittingly described as "the Revelation of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1. 1).

There are some eighteen references to the Spirit in the book of Revelation. Apart from the expression "the seven Spirits of God", used twice, He is called "The Spirit". The order of the greeting (1. 4, 5) is indicative of the inner relations of the Trinity, and is in keeping with the truth of subjection in the Godhead implied elsewhere in the New Testament. From the association of the divine Persons, the Father (Him which is and which was and which is to come) and Jesus Christ, it is clear that the term "the seven Spirits of God" must be interpreted as referring to the Person of the Holy Spirit. The seven Spirits would teach the full deity and perfection of His Person. The seven lamps which are before the throne, representing the seven Spirits of God, reveal the work of the Spirit in the full knowledge and perfect rule of that throne in the whole universe, as well as indicating its rule over those gathered in the seven churches.

In each of the letters to the seven churches in Asia the voice of the Spirit in the words, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches", is identified with the voice of Christ. The messages to the churches individually and to all of these together, have a Spirit-given application to all, and indeed to churches of God in our time. The presentation of Christ to each church is relevant to its individual position and condition and even in His several names there is comfort and hope. To the over-comers there are promises and rewards, which will be perfectly just and suitable for the recipients. The Holy Spirit Himself will apply to churches of God the principles and truths He reveals to those seven golden lampstands. Though the record of errors, failures and successes of those early churches had a particular application to them, the letters are like a mirror in which we can see ourselves in churches of God today. As to them so to us, the word is, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches". The fact that there were seven churches addressed and that He had a different message for each is a further indication of His sovereign activity in the sphere of God's rule among His people gathered in assemblies of God.

The expression, "I was in the Spirit" (1. 10. 4. 2), seems to indicate special experiences that John had to enable him to appreciate the nature of his mission, to see the glory of the Lord and the majesty and grandeur of scenes in heaven. It is part of the Spirit's work to take up men, revealing in them, to them and through them in His sovereign control the historic and prophetic content of the word of God. It was through the Spirit's activity that John was able to record the book of Revelation.

At the close of Revelation, and therefore of the New Testament, we have that incomparable promise of Christ, "Yea; I come quickly", and coupled with it the final invitation, "the Spirit and the Bride say come". The response of all whose hearts are illuminated by the Spirit's testimony is fittingly expressed among the closing words of Scripture: "Amen: come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22. 20).

For Christ, my Master's quick return,
'Tis He who teaches me to yearn;
The Paraclete, who, wondrous grace!
Makes my poor heart His dwelling place.

(C. M. Luxmoore) A. Hyland

ELDERS IN SCRIPTURE

The word "elder" in Scripture has a consistent usage to describe a man upon whom delegated authority rests and who has special responsibility with regard to others. This responsibility found expression (a) within a household (Gen. 24. 2), (b) within a city (Deut. 21. 29), (c) within a tribe (Deut. 31. 28) and (d) within a nation (Ex. 3. 16).

Whilst an "elder" within a household was concerned with domestic and family affairs, the plural term "elders" is used when related to civic, tribal, and national activities. As such it identifies a group of men united in corporate and representative action.

Israel's slavery in Egypt did not erase the function of elderhood from their national character. The divine message of deliverance was sent through Moses and communicated to the people through their elders (Ex. 3. 16). This entrustment to elders to convey to Israel what God had first committed to them was repeated at Sinai when the terms of the divine covenant were declared (Ex. 19. 7); again, when the written law of God was given, it came first to priests and elders who were instructed to read it before all Israel, every seven years at the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut. 31. 9). Seventy elders shared a moment of great privilege with Moses, and Aaron and his two sons, when at Sinai, they received a revelation of the glory of God (Ex. 24). On another occasion "seventy men of the elders of Israel" were called to support Moses in the burden that came upon him as a result of the rebellion of the mixed multitude within the nation who lusted for the food of Egypt (Num. 11. 16).

Corporate acts of confession were led by the elders: "if the whole congregation shall err... when the sin... is known..." (Lev. 4. 13-15). Elders were required to be completely involved in the sacrifice of the sin offering which such transgressions demanded. They had to lay their hands upon the head of the offering. This was an act both representative (i. e. on behalf of the sinning congregation) and identifying (i. e. their association with guilt acknowledged and confessed).

The pattern which unfolds, therefore, from the consideration of the place that elders had in Israel is that of men upon whom God placed high responsibility to lead and instruct the nation in obedience

to Himself and to act swiftly when that obedience was threatened (Josh. 7. 1, 1445). **Such** service called for men who were "wise", "understanding" and "known"; men capable of righteous judgement, **impartial and** fearless "for the judgement is God's" (Deut. 1. 13-17; of. Ex. 18. 22).

It is a sad indication of human weakness that men called to high responsibility may lose their integrity. There were elders who sought counsel of the Lord although secretly disloyal to Him for they had "taken their idols into their heart" (Ezek. 14. 3). Better far when they are united with the assembly in exalting the Lord and answering the call to "praise Him in the seat of the elders" (Psa. 107. 32).

The New Testament record of the elders of Israel presents a sad story of leaders leading a nation out of relationship with God—a fact demonstrated by their implacable opposition to the incarnate Son of God. Ritualistic with a dead orthodoxy, they argue for "the tradition of the elders" (Mark 7. 3-5); blind in unbelief, they blatantly reject their Messiah and scheme with the high priests to encompass His death (Matt. 26. 3, 4); and they are found among those who came to arrest the Lord Jesus (Luke 22. 52). These elders therefore were leaders in Israel's supreme apostasy and disobedience. As such they contributed to the setting aside of that nation and their replacement, in the purpose of God, by a spiritual nation which would bring forth the fruits of the kingdom of God (Matt. 21. 43). This spiritual nation had its divine beginning on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured forth upon the disciples of the Lord Jesus (see Acts 2). The history of the Acts of the Apostles and the teaching of the epistles clearly reveal that the principle of united elderhood so firmly established in the nation of Israel is projected also in the spiritual nation now constituted as a result of obedience to the risen and exalted Lord Jesus Christ. Elders were appointed in every church (Acts 14. 23; of. Acts 15. 4; Titus 1. 5).

Elders of Judaea, those representing a number of churches in that province, received gifts brought by Paul and Barnabas from the saints in Antioch (Acts 11. 30). Paul sent for the elders of the church in Ephesus (Acts 20. 17). His message to them was sadly reminiscent of those which Moses (Deut. 31. 28) and Joshua (Josh. 24. 1) had given to the elders of Israel.

Scriptures such as Acts 20. 17, 28, 1 Tim 3. 1 and 1. Tim. 5. 17 link the titles elders and bishops (overseers), and confirm that they are interchangeable. Clearly defined qualifications affecting character and testimony mark the man worthy of this responsibility (1 Tim. 3. 2-7; Titus 1. 5-9). Capricious choice has no place in the call to the elderhood, but the appointment of the Holy Spirit (Acts 20. 28).

"Elders that rule well... who labour in the word and in teaching" these, says Paul, are worthy of double honour (1 Tim. 5. 17). Hebrew saints are entreated "Remember them that had the rule over you, which spake unto you the word of God" (Heb. 13. 7). These and kindred scriptures define the service of elders requiring them to "rule well", "heed", "tend", "feed" the flock of God (Acts 20. 28; 1 Pet. 5. 1, 2), and as each exhortation is linked with John 21. 75-17, we are left with the clear understanding that these responsibilities can be effectively fulfilled only in the power of an undivided love for our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is difficult to identify the elders mentioned in the last book of the Bible (Rev. 4; 5; 7; 11; 14; 19). It may be that they are representative of all the redeemed. The old covenant was related to a nation of twelve tribes and the new covenant to the twelve apostles of the Lamb and four and twenty elders are mentioned in Rev. 4. 4, etc. In this connection we cannot avoid the significance of Rev. 21. 12, 14. [A different view, which editors prefer, is put forward in March issue, pages 57, 58, 60], These elders are "round about the throne" and if we accept that they are representative of the whole company of the redeemed, then the bliss of the ransomed is seen in the fact that they are seated, indicating perfect rest, that they are clothed in white raiment, indicating perfect purity. That they have on their heads crowns of gold indicates perfect victory, and that they cast their crowns before the throne is an act of worship that will eternally find expression from all the countless multitude of the redeemed.

L. C. Shattock

A STUDY OF REVELATION

The Golden Censer and the First Four Trumpets (8. 1-12)

From Derby. —We may never know the reason for the half-hour silence which followed the opening of the seventh seal. In 1 John 2. 18 we read: "It is the last hour". God's timing is so different

from ours; He is never in a hurry, nor is He behind His time. The seven angels who stand before God were each given a trumpet. Before the sounding of these trumpets *is* mentioned, there are three verses occupied with incense and prayers. We thought much as to the possible themes of these prayers, and offer three suggestions: (1) that the righteous may not perish with the wicked; (2) that the wicked may repent of their wickedness and so possibly (as in the case of Nineveh) avert further disasters; (3) that these very judgements would soon fall (of. Elijah). God had arranged that an angel should officiate at the golden altar in the heavenly sanctuary with much incense, that he should add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar. The angel then took a censer, and filled it with fire from the altar (upon which the incense had been burning) [See Comment 8] and cast it upon the earth. From then onwards terrible things happened. This no doubt led to the thought expressed in the third suggestion above.

In Rev. 5. 8 it is said of the incense, "which *are* the prayers of the saints" but in 8. 3, 4 we read of "the smoke of the incense *with* the prayers of the saints". With the seventh seal, as with the sixth, there is an earthquake. The Lord is in the dreadful process of shaking mightily the earth (Isa. 2. 20-22). Ten times "the third part" is singled out for judgement and two parts are given, as it were, time to repent. God is ever ready to pardon, but He has certain righteous conditions which are often repeated in Scripture, e. g. Isa. 55. 7: "Let the wicked forsake his way". Maybe it was now too late. God had been trifled with, and now the terrible day of the Lord was in progress. We thought of Zech. 13. 8, 9 where we read that two parts shall perish in Jerusalem, and one part be spared though caused to pass through the fire to refine them for future blessing.

In verse 7 we read that all the green grass is to be burned up. This may be referred to in Joel 1. 18: "How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture". Joel goes on: "The water brooks are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness" (verse 20).

The second angel sounded and the great and mighty God manifests His power over the sea, and those who do business in the great waters (who should have known something of His wonders of the deep) are made to see them now. The third angel sounds, and then

the fourth; now God displays His power over the heavenly bodies, the things of which king David wrote, that they declare the glory of God and His handiwork (Psa. 19). We thought of the three days of pitch darkness in Egypt (Ex. 10. 21-23) and also the three hours of darkness while the Lord Jesus was suffering for our sins on the cross. There will be yet further disturbances of the heavenly bodies as the advent of the Son of Man draws nearer, as foretold by several of the prophets; e. g. Joel 2. 30-32, cited by Peter in Acts 2. 19, 20: "I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness... before the great and terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered". This latter portion along with many others might well have been incorporated in the prayers of the saints.

S. Wymer, S. R. W.

From Hayes. —The opening of the seventh seal introduces a further aspect of revelation which has to do with seven trumpets given to the seven angels which stand before God, just as further on there are other aspects of revelation related to seven bowls and seven plagues. The reference here is to the seven angels which stand before God. It appears that these seven have a definite office and a high position in the order of things in heaven. To them were given seven trumpets. Trumpets were used in Israel according to the law to gather the people, to command and direct, and to warn of judgement (Num. 10; Joel 2. 1; Amos 3. 6). The judgements brought in by the trumpets are more fearful in type and effect than those of the seals.

Here also is introduced the golden altar which stands before the throne. An altar has been mentioned in 6. 9 but is not specifically said to be a golden altar. It may have been a different altar corresponding to the copper altar, the altar of burnt offering, in the tabernacle. There can be no doubt, however, that this golden altar of ch. 8 corresponds to the golden altar of incense which stood before the veil of the holy of holies in the tabernacle. Associated with this golden altar is a golden censer held by another angel. It is interesting to notice that it is an angel, not a priest. The smoke of the incense went up with the prayers from the angel's hand. The casting of the censer upon the earth would appear to be the

answer to the prayers of the souls of them that had been slain for the testimony, that their blood should be avenged. The thunders, voices, lightnings and earthquake may well be a warning of what is to follow.

With the seven trumpets we are introduced to another number, "three". As each of the first four angels sounded, a third part of something was affected. By the time the four had sounded, a third part of all that had been provided for man's sustenance was affected, i. e., the earth, the sea, the rivers, the sun, moon and stars. Why is only a third part affected by these judgements? This partial judgement may well be intended to cause men to repent before more severe judgement comes, but 9. 20, 21 sadly states that after the even more severe but still partial judgement of the sixth trumpet, in which a third part of the people are actually killed, the rest did not repent of their evil deeds.

J. A. H. Robertson

From Nottingham. —Rev. 8 brings the reader to the opening of the seventh seal. The use of the number seven in Scripture is interesting, being found frequently in the Revelation and seeming to express the thought of completeness. Here we have the last, the seventh, seal, that is the completion of the opening of the seals and the revealing of the consequent judgements.

It seems natural that the opening of this seal should be attended with an air of great solemnity and there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. This silence would impress the seriousness of the occasion on the seer.

There is also a distinctive characteristic about the opening of the seventh seal in that what is about to happen is not disclosed at once but is revealed in the blowing of seven successive trumpets. Verse 2 records that John saw the seven angels which stand before God. The definite article is noted and gives rise to the question as to the identity of these angels. Is the term used symbolically as indicative of a complete or entire angelic force which stands before God waiting to do His will or are we to understand that before Him stand seven angels to whom is the specific responsibility of standing in His presence? Luke 1. 19 comes to mind, where Gabriel states that he stands in the presence of God [Comment 1].

The presence of the article would tend to make us expect an earlier reference to these same angles, but we are not aware of any

such in the book. Even so, thoughts turn to 1. 4 where we read of the "seven spirits which are before the throne". We take this to be a reference to the Holy Spirit but wonder in what way, if in any way, it may refer to the seven angels before God [Comment 2].

In the golden censer (v. 3) it seems we have the substance of an earthly shadow (Heb. 8. 5). Then also there is the altar (v. 3; also 9. 13) and in 11. 19 we have the ark of His covenant. The shadows of these things which had been used on earth in Old Testament service were built out of materials. John saw, it seems, an actual censer which also appears to have been made out of material, although in what way there can be a material censer and so on in heaven is beyond our present understanding [Comment 3],

The burning of incense was associated with prayer (Luke 1. 10) and the custom was for the worshippers to pray at the time the incense was offered by the priest. In v. 5 we find that which had been associated with the prayers of the saints now associated with the judgements which must fall on this earth [Comment 4]. These saints appear to be those who have refused to bow to the man of sin and who have responded to the gospel of the kingdom. They cannot be saints of this dispensation because the rapture will have already taken place.

The question arises as to whether the fire, thunder, voices, lightnings and earthquakes of verse 5 are literal or symbolic [Comment 5]. It is suggested they are literal (for of what could they be symbols?), but in what way fire can descend from the altar of heaven on to this earth seems uncertain and may be one of those things which we cannot at present understand.

In much the same way there is that in the judgements which we cannot yet fully comprehend. One thing is certain, that these judgements will be fearful in the extreme, and as we read of them and consider them we have some small realization of the terrible future of this godless world.

In connection with these judgements it is suggested that: -

(a) They do not apply to any historical event or international occurrence, as some commentators suggest, supposed to take place between the Lord's death and the rapture of the saints. They are future and belong to the period after the rapture.

(b) They will be literal happenings, although John through the

Holy Spirit uses such language as will convey to the reader what he saw. For example, while it seems that a mountain burning with fire will be moved and cast into the sea, are we to understand that the star of Verses 10, 11 is a literal star, or did the object of the devastation appear to John as a star?

(c) We wonder if these events are direct supernatural acts of God or if they are, in fact, the results of human warfare used by God to bring about His judgements on the earth.

(d) Although we acknowledge readily that with God all things are possible and we are not required to understand how God can bring about the events described, we cannot help but think that certain of the happenings have all the characteristics of the effect of nuclear warfare, for example the waters becoming bitter and causing death (v. 11). *R. Hickling*

From Birkenhead. —The golden altar and golden censer (v. 3) are linked with the tabernacle in which were earthly copies of these things. The smoke of the incense with the prayers of the saints ascended to God out of the angel's hand. It was thought possible that the happenings on earth (v. 5) are a response to the prayers of the saints for deliverance from the wickedness that surrounds them. We did not incline to the view that the angel (v. 3) is the Lord.

Following the sounding of the trumpets by each of four of the seven angels, judgements are poured out on the earth which result in disturbances in the forces of nature. These judgements are not God's final dealings with the earth, for only one third is affected. We wondered whether this would be evenly spread around the world or whether certain parts of the world would be completely affected [Comment 6]. With reference to v. 12, we wondered whether the correct interpretation was that the sun and consequently the moon shone with a loss of one third of power as well as being visible for one third less time [Comment 7].

It was considered that the narrative of the chapter was literal and not figurative. As to the waters becoming wormwood it was felt that an alternative reading could be "hemlock" as in Amos 6. 12 (A. V.), the latter being poisonous whereas the former is bitter.

In our discussion we reviewed relevant passages of the discussion article "Seals, Trumpets and Bowls" (B. S. Feb. 1972) **and** concurred with the view that the events of the sixth seal **and** seventh trumpet are clearly identifiable with the coming of the Son of **Man** (Matt. 24), thus rejecting the alternative suggestion that our study of the sounding of the trumpets follows on from the opening of the seals chronologically.

R. D. Williams

From Crowborough, — "And when He opened the seventh seal". The same words are used for the seventh seal as for the former six seals. We thought that the silence in heaven for about half an hour was the immediate effect of the opening of the seventh seal. The Book is in the hand of Him through whom God's greatest blessing has been given to men on earth. Now He alone can open the Book that unfolds the purposes of God in judgement, but He is merciful even in these. For example there are seven phases of judgement in this' last seal instead of one devastating stroke of judgement.

The angel with the golden censer is seen going over to the altar; we take this to be the altar of burnt offering, for he would require fire to burn the incense, although fire is not mentioned until verse 5, where he casts it upon the earth. If this scene here is that of which the tabernacle was a copy, then it was appropriate for the angel to go over to the altar (of burnt offering). In the tabernacle arrangement there would have been no golden altar without the altar of burnt offering. There was a very close connexion between the two altars [Comment 8]. If this angel was performing a priestly work at the golden altar then can we say it was because of a sacrifice? Christ, of course, answers to both the sacrifice and the sweet incense. The word rendered "censer" is sometimes used for incense but the title "golden" clearly indicates a receptacle which would hold the fire; "much incense" (v. 3) is *given* to the angel to add to the prayers of all the saints. The smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God (v. 4). The incense is there, so also are the prayers, suggesting a ripeness of time or season in the divine purposes. The golden censer has been used for one purpose, now it is used for another (v. 5). Fire is taken from the altar and cast on to the earth, followed by four things: thunder, voices, lightning and an earthquake (v. 5). The seven angels

prepare to sound their trumpets. Again we have the number "four". Four trumpets are blown and introduce a series of startling events in the earth. The first four trumpets are grouped together like the first four seals. The first four seals are all introduced by the word "Come". In chapter 8 the first four trumpets are followed by judgements on the earth, the sea, the rivers and the heavenly bodies. The first trumpet sounded and a third part of the earth, trees and grass were burnt up with the fire of judgement. The calamity is severe but we see that it is limited by God. Terrible events follow the sounding of the second trumpet. Yet again it is but a third part of the sea which is affected—still a limitation of the judgement, in which mercy is remembered. The third trumpet is sounded and the effect of the judgement was a great bitterness of the waters of earth, causing death. Mercifully, it was only a third part of the rivers. The fourth trumpet has sounded, affecting a third part of the great lights that rule the day and night, as well as the stars—a state of neither light nor dark. This surely will bring great fear and distress. Yet it could have been complete darkness. If we think back to Genesis and the creation of these things, it is saddening to think of this great reversal as it were; the things He made become the instruments of His righteous anger because of sin.

J. H. B.

IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

Papers were also received from Atherton and Leigh, and Vancouver; a brief summary follows:

If for many thousands of years there has been continuous praise in heaven, as several scriptures seem to indicate (e. g. Rev. 4. 8), the half-hour silence of 8. 1 will be most significant. Possibly the profound service of verses 3-5 will take place during this interval, the *hosts* of heaven silently watching the officiating angel. As in 5. 8, so here, the prayers of the saints are given an awesome prominence in the divine service of heaven. Perhaps we see the divine response to the saints' prayers in the events of verse 5 and even in all the judgements of the seven trumpets.

Are the details of the trumpet-judgements to be taken literally? Some thought the great mountain of verse 8 might be the city of Babylon (of. Jer. 51. 25). Others, who consider that the seven trumpet-judgements will occur in chronological order as given, point

out that verse 8 comes under the second trumpet-judgement, before the three woes of verse 13, whereas 16. 17-21 places the fall of Babylon in the judgement of the seventh bowl, in immediate association with the Lord's coming to earth.

Again, the great star of verse 10 was considered to symbolize some great individual who will arise at the time of the end. In the other view, the term "star" describes what John actually saw, possibly a large meteorite which burned brightly as it passed through the atmosphere to the earth.

The waters of verse 11 might refer to a great multitude of people, as in 17. 15, although in the literalist view this verse refers only to the vision of 17. 1-6, which is indisputably figurative. Broadly speaking, it is argued, the details of the first four trumpet-judgements can quite reasonably be given fairly literal interpretations in a meaningful context of a widespread physical catastrophe, and it seems wise to accept the words of Scripture as they stand whenever it is possible to do so. , Eds.

COMMENTS

1. (*Nottingham*): The R. V., "which stand before God", might suggest some such thing as a representative seven angels. The A. V., "which stood before God", is in keeping with Dr. Marshall's inter-linear literal translation. If this is the better rendering, then we are only entitled to gather that, when these things, were revealed to John and when these events will actually take place, seven angels stand before God.

2. (*Nottingham*): I do not take the seven spirits to be the seven angels, nor do I see warrant for asserting that there is a link between the two.

3. (*Nottingham*): Heb. 8. 5 refers to the Lord's repeated warning to Moses that the tabernacle and its furniture must be made according to the pattern shown to him in the mount. If the tabernacle in the wilderness was a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, then the heavenly tabernacle preceded it and was furnished in the same way. We should not, therefore, be surprised if John, with his Hebrew background, should readily recognize the heavenly things, though perforce he speaks of them in terms of earthly things.

4. (*Nottingham*): In "cast it upon the earth" the A. V. puts the "it" in italics as not being in the text; not so the R. V., which puts the "it" in Roman type and so does not indicate that the "it" is not in the Greek. The question then is whether or not it is necessary to supply the "it" to give the sense. For my part, I prefer to omit the "it", and read as "cast upon the earth", that is to say the fire from the altar, not the censer, was cast upon the earth.

5. (*Nottingham*): Respected opinions differ as to this. It would appear that both views have their respective difficulties, the literal reading possibly having fewer.

6. (*Birkenhead*): However these acts of judgements may be distributed, they will constitute a warning to all the people on the earth.

7. (*Birkenhead*): This interpretation comes well within the terms of Rev. 8. 12. One third part of the day and one third part of the night will not be blessed with light from the heavens.

8. (*Crowborough*): In verse 3 the altar concerned is described as "having a golden censer". This identifies it as the golden altar of incense. This is confirmed at the second mention, where it is called "the golden altar". Verse 5 refers to "the fire of the altar". There is no fire on the golden altar of incense. In the tabernacle it had a wooden top overlaid with gold (Ex. 30. 3), and so could not endure fire. Also the fire on the brasen altar was symbolic of divine judgement. In Rev. 8. 5 it was fire from the altar of burnt offering that was put into the censer, and it was this fire that was cast upon the earth.

J. B.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

From Hayes: "Them that had been slain" (Rev. 6. 9), "a great multitude" (7. 9-17) and "all the saints" (8. 3). Is the same company of people referred to in these scriptures?

Those "that had been slain" (6. 9) would appear to be included "in the great multitude" (7. 9-17), but "all the saints" (8. 3) may refer to people still alive on the earth.

From Crowborough: Are the details in the judgements of the four trumpet soundings literal?

See Comment 5.

***From Vancouver:* In view of the fact that the fire that was used upon the golden altar was carried in the censer from the brasen altar, can we conclude that the brasen altar is referred to in Rev. 8. 3, 5?**

See Comment 8.

***From Atherton and Leigh:* Is the Angel of Rev. 8. 3-5 performing priestly service?**

The angel is not "taken from among men" and is not seen to be offering "both gifts and sacrifices for sins" (Heb. 5. 1). Even the Lord Jesus was taken from among men to be the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. In the light of these considerations I prefer to regard the angel in Rev. 8. 3-5 as not performing priestly service. More could be said to the same effect. *J. B.*

PSALM 71 (*continued*)

Cast me not off in the time of old age;

Forsake me not when my strength faileth.

For mine enemies speak concerning me;

And they that watch for my soul take counsel together,

Saying, God hath forsaken him:

Pursue and take him; for there is none to deliver

(verses 9, 10, 11).

It seems evident that David was now an old man. It may be that the psalm was written after the rebellion of Absalom and the battle that ensued, when twenty thousand of the men of Israel that followed Absalom were slain by the servants of David, and we are told that the forest devoured more than the sword devoured. It may be that the widows and the children that were left after that disaster had bitter thoughts about king David. One would not be surprised if that were so. In his old age his enemies were speaking against him, and were saying that God had forsaken him, and that they should pursue and take him for there was none to deliver. *J. M.*

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BIBLE STUDIES

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EDITORIAL

The sounding of the last three trumpets, part of which comprises this month's study in Rev. 8 and 9, heralds a fearful escalation of divinely controlled judgements on the world. The world of nature suffered in connection with the first four trumpets, and attention is now focussed on men themselves, first in tormenting tribulation, then in vast destruction of human life. The appropriateness of the great voice crying, "Woe, woe, woe" (8. 13) is unmistakable.

Now the background of human behaviour, upon which God's judgement falls so fiercely at this time, is strikingly relevant to the contemporary world scene. Although due caution must be preserved with regard to the trends of today as portents of a very imminent return of the Lord, the four evils specified in 9. 21 to summarize the human sin of that time have an arrestingly familiar ring. They are murder, sorceries, fornication, theft. They represent a flagrant disregard of human life, a grim association with evil spirit activity and hence idolatry (v. 20), a complete contempt of divine law relating to sexual behaviour and a dominating covetousness of the possessions of others. The trends in human criminal activity today correspond closely, as does also much human behaviour which is not technically criminal by national legal codes (themselves changing alarmingly), but which does increasing violence to divine standards.

Selecting for special mention the matter of "sorceries", we note that the Greek word here is *pharmakia*, the root of the English word pharmacy, and relating immediately to the world of drugs and poisons. Those latter have, over centuries, been widely used, especially drugs producing hallucinations, as adjuncts to witchcraft and occult experiences. The alarming and growing world-wide abuse in recent years of such drugs by young people is a sombre development. Such exposure to the destructive demoniac power of Satan is

claiming appalling numbers of precious young lives in our day. A repeated poll of U. S. college students, recently reported, showed an increase between 1967 and 1971 from 5 to 42 per cent, who had used marijuana, and from 1 to 14 per cent, who had dabbled in LSD, a highly dangerous hallucinogenic drug. Horrific shadows of the world conditions of Rev. 9 are around us and contribute great solemnity to our study. Galatians 5. 19-21 lists "the works of the flesh", including "sorcery", and Rev. 21. 8 indicates the fearful end of their downward path. The prayers of the saints in that day are, as we have seen in recent months, righteously and properly associated with a cry for divine vengeance. While grace reigns supreme today, may the saints' prayers be unfailingly for the rescue of human souls from such a calamitous fate! J. D. T.

A COMPARATIVE STUDY—EZEKIEL AND REVELATION

Whereas the Book of the Revelation is a continuous series of visions following the message to the seven churches, the book of Ezekiel contains prophecies given at various times; and much of the book of Ezekiel is concerned with warnings about the fall of Jerusalem as the inevitable consequence of the people's behaviour. John had to write in a book what he saw and heard. Ezekiel, however, was charged to *speak* to the house of Israel with the Lord's words (3. 4). By his actions also he was made to be a sign to the people, symbolizing by his removal, for instance, the captivity which was then imminent (12. 11), and making predictions, such as the blinding of Zedekiah (12. 12), which had their fulfilment in his own day (2 Kin. 25. 7). While the downfall of Jerusalem was certain (12. 25), Ezekiel proclaimed a message of hope for an obedient remnant (11. 16).

Some principles in his prophecy have their application today, as for example that of judgement beginning from the sanctuary (9. 6).

The inference from this order of judgement in 1 Pet. 4. 17 is of far-reaching significance. Such principles transcending the historical crisis of Ezekiel's own day have a bearing on the Revelation of Jesus Christ, signified by God's angel to His servant John. Since the prophet and the apostle were both granted visions of divine things, the human language which they use to describe them shows a marked resemblance, and the ways in which they were involved in the heavenly scene have their similarities.

The number of living creatures (Ezek. 1. 5) was four, as in Rev. 4. 6-8. Their characteristics expressed the One whom they served. As to their feet, they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass (Ezek. 1. 7), and the noise of their wings was like the voice of the Almighty, like the noise of great waters (Ezek. 1. 24). As the glassy sea (Rev. 4. 6) was like unto crystal, so Ezekiel saw the likeness of a firmament like the colour of the terrible crystal (1. 22). The living creatures of Rev. 4. 6 were full of eyes, and so was the living creature which Ezekiel saw under the God of Israel (Ezek. 10. 12, 20). There was a rainbow round about the throne in Rev. 4. 3, and Ezekiel likens the brightness round about to the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain.

It was the glory of the Lord which caused Ezekiel to fall upon his face (Ezek. 1. 28) even as John also did (Rev. 1. 17). At the time when Ezekiel was being instructed to speak to the house of Israel (3. 1), he was caused to eat a book containing lamentations and mourning and woe. John also was told to eat a little book (Rev. 10. 9). In both cases the book proved to be as honey for sweetness in the mouth. Ezekiel's roll was written within and without (2. 10), but in Rev. 5. 1 it is the book in the hand of Him that sat on the throne which is so described.

After Ezekiel had eaten the roll of a book, he heard behind him the voice of a great rushing, which he attributes to the wings of the living creatures and the noise of their wheels. He heard the voice saying "Blessed be the glory of the LORD from His place". God's standard was unaltered. The court of the temple had already ceased to be a fit place for His glory. So John also (Rev. 11. 1) was instructed in the patience of God to measure the temple and the altar but not the court. The temple of God which John had to measure was a temple on earth. With the divine standard he had also to take the measure of the worshippers.

In 8. 3 Ezekiel is lifted up and brought to see the image of jealousy set up at the gates of the inner court at Jerusalem. The Lord God had said, "They shall profane My secret place" (Ezek. 7. 22), and "Behold, I will profane My sanctuary" (24. 21). This is the result of their whoredom with the great harlot (Ezek. 16; Rev. 17).

In 2 Chron. 36. 13 we are told that Zedekiah rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God; so that

God gave them all into his hand. And they burned the house of God. Zedekiah had despised **the oath by breaking the covenant (Ezek. 17. 18).** So that in **Ezek. 21. 14** we read that "It is the sword of the great one **that** is deadly wounded, **which** entereth **into** their chambers". Zedekiah's action **was the undoing not only of Jerusalem but also of himself.** Then the word came, "**And thou, O deadly wounded wicked one, the prince of Israel, whose day is come, in the time of the iniquity of the end... Remove the mitre**" (21. 25-26). **But God overturned the schemes of the Babylonian. God's purpose was to establish the true succession to the throne of David.** From Jeconiah would **spring the tender One (Ezek. 17. 22),** who would **be a goodly cedar.** The prophet looked forward **to the time when this One should come who had the right to the crown.** "**And, " said the Lord, "I will give it Him" (Ezek. 21. 27).**

Concerning Babylon **the great,** John heard a voice from **heaven, saying, "Come forth, My people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins"** (Rev. 18. 4). The **second beast of Rev. 13** deceiveth **them that dwell on the earth, saying that they should make an image to the beast who hath the stroke of the sword and lived.** This first **beast** whose **death stroke is healed** receives **the worship of all on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life of the Lamb.** The **tabernacle of God, even them that dwell in the heaven, is out of his reach.** Nevertheless **he utters blasphemies against it.** This deadly wounded **beast makes a firm covenant, prematurely terminated by abominations, then claims the diadem to which he has no right.** His **image** standing in **the holy place, the time is ripe for the sharpened sword of Him that sat upon the horse (Rev. 19. 21).**

The words "**He that heareth, let him hear,**" were spoken to Ezekiel (3. 27). This **message is repeated to the seven churches in Rev. 2. 5, and also in Rev. 13. 9.** Here attention **is directed to the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world.** The colossal structure of **Gentile dominion** will disintegrate **because at its basis there is failure to acknowledge that the heavens do rule.** It cannot **but give way to the kingdom whose foundation is utterly trustworthy.** The foundation of spiritual world-order **has required the death of the Sin-bearer. He alone can uphold the righteousness of Jehovah.** "I sought for a man among them, " **God said, "but I found none" (Ezek. 22. 30).**

In Ezek. 9. 4 the Lord bids the destroyers to set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh because of all the abominations done in the midst of Jerusalem. See also in Rev. 7. 3 the four angels are stayed from hurting the earth the seas and trees, until the servants of God are sealed on their foreheads. These are the 144, 000 of Israel. The locusts at the time of the fifth trumpet, which torment men for five months, will be powerless to hurt those who are sealed (Rev. 9. 5).

The sword would cut down Jerusalem, and scales would determine which were for famine, which for slaughter, and which for scattering (Ezek. 5. 72). The second, third and fourth seals of Rev. 6 bring bloodshed, famine and death upon the earth. At the opening of the fifth seal comes the cry of the souls of the slain for vengeance (Rev. 6. 10). The response to the angel of the third bowl is in the same spirit (Rev. 16. 7).

Before the sounding of the first trumpet (Rev. 8. 5), an angel fills a censer with the fire of the altar, adding it to the prayers of the saints, and casts the fire upon the earth. The man clothed in linen (Ezek. 10. 2) was to receive coals of fire from between the cherubim and scatter them over the city. Noah, Daniel and Job would not save it from the four ensuing judgements (Ezek. 14. 21).

The words ascribed to Israel (Ezek. 20. 32), "We will be as the nations... to serve wood and stone", were to bring down the fury of His judgement on them. So the second woe of Rev. 9. 20 leaves mankind unrepentant in their worship of idols. They unite with the kingdom of the beast to blaspheme the God of heaven (Rev. 16.

ii).

The attitude of the prince of Tyre in Ezek. 28. 2 is like that of the beast, and the merchandise described in Ezek. 27 is like that of Babylon (Rev. 18).

Ezek. 30. 5 envisages a time when the day of the Lord is near; the time of the heathen when the league with Egypt will end in the sword. Egypt will be a prey to the fowls of the heaven, and her fall will be associated with darkened heavens (Ezek. 32. 4, 7).

The defeat of Gog is accompanied by a great shaking in the land of Israel (Ezek. 38. 19), though perhaps the prophet also sees that their ultimate fate is to be devoured by fire (Rev. 20. 9). In the scene which introduces the seven trumpets, we are told of an earthquake following the casting of fire upon the earth (Rev. 8. 5).

The pouring out of the seventh bowl (Rev. 16. 18) is marked by such an earthquake. The sixth seal is also associated with shaking of the earth, and great disturbances follow on the shaking of the heavens.

The flesh of the slain will be given to the birds at the great supper of God (Ezek. 39. 17; Rev. 19. 17).

Then comes the revival and restoration of Israel foretold in the vision of dry bones (Ezek. 37. 24). The tabernacle of God, which the beast sought to assail with his blasphemies, will also be with them (Ezek. 37. 27; Rev. 21. 3).

As in Rev. 21. 12, 13 the gates of the city are named after the tribes of Israel, so are those in Ezekiel (48. 31), even the names of the tribes being given.

In Rev. 21. 3 we read that "God Himself shall be with them". Henceforth, Ezekiel is told, the name of the city shall be "The Lord is there".

The site whereupon Ezekiel saw the frame of a city (Ezek. 40. 2) was on a very high mountain. Moreover the vantage point from which John saw the holy city was a mountain great and high (Rev. 21. 10).

Eric Archibald

TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS ARE HIS JUDGEMENTS

God's judgements through His Son

In the synagogue at Nazareth the Lord Jesus opened the book that was given to Him and read from the prophecy of Isaiah concerning Himself (Luke 4. 16). He read of the great work He had come to do, to bring good tidings to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, give sight to the blind and bring liberty to the bruised. Then He closed the book and sat down without finishing the paragraph. The phrase "and the day of vengeance of our God" was left unread.

For God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through Him (John 3. 17). We delight to think of the gracious work that He came to do, and of God's mercy and love manifest in His Son. But the last phrase of the verse is none the less true and Scripture is not silent on this aspect of His character.

The Father "gave Him authority to execute judgement, because He is the Son of Man" (John 5. 27).

This is He which *is* ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead (Acts. 10. 42).

God is righteous and must judge. In this paper we consider briefly this aspect of His work.

His message to the Churches

John, in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, saw a vision that made a profound impression upon him; One with feet as of burnished brass and eyes as a flame of fire. He stood in the midst of the churches. Everything that was going on there was seen by Him who alone could assess its value in truth and righteousness. In Ephesus He saw their toil and patience and their hatred of evil men, but He also saw the lack of fire of first love motivating their works. He saw the saints in Pergamum holding fast in difficult circumstances but tolerating those who propagated false teaching. In Thyatira He saw those increasing in works which He approved but failing to judge the woman who seduced the saints. And so on. Each was brought under the searchlight of the True and Righteous One. Their works were reviewed and they were warned of the consequences of failure to respond to the message He had sent to them. They had a responsibility to hear and to act lest His judgement fall upon them.

His judgement of the works of believers

Believers look forward to the time when the shout of the Lord will call them away from the impediments of earth to meet the Lord in the air. But then, too, the last opportunity of earthly service will have passed and we shall face the great assessment of our works. Saved eternally as to our persons we must nevertheless appear before the judgement-seat of Christ to receive the rewards of our works.

"We must all be made manifest before the judgement-seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5. 10).

No exceptions here; we must *all* be made manifest. But, *each one* shall give account of *himself* (Rom. 14. 12). What an intensely personal thing this is! All the things we have done in the body made manifest before Him as He assesses, in truth and righteousness, of what sort they are. How little may remain of some of those acts of which we thought so highly and how much more may count those things that seemed less to us but were done out of a purer motive for Him! Well may we consider now,

... when in His Holy presence,
 We again our works shall meet,
 Will they stand the fiery testing
 Of the coming judgement-seat?

God's judgements in the earth

Men go on in rebellion against God, resisting Him or denying His existence and ordering their lives without reference to His laws. But God is in control and men will be brought to know it.

John is given a vision (Rev. 5) of God's book of judgement, written within and on the back. Who is worthy to open it? Only the One whom men despised, but to whom God committed all judgement.

"I saw in the midst of the throne... a Lamb standing, as though it had been, slain... and He came, and He taketh it out of the right hand of Him that sat on the throne" (Rev. 5. 6, 7).

As the seals are opened earth is smitten with a period of unprecedented tribulation and men begin to taste the judgements of a righteous God. At this time the sinister figure of the great world dictator arises, with Satanic power, speaking great things and blasphemies and achieving authority over every tribe and tongue and people and nation. In his hatred of God he gathers together earth's armies in an imposing array of military might against Him that is called Faithful and True. This is the one who stood in the synagogue at Nazareth as He continues to fulfil the prophecy He started reading there and to proclaim the day of vengeance of our God. His eyes are as a flame of fire and a sharp sword proceeds out of His mouth. Men are killed by it and earth's armies cannot stand before the might of the King of kings and Lord of lords. By His authority the Beast and his prophet are cast into the lake of fire and Satan is consigned to the abyss. What a fearful picture of the Lord Jesus as He rides out in judgement!

The judgement of the nations

Thus the Lord comes to the earth and Matthew 25 makes it clear that all nations who are then living on the earth will be brought before Him to be judged in righteousness on the basis of their works and their attitude to His people. The Lord will separate them; some on His right hand to enter into the kingdom and some on His

left to depart into the eternal fire. There will be no appeal in this judgement. All judgement is in His hand.

The judgement of Gog and Magog

Even after the righteous rule of the Lord Jesus for a thousand years men will still be capable of lending an ear to the great deceiver when he is released from his prison. By him they will be gathered to make war with the saints. But no fighting is necessary in this battle. Upon them the judgement of God will speedily descend as "fire came down out of heaven, and devoured them" (Rev. 20. 9).

The great white throne judgement

In a few brief phrases the divine revelation describes the last great tribunal at the end of time when the rest of the dead are raised and called to stand before the judgement throne. The books are opened and the dead are judged out of the things written in the books. Here all men of all time stand accountable to the Judge of all the earth and "if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire".

Thus in the unfolding of the Scripture we behold the goodness and severity of God. In the proper time in the working out of God's purposes the whole of the prophecy from Isaiah sees its fulfilment.

L. A. Hickling

A STUDY OF REVELATION

The Fifth and Sixth Trumpets (8. 13 - 9. 21)

From Atherton and Leigh. —The Greek word for "pit" in the term "the pit of the abyss" (Rev. 9. 1, R. V.) is that used for "well" in John 4. 11, 12. Marshall renders it as "shaft" and Vine says it is "the shaft leading down to the abyss". It appears from Rom. 10. 7 that the Lord Jesus was in the abyss itself. The demons who indwelt Legion begged not to be sent into the abyss (Luke 8. 31). The beast is said to come up out of the abyss (Rev. 11. 7) and it is in the abyss that Satan will be held captive during the Millennium (20. 1-3). Assuming the term "abyss" to refer always to the same place in these scriptures, it seems to be synonymous in the New Testament with Hades or Sheol, where many of the angels are kept bound (Jude 6) and where are also many departed human souls (the Septuagint uses "abyss" more widely; e. g. Gen. 1. 2,

Deut. 33. 13). Hades is divided by a great gulf into two parts (Luke 16. 22-26). The abyss seems to cover both parts. In some sense the Devil once had "the power of death" (Heb. 2. 14), and so had some control over Hades, but since His resurrection **our** Lord now has "the keys of death and of Hades" (Rev. 1. IS) [Comment 1].

What at first appeared to John to be a star falling from heaven to earth turned out to be an angel (9. 1). We thought he was one of the holy angels, sent by the Lord to open the abyss. We took the smoke of v. 2 to be literal smoke. The locusts of vv. 3-10 are clearly not the ordinary locusts of earth. The angel of the abyss is their king, so we thought they might be evil spirits in grotesque bodily form. As in Job's time the extent of the activity of Hades' hosts is limited by God. Fearful and horrible have become the war weapons of mankind, but they are as toys compared with these foul creatures from the abyss. Modern missiles are senseless, need human guidance, and can be deflected from their targets, but these satanic monsters will be actually alive and malevolent, and able to inflict deathless pain.

The angel of the abyss, Apollyon, is clearly an evil being. Presumably he was placed in charge of the abyss by Satan. This passage makes clear that Apollyon and his foul hosts cannot leave the abyss until the key has been used to release them. Satan no longer has control over that dark domain. From of old, however, the Lord has used evil beings, human or otherwise, to execute His judgements on men. In this judgement of the fifth trumpet Apollyon is permitted to lead out the "locusts" from the abyss. It is truly the first "Woe".

D. S. Jones

From Derby. —In ch. 8. 13 the chief words are the announcement of the three Woes. Ch. 9. 141 describes the first Woe. The fifth angel sounded, and John saw a star from heaven fallen unto the earth, and there was given to him the key of the abyss (bottomless pit, A. V.). We thought that this star, referred to by a masculine pronoun, would suggest an angel (see 20. 1; 1. 20). The Greek for abyss is "abussos", a very deep place or gulf (Young). It is not to be confused with Sheol, sometimes called the pit (Job. 33; Isa. 38), or Hades, meaning the unseen state, the unseen world, or the world below [Comment 1].

The smoke out of the abyss brought forth locusts, not like those of Joel 1 which were only interested in vegetation, but a type quite unearthly, as described in verses 7-11, horse-shaped, and scorpion-like as to their sting, with which all mankind who had not the seal of God on their foreheads were to be tormented for five months. The first Woe being past, the sixth angel sounded. Then a voice was heard from the horns of the golden altar which *is* before God. It is still associated with the prayers of the saints crying for judgement upon their enemies. The instruction to the sixth angel, "Loose the four angels which are bound" implies that things had been waiting for the set time. It may be that God had been waiting for some to repent, and thus to seal them, to save them from the second Woe and the fearful judgement involved. The angels were to kill one third of the world's population. We suggested that these angels would direct the operations of the armies, the aggregate of which numbered two hundred million (for John heard the number of them). John further says he saw the horses in the vision and them that sat upon them, having breastplates as of fire, of brimstone, and of hyacinth (or jacinth, a stone said to resemble the colour of fire). Brimstone, a highly inflammable substance, proceeded out of the mouths of the lion-like heads of the horses. With these three plagues, namely fire, smoke, and brimstone, the third part of men were to be killed. Moreover they were to be hurt by the serpent-like tails. These things are too dreadful to be contemplated. The whole scene seems to suggest millions of demons out of the abyss massed into armies by the Almighty to kill men who had been guilty of demon-worship (see verse 20, first part). We read in Luke 8. 31: "They entreated Him that He would not command them to depart into the Abyss". They would rather enter the swine. The abyss may well be the abode of the demons, although great numbers of them find their way into human beings, as shown in many scriptures.

With all this exhibition of divinely permitted demoniacal power there is no repentance recorded among the remaining two-thirds of men. It was thought that the prophet Joel touches upon these happenings in ch. 2, particularly verse 3. There does not seem to be any fire associated with the locusts in ch. 1, and it seems clearly to be a prophecy of the Day of the Lord judgement as in Rev. 9. 17-19. The Lord Jesus Christ manifested complete control over

demons at all times during the days of His flesh.

As the mark of the Beast is not mentioned till ch. 13. 16, was there still hope for some to receive the seal of God on their foreheads? [Comment 2]. "Who knoweth the power of Thine anger, and Thy wrath according to the fear that is due unto Thee? (Psa. 90. 11).
A. G. W., L. A. H., S. R. W.

From Melbourne. —The eagle flying in mid heaven (8. 13) appears to be an angelic being. Angels have looked on as men have perpetrated their vile deeds, especially the murder of the Lord of life and glory. They have not been permitted to intervene or execute righteous judgement upon men. But now some are permitted and commanded to herald and initiate the execution of judgements which are true and righteous and are being poured out upon a guilty world.

Severe though the former judgements have been, the three successive Woes herald events more terrible. The preceding judgements have been convulsions of nature, but the two about to follow as recorded in ch. 9 are, we suggest, to come forth from the abyss, the abode of demoniacal legions. In 9. 1 a star is seen falling from heaven unto earth, and to him was given the key of the pit of the abyss. This star was thought by some, because of his possession of the key, to be the One referred to in the first chapter of the book, the Risen and glorified Lord, who has the keys of Hades and of death. Others judged him to be an angelic being [Comment 3]. Whichever view be correct, the opening of the pit of the abyss is the signal for letting loose on earth terrors and powers confined therein and previously unknown to man. The darkening of the sun and air by the smoke of the pit, we suggest, is literal. Out therefrom come living things in the form of locusts. Their behaviour and habits are unlike the locusts known to man. They are commanded not to hurt the grass, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only such men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads. Their power was the power of scorpions, not to kill, but to cause torment when they strike with the sting in their tails, and the pain inflicted is such that men will seek death in vain. The king over them is referred to as the angel of the abyss whose name is Destroyer, thought by some to be Satan, but by others to be a being under his authority [Comment 4]. In this they are also unlike the locusts of earth, which are said to have no king (Prov. 30. 27).

The angel which sounded the sixth trumpet is instructed to loose the four angels which are bound at the river Euphrates, at what part we are not told, but they have been placed there for a purpose. Their work has been pre-determined, and also the precise hour and day, and month and year, to let loose a further terrible judgement upon godless humanity, killing the third part of men. In the vision are seen armies of horsemen and horses, with armour and the means of destruction such as has never been seen on earth. The vision is a fearful one and leaves us with a sense of awe, as we are brought to realize, even in a feeble degree, the terrible forces and powers, never before known to men, which if our judgement is correct, are confined to the abyss, and available for the destruction of men. The number of the horsemen is given as two hundred million.

We believe that today demons have restricted access to earth and its inhabitants, even as in the days of the Lord upon earth; but never has there been such a massive loosing or opening of the door of the abyss for the liberation of such things as are described here.

We would judge that these events are to take place at some period during the second half of the reign of the man of sin, when the lusts and passions of men are being indulged without restraint. The knowledge of God and His claim upon men as seen in the restraints of a righteous law will have been relegated in the minds of men to antiquated past days of suppression of human "liberty". Men will be past the point of being granted repentance, and in their utterly debased condition, the righteousness of God's judgements will not be recognized or acknowledged by those who remain [see Comment 2].

W. H. F., T. W. F.

From Vancouver. —The brazen altar is mentioned six times in Revelation. It stood in the court. The golden altar stood in the Holy Place. The brazen altar was the altar of sacrifice. The golden altar was the altar of incense, or intercession.

The sixth trumpet heralds something much more dreadful than the previous trumpets. The voice that John heard was either the voice of God, or of someone who had been commissioned by Jehovah God. Why was the voice heard from the four horns and not from the altar itself? In Rev. 16. 7 the voice came from the altar itself. There is perhaps significance that it came from the four horns and not from one horn. Numbers are of significance in the Scriptures.

Four expresses universality (e. g. four points of the compass as in Rev. 1. 1).

Four angels are let loose on this occasion, whereas in chapter 7 four different angels hold back the forces of evil. These four angels will lead a vast army of men. It is hard for the human mind to grasp such a figure. The description of the army is also very graphic. Their power to destroy is monstrous. This army leaves one third of the earth's population dead. One wonders if this description is to be accepted literally, or if one should interpret these horses as modern weapons of warfare. The judgement is devastating [Comment 5].

In spite of such slaughter the remaining two-thirds of the earth's population still refuse to repent and worship God. They continue in activities that indicate the power of unrestrained evil. At the time of the sixth trumpet the Church has been called to be with the Lord. The Holy Spirit is not on earth as a restraining influence after the Rapture. The Devil and all the forces of evil will be able to run unchecked [Comment 6].

John Robinson

IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

Papers were also received from Crowborough, Denmark Hill and Methil, and the following are impressions from these.

Whereas the star of 8. 10 was considered literal, the star of 9. 1 was thought to symbolize the person of an angel, a direct messenger of God, doing His will. It was generally understood that chapter 9 belongs to the time of the Great Tribulation.

A possible distinction was suggested by one group between the abyss (20. 1) and the pit of the abyss (9. 1). The pollution from the pit affected the sun and the air. The locusts of verse 3 are terrifying in appearance. Enormous wings propel them, beating the air, and making a noise like chariots and horses rushing to war. The fact that they had tails like scorpions caused conjecture as to whether there is an allusion here to modern weapons of warfare. In many ways they seem to differ from locusts as elsewhere described in the Scriptures. Leaving the vegetation, they inflict torment on unprotected men. Locusts have no king (Prov. 30. 27), yet these have over them as king the angel of the abyss (9. 11). Nevertheless they are prepared for judgement, as were the locusts in Egypt, and they would therefore appear to symbolize a severe visitation. Those

so tormented would have preferred to die, but were unable to do so. For an experience like this see Jer. 8. 3; Job. 3. 21; 7. 16.

The name of the king of the locusts is in Hebrew Abaddon, which means "destruction". The forces of evil are being loosed for a little time under God's great authority, being permitted certain powers, yet restrained where necessary. They are not given to destroy men completely, just as Satan was restrained from killing Job (Job. 1. 12). A similar restraint is present even amid terrible judgement, when the angels are given the power to kill the third part of all mankind (9. 15). The four angels were thought by some to be the same as those mentioned in 7. 1 (Their location, "bound", at the river Euphrates, seems rather against this, however.) They are prepared for the very moment, right down to the hour, day, month and year, though this precise time when a third of the world's population is killed has not been revealed to us. In v. 6 death had been sought and could not be found, but the horses (v. 18) represent a dreadful visitation wherein death comes unlooked for.

Eds.

COMMENTS

1. (*Atherton and Leigh and Derby*): The word "abyss" (Gr. *ahussos*—bottomless) is mainly used in Revelation (chapters 9, 11, 17, 20) referring to the abode of evil beings. From this we might tend to assume that it referred exclusively to the abode of the *lost*. Yet the same word is used in Rom. 10. 7, as is here pointed out, in association with the Lord's death and resurrection. Is not the explanation that the Lord in his death and resurrection not only released the righteous dead from Sheol (Heb. 2. 15; Ephes. 4. 8-10) but invaded and conquered that part which was the abode of the lost and of evil spirits, taking indeed "the keys of death and of Hades". Thereafter the abyss is in fact exclusively the place of the lost and ultimately, as shown in Rev. 9, under His control.

2. (*Derby*): It is difficult to be precise about the timing—most contributors associated the events under consideration with the time of the great tribulation. If we assume a strong parallelism between the seals, trumpets and bowls, though with differing emphasis, we note that the first bowl (16. 2) was distinctly associated with a time when the mark of the beast was in use. It would seem that God

is initiating **and** controlling (9. 4) progressively more **fearful judgements** on **men who have** not **His** seal, **even** while **the beast and his accomplices** are persecuting those **who refuse the latter's** evil mark. **It is true that repentance would appear to be one object of the judgements of 9. 13-19.** It may well be, however, that, as Melbourne friends suggest, men in general will be past repentance at this point. Certainly Rev. 14. 9-11 makes it quite clear that when any individual has made the fateful decision to worship the Beast and receive his mark, that person is doomed.

3. (*Melbourne*): I would think that it is not likely that the star referred to is the Person of the Lord. An angel is used for a similar task in 20. 1. The Person of the Lord is especially associated with the divine role of the almighty Executor of God's final purpose (19. 16).

4. (*Melbourne*): The expression "angel of the abyss" would rather suggest a prominent demonic accomplice of Satan rather than the Devil himself.

5. (*Vancouver*): The question of the literal interpretation or otherwise of much of these Revelation visions has already been widely commented on in papers and editorials. Is not the number of these horses rather against their representing modern weapons of warfare? I am thinking particularly, of course, of nuclear weapons and guided missiles which concentrate such vast destructive power in small bulk and numbers.

6. (*Vancouver*): This impinges on an old controversy about the interpretation of 2 Thess. 2. 61 Without opening up that issue further in the present context, it might, however, be observed that the judgemental evil forces described in 9. 16-19 are "loosed" in the release of the four angels, indicating, I suggest, a distinctive divine control over such Satanic force from beneath. At the same time it is true that the picture as far as man's behaviour is concerned is one of unbridled indulgence in evil. J. D. T.

BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11)!

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EDITORIAL

In the New Testament the word "mystery" has to do with things which are beyond human understanding but are divinely revealed in the Scriptures, as is well illustrated in Col. 1. 24-26: "The Church... even the mystery which hath been hid from all ages and generations: but now hath it been manifested to His saints". In our dictionaries the word *is* defined as something inexplicable, so that we need to bear this difference in mind in order to understand correctly the New Testament passages in which it occurs.

God has revealed many things to men in the gospel, which is why Paul asked the Corinthians to account him and other preachers of the Word as "stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4. 7). These must surely be included in the great "mystery of God, even Christ" (Col. 2. 2). We could know little of God apart from Christ, who has declared Him (John 1. 18), and it is in this sense that Christ is spoken of as the Mystery of God. Other examples of mysteries mentioned in the New Testament are: lawlessness (2 Thes. 2. 7), the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 13. 11), the kingdom of God (Mark 4. 11), the Rapture (1 Cor. 15. 51), the Church the Body (Eph. 5. 32), Babylon the Great (Rev. 17. 5, 7).

What then is the "mystery of God" in this month's study (chapter 10. 7)? We note that it is something finished or brought to an end "in the days of the voice of the seventh angel", that is, when "the kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ" (Rev. 11. 15), and at the time "of the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to Thy servants the prophets... and to destroy them that destroy the earth" (11. 18). Another clue is that it is "according to the good tidings which He declared to His servants the prophets" (10. 7). Is this a reference to Amos 3. 7? Both the phraseology and the underlying thought are similar. Although the message of the Old Testament prophets

was largely one of warning and judgement, yet the final outcome would be blessing for Israel and all nations, and could be broadly termed good tidings. The gospel message of this dispensation is not necessarily excluded, for it was given to the apostles and New Testament prophets (Eph. 3. 5) and embraces judgement in its scope (Rom. 2. 16),

The foregoing considerations suggest that although this mystery is one of the "mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4. 1), it is not "the mystery of God, even Christ" (Col. 2. 2). The aspect of the prophetic message which most closely fits the conditions referred to is God's dealings with men in warning and judgement. The righteous blending of divine mercy with severity is beyond the comprehension of unregenerate man but is revealed to the believer through the Scriptures. The whole process of divine judgement upon the world will reach its crisis and also its culmination with the coming of the Son of Man.

L. B.

INTERPRETATION OF SYMBOLISM IN SCRIPTURE

It is difficult to present material on such a controversial and complex subject. In working it through I have come up with a series of statements, each one a proposition that a student can examine in the light of his own knowledge of the Scriptures. I do not expect that anyone would agree with every statement, and would be disappointed if he did. I make each one as a point for discussion.

1. *Symbolism is used to communicate effectively and descriptively*

This may be the most startling statement of all because there is a popular view that the intention of a symbol is to interpose between reality and the seeing eye. A symbol is difficult to interpret when it is not familiar. The question is whether "seven heads and ten horns" was more familiar to a first century Christian than to a Christian today. There is evidence that it would be much more familiar to the first century believer as a form of expression and that he would respond to the phrase much more sensitively than the average Christian today. But, because symbolism is used to communicate, that does not mean that the reality is fully represented or explained by the symbol. It contains a certain degree of significance that history **and** further revelation may amplify.

2. Symbolism is based on simplicity and strong emotional appeal.

The emotional **impact** of symbols is modified by **time, changing environment and translation**. By simplicity I mean that the symbol **represents in simple terms something that may be more complex**. A child can easily **picture most of the symbols of Scripture**, and could **draw many of them**. I certainly **believe that the Holy Spirit was communicating to the whole age, not only to the first readers**. There are some symbols **which may have a greater or different impact on us than on them**. I would also **suggest that there are many other ways in which the mind of God is communicated, and that we do not have to share the first century Christians' world view in its entirety to understand what the Word is saying to us**.

3. It is necessary clearly to distinguish between the symbol and the reality

This, I think, is a very **important** statement. Usually the symbol is a representation of a particular **facet of the reality**. The lion, for instance, is a symbol of **royalty and power, but in other instances he may represent savagery and destructive ferocity**. Sometimes a **figure, used in different ways, may become significant in many aspects**. The lamb is an example of this, and the Lamb of Revelation has many facets, but it is still **necessary not to confuse the representation with the reality it represents**.

4. Fantastic symbols, composed of incongruous details, are made up of individual symbols which each have an identifiable meaning

For example—**Rev. 5. 6.**

A Lamb standing (**the Lamb of God**)

as though it had been slain (**bearing the marks of death**)

with seven horns (**symbols of authority, often of aggression**)

and seven eyes (**the seven Spirits of God, His channels of perception and involvement in the activities on earth**).

Look at this symbol in terms of these four statements. It communicates **effectively and descriptively**; it is a very simple, if **unusual, figure with strong emotional appeal, and each characteristic described has its separate significance**.

5. Interpretation of a Scriptural symbol, unless the text provides it, requires close acquaintance with the whole book, with the way in which the writer is communicating, and with other Biblical usage of the same or similar symbols

It would be a mistake to try to understand the scarlet coloured beast of Rev. 17. 3 without an acquaintance with the whole of Revelation. It would be a mistake to interpret it without an understanding of the idiom of prophetic writing. It is useful to be aware of the general way in which the word "beast" is used in the Scriptures, that it carries a different weight from our word "animal", and that Daniel used it in a similar but possibly not identical sense as did John.

6. Because other usages of the same symbol are known it may not represent the same thing

For example, the two witnesses of Zech. 4 may not be the same two men as in Rev. 11. There are many other examples.

7. Interpretation of symbols without clear Scriptural guidance can be very misleading

There are sects whose teachings rest heavily on misinterpreted symbols. The emphasis in Christian living is on experiencing and teaching truth. Too often, I believe, the debate of ideas has been an escape route from Christian action. There was a good deal of material written before 1945 on the idea that Hitler and Mussolini might be the beast and the false prophet. The energy so expended could have been put to better use.

8. The Book of Revelation has a carefully planned structure

It uses numbers in a symbolic way and also groups things in numerical relationships. I am very wary of the general use of numerology, but it is quite clear that sometimes numbers are used in a symbolic way and this is particularly so in Revelation.

In conclusion then, I would suggest that it is neither possible nor desirable in our present state of knowledge to interpret every scriptural symbol. I would confine interpretation to three kinds and question the wisdom of any wider enterprise. Symbols can safely be interpreted which are: -

- 1. Explained by the writer, e. g., Rev. 1. 20; Daniel 4. 9.**
- 2. Explained in generally similar usage. The sword in Rev. 1. 16, is the same sword as in Rev. 19. 75, with the latter passage providing some interpretation of the symbol. Heb. 4. 12 also uses the same figure and adds another dimension to its meaning. In fact, the figure is used a number of times, both in Old and New Testaments, but**

when it is used in Psa. 57. 4, and Prov. 5. 4, there are very different connotations.

3. Explained by inference, supported by other scriptures. The **beast** is a symbol, a very forceful and simple one used to represent a world authority. When the figure is used in Daniel, it emphasizes the brutal, destructive nature of authority. In Revelation the emphasis seems to be on the aspect of God-defying, anti-Christ power. The inference that we are safe in accepting is that the Holy Spirit used the symbol of a beast on occasions to represent worldly, ungodly authority. We cannot infer that each time the symbol is used it represents the same person or the same total characteristics.

I hope that these notes may provide a basis for thought and discussion. The main emphasis in it all, and one that I have tried to make clear, is that the reality is far more important than the symbol because the reality is a living part of the purposes of God. Interpreting symbols, as was speaking in tongues, is a pointless exercise unless it is a way of coming into touch with the reality of the living God at work in this world.

L. Home

SATAN'S FUTURE ROLE IN WORLD AFFAIRS

The third chapter of the Bible records mankind's first encounter with his arch-foe, Satan, and the third from the end foretells the latter's final expulsion from the earth. He is everywhere represented as the implacable enemy of God and man. Though unable to lay claim to the three great attributes of Deity—omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence—he is nevertheless a being of great power, having at his command mighty demoniac forces. No informed saint can think lightly of him (Jude 9). His character is described by such significant names as "serpent" and "dragon", a roaring and ravaging lion, a murderer and a liar, deceiver and seducer, tempter and accuser. Though darkness is his domain, he can appear as an "angel of light". Children of God are warned against his snares and darts, his wiles and devices.

The ambitious designs of this powerful being have two main objectives. First, that he may usurp control of the nations; second, that he may introduce the false Christ, whose credentials will receive universal acceptance and who will by his feats and powers convince the most sceptical of men. The Scriptures bear evidence that the prince of this world is not complacent or satisfied with his present

dominion in the lives of men. An empire on this earth, in which he is worshipped by the people and his will is acknowledged, is assuredly the plan of the master deceiver who makes war with truth, being himself the author of error.

The tragic picture of future world conditions and affairs is vividly described in chapters 6-19 of Revelation. It will be readily admitted that events mentioned can rapidly become a reality. The tremendous upheavals which have taken place in international affairs in recent times have far surpassed the predictions of shrewd minds. Man's selfish disregard for his fellows and his self-willed nature will be fully exploited by Satan to execute and hasten his sinister purposes. In chapter 6 of Revelation, while clearly the wrath of the Almighty is awakening, there can be detected movements of Satan on earth as the seals are opened by the Lamb. Revolutionary happenings begin to take place. These coincide with the prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 24. 1-8, in which He outlines the "beginning of travail", which will precede "the tribulation, the great one" (literal translation). In verse 2 of Rev. 6 there would appear to be the emergence of Satan's representative, one who will dominate the political scene until the whole of the revived Roman empire is firmly in his grasp. In the second seal a second rider appears bearing the emblem of war, a great sword, and the earth is deprived of peace. Wars and rumours of wars only form the beginning of the terrible throes which will produce ever more slaughter on the earth.

These are inevitable outcomes of war—famine, death, the blood of Jewish martyrs, cataclysms of astonishing proportions, terror infiltrating every stratum of society, the displacement of great rulers and leaders—to mention only a few. Behind the rising tide of travails is Satan himself.

A series of divine judgements is presented by the sounding of the trumpets which would appear to be largely concurrent with the vial judgements of chapters 15 and 16. The three "Woes" (8. 13) indicate the last of the trumpet soundings. In the judgements there are drastic happenings upon the earth, in the sea, in the fountains of waters and in the heavenly realms. The Woes have to do with those that "dwell on the earth". Prior to this we see the destructive agencies and powers of nature, upheavals among nations, the saturation of every department of life with poisonous elements. Man arrives at his selected destination at last in chapter 9.

In the first Woe, initiated by the fifth trumpet sound, the apostle discerns a great fallen being to whom extraordinary power is given—a star fallen from heaven, to whom was given the key of the abyss (9. 1). [Contrast views expressed by Atherton, Melbourne and Editorial Comment in last issue.] His league with the king of the abyss, Satan himself (verse 11), together with his tremendous diabolical powers, leave no doubt as to his identity as the antichrist (2 Thess. 2. 9). His character is amplified in the second beast of Revelation 13. [See Editorial Note below.]

This counterfeit saviour will release demoniac forces from the depths of the abyss. Earth's inhabitants will find themselves so sorely perplexed that life will become unbearable, yet escape will be denied them (9. 6). The locust, the scorpion and the war-horse conjure a terrifying picture of the power of their king, whose name in Hebrew, "Abaddon", means Destroyer. These are probably the deceiving spirits and teachings of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy. The second Woe introduces armies of staggering proportions (two hundred million) invading with equipment of death which, together with the other two Woes, results in the third part of men being killed. This is all occasioned by the sins that have perverted civilization. These are given in detail to show the vile desires and abhorrent depravities to which man has bowed. The third Woe, which begins after the resurrection and ascension of the two witnesses, and the earthquake which results in the death of seven thousand (11. 13) brings the Judge of all the earth to the earth. How characteristic of God that, at this early stage in the vision, at such a dark period on the earth, there is given the reassurance of the control which He exercises in spite of prevailing evils in the world!

In chapters 12-19 of Revelation, the details of what has been a panoramic view are now brought under closer examination. The spotlight of inspiration is on the second half of Daniel's seventieth week, where we view the very height of Satan's evil. John is to prophesy again concerning peoples, nations and many kings (10. 77). In Rev. 12 there appear the final stages in man's rebellion against God and in his manipulation by Satan. This being will be at his most powerful as political, religious and diabolical forces thoroughly corrupt the whole earth. He knows his sphere is limited to earth and sea; his time short; therefore, his wrath is great. The systematizing of evil doctrine and practice will be rife. The character

of Satan looms large in chapter 12, cruel and loathsome, subtle, a slanderer and adversary, the relentless opponent of God and man. The believer's only recourse is to the blood of the Lamb and His testimony. The prince of death can never bear any reminder of the victory of the Prince of life and glory. The increased sorrow and woe on earth will therefore be brought about by the humiliation of Satan and the realization of his limited time. The exalted Saviour, of course, is the object of the serpent's hatred. This angry adversary will make his fiercest assault during the latter half of the seven-year period.

The **beasts seen emerging from the land and sea (Rev. 13. 1, 11) reveal Satan's political genius. The first beast receives the power, throne and authority of the great red dragon. The second beast bears the similitude of the first (13. 12). Satan will make full use of these instruments to lead world nations into unity, albeit short-lived. The final state of Gentile domination on the earth is the ten-kingdom confederacy, and a study of Daniel 2 shows the answer of the image in the beast of Revelation 13. The description of the beast's features make it clear that it will be a despotic regime. He will blaspheme against God, His Name, His tabernacle and heaven-dwellers (13. 5).**

The **second beast of Rev. 13. 11 is referred to in chapters 19 and 20 as the false prophet. This great person makes his appearance from the earth and co-operates with the political leader. Thus Rome and Jerusalem enter into a pact. Satan again is at work behind the scenes as the character of this beast is both lamb-like and lion-like. Qualities calculated to deceive and make him totally acceptable in the religious realm (13. 13) are apparent. His influence as anti-christ will stretch into the revived Roman empire. The very same spirit which cast the nation of Israel into blindness as to the real Messiah now assumes control again in their falling a prey to the wiles of this master deceiver. His ability to bring fire from heaven, and his successful image of the first beast and giving breath to it, will prove him to be the Christ in the eyes of the people. [See Editorial Note below.]**

The **man of sin will eventually find his place in the new temple at Jerusalem and the climax will be reached when he sets himself up as God. This will be the fulfilment of Daniel's prediction of the "abomination of desolation" (Dan. 9. 27).**

In view of all this, it is easy to visualize this great religious deceiver enforcing the mark on the right hand or forehead (13. 16) as essential for commercial transactions. Obviously, there is a marriage of religion and commerce here.

The "mystery of lawlessness" was already in operation in the time of the apostle Paul in preparation for the revelation of the "lawless one" (2 Thess. 2. 7). John himself spoke of those who denied the actual incarnation of Christ (1 John 2. 22). Truly, the perfect atmosphere exists for Satan's presentation of the travesty of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. That system of politics and religion combined, the Great Harlot, Mystery, Babylon the Great, suffers a great downfall and the instruments of her ruin are her own devotees (17. 16-18). Satan, the beast and the false prophet, the evil trinity, together with their minions, suffer defeat at the hand of the Lamb. (17. 14). The grievous evils of these betrayers of mankind are mentioned again in Rev. 19. The two lieutenants of Satan are committed alive into the "lake of fire that burneth with brimstone". Thus end all Satan's designs to usurp the prerogatives of God and of His Christ. He himself is committed to the abyss for 1, 000 years. This powerful intelligence rises again to lead Gog and Magog (Ezek. 38-39; Rev. 20. 8) to inevitable wrath. The lake of fire which he shares with his confederates, becomes his place of eternal dwelling.

R. B. Fullarton

Note on the Two Beasts of Rev. 14.

The writer of the foregoing article is among those who identify the antichrist with the second beast of Rev. 13. However, editors of *Bible Studies* consider antichrist to be the first beast (Rev. 13. 1). A resume of the reasons for this view is set out below.

1. Prophetic scriptures describe an outstandingly wicked dictator who rules prior to the coming of the Son of Man. He is variously described as: -

- (a) The little horn (Dan. 7. 8, 11, 23-26, 8. 9-12).
- (b) The prince that shall come (Dan 9. 26).
- (c) The king of the north (Dan. 11. 30-45).
- (d) The abomination of desolation (Matt. 24. 75).
- (e) The man of sin (2 Thess. 2. 3-10).
- (f) The antichrist (1 John 2. 18-23; 2 John 7).
- (g) The beast (Rev. 13. 1-10).

Extreme manifestations of boasting, lying and blasphemy are described in these scriptures, and what is most remarkable is the high-handed manner in which this ruler is said in some of the accounts to interfere with the temple services and put himself in the place of God. What greater lie is there than to impersonate God? The anti-christ, who is the arch liar and deceiver (2 John 7), is thus to be identified with the man of sin, who "sitteth in the temple of God setting himself forth as God" (2 Thess. 2. 3, 4). The other references in Daniel, Matthew and Revelation 13. 1-10 describe a man so similar in character, accomplishments and timing to the man of sin that there seems no alternative but to accept their identity with him and thus with antichrist.

2. In Bible Studies 1958 p.179 Mr. J. Miller says, "The rise of the beast from the abyss is no ordinary happening. The beast, who is also the antichrist, after dying will rise from the dead, and in him there will be an imitation of the real Christ. Some have thought and taught that the antichrist is the second beast of Rev. 13. This is quite incorrect. The second beast is not slain: he has no death-stroke, he is not worshipped, but encourages with all the powers at his disposal the worship of the first beast. Some have claimed as proof of their view that the Jews would not accept a Gentile king as their Messiah and therefore the first beast, being a Gentile king, would be unacceptable. But there is nothing in this chapter or any other in Scripture to prove that the first beast is a Gentile, and the second, a false prophet, is a Jew. What is there to hinder the first beast being a Jew by race? Indeed we do not know that the seven kings follow each other by heredity. They may be elected to the office of kings of Babylon. Ezek. 21. 25 gives help in this matter of the beast, who is the antichrist: 'And thou, O deadly wounded wicked one, the prince of Israel, whose day is come, in the time of the iniquity of the end'. The prince of Israel is the deadly wounded one, which I take to mean, the beast with the death stroke".

3. It may be argued that, since it is the false prophet who works the signs to deceive men, he is the son of perdition of 2 Thess. 2, whose coming is "according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders". We do not consider this reasoning to be sound because the signs are said to accompany the son of perdition, not to be actually executed by him.

Editors would **welcome further** contributions **on this** subject. **Writers should aim to be brief and not go over ground already covered** in this issue. *Eds.*

A STUDY OF REVELATION

CHAPTER 10

From Denmark Hill. —This fascinating interlude **in the prophecy revealed to John underlines for future revelation features common to both past and present revelation:-**

1. *The message comes from heaven* (v. 1). **The message is clearly one of judgement on the earth by God; hence the assurance of the heavenly origin of the message is important. Many times in the past God has indicated His conditions for and time of judgement, and since He is absolute righteousness, all has been fulfilled, e. g., the 70 years of Judah's captivity and Israel's dispersal through the nations over the past centuries. As surely as these judgements on one nation have been fulfilled, so surely will future judgements come to pass, because their origin is God in heaven.**

2. *It is brought by a heavenly messenger.* **The heavenly messenger reflects the glory of heaven and the power of the ruler of heaven, and so his appearance has features in common with the revelation of the Lord Jesus in the appearance of His form. It is noteworthy that the messenger does not himself attempt to spread the message to man; he imparts it to John who is God's human witness to humans. This principle applies throughout all divine revelation. The message comes from God to one of His prophets, and the prophet passes it on to the man for whom it is intended. Jesus Christ, as both God and Man, not only received the message from heaven, but also spread it to His fellows.**

3. *The earthly messenger must first digest the message himself.*

The message was contained in a little open book in the hand of the heavenly messenger. John was instructed to go forward to take the book and to eat it. It was a book of God's judgements on mankind. God made it palatable for him to eat, but it became bitter in his stomach when he digested the contents and realized the fearfulness of the judgements. The digestion of God's message, making it part of oneself before attempting to pass it on to those for whom it is intended, is also an important principle for today.

4. *The message is contained in a little book.*

It is striking that the divine message was contained in a little book. The whole of God's revelation can be compressed into a very small compass. God has not made His revelation overwhelmingly large — as well He might — but has made known an essential minimum.

5. *The message is for all the earth.*

The strong angel planted one foot on the sea and one on the land. Since the whole of the earth's surface is covered by land and sea, may it not be concluded that the message was for the whole earth?

6. *The message was for widespread distribution*

John was to pass on what he had digested in prophecy to many peoples. Since he was then an old man and a captive, is it to be concluded that the dissemination of the message would be via the reading of the Revelation rather than by John's own mouth? [Comment 1].

C. L. Prasher

From Atherton and Leigh. —Rev. 10 is an interposing section between the sixth and seventh trumpets. John's vision seems to be seen as if he were on the earth, for he sees a great angel coming down out of heaven (v. 1). Although this angel is of a glorious aspect we did not think this was the Lord Himself. The angel stands astride the land and sea and speaks with a voice which sounds like lions roaring. Immediately there is a response from seven thunders. Could this be the sevenfold voice of God (Psa. 29)? It is clear that John understood what the thunders meant for he was about to record what they said (v. 4), but he was restrained by a voice from heaven. The contents of the seven thunders were not to be revealed but kept secret. There is perhaps a parallel here with Paul's experience when he was caught up to the third heaven and heard things not lawful for a man to utter (2 Cor. 12. 1-4). If secrets are meant to be kept then mysteries are for revealing. The angel makes a vow in the name of God the Creator that there would now be no delay. In the days of the seventh trumpet the mystery of God will be finished. This is a literal period of time as yet in the future. This means we can place chap. 10 chronologically before the seventh trumpet. These words of the angel would no doubt bring comfort to the saints of God, knowing that God is going to reveal His hand. The mystery of God will be revealed when the seventh

trumpet is about to sound. It seems that the mystery of God is connected with (a) good tidings, (b) things that have perplexed saints through the ages [see Editorial]. It seems probable that v. 7 is connected with 11. 17, 18, where God decides to take up the reins of power and to reveal the rewards that His saints have long waited for. The things which have perplexed saints will now be understood. A voice from heaven instructs John to take the little book from the angel's hand. The book that John took had to be eaten, which symbolizes that the message of the book was to be assimilated. The book was sweet to taste but bitter to the stomach. The psalmist found the word of the Lord to be sweeter than honey (Psa. 119. 103). The word of the Lord brought joy to Jeremiah (Jer. 15. 16). Ezekiel found the scroll he was instructed to eat was sweet to taste but bitter to the stomach (Ezek. 3. 5). The book John ate was sweet because it was the word of the Lord. It became bitter when it was understood because it contained words of lamentation, mourning and woe. The contents of the book may be the prophecies which concerned the people of the nations (v. 11); these John would reveal in due course; possibly they are found in the remainder of the Revelation.

L. de Ville

From Birmingham. —The description John gives of the strong angel is remarkable. He is arrayed with a cloud, speaking of sin, and his feet are of fire, perhaps speaking of judgement [Comment 2]. In contrast there is a rainbow upon his head and his face is as the sun, speaking, we suggest, of blessing. Indeed, throughout this chapter there seem to be these aspects of the bitter and the sweet. There are bitter experiences for those who have rejected the Christ, but there will be sweetness for those who have remained true to His name. "Behold... the goodness and the severity of God."

Whatever was spoken in the seven awesome thunders, we were convinced that no clue is given in the chapter. The thunders spoke things so terrible that it was not lawful or fitting for John to record them. We were certain that what God had forbidden John to record, John left completely unrecorded.

In verse 6 we read that time shall be no more, good tidings indeed for those who love God. We concluded that the clause "that there shall be time no longer" was a declaration of intent, the final over-

throw being imminent; God would delay **no longer**. God's elect, still on this earth, will receive the tidings joyfully.

Regarding the mysterious little book in the hands of the angel, we had two lines of thought: -

(i) The book might speak of the sinful acts of men, sweet in the doing, but leaving a bitterness in the belly, and to the unrepentent sinner a lasting bitterness. Verse 11 emphasizes the need to warn people of every tongue and nation of the need to receive forgiveness [Comment 3].

(ii) The book may contain the words of God. The contents of the book are very sweet because they are the words of God, but also extremely bitter because they contain such terrible and fearful judgements.

J. A. T. Russell

From Vancouver. —Our chapter begins with reference to "another angel", also described as being "strong". Some would wish to have it symbolize some other individual but it seems that, by the usage of the word "another", this is simply an angel. Another indication of this viewpoint would be that the angel "swore by Him that liveth for ever and ever" (v. 6). If this angel symbolized Christ, as some believe, we would have God swearing by Himself, an unnecessary action [Comment 4].

This angel is a signal that events can continue to progress. He states that there will be "delay no longer". It would seem that the events of this chapter take place at the end of the first half of Daniel's seventieth week. The majority of the tribulation comes in the second half and this angel warns that this is coming and what will happen. We wondered whether there was any link between his message mentioned in verse 7 and that in Rev. 14. 6.

Regarding the little book, we naturally compared the sweet to that in Ezek. 3, one major difference being that the roll was only sweet for Ezekiel. It was difficult to come to any consensus as to the significance of the action of eating except that, since one assimilates what is eaten, both John and Ezekiel would have to take the message to themselves before passing it on. *J. C. Bell*

IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

Papers were also received from Crowborough, Derby, Hayes, Melbourne, Methil and Nottingham: below is a summary from them of points not made in the papers printed above.

When John saw the appearance of the strong angel's face—"as the sun" (v. 1)—he was possibly witnessing a similar phenomenon to the shining of Moses' face after his close communion with God. That the angel had his right foot upon the sea and his left upon the earth suggested that the whole world was to be involved in what the angel announced.

Attention was drawn to the voices of this chapter:

- (i) the voice of the strong angel (v. 3),
- (ii) the voices of the seven thunders (v. 3),
- (iii) the voice from heaven (vv. 4, 8),
- (iv) the voice of the seventh angel (v. 7).

The Greek word used in verses 2, 9, 10 for "little book" (*biblaridion*) occurs in the New Testament only in those verses. Some texts have it also in verse 8, but most texts have *biblion*, which is the usual New Testament word for "book" or "scroll" (see Vine's Expository Dictionary). Perhaps the most we can say about the use of *biblaridion* in Rev. 10 is that it distinguishes the "little book" of this chapter from the book (*biblion*) with seven seals of Rev. 5; possibly there was a marked difference in size.

The little book is said to be "open" (vv. 2, 8), in contrast to the book "close sealed with seven seals" (5. 1). Two suggestions were deduced from this fact about the possible contents of the little book: -

(i) The book might be "the book of Old Testament Prophecy, open or revealed prophecy relating to God's people of a former time". There was no longer to be any delay in the absolute fulfilment of these prophecies.

(ii) The book contains prophecies about to be revealed or fulfilled. Verses 10, 11 imply that the book John had eaten contained the prophetic message he was about to give, which message is presumably to be found in the remaining part of the book of Revelation. (Editors prefer the latter view.)

John was told: "Thou must prophesy again over many peoples and nations and tongues and kings". This seems to introduce a markedly fresh element into John's writing from this point, viz., specific references to nations and their rulers (e. g. 11. 2, 9, 12. 5, 13. 1, 14. 8, 16. 12, etc). There is much more political material in chapters 11 to 18 than there is in chapters 6 to 10. Eds,

COMMENTS

1. (*Denmark Hill*): John was told to write **what he saw in a book** (Rev. 1. 11) including **the things that were to come to pass hereafter** (1. 19). As suggested in this contribution, **any prophesying by word of mouth was unlikely to have been possible** for John the apostle.

2. (*Birmingham*): Care is needed in the interpretation of the symbols used in Revelation. Clouds in Scripture often speak of what is connected with heaven (Dan. 7. 13; Matt. 26. 64; Rev. 11. 12) and that is the most likely meaning here.

3. (*Birmingham*): The book tasted sweet in *Johns* mouth. It would be strange indeed if the beloved apostle, in the process of writing Holy Scripture, could be involved in a symbolism speaking of sinful acts.

4. (*Vancouver*): Although we agree that the strong angel was not the Lord, the reason given by our friends could be faulted on the ground that God does in fact swear by Himself, for he can swear by none greater (Heb. 6. 13).

5. (*Nottingham—extract*): "The angel had his right foot upon the sea and his left upon the earth. Is this to be understood literally? This is not a physical impossibility for the ordinary human being. If it is to be understood as a literal thing we wonder where this will take place and to what extent it will be visible to the people on the earth at the time. If we are to take it as a symbol then we suggest it is an illustration of the fact that God's dealings are universal and that His established word and its fulfilment embrace all men everywhere. "

John was in the Spirit (4. 2) and he was able to see spiritual things which, although real, are not seen by men. I suggest that just as angels are not normally visible today, so will it be in future. But John saw God's future judgements from a heavenly viewpoint and so the angelic forces at God's command would be part of his vision. If this is so, then the strong angel (10. 1-3), although a spiritual being, literally but unseen by men, puts feet on land and sea. The general tenor of the description indicates the majesty of the action and suggests an all-embracing stance. L. B.

BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11). '

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EDITORIAL

"I will give unto My two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth" (Rev. 11. 3). With these words are introduced two of the most remarkable witness-bearers mentioned in Scripture. Our study this month gives rise to many interesting questions about them and about the period of their witness. Amidst much that remains obscure to us we should, not miss the lesson of their uncompromising faithfulness in one of earth's darkest hours.

"Witness" in this passage is a translation of the Greek word *martusin* — "one who does aver what he has seen or heard or knows". From the noun *martus*, of course, is derived our English word martyr—"one who bears witness by his death". For the two witnesses of Rev. 11 there will be no less than 1260 arduous days in testimony to the truth God has committed to their trust, culminating in their martyrdom at the hand of the beast that cometh up out of the abyss.

Their witness is to be centred in "the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified". That Jerusalem should be so described illustrates Israel's attitude at this time. Having received the one who will come in his own name (John 5. 43), they will be resting in a false sense of security, and sharing the prevalent spiritual attitudes of a world hardened against God and His Christ (Psa. 2. 1-3). The testimony of God's two witnesses will inevitably incite resentment and attempted persecution. It seems clear from the reactions at the time of their death (11. 9, 10) that their rebukes and judgements will have an impact far beyond Israel. Probably their witness will have had worldwide effects.

If Satan simulates the death and resurrection of Christ by bringing the beast which had received the death-stroke up out of the abyss, God brings to pass a dramatic reminder of His sovereign power by the return to life of the two witnesses after they had been dead for three days and a half.

G. P. Jr.

A COMPARATIVE STUDY—DANIEL AND REVELATION

Part 1

Our subject concerns "the theology of power". Both Daniel and Revelation proclaim the sovereignty of God: "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men" (Dan. 4. 25), and "the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth" (Rev. 19. 6). A summary of salient features follows.

1. *Authors.* Daniel, a Hebrew saint exiled in Babylon under two oppressive empires, searching the Scriptures and awaiting the fulfilment of God's promises (Dan. 9. 2). John, an aged Hebrew Christian (presumably the apostle) exiled in Patmos under a later oppressor; undoubtedly a student of Daniel (with much to say about Babylon) and awaiting the promised One (Rev. 22. 20).

2. *Composition and prophetic outline.* Both books treat of contemporary situations as well as being apocalyptic. Daniel's first six chapters include experiences of himself and his contemporaries, and the first three chapters of Revelation concern the condition of seven churches. The latter part of Daniel and virtually the entire Revelation contain visions and interpretations (and "dreams" in Daniel). Their extensive symbolism has many common features. Daniel predicts (a) things now history; e. g. world empires affecting God's people till their rejection of Messiah; and (b) things pertaining to "the time of the end" (Dan. 12. 4), namely, ultimate evil leadership and the conquering kingdom of God. Similarly, John writes of things he saw and "the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter" (Rev. 1. 19). The "hereafter" certainly enlarges on (b) above, but no doubt intervening history is to some extent predicted. Coming events often cast their shadows before, and some prophecies have a prior application.

A striking feature of Revelation is the frequent use of 7 (symbol of completeness). There are: 7 churches (1. 11), 7 lampstands (1. 12), 7 stars (1. 16), 7 spirits of God (4. 5), 7 seals (5. 1), 7 angels (8. 2), 7 trumpets (8. 2), 7 thunders (10. 3), 7 plagues (15. 6), 7 bowls (15. 7), and 7 heads (13. 1). There are also seven significant signs in chapters 12 to 14. In contrast, Daniel has only two such occurrences: "seven times" (Dan. 4. 16), and "seventy weeks (sevens)" (9. 24-26). The revelations to both Daniel and John were in a sense partial, but in the case of the latter God

concluded His written revelation, and the numerous sevens stress this completeness.

3. Recipients. Daniel's use of languages additional to Hebrew, and the content of his writings, indicate that he was to some extent addressing Gentiles. For some unknown reason he did not return with the Remnant, and although he does not say so, his message was intended for future generations of God's people also. John on the other hand clearly was writing to his contemporaries in the seven churches (1. 11, 22. 16).

4. Purpose. A paramount objective of both books is to throw essential light on the future. Daniel says, "there is a God... that revealeth secrets, and He hath made known... what shall be in the latter days" (Dan. 2. 28). Similarly John writes of "the things which must shortly come to pass" (Rev. 1. 1) "hereafter" (1. 19). Daniel reveals the immediate future to Gentile monarchs, to influence their behaviour, and also the distant future, principally to influence God's people, who would soon be released from Gentile captivity. John writes to Christians living in the prospect of enforced Caesar-worship. He reveals the ultimate outcome of current trends to encourage them to overcome. The Spirit has miraculously designed the Revelation so that it is meaningful to all generations of those who seek to serve God (Rev. 1. 1).

5. Conclusions. The two books close on an interesting note of both contrast and comparison. Daniel's prophecy is "sealed" (whatever this may mean) "till the time of the end" (12. 9). In contrast John is told "seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand" (Rev. 22. 10). However, both predict the same inevitable division of humanity between those who purify themselves and those who do wickedly (Dan 12. 10), that is, the "righteous" and the "unrighteous" (Rev. 22. 11).

6. Some specific parallels. Space only permits brief consideration of some remarkable parallels:

(i) **Beasts.** The lion, bear, leopard, and ten-horned monster of Daniel 7 are all represented in the composite beast of Revelation 13. Is Daniel 7 concerned with the same four Gentile powers as are depicted in the image of Daniel 2? The popular affirmation of this view presents difficulties. For example, Daniel 7 concerns "four kings which shall arise" (v. 17). Babylon, the first power of chapter 2

had already seen the rise of its last king when the vision was given (Dan. 7. 1). Another difficulty arises in verse 12 in that the lives of three beasts are prolonged. The difficulty is resolved for those who discern here a reference to a probable continuance into the end times of features of the three former powers. However as the features of all four powers appear simultaneously in the first beast of Rev. 13 is it not possible that both this vision and that of Dan. 7 have their fulfilment in co-existing Gentile powers of the end time (we see features now) and an application in previous powers? [Comment A].

(ii) *Ten Toes and Ten Horns.* Undoubtedly the ten toes of Dan 2, and the ten horns of Dan. 7 and Rev. 13 refer to the same Gentile powers prevailing in the end times (Dan. 2. 40-42; Rev. 17. 12, 13). Is "ten" symbolic of the aggregate of world powers, or literal in respect of a ten-nation super-power? If the former, then the iron and clay of the toes might indicate totalitarian states (e. g. communistic), and other weaker democratic states. If the latter, then one such superpower is already being formed in Europe, and students of the "revived Roman Empire" view will closely follow the performance of the Treaty of Rome [Comment B]. Others might consider that in the context of Daniel's prophecies we are concerned with powers prevailing over the Holy City, and that historically Rome was succeeded by the Muslim world in this respect. A ten-nation union of Arab states is therefore suggested by some as being envisaged [Comment C].

(iii) *Antichrist.* The domination of the coming Ten by absolute evil incarnate, with fearful global consequences, is clearly foretold by Daniel and John. Daniel's detailed predictions of Antiochus Epiphanes, the archetype of the Antichrist (Dan. 8 and 11), have undoubtedly a measure of dual application, and in fact develop into portraits of Antichrist himself, as evidenced by reference to "the time of the end" (Dan. 11. 55), and by John's corroboration. The "little horn" of Daniel 7, the "coming prince" of chapter 9, and the beast of Revelation 13 portray him further. Comparing Daniel and Revelation the following features of Antichrist are confirmed: -

1. His thoroughly Satanic power (Dan. 8. 24; 11. 39; Rev. 13. 2),
2. His blatant blasphemy (Dan. 7. 25; 11. 36; Rev. 13. 6),

3. His deadly deception (Dan. 8. 25; Rev. 13. 3, 4, 12-14),
4. His total economic control (Dan. 11. 43; Rev. 13. 16, 17),
5. His unprecedented persecution of Israel (Dan. 7. 21, 25; 8. 24; Rev. 13. 7),
6. His confrontation with Christ (Dan. 8. 25; Rev. 17. 14), and
7. His eternal destruction by Christ (Dan. 7. 11; 26; 8. 25; 11. 45; Rev. 19. 20; 20. 10).

(iv) The *Great Tribulation Period*. Antichrist's breaking of his seven year treaty midway (Dan. 9. 27) commences the three and a half year Tribulation, the duration of which is strikingly confirmed in Daniel and Revelation. It is variously stated in terms of (a) times, (b) months, and (c) days, as indicated below.

(a) The expression "time, times and half a time" denotes the period Antichrist persecutes the saints (Dan. 7. 25), the time of unprecedented trouble (12. 7), and the period during which those who flee are sustained (Rev. 12. 14).

(b) The period of 42 months refers to the siege of Jerusalem (Rev. 11. 2), and the Beast's reign (Rev. 13. 5).

(c) The 1, 260 days of Rev. 12. 6 refer to the same period as in ch. 12. 14. The period during which God's witnesses prophesy is also described as 1260 days (11. 3), although belonging to the first half of Daniel's 70th week.

Dan. 12. 11, 12 mentions 1, 290 days and 1, 335 days, presumably in the above context of the second half of the "week". Possibly the excess of 30 days in the former relates to the period of Israel's post-Tribulation repentance, and the further 45 days excess in the latter perhaps concludes the period of Messiah's wrath when the faithful and repentant return to be "blessed".

A. P. Sands

Comment A.

Alternative interpretations of the vision of Daniel 7 have been widely debated. As to points raised in this article it may be noted—

- (i) that arguments based on verb tenses in prophecy are often of doubtful value e. g., Messiah's sufferings in Isa. 53 are presented in the past tense.
- (ii) that the prolongation of the lives of three of the beasts may represent a continuing influence of certain powers

through historical phases in which they have lost their once supreme position.

- (iii) that the suggestion of a major fulfilment in the end-time context would seem to be outweighed by symbolic detail which appears remarkably to identify *past* characteristics of the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman Empires, e. g., —the winged lion, an apt symbol of the Babylonian empire; the bear raised up on one side, emphasizing Media's subservience to Persia; the agility and fierceness of the leopard, plus the impression of swiftness indicated by the wings, fittingly express the Grecian power under Alexander the Great, while the four heads point to the division of the empire among his generals; the ferocity and power of the fourth beast answer to the ruthless strength of the Roman empire.

Comment B

It would seem to be out of harmony with the overall prophetic picture to regard the ten toes as symbolic of the aggregate of world powers. For in each phase of Gentile dominion represented by the image of Dan. 2, a leading power rose to dominate the rest of the world. Similarly at the time of the end the Antichrist's power is seen to be based on a 10-kingdom confederacy, a "power block" which intimidates the world into submission (Rev. 13. 4).

Comment C.

But was not Muslim domination during the "Church period" and therefore outside the ambit of Daniel's prophecy? *Eds.*

A STUDY OF REVELATION

Measurement with the Reed and the Two Witnesses (11. 1-13)

From Crowborough. —In verse 1 John is given "a reed like unto a rod" and told to measure the temple of God, the altar, and them that worship therein. It was thought that this measuring had nothing to do with finding out the size or dimensions of anything, but could be for protection, as was the sealing in chapter 7. The court without the temple was not measured and was left open. Another thought suggested was, that as the people are spoken of as being measured, the quality of the worship was in view [Comment 1].

The testimony of the two witnesses for one thousand two hundred and threescore days would take place during the first half of Daniel's seventieth week. Their influence must have been great since the relief when they were dead was so manifest (see verse 10). Some felt that Elijah would be one of these prophets (see Mai. 4. 5) and also associated Moses with him.

In verse 4 the similarity to Zechariah's prophecy was noted. God has definite ways of working and His hand can be traced in events that took place in Old Testament times, or which will yet come to pass.

In the light of modern methods of communication verse 9 can be brought to pass. In view of what can be flashed on television screens there will be no difficulty for peoples and tribes and tongues and nations to look upon these bodies, and find great enjoyment in doing so. The amazement at the resurrection of these two prophets is also great. After the tenth part of the city fell because of an earthquake and seven thousand were killed, "the rest gave glory to the God of heaven". This is in contrast to 9. 21 where we read, "they repented not".

J.

Robertson

From Derby. —It was thought that the reed would be six cubits long (of. Ezek. 40. 5). The instruction to measure the temple of God clearly signified that God was owning this temple as His, whoever the builders may be. This temple is touched upon in Dan. 12. 11, and also by the Lord (Matt. 24. 25), and by Paul in 2 Thess. 2. 4. It would be built, we thought, prior to the commencement of the final week of prophecy. The temple site is already in Israeli hands. To measure them that worship therein could mean to number them or in some way to assess the sincerity or quality of their worship, for God looketh upon the heart. There may be some there who ought not to be in the Temple of God. The court without was not to be measured. The time during which the nations tread under foot the court and the holy city is forty and two months, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (Luke 21. 24), that is at the end of the second half of the prophetic seventieth week mentioned in Daniel's prophecy.

At the beginning of the first half of this period the two witnesses are to begin their work and will prophesy for 1260 days clothed in sackcloth. Some agreed with the suggestion that these two men

will be Moses and Elijah [see Comment 6] the two olive trees, and the two lampstands, probably referred to by Zechariah in chapter 4, and named also the two sons of oil in verse 14 [Comment 2]. The two olive trees, representing men filled with the Holy Spirit, were to continue to execute the judgements of the second Woe, associated with the sixth trumpet (9. 12, 13) [Comment 3]. Their lampstand testimony we thought would be more in keeping with the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom, embodying the imminent appearing of the Son of Man, the world-wide preaching to be heralded by the 144, 000 of chapter 7 and by very many others besides. These two witnesses take a valiant stand in Jerusalem itself, the very centre of apostate Judaism. When finally killed, they would strengthen and encourage others in many parts of the inhabited earth.

We noticed that it was only when the two valiant witnesses had finished their work that they were killed by the "beast that cometh up out of the abyss". This unique statement describes the appearing of a mysterious being to whom the Lord made reference in the words, "Another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John 5. 43). The abyss, out of which the locusts also came, would seem to be the abode of demons. Nevertheless, "God everywhere hath sway, and all things serve His might"; and "Who is a Mighty One, like unto Thee, O JAH?" (Psa. 89. 8).

A. Neal, S. R. W.

From Hayes. —This portion appears to be a parenthesis—verse 7 of chapter 10 says the seventh angel is about to sound, and in 11. 15 he sounds the seventh trumpet. Some commentators generalize this portion entirely: - the two witnesses are "the church" (particularly the martyrs) through the centuries since Pentecost, and the "great city" is the world-organisation opposed to God. We consider that these verses describe a particular situation and are to be taken literally.

Forty-two months is, of course, three and a half years, and 1260 days is three and a half years of 360 days. This suggests one-half of the seventieth week of Daniel. During the second half, the oppression of Israel and the opposition to God are at their height, and hence this might seem particularly the time for the two witnesses to function.

Other considerations, however, suggest the first half of the week. The temple is referred to as the Temple of God and the worshippers

are referred to; but at the beginning of the second half the Temple sacrifices will cease and the abominable image will be *erected*. If the witnesses prophesy in the first half, then one of the first acts of the beast will be to get rid of them, and the reference to worshippers in the temple fits into place.

We believe that the temple referred to is the one which Israel will erect before the seventieth week commences, and the command to measure it and the worshippers, means only to take stock of it, rather than detailed measurement [see Comment 1].

The statement about the court of the temple is somewhat difficult to understand. Gentiles always had access to part of the outer court and, of course, to the city. The Lord spoke of Jerusalem being trodden down of the Gentiles "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled". This is usually thought of as the rule by Gentiles which existed since before the Lord came, until 1948, when Israel became an independent state [Comment 4].

There is no statement that the two witnesses will be Old Testament prophets returning to earth, but the signs that they do have suggested to many students that they are Moses and Elijah, though there are many other suggestions also. The last statement in the Old Testament is that Elijah will return before the "day of the Lord". After Moses and Elijah had appeared with the Lord on the mount of transfiguration, He said that Elijah had already come. The characteristics and life of John the Baptist had parallels with those of Elijah, but it is evident that John did not completely fulfil the prophecy of Malachi.

Nothing could prevail against the witnesses until their work was completed. God's servants may have to make the supreme sacrifice but will triumph in the end. The events that follow their death show us the state of the world and also the thinness of the veneer of civilization. We take the city to be Jerusalem.

From Melbourne. —We are not clear in our understanding of the purpose of measuring the temple, the altar, and them that worship therein. It was suggested that this was for the protection of the worshippers—a remnant of Israel [see Comment 1], We would however ask if God will in any way recognize the temple service, which, we would judge, will be Aaronic in character. The nation will still be estranged from God: still guilty of the rejection

and death of their Messiah [Comment 5]. The city in which He once delighted will be as Sodom and Gomorrah to Him; and when the man of sin, whom they have welcomed and acclaimed as their Messiah, reveals himself in his true colours, their safety will be in flight from the temple, the city, and the country of Judaea. We believe that although the Israel nation today rejoices in its recovery from under the heel of the oppressor, the days of its mourning are not ended. Again it will come under the feet of the nations for forty and two months; which we judge will be the period of the great tribulation—a terrible climax to the long centuries of chastisement for the rejection and death of their true Messiah, only to be brought to an end by His appearing for their deliverance, when with a broken spirit and a contrite heart they will look upon Him whom they pierced.

There was no unanimous mind as to the identity of the two witnesses. With the majority of Bible students, it was agreed that one is evidently Elijah the prophet, confirmation of this view being found in the prophecy of Malachi. It would appear that the coming of John the Baptist in the spirit and power of Elijah did not fully meet the requirements of the prophecy. Also the shutting of the heaven for forty and two months is reminiscent of a similar judgement at the word of Elijah during the reign of Ahab, king of Israel; and possibly the devouring by fire of their enemies would recall the judgement on the messengers of Ahaziah. The other witness is more difficult to identify. Some of our number would judge him to be Moses, and would give as one of their reasons his association with Elijah on the mount of transfiguration in the presence of the Lord. Moreover the plagues referred to in the latter part of verse 6 are similar to the plagues brought upon Egypt prior to the exodus. Others lean towards Enoch as the other witness, as of all the human race these two, Enoch and Elijah, are the only ones who have not experienced death, and this must be the lot of both when their witness is ended. While the identity of Elijah appears to be unquestionable, we doubt if it is possible to define with certainty the identity of the other. Both, however, are honoured servants of the God of Israel, and faithful witnesses to His people and the inhabitants of Jerusalem concerning apostasy and allegiance to a false messiah. There is also something distinctive in the divine description of these servants of the Lord as "the two olive trees and the

two candlesticks (lampstands), standing before the Lord of the earth" [Comment 6].

We would judge that their testimony will be borne during the first half of the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy, and the week is divided by the events of verse 7. Their period of witness ends with death at the hands of the man of sin. The last great insult to God's faithful witnesses will be to deny them the right of burial. Their death and the evidence thereof will be made a cause of merry-making and rejoicing. Their prophesying concerning the sin of Israel and the nations, and concerning the judgements so soon to be poured out on a godless world has tormented men, and the brief respite from hearing of these things will be the basic cause for rejoicing. But the brief respite granted is to be followed by divine intervention and swift and summary retribution upon a guilty city. There is no evidence that the "glory given to the God of heaven" will spring from true repentance towards God. *P. W. A., T. W. F.*

From Methil. —Verses 1-13 deal with events that take place on the earth. In the vision, John was given a reed for measuring the temple of God in Jerusalem. We believe that divine worship is going on in the temple of God and not the worship of the beast at this stage (verse 1). We consider that verses 1-13 cover more than three and a half years. Verses 1-6 take place in the first half of Daniel's seventieth week, verses 7-13 most probably during the second half of the week [Comment 7]. The witnesses' prophecy commences in the first half of the week, and runs for 42 months accompanied by miraculous powers. The fact that these are worshippers would show to us that these events take place in the first half of the week (see Dan. 9. 27). The outside court John is told to omit; it is given to the nations and will be the site of the image of the beast [Comment 8],

It is generally accepted that Elijah will be one of the two witnesses. This can be easily understood and is supported by Mai. 4. 5. Is the other witness Moses or Enoch? The difficulty with the suggestion of Moses is the scripture in Heb. 9. 27, "appointed unto men *once* to die". Moses, if he is the second witness will have to die twice! Enoch and Elijah are the only two who as yet have not died. Their enemies are not only godless Jews, they are from among the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations. We would not limit their witnessing

to the Jews. The contempt of these enemies is seen in the fact that their bodies lie in the street for three and a half days. This was vindictive gloating, not a ceremonial lying in state. Great is the terror in the city when at the appointed time the two prophets once again stand on their feet, and a great voice from heaven is heard saying to them, "Come up hither". God publicly reclaims His faithful witnesses. That same hour an earthquake destroys one tenth of the city and 7, 000 of its inhabitants. This is the only judgement recorded in Revelation resulting in men giving glory to the God of heaven.

I. Lithgow, N. Coomer

IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

Papers were also received from Atherton and Leigh, and Birmingham, from which the following impressions were gathered.

It was concluded from Rev. 11. 1, 2 that the temple will be rebuilt at Jerusalem. It is called the temple of God as in 2 Thess. 2. 4. Moreover a revival of the temple service is implied in the allusion to the altar and worship. From Dan. 9. 27 it is evident that the "sacrifice and the oblation" will be caused to cease for the second half of Daniel's seventieth week. Rev. 11. 1, 2 would consequently refer to the first half of the week.

The 1260-days period in which the two witnesses prophesy was identified with the first three and a half years of Daniel's seventieth week. Three and a half years is also the length of time during which the beast has authority to continue, and to make war with the saints and overcome them (13. 5). Since it is likely that the beast who comes up from the abyss will kill the two witnesses, his three and a half year period could be identified with the second half of the week after which he is cast into the lake of fire when the Lord comes to earth (19. 20).

The difficulty was expressed that if the testimony of the two witnesses takes place in the first half of the week as described in verses 1-13, it seems inappropriate that the immediately following verses (14-19) should apply to the climax at the end of the second half of the week. [This problem is discussed in Comment 3 on Derby's paper. There are very strong grounds for accepting that verses 14-19 do in fact apply to the climax at the end of the second half of the week; for it is difficult otherwise to explain the message

of the great voices (v. 15) or the declaration of the twenty-four elders (vv. 17, 18). It is also consistent with the pattern of the Book of Revelation to treat the section from 10. 1 to 11. 13 as parenthetical, and therefore to discern that 11. 14 takes up the chronological sequence of the trumpet series from where it was left off in 9. 21 i. e., the events of 11. 1-13 are not to be regarded as taking place between the sixth and seventh trumpets.]

Direct Satanic influence makes its appearance with the beast, whereas formerly Satan had worked through sinful men.

The two witnesses (11. 3) included the judgement of death in their message. In considering whether these witnesses were men, it was noted that they had powers which no human has today. As witnesses they declare God's eternal being, and dispense His immediate judgements. As olive trees they declare the way of deliverance. As lampstands they proclaim His truth associated with the temple of God. As prophets they declare the future judgements of God. Their own resurrection by divine power is of great avail to strengthen their testimony in all four aspects. *Eds.*

COMMENTS

1. (*Crowborough*): If we link Rev. 11. 1 with 21. 75 and Ezek. 40. 3, which appear to be parallel experiences, it seems difficult to exclude the intention of taking literal measurements. Admittedly these are not recorded in Rev. 11 as they are in the other occurrences; but may this allusion be intended to confirm for us the literal existence of a material temple in Jerusalem at the time of the end? This is not merely a symbolic vision but the vision of a real temple subject to measurement by human calculation.

2. (*Derby*): The identity of the two witnesses is a much debated problem. Leaving aside for the moment the question of whether they may be Elijah and Moses, are we to concede that the two sons of oil represented by the olive trees of Zech. 4. 11-14 are the same persons as the two witnesses of Rev. 11? Does it not seem more appropriate that the two olive trees of Zech. 4 represented Haggai and Zechariah, the prophets through whose Spirit-given ministry the flame of remnant witnesses was stimulated and sustained? They fulfilled a function in their generation which finds its counterpart in the much sterner context of the time of the end. The Lord of the

whole earth has His "sons of oil" in readiness to meet the need at different crises as His purposes develop.

3. (*Derby*): Our friends start with the premise that the testimony of the two witnesses belongs to the *first* half of Daniel's seventieth week, but then associate the judgements meted out by them with the judgements of the sixth trumpet and the second Woe. Can this association be sustained? Do not the judgements of the sixth trumpet and the second Woe take place fairly late in the *second* half of the week? After suffering the torments of the sixth trumpet judgements, "the rest of mankind, which were not killed, repented n o t . . . that they should not worship demons, a n d . . . idols". But after the resurrection of the two witnesses "the rest were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven". It is clear that events in Revelation are not necessarily presented in chronological sequence. Certain sections are interposed to give impressions of particular aspects of God's dealings, e. g., chapter 7 between the sixth and seventh seals; chapter 10. 1 - 11. 13 between the sixth and seventh trumpets. The first Woe is said to be past in 9. 12; the sixth seal comprises the second Woe—that it also is past is noted in 11. 14 as announcement is made of the imminence of the third Woe; the third Woe must be fulfilled in the seventh trumpet (11. 15-19) as confirmed by 10. 7, for in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, then is finished the mystery of God. Yet in chapter 12 the scene reverts to a summary of the Devil's antagonism towards Israel, a summary which includes the period already looked at from a different viewpoint under the imagery of the seven trumpets. It seems necessary therefore to regard chapters 10. 1 - 11. 13 as a parenthetical section, and not to associate the judgements meted out by the two witnesses in the first half of Daniel's seventieth week with the judgements inflicted under the sixth trumpet during the second half of that week.

4. (*Hayes*): I suggest that the times of the Gentiles referred to in Luke 21. 24 will not expire until the coming of Messiah for Israel's deliverance. It is true that at the moment Jerusalem is not trodden down of the Gentiles by literal occupation. But Zech. 12. 3 and 14. 2 make clear that at the time of the end Jerusalem will again be assaulted by Gentile powers, "the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled... half of the city shall go forth into captivity,

and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city". Rev. 11. 2 confirms that "the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months". May we conclude then that when Antichrist breaks the covenant with Israel and the abomination of desolation stands in the holy place, this will ignite military resistance among Israel despite the odds against her? The composite picture from relevant prophetic scriptures indicates a spectacular Israeli resistance in Jerusalem and Judaea (see for example Zech. 12. 4-9). In their extremity Messiah appears for Israel's deliverance. While the detail may only be tentatively anticipated this general situation may provide a clue to the reason why John was told not to measure the court without the temple. May it be that Israeli military power will be able to maintain control of much of the temple area, yet will be forced to concede the "court which is without the temple" to the invading Gentile armies?

5. (*Melbourne*): It is true that the re-institution of the temple services will be on the basis of Judaism without the recognition of the Lord Jesus as Messiah. Nevertheless the Spirit uses the term "temple of God" both in Rev. 11. 1 and 2 Thess. 2. 4. We can see that despite its spiritual deficiencies orthodox Judaism does retain vital aspects of Old Covenant revelation. For instance, in contrast to the blasphemous claims of Antichrist, the Jewish temple will at least betoken faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In a relative sense, therefore, it will represent certain aspects of spiritual truth.

6. (*Melbourne*): This is a useful contribution on the problem of the two witnesses. Readers will be interested to compare other contributions, noting Methil's point regarding the possible relevance of "once to die" in Heb. 9. 27. Some may feel that there could conceivably be an exception to this general statement. Jude 14-15 may also be considered as having some relevance, for it reveals Enoch as a prophet of divine judgement, perhaps suggesting the appropriateness of his being associated in witness with a situation so heavily fraught with God's judgements on men. However, most students will agree that there is direct scriptural support for identifying one of the witnesses as Elijah, and with Melbourne's statement that "we doubt if it is possible to define with certainty the identity of the other".

7. (*Methil*): As suggested by several contributors, the events of verses 7-13 will presumably take place right at the beginning of the second half of Daniel's seventieth week.

8. (*Methil*): Can we satisfactorily conclude that the image of the beast will be set up in the outside court? It seems significant that in Matt. 24. 15 the abomination of desolation is said to stand in the holy place (Gk. —*naos*); the same word is used for temple or sanctuary in 2 Thess. 2. 4. May it be that the sanctuary will initially be desecrated by the setting up there of the image of the beast, but Israeli forces will then gain control of the temple area, including the sanctuary, only the outer court being "given unto the nations" to be trodden underfoot for forty-two months by the Gentile armies? It is true that "he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease" (Dan. 9. 27), but this would not necessarily require occupation of the temple sanctuary by Antichrist throughout the forty-two months. It could find fulfilment as a result of the initial act of desecration, and the ensuing military conflict in the immediate area [see also Comment 4],

G. P. Jr.

Question from Atherton and Leigh deferred to December issue owing to shortage of space.

BIBLE STUDIES

'A magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11).'

VOLUME 40

DECEMBER, 1972

EDITORIAL

We now reach the final number for 1972. The subject has not been an easy one, and the response of all contributors reflects much credit on them. Editors welcome this opportunity to express their appreciation of all who joined in the study of part of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, our appreciation applying alike to contributors on the Revelation and to writers of the special studies. It is our desire and prayer that the year's study will prove profitable to all.

The study in the Minor Prophets, proposed for 1973, is again far from being a light undertaking, but it is hoped that all will brace themselves to the task. The three books involved contain much that should prove helpful to us in our day and time, especially if we discern principles governing the relationship between God and His people, whatever the dispensation.

We look to God that we may be the recipients of enlightenment through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in guiding us into all the truth.

J. B.

REVELATION—THE FITTING COMPLETION OF THE WRITTEN WORD

One of the most remarkable things about God's word, delivered over many hundreds of years, is how much of His purposes and plans for all of time are revealed to men. The things revealed can be outside our personal place in the time scale, but are answers to questions natural to men at any point in time.

We should be left with many troublesome queries did the Bible not contain a book dealing with the final kingdom, final judgements, the exposure and destruction of forces shown to have been long in revolt against God and righteousness, the dissolution of the old earth and the establishing of the new. The place for such a book is at the end of the Bible, for, difficult as much of the Revelation is, it would be incomprehensible had we not read our way through the other books; and except for a curiosity about the future we

should not have the question seeking the answers. It takes the rest of the Bible to introduce and describe the various personalities and forces concerned with time, and the final solutions affecting them are only in place in the last book of the sixty-six. From our reading of the other books there is a certain inevitability about the broad outline of some of the Revelation, but, as with the rest of the Bible, so much detail in presentation argues that this could only have come from the mind of God Himself. This last book is the naturally concluding communication of God with men in time.

Although a similar book could have a logical place at the end of the Old Testament, it would only be a partial answer to Jewish questions, and would have been too narrowly based. In any case, as time has gone on Israel's affairs have become interwoven in the divine pattern for all of men and all of time. Daniel and Zechariah share subjects with the Revelation, but it is only possible nearer the end of time for God to reveal His universal solutions to human history's problems, since they involve the ending of earth and time. The natural place for the record of scenes describing the conclusion of time is the last book, and anything else would interrupt the easy flow of order in divine revelation.

It is exciting to find so much that concerns our Lord Himself in the Revelation, and in such circumstances as could be understood in the last book. He who said in John 14. 26 of the Holy Spirit "He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you", makes a last dramatic intervention when speaking to the churches. Such was the emergency and so great His personal concern that He permitted John to see Him in all His glorious state and in supreme authority. As these were certainly to be His very last words for John to report, He reminds John that He IS—nothing has changed! The description of Himself is intended to confirm and establish all already known—the faithful Witness, the Firstborn from the dead, our great Lover and Redeemer, the One with the power to make a kingdom, a priesthood and who, in the ultimate, has the keys of death and Hades. It is salutary that in the concluding book of the Bible we see Him knowing and caring about individual churches, and anxious that they should know from Himself that He is living, powerful and deeply interested in individuals.

That God is worshipped continuously by great and wonderful beings is the scene from eternity, but the opening of the books so long sealed is at the end of time, and fitting material for the last book of the Bible. The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, is shown to be the Lamb that has been slain. He is the great and longed-for Conqueror. We have read the Gospels and the prophets, seen the despised Man and His disciples, and now this last view is of Him receiving power, riches, wisdom, might, honour, glory and blessing "for ever and ever". Naturally this revelation of the Father's intention for the Lord Jesus is in this last book for the scenes precede and introduce the end of time. He who receives the kingdom does so to take control, and He who had been meek and humiliated now initiates the great day of wrath and judgement. Paul had said in Acts 17. 31, "He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He hath ordained"—and in this last book we see it happening and the Man is revealed.

The questions asked regarding the future for men and time are fittingly answered in this last book, and the denouncements are awesome to contemplate. God's revelation of things long sought by men and withheld till now shows a progressive deterioration of earthly conditions and associated human disasters. In all this He is merciful to some and they will find peace and plenty in the kingdom of the Lamb. He will be their Shepherd.

The days of Satanic influence are shown to have their limits, and this book, expanding on other scriptural comments, details the last increase, imprisonment and eternal banishment of the great adversary. The last days grow darker for men, and events are shown to be beyond human control. Dissensions divide and confound men and their best purposes and hopes are upset. Before the awfulness of the end-time scenes men are shown to diminish—only God is in control.

Destruction of false religion, the confounding of human ingenuity in world politics, the confrontation of the armed might of men, the judgement on every rebellious system, the White Throne examination of individuals out of all of time—these are fitting subjects for the last book of the Bible.

So too is the information that there is to be a continuation of divine favour and mercy towards those who trust Him in the news of a new heaven and earth. Through all, the Lamb is magnified and

honoured, seen enthroned and active. This last book establishes His triumph for ever, first in the old, and then in the new earth and heaven. These last scenes show Him pre-eminent, and God's ways and righteousness eternally established.

The revelation of the Lamb in triumph belongs to these last days and when He takes control events follow each other swiftly through the deepening darkness into the brilliance of the eternal day. In all this "His servants shall do Him service"—glorious confirmation of all we could have dared to hope for. God's promises are sure, and with the confidence this last book gives us we can join with John in his "Come, Lord Jesus". The happy anticipation this book stirs in us makes us happy that our Bible ends with such a book—fitting completion to the written Word. A. B. Robertson

A COMPARATIVE STUDY—DANIEL AND REVELATION

Part 2

6. *Some specific parallels* (continued)

(v) *Christ—His Advents.* The Incarnation, in relation to both Israel and the nations, and also to Satanic opposition, is depicted in Revelation 12 in the birth of the Man Child. In contrast, Daniel's sole reference to Christ's first advent is his remarkably chronological prediction of the anointed One's shameful death, "having nothing" (Dan. 9. 26). In this respect however, John denotes the magnificence of the Lamb's death in terms of redemption and heavenly worship (Rev. 5. 9).

Christ's second advent is dramatically illustrated in Daniel by the stone "cut out without hands" (Dan. 2. 45). The manner of His appearing *is* indicated: ". . . with the clouds of heaven . . . like unto a son of man" (Dan. 7. 13). John uses remarkably similar language and describes Christ sitting on the cloud (Rev. 1. 7; 14. 14). At His coming many millions attend Him, and one consequence is that judgement is "given to the saints" (Dan. 7. 10, 22; Rev. 20. 4). John describes Him coming on a white horse with heavenly armies following (Rev. 19. 14), and records His promise to overcoming saints: "authority over the nations" (Rev. 2. 26). Christ personally predicts His second advent in words equally meaningful to all generations (Rev. 22. 12, 20).

(vi) *God's Kingdom*. Though now only partially revealed, this kingdom is, nevertheless, "everlasting... from generation to generation" (Dan. 4. 3). However, it will fully appear when the final ten-nation power is crushed by the Stone, the returning Christ. Then "shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom" which will "stand for ever" (Dan. 2. 44). Daniel stresses this aspect of an "everlasting kingdom" (Dan. 4. 34; 7. 14, 27). John also indicates the inauguration of the fullest expression of the kingdom, and also its duration: after the Tribulation he hears: "the kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of... Christ: and He shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11. 15).

The universality of Christ's kingdom is stressed by Daniel: "all the... nations... should serve Him" and "all dominions shall... obey Him" (Dan. 7. 14, 27); a truth inherent in the title "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19. 16). Daniel also points out that Old Testament saints will be given the kingdom (Dan. 7. 18, 22), as will overcoming saints of this age (Rev. 2. 26; 3. 21). They will all reign with Christ a thousand years before this old world is superseded by the eternal kingdom in the new earth (Rev. 20. 4; 21. 1).

(vii) *Angels and the Archangel*. Daniel does not mention angels as such in his prophecies, though "His angel" is mentioned in relation to two events: the furnace and the lions' den (Dan. 3. 28; 6. 22). In contrast, angels are mentioned seventy-five times in the Apocalypse, and in fact the entire Revelation was conveyed to John by an angel from the Lord (Rev. 1. 1; 22. 6, 16).

This topic has already been the subject of a previous paper. It is sufficient therefore to refer briefly to three matters. Firstly, Daniel wrote to God's earthly people concerning events on earth, whilst John wrote to His heavenly people to stress the primacy of the heavenly realm in shaping earth's destiny; hence his emphasis on angelic beings. Secondly, Daniel twice refers to Gabriel who appears as a man to instruct the seer (Dan. 8. 16; 9. 21), whilst John makes no reference to him at all. Thirdly, Michael the archangel features in both books. Daniel refers to him as "one of the chief princes" in his warrior-like capacity in conflict with apparent spiritual power behind the human ruler of Persia (Dan. 10. 13, 20, 21). He also indicates Michael's special responsibility as defender

of God's earthly people, standing up prior to the "time of trouble" (Dan. 12. 7). John elaborates on this, depicting Michael at war with Satan in heaven, and the latter's ejection to earth, where he resumes his conflict, now against Michael's charge (Israel) thereby initiating the Tribulation (Rev. 12. 7-77).

7. Seers' Responses. The comparative study of the reactions of Daniel and John to divine revelation is very instructive. Much that Daniel saw and heard was frightening and grave. Consequently he says he was "grieved" and "troubled" (Dan. 7. 75). When he saw the "fierce" king who would arise he says, "I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; then I rose up and did the king's business" (Dan. 8. 27). Perhaps we shall only effectively conduct our King's business after first being distressed by a right view of the world's future. We are also challenged by Daniel's great intercessory prayer of confession after his discerning the imminence of the next event in God's programme. Chapter 9 warrants careful study.

Although John sees more visions than Daniel—more terrible ones perhaps—generally he seems less disturbed than Daniel. However, there is a notable exception. Confronted by Christ among the lamp-stands, he says: "I fell at His feet as one dead" (Rev. 1. 77). Also on two occasions he was so impressed by a heavenly messenger that he was about to worship him, before being suitably restrained (Rev. 19. 10; 22. 8, 9).

Three factors are suggested to explain why the seers' reactions are somewhat different. Firstly, Daniel's visions were spread over many months, but John's presumably came in quick succession all on the Lord's day (Rev. 1. 10). John had little opportunity for interim reflection. Secondly, because John received the great revelations of God's ultimate universal victory, he was more likely to be elated than depressed. Thirdly, Daniel wrote when Gentile monarchs were being overthrown, and the Jewish nation was nearing the end of captivity—a time of heart-searching preparation for both groups. Daniel's distress, shared by his readers, would be the prelude to necessary repentance. In contrast, John received his revelations concerning Christian promises believed for a generation or more, when human history had still a long future unfolding ahead before those promises would finally materialise. John's contemporaries, and saints for many centuries to follow, would need the strengthening assurance

that God is in control—the joyful anticipation of His promises must be preserved. John's response sets the pattern, as seen below.

Whilst Daniel ends on a note of assurance, "thou shalt rest, and shalt stand in thy lot, at the end of the days" (Dan. 12. 13), there is a ring of remoteness as to the time of this great blessing. On the other hand, John, captivated by the spirit of lively anticipation conveyed by his Lord's promise "I come quickly", replies in eager response, "Amen, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22. 20). *A. P. Sands*

A STUDY OF REVELATION

The Seventh Trumpet and the Temple of God in Heaven

(11. 1449)

From Denmark Hill. —We note the gap apparent between the sixth and seventh trumpets [Comment 1]. The seventh trumpet sounded by the seventh angel appears to embrace the seven bowls or last seven plagues of Rev. 16. 1-21, which make up the third Woe [Comment 2]. Whereas the first six trumpets when sounded were followed by events relating to the earth, the sounding of the seventh trumpet was followed by the great voices in heaven and that glorious time when the kingdom of the earth became the kingdom of the Lord and of His anointed.

The period of the sounding of this trumpet appears to extend to the great hail (11. 19; of. 16. 21) which accompanies the destruction of Babylon the Great, which is celebrated in heaven by rejoicing hosts as proof of the sovereignty of the Almighty and that the marriage and the kingdom of the Lamb are come (19. 6-9).

The seventh trumpet introduces the war in heaven (12. 7-9), [Comment 3], which is the central fact of the Revelation and is the great crisis in the world's history, for "now is the judgement of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John 12. 31) [Comment 4]. Also during the period of its sounding is proclaimed the release of the earth from the power of Satan and its incorporation into the freedom and kingdom of Christ. Satan, having been cast out from the heavens, is now confined in his operations to earth where, through his Antichrist, he so stirs up the nations to the state of Rev. 11. 18 that they become wroth and set themselves against the Lord (Psa. 2).

But "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh". Of the Almighty God of Isa. 40 and Psa. 2, the elders now say, "Thy wrath came" (Rev. 11. 18) and so describe the time when God Himself gathers the reins of universal sovereignty to rule with absolute power.

With the wrath of God comes the time of the judgement of the dead (Rev. 11. 18). This judgement is different from the Judgement-seat of Christ and the Great White Throne Judgement. The former takes place in heaven and could by now, we presume, be complete, and the latter is still future, taking place after the Millennium.

The dead judged here would appear to be those worthy of "resurrection", to be rewarded by inclusion in the coming kingdom of Christ (Luke 14. 14; 20. 34, 36; Matt. 5. 12; Rev. 22. 12) and who will soon be raised. The reward of Rev. 11. 18 applies also to the servants, prophets, saints and those that fear God's name, the small and the great, who will still be on the earth.

The end of the period covered by the sounding of the seventh trumpet results in the destruction of those that would destroy the earth (Rev. 11. 18), which destruction is also referred to in chapters 12, 13 and 14.

We note the contrast between Rev. 11. 1 and 11. 19. In 11. 1 we have the temple of God on earth, soon to be violated by the Antichrist, whereas in 11. 19 we see the temple in heaven, showing the type of the "Word become flesh" whom God hath set forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood, but now exalted and glorified.

G. Bennison

From Birmingham. — We feel that Rev. 11. 14-19 reflects several aspects of chapters 12 to 19. Rev. 15. 5 refers to the opening of the temple of the tabernacle in heaven, while v. 1 tells us of seven angels having seven last plagues, which must be the third Woe and the final wrath of God to avenge Himself and His people. In Rev. 19 we have the four and twenty elders falling down and worshipping God.

We see included in the events the latter part of the tribulation, the Son of Man coming to the earth, the battle of Armageddon, the binding of Satan in prison and the commencement of the millennial reign of Christ.

The temple of God in heaven was opened to pronounce judgment upon men, wrath that they had never known before, culminating in the Lord coming to earth to the great and terrible battle of Armageddon where Satan and his host are overthrown. The kingdom of the world then becomes the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and He shall reign for ever and ever. *D. P. Brown*

From Atherton and Leigh. —In the grouping together of the last three trumpet judgements under the term "Woes" we expect and look for a certain similarity in the details of the three calamities. Some thought that the three Woes each involved special angelic initiatives, possibly dealing with a series of events in each case. The third Woe was thought to refer particularly to the judgements of the seven vials, concluding with lightnings, voices, thunders and a great hail (of. 11. 19 and 16. 17-21) [see Comment 2].

Others thought that the three Woes were similar in that each involves the tormenting of men on earth by unearthly creatures, as follows:

- the first Woe—locusts from the Abyss (Rev. 9. 1-11),
- the second Woe—horsemen and riders (9. 13-19),
- the third Woe—Satan himself (12. 9-12).

Proponents of this second view stressed the chronological continuity of 11. 3-13 and 12. 7-12. The former passage, dealing with the three and a half year period of the two witnesses, refers to the first half of Daniel's seventieth week (11. 3), while the latter, dealing with the three and a half year period of Satan's confinement to earth, refers to the second half of that week (12. 14, 16). Thus the words, "the second Woe is past: behold, the third Woe cometh quickly" (11. 14), are followed by: "Woe for the earth... because the devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time" (12. 12). It appears then, that the third Woe is the casting down to earth of Satan [Comment 53-

As to the timing of Rev. 11. 15-18 some thought that the heavenly beings of this passage are referring to the imminent coming of the Lord to earth; i. e., their words are anticipatory, the past tenses "hast taken", "didst reign", "came" of verses 17, 18 being prophetic past tenses (of. Isa. 53: "He was wounded... ", etc.). Reference

to the raising and rewarding of saints (v.18) was held to indicate the closing days of the dispensation are at hand, with the establishment of God's kingdom in the immediate future (10. 7; 11. 18) [Comment 6].

The second view was that the speaking of 11. 15-18 will take place chronologically between the resurrection of the two witnesses and the fall of Satan to earth; i. e., about midway through Daniel's seventieth week. The words of the heavenly beings in v. 15 bear close resemblance to those said to be spoken at Satan's downfall (which is definitely midway through the seventieth week): "Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ, for the accuser of our brethren is cast down . . . (12. 10). These latter words indicate what is involved in the kingdom of God "coming"—it signifies that the rule of God has extended to a fresh area (of. Matt. 12. 28), viz. in this case, the restriction of Satan's freedom [Comment 7]. It was also suggested that the words of the twenty-four elders, "Thou hast taken Thy great power, and didst reign", refer to the key event in the prophetic section of Revelation, the granting to the Lamb of executive power by God the Father (Rev. 5). It will then have been that the Father, through the Son, will have taken His great power (11. 17) and reigned. Following this God will pour out great wrath on the nations; e. g., in the seven seals. Thus 11. 15-18 was viewed as a tribute of praise and thanksgiving for all God will have done since that momentous ceremony when the Lamb received the Book [Comment 8].

The finishing of the mystery of God (10. 7) which takes place during the days of the voice of the seventh angel, was held under the latter view to refer to the clear showing of God's intentions and His ability to carry them out. This will be seen particularly in Satan's being cast down to the earth. God will then have shown His hand—the devil will know his imminent fate, and Israel will prepare for her finest hour [Comment 9].

L. de Ville, D. S. Jones

From Derby. —The third Woe commences with the sounding of the seventh trumpet. The seventh seal inaugurates the period of the seven trumpets, the seventh trumpet that of the final phase of the divine judgements. The sixth and seventh seals seem to be associated

with the same period, namely that of the end time of the second half of the prophetic seven years. Probably the seven bowls were poured out also as a final blow aimed at selected targets. This sums up the conclusions arrived at in our discussions. There seem to be similar sequences of events, though from different aspects, in comparing 6. 12-17 with 11. 15-19 and 16. 17-21. Matt. 24. 29, 30 would seem to correspond to Rev. 6. 14-16 and Matt. 25. 31-46 to correspond to the sounding of the seventh trumpet (Rev. 11. 17-19).

We thought it possible that included in the seventh trumpet judgements are not only the advent of the Son of Man to earth to deal with the beast and his armies but also the seven bowls (seven plagues), the selected targets being as stated in chapter 16. In 15. 1 we read, "the seven plagues, which are the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God". As a matter of interest and enquiry, regarding the sixth bowl, the drying up of the river Euphrates to open the way to make ready for the kings that come from the sunrising, we wondered if these kings would be bringing their armies to war against them or to war with them against the Lord and His angelic hosts, the armies of heaven; in either case we may be sure they would all suffer the same defeat.

"And there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven; and there was seen in His temple the ark of His covenant. " We wondered by whom this was seen? By John? [Comment 10] Several items of the Tabernacle furniture are mentioned in the book of Revelation; here we have the ark, perhaps the most important, in 6. 9 the altar and in 8. 3 the golden altar. We were reminded of the sight of these granted to Moses when he was commanded: "See... that thou make all things according to the pattern that was shewed thee in the mount" (Heb. 8. 5). He made "copies of the things in the heavens" (Heb. 9. 25).

"And there followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail. " In 16. 17-21 the terrible intensity of this final blow is seen after the great voice out of the temple from the throne says, "It is done". This is the greatest of all earthquakes, the disruption of islands and mountains, (see also 6. 14) along with the great plague of the greatest of all hailstorms (see 11. 19).

G. Conway, S. R. W.

IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

The remaining papers from Crowborough and Methil yielded the following impressions:

In both papers the seventh trumpet judgement was thought to apply to the end of the Great Tribulation at the close of Daniel's seventieth week. Neither paper stated whether the Lord will actually be on earth while the elders and the others are speaking, as recorded in 11. 15-18, but in both the words "didst reign" were referred to the millennial reign of Christ.

The atmosphere of sincere praise in the court of heaven was seen as a foretaste of the wonderful spirit which will pervade the Millennium when, instead of continually chafing at the authority of the powers that be, men will offer sincere praise to the King—"on earth, as it is in heaven".

Noteworthy also is the selfless joy of the twenty-four elders as they thank God for rewarding His servants the prophets and others. For long centuries they have watched with deep spiritual interest the slow progress of God's purposes on earth and the varied responses of men to divine initiatives, but now their hearts overflow in praise as the time for reward arrives. We marvel at the profound and unselfish concern such elevated creatures have for the spiritual well-being of such as we!

"And the nations were wroth, and Thy wrath came" (11. 18). The association of the nations' wrath with the divine wrath is striking. "Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire!" (Jas. 3. 5). Yet in so few words is described the awful tragedy of human arrogance. To be angry with the Almighty is the ultimate insult. Alas, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure" (Psa. 2. 4, 5). *Eds.*

COMMENTS

1. (*Denmark Hill*): It is true that there is a gap between the sixth and seventh trumpets as presented in Revelation. But does this imply a gap in the actual sequence of events at the time of the end? Is the gap not rather a typical feature of the method of presentation of prophetic truth in Revelation, with parenthetical sections (e. g.

10. 2 - 11. 25) introduced for other than chronological reasons? If that is the case, and we accept the sixth and seventh trumpets as comprising the second and third Woes, then 11. 14 would suggest very little time lag between the sixth and seventh trumpets.

2. (*Denmark Hill*): May we examine together the interesting suggestion that "the seventh trumpet... appears to embrace the seven bowls or seven last plagues of 16. 1-21, which make up the third Woe". It seems clear that the judgements of the fifth and sixth trumpets comprise the first and second Woes respectively (8. 13; 9. 12; 11. 14) and that the third Woe must be within the scope of events under the seventh trumpet (10. 7). The expression "third Woe" is not specifically applied to the judgements of the seven bowls, although if we equate these with the seventh trumpet period they would of course "make up the third Woe". But are we sure that the judgements of the seven bowls are necessarily limited to the period of the seventh trumpet? That they are described as the "seven last plagues" would certainly place them at a late phase in the second half of Daniel's seventieth week. It may nevertheless transpire that they will begin at the time of the fifth or sixth trumpets and continue into the seventh trumpet period.

3. (*Denmark Hill*): A problem arises if the war in heaven and the casting down to earth of the Devil and his angels take place during the seventh trumpet period. For the seventh trumpet seems clearly to bring us to the climax of the second half of Daniel's week. But after the Devil is cast down he persecutes the woman who is nourished for three and a half years in "her place" in the wilderness. It is inappropriate therefore to think of the Devil starting the persecution at the time of the seventh trumpet, which is towards the close of that week. May the solution not lie in regarding the series of trumpets as leading us to the close of the week, and chapter 12 as not following in chronological sequence, but introducing a different aspects of things? For it does present a symbolic impression of the Devil's age-long hatred of Israel and the Christ who came into the world through her; this hatred is seen to be intensified at the time of the end. Certainly the earlier part of chapter 12 does not follow chronologically from chapter 11, and the whole chapter is more clearly understood if regarded as a new phase of the prophetic revelation.

4. (*Denmark Hill*): The repeated "now" in John 12. 31 would suggest that it applied to the time then present. *J. B.*

5. (*Atherton and Leigh*): While it is agreed that 11. 3-13 and 12. 7-12 respectively refer to the first and second halves of Daniel's seventieth week, the suggestion that the third Woe is the casting down to earth of Satan rests on inadequate evidence. The use of the word "woe" in 12. 12 is incidental and insufficient to sustain the view against stronger evidence that the third Woe coincides with the seventh trumpet period (8. 13; 11. 14) in which is finished the mystery of God (10. 7).

6. (*Atherton and Leigh*): This view is favoured by Editors.

7. (*Atherton and Leigh*): Whereas there is resemblance in the general note of triumph expressed in 11. 15-18 and 12. 10-12, the detail is distinctively different. As other contributors have pointed out, 11. 15-18 refers very precisely to elements involved in the climax of Daniel's seventieth week. But 12. 10-12 expresses joy at the Devil being cast down from heaven, with warning of the consequences to those dwelling on earth.

8. (*Atherton and Leigh*): This attempt to deal with the difficulty that 11. 15-18 seems so definitely to place the seventh trumpet period at the climax of Daniel's seventieth week, rather than at the middle of the week, where our friends would wish to place it, appears unconvincing.

9. (*Atherton and Leigh*): It seems doubtful that such an involved explanation of Rev. 10. 7 would be attempted were it not necessary to support a particular line of exposition. The explanation of 10. 7 which seems to be supported by most contributors is straightforward, and appeals to editors as a clear guide in placing the seventh trumpet very near the close of Daniel's seventieth week.

G. P. Jr.

10. (*Derby*): Certainly seen by John in the vision. It may be seen in the fulfilment of this prophecy. The point to note is that this is a new thing: hitherto the ark of the testament was hidden by the veil. *J. B.*

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

From Atherton and Leigh: What scriptural evidence, apart from Rev. 11. 18, supports the view that Old Testament saints will receive their reward at the very end of Daniel's seventieth week?

The following scriptures are helpful: - Ezek. 44. 5-16; Dan. 7. 27, 9. 24; 12. 1-3, 13. The context of them all is God's earthly people entering upon peaceful occupation of their land, a happy scene which will not be possible until after the end of Daniel's seventieth week.

L. B.

Deferred from November issue—

From Atherton and Leigh: To which half of Daniel's seventieth week do the forty-two months of Rev. 11. 2 refer? What does the treading underfoot of the holy city involve? Who gives the temple court to the nations?

Editors agree with the view expressed by most contributors that the forty-two months of Rev. 11. 2 belong to the first half of Daniel's seventieth week.

As will be seen from Comments 4 and 8 in last month's issue it is suggestively proposed that the treading underfoot of the holy city for forty-two months will result from the gathering of the nations against Israel during the second half of Daniel's week. Israel's military resistance to the forces of Antichrist will be prompted by the breaking of the covenant in the middle of the week and the desecration of the temple sanctuary by the setting up of the abomination of desolation. In this view, then, the temple court is seen as given over to the nations in the permissive sovereignty of God as He controls the overall situation at the time of the end. G. P. Jr

PSALM 71 (*continued*)

O God, be not far from me:

O my God, make haste to help me.

Let them be ashamed and consumed that are adversaries to my soul;

Let them be covered with reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt (verses 12, 13).

Here again David renews his calling upon God to make haste to help him, and not to be far from him. He also asks what he asked in Psalm 35. 4, 26 > and in Psalm 70. 2, and also in verse 24 of this psalm, that his adversaries would be ashamed and confounded. One would require to be in the circumstances of David really to appreciate his calling upon God repeatedly for shame to cover his adversaries because of their unworthy attitude towards him. The name and honour of David lives on with undimmed lustre, but even the memory of his adversaries has perished long ago.

But I will hope continually,
 And will praise Thee yet more and more.
 My mouth shall tell of Thy righteousness,
 And of Thy salvation all the day;
 For I know not the numbers thereof (verses 14, 15).

Here again David turns in thought from his adversaries to God. He would not be discouraged to the extent of giving up. He would hope continually. This is ever a safe attitude of mind to follow, as the sons of Korah sang,

"Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him,
 Who is the health of my countenance, and my God. "

David in hope would praise God more and more. Also his mouth would tell of God's righteousness, and of His salvation all the day, and of His salvation he knew not the numbers thereof. Numbers here means, Dr. Strong says, "numeration", and the Hebrew word is derived from another similar word which means "to score with a mark as a tally or record". Of this other word Gesenius says it means, "to scrape, to scratch, especially to inscribe letters on a stone; hence to write". The "numbers of salvation" seems to refer to the unknown number of occasions on which God had saved him from manifold dangers.

I will come with the mighty acts of the Lord GOD:
 I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only.
 O God, Thou hast taught me from my youth;
 And hitherto I have declared Thy wondrous works
 (verses 16, 17).

The A. V. says in verse 16, « "I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD", but what seems to be before the mind of the psalmist is what God had taught him from his youth, and of God's mighty acts. He says that he had hitherto declared God's wondrous works, that *is* he would teach what the Lord had done, and he would make mention of His righteousness and His only, and never speak a word about his own.

J. M.

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