

WORLD'S FINALE

A Brief Exposition of the Prophecies of the Seven Churches, the Seven Seals, and the Seven Trumpets of Revelation

By
A. W. ANDERSON
Author of "Through Turmoil to Peace"

1912

"Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein for
THE TIME IS AT HAND."
Revelation 1:3.

.SIGNS PUBLISHING COMPANY
(A.C.A. Ltd., Proprietors)
Warburton, Victoria, Australia

Wholly set up and printed in Australia, 1932
Registered by the Postmaster-General for transmission
through the post as a book.

Introduction

THE Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass. And He sent and signified It by His angel unto His servant John: who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

John to the SEVEN CHURCHES which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before His throne. And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and bath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kingdoms of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, said the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am' Alpha and Omega, the first and the last; and, what thou sees, write in a book, and send it unto the SEVEN CHURCHES which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the chest with a golden girdle. . . . And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the First and the Last: I am He that lived, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. Write the things which thou has seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; The mystery of the seven stars which thou saw in MY right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou saw are the seven churches. Revelation 1.

PREFACE

OVER eighteen centuries ago the Apostle John was banished to Patmos, a small island about thirty miles in circumference off the west coast of Asia Minor. Victorinus, Bishop of I'ettau, in Pannonia, who suffered martyrdom under Diocletian in AD 303, and who wrote a commentary on the Apocalypse, tells us that while John was imprisoned in Patmos, he had to work in the mines. Doubtless the pagan authorities at Rome then considered that they had effectively silenced the witness of the apostle by compelling him to labor in the mines of Patmos. But they were ignorant of the fact that God could communicate just as effectively with His servant in that lonely little island as He could in the great city of Ephesus. And that through His apostle He could make known His purposes notwithstanding all that might be (done) by human effort to thwart the proclamation of the gospel. Separated as he was from the companionship of his brethren, Jesus Christ came to him in his lonely exile. And as he gazed upon the Son of man and His heavenly majesty, with His "countenance is the sun shines in his strength," John tells us that he "fell at His feet as one dead." Then the Son of God laid His hand upon him and said, "Fear not; I am the first and the last; I am He that lived and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore. . . . Write the things which thou has seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter." Revelation 6-19, R.V.

How strange it is that men imagine such a vain thing as to defy God! In all ages men have "set themselves . . . against the Lord, and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands assunder, and cast away their cords from us. [But] He that sits in the heavens," says the Psalmist, "shall laugh: the Lord shall them in derision." Psalm 2:1-4. Hence the efforts of the pagan rulers of the first century of the

The World's Finale

Christian era to stop the work of God in the earth, by imprisoning the last of the apostles, came to naught; and God used the occasion of John's imprisonment to reveal to the world the ultimate triumph of His church over all its foes, and the final overthrow of the kingdoms of this world. All of which are to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

Chain after chain of prophetic revelations of the future were by Jesus Christ to His apostle, in order that these divine might be given to His servants for their encouragement to hold fast, and to endure unto the end, in spite of the tribulations and persecutions which they would be called upon to bear.

In the Apocalypse, the prophetic outlines of the Seven Churches, the Seven Seals, and the Seven Trumpets, all indicate in a most convincing manner that we are now living in the time just preceding the second advent of Jesus Christ.

It is the desire of the author to give a very simple explanation of these symbolic outlines of history in the hope of awakening the people of today to a realization of the extreme urgency of preparing to meet our God. Soon it will be too late to make any preparation, for we cannot have any part in God's eternal kingdom, nor taste of the bliss of heaven, unless we put away sin from the life by repentance, and are justified by the blood of Jesus.

Should this little book fall into the hands of any readers who doubt the possibility of prophetic inspiration, or who may be inclined to consider that the prophecies of the Bible are unreliable, or that they are the mere imaginings of men, we invite all such to give these simple interpretations of prophecy an impartial reading.

It should be understood that the author has made no attempt to write a treatise on the Revelation for the use of trained theologians; the object of this little book being merely to give the average reader a brief exposition of three of the wonderful prophetic outlines of history which were revealed to the Apostle John for the encouragement of the church in times such as these through which the world is now passing.

Those who desire a more extended exposition of the Apocalypse, should consult the standard works referred to by the author, or such books as "Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation," by Uriah Smith, or "The Seer of Patmos," by S. N. Haskell, both of which are procurable from the publishers of this booklet. A special blessing is pronounced upon those who read, and hear, and keep the things which were written by John at the dictation of Jesus Christ. See Revelation 1:3. Praying that this promised blessing may rest upon all who read these pages, and in the hope that the perusal of these simple expositions may lead many to accept the Savior, this little volume is sent out on its mission of love.

A. W. ANDERSON.

1. The Object of the Apocalypse

IN the Book of Revelation the battle between the forces of good and evil is dramatically described in a series of pictorial and symbolical prophecies. For many centuries, in times of tribulation, distress, and persecution, the church has found comfort from the assurances of ultimate victory which Christ has given to His people in this wonderful book. Therefore, in this time of world-wide perplexity, when "men's hearts are failing them for fear," the promises of victory to the overcomers, which are so clearly enunciated in the Apocalypse, should be a source of continual encouragement to the Christian.

In this little publication no effort has been made to do more than to give a very simple exposition of the great truths which are revealed in some of the beautiful symbolical prophecies of the Apocalypse, in the hope that those who desire to understand the meaning of the present world-wide turmoil, unrest, and perplexity, may find in these pages that very laudable desire satisfied.

The object for which the Book of Revelation has been given to the church is definitely stated. It is to make known "things which must shortly come to pass." For this reason we are following in this exposition what is known by theologians as the Historical System of Interpretation, believing that it was evidently the intention of Christ to impart to His church on earth an outline of the most important events and circumstances which His people would be called upon to meet, as the centuries rolled by between His ascension and His second advent. His object in making these historic events known beforehand is that His people may be assured that when all these events and circumstances had come to pass, the kingdoms of this world would then become "the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ."

Incidentally we might mention that there are three schools of interpretation of the Apocalypse the Preterist, the Futurist, and the Historical. The first one maintains that the visions of the Apocalypse relate to events and circumstances which are past; the second maintains that the fulfillment of most of the Book is still future. The third the Historical-teaches that the Apocalypse contains a continuous sequence of prophecies, in which are described the main features of the history of the world as they are related to the church. "is it possible," as one Anglican commentator has well observed, "that the counseling voice of prophecy should have spoken only of immediate dangers, and left the church for fifteen centuries unwarned": or "that eighteen centuries of the eventful history of the church are passed over in silence, and that the whole weight of inspired warning was reserved for the few closing years of the dispensation!"

As we proceed with the study of this simple outline we believe the reasonableness of the Historic system of interpretation will become more manifest and self-evident. As century after century of the Christian era is reviewed in the light of the Apocalyptic predictions, the gradual unfolding of the panorama of historical events becomes an enchanting series of stories from real life, all of which reveal that history is but the outworking of God's eternal purposes, and that the Most High still rules in the kingdoms of men; and that ultimately the forces of good will triumph over the forces of evil.

Merely human observation, unaided by the divine revelation of the written Word, leads men to conclude the very opposite of all this. They see, as Job saw, that in this life prosperity appears to be the lot of the wicked.

"Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?

"Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes.

"Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them.

"Their bull genders, and fails not; their cow calves, and casts not her calf.

"They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance.

"They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ.

"They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave.

"Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways.

"What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what profit should we have, if we pray unto Him?" Job 21:7-15.

But the divine enlightenment imparted to us through the Word Of God, sets before us the awful results of sin, and the certain reward of righteousness, and bids us in the words of David, the Psalmist, to view the temporary prosperity of the wicked from another angle.

"Fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." "Fret not thyself because of him

The World's Finale

who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree. Yet he passed away, and lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." "But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord: He is their strength in the time of trouble." Psalm 37:1, 2, 7, 9, 10, 11, 35, 36, 39.

The Book of Revelation is a drama in several acts illustrating from real life, as set forth in the actual facts of history, the outworking of these eternal principles of the divine law. And proving from the experiences of the past that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of this life, and of that which is to come." In every act of this drama as will be seen by glancing over the twelve divisions of the Apocalypse which we have outlined on this page, is brought to view either the ultimate victory of Christ and His people, or the final destruction of the wicked.

As we follow the play and interplay of events as they are delineated in the Apocalypse, we shall see clearly that the events portrayed in most of the acts have almost run their course. This is indeed a solemn reality' for it brings us face to face with the stupendous fact that we are living in the closing scenes of the world's drama, and that soon Jesus will come to "reward every man according to his works."

THE TWELVE DIVISIONS OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

SUBJECT	CHAPTER
1. Introduction and Dedication	1
2. Prophecy of the Seven Churches	2,3
3. Scenes in Heaven Described	4,5
4. Prophecy of the Seven Seals and the Sealing of the 144,000	6-8:
5. The Prophecy of the Seven Trumpets	8:2 - 11:19
6. The Controversy between Satan and the Church	12-14
7. The Victory of the Church	15
8. The Prophecy of the Seven Vials	16
9. The judgment of Babylon the Great	17, 18
10. Christ Destroys His Enemies and Becomes King of kings and Lord of lords.	19
11. The judgment of Satan and the judgment of the wicked	20
12. A New Heaven and a New Earth	21, 22

In each of these twelve divisions of the Book of Revelation is brought to view either the ultimate victory of Christ and His people, or the final destruction of the wicked.

1. Introduction - Christ's second coming emphasized, and the manner of His return. Chapter 1:7.
2. Church history till Christ's second advent-seven promises of victory of the overcomers.
Chapters 2: 7, 11, 17, 2 6; 3: 5, 12, 2 1.
3. The final victory of God's people. Chapter 5:1-13.
4. Representatives of all nations on earth before the throne of God in heaven. Chapter 7:9-17.
5. Kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. Chapter 11:15.
6. Christ reaps the harvest of the earth. Chapter 14:14-16.
7. Overcomers take part in the greatest anthem of praise ever sung in the universe. Chapter 15:2,3.
The destruction of the world at Christ's second coming. Chapter 16: 15-21.
9. The Lamb of God overcomes all His enemies. Chapter 17:14.
10. Christ's triumph with the armies of heaven. Chapter 19:11-16.
11. The resurrection of the righteous dead and the destruction of the wicked. Chapter 20: 4, 6, 11-15.
12. Christ's people inherit the New Jerusalem, the place which He has gone to prepare for their eternal habitation. Chapter 21:3,14.

In the first chapter a special blessing is pronounced upon those who read, and hear, and keep those things which are written therein. This should be an encouragement to all of us to give special attention to the last book in the Bible.

Additional interest is attached to this book, inasmuch as it is asserted in the opening sentence that

The World's Finale

it is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass." In this chapter Christ is represented as standing in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, which are the seven churches to whom John was instructed to send the book-Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. A glance at the accompanying map of Asia Minor reveals that these seven cities are situated on an old Roman road which traversed the country in an irregular circular direction, connecting all these cities in the order named, with Ephesus, which was the main seaport of that province in ancient times. It must be obvious that these seven churches are used symbolically of all the churches, for it is self-evident that Christ could not represent Himself as standing in the center of these seven literal churches, and holding in His right hand the angels of only these seven churches. His relationship to all the churches on earth is precisely the same, for God is no respecter of persons. His care and interest are equally divided between all the churches of all ages. If any churches had been mentioned particularly because of their influence and importance in the apostolic age, it is singular that the churches at Jerusalem, Rome, Corinth, Thessalonica, Colossae, Philippi, or Antioch were not mentioned in preference to such churches as Pergamos, Thyatira, or Sardis.

As we proceed with our study, it will become apparent that the seven churches in Asia Minor were chosen to symbolize the seven periods of church history, because-the names of these seven cities and the characteristics of their citizens were admirably fitted to represent the whole gospel church in seven divisions. What a wonderful tribute to the divine prescience of Jesus is here unfolded! From His throne in the heavens He could look down upon a section of Asia Minor, and there trace the outworking of the whole gospel age in seven periods, by simply following the meandering of an old Roman road which connected the cities of the province of Asia with the seaport of Ephesus. And then to select seven of those cities through which this road passed, the definition of whose names, together with the characteristics of their respective citizens, exactly typified the seven periods of church history. Who but a divine Being, from whom nothing is hidden, could trace history in advance for twenty centuries. And then divide those centuries into seven periods, each of which would manifest singular peculiarities and characteristics which had already manifested themselves in seven ancient cities, whose names even were typical of the period symbolized? This is surely a literary miracle, to account for which is beyond human comprehension.

The symbolical nature of these seven churches of Asia has been understood for centuries by leading writers on the Apocalypse who follow the Historical school of interpretation. In his scholarly work on the "Letters to the Seven Churches," Sir William Mitchell Ramsay reviews the varied characters of the Seven Churches and the Seven Cities, and in his opinion they constitute ~(an epitome of the Universal Church, and of the whole range of human life."

THE SEVEN PERIODS OF CHURCH HISTORY With definitions of names, and their historic characteristics

SEVEN CHURCHES	SEVEN PERIODS	DEFINITIONS OF NAMES CHARACTERISTICS'	HISTORIC
EPHESUS	31-100	Desirable	The City of Change
SMYRNA	100-323	Myrrh. Sweet-smelling Savor	The City of Life. Faithfulness
PERGAMOS	323-538	Height. Elevation The Royal City.	The City of Authority
THYATIRA	538-1798	Sweet Savor of Labor Subjection to Outward Influence	Weakness Made Strong.
SARDIS	1798-1833	Prince, or Song of Joy; or That Which Remains	The City of Death. Without Reality
PHILADELPHIA	1833-1844	Brotherly Love The City of Earthquakes	The Missionary City.
LAODICEA	1844	Judging of the People	The City of Compromise

As He addresses each of the Seven Churches, Christ assumes a different title, or description of some of His characteristics. Each of these titles seems to be peculiarly fitted to give assurance and courage to the followers of Christ in their respective periods of history, in order that they may be fortified to meet the peculiar conditions which they were called to face. This also will become more apparent as we proceed with our study.

The World's Finale

"The seven descriptions," says Professor Ramsay, "all differ from one another; and, taken together, they make up the complete account given in Revelation 1 of One like unto the Son of man. The divine Author presents Himself in a different aspect to each individual church; and the seven aspects make His complete personal description, as the different churches make up the complete and universal church."

SEVEN TITLES OF CHRIST

1. "He that holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." Revelation 2: 1.
2. "The First and the Last, which was dead, and is alive." Revelation 2: 8.
3. "He which bath the sharp sword with two edges." Revelation 2:12.
4. "The Son of God, who bath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet are like fine brass." Revelation 2:18
5. "He that bath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars." Revelation 3:1.
6. "He that is holy, He that is true, He that bath the key of David, He that opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens." Revelation 3:7.
7. "The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the Creation of God." Revelation 3:14.

To each of the Seven Churches is given a special promise to the overcomers of the period symbolized. These promises also have a singular significance for the faithful followers of Christ in the respective periods of church history.

SEVEN PROMISES TO THE OVERCOMERS

1. "To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Revelation 2:7.
2. "He that overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death." Revelation 2:11.
3. "To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows saving he that receives it." Revelation 2:17.
4. "He that overcomes, and keeps My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of My Father. And I will give him the morning star." Revelation 2:26-28.
5. "He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels." Revelation 3:5.
6. "Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out. And I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write upon him My new name." Revelation 3:12.
7. "To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne." Revelation 3:21.

To the overcomers in the apostolic period who carried the gospel to the pagan world in the face of death Christ promised that they should eat of the tree of life in the paradise of God.

To the brave Christians who endured the persecutions during the second period of church history He promised that they should not be hurt of the second death.

To those who resisted the temptation to affiliate with the world when Christianity was adopted as the state religion in the fourth century, Christ promised to give a new name which no one would know save him that received it.

To the faithful Christians of the Middle Ages who were commanded to worship according to the prescribed ritual of an intolerant ecclesiastical authority, Christ promised that the conditions would ultimately be reversed. Those who were ostracized and persecuted were to be given power over the nations, while the power of the persecutor was to be broken to pieces.

Those who combated the temptations of the post-Reformation period were promised the privilege of having their names confessed by Christ before the Father and His angels.

To the overcomers in the Philadelphian period is promised the high privilege of being a pillar in the temple of God.

To those who resist the temptation to compromise with the Laodicean conditions of these last days is promised a seat with Christ on His throne.

The World's Finale

UNTO the angel of the church of EPHESUS write. These things said He that holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou cannot bear them which are evil. And thou has tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and has found them liars. And has borne, and has patience, and for My name's sake has labored, and has not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou has left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou has, that thou hates the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit said unto the churches; To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

And unto the angel of the church in SMYRNA write; These things said the First and the Last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shall suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days; be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit said unto the churches; He that overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death.

And to the angel of the church in PERGAMOS write; These things said He which hath the sharp sword with two edges. I know thy works, and where thou dwells, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holds fast MY name, and has not denied MY faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against thee, because thou has there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So has thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. He that bath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit said unto the churches. To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows saving he that receives it. Revelation 2:1-17.

2. The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia

FIRST PERIOD: EPHESUS

(The Apostolic Era-To AD 100)

EPHESUS being the first church mentioned in the series of seven, we may understand that that church is intended to represent the first period of church history. The definition of the word "Ephesus" is "desirable," which may well describe the church of which the Revelator could say: "I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou cannot not bear them which are evil. And thou has tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and has found them liars; and has borne, and has patience, and for My name's sake has labored, and has not fainted." Revelation 2:2,3. Professor Ramsay calls Ephesus "the city of change," because of "the shifting character of the natural conditions on which the city depends for prosperity, that strikes every observer and every student either of history or of nature." What more natural symbol could have been selected to represent the mighty change wrought in the ancient world by the introduction of the gospel in the apostolic age, than "the city of change"?

When the apostles began their work of evangelizing the world, every country outside Palestine was lying in heathenism. Christ's commission to His apostles was to go and teach all nations the truths of Christianity. They were instructed to preach their message "both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." In a few years that commission had been so faithfully carried out that Paul was able to say to the church at Rome, "Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." Romans 1:8. Also to the church at Thessalonica he was able to say: "From you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad." 1 Thessalonians 1:8.

Gibbon, the famous historian, accounted for the rapid growth of Christianity by making the following impressive statements:

"Our curiosity is naturally prompted to inquire by what means the Christian faith obtained so remarkable a victory over the established religions of the earth. To this inquiry, an obvious but satisfactory

The World's Finale

answer may be returned; that it was owing to the convincing evidence of the doctrine itself, and to the ruling providence of its great Author. But, as truth and reason seldom finds so favorable a reception in the world, and as the wisdom of Providence frequently condescends to use the passions of the human heart, and the general circumstances of mankind, as instruments to execute its purpose. We may still be permitted, though with becoming submission, to ask not indeed what were the first, but what were the secondary causes of the rapid growth of the Christian church. It will perhaps, appear that it was most effectively favored and assisted by the five following causes:

1. The inflexible, and, if we may use the expression, the intolerant zeal of the Christians, derived, it is true, from the Jewish religion, but purified from the narrow and unsocial spirit which, instead of inviting, had deterred the Gentiles from embracing the law of Moses.

2. The doctrine of a future life, improved by every additional circumstance which could give weight and efficacy to that important truth.

3. The miraculous powers ascribed to the primitive church.

4. The pure and austere morals of the Christians.

5. The union and discipline of the Christian republic, which gradually formed an independent and increasing state in the heart of the Roman empire." The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," Vol. II, Edward Gibbon, page 2.

Never in the world's history was so remarkable a change in the beliefs, customs, and habits of the people brought about. How fitting, therefore, that Ephesus - the desirable-the city of change, should be chosen to represent so mighty and so desirable a change!

SECOND PERIOD: SMYRNA

(The Era of Pagan Persecution-A.D. 100-323)

Smyrna typifies the second period of church history. As the word "Smyrna" signifies "myrrh," that was surely a fitting symbol for that period of history during which the church was passing through the fiery furnace of pagan persecution. In spite of the most terrible persecutions, the early church remained faithful to God.

Smyrna was a city which gloried in its reputation for faithfulness. To the Smyrnaean church Christ said: "Fear none of those things which thou shall suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried. And you shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Revelation 2:10. The ten days of tribulation evidently had reference to the ten years of persecution which was carried on against the Christian church under the Emperor Diocletian, AD. 302-312. It must be self-evident that inasmuch as the literal church of Smyrna was not the only church which suffered from the persecution of the pagan emperors, therefore Smyrna was chosen to represent all the churches of Christ at that period, for all the churches in the Greco-Roman empire suffered those persecutions equally with Smyrna.

THIRD PERIOD: PERGAMOS

(The Union of Church and State-A.D.323-538)

Pergamos signifies height, elevation; and it was the Royal City, the city of authority. How true to the actual experience of the church this symbol is! Early in the fourth century, Christianity became the leading religion of the empire. Of this period of church history Christ says: "I know thy works, and where thou dwells, even where Satan's seat is." Revelation 2:13. Compare Revelation 13:2.

Pergamos was the official capital of the province for two centuries and a half. It "was the seat," says Professor Ramsay, "where the power of this world, the enemy of the church and its Author, exercised authority," and from the center the state religion was directed. When the Persians conquered Babylon, they substituted their own religion for that of the Babylonian mythology. The Chaldean magi fled to Asia Minor, and established their central college at Pergamos; and from that center Rome derived its knowledge of the mysteries, the fundamental doctrine of which was that the sun was the one only god. The sun divinity was worshipped under the form of a serpent, under the name of Esculapius, "the man-instructing serpent" that gave to man the knowledge of good and evil. It was at Pergamos that the idea originated that the Roman emperors should be deified.

It is interesting to note in passing that some Roman Catholic writers agree with the Protestant interpretation of these churches, for in a Roman Catholic work entitled "The Apocalypse of St. John," by J. J. L. Raton, the following statement appears: "The third stage of the church, called Pergamos, extended from the Edict of Milan, AD 313, to the fall of the Roman empire in the beginning of the sixth century."

The World's Finale

Professor Ramsay's wonderful description of the history of Pergamos makes it very apparent why the Revelator chose that city of all the cities of the ancient world to symbolize the third period of church history. He says:

"Pergamum stands before us in the letter as the city of authority, beside the throne-the throne of this world and of the power of evil, where the lord of evil dwells. And to its victorious church is promised a greater authority, the power of the mighty name of God, known only to the giver and the receiver. It was the royal city of history, seat of the Attalid Kings and chief center of the Roman imperial administration. And the epithet 'royal' is the one that rises unbidden to the traveler's lips, especially if he beholds it after seeing the other great cities of the land, with its immense acropolis on a rock rising out of a plain like a mountain, self-centered in its impregnable strength, looking out over the distant sea and over the land right away to the hills beside far-off Smyrna." - "Letters to the Seven Churches," pages 43, 44.

Pergamum was the official capital of the province for two centuries and a half; so that its history as the seat of supreme authority over a large country lasts about four centuries, and had not yet come to an end when the Seven Letters were written. The impression which the natural features of its position convey was entirely confirmed to the writer of the letters by its history. It was to him the seat where the power of this world, the enemy of the church and its Author, exercised authority. The authority was exercised in two ways-civil administration through the proconsul, and the state religion directed by the commune of Asia." - Ibid., page 283.

"Before the Seven Letters were written, the imperial government had already ranged itself definitely in opposition to the church of Christ. The procedure against the Christians was fixed and stereotyped. Their loyalty was now tested by the one criterion recognized alike by public opinion and by government policy, viz., their willingness to perform the ritual of the state religion, and make offering to the imperial god, the divine emperor. Those who refused to comply with this requirement were forthwith condemned to death as traitors and enemies of the state.

"In this state religion of the empire, the worship of the divine emperors, organized on a regular system in Asia as in all other provinces, Satan found his home and exercised his power in opposition to God and His church. Pergamum, as being still the administrative capital of the province, was also the chief seat of the state religion. Here was built the first Asian temple of the divine Augustus, which for more than forty years was the one center of the imperial religion for the whole province."-Ibid., pages 293, 294. "In this Pergamene temple, then, Satan was enthroned. The authority over the minds of its Asian subjects, possessed by the state, and arrayed against the church, was mainly concentrated in the temple. The history of the church in Pergamum had been determined by its close proximity to the seat of the state opposition, 'where Satan's throne is.' "-Ibid., page 294.

THE NICOLAITAN HERESY

"The honorable history and the steadfast loyalty of the Pergamene church, however, had been tarnished by the error of a minority of the congregation, which had been convinced by the teaching of the Nicolaitans. This school of thought and conduct played an important part in the church of the first century. Ephesus had tried and rejected it. The Smyrnaean congregation, despised and ill-treated by their fellow-citizens, had apparently not been much affected by it; in Pergamum a minority of the church had adopted its principles; in Thyatira the majority were attracted by it, and it there found its chief seat, so far as Asia was concerned. Probably the controversy with regard to the Nicolaitan views was fought out and determined in Asia more decisively than in any other province, though the same questions must have presented themselves and demanded an answer in every province and city where the Greco-Roman civilization was established.

It was evidently an attempt to effect a reasonable compromise with the established usage of Greco-Roman society and to retain as many as possible of those usages in the Christian system of life. It affected most of all the cultured and well-to-do classes in the church, those who had most temptation to retain all that they could of the established social order and customs of the Greco-Roman world, and who by their more elaborate education had been trained to take a somewhat artificial view of life and to reconcile contradictory principles in practical conduct through subtle philosophical reasoning."-Ibid., pages 298, 299.

"But the historian must regard the Nicolaitans with intense interest, and must regret deeply that we know so little about them, and that only from their enemies. And yet at the same time he must feel that nothing could have saved the infant church from melting away into one of those vague and ineffective schools of philosophic ethics except the stern and strict rule that is laid down here by St. John. An easy-

The World's Finale

going Christianity could never have survived; it could not have conquered and trained the world; only the most convinced, resolute, almost bigoted adherence to the most uncompromising interpretation of its own principles could have given the Christians the courage and self-reliance that were needed. For them to hesitate or to doubt was to be lost.

"Especially, it is highly probable that the Nicolaitans either already had, or soon would have, reached the conclusion that they might justifiably comply with the current test of loyalty, and burn a little incense in honor of the emperor. The church was not disloyal; even its most fanatical defenders claimed to be loyal; then why should its members make any difficulty about proving their loyalty by burning a few grains of incense? A little incense was nothing. An excellent and convincing argument can readily be worked out; and then---the whole ritual of the state religion would have followed as a matter of course. Christ and Augustus would have been enthroned side by side as they were in the compromise attempted by the Emperor Alexander Severus more than a century later. And everything that was vital in Christianity would have been lost. St. John, like St. Paul in 1 Corinthians, saw the real issue that lay before the church---either it must conquer and destroy the imperial idolatry, or it must compromise, and in so doing be itself destroyed. Both St. Paul and St. John answered with the most hearty, unwavering, uncompromising decisiveness. Not the faintest shadow of acquiescence in idolatry must be permitted to the Christian. On this the Nicolaitans, with all good intention, went wrong; and to St. John the error was unpardonable. He compares the Nicolaitans to the Israelites who were led astray into pleasure and vice by the subtle plan of Balaam. No words of condemnation are too strong for him to use. Their teaching was earthly, sensual, devilish. In their philosophical refinements of argumentation he saw only 'the deep things of Satan.'"--Ibid., pages 300, 301.

AND unto the angel of the church in THYATIRA write; These things said the Son of God, who bath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet are like fine brass. I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou suffers that woman Jezebel, which calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am He which searches the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which you have already hold fast till I come.

And he that overcomes, and keeps My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of My Father. And I will give him the morning star.

He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit said unto the churches. Revelation 2: 18-29.

FOURTH PERIOD: THYATIRA

(The Middle Ages, AD 538-1798)

Thyatira symbolizes the fourth period of church history. If Pergamos symbolized that period of church history in which the church became enthroned with the state, then Thyatira would naturally symbolize that period of church history during which the world was dominated by the Papacy. "Thyatira," says Uriah Smith, "signifies 'sweet savor of labor,' or 'sacrifice of contrition.' This would well describe the state of the church of Jesus Christ during the long period of papal triumph and persecution. This age of such dreadful tribulation upon the church as never was (Matt. 24:21), improved the real condition of believers.

Hence they receive for their works, charity, service, faith, and patience, the commendation of Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire. And works are then again mentioned, as though worthy of a double commendation. And the last were more than the first. There had been an improvement in their condition, a growth in grace, an increase in all these elements of Christianity. This church is the only one that is commended for an improvement in spiritual things. But as in the church of Pergamos, unfavourable circumstances were no apology for false doctrines in the church, so in this church, no amount of labor, charity, service, faith, or patience could compensate for a like sin." "Daniel and the Revelation," Page 358. Summing up his description of the topographical surroundings of Thyatira, Professor Ramsay says:

The World's Finale

"The whole impression which the situation gives is of weakness, subjection, and dependence. The most careless and casual observer could never take Thyatira for a ruling city, or the capital of an empire." "The history of Thyatira is a blank. . . . Its situation defines its history; but the history has not been recorded." - "The Letters to the Seven Churches," pages 318, 323.

It seems rather paradoxical that Thyatira, so weak and so dependent by nature, should be singled out for a reward of such mighty power. "And he that overcomes, and keeps My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of My Father. And I will give him the morning star." Revelation 2:26-28.

"Thyatira, of all the seven cities," says Professor Ramsay, "seemed in every way the least fitted by nature and by history to rule over the nations; and it could not fail to be observed by the Asian readers as a notable thing, that the church of this weakest and least famous of the cities should be promised such a future of strength and universal power. . . . As we go through the seven letters point by point, each detail confirms our impression of the unhesitating and sublime confidence in the victory of the church which prompts and enlivens them. The emperor, the Roman state with its patriotism, its religion, and its armies, the brutal populace of the cities, the Jews, and every other enemy of the church, are all raging and persecuting and slaying to the utmost of their power. But their power is naught. The real church stands outside of their reach, immeasurably above them, secure and triumphant, 'eternal in the heavens,' while the individual Christians work out their victory in their own life, and above all by their death. So that the more successfully the enemy kills them off, the more absolute is his defeat, and the more complete and immediate is their victory. The weakest and least honored among those Christian martyrs, as he gains his victory by death, is invested with that authority over the nations, which the proud empire believed that its officials and governors wielded, and rules with a power more supreme than that of Rome herself." -Ibid., pages 333, 334.

For the sin of Thyatira in permitting herself to be seduced by the false doctrines of Jezebel, Christ gave her opportunity to repent, but the sacred record says, "She repented not"; therefore the judgment of her sin was pronounced-she should be cast into "great tribulation," and her children should be killed. How true all this is of the fourth period of church history! After the exaltation of the church of the Pergamos period to union with the state, false doctrines were taught in the church itself, and the evil communications with Grecian philosophy corrupted the good manners of the church. Hence degeneracy and decay of true spirituality manifested itself. The little flock which remained loyal to apostolic teaching, was driven into obscurity, hidden in "the wilderness," as portrayed in chapter 12, verse 14, of the Apocalypse, "where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent." How wonderfully the natural weakness of Thyatira, and the obscurity of her history, which is described as "a blank," is symbolical of the church during the prophetic equivalent of twelve hundred and sixty literal years, the period of papal supremacy! During the fourth period of church history one thing stood out upon the horizon; the power of the Church of Rome was so great during the period of her supremacy that no rival was tolerated. But He who "changes the times and the seasons," and "removes kings and sets up kings," had set a bound to that period of intolerance, and at the appointed time the reign of intolerance came to an end.

J. J. L. Ratton, the Roman Catholic writer from whom we have already quoted, makes the following observations on Thyatira:

"Thyatira, the fourth age of the church, began when the downfall of pagan Rome was accomplished and the devil was chained up for a thousand years. . . . Both the church and the world speak of this period as 'the Middle Ages.' In this it may be that we have built better than we knew; for Thyatira is the middle church of the seven, and consequently stands as the symbol of the church of 'the Middle Ages.'" - "The Apocalypse of St. John," pages 155-158.

We have quoted this extract because of the fact that this writer recognizes that the Thyatiran period covers "the Middle Ages." But we must not wish our readers to believe that "the devil was chained up for a thousand years" during that long period of oppression, intolerance, and tyranny. In our opinion Satan was most active during that period, in his opposition to the dissemination of truth, and as the instigator of the Inquisition was responsible for the destruction of millions of God's devoted People who preferred death rather than to deny their faith.

Another authority sums up this period of church history thus:

"The material prosperity of the church culminated in the Middle Ages. Its revenues from lands and property of all kinds, from endowments and bequests, increased enormously. It became one of the richest institution in the world. In the train of wealth came luxury, and in the lap of luxury lay vice." - Holzhauser,

The World's Finale

Volume I, page 145.

In a letter upon the "Downfall of Antichrist" published in London by the Revelation A. Maddock in 1799, he says that this Thyatiran period of church history "began at the time when the pope was declared supreme over all other bishops [5331, and lasted till his power and reign met with a check at the Reformation, which began the Sardinian church state, which still continues [1799].

It will be seen that we are by no means alone in following the system of interpretation of the seven churches which we are setting before the reader. Numbers of theologians of various denominational beliefs have adopted the same system of interpretation, although in some respects, and in mere matters of detail, they may differ slightly in their conclusions.

AND unto the angel of the church in SARDIS write; These things said He that bath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars. I know thy works, that thou has a name that thou lives, and are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die. For I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou has received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shall not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shall not know what hour I will come upon thee.

Thou has a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcomes the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit said unto the churches.

And to the angel of the church in PHILADELPHIA write; These things said He that is holy, He that is true, He that bath the key of David, He that opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens. I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou has a little strength, and has kept My word, and has not denied MY name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

Because thou has kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou has, that no man take thy crown.

Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out. And I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from MY God. And I will write upon him MY new name. He that bath an ear, let him hear what the spirit said unto the churches. Revelation 3:1-13.

3. The Churches of Sardis and Philadelphia

FIFTH PERIOD: SARDIS

(Post-Reformation Era-A.D. 1798-1833)

THE fifth period of church history was symbolized by the church of Sardis. If the period of church history symbolized by Thyatira synchronized with the period of papal supremacy, then the next period would commence at the end of the eighteenth century, when the papal dominions were captured by the French, and the papal government abolished. Wonderful light and opportunities were given to the church when the papal dominion was overthrown. An era of liberty dawned upon the world. Bible societies soon sprang into existence, and missionary societies were organized for the purpose of evangelizing the whole world.

But while the Sardinian period of church history is singular because of its special privileges and opportunities, the Lord exhorted His church of that period to "be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die. . . . Remember, therefore, how thou has received and heard, and hold fast, and repent."

"Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." Great opportunities demand great service, but the church of the Sardinian period failed to rise to the occasion.

Sir William Mitchell Ramsay offers the following intensely interesting comments on the letter to the Sardinian church:

"The letter to the Sardinian church breathes the spirit of death, of appearance without reality,

The World's Finale

promise without performance, outward show of strength betrayed by want of watchfulness and careless confidence. . . . And such also was the city and its history. Looked at from a little distance to the north in the open plain, Sardis wore an imposing, commanding, impregnable aspect; as it dominated that magnificent broad valley of the Hermus from its robber stronghold on a steep spur that stands out boldly from the great mountains on the south. But, close at hand, the hill is seen to be but mud, slightly compacted, never trustworthy or lasting, crumbling under the influences of the weather, ready to yield even to a blow of the spade. Yet the Sardians always trusted to it; and their careless confidence had often been deceived, when an adventurous enemy climbed in at some unguarded point, where the weathering of the soft rock had opened a way." - "The Letters to the Seven Churches," Pages 44, 45.

"The analogy between the Ephesian and Sardian letters is close, and the two have to be studied together. History had moved on similar lines with the two churches. Both had begun enthusiastically and cooled down. Degeneration was the fact in both, but in Ephesus the degeneration had not yet become so serious as in Sardis. Hence in the Ephesian letter the keynote is merely change, instability, and uncertainty; in the Sardian letter the keynote is degradation, false pretension, and death." - Ibid., page 369.

"No city in, the whole province of Asia had a more splendid history in past ages than Sardis. No city of Asia at that time showed such a melancholy contrast between past splendor and present decay as Sardis. Its history was the exact opposite of the record of Smyrna. Smyrna was dead, and yet lived. Sardis lived, and yet was dead." - Ibid., page 375.

"To those Greeks of the coast colonies, Ephesus and Smyrna and the rest, Sardis was also the city of failure, the city whose history was marked by the ruin of great kings, and the downfall of great military strength, apparently in mid-career, when it seemed to be at its highest development. It was the city whose history conspicuously and pre-eminently blazoned forth the uncertainty of human fortunes, the weakness of human strength, and the shortness of the step that separated over-confident might from sudden and irreparable disaster. It was the city whose name was almost synonymous with pretensions unjustified, promises unfulfilled, appearances without reality, confidence that heralded ruin. Reputed an impregnable fortress, it had repeatedly fallen short of its reputation, and ruined those who trusted in it. Croesus had thought he could sit safe in the great fortress, but his enemy advanced straight upon it, and carried it by assault before the strength of the Lydian land was collected.

"Carelessness and failure to keep proper watch, arising from overconfidence in the apparent strength of the fortress, had been the cause of this disaster, which ruined the dynasty and brought to an end the Lydian empire and the dominance of Sardis. . . .

"The sudden ruin of that great empire and the wealthiest king of all the world, was an event of that character which most impressed the Greek mind, emphasizing a moral lesson by a great national disaster. A little carelessness was shown; a watchman was wanting at the necessary point, or a sentinel slept at his post for an hour; and the greatest power on the earth was hurled to destruction." - Ibid. Pages 376, 377.

The history of Sardis as a city is reflected in the church of Sardis. The development of the characteristics of the Sardians was largely influenced by the natural environment amid which the city stood. The hill upon which Sardis was built gave the impression at a distance of great strength and stability, yet closer examination revealed the fact that it was "only mud slightly compacted, and easily dissolved by rain." "The crumbling, poor character of the rock must always have been a feature that impressed the thinking mind, and led it to associate the character of the inhabitants with this feature of the situation. Instability, untrustworthiness, inefficiency, deterioration-such is the impression that the rock gives, and such was the character of Sardian history and of the Sardian church." - Ibid., pages 382, 383.

Dr. Camden M. Cobern relates an interesting discovery at Sardis of a primitive Christian church, built of brick, at the east end of the majestic temple of Artemis, and which is still standing amid "the magnificence of the paganism which it had supplanted." - "The New Archeological Discoveries," page 568.

There seems to be a close analogy between this little Sardian church and the modern Sardian period of church history, during which large numbers of modest little churches sprang up, in contrast to the magnificence of the great cathedrals and state churches which were erected during the Thyatiran period.

SIXTH PERIOD: PHILADELPHIA

(The Missionary Era-A.D. 1833-1844)

The sixth period of church history was symbolized by the church of Philadelphia. The meaning of the word "Philadelphia" is "brotherly love." The city derived its name from Attalus II, 159-138 BC, whose truth and loyalty to his brother Eumenes (king of Pergamos) won him the epithet, Philadelphus." Philadelphia was founded for the purpose of "spreading the Greek language and manners in the eastern

The World's Finale

parts of Lydia and in Phrygia. It was a missionary city from the beginning," says Professor Ramsay, "founded to promote a certain unity of spirit, customs, and loyalty within the realm, the apostle of Hellenism in an Oriental land. It was a successful teacher. Before AD 19 the Lydian tongue had ceased to be spoken in Lydia, and Greek was the only language of the country."

To the church in Philadelphia the heavenly message was sent, "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou has a little strength, and has kept My word, and has not denied My name." Revelation 3: 8. To the Apostle Paul "a great door" was opened at Ephesus. 1 Corinthians 16:9. At Troas he says "a door was opened unto me of the Lord." 2 Corinthians 2:12. This expression, "an open door," may therefore refer to the opportunities for missionary activity which the geographical situation of Philadelphia furnished to the Christians of that city. "This opportunity," says Professor Ramsay, "was a special gift and privilege and favor bestowed upon Philadelphia. Nothing of the kind is mentioned for any other city.

"The situation of the city fully explains this saying. Philadelphia lay at the upper extremity of a long valley, which opens back from the sea. After passing Philadelphia the road along this valley ascends to the Phrygian land and the great central plateau, the main mass of Asia Minor. . . . Philadelphia, therefore, was the keeper of the gateway to the plateau; but the door had now been permanently opened before the church, and the work of Philadelphia had been to go forth through the door and carry the gospel to the cities of the Phrygian land. . . . Philadelphia must have been preeminent among the seven cities as the missionary church." - "The Letters to the Seven Churches," pages 404-06.

It is singularly appropriate that Philadelphia, "the missionary city," should have been selected as symbolical of the sixth period of church history, for that period marked the time when God opened the doors of the heathen world in a most remarkable manner to the preaching of the gospel. The era of modern missions began at the close of the eighteenth century, but the doors of the heathen world were certainly not "open" at that time. Think of the difficulties which Carey and Judson and Morrison had to face in order to enter India, Burma, and China! Not only did these modern apostles of the cross have to face the opposition of Hindus, Buddhists, and Confucians, and civil authorities, but they had to meet the opposition of the mercantile companies who feared that missionary activity might interfere with their trade. It was largely through the efforts of these noble men, who attempted "great things for God," and who, in spite of the most forbidding circumstances, could calmly say that the outlook was "as bright as the promises of God," combined with providential political circumstances, that the doors of the Far East were open to the preaching of the gospel. Many attempts have since been made to shut those doors, but Christ, who holds "the key of David," and who opens and no man shuts, says to the Philadelphian church, "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." The Bible has been translated into the languages of the peoples of the East, and nothing that men or devils can do can upset the truths of Christianity which have already found a lodgment in the hearts of multitudes of Mohammedans, Hindus, Buddhists, Confucians, and pagans.

Philadelphia was singular among the seven cities because it adopted a new name. In AD 17 the city was destroyed by a great earthquake. The dread of a repetition of that disaster caused many of the inhabitants to live out in the open country in huts and booths. The Emperor Tiberius showed considerable kindness to the city because of the disaster which had overtaken it; hence Philadelphia assumed the name Neokaisareia. "Subsequently, during the reign of Vespasian, AD 70-79, Philadelphia assumed another imperial title, and called itself Flavia. . . . Thus Philadelphia was distinguished from the other cities by several characteristics: first, it was the missionary city; secondly, its people lived always in dread of disaster; 'the day of trial'. Thirdly, many of its people went out of the city to dwell; fourthly, it took a new name from the imperial god."-Ibid., page 398.

Another rather singular fact which Professor Ramsay mentions concerning Philadelphia is that the "Philadelphian church was distinguished by a prophetess, Ammia, who flourished apparently between AD 100 and 160. She was universally recognized as ranking with Agabus and the four daughters of Philip, as one of the few in the later time who were truly gifted with the prophetic power."-Ibid., page 399.

To the people of God who keep the word of His patience in spite of the disasters and perils which threaten them, the promise is given: "Because you have guarded My message resolutely, I also will guard you in the time of trial, which is coming upon all the inhabited world to test them who dwell upon the earth." Revelation 3:10, Fenton's translation.

In the message to Philadelphia, "the Second Coming of Christ is brought to view," says Uriah Smith, "with more startling emphasis than in any of the preceding messages. The nearness of that event is here urged upon the attention of believers. The message applies to a period when that great event is

The World's Finale

impending; and in this we have most indubitable evidence of the prophetic nature of these messages. What is said of the first three churches contains no allusion to the Second Coming of Christ, from the fact that they do not cover a period during which that event could be Scripturally expected. But we come down to the Thyatiran church, beyond which only three comparatively brief stages of the church appear before the end, and, as though then the time had come when this great hope was just beginning to dawn upon the church, the mind is carried forward to it by a single allusion. 'Hold fast till I come.' We come down to the next state of the church, the Sardis, the church which occupies a position still nearer that event, and the great proclamation is brought to view which was to herald it, and the duty of watching enjoined upon the church. 'If thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief.' We reach the Philadelphian church, still farther down in the stream of time, and the nearness of the same great event then leads Him who 'is holy and true' to utter the stirring declaration, 'Behold, I come quickly.' How evident it is from all this that these churches occupy positions successively nearer the great day of the Lord, as in each succeeding one, and in a constantly increasing ratio, this great event is made more and more prominent, and is more definitely and impressively urged upon the attention of the church!" ("Daniel and the Revelation," page 369). In the next period of church history, the last of the seven Christ is represented as standing at the door, and knocking. Revelation 3:20.

While living in dread of disaster, the people of God in the Philadelphian period of church history had the hope of the nearness of the second advent to encourage them; and on every hand there were open doors of opportunity to carry the gospel to those sitting in darkness. How wonderfully God has shown in the messages to the churches that He knows the end from the beginning, and that everything is open before Him. Each of the seven churches of Asia was selected because the characteristics of those seven cities were symbolical of the seven future periods of church history; and these revelations were not given merely to satisfy the curiosity of men, but to stimulate their faith, and "to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass."

AND unto the angel of the church of the LAODICEANS write; These things said the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the Creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou were cold or hot. So then because they art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of My mouth. Because thou says, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knows not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou may be rich. And white raiment, that thou may be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye-salve, that thou may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me. To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit said unto the churches Revelation 3:14-22.

4. The Church Of Laodicea

THE SEVENTH PERIOD: LAODICEA

(The Era of Modernism and Compromise-1844 to the Coming of Christ)

THE seventh period of church history is symbolized by the church of Laodicea, and the message is given by "the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the Creation of God." Revelation 3:14. It would be natural to infer that the use of the title "Amen" would signify that this is the terminating point of church history. But in addressing the last of the churches it is perhaps not quite so clear why Christ should call Himself by the title, "the beginning of the Creation of God." That there is a reason for this we may be quite sure.

In the last gospel message to the world, there are two exhortations; one being, "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come" the other being, "Worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." Revelation 14:7. So the last gospel message to the world is a judgment message and an exhortation to worship the Creator. It is rather significant that Christ addresses the last period of church history, the Laodicean, as the "Amen" and the "Beginning of the Creation of God."

The meaning of the word "Laodicea" is "the judging of the people." It is surely more than a

The World's Finale

coincidence that Laodicea should be chosen to represent a period of history during which a special judgment message is to go to all the world, and that Christ, in addressing a message to that period of time, should choose as His title, "the Beginning of the Creation of God." The Greek word translated in the Authorized Version of the Bible "beginning," really means the "agent" and the word was evidently used to indicate that Christ was the agent through whom God created all things. Fenton translates the word, "Beginner."

Into all the world God is now sending a message of warning that "the hour of His judgment is come," accompanied by a definite call to worship Him as Creator; and these prophetic messages are singularly applicable to the conditions which are so manifest in this Laodicean age, for the very fundamental truths of Christianity are now being attacked by evolutionary theories. If we are to believe the Bible, man was created by God, as taught in the Book of Genesis. Or is he simply the product of natural forces, as taught by the evolutionist? Here are the two propositions placed side by side:-

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. So God created man in His own image."

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Genesis 1:26,27; 2:7.

All life on this planet, even human life, originated in a tiny slimy speck resembling transparent jelly found in pools of water along the shores of the primeval seas over a billion years ago." - Popular Science Monthly, March, 1925.

These two propositions cannot both be correct, for they flatly contradict each other. But as evolutionists cannot agree among themselves as to the origin of life upon this planet, it would seem wise to let them settle their own differences before giving any credence to their vague theories; for recent scientific investigations have somewhat upset the traditional views of evolutionists.

Dr. William Emerson Ritter, Professor of Zoology in the University of California, in an article published in Science, April 14, 1922, made this rather significant remark: "If one scans a bit thoughtfully the landscape of human life for the last few decades, he can hardly fail to see signs that the whole battleground of evolution will have to be fought over again. This time not so much between scientists and theologians, as among scientists themselves."

Dr. H. H. Newman made the following admission: "Reluctant as he may be to admit it, honesty compels the evolutionist to admit that there is no absolute proof of organic evolution." "Readings in Evolution," page 57.

In view of the utter failure of science to account for the origin of the organic world, it is only natural that we should refuse to accept their contradictory and unproved theories. Lord Kelvin, a prince among scientists, said: "It is not in dead matter that we live and move and have our being, but in the creating and directing power which science compels us to accept as an article of belief. If you think strongly enough, you will be forced by science to believe in God, which is the foundation of all religion."

How very applicable the Laodicean message is to this age of the world when almost all the churches are contaminated more or less with the Bible-denying theories of evolution! Jesus Christ claims as one of His titles, "The Beginner of the Creation of God." Of Him we read that "all things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." John 1:3. "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible." Colossians 1:16. Let us then heed the proclamation which is going into all the world, to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people": "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come. And worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." Revelation 14:6,7.

In the message to the church of Laodicea, the lukewarm condition of the church appears most distasteful to the Master. The Laodiceans are described as "neither cold nor hot." They appeared to be well satisfied with their spiritual condition, commenting themselves upon their riches, while all the time they were "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Because of this condition, Christ counseled them to buy of Him "gold tried in the fire . . . and white raiment"; and He further exhorted them to anoint their eyes with eye-salve, that they might see.

In view of the actual conditions which obtained in the city of Laodicea, this message should be of great interest to the Bible student. Laodicea was a manufacturing and banking center, as well as the seat of a famous school of medicine. Aristotle tells us of a powder which was manufactured at Laodicea, and

The World's Finale

which was exported to all parts of the Greek and Roman world. This powder was made from Phrygian stone, and was used as an eye medicine. By the sale of this eye-salve the Laodiceans became wealthy. .

In his description of Laodicea, Sir William Mitchel Ramsay says:

"There is no city whose spirit and nature are more difficult to describe than Laodicea. There are no extremes, and hardly any very strongly marked features. But in this even balance lies its peculiar character. Those were the qualities that contributed to make it essentially the successful trading city, the city of bankers and finance, which could adapt itself to the needs and wishes of others, ever pliable and accommodating, full of the spirit of compromise. . . . It is the only one of the seven cities in which no relation is discernible between the natural features that surround it and its part and place in history." - "The Letters to the Seven Churches," pages 422, 423.

COMPROMISE

The characteristics of Laodicea are summed up by Professor Ramsay in one word, "compromise." He says:

"The Laodicean church is neither one thing nor another. It is given to compromise. It cannot thoroughly reject the temptations and allurements of the world. . . . Of the seven cities, Laodicea is the one which is least determined in character, the one of which the outline is least clearly and sharply defined in history. . . . The one respect in which it stands forth pre-eminent is that it is the adaptable city, able to suit itself to the needs of others, because it has no strongly pronounced character of its own. Such a nature would be suited for the successful commercial city which it was. But such a nature would least commend the city to St. John. Laodicea must appear to him undecided, devoid of initiative, pliable, irresolute, and unsatisfactory."-Ibid., page 424.

The compromising city of Laodicea, rich in this world's goods, self-satisfied, adaptable to circumstances, possessing no pronounced characteristics of its own, lacking initiative, enthusiasm, religious zeal and fervor, accommodating itself to the customs of the world rather than standing out for strict obedience to the principles of truth, is a fit symbol of this compromising age, when some of the leading Protestant churches are seeking for opportunities to reunite Christendom under the papal See. It would indeed be a blessed thing if Christendom could be united under the leadership of Jesus Christ, but unity gained at the expense of principle - a mere compromise between truth and error - the abandonment of fundamental doctrines founded upon the Word of God, would be but a backward step into medieval darkness.

In a sermon on "Reform," preached by the Revelation Charles Haddon Spurgeon, in London, February 14, 1859, that celebrated preacher said.

"It is quite clear that all sects cannot be right. They may be right as to the main points essential to salvation, though in their discrepancies with one another they betray errors. I do not want you to believe that I am right; rather turn to the Scriptures, and see what is right. The day must come when Episcopacy, Independency, Wesleyanism, and every other system must be read by the Word of God; and every form given up that is not approved before the Most High. I do hope I shall always be able to lift up my voice against that charity growing up in our midst which is not only a charity towards persons, but a charity towards doctrines. I have fervent charity towards every brother in Christ who differs from me; I love him for Christ's sake. But I can have no charity for his errors, nor do I wish him to have any for mine. Either I am right and you are wrong, or you are right and I am wrong; and it is time we should meet together and search the Word of God, to see what is right.

"Talk of your evangelical alliances, and suchlike; they will never endure; they may effect many blessed purposes, but they are not the remedy that is wanted for our divisions. What is wanted is for all of us to come to the model of the Word of God; and when we have come to that, we must come together. Let us all come 'to the law and to the testimony.' Let the Baptist, the Independent, the Churchman, lay aside his old thoughts, his old prejudices, and his old traditions, and let each man search for himself as in the sight of Almighty God, and some of the altars must go down, for they cannot all be after the divine type when their dissimilarity is so palpable."

How true these words ring! How little of the compromising spirit of Laodicea is found therein! It is not evangelical alliances, nor unions of churches, nor any other organization that men may devise that is needed today. "What is wanted is for all of us to come to the model of the Word of God; and when we have come to that, we must come together. Let us all come 'to the law and the testimony.' "

Since Charles H. Spurgeon preached that sermon, in which he condemned the growing disposition to be charitable towards doctrines, there has been an amazing development along that line. Prominent

The World's Finale

members of the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches met at Malines at various times between 1921 and 1925 to discuss the possibility of reunion. According to a cabled report from London, which appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald, January 20, 1928, these representatives of the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches were able to agree that:

"In the Eucharist the body and blood of Christ are verily given, taken, and received by the faithful; and that by consecration, bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ."

The Anglican representatives agreed to the following proposition:-

"That the church is a living body under the authority of the bishops as successors to the apostles. From the beginning of the church the primacy and leadership among all bishops have been recognized as belonging to the Bishop of Rome."

They went even further in their advances towards Rome by adding the following startling remark:-

"Nor can we Anglicans imagine any reunion of Christendom being effected excepting by recognition of the primacy of the pope."

The Romeward drift, however, is not confined to the Anglican Church, for there are unmistakable evidences that even in Nonconformist churches ' the leaven of Rome is working. How true are the words of Dean Inge, in an article entitled, "Religion of the Future," published in the Atlantic Monthly, February, 1925. "Protestantism," says the Dean, "is at present suffering from two causes of weakness, very unlike each other. The first is the collapse of the Bibliolatry which used to be one (if its chief buttresses. . . . The other reason . . . is the decay of the old Puritan discipline." Instead of Bibliolatry being the fashion amongst church people today, it is higher criticism, and instead of Puritan discipline we see everywhere laxity in morals, compromise in doctrines, and a "peace-at-any-price policy" being practiced by those who should be staunch defenders of the principles of Protestantism.

"To him that overcomes" in Laodicea, says Christ, "will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne." Revelation 3:21.

Having traversed along the symbolical road from Ephesus to Laodicea, and noted the marvelous manner in which the history of Christendom has been written in these divine letters to the Seven Churches it must be apparent to the reader that we are now living in the closing age of this world's history and that Christ is actually knocking at the door. Let us then be wise and open our hearts to Him and invite Him to be the Master of our lives and the Savior of our souls.

AFTER this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceeded lightning and thundering and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God.

And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as, a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to Him that sat on the throne, who lives for ever and ever the four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on' the throne, and worship Him that lives for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou has created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created. Revelation 4.

5. Scenes in Heaven Described

IN Revelation 4 is given a symbolical representation of the heavenly sanctuary. John was invited to enter heaven in vision in order that he might be instructed concerning "things which must be hereafter," for the purpose of instructing and comforting the church of Jesus Christ on earth.

From the disappointments, the sufferings and trials of earthly life, the gaze of the apostle was directed to heaven and to the throne of Him who rules over all, and in whose hands lie the destinies of all men. The majesty of the heavenly scene dwarfs into insignificance the woes of the church on earth. Therefore, in the midst of tribulation it is well that the church of God should look, up to the open door in heaven and get a view of the One who inhabits eternity. Christ has opened the way into heaven, and is now officiating as our High Priest and Advocate. "Let us therefore draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." Hebrews 10:22.

In Revelation, chapters 4 and 5, is given a graphic description of the celestial council-chamber. The Father is seated on the throne, surrounded by four and twenty elders clothed in white raiment, with golden crowns on their heads. The Son is represented as "a Lamb as it had been slain"; and the Holy Spirit is represented by the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne.

Jesus Christ was about to reveal to John the terrible trials through which His church was to pass into the future, but He gave him the assurance that God rules in the heavens above and in the earth beneath. This vision, however, was not given merely for the benefit of the Apostle John. For all time and in all places the church is-encouraged to look up to heaven, and receive comfort and encouragement from the fact that our heavenly Father sits on the throne of the universe, and that our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, ministers on our behalf before His Father as our Advocate. Therefore, whatever may assail us, whether it be "tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword," yet in all these things we may be "more than conquerors through Him that loved us." It was this assurance which led the Apostle Paul to say: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." See Romans 8:35-39.

In the midst of conflict and perplexity, God's people should recognize that the Eternal Father is still ruling in heaven above; and that "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Psalm 46:1.

That these revelations of church history are shown as emanating from the council-chamber of God, should give confidence to the reader that they are true, and that God is directing all things according to His inscrutable purposes, and that what we know not now, we shall know hereafter.

Around the throne of God, sat twenty-four elders, who, in their song of praise to the Lamb of God, declared that they had been redeemed by the blood of Christ out of "every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." Revelation 5:9. It is significant that in the vision of the throne of God shown to the prophet Ezekiel, no human beings were seen. See Ezekiel, chapters 1 and 8. It is evident that these twenty-four elders represented the redeemed from all earthly nations. How did these representatives of the human family reach heaven?

In Matthew 27:52,53, the apostle tells us that "many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection." Paul also refers to this same incident in his letter to the Ephesians: "When He [Christ] ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." The marginal reading is, He led "a multitude of captives." Ephesians 4:8. In Psalms 24 another reference is found concerning the ascension into heaven of Christ and His captives, won from earthly graves. Read Psalms 24:3-10. The heavenly hymn of victory which is to be sung by those who receive the overcomer's crown, will be a song of Moses and the Lamb. Revelation 15:3.

Why are there twenty-four representatives? May it not be that these twenty-four elders represent both the Jewish and the Gentile churches? As these twenty-four elders, in their song, say that they have been redeemed out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, it is evident that they are representatives of the church of God throughout the world and in all ages.

In the New Jerusalem there are to be twelve gates bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, and twelve foundations to the walls of the city in which are the names of the twelve apostles. Revelation 21:10-14. Under the Jewish dispensation in the temple service the priests were divided into twenty-four orders. See 1 Chronicles 24:1-19.

"Seven lamps of fire." Revelation 4:5. Allusion has already been made in the Apocalypse to the

The World's Finale

seven lamps, which symbolize the seven spirits of God. See Revelation 1:4; 3:1. In the earthly sanctuary these seven lamps were symbolized by the golden candlestick with seven branches.

"A sea of glass." Verse 6. Reference is made to this crystal sea in Revelation 15: 2. On that "sea of glass mingled with fire," were seen standing the overcomers, having the harps of God.

"Four living creatures full of eyes." Verse 6. The word translated "beasts" in the Authorized Version, is more accurately translated in the Revised Version "living creatures." These four living creatures evidently are also representatives of the redeemed, for they offer praise to God, together with the twenty-four elders, because they had been "redeemed . . . out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." Revelation 5: 9. Bishop Ellicott expresses this thought concerning these four symbolic living creatures:

"The characteristics of these four chiefs of creation unite to make a perfect picture of the true spirit of service, which should be as brave as the lion, patient as the ox, aspiring as the eagle, intelligent as man." Another suggestion concerning the symbolism of these four living creatures is that they represent "strength, perseverance, reason, and swiftness-strength of affection, perseverance in carrying out the requirements of duty, reason in comprehending the divine will, and swiftness in obeying."

Their song of adoration. Verse 8. Ceaselessly the song of praise resounds in the courts of heaven: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

The prophet Isaiah was given a vision of this same scene in heaven:

"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me I for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Isaiah 6:1-5.

AND I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with SEVEN SEALS. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

And one of the elders said unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints.

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou was slain, and has redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. And has made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped Him that lives for ever and ever. Revelation 5.

THE BOOK WITH THE SEVEN SEALS, AND ITS STRANGE CONTENTS

This book was unlike our modern books, which consist of leaves bound together. In ancient times books were scrolls rolled on a stick. This roll of books contained seven distinct volumes each sealed up, and no man was found who was able to open the roll and reveal its contents. Only our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, was worthy to loose the seven seals. For "no man in heaven, nor

The World's Finale

in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book." No one in God's universe is able to disclose the future. The knowledge of future events can be disclosed by God alone, who is able to declare "the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done." Isaiah 46:10.

The punctuation in verse 1 leads us to conclude that these seven rolls were written on both sides. Some notable commentators believe that the comma should follow the word "written," making the Passage read thus: "A book written within, and on the backside sealed with seven seals."

How much we owe to Christ, who, of all beings on earth or in heaven, was the only One found who was worthy to open the book containing the counsel of God for His church! No wonder the Apostle John wept much when he discovered that no man was able to unlock the secrets of the future! Are we as solicitous to know what God has revealed in His Book as the apostle was? Are we as ready to ascribe praise to the Lamb of God because of what He has done for us, as are the heavenly hosts?

By the countless angels in heaven is given to the Lamb a seven-fold ascription of praise: "Power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

John heard three different choruses in heaven ascribing praise to the Lamb of God. The first one consisted of the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders who represented the redeemed from all nations. See Verses 9, 10. The second chorus consisted of millions of angels. See verses 11, 12. The third chorus comprised the entire universe of God. See verse 13. It is evident that the account of this universal chorus of praise should be applied to the future, when the reign of sin is terminated.

A roll or other document intended for Preservation was sealed up before it was deposited in a place of safety. Jeremiah 32:14; compare Revelation 5:1. In sealing the roll, it was wrapped round with flaxen thread or string, then a lump of clay was attached to it impressed with a seal. The seal would have to be broken by an authorized person before the book could be read. International Standard Bible Encyclopedia."

AND I saw when the Lamb opened one of the SEALS, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a WHITE HORSE; and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

And when he had opened the SECOND SEAL, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. And there went out another horse that was RED: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

And when He had opened the THIRD SEAL, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a BLACK HORSE; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

And when He had opened the FOURTH SEAL, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a PALE HORSE: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth

And when He had opened the FIFTH SEAL, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, does Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their-fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

And I beheld when He had opened the SIXTH SEAL, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood. And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casts her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains. And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? Revelation 6.

The World's Finale

God's entire universe has been cleansed from every abomination. To John there was revealed a time when the whole of God's creation will unite in one mighty song of praise to Jesus Christ. Paul tells us in his letter to the Philippians of a time when every tongue shall confess "that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." See Philippians 2:11.

THE OPENING OF THE SEALED BOOKS

These seven sealed books contain the history of the church from the time of the apostles until the Second Advent. They do not depict the moral characteristics of the church, as the prophecy of the seven churches does, but they describe the general conditions which will manifest themselves during the seven periods of church history. In this prophetic outline is shown the relation of Christianity to great universal evils. War, disease, death, and persecution would hinder the work of the church until the end of time, but in spite of these obstacles to the work of God the Christian is assured of the ultimate triumph of the church.. The events which are unfolded as the seals are opened, were set forth in plain language in our Lord's great prophecy in Matthew 24. To the question of the disciples concerning the end of the world, Christ said very plainly, "You shall hear of wars, and rumors of wars . . . for nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines, and pestilence, and earthquakes in divers places." Matthew 24: 6, 7.

As the Lamb of God opened each of the first four of these sealed books, the Apostle John was invited by one of the four living, creatures to "Come and see." And he was invited to do this in order that he might make known to the church "things which must shortly come to pass."

THE WHITE HORSE

(Verse 2 - First Century AD)

The crowned rider on the white horse went forth conquering, and to conquer. The first period of church history is depicted by a white horse, the symbol of purity. This crowned rider is the symbol of victory. White horses were used by conquerors in Roman triumphs. What a more fitting symbol could illustrate the conquest of paganism by the church of Christ in the first centuries of the Christian era?

In his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," Gibbon says: "Our curiosity is naturally prompted to inquire by what means the Christian faith obtained so remarkable a victory over the established religions of the earth. To this inquiry, an obvious but satisfactory answer may be returned; that it was owing to the convincing evidence of the doctrine itself, and to the ruling providence of its great Author."-Vol. II, page 2.

"Within fourscore years after the death of Christ, the humane Pliny, in his very curious epistle to the Emperor Trajan, affirms that the 'heathen' temples were almost deserted, that the sacred victims scarcely found any purchasers, and that the 'Christian' superstition had not only infected the cities, but had even spread itself into the villages and the open country of Pontus and Bithynia. . . . The progress of Christianity was not confined to the Roman Empire; and, according to the primitive Fathers . . . the new religion, within a century after the death of its divine Author, had already visited every part of the globe."

THE RED HORSE

(Verse 4 - AD 100-323)

A change of color in the symbol denotes a change of character in the period of history which is being symbolized. Red is used in the Apocalypse to symbolize the character of the persecutors and enemies of Christ. In Old Testament times the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, were the inveterate enemies and persecutors of the Israelites. It is significant that the word "Edom" in Hebrew means "red." The dragon that fought against Michael is described as "a great red dragon." Revelation 12:3. The woman arrayed in purple and scarlet color, represented as being drunken with the blood of the saints, was seen sitting on "a scarlet-colored beast." Revelation 17:3-6. Is it not significant that in these last days red still seems to be the favorite color used to symbolize all that is opposed to righteousness and truth?

This second era was a time of controversy-the war of opinions in the church and civil war in the empire. All kinds of errors found a place in Christian teaching, and many pagan superstitions were brought into the church and accepted as truth. This second rider was given power to take peace from the earth, and a great sword was given to him. The sword is the symbol of civil authority with which the church was armed when the church and state were united in the fourth century.

THE BLACK HORSE

(Verse 5 - AD 323-538)

The World's Finale

The black horse symbolizes the great dearth of true religion which characterized the third period of church history. "The age of controversy," says Bishop C. J. Ellicott, D.D., "gives rise to the age of spiritual scarcity, for men intent upon controversy forget the true Bread which came down from heaven, and a famine of the Word of God succeeds; and out of this there emerges the pale horse of spiritual death, the parody of the victorious rider-the form of godliness without the power, the age of irreligious ritualism."

How wonderfully these divinely painted cartoons illustrate the actual course of history! The period of controversy symbolized by the red horse, introduced an era of great darkness and moral corruption. Mosheim tells us that in this period of church history "true religion was almost entirely superseded by horrid superstition." In Mark 6:37 we are told that two hundred pennyworth of bread would suffice for a small meal for about five thousand people. In this period of history two hundred pennyworth of bread would not suffice for one thousand people. The "denarius," here translated penny, was the usual daily wage of a laborer, or soldier, in Bible times; hence, as a "measure" of wheat was about sufficient for a day's rations for a man, he would have to use the whole of his wages for food. Yet in such a time of scarcity, a voice from heaven is heard to say, "See thou hurt not the oil and the wine." Verse 6. Oil and wine are symbolical of faith and love; and in such a time of apostasy and dearth of true religion, there was great danger that faith and love would be crushed.

"The red horse of controversy is followed by the black horse of spiritual starvation," says Bishop Ellicott. "In the heat of polemical pride and passion for theological conquest is developed that love of barren dogmatics which forgets the milk of the Word and the bread of life, which are the needed food of souls."

During the third period of history the empire was crushed with tyranny and taxation, and Christians were punished with the greatest severity. Indeed, Gibbon points to the excessive weight of taxation imposed upon the people by their tyrannical rulers, as one of the important causes which contributed to the downfall of the empire. Lactantius describes this period of history as one "filled with wailing and sadness," and states that the taxation was so excessive "that it was no longer allowed either to live or die without a tax." Modern legislators should take warning from this. History has demonstrated that the prosperity of a state is not to be measured by the amount of taxes extorted from the people. To promote the happiness and prosperity of the people should be the first and foremost objective in the minds of civil rulers.

THE PALE HORSE

(Verse 8-A.D. 538-1517)

The white, red, and black horses are followed by an unnatural colored symbol, denoting tremendous mortality-a time of unprecedented persecution, when the people living in one-fourth part of the earth were subjected to death by the sword, hunger, and many diabolical methods of extermination during the Middle Ages-the darkest period of church history. Fifty million martyrs testify to the accuracy of this symbolic representation of the fourth period of church history. This period has been well described as "the midnight of sorrows, when all seems given up to the sovereignty of death."

THE FIFTH SEAL

(Verses 9-11 - AD 1517-1755)

After the long period of persecution, the voices of the persecuted are heard saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, does Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Their sacrifice in the cause of Christianity is rewarded by the gift of white robes, and the promise of a little time of rest.

"It is not the Christians themselves," says Bishop Ellicott, "who cry for vengeance, any more than it was Abel who cried from the ground to God: it was the blood of Abel (Genesis 4:10); the earth disclosed her blood, and refused to cover her slain. The forgotten or ignored wrongs of generations come forth from oblivion and cry for vengeance."

After the Reformation, the martyred saints of God who had been execrated as outlaws during the Middle Ages, were regarded as the world's heroes, men and women of whom the world was not worthy.

THE SIXTH SEAL

(Verses 12-17 - AD 1755 Till the Second Advent of Christ)

We now pass from highly symbolical to literal language, for we are now introduced to the closing era of this world's history when the prophetic portions of Scripture were to be unsealed and made

The World's Finale

comprehensible to the Bible student.

The first event alluded to is a great earthquake. Evidently this has reference to the mighty earthquake of Lisbon, November 1755, which affected no less than four million square miles of the earth's surface. Ninety thousand lives were estimated to have been lost in that catastrophe, and half the world felt the convulsion. The appalling magnitude of this, the greatest earthquake ever recorded in previous history, impressed the people so profoundly that patrons of the drama forsook the theatres and filled the churches instead. The following poem, written at the time, by John Biddolf of London, indicates that men were then impressed that the Lisbon earthquake was a sign given to the world that the end of all things was approaching:

"Who can with curious eyes this globe survey, And not behold it tottering with decay? All things created, God's designs fulfil, And natural causes work His destined will. And that eternal world which cannot lie, To mortals bath revealed in prophecy That in these latter days such signs should come, Preludes and prologues to the general doom. But not the Son of man can tell that day. Then, lest it find you sleeping, watch and pray!"

The next event pictured before the mind of the apostle was the darkening of the sun. On May 19, 1780, the sun was supernaturally darkened, and no one has been able to offer any explanation for the phenomenon. The following night the moon appeared as blood. Compare Matthew 24:29; Mark 13:24,25; Luke 21:25.

An interesting story is told of the Connecticut State Legislature, which was then in session. The intense darkness which crept over the earth at 10 AM so terrified the legislators that they thought the day of judgment had come. Someone arose and moved the adjournment of the House. Thereupon Mr. Abraham Davenport arose, and said: "Mr. Speaker, it is either the day of judgment, or it is not. If it is not, there is no need of adjourning. If it is, I desire to be found doing my duty. I move that candles be brought, and that we proceed to business." The poet Whittier has immortalized that story in one of his poems, from which we quote a few lines:

"Meanwhile in the old Statehouse, dim as ghosts,
Sat the lawgivers of Connecticut,
Trembling beneath their legislative robes.
'It is the Lord's great day! Let us adjourn,'
Some said; and then, as if with one accord,
All eyes were turned to Abraham Davenport.
He rose, slow cleaving with his steady voice
The intolerable hush. 'This well may be
The day of judgment which the world awaits;
But be it so or not, I only know
My present duty, and My Lord's command
To occupy till He come. So at the post
Where He hath set me in His providence
I choose, for one, to meet Him face to face
No faithless servant frightened from my task,
But ready when the Lord of the harvest calls;
And there, with all reverence,
I would say, Let God do His work,
we will see to ours. Bring in the candles.'"

The next striking event which was revealed to John, was the falling of the stars. On November 13, 1833, the most brilliant meteoric shower ever known in history caused great consternation amongst the people then living.

The Revelation Thomas Milner, in his "Gallery of Nature," declares that "the mass of the people were terror-struck, and the more enlightened were awed at contemplating so vivid a picture of the Apocalyptic image—that of the stars of heaven falling to the earth, even as a fig-tree casting her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind." (Page 140.) So realistically accurate is the prophetic description of this astronomical phenomenon that a press correspondent in reporting the scene the next morning in the newspaper, said: "Were I to hunt through nature for a simile, I could not find one so apt to illustrate the appearance of the heavens as that which St. John uses in the prophecy."

The World's Finale

The next scene depicted is one which is still in the future "the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together." This is the finale of earth's history of sin. It is the great day of judgment when the opening heavens will reveal to an astonished world the majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ, riding upon a cloud with all His holy angels. At the sight of such a cavalcade, the inhabitants of the whole world will be filled with consternation. All who are unprepared to meet their Lord will call to the falling mountains and rocks "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" That day is hastening upon us rapidly; there is, indeed, but little time to prepare to meet the Lord of lords and King of kings. "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Revelation 22:17.

AND after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having THE SEAL OF THE LIVING GOD. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephtholim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand.

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kingdoms, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen. Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knows. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sits on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. Revelation 7.

6. The Sealing of the One Hundred and Forty four Thousand

THE language of this chapter abounds in symbols. The "four corners of the earth," and the "four winds of the earth," are evidently phrases which are meant to convey the idea of the world-wide extent of the conditions which the Revelator is describing. The seal of the living God, and the white robes, and the twelve tribes are also symbols, for no one would suppose that a literal seal was to be actually stamped upon the foreheads of God's servants; nor that the saints literally washed their literal robes in the blood of Christ; nor that the sealing work was confined to the twelve literal tribes of Israel, of whom all means of identification have been lost for many centuries.

As so much of the language of this chapter is figurative, it may very naturally be inferred that the numbers which occur also may be symbolical.

The number twelve is used in the Bible to symbolize perfection of government. "This number,"

The World's Finale

says the Revelation E. W. Bullinger, "is found in all that has to do with rule. The sun which 'rules' the day, and the moon and the stars which 'govern' the night, do so by their passage through the twelve signs of the Zodiac, which completes the great circle of the heavens Of 360 (12 x 30) degrees or divisions, and thus govern the year. . . . There were twelve patriarchs from Seth to Noah and his family, and twelve from Shem to Jacob. "-Number in Scripture," page 253.

The Israelite nation consisted of twelve tribes, and the promise was made to Abraham that Ishmael would become a great nation, and that he should beget "twelve princes." Genesis 17:20. When Christ founded His church, He chose twelve apostles as leaders, and after the apostasy of Judas, it seemed essential to the eleven apostles that one should be "ordained to be a witness" (see Acts 1:22), in order to make up the deficiency, in order to have twelve witnesses to testify to the resurrection of Jesus.

The New Jerusalem has twelve gates, which are in the keeping of twelve angels, and on these gates are inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Its walls have twelve foundations, bearing the names of the twelve apostles; and the height of these walls is given as 144 cubits (12 X 12); and the circumference of the city is given as 12,000 furlongs. It is interesting to note that the word "Jerusalem" occurs 144 times in the New Testament. Evidently the number twelve, and one hundred and forty-four (12 x 12), are therefore figures of more than ordinary significance.

Much of the real meaning of such passages of Scripture as Revelation 7, is lost when an attempt is made to deal with them literally. Beautiful truths are revealed in these symbolic passages, once we can define the symbolism which is used.

Now let us look at these symbols, and endeavor to unravel their meaning. The first thing we are told is that four angels were seen "standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the flour winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree." Revelation 7:1. In prophecy, "winds" are used to symbolize war. See Daniel 7:2; Jeremiah 49:36,37; and Jeremiah 51:1,2. "The essential ideas," says Dr. Albert Barnes, "in this portion of the symbol cannot be mistaken. They are two. (1) That at the period of time here referred to-after the opening of the sixth seal, and before the opening of the seventh -there would be a state of things which would be well represented by rising tempests and storms, which if unrestrained would spread desolation afar. (2) That this impending ruin was held back as if by angels having control of those winds."

While the four angels were occupied in restraining war, another angel appeared in the east, having the seal of the living God, and he exhorted the four angels to hold the winds, saying: "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of God in their foreheads." Revelation 7:3.

Here is another symbol referred to: "the seal of the living God." Dr. Albert Barnes, in his comments on the Revelation, published in 1855, offers a most interesting interpretation of this symbolic seal. He says: "As to the form of the seal, we have no information. It would be most natural to suppose that the name of, the living God would be engraved on it; so that that name would appear on anyone to whom it might be affixed. . . . The essential ideas in the sealing, in the passage before us, would therefore seem to be:

"1. That there would be some mark, sign, or token, by which they who were the people of God would be known; that is, there would be something which would answer, in this respect, the same purpose as if a seal had been impressed upon their foreheads. Whether this was an outward badge, or a religious rite, or the doctrines which they would hold, and by which they would be known, or something in their spirit and manner which would characterize His true disciples, may be a fair subject of inquiry. It is not specifically designated by the use of the word.

2. It would be something that would be conspicuous or prominent, as if it was impressed on the forehead. It would not be merely some internal sealing, or some designation by which they would be known to themselves and to God, but it would be something apparent, as if engraved on the forehead. What this would be, whether a profession, or a form of religion, or the holding of some doctrine, or, the manifestation of a particular spirit, is not here designated.

3. This would be something appointed by God Himself. It would not be of human origin, but would be as if an angel sent from heaven should impress it on the forehead. If it refers to the doctrines which they would hold, they could not be doctrines of human origin; if to the spirit they would manifest, it would be a spirit of heavenly origin."

Paul tells us that Abraham "received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had." Romans 4:11. In this passage the words "sign" and "seal" are used synonymously., Ezekiel, in describing a vision of judgment which was given to him, tells of a man with a writer's inkhorn going through the midst of Jerusalem, setting a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sighed for all the

The World's Finale

abominations that were done therein. Ezekiel 9:1-5. The original word translated "seal" is variously defined as "a mark, stamp, or badge." As we have said before, this cannot be a literal mark, hence it must symbolize something which will serve to identify the people who are sealed.

A seal bears the name and title of its owner; therefore this seal must bear the name and title of God, because we read in Revelation 14:1, that the hundred and forty-four thousand have the "Father's name written in their foreheads." Moreover, seals are always used in connection with some legal enactment, or some legal document. Isaiah makes reference to this universal custom when he says: "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among My disciples." Isaiah 8:16.

We have, therefore, a strong clue that the seal of God should be sought for in His law, which, as all leading theologians agree, is summed up in the Ten Commandments. An examination of these Ten Precepts shows most conclusively that only one of them contains the name and title of the Lawgiver. Take that one away from the ten, and the remaining precepts may be claimed as the precepts of any false god, because in none of them is there any mention of the God who "made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is."

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shall not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." Exodus 20:8-11.

We have already seen that the words "sign" and "seal" are used synonymously. Let us now turn to Exodus 31:13 and Ezekiel 20:12,20. In these texts we are told three times that the Sabbath is a "sign"; and what is still more interesting, we are told that it is a sign of sanctification. Yet in the face of such scriptures, there are men who regard Christians who keep the original Sabbath according to the commandment, on the seventh day of the week, as dangerous heretics who must be ostracized by all true Christians.

Dr. Barnes, nearly eighty years ago, in commenting upon this sealing work, which he said would be carried out "after the opening of the sixth seal, and before the opening of the seventh seal," said that "there would be some mark, sign, or token by which they who were the people of God would be known." He also said that it would be most natural to suppose that the name of the living God would be engraved on it (the seal), and that it would be a fair subject of inquiry, "whether this 'seal' was an outward badge, or a religious rite, or the doctrines which they would hold, and by which they would be known." He said further that this seal "would be something appointed by God Himself. It would not be of human origin. . . . If it refers to the doctrines which they would hold, they could not be doctrines of human origin."

How wonderfully these beautiful ideas of Dr. Barnes harmonize with all that we have now discovered concerning the seal of the living God! We have found:

1. That all seals contain the name and title of their owners.
2. That seals are always used in connection with law and legal documents.
3. That only one commandment of the ten (the fourth) contains the name and title of the Lawgiver.
4. That the seal which is placed upon the heads of the 144,000 contains the name of the Father.
5. That it is evident that the seal would be "something appointed by God Himself, and nothing of human origin."
6. That it would not be some internal sealing, or some designation by which they would be known to themselves or to God, but it would be something apparent, as if engraved on the forehead.

Throughout the Scriptures God is designated, in contradistinction to other gods, as the Creator of the heavens and the earth. See 2 Kings 19:15; Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 121:2; 124: 8; 146:5,6; Isaiah 42:5; Jeremiah 32:17; Acts 4:24,25; 14:15; 17:24,25; Exodus 20:8-11.

It is evident, therefore, that the seal of God is found in the fourth commandment, and that during the sixth seal and before the opening of the seventh seal, while the winds of war and commotion are threatening to destroy the earth, a movement will manifest itself in all quarters of the globe for the purpose of sealing God's people with the name of the Father, as Creator of the heavens and the earth. And that until this work is accomplished the angels of God will be restraining the winds of war in order that God's work may not be impeded.

What does this mean? It means that as we are now living under the sixth seal a great message of Sabbath reform is due to the world—a message which will call the attention of the whole world to the importance of observing the true Sabbath as appointed by God Himself. Already that message has been carried to almost every nation, kindred, tongue, and people; and God is still calling men and women to

The World's Finale

obey Him.

Whether we are willing to acknowledge it or not, the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. No other day can be substituted for that day which God has blessed, hallowed, sanctified, and appointed to be observed by His people. His law has neither been abrogated nor changed. Christ Himself said: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but' whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:17-20.

That this company of 144,000, who are especially chosen from the twelve tribes of Israel, are not literal Jews, but Christians, is practically universally understood by the leading expositors. It is not to be imagined, however, that 144,000 will be the number of the saved, for in addition to this company, John was shown "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kingdoms, and people, and tongues," standing "before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands." Revelation 7:9. The 144,000 are evidently a special company of the redeemed who' are to be sealed with the Father's name in the last days, just prior to the opening of the seventh seal, who will be known, as Dr. Barnes says, by "some mark, sign, or token". And it is evident also, by comparing Revelation 7 with chapters 14 and 22, that this company will be recognized as those who "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus," and who at the same time are also looking for the coming of the Lord to gather the harvest of the earth. See Revelation 14:12-14. Furthermore, Christ, the Alpha and the Omega, has pronounced a special blessing upon those that do His commandments: "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Revelation 22:14.

It is apparent that a special obligation is laid upon the last generation to prepare to meet Christ at His coming, for it would appear that all who are prepared for translation from amono, the living at the second advent, will be sealed with the name of the Father.

What a privilege is that which is offered to those who choose to obey God rather than, man even an entrance through those pearly gates into the eternal city which Christ has gone to prepare for all who love Him and do His commandments. "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." Romans 2:13.

"Hear the words our Savior bath spoken,
Words of life, unfailling and true;
Careless one, prayerless one,
Hear and remember,
Jesus says, 'Blessed are they that do.'

"All in vain we hear His commandments,
All in vain His promises, too;
Hearing them, fearing them, never can save us,
Blessed, 0 blessed are they that do.

"They with joy may enter the city,
Free from sin, from sorrow and strife,
Sanctified, glorified, now and for ever,
They may have right to the tree of life.
"Blessed are they that do His commandments,
Blessed are they, blessed are they;
Blessed are they that do His commandments,
Blessed, blessed, blessed are they."

AND when He had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given SEVEN TRUMPETS. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints,

The World's Finale

ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunders, and lightning, and an earthquake. And the seven angels which had the SEVEN TRUMPETS prepared themselves to sound. The FIRST angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

And the SECOND angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood. And the third part of the creature which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed. And the THIRD angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood. And the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

And the FOURTH angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars. So as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise. And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound! Revelation 8.

7. The Seven Trumpets

THE prophecy of the Seven Trumpets introduces a series of warlike and political events which were to occur during the Christian dispensation. Before proceeding with the prophetic outline, John was shown in vision that the prayers of God's people actually reach the temple of God in heaven. The child of God should take comfort from this assurance.

THE FIRST TRUMPET

(The First Four Trumpets Cover the Period from about AD 395-476)

"The FIRST angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up." Revelation 8:7.

At the time when the Book of Revelation was written, the civilized world was under the domination of the Roman empire. Under the sounding of the first trumpet the third part of the Roman empire was subjected to an invasion, at the close of the fourth century, by the Goths under Alaric-which is symbolized by "hail and fire, mingled with blood." The historian Gibbon, in his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," describes most graphically this Gothic invasion. He says: "The Gothic nation was in arms at the first sound of the trumpet, and in the uncommon severity of the winter, they rolled their ponderous wagons over the broad and icy bank of the river." The poet Claudian "pathetically lamented the fate of his contemporary trees, which must blaze in the conflagration of the whole country. . . . The pastures of Gaul, in which flocks and herds grazed, and the banks of the Rhine, which were covered with elegant houses and well cultivated farms, formed a scene of peace and plenty, which was suddenly changed into a desert, distinguished from the solitude of nature only by smoking ruins. Many cities were cruelly oppressed, or destroyed. Many thousands were inhumanly massacred; and the consuming flames of war spread over the greater part of the seventeen provinces of Gaul.

"Alaric again stretched his ravages over Italy. During four years the Goths ravaged and reigned over it without control. And in the pillage and fire of Rome, the streets of the city were filled with dead bodies; the flames consumed many public and private buildings; and the ruins of a palace remained (after a century and a half) a stately monument of the Gothic conflagration."

The prophecy depicts the first invasion of the Roman empire as "hail and fire mingled with blood." Revelation 8:7. The Goths, who came from the frozen regions of the north, and destroyed by fire so much of the fairest portions of the empire, exactly fulfilled the prediction. Alaric told an Italian monk that "he felt a secret and preternatural impulse which directed, and even impelled, his march to the gates of Rome."

The World's Finale

THE SECOND TRUMPET

"And the SECOND angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood. And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed." Revelation 8: 8, 9.

The second trumpet sounded, and "as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea." It should be noticed that the sounding of each of the first four trumpets affected a "third part of the empire. The Emperor Constantine bequeathed a portion of his empire to each of his three sons-Constantine II, Constantius, and Constans; and the phrase-"the third part" is evidently intended to allude to that portion of the empire which was being attacked, either the really Roman, the Greek, or the Oriental.

The second attack upon the empire was made by Genseric, whose conquests were mostly naval. Instead of hail from the frozen north, his conquests were described as "a great mountain burning with fire." Instead of "the trees and the grass" being burnt up, we are told that his warfare would destroy "the third part of the ships." Revelation 8:9. Gibbon tells us that Genseric "cast his eyes toward the sea; and resolved to create a naval power." As Genseric was sailing out of the port of Carthage on one of his naval expeditions, the helmsman asked him for what port he should steer; to which the king replied, "For the men with whom God is angry." So successful was this naval tyrant in his expedition against Rome, that he lived to see the final extinction of the Western portion of the empire.

THE THIRD TRUMPET

"And the THIRD angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters." Revelation 8:10.

In this trumpet the scene shifts from the sea to the rivers and mountains, for this scourge "fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters." Dr. Albert Barnes, in his comments on this chapter, says: "That there should be some chieftain or warrior who might be compared to a blazing meteor; whose course would be singularly brilliant. Who would appear suddenly like a blazing star, and then disappear like a star whose light was quenched in the waters." Such a man did arise and wrought havoc, particularly upon the Alpine regions of the empire. Attila, the king of the Huns, boasted that "the grass never grew on the spot on which his horse had trod," and he styled himself "the Scourge of God." It is related that "a Christian hermit approached the Hunnish king, and said to him, "Thou art the scourge of God for the chastisement of Christians." Attila immediately laid claim to this title; his soldiers we are told regarded him as being "the inspired favorite of their deities"; while his enemies looked on him as "the pre-appointed minister of Heaven's wrath against themselves." The meteoric career of Attila ceased as suddenly as it began, for the destroyer was cut off suddenly by apoplexy.

THE FOURTH TRUMPET

"And the FOURTH angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars." Revelation 8: 12.

Under this trumpet the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars. It is evident that this language is symbolical, for no attack by any human warrior could make any apparent effect upon the sun, the moon, or the stars. These symbols may be understood as refer ring to the great luminaries of the Roman government-emperors, senators, and consuls. In 476, Romulus Augustulus, the last emperor of Western Rome, resigned his high office, at the dictation of Odoacer, the chief of the Heruli, a barbarian remnant of the host of Attila. The following century both the senate and the consuls ceased to function, and Rome's power over the nations ceased. Commenting upon this portion of the prophecy, the Revelation Dr. Keith says: "Every token of royalty disappeared from the imperial city. . . . The last act of obedience to a Roman prince which that once august assembly performed, was the acceptance of the resignation of the last emperor of the West, and the abolition of the imperial succession in Italy. The sun of Rome was smitten."

Justinian, the emperor of the East, whose capital was Constantinople, abolished the consuls and the senate. We are warranted in concluding that the symbols-sun, moon, and stars, were intended to be applied to the three chief portions of the Roman government. At the taking of Rome by Alaric, the Goth, Jerome said: "Clarissimum terrarum lumin extinctum est." ("The world's glorious sun has been extinguished.")

In his notes on Revelation 8:7, Dr. Albert Barnes says: "At this point in writing, I looked on a chart of history, composed with no reference to this prophecy, and found a singular and unexpected prominence given to four such events extending from the first invasion of the Goths and Vandals at the

The World's Finale

beginning of the fifth century, to the fall of the Western Empire, AD 476. The first was the invasion of Alaric, king of the Goths, AD, 410. The second was the invasion of Attila, king of the Huns, 'Scourge of God, AD 447. A third was the sack of Rome by Genseric, king of the Vandals, AD 455; and the fourth, resulting in the final conquest of Rome, was that of Odoacer, king of the Heruli, Who assumed the title of King of Italy, AD 476."

THE FIFTH TRUMPET

(AD 622-1449)

"And the FIFTH angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power." Revelation 9:1-3.

The fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpets are called "woe trumpets," because the destruction wrought under them are still more terrible than those of the first four. Of the fifth trumpet, Dr. Keith says: "There is scarcely so uniform an agreement among interpreters concerning any other part of the Apocalypse as respecting, the application of the fifth and sixth trumpets, . . . to the Saracens and Turks. It is so obvious that it can scarcely be misunderstood. Instead of a verse or two designating each, the whole of the ninth chapter of Revelation, in equal portions, is occupied with a description of both."

In a work published in 1799, by J. Bicheno, M.A., entitled "Signs of the Times," it is stated that the fifth and sixth trumpets "so evidently refer to the Saracens and Turks, that there are scarcely two opinions on the subject." For several centuries the leading commentators on the Apocalypse have taught that the fifth and sixth trumpets refer to the Saracens and the Turks respectively. The phraseology which is used to describe the fifth trumpet is wonderfully descriptive of the manner in which the Saracens attacked the Oriental portion of the Roman empire.

AND the FIFTH angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented FIVE MONTHS: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he strikes a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.

And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon. One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.

And the SIXTH angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an HOUR, and a DAY, and a MONTH, and a YEAR, for to slay the third part of men. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred million. And I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of Jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt. And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood. Which can

The World's Finale

neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: neither repented they of the' murders, nor of their sorcery, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts. Revelation 9.

While Persia and the remains of the Greco-Roman empire were mutually destroying each other by constant warfare, Mohammed, the prophet of Arabia, was deriving much satisfaction from the thought that these two kingdoms which might have frustrated his purposes, were sapping their powers of resistance; thus opening the way for the attainment of his ambitions. The overthrow of Chosroes the Persian by the Emperor Heraclius, fulfilled that portion of the prophecy which tells us that "a star fell from heaven unto the earth." Revelation 9: 11. Some commentators, however, believe that Mohammed was the one alluded to under the symbol of a star that fell from heaven unto the earth. After converting the Arabs to his religion, this Arabian prince with hordes of Arabian warriors burst forth from the deserts and devastated Roman Christendom. In any case, whether it be the fall of Chosroes, or the rise of Mohammed, the way was opened for the "smoke of Mohammedanism" from the pit of Arabia, to darken the Oriental world. Describing the spread of Mohammedanism, Sir William Muir says:

"Onward and still onward, like swarms from the hive, or flights of locusts darkening the land, tribe after tribe issued forth, and hastening northward, spread in great masses to the east and to the west;"-"The Caliphate," page 44.

"And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth." These "locusts" were commanded "that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads." Revelation 9:4. Gibbon, in his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," relates the following instructions which were given by the Caliph, Abu-bekr, to the Saracens:

"When you fight the battles of the Lord, acquit you like men, without turning your backs; but let not your victory be stained with the blood of women or children. Destroy no palm-trees, nor burn any fields of corn. Cut down no fruit-trees, nor do any mischief to cattle, only such as you kill to eat. When you make a covenant or article, stand to it, and be as good as your word. As you go on, you will find some religious persons who live retired in monasteries, and propose to themselves to serve God that way: let them alone, and neither kill them nor destroy their monasteries. And you will find another sort of people, that belong to the synagogue of Satan, who have shaven crowns; be sure you cleave their skulls, and give them no quarter till they either turn Mohammedans or pay 'tribute.'" -Vol. V, pages 189, 190.

The Moslem warriors were given wonderful promises in the future life by Mohammed, in order to stimulate their zeal in his cause. "The sword," he said, is the key of heaven and hell; a drop of blood shed in the cause of God, a night spent in arms, is of more avail than two months of fasting and prayer. Whosoever falls in battle, his sins are forgiven; at the day of judgment his wounds shall be resplendent as vermilion, and odoriferous as musk; and the loss of his limbs shall be supplied by the wings of angels and cherubim. "-Ibid., Vol. III, page 387.

These promises of future glory drew under the banner of the prophet millions of followers, who hoped to participate in the spoils of paradise; and to a superstitious people they proved to be a mighty incentive to fanatic valor on the battlefield. Success in war brought immense wealth to the Caliphs, and gradually their warlike character gave place to a desire for pomp, luxury, and pleasure, in which, of course, their subjects also began to indulge. Hence the more warlike Turcomans gained the ascendancy over the Moslem world, and the center of Mohammedan influence shifted eastward to Bagdad.

"And they had a king over them." Revelation 9:11. Until the rise of Othman, in the thirteenth century, Mohammedanism was by no means a united organization, possessing a central government. Othman succeeded in consolidating the various Moslem tribes into one great monarchy, and since then it has been known as the Ottoman Government. In the prophecy this government is called in the Hebrew tongue, "Abaddon," which means "the destroyer." In the Greek tongue, it is called "Apollyon," or "one that exterminates, or destroys."

These symbolic "locusts" were not to "kill," but were to "torment" men for five months, which in prophetic time, on the year-day principle of interpretation, taught in the Scripture, a day for a year, is equal to 150 years (5 x 30=150). When did this period begin? The prophetic period of five months should be calculated from the time when Othman began his attack upon the Graeco-Roman empire. Gibbon tells us that "Othman first entered the territory of Nicomedia on the 27th day of July, 1299." Commencing from this date, the five prophetic months, or 150 years, would reach to 1449. In that year John Palaeologus, the emperor of the Eastern remnant of the Roman empire, died; and as he had no son to inherit his throne, his brother Constantine became emperor in his stead. During the period of five prophetic months (150 literal

The World's Finale

years), the Ottomans had been engaged in almost perpetual warfare with the Oriental division of the Roman empire; but the capital, Constantinople, still held its independence. So influential had the Turkish sultans become during that 150 years, however, that Constantine did not dare to occupy his brother's throne without first gaining the consent of Amurath, the Turkish sultan. This was a voluntary acknowledgement on the part of the last of the Roman emperors, that he held his throne subject to the will of the Ottoman Government. Four years later Constantinople became the seat of the Ottoman Government.

THE SIXTH TRUMPET

(AD 1453-1840)

"And the SIXTH angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an HOUR, and a DAY, and a MONTH, and a YEAR, for to slay the third part of men." Revelation 9:13-15.

Another interesting prophetic period is here introduced, which is described as "an hour, a day, and a month, and a year" (Revelation 9:18), during which time the Mohammedan power was to be "loosed." To what date does this period bring us? The period of five prophetic months terminated July 27, 1449. To this must be added the next prophetic period, which works out as follows:

1 prophetic year	360 literal years
1 prophetic month	30 literal years
1 prophetic day	1 literal years
1 prophetic hour	15 days
TOTAL	391 years and 15 days

This prophetic period, therefore, covers 391 years and 15 days, which, added to July 27, 1449, would stretch to August 11, 1840.

Prior to that date, students of prophecy who had made this calculation, looked forward with interest to see what would happen to the Ottoman Government at the completion of that prophetic time period. For some time the Sultan had been engaged in a struggle with Mehemet Ali, Pasha of Egypt, and it looked very likely that Mehemet Ali would succeed in overthrowing the Ottoman Government. To prevent this contingency, Britain, Russia, Austria, and Prussia intervened, and the Sultan voluntarily surrendered his case into their hands for settlement.

On August 11, 1840, the Sultan addressed a note to the ambassadors of the four powers, inquiring what plan they intended to follow should Mehemet Ali refuse their terms of settlement. He was officially informed that he need not trouble himself, as the four powers had made provision for any contingency that might arise. Thus ended the civil independence of the Ottoman Government. Nearly four years later, Britain compelled the Sultan to issue a decree canceling the death penalty to which all apostates from the Mohammedan religion were liable. Thus ended the religious independence of the Ottoman Government. Thenceforward the Ottoman Government was dependent for its very existence upon the great powers of Europe. Gradually most of its immense territories in Asia, Africa, and Europe were stripped from it, until the Great War terminated its career. Even the Turks themselves revolted, and left the Sultan without territory or people; and on November 5, 1922, the government of the Turkish Republic announced to the world that "the government of the Sultan had ceased to exist." "Thus ended the political role of the house of Osman, which had reigned for nearly six centuries and a half." - "These Eventful Years," Vol. II, page 145.

THE DECADENCE OF THE TURKISH EMPIRE

Some facts of singular interest to students of prophecy may be mentioned in connection with the decadence of the Turkish Empire. The year 1840 marked the termination of the prophetic period of 391 years and 15 days. The year 1844 marked the termination of the period Of 2300 days (or years) of Daniel 8:14, at the expiry of which the sanctuary was to be cleansed. It is surely more than a coincidence that the Sultan was compelled by the great powers to sign his decree annulling the law which provided the death penalty for apostates from the Moslem religion, exactly 2,300 years to a day after Artaxerxes, the king of Persia, signed his decree emancipating the Jews. These great events do not happen by mere chance. The time had come for the proclamation of the hour of God's judgment, and the preaching of the everlasting gospel in all the world. How could such a message be given to all the world, with about one-third of the world held in a vice like Mohammedanism, with laws and customs which required the execution of all

The World's Finale

Moslems who should accept Christianity? So when the time came for the judgment message to be proclaimed to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, God impressed the minds of the statesmen of the great powers to insist upon the issue of a decree from the supreme Caliph of all Mohammedanism, annulling the law which required the death penalty for apostates.

Missionary work by Protestant missionaries had already begun in Moslem lands, but their efforts were thwarted not only by the Moslem priests, but by the Greek and Armenian patriarchs. The Russian ambassador at Constantinople was openly hostile, taking the position that as the Czar was the head of the Orthodox Church, he would "brook no rivalry." In conversation over this matter one day with Dr. Schaffier, an American missionary, the Russian ambassador, M. Boutineff, said: "I might as well tell you, Mr. Schaffier, that His Imperial Majesty, the Czar of all the Russians, who is my master, will never allow Protestantism to set its foot in Turkey." To this the missionary replied: "And I, Sir, may tell you that the Lord Jesus Christ, who is my Master, will never ask the Czar of all the Russians where He may set His foot."

Earthly potentates may think their power is sufficient to thwart the purposes of God. "The kings of the earth [may] set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His Anointed." But, "He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." Where is the haughty power of the sultan who opposed the proclamation of God's eternal truth in Mohammedan lands? Where is the power of the czar who decided never to allow Protestantism to find a footing in Turkey? Today there is neither a Sultan of Turkey, nor a Czar of Russia, to make a protest. True, other enemies of God have arisen, such as societies for the advancement of atheism, anti-God organizations, etc., but their vapors will never thwart the purpose's of God. Let those who despise God remember how history has proved that His counsels have stood the test of ages. The prophecies of His Word have been, or are in process of being, fulfilled to the letter. Therefore, when tempted to doubt whether God is as good as His word, and whether He will surely punish the guilty and the despisers of His grace, let them remember these inspired words of truth. "Transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off." "The wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away." Psalms 37:38,20.

There is a time coming when the wicked "shall be as though they had not been." Obadiah 16. Christ and His redeemed people will ultimately be victorious, while those who reject Him shall perish. "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." Psalm 37:10,11.

As the almost unanimous opinion of Biblical expositors applies the second woe to the Ottoman Empire, and as the Ottoman Empire is now defunct, therefore it must be obvious that the second woe has passed, and that we are now living in the days of the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the last of the series, a period when "the kingdoms of this world" are to become "the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ." Revelation 1: 15.

THE SEVENTH TRUMPET

(1844 till the Second Advent of Christ)

The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe comes quickly. "And the SEVENTH angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.

"And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and was, and art to come; because Thou has taken to Thee Thy great power, and has reigned.

"And the nations were angry, and Thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that Thou should give reward unto Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear Thy name, small and great; and should destroy them which destroy the earth.

"And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament: and there were lightning, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail." Revelation 11:14-19.

The first event mentioned by the apostle which is to occur under the sounding of the seventh trumpet, is the overturning of all the kingdoms of this world, and the establishment of the kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who will thenceforward "reign for ever and ever." This, the greatest event in all human history since the fall of man, is noted first in the outline of events which will come to pass after

The World's Finale

the passing of the second woe. Not because it will be the first to take place in point of time, however, but because it is the principal event of all which will happen after the sounding of the seventh trumpet. Seven great events are enumerated by the apostle as occurring during this period:

1. The kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of Christ.
2. The anger of the nations.
3. The wrath of God (the Seven Last Plagues; see Revelation 16).
4. The judgment of the dead.
5. The dispensing of rewards to the redeemed.
6. The destruction of the wicked.
7. The opening of the temple of God in heaven.

It should be evident at a glance to any intelligent Bible student, that this list of events, although set out in the order enumerated in the scripture under consideration, will not occur in that order. For instance, it must be apparent that when the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of Christ, there will be no angry nations. The anger of the nations, and their continual warfare which they have waged one upon another, is generated and promoted by Satan, the prince of this world, who is the source of all evil. When Christ takes the reins of government into His own hands, and He is crowned Lord of all, there will be no more angry nations. Therefore we may assume that event number two in the above list will occur before number one.

The outpouring of the seven last plagues, which is also called the "wrath of God," will also precede the second advent, for it is not until after the outpouring of the sixth plague that Christ says, "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watches." Hence the third event in the list will also precede the first in the time of its occurrence.

The judgment of the dead must necessarily precede the Second Advent of Christ, for we are definitely instructed that when Jesus comes, He will bring the rewards for His people with Him. "Behold, I come quickly," says Christ, "and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Revelation 22:12. Furthermore, Paul tells us that Christ "will render to every man according to his deeds"; and "to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality," He will render "eternal life." Romans 2:6,7. But, as he tells us in another place, that gift of immortality is to be conferred "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." It must therefore be obvious that the investigations concerning "the patient continuance in well doing," and the earnestness in seeking for "glory and honor and immortality," must necessarily be made before the sounding of the last trump, at which the change from mortality and corruption to immortality and incorruption takes place "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." 1 Corinthians 15:52. Therefore number four in the list will also take place before number one while the same line of reasoning proves that number 5 will be synchronized with number one, for we have already shown that when Jesus returns He will bring His rewards with Him.

The destruction of the wicked will not occur until after the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of Christ. One of the causes of distress and remorse on the part of those who despise God's grace, will be to "see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God," and themselves "thrust out." Luke 13:28. Evidently the sixth event mentioned in the list will be the last to occur.

The opening of the temple of God in heaven, although mentioned last in the series, must be one of the first to happen in this series of seven events. It certainly must precede the outpouring of the wrath of God, for we are told in a later chapter that the seven angels, having the seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, "came out of the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven" after it "was opened." It is evident also that the opening of this temple must precede the judgment of the dead, the dispensing of the rewards to the righteous, and the Second Advent of Christ.

What conclusion may we therefore draw from this explanation of the events which are to happen under the sounding of the seventh trumpet? That we are now living in the most momentous period of all history, a period which will mark the termination of the reign of sin in this world, and the complete overthrow of the kingdoms of this world, and the ushering in of the kingdom of God!

We are facing the "grand finale" of this world's history. "The second woe is past"; and we are witnessing the events which have been predicted as occurring under the third woe. Two hundred years ago that master mathematician and scientist, Sir Isaac Newton, in his "Observations on the Prophecies of Daniel, and the Apocalypse," expressed the opinion that only under the seventh trumpet would the time

The World's Finale

come for a perfect understanding of the prophecies. "The event," he said, "will prove the Apocalypse; and the prophecy thus proved and understood will open the old prophets, and all together will make known the true religion, and establish it. For he that will understand the old prophets must begin with this; but the time is not yet come for understanding them perfectly, because the main revolution predicted in them is not yet come to pass. 'But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as He hath declared to His servants the prophets.' . . . Till then we must content ourselves with interpreting 'what has already been fulfilled.'"

As an indication that great light upon the prophecies would be given to the world in the last days, we are told that in the latter days you shall consider it perfectly." Jeremiah 23:20. What a privilege it is, therefore, to be living in these last days, when such great events are taking place preparatory to the setting up of the kingdom of God! But great privileges mean great responsibilities, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." Luke 12:48. Things which master minds such as Sir Isaac Newton's could not comprehend, are now made plain through the fulfillment of prophecy, and by the Spirit of God. He and scores of other notable Bible students recognized that when the Turkish woe, or sixth trumpet, ceased to sound, then the mystery of God would soon be finished. With greater light than they had, we should be equally sure that we are living under the sounding of the seventh trumpet; when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

The three great lines of prophecy—the Seven Churches, the Seven Seals, and the Seven Trumpets, which we have studied, all point to this age of the world as the closing period of this world's history. With unerring accuracy the pen of Divine Inspiration has traced the historic outlines of the last nineteen centuries. And the overturning of nations as portrayed in the trumpets, and the development of the various characteristic features which have distinguished the successive periods as set forth under the Seals and the Churches, all prove that the Word of God is true even to the smallest details. One great event remains unfulfilled, viz., the Second Coming of Christ. We may be assured that as six sevenths of the historic-prophetic outline has been fulfilled to the letter, the one remaining event—the most important of all events will certainly follow.

CONCLUSION

The judgment in "the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven" is now proceeding, and soon—perhaps sooner than anyone realizes the case of every one of us will be settled for all eternity; and then the fiat will be pronounced. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still. And he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Revelation 22:11. This, then, is no time for the manifestation of careless indifference towards the gospel of Jesus Christ. The most important thing in life for us to do now is to repent of sin and to seek for eternal life from Jesus Christ, who gave Himself a ransom for our sins, and who is the way, the truth, and the life. He, our advocate, is pleading on our behalf before the throne of the universe, in the temple which is opened in heaven.

If we ultimately find ourselves thrust out of the kingdom of God, we shall have no one to blame but ourselves. What more could our heavenly Father have done that He has not done? "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3: 16. "He that believes on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides in him." John 3:36. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

"He which testifies these things said, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."
Revelation 22:17,20.