

Commentary on Revelation

By E W Bullinger (1837-1913)

(chapter 14)

Chapter XIV. THE SEVEN ASSEMBLIES AS A WHOLE (i. 11).

We must here, at the outset, remove the greatest source of all the misunderstandings which have arisen with regard to these seven "churches."

The fact of their being called "churches" has naturally led commentators and students of this book to infer that it is the Church of God, or at any rate the historic Christian Church, which is meant.

The difficulty is thus arbitrarily created. The Bible student is at once confronted with an overwhelming difficulty. He has read the Epistles which are addressed to the churches by the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul; and, on turning to the Epistles in Rev. ii. and iii., he is at once conscious of a striking change. He finds himself suddenly removed from the ground of *grace* to the ground of *works*. He meets with church-officers of whom he has never before heard; and with expressions with which he is wholly unfamiliar: and he is bewildered.

Two courses are open to him: either to try and force the words into a meaning to suit both, thus lowering the standard of the Church of God, and the Christian's own standing in Christ; or, to invent some purely imaginary interpretation and baseless hypothesis by applying them to Christendom, and holding that instead of seven assemblies we have seven stages of Church history: some going so far as to give the very years which mark off these periods.

Those who feel this to be a very difficult task, and lack the knowledge of history which is absolutely essential to this system of interpretation, wonder why God gave to Jesus Christ to show unto His servants what must come to pass hereafter, and yet expected them to become deep students of history in order to understand what He has revealed!

No wonder that most Bible readers, after struggling for a time with this fantastic idea, give it all up in despair; abandoning the reading of the book, and losing the "blessing" which is pronounced upon its readers.

As a first step toward removing this great evil, let us note at once that the word (...) (*ecclesia*), rendered "church," is by no means limited to the restricted sense which is thus forced upon it.

Ecclesia means simply an *Assembly*: any assembly of people who are *called out* (for that is the etymological meaning of the word) from other people.

Hence, it is used of the whole nation of Israel as distinct from other nations.

The Greek word *Ecclesia* occurs seventy-five times in the Septuagint Translation of the Old Testament, and is used as the rendering of five different Hebrew words. As it is used to represent one of these, seventy times, we need not concern ourselves with the other four words.

This Hebrew word is (...) (*Cahal*), from which we have our English word *call*. It means *to call together, to assemble, or gather together*, and is used of any *assembly* gathered together for any purpose. This Hebrew word *Cahal* occurs 123 times, and is rendered: "congregation," 86 times; "assembly," 17; "company," 17; and "multitude," 3 times: but is never rendered "church." Its *first* occurrence is in Gen. xxviii. 3 - "that thou mayest be a *multitude* (margin, *assembly*) of people," i.e., *a called-out people*. That is what Israel was, a people called out and assembled from all other peoples.

In Gen. xlix. 6 we read - "O my soul, come not thou into their secret (*Council or Senate*); Unto their assembly (*cahal*), mine honour, be not thou united."

Here the word *cahal* is used, not of all Israel as called out from the nations, but of the *assembly* of those called out of from the Tribal *Assembly* (or Council) of the tribes of Simeon and Levi.

Then, it is used of the worshippers, or those *called out* from Israel, and assembled before the Tabernacle and Temple, and in this sense is usually rendered "congregation." This is the meaning of the word in Ps. xxii. 22: "In the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee;" and verse 25: "My praise shall be of Thee in the great congregation."

This is the usage of the word in the Gospels, and even in the Acts of the Apostles before the new use, which the Holy Spirit was going to make of the word, was revealed.

When Christ said, "Upon this rock will I build my *Ecclesia*," He did not use the word in the exclusive sense in which it was *afterwards* to be used, but in the older and larger sense in which the word had been before used, which would embrace *the whole assembly* of His People, while not excluding the future *application* of the word to the Church or Body of Christ when that secret should have been in due season revealed.

When the Spirit, by Stephen, speaks of the *Ecclesia* in the wilderness (Acts vii. 38), he means the *congregation* of pious worshippers of God at the Tabernacle.

When the Lord added to the *Ecclesia* daily (Acts ii. 47), He added to the number of those 120, who first assembled themselves together in the upper room in Jerusalem.

When Saul says he persecuted the *Ecclesia* of God, he does not use the word in the limited sense, which it subsequently acquired after he had received the special revelation concerning it: but in the sense in which it had been used up to, and in which it was used at, that time. It means merely that he persecuted the People of God - the congregation of God. He is speaking of a past act in his life which took place long before the revelation of the secret, and his words must be interpreted accordingly. We must not read into any of these passages that which was the subject of a *subsequent* revelation! which passages are perfectly clear without it. The word *Ecclesia* in the Old Testament, the Gospels, and (for the most part) in the Acts, must be taken in the sense of its earlier usage as meaning simply the *congregation* or *assembly* of the Lord's people, and not in the sense which it acquired, after the later and special signification had been given to it by the Holy Spirit Himself.

As we have already abundantly shewn, in the consideration of our foregoing thirteen points, the Apocalypse is linked on to the Old Testament, the Gospels, and the Acts (and not to the later Pauline Epistles), and we ought to use the word *Ecclesia* in the sense in which it is there used; and not, surely, in the newer and special sense which it acquired, and in which it is used, in the Epistles.

In the Pauline Epistles we read nothing about an "angel" as having to do with the churches of God which Paul planted.

But we do meet with the word Angel in connection with the *Synagogue*; (though not in the Old Testament). There, there was an officer, who was called *Sheliach Tzibbur* (...): *Tzibbur* meaning *Assembly*; and *Sheliach*, the *Angel* or *Legate* of the Assembly, and the Leader of Divine worship, from (...) (*shalach*) to send.

The chief officer was the *Archisynagogos*, or "Ruler of the Synagogue;" and after him came the *Sheliach Tzibbur*; or "Angel of the Assembly," who was the mouthpiece of the congregation. His duty it was to offer up public prayer to God for the whole congregation. Hence his title; because, as the messenger of the assembly, he spoke to God for them.*

* See Jennings' *Jewish Antiquities*; and Article *Synagogue* in Kitto's *Biblical Cyclopaedia*, vol iii. 903.

When we have these facts to our hands, why arbitrarily invent the notion that "angel" is equivalent to Bishop, when there is not a particle of historical evidence for it?

Episcopi, or Bishops, are clearly spoken of in other parts of the New Testament (though not in the modern sense of the term. See Acts xx. 28; Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 2; Tit. i. 7). But the office of "Angel" in the Church of God is *never used* either inside or outside the Word of God. One might just as well argue for the popular interpretation of the word "angel," from the fact that the word has been so used and applied by the "Catholic Apostolic" Church within recent times.

Add to this the use of the word *synagogue*, which we have in Rev. ii. 9 and iii. 9. Here again translators mislead us. For, while the Greek word occurs 57 times in the New Testament, and is translated *synagogue* 55 times, it is rendered "assembly" in Jas. ii. 2, and "congregation" in Acts xiii. 43.

It should, of course, be rendered *synagogue* in these two places, as well as in all the others, as it is in the R.V. (though in Jas. ii. 2 it has *assembly* in the margin). Had the A.V. so rendered it in Jas. ii. it would have marked and emphasised the fact that James wrote "to the Twelve Tribes which are scattered abroad," and would have shown how his epistle has a present point of appeal to the scattered people,* as well as a direct future application to them, like that of the seven epistles in Rev. ii. and iii. In any case, the use of the word "synagogue" in Rev. ii. 9 and iii. 9 stamps these Epistles as Jewish, Satan's synagogue being put in opposition to the other assemblies.

* As well as saved a great deal of controversy as to the anointing with oil, etc., in Jas. v. 14; and as to "faith" and "works."

When the word *Ecclesia*, in the Apocalypse is rendered "Church," and the word "Synagogue" in Rev. ii. 9 and iii. 9, is interpreted of the church, it is playing fast and loose with the "words which the Holy Ghost speaketh," and which He has employed, not only for His revelation, but for our instructions.

We hold that the Apocalypse contains a record (by vision and prophecy) of the events which shall happen "hereafter" in the Day of the Lord; that the whole book is concerned with the Jew, the Gentile, and the Earth, but not with the Church of God, or with Christendom; or with the latter only so far as the present corruption of Christianity shall merge in the great apostasy, and form part of it, after the Church, the Body of Christ, shall have been removed.

But there will be a people for God on the earth during those eventful years. There will be the remnant of believing Israelites; the 144,000 sealed ones; the great multitude; and other bodies of faithful ones who are referred to all through the Book (see chaps. vii., xi., and xii. 17). In which latter passage we read of "the remnant of her (the woman's) seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

Will not these need special instruction? Have these been forgotten by Him who sees the end from the beginning? The Pauline Epistles will of course be of use as an historical record of what will then be past, just as we have the record of Israel's history in the Old Testament now.

Our answer to these questions is that God has provided for their instruction, and warning, and encouragement, in the second and third chapters of this book.

Right at the beginning they are the first subjects of Divine remembrance, provision, and care. Their needs must be first provided for, before anything else is recorded of the things which John saw; and there they will find what is specially written for *their* learning.

Even now, the nucleus of this Remnant is being prepared. Hundreds of Jews are believing in Christ as the Messiah, who know nothing of Him as the Saviour. And even among the unbelievers in Israel a political movement is on foot which may speedily lead up to and issue in the events of which Revelation treats.

Of course this means that we are to consider the *interpretation* of Rev. ii. and iii. as future, and belonging to the "hereafter." As to *application*, we, of course, quite understand, and readily admit that these epistles have been read by the saints of God all through the ages; and all who have thus read them have received a blessing according to the promise. *We* may so read them now, ourselves, and *apply* them, so far as we can do so consistently with the teaching for this dispensation of grace, contained in the Pauline Epistles. *Applying* these thus we leave the full and final *interpretation* for those to whom it will specially belong hereafter.

Few are aware that the evidence as to the existence of these assemblies as churches is very scanty. Indeed, concerning some, not only is evidence wanting; but concerning others it is quite opposed to their ever having existed at all.

Tertullian* (about 145-200) says that leaders of certain sects, such as Cerdon and Marcion, rejected the Apocalypse on the ground that it could not have been written by John, inasmuch as (among other reasons) there was no Christian Church in existence at Thyatira in the time of John.

* *Contr. Marcion* i. 1.

Epiphanius (who wrote about A.D. 367) deals with the Alogi, a sect which disputed the genuineness of the Apocalypse, and on the same grounds. He quotes their words: "moreover, some of the [the Alogi] again seize on this passage in this same Apocalypse [Rev. ii. 18]. And they allege, by way of opposition, that it is again said: 'write to the angel of the Church which is in Thyatira,' although there was no Christian Church in Thyatira. How then could he write to a church which was not in existence?"

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* (...) Epiphanius *Adversus Haereses*, Book II., Vol. I. Haeres li. Sec. xxxiii. (Migne's Ed. Vol. xli., p. 948).

The answer of Epiphanius acknowledged the historical fact: but his answer was that St. John wrote to the church at Thyatira, not because it was then in existence, but because it would be at some future time.

We do not see how he could have given a better answer.

In A.D. 363 was held the Council of Laodicea. It was attended by thirty-two bishops of Asia, among whom was the bishop of Ephesus. This Council framed a list or canon of the sacred books, but the Apocalypse was not included in the catalogue.

How can we account for this as a historical fact if these seven churches were all *then existent*; and if these epistles were sent to them at the time, Laodicea being one of them?

The facts being what they are, the enemies of the Bible draw from them an entirely false conclusion. They use them against the authenticity and genuineness of the Apocalypse, and against its claim to a place in the Canon of Scripture.

We, on the contrary, strongly hold the canonicity and inspiration of the Apocalypse, but we use the undoubted historical facts against a false system of interpretation which is a very different thing.

An opponent of the Bible, in a large and important work, uses the common system of a apocalyptic interpretation as an argument against all Scripture. Speaking of Revelation, he says, "As all parties admit that it contains the destiny of the church, each sect has applied it to itself, frequently to the exclusion of all others."

All parties, we are thankful to say, do not admit to the popular system of interpretation; and our present object is to show that there is a "more excellent way," not of interpreting it, but of *believing it*; a way which, while it honours it as the word of God, satisfactorily meets the erroneous conclusions drawn from facts.

If these "churches" are future assemblies of Jewish believers on the earth, after the Church has been "caught up to meet the Lord," then all is clear, consistent, and easy to be understood.

The real difficulty is created by attempting to read the Church into the book where it has no place.

As to the "seven lamp-stands," ought not this expression at once to send our thoughts back to the one golden lamp-stand of the Tabernacle (Exod. xxv. 31-39). ONE lamp-stand with seven lamps, indicative of Israel's unity in the Land and in the City? Here, the scattered condition of the nation is just as distinctly indicated by the fact that the seven lamps are no longer united in one lamp-stand. The nation is no longer in the Land, for Jerusalem is not now the center; but the people are "scattered" in separate communities in various cities in Gentile lands. So that just as the *one* lamp-stand represents Israel in its unity, the *seven* lamp-stands represent Israel in its dispersion; and tells us that Jehovah is about to make Jerusalem again the center of His dealings with the earth.

We must further note that John was not told to send seven separate letters to seven separate assemblies, as is generally assumed and believed. Indeed the contrary is the fact. The great Voice said, "What thou seest, write in A BOOK and send IT unto the seven assemblies."

Over three-quarters of a million copies of this Book of the Revelation have in the last few years been placed in the hands of the Jews throughout the world. We allude to the Salkinson-Ginsburg translation of the New Testament in Hebrew, published by the Trinitarian Bible Society, and distributed by the Mildmay Mission to the Jews, and by other similar agencies throughout the world.

So that "the book" has been and is being sent to those for whom it was written, and at no distant day many assemblies of Jews will hear and read the words of this prophecy, and a people be prepared who will keep "the words of this prophecy," and receive in a special manner the blessing pronounced in i. 3.

They will be able to understand what is now so inexplicable to Gentile Christian readers. We find nothing in our Pauline Church Epistles that fits into what is said to these assemblies. But those readers will be at once reminded of the various stages of their own past history, and they will find in almost every sentence some allusion to the circumstances in which they will find themselves as described in this book.

We will show this; first, from the references made to their past history; and when we come to deal with these Epistles separately, we will, in some circumstance in the Apocalypse itself, give a reference to nearly every sentence in these seven Epistles.

It is a remarkable fact that

Seven past phases of Israel's history

are referred to in these Epistles: and the *literary* order in Revelation corresponds with, and answers to, the *historical* order in the Old Testament.

1. EPHEBUS - THE DAY OF ISRAEL'S ESPOUSALS.

(Exodus).

In the Epistle to the Assembly at Ephesus, the reference is to Exodus: to God's love in choosing them out of Egypt, and them making them a nation. See Hos. xi. 1: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." In Jer. ii. 2 we see this "first love," which Jehovah calls "the love of thine espousals." And in Ezek. xvi. we have a full description of the workings and outcome of this "first love." The whole of Ezek. xvi. must be read with Ex. xix. 4-6. It is this "first love" which Israel is here charged with having "left." This is the beginning of all the subsequent evil.

2. SMYRNA - THE PERIOD OF ISRAEL'S WANDERINGS.

(Numbers).

In Smyrna, we have a reference to a definite time of trial.. In the wilderness it was *forty* years. Here it is *ten* days. If any wish to make this stand for ten years it must be on their own responsibility. We only press the point that a *corresponding time of trial* is referred to; and that it is a definite and limited time.

We are aware of the "interpretation" proposed as to there having been ten persecutions of "Christians" between A.D. 57 and 284. But unfortunately for this theory, there is nothing said here as to any *number* of separate persecutions: but only as to the *duration of one*! It is evident that no system of interpretation which is based on such imaginations will be of any service to us in our understanding of this book.

The year-day system, as a *principle* of prophetic interpretation, is a human invention; and as unnecessary as it is mischievous.

When God says a "day" He means a day, and when He says a year He means a year. Even in those very passages where He makes one day to stand for a year, the words are used in each case in their literal sense and natural meaning.

When the spies were gone 40 days, and Israel was made to wander 40 years ("a year for a day"), "day" means day and "year" means year (Num. xiv. 34). Because God thus orders it here, we have no authority to do this *on our own responsibility* in every other place.

When Ezekiel was told to lie on his left side 390 days, it does not mean that he was thus to lie for 390 years! And when Jehovah says, "I have laid upon thee the *years* of their iniquity according to the number of the *days*, 390 days" (Ezek. iv. 4,5), it is clear that "days" means days, and "years" means years.

And when Ezekiel does the same with respect to Judah, 40 days, Jehovah says, "I have appointed thee each day for a year" (Ezek. iv. 6, and see margin). We have the same plain and literal statement of facts.

When human interpreters take upon themselves to "appoint" the same in other cases, whether 1260 days or "ten days," or any other number, they incur a very grave responsibility. They do not adopt this "system" in other prophecies, and dare not. For when, in Gen. vii. 4, God says, "For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain on the earth forty days and forty nights," it is said to have been so fulfilled. (vers. 10, 12).

When, in Gen. xl. 12, 13, it is said "the three branches are three days," the fulfillment is given in verse 20: - "And it came to pass on the third day," etc. (not *year*).

When God prophesied of the flesh that He would give Israel to eat, the days meant days (Num. xi. 19, 20).

So here, in Rev. ii. 9, the expression "ten days" means ten days: and many Jews in many cities already know what it is to suffer an anti-Semite tribulation for days together. Why not here and under these circumstances?

Haman had *one* day given to him to "destroy the Jews"! Why not another "Jews' enemy" be allowed ten days?

And what is this or any such period to do with the Church of God, which has nothing whatever to do with "times and seasons" (1 Thess. v. 1)?

It is quite probable that the time referred to here may that of Matt. xxiv. 9, 10, and Isa. lxvi. 5.

3. PERGAMOS - THE WILDERNESS PERIOD.

(Numbers)

In Pergamos we have the reference to Balaam, which will have its counterpart in a yet future day.

Through "the counsel of Balaam" (Num. xxxi. 16, etc.) Israel was entrapped and led into the worst form of Midianitish idolatry, when "Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor" (Num. xxv. 3).

In the coming future day Pergamos will be in a special manner the seat (or throne) of Satan (ii. 13; and compare xiii. 2), and a form of idolatry more awful than that of Baal-peor will be on the earth. Peter, writing to the Dispersion, tells of this future time in 2 Peter ii., and in verse 15 he speaks specially of their "following in the way of Balaam the son of Bosor."

Jude also connects his description of a similar phase of idolatry with "the error of Balaam" (verses 10-13).

It is clear, therefore, that that special feature of idolatry connected with Balaam's "counsel" is referred to in Rev. ii. 14, and will be revived in the period described in the Apocalypse.

And, as, upon this great evil the special judgment of the "sword" was sent and executed (Num. xxxi. 1-15), so here. He who speaks to the same People of the same evil, speaks also of the same judgment, "I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth" (Rev. ii. 16), which threat will be carried out in chap. xix. 21. This is why we have that special mention of the "sharp sword," describing the speaker in ii. 12, referring to the same feature of the Vision as seen in i. 16.

4. THYATIRA - THE PERIOD OF ISRAEL'S KINGS.

(1 and 2 Kings).

In the Epistle to Thyatira we have the reference to another and more intensified form of idolatry as developed and established in the days of Ahab, king of Israel; another who, like Balaam, "made Israel to sin" (1 Kings xvi. 30).

Ahab was the first king who officially introduced and organised the most abominable form of heathen idolatry that the human mind ever conceived (1 Kings xvi. 33). See Revised Version, where the special significance of this abomination is conveyed and contained in the word "Asherah." To particularise on this form of idolatry would be only to defile the mind. The Lord Himself in this Epistle (Rev. ii. 20-24) gives a clue to it. We may, perhaps, add that what was introduced into Israel by Balaam (see Rev. ii. 14) became elevated into a national religious system under Ahab and Jezebel, as it had long been recognised among the heathen nations around.

What that religious system of licentious idolatry was is well known; but something may be gathered from a recently-discovered Papyrus,* containing about a sixth of the *Ascension of Isaiah*, which had before been known only in an Ethiopic Translation (except a mutilated Lectionary in Paris). The origin of this Papyrus is very ancient, and its historical facts may be taken as correct, separated from its vaticinations. It says, speaking of the condition of things in the days of Israel's Kings - "And Manasseh turned aside his heart to serve Beliar [i.e., Belial]; for the angel of lawlessness who ruleth this world is Beliar, whose name is Malambuchus. And he delighted in Jerusalem because of Manasseh, and made him strong in Jerusalem. And sorcery and magic increased, and divination and auguration and fornication and the persecution of the righteous at the hands of Manasseh... And when Isaiah the son of Amoz, saw the lawlessness which was being committed in Jerusalem, and the worship of Satan, and his triumph, he withdrew from Jerusalem, and settled in Bethlehem of Judea."

* Now in Lord Amherst's collection, and published under the title of the *Amherst Papyri* (Oxford Press).

The Papyrus goes on to speak of Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, as being "the teacher of the four hundred prophets of Baal;" and tells how Isaiah "called Jerusalem Sodom, and the rulers of Judah and Israel he named people of Gomorrah." This was of course in reference to the special sins of Sodom and Gomorrah. See Isa. i., &c.

Many proofs abound to show that some similar system will yet be revived. None can be imagined which would more quickly and universally take hold upon the world, and unite all communities - and even the worst of characters, by making all, thus, to become *religious*, and yet able to degrade and gratify the instincts of human nature *under the guise of religion*.

Nor can we conceive any form of corruption which would mark off the people of God more effectually, and cause them to be separated from the abounding wickedness around them.

This is the best explanation which can be given of those solemn verses, Rev. ix. 20, 21: or rather, it is this passage which is itself the explanation of the awful character of Antichrist's great universal system of Religion, which even God's plagues, up to the point of time there referred to, will have failed to remove, and which will call down the yet greater judgments of "the seven vials."

These verses (Rev. ix. 20, 21) are so weighty that we must them in full.

"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 (R.V. marg. *demons*), and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts."

Our point, however, must not be forgotten, which is, to draw attention to the fact, that the mention of this evil in these Epistles corresponds with the historical order in Israel's history in the Old Testament.

5. SARDIS - THE PERIOD OF ISRAEL'S REMOVAL.

(1 and 2 Chronicles).

We have had four references to Israel's history in the Old Testament, and as *four* is the number connected with the earth, so these four have been connected with Israel in the earth and the Land; and with the culminating sin of departure from the love of God manifested to the Nation. Israel had "left her first love," forsaken God, and joined herself to idols in the most abominable form.

This is the climax of Israel's sin. All else in this history is judgment, until Israel is removed from the Land and taken away out of God's sight. His name is practically blotted out, never again to be a separate ten-tribed kingdom. So blotted out, in fact, that men speak today of the lost* ten tribes.

* Not that they are "lost" in the proper sense of the word: but the proverbial expression is significant.

Indeed, the prophecy of Deut. xxix. 20 is fulfilled, not only as to the individual and to the Tribe; but there is an application to the whole nation. In Deut. xxix. 18, 20 (17, 19) there is the threat to blot out the name of the "man" or "tribe" who shall introduce idolatry. As a matter of fact, the Tribes of Dan and Ephraim were the first to introduce it; and their names *are* blotted out from the tribes of those who are to be sealed in Rev. vii.

It is in this Epistle, next in order (to the assembly at Sardis) that we have the reference to this silence, in the promise to the few names of such as have not defiled their garments: "He that overcometh... 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" (Rev. iii. 5).

6. PHILADELPHIA - THE PERIOD OF JUDAH'S KINGS.

(2 Chronicles).

We have had two references to Israel's history, and now we are to have two references to Judah's, and these refer, not any more to failure, sin and judgment; but to the hope of restoration and blessing.

As Ahab, king of Israel, was the first to introduce and establish the Asherah worship, so the reference here, in the Epistle to the assembly of Philadelphia, is to Hezekiah, king of Judah, who did much to destroy it and cast it out.

In 2 Chron. xxxi. 1, Hezekiah "broke in pieces the pillars (marg. *obelisks*), and hewed down the Asherim" (R.V.).

His two predecessors, like himself, are described with special reference to their connection with the Temple and with the Temple worship. Indeed, these three kings of Judah are linked together as being three of the four reigns in which Isaiah prophesied, namely, "Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah" (Isa. i. 2).

Jotham "*entered not into* the temple of the Lord" (2 Chron. xxvii. 2).

Ahaz "*shut up* the doors of the house of the Lord" (2 Chron. xxviii. 24).

Hezekiah, at the beginning of his reign, "in the first year, in the first month, *opened* the doors of the house of the Lord" (2 Chron. xxix. 3).

In Isa. xxii. 22 there is a further reference to this point. Shebna, the Treasurer, had misused his trust for his own glorification (see Isa. xxii. 15-19). On this account he was ordered to be deposed, by Divine command, and "the key of the house of David" was laid upon the shoulder of Eliakim, the son of Hilkiyah (vers. 20-25): "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so the shall open, and none shall shut, and he shall shut, and none shall open" (ver. 22).

Eliakim means *God will raise up*: and there can be no doubt whatever that we have here a prophetic reference to Christ, whom God would raise up. Indeed, the whole passage (vers. 20-25) reads more like prophecy than history; and points very distinctly forward to the Temple which He Himself will build, and will fill with His glory.

It is remarkable to notice how, in writing to this Assembly in Philadelphia (Rev. iii. 7), the Lord takes these very words and applies them to Himself, saying: "These things saith he... that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth."

The reference here to Isa. xxii. 22 is unmistakable, and it is clear that we have a reference to another and subsequent, but closely connected, event in the Old Testament history.

With this reference we can understand the announcement to the Assembly of Philadelphia in Rev. iii. 8: "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it."

And we can understand also the reference to the Temple in the promise, "I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out" (Rev. iii. 12).

We are taken right on, beyond Jerusalem and its Temple, to the days of final blessing, even to the new Jerusalem and "the Temple of my God," when Isa. lxii. 2 shall be fulfilled: "And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name."

When this is exactly what is promised in Rev. iii. 12, "I will write upon him my new name," it is difficult to understand how such a promise could ever have been diverted from Israel to the Church: taken away from what it is directly associated with; and applied to that with which it has no connection whatsoever.

7. LAODICEA - THE PERIOD OF JUDAH'S REMOVAL.

(The Minor Prophets).

We reach, in this last Epistle, the lowest point of Judah's degradation, in that long line of departure from God, from the day Israel left her "first love," even the day of her espousals, when brought forth out of Egypt, down, down through one vast scene of idolatry and judgment, until we find that nation described in the Epistle to the Assembly in Laodicea in a condition of spiritual destitution such as characterised the People in the period of the Minor Prophets.

Indeed, so complete is the correspondence, that to see it we must wait till we take the Epistle sentence by sentence, and look at the passages from the Prophets, which we shall there place side by side. We give one or two as examples:

<p>Rev. iii. 17 - "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."</p>	<p>Hos. ii. 5, 8, 9 - "For their mother hath played the harlot;... for she said, I will go after my lovers that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink... For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness. And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers," etc. etc.</p>
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The whole of Hosea ii.-v., xii. 8, etc., must be read to see the pointed reference to this stage of Israel's condition. Compare also Hag. i. 6; Jer. xiii. 25, 26; v. 27; Zech. xi. 5, 13-18.

<p>Rev. iii. 18 - "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see."</p>	<p>Compare with this Isa. lv. 1, 2; Hos. ii. 3; Jer. xiii. 25, 26; Isa. lix. 10; lxvi. 17; See also Mal. iii. 3</p>
<p>Rev. iii. 19 - "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."</p>	<p>Isa. xliii. 4 - "Since thou was precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee." So Deut. vii. 8; Deut. viii. 5 - "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." Mal. iii. 7 - "Return unto Me and I will return unto you" is another form of Rev. iii. 19.</p>

In verse 16, the Lord speaks of spueing out the angel. This is the very expression used prophetically in Lev. xviii. 25-28 of Israel; where Jehovah warns that, if they adopted the abominations of heathen idolatry, the Land might spue them out (compare Jer. ix. 19; Ezek. xxxvi. 13, 17).

All this shows that the references in this last Epistle do not in any way fit the Church of God, but agree in every particular with Israel's history, and are referred to so as to enlighten them from their own past history, and thus warn them as to future evils which will then surround them.

When the Church has been removed, and Israel is again dealt with, the religious condition of the nation will exactly correspond with its condition at the Lord's first coming.

There will be, as there was then, plenty of religion. Isa. i. 10-15 minutely describes the state of things, as they were then and will be again in the future.

The truth of "this prophecy will be amply evidenced - "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing."

The Pharisee's prayer (Luke xviii. 11, 12) exemplifies it. The parables of the great supper, the wedding garment, etc., describe it. The people were blind. The answer to the question, "Are we also blind?" (John ix. 40, 41) proves it.

The call to the wedding feast will be, as then, individual. Matthew was called, Zacchaeus was called, and many others; and those who heard that call were unable to resist its commanding and enabling power.

It is the great wedding feast of Rev. xix. 9 to which the parables pointed.

These "servants," to whom this epistle is addressed, will understand the solemn warning, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." "To the twelve tribes scattered abroad" it was announced "the judge standeth before the door" (Jas. v. 9).

The then nearness of the Judge is the thought conveyed in this announcement. He will be then near at hand, and ready to be revealed.

We are aware that the warning in chap. iii. 20, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock," has been universally interpreted of the nearness of the *Saviour* in grace to those living in this present Church Dispensation, and this has been fostered by painters who have done so much to present perversions of Scripture to the eye.

It is a perversion which just suits the old nature, for it puts man in the place of Almighty God, and turns the Lord Jesus into a helpless suppliant. All this is foreign to the doctrines of grace, and makes them all of none effect.

Moreover, this popular interpretation is out of keeping with the context. For, all through these seven Epistles the Lord is in the character of a Judge, rewarding His "servants" according to their "works." To those looking for Him and ready to receive Him, He appears according to His promise in Luke xii. 35-40: "let your loins be girded about and your lights burning: and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that *when he cometh and knocketh*, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching: Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself and *make them to sit down to meat*, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the good-man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not." Here, we have the "Son of Man;" the "servants;" the illustration of the "thief;" the "watching;" the "knocking;" the "opening," and the "sitting down to meat." Surely we have in Rev. iii. 20, the fulfilment of this prophecy.

How simple it all is when we look at this Epistle as relating to backsliding Israel, and read it in the light of the Prophets and the Gospels. How much more satisfactory to find these illustrations in the Old Testament Scriptures, instead of being occupied with the conflicting and fanciful references to certain phases of ecclesiastical history, *which have no Scriptural foundation whatever, and rest entirely on human imagination*. All is confusion as to interpretation, and error as to doctrine, the moment we introduce the Church or the present dispensation into these Epistles.

We have seen enough in the consideration of this fourteenth point to furnish us with further evidence that the Church is not the subject of the Apocalypse.

The same is seen when we look at our last point, viz., the order of the *promises* contained in these Epistles.

(XV). THE PROMISES TO THE SEVEN ASSEMBLIES.

As we have seen that the references to the Old Testament in the seven Epistles correspond with the historical order of the events, so it is with respect to the promises contained in these Epistles. The literary order follows the historical order.

They are written to a People supposed to be well-versed in the history of the Old Testament, and well-acquainted with all that had happened to their fathers and had been written for their admonition. Instructed in the past history of their nation, they will readily understand the relation between the testings and judgments in the past with which they are familiar, and those similar circumstances in which they will find themselves in a yet future day.

While the historical events connected with the rebukes are carried down from Exodus to the period of the Minor Prophets, the promises cover a different period; commencing with the period of Eden, and ending with the period of Solomon.

The subjects of the rebukes follow the order of the departure of the People from Jehovah. Their decline and apostasy is traced out in the historical references contained in these Epistles.

All blessing depended on the national adherence of the chosen nation to the conditions of the Covenant made with them from the days of the Exodus to the days of the Minor Prophets.

We see them, in the history, coming down, down, down; till we find them stripped of all blessing (nationally), poor, miserable and blind. All that seems to be hoped for, or looked for, among the People is a few individuals who will speak to one another and think upon the Coming One (Mal. iii. 16). Later, we see these in the persons of Zacharias and Elisabeth (Luke i. 5,6), Simeon (Luke ii. 25), and Anna (Luke ii. 36-38), and others, "who were waiting for the consolation of Israel," and looking "for redemption in Jerusalem." (Compare Mark xv. 43 and Luke xxiv. 21).

We have seen that this same historical order is followed in these seven Epistles to the Assemblies.

But when we turn to the PROMISES, then all is different. They proceed in the opposite direction. The order, instead of descending - from Israel's highest ground of privilege (Exodus) to the lowest stage of spiritual destitution (Minor Prophets) - ascends, in the counsels of Jehovah, from tending a garden to sharing His throne.

This will be readily seen as we trace it out in the promises made in Rev. ii. and iii.

But first we must note that they are all intensely individual. There is no corporate existence recognised as such. Each one of the seven promises commences with the same words, "to him that overcometh." This answers to the language of the Four Gospels, and the Epistle to the Hebrews: e.g., "He that endureth to the end," and resists all the flood of evil by which he will be surrounded, he shall be saved.

Such phraseology is foreign to the language of the later Pauline Church Epistles.

The whole period covered by "the day of the Lord" is called the *final meeting* of the ages, or the (...) (*sunteleia*); but, the *crisis* in which it culminates is called the (...) (*telos*), *the end* of the age.

Both are rendered "end" in the New Testament, but the use of these two words must be carefully distinguished.

Sunteleia denotes a *finishing* or *ending together*, or in conjunction with other things. *Consummation* is perhaps the best English rendering.* It implies that several things meet together, and reach their end during the same period; whereas *telos* is the point of time at the *end of that period*.** For example, in Matt. xxiv. 3 the disciples ask, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the *sunteleia* of the age."

* The word occurs only in Matt. xiii. 39, 40, 49; xxxiv. 3; xxviii. 20, which shows that this verse refers to a yet future day. And in Heb. ix. 26, which refers to the *sunteleia* of the former dispensation. It is the Septuagint rendering of (...) (*keytz*) in Dan. xii. 4, 13.

** *Telos* is significant in this connection, in Matt. x. 22 and Rev. ii. 26.

In His answer to this question the Lord speaks of the whole period, and covers the whole of the *sunteleia*. But three times He mentions the *telos* (1) to say that "the *telos* is not yet" (verse 6); (2) to give a promise to him "that shall endure unto the *telos*" (verse 13); (3) to mark the crisis in verse 14, which comes immediately after the close of the preaching of "the gospel of the kingdom." "Then shall the *telos* come." The *sign* of the *telos* is the setting up of "the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet." Thus the *telos*, and he who endures to this, the same shall be saved, and will be among the *overcomers* specially referred to in these seven Epistles; to whom these promises are made, and to whom they peculiarly refer.

They are seven in number, as we know: but we have to note that the *seven* here, as elsewhere, is divided into *three* and *four*.

Each Epistle ends with two things: (1) an *injunction* to "hear;" (2) a *promise* to him that "overcometh." In the first three Epistles the Promise comes *after* the Injunction. In the last four it comes *before* it.

This is because the first *three* are connected, by reference, to what is written of the *Divine* provisions in the books of Genesis and Exodus (the Garden and the Wilderness); while the latter *four* are connected with the *Land* and the thrones of David and Solomon: the number *three* marking Heavenly or Divine perfection; and the number *four* having to do with the earth.

Let us look at these Promises in order.

1. THE FIRST (EPHESUS)

refers to Genesis ii., the promise being, "I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Rev. ii. 7).

God begins from Himself. The Apocalypse related not only to Israel, but to the earth; and the first promise goes back to Eden and to the "tree of life."

The way to that tree was lost: but was "kept" (or preserved) by the cherubim (Gen. iii. 24). These cherubim next appear in connection with the way to the Living One, in the Tabernacle, and are thus linked on to Israel.

Only in Israel's restoration can the way to the "Tree of Life" be restored.

Sovereignty and government on the earth is the great subject of the Apocalypse; therefore the promise goes back to the point where sovereignty was ignored and government was overthrown. This becomes the starting-point. That is why the cherubim reappear in the Apocalypse, intimately associated with this work of restoration of Divine Government on the earth. their song is of "creation" (Rev. iv. 11). Their likeness is to creation. Their song is of the redemption of Israel (not their own. See the notes on them in chap. iv. and v.).

2. THE SECOND (SMYRNA)

refers to Genesis iii., the promise being "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death" (ii. 10, 11). The reference is to Genesis iii., where death first enters. But the promise goes beyond this; for it relates not merely to the death which came in with sin, but to the "second death," which is revealed in Rev. xx. 14; xxi. 8.

3. THE THIRD (PERGAMOS)

refers to Exodus. The promise is, "I will 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 knoweth, saving he that receiveth it" (ii. 17).

It is in this third Epistle, which refers to the wilderness period and Balaam's counsel, that we have a special reference to the manna, the wilderness sustenance, of which Exodus contains the record. "Bread from Heaven" and "Angels' food" (Ps. lxxviii. 24,25) are set over against the lusts of the flesh and spiritual idolatry. The manna was to be "hidden" in the Ark of the Covenant, "that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt... so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony to be kept" (Ex. xvi. 32-34). This "hidden" food is for remembrance; to remind them that God can supply the remnant of His People in the coming day, when none shall be allowed to buy or sell (Rev. xiii. 16,17), and therefore to buy food to eat, unless they consent to bear the "mark of the Beast."

God supported His People in the wilderness, where they could obtain no food: Why not here? The false prophets will eat to the full at the table of another Jezebel: Why should not God "furnish a table" (Psa. lxxviii. 19) for His own in that coming day, in that wilderness whither they will flee (Rev. xii. 14)? The one was literal: why not the other? Why go out of our way to seek for a strange interpretation alien to the subject, when we have one ready to hand in the Old Testament Scriptures which are being referred to? That manna was to be "hidden," and "kept," to remind them that God can still, and will again "furnish a table in the wilderness," that they may again be "nourished for a time, and times, and half a time" (Rev. xii. 14).

There is a further promise as to the "white stone" and the "new name." Again we ask, Why go to our own imaginations, or to Pagan customs, for interpretations, when we have in this same book of Exodus* the account of the stones on which the names of the Tribes were engraven: Two on the High Priest's shoulder, with six names on each (collective); and twelve on the breastplate, with one name on each (individual). The individual names being placed "upon his heart" (the place of love), and the collective names "upon his shoulders" (the place of strength) (Exod. xxviii. 8-30).

* In the Hebrew Canon Exodus is called the Book of "the Names." See *Names and Order of the Books of the Old Testament*, by Dr. Bullinger.

Besides these stones there were the stones of the "Urim and Thummin," of which little or nothing is known. These may have "white" for aught we know; but we do know that they were associated with a hearing and answering God dwelling in the midst of His People.

Here, amid their scenes of trial and tribulation, when God's people will find themselves in another wilderness, they are reminded, by this Exodus-promise, of Jehovah's presence with them; and of the blessed fact that He has their names in remembrance; that His love is everlasting; that His strength is almighty, and able to nourish them when their enemies might prevail and human resources fail.

4. THE FOURTH (THYATIRA)

refers to the books of Numbers and Samuel. The promise is, "to him will 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" (Rev. ii. 26-28).

Here again the literary order in the Apocalypse goes forward with the historical order: for it is in the book of Numbers that we have the basis of this promise given to the same People, who were the subjects of it there. For "there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall mite the corners (marg. *princes*) of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly. Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city" (Numbers xxiv. 17-19).

This promise and prophecy had a first foreshadowing fulfilment in David; showing what was in store for David's Son and David's Lord: even for Him who was the "root and the offspring of David."

Luke i. 31-33 tells of His conquest, and of His reign on David's throne.

David, we have said, foreshadowed it: for he could say in the words of his song, "thou hast girded me with strength to battle; them that rose up against me hast thou subdued under me. Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies, that I might destroy them that hate me.... Then did I beat them as small as the dust of the earth, I did stamp them as the mire of the street" (2 Sam. xxii. 40,41,43).

This was the theme of David's song "in the day that the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies."

And this heralds the yet more glorious song in honour of David's Lord when the kingdoms of the world shall have become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever (Rev. xi. 15).

The promise is given in this fourth Epistle, because the prophecy of Numbers xxiv. 17-19 has never yet been really fulfilled. "The day-spring (the morning star) did visit His people" (Luke i. 78); but He was rejected; and therefore the fulfilment remains in abeyance, as well as that of Luke i. 31-33.

In Rev. ii. 26-28 the time is at hand for the fulfilment of it. Hence the promise is repeated; and in chap. xx. 4 we see it accomplished; for the "morning star" shall then have risen (Rev. xxii. 16), and the prophecy of Psalm ii. shall be fulfilled.

5. THE FIFTH (SARDIS)

refers again to the times of David — not the beginning of his reign, but to the end of it.

It is a double promise, negative and positive, and both have to do with the names of individuals.

"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" (iii. 5).

The reference is to "the last words of David" in 2 Sam. xxiii. They follow "the words of this song" in the previous chapter.

These "last words of David" were uttered as he was about to give up the throne and the kingdom to Solomon; when the conflict was to end, and issue in dominion, and in a glorious reign of peace: foreshadowing the time when this promise of Rev. iii. 5 is about to be fulfilled, and the Apocalyptic judgments are about to issue in millennial glories.

"I will not blot out his name."

"I will confess his name."

So runs the double promise, and it is exactly what we see in the history which is thus referred to.

David is confessing the names of his overcomers, and the confessing of them begins, "These be the names of the mighty men whom David had" (2 Sam.xxiii. 8).

They had "gathered themselves to him" in the day of his rejection. For, though he had been anointed as king, he was not as yet sitting on his own throne, but was in the cave Adullam, or the place of testimony.*

* Adullam means *their testimony*.

They had gone to him in their distress and debt and bitterness of soul (I Sam. xxii. 1,2), and David "became a captain over them." They had followed him through all his conflicts: and now, on the eve of the era of glory and peace, their names are confessed before all.

Their deeds are announced, and their exploits are recorded. But there are some who are "blotted out."

Joab is not there, though "Abishai, the brother of Joab," is there (2 Sam. xxiii. 18); "Asahel, the brother of Joab," is there (verse 24); "Nahari...armour-bearer to Joab," is there (verse 37); *but not Joab himself*. He was a "mighty man." He had been the commander-in-chief of David's forces, a valiant soldier, a great statesman and wise counsellor; but, while he was all this and more, he was not an *overcomer*, for his heart was not right with David. He remained loyal when Absalom rebelled; but he took part in the treason of Adonijah.

Ahithophel is not there; though we read of "Eliam the son of Ahithophel" (verse 34). He was David's greatest counsellor; so wise, that when he spoke "it was as if a man had enquired at the oracle (or word) of God" (2 Sam. xvi. 23). But he was not an *overcomer*, and he is not "confessed" even before men. He took sides with Absalom in his rebellion; and he is blotted out from this list of names.

Abiathar, too, is blotted out, for not even is his name here. He was David's beloved friend (see 1 Sam. xxii. 20-23), but he was not an *overcomer*. He remained loyal in the treason of Absalom, but joined in that of Adonijah.

The other names are duly confessed.

The scene is unspeakably solemn; and has, by application, a warning voice for all. But, by interpretation, it comes with special force in this promise to the Assembly at Sardis, and refers to the fulfilment of Matt. x. 32, 33 and Luke xii. 8, 9. "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." Thus this promise refers not only to that solemn past scene in Israel's history, but is shown to be closely connected with the Four Gospels, and points on to the scenes of final judgment and glory in connection with David's Lord, and "a greater than Solomon."

6. THE SIXTH (PHILADELPHIA)

refers to Solomon, as does the seventh (Laodicea). In the former the reference is to the "Temple" and to the "City;" while, in the latter, it is to the "Throne."

The promise runs (iii. 12), "Him that overcometh 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 cometh down out of heaven from my God: and my new name."

The reference here to Solomon is unmistakable.

He it was who built the temple, and put in its porch those mysterious pillars "Jachin and Boaz" (1 Kings vii. 13-22; 2 Chron. iii. 17).

"And he set up the pillars in the porch of the temple: and he set up the right pillar, and called the name thereof Jachin (i.e., *He shall establish*): and he set up the left pillar, and called the name thereof Boaz (i.e., *In it is strength*)."

Strength and permanence were thus announced to all who entered that wondrous Temple.

The Temple of God is brought in this Epistle into contrast with the Synagogue of Satan, and those were of the latter who "say they are Jews and are not." That synagogue has neither strength nor permanence. But the overcomers are endued with Divine strength, and shall have eternal inheritance, for they "shall go no more out."

Moreover, the promise refers to the name of the overcomer being written in "the city of my God."

There can be only one interpretation to this promise. Anyone acquainted with Old Testament phraseology will at once go back in memory to such Psalms as xlvi., cxli., and lxxxvii. In this latter we read:

"Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised:
In the City of our God -- His holy mount.
Beautiful for situation, The joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion,
The sides of the north, the city of the great king.

As we have heard, so have we seen;
In the city of the Lord of hosts,
In the city of our God: God will establish it for ever" (Psa. xlvi. 1, 2, 8)

"His foundation is in the holy mountains.
Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion
More than all the dwellings of Jacob.
Glorious things are spoken of thee,
O city of God. Selah.
I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me:
Behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia,
This one was born there.

And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her.
And He, the Most High, shall establish her.
Jehovah shall count, when he writeth up the peoples
'This man was born there.' Selah.
As well the singers, as the players on instruments [shall say]
'All my springs are in thee'" (Psa. lxxxvii.).

True, the chapter-headings of the A.V. may call this "*the nature and glory of the Church*." But we shall prefer to believe God in so plain and literal a description of "the city of God:" and those who are the subjects of the promise will have a blessed knowledge of what it will mean to be written "in the city of my God."

Ezekiel (chap. xli.) also addresses Israel; but as he speaks not of promises and blessings, it is not interpreted of the Church, but it is left for the persons mentioned; though they are not more clearly defined here than in the above Psalm. In verse 9 we read of those who "shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am Adonai Jehovah" (Ezek. xli. 9).

The promise in Rev. iii. 12 refers to the New Jerusalem (chap. xxi. and xxii.). If the city of David and Solomon was such that "glorious things" were spoken of it as "the city of God," what will be the glories of that city which "cometh down out of heaven from my God"? And what will be the blessing of Zion

and Jerusalem when, as written in Isa. lxii. 1, "the righteousness thereof shall go forth as brightness and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth"? Then it is that the promise is given, "Thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name." (Compare Isa. lx 14). In Isa. lxii. 4 and 12 we have further instruction as to this "new name" referred to in Rev. iii. 12.

7. THE SEVENTH (LAODICEA)

refers to the throne, of which Solomon's was in every respect the ideal type.

This, the highest promise, is given to the overcomers in the lowest condition of Israel's degradation, which is described as in danger of being "spued out."

What that was we have already seen (page 89), and now we have the chiefest of all the promises. The overcomers in that last terrible condition of things are the ones who most need the greatest of Divine help and encouragement. Hence the highest promise is given.

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

To Solomon is the great promise of the throne vouchsafed through David. "When thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee... and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever" (2 Sam. vii. 12, 13).

The defection of those who should follow Solomon on that throne was foreknown and provided for. The whole of Psalm lxxxix. should be read in this connection, as explaining how and why the throne should come to be in abeyance. After referring to this in verse 14, the promise goes on: Yet

"My mercy shall not depart away from him...

"And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee:

"Thy throne shall be established for ever" (2 Sam. vii. 15, 16).

How and when this promise will be fulfilled, after the period of chastening referred to in verse 14 (of 2 Sam. vii.) shall have ended, is described in Dan. vii. There we have fully set forth how "the Son of Man" shall receive the kingdom and the throne, and how "the saints of the Most High" shall share that throne with Him, as promised in this Epistle.

The title used in Dan. vii., "The Most High" is very significant, and shows that the whole scene relates to the earth. Whenever this title is used this is its meaning and teaching. Its first occurrence, in Gen. xiv. 18-24 marks it as belonging to the "possessor of heaven and earth." It was as "the Most High" that He divided to the nations "their inheritance" in the earth (Deut. xxxii. 8), which, as its "possessor," He alone had the right or the power to do. In Psa. lxxxiii. 18 He is called "the Most High over all the earth." And so it is in all the thirty-six occurrences of the title in the Old Testament.

The expression, "the saints of the Most High," tells us that the people referred to are an *earthly* people, even those whose promise is an earthly throne and an earthly kingdom. Not the church of God, therefore, whose calling, standing, hope and destiny are heavenly.

Four times is the expression used in Dan. vii. In verse 18 *the saints of the Most High* shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever."

In verses 21, 22 the fourth Beast "made war with the saints and prevailed against them (as related in Rev. xiii. 7); until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the *saints of the Most High*; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom."

In verse 25 the Beast "shall speak great words against the Most High," &c. (as related also in 2 Thess. ii. 4, and Rev. xiii. 5, 6).

In verse 27 we read that "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the *saints of the Most High*, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him."

These are the "elect," who shall be "gathered together from the four winds, from one end of the heaven to the other," when the "Son of Man" shall come down on the earth (Matt. xxiv. 30, 31). Then shall His "call" go forth, "Gather my saints together unto me." This is when He will call "to the earth, that He may judge His People" (Psa. l. 4, 5; read the whole Psalm).

And when, later, in Matt. xxv. 31, we read, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory": then there will be a different gathering, not of His "elect" (see Matt. xxiv. 31), but "before him shall be gathered all nations," * according to Joel iii. 1, 2 and 11, 12.

* See the structure of the whole of this great prophecy of Matt. xxiv. and xxv. in *Things to Come*, vol. vi., p. 103.

This throne of the special judgment of the "nations" leads up to and ends in the permanent throne of Divine government, according to Jer. iii. 17.

Then will this promise be fulfilled to the overcomer: "I will grant to sit with Me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne (Rev. iii. 21).

This promise, therefore, like all the others is not given to the Church of God. The members of that glorious body will have already been 'caught up to meet the Lord in the air,' and will have had their part in the "gathering together unto him" there, before the cry of Psa. l. 5 goes forth to "the earth, that he may judge his people," and "gather his (earthly) saints together."

Thus we have traced the upward path -- the ascending scale of the seven promises of these seven Epistles, and seen how are they to be interpreted of Israel, whose downward path is here also so wonderfully set forth in these same Epistles.

This concludes our *fifteen preliminary points*; and we submit that their cumulative evidence establishes our fundamental position that, *the "Church of God"* does not form the subject of the Apocalypse. Our interpretation confines that subject to the "Jew" and the "Gentile" (I Cor. x. 32). Whether "the word of truth" is thus "rightly" divided is for our readers to determine for themselves, according to the evidence which we shall put before them.