

Serial Number 047-22

REVELATION

SPIRITUALLY UNDERSTOOD

PART 22

REVELATION 18:1-24

Satan's Shameful Fall

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REVELATION SPIRITUALLY UNDERSTOOD

PART TWENTY-TWO

SATAN'S SHAMEFUL FALL

Revelation 18:1-24

Chapter 18 of Revelation records the triumph of the City of God over the City of the World and the contrasting lament of the 'kings of the earth' over the disastrous outcome of their pride and ungodliness. That the lamentation of the 'kings' should be taken almost entirely from equivalent passages of the Old Testament denoting the downfall of the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar (on the one hand) and the maritime empire of Tyre (on the other hand) should convince us of the emblematic nature of the Babylon of the Apocalypse - that it is not an actual geographical city located somewhere on the map of this world. This Babylon of the Apocalypse is a prophetic emblem of Satan's empire of pride, deceit and fraud - an empire which dazzles the minds of the earthly multitudes and powers who seek their wealth and pleasure in earthly things.

This chapter (18) consists largely of the declaration, on the one hand, of the divine judgment against the system of this world in its pride, unbelief, and oppression of the truth, and on the other, the lamentation of those whose only riches consist of the false values of this world. How often in history has this scene been repeated. Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, Rome! Yet even these great cities were only representative of that organised pride and impiety by which Satan's empire is bound together in its opposition to God and truth. It must be plain to all that the elements of self-destruction are discernible in all human institutions. The successive overthrow or disintegration of empires is one of the great facts of history, and concealed in this process is the secret judgment of God who has never abdicated His rule over all things in heaven and earth and under the earth. So declares the wisdom of God in Psalm 75: "God is the judge: he putteth down one and setteth up another. For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red, it is full of mixture, and he poureth out of the same. But the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out and drink them.... The horns (i.e., pride and power) of the wicked also will I cut off; but the horns of the righteous (their hope and glory and confidence) shall be exalted."

THE DESCENT OF CHRIST (verses 1-3)

“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.”

Learned commentators have disagreed whether this angel is Christ Himself or just another angel. Those (like Hengstenberg) who believe the former are influenced by the reference to the ‘great power’ wielded by this angel, and his glory which lightens the earth. This view is based on Ezekiel 43:2 – “The glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east and his voice was like the noise of many waters, and the earth shined with his glory.”

For our part we incline definitely to the view that it is Christ who speaks here, in the angelic form in which we have already seen Him in chapter 10. Before the glory of Christ all the boasting and pride of Satan’s city and kingdom pale into insignificance. Here in chapter 18 He who announces the end of Satan’s empire is the same who executes that vengeance. Long before the actual destruction of Satan’s pride, this prophecy proclaims Christ’s ultimate victory.

The strength of the voice indicates the irresistible nature of the judgment about to be poured upon the harlot city of this world. The resources of the Godhead are all-sufficient at all times to bring about the ruin of any power or system which raises itself against the Omnipotent One. The true nature of this world’s idolatrous system is exhibited in the fate to which all pride and apostasy come: “The habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit, and cage of every unclean and hateful bird”. The inevitable end of any church or nation which yields itself to evil so as to become a haven for wickedness and shame, and a sanctuary for devils, is to be given up to the pride and pollution which it chooses in preference to the gospel of divine mercy, love and grace.

Verse 3 shows that those who trade with the false City of This World become inebriated with the delusions which always go with her deceitful nature. Unlawful commerce with idolatry, whether in its gross materialism or in its more subtle delusions, is always described in the inspired Word of God as adultery, as in this text – ‘the wine of the wrath of her fornication’. The worst form of idolatry is not the bowing down to wood and stone, or the devotion paid to images, but that idolatry of the heart and mind, which gives itself to worldly vanity, pride, and sin. The worst idols of all are those which atheism and agnosticism set up for themselves - the worship of self, or as John elsewhere puts it,

“All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world”. (1 John 2:5-18)

It is not without significance for our own day that in this passage from the 1st Epistle of John we are warned of the coming of antichrist - evidently a subtle and delusive spirit of evil already manifest in John’s day and characteristic of the entire range of gospel time – “Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time”. (1 John 2:18) “This last time” with John had already begun, and can only mean here the more subtle activities of Satan which continue from John’s day till the end of time. The last time is the gospel time, the age of the Church, the kingdom of Christ and of God. There is no other ‘time’ after the ‘last time’ and hence the only millennium is the Age of the Church, as we hope to prove when we come to chapter 20.

Idolatry is always in Holy Scripture represented as spiritual fornication or adultery. The kings and merchants of the earth mentioned in these verses are those who rule over or trade in the devilish commodities of false religion, pride and power which inevitably lead to abandonment to polluting lusts, as we are seeing in western civilisation today.

THE SECOND VOICE (verses 4-20)

“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.”

The Speaker's Commentary writes, "It is thus that at all times the people of God have been warned to flee from the City of Destruction". Compare Genesis 19:15 (Lot's flight from Sodom), Numbers 16:26; Isaiah 48:20; 52:11; Matthew 24:16; 2 Cor. 6:17).

Dr. Isaac Williams (quoted by the above Commentary) writes, "From Egypt, from Sodom, from Babylon, from Jerusalem, the people of God were called before the judgment came on those places: and now they are called out of Babylon." Babylon (Dr. Williams interprets), is not any particular church or city, but "an alliance between Christianity and the world".

Again to quote from The Speaker's Commentary, "The whole passage points not to any single city at any one single period, but to the World City throughout all time". Or, as Ebrard, "The Book of Revelation does not contain presages of contingent, isolated events; but it contains warnings and consolatory prophecies concerning the great leading forces which make their appearance in the conflict between Christ and the enemy. So full are its contents that every age may learn therefrom, more and more, against what disguises of the Serpent one has to guard oneself; and also how the afflicted church at all times receives its measure of courage and of consolation."

What then is this sinful and deluded world? We read here of the pomp of kings, the rich trade of merchants, the busy commerce of the mariners. It is not trade and politics which the Christian is warring against, but against what these things are in a spiritual and religious sense. What a picture of the ungodly, fallen world is furnished in these chapters, 17 and 18. The harlot of chapter 17 and the rich, busy mart of chapter 18 - what a desolation it is to the worldly citizens when their hopes collapse, and their system breaks down under divine judgment:

The world stands under sentence of death. The irretrievable fall of this vast system of error, superstition, atheism, avarice, fraud and deceit, all this finery, this delicacy, this outward show, is but the wrappings of a corpse - a habitation of devils - the hold of every foul spirit - the cage of every unclean and hateful bird (verse 2).

How intoxicated is the world with the heady wine of false religion and the feverish pursuit after gain (verse 3).

There is a high tide of iniquity which, when come to the full, brings down the whole giddy and false empire (v.5). The 'doubling' of verse 6 is the divine equity -

the exact recompense of sin, measured out by the righteousness of God.

There is a false and blind illusion which deceives the worldly mind: “My, present worldly and favourable state will last for ever; this condition of ease and comfort in which I live is permanent.” “I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow” (verse 7).

The nature of eternal judgment is mystically conveyed in terms of death, mourning, famine (verse 8). In hell there will be a sense of desolation, deprivation, vain regret, remorse, finality of doom.

How often, and how suddenly does disillusionment come (verses 11-19). In one unexpected hour all comes to naught. Riches, hope, pleasure, vanish overnight. How vain a deceiver is this world and all its philosophy.

“Rejoice over her, thou heavens, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her” (v.20).

THE THIRD VOICE (verses 21-24)

“And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.

And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;

And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.

And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.”

The figure is taken from Jeremiah 51:63-64: “And it shall be when thou hast made an end of reading this book that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates. And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink and shall not rise

from the evil that I will bring upon her. And they shall be weary. Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.” Such was the end of Jeremiah’s ministry. There is another chapter (52) remaining, but only a historical epilogue recording the actual destruction of Jerusalem and its temple by the army of Nebuchadnezzar in accord with the earlier warnings of the prophet. When all history comes to be understood, it will be seen to be the story of God’s almighty providence in judgment and redemption, bringing to pass not only what He has foretold, but what He has foreordained. Jeremiah also shows that historic events in the Old Testament become spiritual events in the New, and the liberal borrowing in the Apocalypse, of the prophetic events and descriptions of the Old, cautions us against any mere literalism in the study of the prophetic scriptures whether of the Old or the New Testaments - as we shall now proceed to show, the Lord helping us.

The symbolism of Jeremiah’s binding of a copy of his prophecy to a stone, to be cast into Euphrates (the river on which Babylon stood), is plain. It signifies the final destruction of the enemy of Israel - a destruction so complete that Babylon will never rise again but will be a perpetual desolation. History records how completely this prophecy was fulfilled when Cyrus the Persian captured and destroyed that mighty City of pride and cruelty. Nevertheless, Babylon reappears in mystic form in the New Testament as the enemy of the Church, in whom is found the blood of prophets and saints and of “all that were slain on the earth”. The last clause signifies that we are dealing with the perpetual enemy of the city of God, stretching back to the beginning of history in the earliest chapters of the Bible, from the City of Cain onward.

It is of very great significance also, that our Lord borrows the same figure from Jeremiah, and anticipates the like figure in the Apocalypse, when He declares: “Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea” (Mark 9:42). Here again is the genius of prophecy which compresses into a single event, the judgment of the wicked, though that event is repeated many times and in many forms, throughout history, or as in the case of Mark 9:42, threatens the same judgment against those who oppress a single individual believer – “one of these little ones that believe in me”. A ‘little one’ here, is not a child, but a believer, as in John’s first epistle (chap. 4:4) – “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world”.

THE THREE GREAT PROPHETS - AND JOHN

We are now ready to consider the yet deeper, inward significance of the array of OT references assembled in chapter 18. We note that the description of the downfall of the Apocalyptic Babylon, and the lament of the world over this ruin of their hopes, wealth and pleasure, is taken literally from the prophecies of the downfall of the ancient cities of Babylon and Tyre, found in the writings of the three major prophets of the OT, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Isaiah, lived a century in advance of the campaign of Nebuchadnezzar which resulted in the ruin of Jerusalem and its people; the second, Jeremiah, was present in the city during the last siege; the third, Ezekiel, was already a captive in Babylon, having been taken away along with most of the leading citizens of Jerusalem when Nebuchadnezzar took possession of the city in an earlier invasion; and spared it from destruction so long as its puppet king remained loyal to him. The respite lasted but twelve years, when the revolt of King Zedekiah brought back the Chaldean army and Jerusalem was completely destroyed, and its surviving inhabitants removed into captivity. Ezekiel records how the news of the fall of the city came to him in Chaldea by the hand of one of the Jews who had escaped from the destruction (Ezek. 33:21).

Isaiah and Jeremiah had much to say about the subsequent judgment of Babylon (which they did not live to see) while Ezekiel's vision strangely and wonderfully weaves into the mysterious tapestry of Jehovah's vengeance a graphic poetic description of the ruin of Tyre. From these three great prophets John draws his language and symbolism as he portrays the final end of the City of This World.

Readers are urged to study with us the significant margin references in Revelation 18. They will need an Oxford Reference Bible (Authorised Version). The Cambridge references are less full, and the Oxford Bible therefore is essential if the student is to gain the maximum benefit. In the modern versions of course there is no adequate reference system.

From Revelation 18, the reference chain takes us to various texts in Isaiah chapters 13, 21 and 47; in Jeremiah to chapters 50 and 51; in Ezekiel to chapters 26, 27 and 28.

The modern versions of the Bible now pouring in an unending stream of confusion from the presses in Britain and America will have little or no help to the student anxious to find all those corresponding references in the OT, from which the Book of Revelation derives so many of its figures.

The fact that the descriptions of the fall and ruin of the Apocalyptic Babylon are taken so literally from the ancient scriptures of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and are mingled with the remarkable references to the fall of Tyre, found in Ezekiel, indicate that the Babylon of Revelation is no earthly city located either on the banks of the Euphrates or the eastern shore of the Mediterranean sea, least of all in Italy whose city of Rome was never a mart of the nations, but only a centre of rule and law. The Apocalyptic Babylon is rather a recurring feature of the Church's trial and warfare - the conflict never ceasing, between the City of God and the City of This World, to the end of time. It has no settled earthly location any more than has the Church herself. "We war not against flesh and blood" declares the apostle, "but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness (margin, wicked spirits), in high places (margin, heavenly places)" - see Ephesians 6:12.

It is true that the invisible powers of evil manifest themselves visibly from time to time in history through systems or institutions which oppose the Word of God, but the principle of evil itself, has no historical or geographical location. We war not against flesh and blood but always against unseen and terrible spirit powers of evil. These powers form for themselves institutions on the earth to communicate their fiendish errors or assail the witness of the Word of God. The form changes but the inward source of action abides to the end. Satan conceals himself in visible forms and systems which rise and fall on the historic scene, only to be succeeded by other forms as an actor will change his costume and alter his voice so as to appear other than what he is. How often indeed, is the voice or the voice of Jacob, but the hand, the hand of Esau! Only at the end of history when all other means have failed to destroy the City of God, does Satan discard his disguises and his deputies, and come forth as the naked devil that he is -as we are surely beholding today.

Babylon must fall at last so as to make way for the final apostasy, which is open Satanism. In the final scene Satan emerges (chapter 20) in the full development of his own character. In final defeat and shame, he follows his deputies who await him in the fiery brimstone lake.

That final phase, of act, in the dramatic conflict between light and darkness, around which all history has developed, is described as a 'little season' and there can be no mistaking the signs that such a season may now be coming upon us. The Age of Rationalism is already here. Even Rome, with all her dogmatic and ironclad conservatism, clinging to her dogmas and inventions, is straining under the pressures of this new phenomenon. For that matter, so are other religious forms outside the Christian corpus - Islam, Buddhism, Shintoism, and the grosser

superstitions of the African continent. Satan has comedown in great fury, knowing that he hath but a short time (Rev. 12:12), and the entire world is turning over to atheism, violence, and unrestrained sin.

THE PHENOMENON OF TYRE

Our readers having now (we trust) diligently compared their Oxford references in Rev. 18 with those of Isaiah and Jeremiah will be ready to consider those taken from the prophecy of Ezekiel in chapters 26 to 28, which foretell the ruin of Tyre and the downfall of its Prince. They will have in mind that Tyre is not Babylon and that the Phoenicians who built Tyre and its twin city of Zidon on the shores of the Levant were never in any sense oppressors of Israel. Yet the references to Tyre are mingled indiscriminately with the references to Babylon as though the two cities were one, and not separated as they were, by some 800 miles of river and desert. This intermingling of two such contrasting and independent powers is one more proof of the emblematic nature of the Babylon of the Apocalypse. Tyre and Babylon live on in prophecy, though the mournful ruins of the cities of those names attest their disappearance long ago from the historic scene. The Apocalyptic Babylon is not identifiable with any existing city of this world. Babylon in the Book of Revelation is a prophetic emblem of Satan's empire of pride, deceit and fraud - an empire which dazzles the earthly rulers and peoples who seek their wealth and pleasure in earthly things.

In an earlier chapter (Part 20: Revelation 16:12-16) we have described the significance of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon, and its overthrow according to prophecy by Cyrus the Persian. What of Tyre, which was never an oppressor of the people of God, but only a mercantile and maritime empire which drew to itself the wealth of the ancient world (like Venice, its ultimate successor) - sending its fleets to the uttermost parts of the known world, including Cornwall in the British Isles, whence that scarce but all-important metal tin was obtained?

Tyre and its twin city Zidon exported nothing of its own, except a gross and filthy idolatry, but acted simply as the exchange and mart for the goods and the wealth of the nations it served. In ancient times the people of Tyre and Zidon were known as Phoenicians, and they set up a colony in North Africa, over against Rome, known as Carthage. The terrible wars between Carthage and Rome are fully described in the pages of history, and these wars became known as the Punic Wars (Latin for Phoenicia). Tyre was destroyed by Alexander the Great and never recovered its former glory, though it lived on for many generations in its colony of Carthage.

Tyre enters fully into divine prophecy in Ezekiel, chapters 26 to 28 where the rise and prosperity of Tyre are described in language borrowed extensively by John in our 18th chapter of Revelation. Tyre was not an oppressor of Israel and Judah, nor of any people, but the evil influence of the idolatry of the Phoenicians upon all nations, including Israel and Judah, brings this remarkable people into unwelcome prominence in divine prophecy in Old and New Testaments.

THE PHOENICIANS

The following description is found in the Speaker's Commentary in the parallel prophecy of Isaiah 23.

“Of all foreign races, none probably exercised so powerful an influence on Israel as the Phoenicians. Small as the strip of land was, which it occupied, it sent out colonies to every part of the Mediterranean, and was the centre of commerce of the old world. Its wealthy enterprising cities, of which Tyre, the successor of the ‘great Zidon’ (Joshua 19:28) was now the chief, seemed to supply the very ideal of worldly prosperity. Their temple of Melcarth was reputed to be the most ancient of all with which the Greeks were acquainted. Their goddess Ashtoreth was worshipped with rites which pretended to throw the sanction of religion over the utmost excesses of licentiousness. Here was a perpetual temptation to the double-minded men in Israel.

“How poor, comparatively, were the Lord's people compared with those who owed allegiance to the Queen of the seas! How gloomy the restraints of the Sinaitic Law compared with the gay and joyous freedom of the crowds that frequented the merchant city!

“This danger was brought closer to Israel, first by the apostasy of Solomon who married Zidonian wives, and built a high place in front of Jerusalem (i.e., on the Mount of Olives, overlooking the sacred Temple) ‘for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians’ (2 Kings 23:13); and afterwards by Ahab's marrying Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of Zidon, and introducing the worship of Baal (= Melcarth).”

* * *

“It is noteworthy that Hamilcar and Hannibal, heroes of Carthage in the Punic wars, were named after two of the gods of the Phoenicians, Melcarth and Baal, as the terminations of their names indicate. Hiram, king of Tyre, the friend of

Solomon, helped to build the temple at Jerusalem. “None can skill to hew timber like unto the Zidonians; cunning to work in gold, silver, brass, iron, purple, blue and crimson” and to “grave engravings” (2 Chron. 2:7). Hiram’s men cast the temple vessels and the two great pillars known as Boaz and Jachin. They also cast the Laver or molten ‘sea’ (1 Kings 7:21-23).

It was the Phoenicians who invented the alphabet used to this day throughout the Western world. Fausset reminds us that the Greeks, according to tradition, received from the Phoenicians the 16 earliest Greek letters of which the first four are Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta (close to our own English alphabet). These letter names are without meaning in Greek (says Fausset) but In the Hebrew (Aleph, Beth, Gimel, Daleth) they mean respectively Ox, House, Camel, Door (and so on to the end of the alphabet).

FINAL DESTRUCTION OF TYRE

With this essential historical information in mind, we now proceed to what we hope will be accepted as the true significance of these mysterious chapters in Ezekiel. Chapters 26 and 27 are a lamentation on the destruction of mainland Tyre by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar (variant, Nebuchadrezzar, supposed to be nearer the Chaldean pronunciation of the name: see Ezekiel 26:7). “Thou shalt be built no more” is the sentence of verse 14 of chapter 26. Yet the Chaldean destruction was not the end of Tyre. It was the mainland city which the Chaldeans destroyed, but the Tyrians returned after an interval and rebuilt the city on an off-shore island which flourished greater than ever before until three centuries later when Alexander the Great destroyed the supposedly impregnable city, after a siege of only seven months. He succeeded by using the ruins of the former city to build a causeway three-quarters of a mile long from the sea shore to the island on which Tyre stood - one of the greatest military feats of all time. Thus Tyre fell, never to rise again. The judgment of Tyre was fearful indeed. Alexander slaughtered many of the inhabitants, and sent 30,000 survivors as slaves into Egypt. Thus was the pride broken of that city which made all nations to drink of the ‘wine of the wrath of her fornication’. Fornication, in the language of prophecy, is idolatry, and hence the Babylon of Revelation is presented as a harlot, or ‘the great Whore’.

THE MYSTIC KING OF TYRE

Ezekiel 28 is one of the most remarkable chapters in the whole of prophecy. It is addressed to the PRINCE of Tyrus, but midway through the chapter the mood changes and the second part of the chapter becomes a ‘lament’ over the fate of the

KING of Tyrus. Readers are asked to note how this change of title (to which practically all the commentators make no significant reference) is deliberately introduced as a separate prophecy with the words, “Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying....” (Verse 11) This sudden break in the vision concerning the Prince of Tyre and his downfall, proceeding with an enlarged and totally unprecedented description of a ‘king’ of Tyrus to whom are attributed privileges and titles which no man in this world ever bore, has been an embarrassment to the commentators throughout history. Their unwillingness to admit that such things are said of the King of Tyrus as could only be said of Satan himself, has led the theologians into unhistorical and patently artificial attempts to attribute to the princes of Tyre a preposterous claim to divine honours and prerogatives. The history of Tyre and its rulers however does not yield any support for such a claim, and the change of style in the chapter, from ‘prince’ to ‘king’ and introduced as a separate prophecy by the words of verse 11 should be sufficient to show us that a new dimension of prophecy is being presented. The curtain lifts and we see, not history, but the reason and the power behind history. A fearful being emerges, who once was guardian of the very throne of God, and who, gazing upon his own beauty was lifted up by a pride which saw himself as the occupant of that throne, whereas that honour was reserved for Another, the very Son of God, whom in His time the Father would show, who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting, Amen (1 Timothy 6:15-16).

Verse 15 could never have been a description of the ruler of Tyre: “Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.”

Let us now read the whole of this remarkable passage:

THE FALL OF SATAN

“Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.

Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the

workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.

By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.

Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.

All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.”

That this picture of "the king of Tyrus" goes far beyond the description of any human being, is self-evident. The Prince of Tyrus in so far as that may be considered as descriptive of the succession of the princes who ruled in the Levantine ports of Tyre and Zidon over a period of many centuries, certainly localises the prophecy of Ezekiel to the ruin of the earthly Tyre. But to limit the verses here reprinted to that meaning as a sort of extravaganza in the mind of the Eternal is not only absurd, but positively impious. Prophecy is more than history written in advance. Untold harm has been done to the prophetic word by such an easy formula. The ruin of Tyre, prophetically, is the ruin of Satan's kingdom of darkness and deceit. The casting down of the king of Tyrus from his former eminence in the mount of God is the assurance to the Church of Ezekiel's day that the ruin of Tyrus would be the ruin of all foes of the Church in all ages. The prince of Phoenicia was only one in a long succession of princes of that maritime empire,

soon to become an almost forgotten and irrelevant page of ancient history. Such a prophecy of almost unprecedented descriptiveness and deep, mysterious, and universal significance, can only be seen as pictorialising a truth which lies at the root of human history from its remote origin to its final curtain, and the real reason behind the corruption and fall of all earthly dominions.

In short, what is quoted above from Ezekiel 28 is the life history not of one ancient rival to the earthly kingdom of Israel, but of Satan himself, the archenemy of God and of the human race, the oppressor of the Church in all ages, the Usurper of the divine name and the agelong adversary of the Kingdom of Christ. Many of the learned commentators have taken refuge in the theory that Ezekiel's vision simply records what the Prince of Tyre thought or claimed for himself: he saw himself, or made claim for himself as being a divine person. But the Prince of Tyre was not even a royal personage in the true sense of the term. Keil admits (while adopting the theory that the Tyrian princes thought themselves to be gods) that Tyre was a commercial state, reared upon municipal foundations, and the Prince was not so much a monarch as 'the head of a great mercantile aristocracy'. In short, if there was one 'prince' on the earth in those ancient times who had less cause to regard himself as a god, it was the Prince of Tyre who never was a great conqueror however much he was a most successful business man:

It appears to us quite clear that the Prince of Tyre according to Ezekiel's prophecy, was only the shadow cast by a being of authority and power far exceeding any who has ever walked the earth (except the Son of God Himself), and that this being was none other than the Prince of Hell in person.

The rise of Tyre to its place of remarkable dominance in the ancient world as the mart of the nations is the work of Satan whose purpose was to pollute the earth with a dazzling but altogether polluting and disgusting idolatry which in essence was the worship of himself. Hence the change in style from 'prince' to 'KING' followed by a description of this king applicable only to the ruler of hell himself. We have his origin as one partaking of the title and office of the mysterious 'cherubim' with a description of the high privilege of the office for which he was originally created.

We are assured that the use in the Apocalypse of Ezekiel's description of the overthrow of the Prince of Tyrus and his empire, intermingled with similar descriptions from other prophets of the fall of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon, the whole being carried forward on the wings of the prophetic Spirit to the end of the world as described In the Book of Revelation, leaves no alternative but to identify

Ezekiel's prophecy with the City of This World stretching in its history from the days of Cain to this present hour, and surely now about to fall, so as to make way for Satan's last 'Little Season' of worldwide revolt against God and truth.

We are therefore, both here and in Revelation, in a region above and beyond the common order of this world. Here is history behind history, the secret movements of spiritual powers of which events on the earth are the mere accidents - the outward effects of mighty events in the invisible world. Daniel saw this in the remarkable passage, Daniel 10:10-13.

Here is Satan (or rather he who by pride and disobedience became Satan, "The Adversary," in the moment of his fall). Perfect in beauty, stored with heavenly wisdom (v.12) Lucifer, son of the morning (Isaiah 14:12-14), says in his heart, "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High". He is cast down to hell. In Ezekiel's account the fall of Satan is more extensively described: "Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God ... Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth ... thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee ... thou hast sinned ... I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire"

Satan falls because he looks away from his God and gazes upon his own beauty. Exalted with pride at the eminence he enjoyed in heaven in his nearness to the throne as one of the cherubim, he seeks to act in independence of the holy will of God. The light of his being fades on the instant and he becomes darkness and death, the Lord of an empire of pride and sin in which he finds no repentance. The holy providence Of God does not annihilate that which perfect wisdom has created, He will bring good out of evil - a greater good than otherwise could have been. God Himself will bear the burden of evil, by total self-abnegation. It is the way of the Cross. That Cross only God Himself must bear or can bear. The deity of Christ is therefore essential, for only One who Himself is the righteousness and the truth of God, can bear the appalling burden of a fallen creation and expiate the offence of sin. That Christ took on Himself not the nature of angels but the seed of Abraham (that is, of Man) shows that for angelic sin there can be no redemption by reason of the fact that to sin against absolute light is to cast oneself away absolutely. Such a sin is absolute and total. Man does not sin like that for he is a limited being. Therefore it is as man that the Son of God must come to make the atonement upon which rests the full realisation by God, of His own glorious destiny in the display of that total LOVE which He is.

Satan's dreadful career of death and despair, the consummate skill which he displays in the rise and perpetuation of his own kingdom of darkness, in the succession of forms displayed in history, is grandly shown in the visions which came to John on the Isle of Patmos. In the various phases of the Church's conflict in age after age, in confrontation with Satan's city and empire of Babylon.

Weakness is matched against strength (as at the Cross of Calvary). This is the true history of the world as seen from the throne of God, and John has set it down as he received it on that marvelous apocalyptic day, when in one period of 24 hours he saw the entire wisdom of God displayed in His acts from eternity to eternity in His own glorious City which surely is now about to succeed in the last battle between the forces of light and the forces of darkness.

LIFE HISTORY OF SATAN

Ezekiel's prophetic vision is that of the eagle soaring into the pure atmosphere of heaven, far above the noise and tumult of the world. We meet him first in his 30th year by the river Chebar in Chaldea, an exile in Babylon whither he had been carried in the first transport of the intelligentsia of Israel following Nebuchadnezzar's preliminary conquest of Jerusalem. Some 12 years later, the puppet king Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar and the enraged Chaldean monarch returned with his army and completely destroyed and devastated Jerusalem and its temple. See 2 Kings 25.

The 30th year of Ezekiel's life was the age at which young men born to the priesthood, entered upon their temple service. It was at that time that the word of the Lord first came to the young man, in prophetic power and vision. See Ezekiel 1:3 – "The word of the Lord came expressly to Ezekiel the priest in the land of the Chaldees by the river Chebar". It was a mournful birthday for the young man. His heart was in Jerusalem where on that very day he would have begun his priestly service in the holy temple. Nor would he ever have that privilege, for in a few more years Jerusalem would be destroyed and temple and city would lie waste for 70 years. But there came to Ezekiel that day such a vision as no son of Levi had ever beheld since the days of Moses the man of God. There came the sound of a rushing mighty wind, a great glory cloud, a devouring fire in the heavens, and lo: the majesty of God appeared, the eternal throne, the four cherubim, the likeness of the firmament of heaven and the colour of the terrible crystal (v.22). These symbols of the presence of Almighty God riding down the heavens in unswerving path to that divine destiny which no power in heaven or earth could arrest - all this was to Ezekiel the temple and much more than the temple. This was the inward

and divine reality of what the temple stood for, but which no man before had ever seen - the assurance that there was a terrible and divine sovereignty, a holy destiny, which no man nor devil could turn aside. "They turned not as they went; they went everyone straight forward" (v.9). Traveling with the speed of light the cherubim upheld the divine throne, the noise of their wings like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty; the voice of speech as the noise of an host ..." (v.24). No longer need Ezekiel mourn over his destitution. Here was something greater than the temple and greater than Jerusalem. Here was the reality of which the temple was only the shadow.

Here indeed was the New Testament, and we are not surprised therefore that the young prophet's ministry ended with the vision of the New Testament temple (not made with hands) with its mystic river of water of life flowing from its threshold, ever deeper and wider, till it emptied itself into the Dead Sea - the dead gentile world to be irrigated by the gospel stream till all lands and peoples should have heard the Word of God (see chapter 47). We do not pause to consider the literal interpretation which has been attached in modern times to Ezekiel's temple and river, except to mourn and wonder over the unspiritual literalism which sees only a restored temple and a Levitical priesthood reestablished in Jerusalem as the ultimate end of the gospel. We live in a day when we need a new generation of Ezekiel's to show us how there can be no communion between a temple of stone and lime with its blood sacrifices on the one hand, and the heavenly reality of the ineffable glory of God in Christ Jesus, on the other.

We may not attempt to say more on this theme at this stage, for we must try to show from Ezekiel's 28th chapter something of the mystery of the Fall of Satan so graphically described therein. Satan fell through pride, and pride is simply the exaltation of self - placing oneself in the room of God. The life history of the Devil is on this wise in Ezekiel 28:11-19. He was created a pure and holy being, showing forth the wisdom, perfection and beauty of the Creator. His home was in the upper Eden, the garden of God (v.13) - no not the Eden in which Adam and Eve dwelt, but that heavenly Eden to which all the redeemed are now traveling, with its heavenly river of water of life and its trees of everlasting life as portrayed in the last chapter of the Bible. The earthly Eden was only the symbol of the true Eden, that 'upper garden fair'.

SATANS ADORNMENT

There, adorned with brightest jewels of heaven (v.13) which are the symbols of a holy, exalted life in the brightness of the divine love and favour, Satan might have

remained in eternal happiness. His security lay in his love and submission to the holy will of God. The joy of that delectable world is symbolised in the harmony and musical sweetness of tabret and pipe (“the emblems of Eden-like joys” says Fausset). The ten jewels of this verse are so numbered because ten is the number of heavenly perfection.

Satan was ‘the anointed cherub that covereth’ (v.14) symbolised in the Ark of the Covenant upon which was constructed the two cherubs (cherubim is the Hebrew plural) whose faces were ever toward the mercy seat which was overshadowed by their wings. The symbolism suggests that in his original creation Satan’s office was to guard the holiness of God and exalt the beauty of the Invisible Presence. In that position he scanned the mystery of the divine Being and walked up and down amid the stones of fire - the awesome symbols of the divine presence.

THE DISCOVERY OF EVIL

The scene changes in verse 15 in the appalling discovery of evil – “till iniquity was found in thee”. Here the origin of evil is laid bare. It began in Paradise, and it took place when Satan turned his eyes away from the glory of God to gaze upon his own image, and revolted against his own destiny which was ultimately (with all the host of heaven) to serve a lower creature, MAN, who would arise from the dust of the ground to the very throne of God, in an intimacy of relationship with deity to which even angels could not aspire. How this was to be, was hidden from the angelic creation, and that was the moral test of their love and faith. Would they be willing to serve so lowly a creature as man, only to find in the end that his destiny was to be higher than theirs - even to the extent of partnership in the eternal throne of which they were the appointed guardians? Perfect love would surely acquiesce, for love seeketh not her own, but finds her joy in the exaltation of another.

This was the only way by which angelic nature could be tested and perfected, and without such a test the angels would have had no moral being, but only a decorative charade of heavenliness. What was withheld from the angels was how this destiny of MAN was to be achieved. Had they known all, all would have remained upright; but had they known all love could not have been tested. What they did not and could not know was that the Invisible God would Himself become Man in a stupendous act of redemption by which a new creation would be bound to Him in everlasting chains of love. God would become known in all the greatness and wonder of His meekness and humility as well as in the beauty and glory of His Godhead. The end would be that Creation would acquire a meaning and a blessedness that could not otherwise have been. In the depths of God,

REDEMPTION was to be paramount over Creation, as the means by which the divine Being could be known and admired and worshipped with a significance not otherwise possible.

Satan, dragging with him a vast number of fellow angelic beings, revolted against his fate. He looked upon his own beauty, and resentment kindled within him. In that instant the light that was in him faded. He became darkness and death and was banished on the instant from the presence of God - nay, he hastened to go not being able to endure that eternal light which thus exposed the evil to which his pride had given birth.

This therefore, was the origin of evil. But why was there redemption for fallen man but not for fallen angels? Because Man is a limited creature, acquiring his knowledge gradually from the cradle, and never in this world knowing aught except in part only. Man is not born a devil. He only can turn himself into that. His nature is depraved at the Fall, but there is alive in him still, the voice of conscience, which is the voice of God. Satan is wholly evil and that means finality. Man suffers pain and bereavement. The love of family and the love of children makes life tolerable. Kindness and self-sacrifice have never been extinguished in man. He learns only little by little from the cradle to the grave. He may turn himself into a devil but he is not born one. There is mercy and redemption for fallen man. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

INCARNATION & REDEMPTION

The mystery of all mysteries is God becoming man - the INCARNATION OF GOD. Satan hates this doctrine with all the fibre of his being, and it is small wonder that it has always been under attack.

The theme of redemption for man in Christ through the blood of the cross, is endless in its glory, and wonderful in its disclosure of the heart of God. The Cross is the greatest proof we have of the fact of God. Such a plan - such a means of redemption - which finds God as a helpless Babe in a manger bed is the kind of wisdom which could never have been invented by the imagination of Man. Nor could Satan with all his wisdom and knowledge have guessed the reality which was hidden from him and all the angels for the purpose of the testing of faith and love. Who in heaven or earth could have invented such a theme - such a God - as this? The soul of man soars heavenward when it finally grasps this theme. He is inspired by poetry and music as he seeks means to express his rapture.

“Once in royal David’s city
Stood a lowly cattle shed

“He came down to earth from heaven
Who is God and Lord of all,
And His shelter was a stable
And His cradle was a stall.
With the poor and mean and lowly
Lived on earth our Saviour holy

* * *

And our eyes at last shall see Him

* * *

Not in that poor lowly stable
With the oxen standing by,
We shall see Him -- but in heaven
Set at God’s right hand on high;
Where like stars, His children crowned,
All in white shall wait around.”

There is therefore mercy and grace for Man, but none for Satan and his empire of devils. Man is a limited creature, not created with the knowledge which was so complete in angels. They who sin against absolute light, sin absolutely. Man does not sin like that - but he can turn himself into a devil by rejecting and despising to the final degree, such a love and such a God as is unveiled in Christ Jesus. We live in days when there is much knowing talk (on both sides) regarding the divine sovereignty and the mystery of divine choice. On the one hand there are those who so weaken the concept of God that He becomes like to themselves, and on the other, who weaken human responsibility to such an extent that the deity becomes a remote Being who may be feared but who certainly does not command the worship of love. Let us beware of claiming all knowledge (which even angels do not have) lest we develop a theology in which faith and repentance are irrelevant to man’s regeneration or are at best curious anomalies in a divine scheme which could well do without them. Let us be content to hold a paradox until in the Day of Light and Truth, when all secrets are laid bare, we may penetrate the full mystery of God. We must hold two apparent opposites without requiring - or even desiring - to know the unknowable, but accepting both apparent extremes in faith. Only when we

know as we are known may we know as we ought to know, to the unravelling of all mysteries which will never be solved in this present state of faith through which we move towards the light. Let us believe - and be content. And let us view, as John Howe did, "The Redeemer's Tears Wept Over Lost Souls". Let us credit the Word of God when He swears by His own great life, "As I live saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his evil way and live. Turn ye! Turn ye! For why will ye die...." (Ezekiel 33:11).

It is better to hold the paradox than, like Satan, to seek to penetrate the divine mysteries without humility and love.

THE LAST WORD

"And in her was found the blood of the prophets and of the saints, and of all that were slain on the earth." v. 24

Again we have in this concluding verse of our chapter a clear indication that Mystery Babylon must not be identified with or confined to, any earthly city either past or to come. No city in history has on her hands the blood of all the martyrs that were ever slain on the earth. Only the City of This World, that Satanic system of fraud, cruelty, idolatry, blasphemy which is the permanent opponent of the truth, the perpetual enemy of the Word of God, can answer to this charge. Andreas, quoted in the Speaker's Commentary, says, "From this passage we are confirmed that the prophecy is of the world, and not of one city." It is the same principle expressed so early in the history of the Church, by Augustine, in his "City of God".

Always we are assured of the perpetual nature of that principle of the Church's witness in the world, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (2 Cor. 10:4). The walls of Satan's city are stout, reaching up to heaven like Nimrod's Tower. The engines of war and the military genius of Alexander which brought down the pride of Tyre in ruin; the consummate strategy of Cyrus which wrought the same triumph over Belshazzar's Babylon - these were only symbols of that eternal wisdom and justice which limits and finally crushes all the spiritual power and pride of Satan's city of darkness and death. The prayers of the saints have much to do with the divine strategy to overcome strength by weakness. He who 'death by dying slew' at the Cross, lives in His Church and still overcomes by her testimony and consecrated suffering.

This is ever the divine method. Those good people, who think in carnal terms of an

Armageddon fought on the old battle ground of Megiddo with all the accoutrements of ancient war, simply have not understood the spiritual nature of prophecy. We recently received a small tract telling us that Palestine has been invaded by flocks of vultures, which are rapidly increasing in number - ready to devour the slain in the impending Apocalyptic battle! (See Ezekiel 39:17-20). It is hard to see how anything can be done to win over this type of mind to the true nature and purpose of prophecy.

Fundamentally, that which destroys the enemies of the Lord is THE WORD OF GOD. We are not unmindful of that glorious statement in Rev. 12:11 – “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death”. By dying they live; by dying they overcome - even as their Lord overcame by the Cross. There is glory and grace in this; there is none in the theory which literalises the vultures.

It is this most potent weapon of THE WORD OF GOD which overcomes the armies of Satan. It is this which destroys MYSTERY BABYLON; and we must never forget that the Word of God is not confined to our preaching of it. There is One (as in our next chapter, Rev. 19:13) whose name is called The Word of God. By Him God created the heaven and the earth (John 1:3). God spoke, and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast (Psalm 33:9). So was the Word of creation. That Word was not the actual speech of God, but was the putting forth of the Wisdom and Power of the Godhead in the Person of the Son, by whom all things were made. So the final victory over all darkness and its secret powers of evil, will be won by Him who has His name written, THE WORD OF GOD, in whom is life and that life is the light of men, the light which shines in darkness, before whom darkness flees away.

How little we know of the written Word in its spiritual and divine nature, as it proceeds from that Living Word by which - rather, by Whom - God reveals and expresses Himself. The Son bears in His glorious and eternal Person, the image of the Father, in the Spirit of love and unity which proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified.

Let us continue to lift our Book of Revelation out of the mists and shadows of an altogether unprofitable carnal and material interpretation.

A GRACIOUS SEQUEL FOR TYRE

God's judgments are often linked with His mercy. It is remarkable that in two instances, one in the Old Testament, and one in the New, the region of Tyre and Zidon comes prominently into the records of God's mercy. The grace of God shines with a peculiar brightness in "the region of Syro-Phoenicia". It was to Zarephath belonging to Zidon, that Elijah was sent during the great famine in the reign of Ahab and Jezebel (the daughter of the king of Tyre). There the prophet's life was preserved in the home of a poor widow and her son – "Behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee". The story of the cruse of oil that did not fail, and the barrel of meal that did not waste, is known to all, and likewise the raising from the dead of the poor widow's son (see 1 Kings 17:8-24).

In the New Testament it is Christ Himself, in the early part of His ministry, who visits the same region, the only recorded instance of His crossing of the boundaries of the Jewish territory since the flight to Egypt as a child. In that same region which Elijah visited, the Lord encounters another woman in distress whose daughter was "grievously vexed with a devil". (Matt. 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30). She cried to the Lord for help, importunately, despite the Lord's trial of her faith ("It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto the dogs"). "Truth Lord" said the woman, "Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table". "O woman, great is thy faith ..." says the Saviour, and turning to those about Him he declares, "I have not found so great faith - no, not in Israel". The faith of the poor gentile was rewarded; her daughter was healed in that very hour. "Oh! How hast thou broken forth!" cries Samuel Rutherford in his notable series of sermons on the faith of this woman - a faith which he perceives as prophetic of the faith of the gentiles as they were called into the kingdom of Christ. (See in Rutherford's "Trial & Triumph of Faith").

The importance of these connected miracles lies in the prophetic bearing they have on the Lord's purpose from the beginning to remove the gospel privileges from Israel and grant them 'unto a people bringing forth the fruit thereof' - namely, the gentiles.

We must not overlook the Old Testament prophecies of the part played by Tyre, in her prophetic mystery as representative of the wealth and beauty brought into the kingdom of God from the heathen world. David in Psalm 95 tells us that at the marriage of the Lamb "the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift" (v.12).

He who is wise will take knowledge of these things.

THE SPEAKER'S COMMENTARY

Readers will have observed that we have made free use in recent issues of our commentary, to what we have mistakenly called "The Speaker's Bible". Having since discovered that there is a work of that name "The Speakers' Bible" (note the position of the apostrophe) published in a series of volumes towards the end of last century, to which our recommendation does not apply, we wish to make clear that our references have been to what is better known as "The Speaker's Commentary" - though it was never published under that name, or any distinctive name, but just, "Holy Bible with Commentary". This commentary which has become better known as "The Speaker's Commentary" is now very scarce and seldom appears in the book lists. It was produced over a period of 18 years (1863-1881) by bishops and other notable scholars of the Church of England on the suggestion of the Speaker of the House of Commons, hence the apostrophe in the singular position. The Speaker then was a most godly and evangelical man, a lover of the Word of God, the Right Honourable J. Evelyn Denison, who saw the need of "some commentary upon the Sacred Books of the Bible, in which the latest information might be made accessible to men of ordinary culture ... that every educated man should have access to some work which might enable him to understand what the original Scriptures really say and mean". In other words he desired that there might be ready access to the latest researchers into the knowledge of the Word of God. The Speaker lived long enough to see the work well on its way, but died (as Lord Ossington) before it was completed. Although for ourselves we cannot give an unqualified assent to all the contents of the thirteen volumes which make up this great commentary we can say that on the whole the work is one of piety and true reverence in an age when a subtle change was coming over not only the Church of England but all the historic churches of the Reformation. It is safe to say that such a commentary will never again be attempted by so many men of eminence who unite with profound learning and scholarship so reverent an approach to the Word of God. Such men no longer exist on the scale necessary to undertake so great a task.