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“ THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST ” CON- SIDERED AS HIS ENDORSEMENT OF THE ENTIRE SCRIPTURES

THE closing words of the Apocalypse and of the whole Bible are these: “ I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely, I come quickly. Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

“ I testify.” The Speaker is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Who, immediately preceding this solemn utterance as to the treatment of His words, issued such a free and gracious invitation to the thirsty and willing to come to Him and receive eternal satisfaction. He bids us come. Yet now in the same breath He dares us, at the peril of our eternal salvation, to corrupt His truth, truth which is the indispensable means to our coming unto Him. These are words in striking contrast to the benediction pronounced upon “ him that keepeth the sayings of this book ”.

The placing of the warning is not without significance, at the end of the Apocalypse and at the end of the Bible. The immediate reference is to the contents of this closing book itself, but since the Apocalypse not only closes but comprehends all previous Scripture, the words hold relation to the whole Bible. Nor is this the only place where such words are found. When communicating to Israel the five books which bear his name—and the Pentateuch is the foundation of Holy Scripture even as the Apocalypse is the top-stone—Moses said, “ Ye shall not add . . . neither shall ye diminish ”.¹ Solomon also, to whom the Lord gave a “ wise and discerning heart ”, wrote: “ Every word of God is pure. . . . Add thou not unto His words lest He reprove thee and thou be found a liar.”²

¹ Deut. iv. 2.

² Prov. xxx. 5, 6.

There are also admonitions and testimonies in the Psalms and Prophets concerning the unalterable abidingness of the Word of God and the peril to those who tamper therewith, which may be placed in the same category; while the Lord Jesus, in the days of His flesh, plainly stated the issues in judgment or blessing which would follow the treatment men accorded His word. Here, however, in the closing warning, the penalties are more severe, and the reason may well be that the mutilation of this book involves the entire Scriptures and impairs the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ Who is the Alpha and Omega, the whole alphabet of God's communication to men.

The reality of this dependence of the Apocalypse on all previous Scripture, while at the same time retaining its prophetic and predictive qualities, may be observed by a simple following of its chapters and noting the characters, histories, symbols, analogies and descriptions in the visions by which the Lord Jesus Christ through His angel signified this unveiling to His servant, John, commanding him to write and send it to the Churches; so that at the close, when all is complete, and when all Scripture has received this remarkable confirmation, He might say, "I, Jesus, have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches".

The divine attributes which are declared throughout the Old and New Testaments are here assembled; the great titles, the august names, ascribing authority and majesty and dignity to the Godhead, to Father, Son and Spirit, the triune God, of creation, of the patriarchs, of Israel, of the Gospel of our Incarnate Lord and Saviour, of judgment and mercy—the God of *all previous revelation* is similarly presented in this closing book.

Creation is here ascribed to God and to the Son and the Spirit is represented in the plenitude of His power. The design and will of God therein are affirmed, and the song which acclaims the Creator as the all-worthy One is sung by the *redeemed*. We are taken back to the Genesis record when "God saw everything that He had made and behold it was very good", and we are carried forward to the future when the praise and glory due to the Lord as Creator, now withheld through unbelief and sin, will, through redemption, be rendered to Him, and every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth and in the sea will give "blessing and honour and glory and power unto

Him ”; unbelievers of every school will be compelled to acknowledge the accuracy of the first verse (and chapters) of Genesis that “ in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ”.¹

The history of Paradise, Eden the garden of God, is here recalled. The sinless condition in which man came from his Maker’s hand, the forfeiture of life and blessing through the entrance of sin, and their restoration through grace, thus confirming what is written in Genesis iii and related passages throughout the Bible, are clearly fundamental.²

The instigator of all evil is here identified by the titles which he bears, namely, the dragon, that old serpent, the devil and satan; and the age-long conflict between the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, predicted with the pronouncement of judgment at the time of the Fall, is brought to the final issue when “ Thou shalt bruise his head ” will be demonstrated before angels, demons and men, and it shall again be seen that the Word of God in Genesis iii shall stand; while the disclosure of his activity as the “ accuser of the brethren ” confirms the ancient story of Job.³

The great system and city of evil, Babylon the great with all its history in principle and mystery and ultimate development and manifestation, takes us back to the record of the beginning in Genesis x and xi, when mankind planned a union in defiance of God Who put them to confusion both in word and deed. And Nimrod the mighty hunter, the builder of Babel, who hunted the souls of the faithful, will have his final successor in the great antichristian monarch here called “ the beast ”, the first to be destroyed by the Lord Jesus Christ when He shall descend out of heaven “ conquering and to conquer ”.⁴

The twelve tribes of Israel are here named and their perpetuity noticed, and in the names of the tribes necessarily the names of the patriarchs from whom they sprung; and also necessarily, the fulfilment of the divine promise and covenant with Abraham respecting them, for not only are they preserved through the time of trouble but their names appear in the heavenly City which will bear rule over the earth. Thus Genesis xi-1 and the later history of the commonwealth of Israel are recalled and ratified.⁵

The prophetic significance of Pharaoh’s oppressions will

¹ Rev. iv, v.

² Rev. ii, xii.

³ Rev. xii, xx.

⁴ Rev. xiii, xix.

⁵ Rev. vii, xxi.

here be observed, for their similarity is inescapable. Any thoughtful reader in this book must surely notice the comparisons. And the supernatural judgments wrought by Moses on Pharaoh and Egypt here find their counterpart or complement in relation to the beast and his worshippers, in God's two witnesses to whom He will give like miraculous powers. The book of Exodus, therefore, finds its ratification here.¹

Moreover, the redemption of the nation and the witness and song of Moses in Exodus xii-xv are recalled. And because that historical deliverance was but typical of the real redemption effected by the true Lamb of God, the redeemed will sing "the song of Moses and of the Lamb". The linking of Moses to the Lamb reminds us of the triumphal exodus from Egypt and also of "the exodus which He accomplished at Jerusalem", and the triumph of His emergence out from death in resurrection power.²

The Tabernacle of Witness with its furniture and service concerning which the books of Exodus and Leviticus supply the particulars, find their counterpart in these visions, in "the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands", of which Moses received the pattern on the mount; and of which in heaven the Lamb is the centre because in Him the types find their complement and the "shadows" pass away. So that all the symbolism representing heavenly worship is based in this book upon the Mosaic ritual and service fulfilled in Christ. And so is confirmed the divine origin of the religious order of Israel.³

The wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness illustrate the temptations and provisions of the Church's pilgrimage and witness. Consequently we meet with warnings to the Churches concerning "the doctrine of Balaam who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel" issuing in their becoming corrupted; which evil doctrine in principle persists to the end and of which the people of God now need to be beware. In the same connection the provision of manna is recalled with the promise of its spiritual counterpart to the Church, even Christ, Who is the source and sustainment of her life. Thus the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy are called to remembrance and still render service.⁴

¹ Rev. xi, xvi.

² Rev. xv. 3.

³ Rev. vii, xv.

⁴ Rev. ii. 14, 17.

Passing from the wilderness to the settlement in the land the Kingdom is in view in the mention of the *royal tribe of Judah* and *David* as king. These are cited, no doubt, as historic forecasts of the rule and reign of our Lord Jesus Christ. The features of David's kingdom find their permanent establishment here, with its iron-like strength, suggested in the phrase, "He shall rule them with a rod of iron", and its undisputed authority indicated in the "key of David"; and, passing to *Solomon*, its abounding blessing and peace. Moreover, the city of David, centre of his rule over all Israel, answers in its historic foreshadowing to the "Jerusalem which is above", from which Jesus, "the Root and Offspring of David" shall rule over all peoples.¹

The Temple of Solomon with its service and appurtenances such as the throne (answering to the mercyseat), the lamps of fire (candlestick), the sea of glass (laver), the golden altar, the fire of the altar, the incense, the censer, the bowls, the ark of His covenant; superseding, yet retaining, so to speak, the tabernacle of Moses, and passing, perhaps, to the tabernacle of David, in the expression, "the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony"—these are seen in the heavenly visions of this book and require for their historic foundation, not only the books of Moses, but of Joshua and Samuel and Kings and Chronicles and Ezekiel, with much in the Psalms, Isaiah, Micah, etc.²

The apostasies of the end, so graphically predicted in these visions, have for their example the apostasies of Israel and the nations as written in the books of Kings and Chronicles. Thus, warning is given concerning "that woman Jezebel" whose spiritual fornication would corrupt the Church even as Israel was vitiated by Ahab "whom Jezebel his wife stirred up". And Elijah, the prophet of judgment of that day who for three-and-a-half years shut up the heavens, anticipates God's witnesses invested with like powers to withstand the developed evil of the rule of "the beast".³

God's judgments on Israel and the apostate nations of the past as recorded or recalled in Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther and the Prophets major and minor, are here repeated in the predicted events of fearful days of divine visitation, in famine and pestilence and sword and wild beasts; to be met

¹ Rev. ii, iii, xx, xxii.

² Rev. iii, iv, viii, xv.

³ Rev. ii, xi.

with no real repentance because of the obstinacy of the human heart, so that like Israel's wearying of the Lord until there was "no remedy" and "He removed them far away", decisive judgment must at last fall on the impenitent.¹

The prophecies of Daniel especially, but also the Psalms and Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah and Malachi, form the basis of much in these visions. The very "times" of Daniel correspond with the "times" and "months" and "days" of this book. The conditions in the world, the character and effects of evil, the supremacy of the great antichristian monarch and his "prophet", the duration of his reign, with his oppression of the saints, answer to personalities represented in the older writings as "the Assyrian", the "king of Babylon", the "king with fierce countenance", "the beast", "the horn", etc. So, too, the Apocalyptic Babylon in her arrogant splendour ruling over the kings of the earth, presented both as a system and a city, unites the testimony of Genesis and Isaiah and Jeremiah and Daniel and Zechariah, concerning Babel and Shinar and Babylon and the "Ephah"—godless commercialism ruling the world in defiance of God and His witnesses. Do we not see clearly the tendency of things in that direction?²

The concluding announcement in the Old Testament is that Elijah, whose testimony was associated with Moses, shall appear again before the arrival of the Day of the Lord (Mal. iv. 4-6). In the Apocalypse there is supplied the manner of fulfilment in the "two witnesses" (which designation also associates them with the prophecy in Zechariah iv), who bear immortal and irresistible witness in the city of Jerusalem against enthroned evil till the Day of the Lord shall come. The remarkable burial and resurrection of Moses and the translation of Elijah, both of whom bore testimony, seemingly unfinished, against monarchs who defied God and His people—the one, Pharaoh, at the commencement, and the other, Ahab, at the end, of Israel's past national history—and the association of these two on the transfiguration mount, which Peter tells us was a forecast of "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ", enable us, in consideration of the repetition of their miracles of judgment, to identify the two witnesses and again to recognise the wonderful unity of Holy Scripture.³

The description of the Lord Jesus Christ in His majesty

¹ Rev. vi, ix, xiv, xvi, xix.

² Rev. xi, xii, xiii, xvii, xviii.

³ Rev. xi.

and glory, and the language which announced His coming, answer in detail to similar prophecies in the Old Testament. Compare the visions of the Lord Jesus with that of the Ancient of Days in Daniel vii, and His receiving the sovereignty of the world with the same vision in Daniel. Notice also that His advent “with clouds and every eye shall see Him”, is like to Zechariah’s account of the coming, while the vision of the King of kings “clothed with a vesture dipped in blood” taking vengeance, corresponds with the enquiry made in Isaiah lxiii, and the prophet’s explanation relating the subject not to the “blood of His cross”, but to His foes in the day of His wrath.¹

The Revelation opens with the precious truth of the atoning character and value of the death of Christ, essential and central to the gospel, to the salvation of sinners, to Israel and the Church, to all; the heart of *all New Testament teaching as of Old Testament type*. And this recurs and is acclaimed throughout, showing that salvation is alone through the redeeming blood of the Lamb, and that the worth and efficacy of His sacrifice are eternal.²

Here also the Lord Jesus is repeatedly entitled “the Lamb”, a designation given Him more often than any other in the book. His sacrifice is thereby recalled, but He is seen to be glorified for all is finished and He alone is worthy. He is the true Lamb, prefigured by Abel’s and Abraham’s and Isaiah’s and Israel’s types and shadows, the one to Whom John the Baptist directed with the word, “Behold the Lamb of God”, of Whom Peter wrote, “redeemed with the precious blood of Christ as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot”, and Paul testified, “Christ our Passover Lamb hath been sacrificed for us”.

The accounts of the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus in the Gospels and Acts and related truth in the Epistles find acknowledgment and confirmation in a phrase in this book. The city which, by reason of its religious and moral corruption at the time in question, “spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt” is identified by the word, “where also our Lord was crucified”. That is, the Lord of Moses and Elijah, the two witnesses, who prior to His crucifixion appeared with Him on the mount and conversed with Him of that very event, while Christ, being transfigured in their midst, foreshadowed His coming glory and majesty. So that this simple reference, taken in all its bearings,

¹ Rev. i, xi, xix.

² Rev. i, v, vii, xi.

calls to mind the main subject of all the Scriptures, namely, "the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that should follow".¹

The prophetic instruction of our Lord in the Gospels, and the apostolic teaching in the Epistles of Peter, Paul and John, and in James, concerning the corruption of Christendom, the desolation of the Temple, the tribulation of the saints, the satanic power of the Man of Sin, otherwise Antichrist, requiring in the saints endurance and wakefulness and faithfulness even unto death; the cutting short of those days for the elects' sakes, the deliverance of His people and destruction of their enemies at His appearing in power and glory—such events are graphically described in the Apocalypse.²

The missionary purpose in the great commission given by the Lord at the end of the Gospels, restated in Acts, carried out by the apostles and communicated in the Epistles to those who believed through their word, is here seen in its achievement in the "great multitude" innumerable, out of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues, made meet by the Redeemer's blood to stand before His throne. These are the "firstfruits" unto God and the Lamb, that is, up to the time of His appearing, and are set beside Israel's twelve tribes blessed with the same salvation.³

Moreover, this great company, the Church of Christ, composed of all believers from the beginning, variously represented like her Lord—she being the "fulness of Him Who filleth all in all" even as "it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell"—is likened in the Apocalypse, among other figures, to virgins and a bride and a wife; reminding us of the *wise virgins* in our Lord's parable, and of the apostle's analogy of the Church as a *chaste virgin* presented to Christ, "Who loved the church and gave Himself for it that He might present it to Himself a glorious church"; which presentation will take place at the marriage supper of the Lamb (anticipated in another of our Lord's parables of the marriage made for the King's Son) when the bride, the Lamb's wife, arrayed in robes of righteousness, will be forever with her Lord.⁴

The heavenly citizenship and habitation of the saints, which in the epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians,

¹ Rev. xi. 8.

² Rev. i, iii, xi, xii, xiii, xiv, xix.

³ Rev. vii, xiv.

⁴ Rev. xiv, xix.

Hebrews, are set forth as the hope and goal of the Church of the firstborn, of all believers of former and present dispensations, including Abraham and the patriarchs who looked for this city, this heavenly country; the disciples to whom the Lord promised the “many mansions”, the saints to whom the apostle wrote as “fellow-citizens” whose “citizenship is in the heavens”, “Jerusalem which is above, being the mother of us all”, are assembled here as the bride, the Lamb’s wife, seen in vision as “the great city, the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God”, as the true Paradise with its river and tree of life, bearing relation to “the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb”, to “the twelve apostles of the Lamb”, to “the twelve tribes of the children of Israel” and to the “nations of them that are saved”; for then shall the Abrahamic promise receive complete fulfilment, and through Christ “all the families of the earth shall be blessed”.¹

The promises of resurrection and immortality, the warnings concerning eternal judgment with its equitable penalties, the rewarding of suffering for Christ realised in the future reign with Him, bearing the cross and gaining the crown—suchlike admonitions and anticipations, insistent *throughout the Scriptures*, are given, as seen in this book, a fulfilment true to what is written when Christ shall assert His universal sovereignty. And the gracious words of welcome extended to sinners at sundry times and in divers manners, calling them to repent and live, meeting all need and satisfying the soul; then spoken by the Son Himself and perpetuated in the Gospel, are echoed in the “Come, Come, COME”, of the closing chapter.

Therefore, it may be said that the entire Scriptures are brought into view in this last volume of inspiration, by quotation and reference and analogy, historic background and prophetic sequence. The law of retribution which has been in force from the beginning, being witnessed by Scripture and history, doth still operate, and at the end against those who dare to tamper with the truth of Christ’s testimony. Here are the things which “He testifieth”, setting His imprimatur upon the Scripture of Truth in its entirety; and His solemn warning is, “I testify that if any man shall add, I will add unto him; if any shall take away, I will take from him”. By adding they virtually charge the Lord Jesus with deficiency and imperfection; by

¹ Rev. xxi, xxii.

subtracting they charge Him with error or exaggeration or unfaithfulness. Yet Christ has declared Himself "the faithful and true Witness", and His words also, "true and faithful". That is to say, at the grand consummation men universally will make proof, to their eternal weal or woe, of the reliability and reality of Christ the Word Incarnate and of the Word of Christ.

JOHN WILMOT.

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