

# Triennial Torah Study – 4<sup>th</sup> Year 13/07/2013

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We continue this weekend with our regular Triennial Torah reading which can be found at [https://sightedmoon.com/sightedmoon\\_2015/files/TriennialCycleBeginningAviv.pdf](https://sightedmoon.com/sightedmoon_2015/files/TriennialCycleBeginningAviv.pdf)

Deut 26	2 Chron 9-11		Rev 1-3
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## **“Look Down...and Bless Your People” (Deuteronomy 26)**

God here gives some final instructions, closing with the saving of the third tithe for the poor. Those who have obeyed God and been careful with all He has commanded are entitled by Him to ask of Him a special blessing. Had Israel been careful in obeying God, He would have poured out blessings upon blessings on the ancient nation. They would have become a special people—a treasured nation to God. Yet Israel failed to live up to God’s condition of obedience.

In modern times, national Israel has been greatly blessed because of God’s unconditional promises to Abraham, but not nearly to the degree it would be if it humbled itself in sincere obedience to God. And sadly, Israel’s wrong choices will soon plunge it into the depths of curses, as the next chapters of Deuteronomy lay out.

Yet God is fulfilling His greatest promises in and through the new spiritual Israel, His New Testament Church, the members of which He has chosen to ultimately be His special people. As God’s spiritual people learn to obey Him with ever-growing care, they increasingly receive more and greater blessings from Him.

As Deuteronomy winds to a close, it is clear that God is looking toward the future—to the time when there will be people who do obey Him and deeply treasure the gifts He gives.

## **Egypt Attacks Judah (2 Chronicles 12; 1 Kings 14:21-31)**

As we saw earlier, Solomon likely married the daughter of Pharaoh as the seal of an alliance between Israel and Egypt. But we also saw that Egypt’s sheltering of Jeroboam probably indicated the end of that alliance. With the division of Israel and Judah, the little realm of Rehoboam became a tempting target for Egyptian expansion. Despite his weakened position, Rehoboam foolishly departed from the Lord, and this within five years of assuming the throne. As a consequence, the protecting hand of God was withdrawn from Judah and the cruel hand of Egypt was stretched out against Rehoboam. The Egyptians undertook a massive assault against Judah and the prophet Shemaiah clearly explained the cause. Fortunately Rehoboam and Judah repented, saying, “The LORD is righteous” (2 Chronicles 12:6), thereby confessing they deserved punishment for their idolatry.

God saw this repentance and decided to lighten—not remove—the punishment. As a consequence, Judah became a vassal state of Egypt, and Pharaoh Shishak took all the treasures in the king’s house and the temple. “He took everything,” states the Scripture (verse 9). It is interesting to note that the Ark of the Covenant was apparently not taken, however, because it was in the possession of the Levites in Josiah’s reign (2 Chronicles 35:3).

Rehoboam ended his days after a 17-year reign. Tragically, most of his reign was wasted as a petty vassal king, dominated by Egypt, without much power, and constantly engaged in border skirmishes with Israel to the north. The Scripture closes its history of Rehoboam by noting that “he did evil, because he did not prepare his heart to seek the LORD” (12:14). What a pity—so much tragedy could have been avoided had he only devoted himself to seeking God.

[http://www.reformed.org/eschaton/Matthew\\_Henry/revelation/](http://www.reformed.org/eschaton/Matthew_Henry/revelation/)

## **Revelation Chapter 1**

### Chapter 1

This chapter is a general preface to the whole book, and contains,

An inscription, declaring the original and the design of it (v. 1, 2).

The apostolic benediction pronounced on all those who shall pay a due regard to the contents of this book (v. 3-8).

A glorious vision or appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ to the apostle John, when he delivered to him this revelation (v. 9 to the end).

Verses 1-2 Here we have,

I. What we may call the pedigree of this book.

1. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ. The whole Bible is so; for all revelation comes through Christ and all centres in him; and especially in these last days God has spoken to us by his Son, and concerning his Son. Christ, as the king of his church, has been pleased thus far to let his church know by what rules and methods he will proceed in his government; and, as the prophet of the church, he has made known to us the things that shall be hereafter. 2. It is a revelation which God gave unto Christ. Though Christ is himself God, and as such has light and life in himself, yet, as he sustains the office of Mediator between God and man, he receives his instructions from the Father. The human nature of Christ, though endowed with the greatest sagacity, judgment, and penetration, could not, in a way of reason, discover these great events, which not being produced by natural causes, but wholly depending upon the will of God, could be the object only of divine prescience, and must come to a created mind only by revelation. Our Lord Jesus is the great trustee of divine revelation; it is to him that we owe the knowledge we have of what we are to expect from God and what he expects from us.

3. This revelation Christ sent and signified by his angel. Observe here the admirable order of divine revelation. God gave it to Christ, and Christ employed an angel to communicate it to the churches. The angels are God's messengers; they are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation. They are Christ's servants: principalities and powers are subject to him; all the angels of God are obliged to worship him. 4. The angels signified it to the apostle John. As the angels are the messengers of Christ, the ministers are the messengers of the churches; what they receive from heaven, they are to communicate to the churches. John was the apostle chosen for this service. Some think he was the only one surviving, the rest having sealed their testimony with their blood. This was to be the last book of divine revelation; and therefore notified to the church by the last of the apostles. John was the beloved disciple. He was, under the New Testament, as the prophet Daniel under the Old, a man greatly beloved. He was the servant of Christ; he was an apostle, an evangelist, and a prophet; he served Christ in all the three extraordinary offices of the church. James was an apostle, but not a prophet, nor an evangelist; Matthew was an apostle and evangelist, but not a prophet; Luke was an evangelist, but neither a prophet nor an apostle; but John was all three; and so Christ calls him in an eminent sense his servant John.

5. John was to deliver this revelation to the church, to all his servants. For the revelation was not designed for the use of Christ's extraordinary servants the ministers only, but for all his servants, the members of the church; they have all a right to the oracles of God, and all have their concern in them.

II. Here we have the subject-matter of this revelation, namely, the things that must shortly come to pass. The evangelists give us an account of the things that are past; prophecy gives us an account of things to come. These future events are shown, not in the clearest light in which God could have set them, but in such a light as he saw most proper, and which would best answer his wise and holy purposes. Had they been as clearly foretold in all their circumstances as God could have revealed them, the prediction might have prevented the accomplishment; but they are foretold more darkly, to beget in us a veneration for the scripture, and to engage our attention and excite our enquiry. We have in this revelation a general idea of the methods of divine providence and government in and about the church, and many good lessons may be learned hereby. These

events (it is said) were such as should come to pass not only surely, but shortly; that is, they would begin to come to pass very shortly, and the whole would be accomplished in a short time. For now the last ages of the world had come.

III. Here is an attestation of the prophecy, v. 2. It was signified to John, who bore record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. It is observable that the historical books of the Old Testament have not always the name of the historian prefixed to them, as in the books of Judges, Kings, Chronicles; but in the prophetic books the name is always prefixed, as Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc. So in the New Testament, though John did not prefix his name to his first epistle, yet he does to this prophecy, as ready to vouch and answer for the truth of it; and he gives us not only his name, but his office. He was one who bore record of the word of God in general, and of the testimony of Jesus in particular, and of all things that he saw; he was an eye-witness, and he concealed nothing that he saw. Nothing recorded in this revelation was his own invention or imagination; but all was the record of God and the testimony of Jesus; and, as he added nothing to it, so he kept back no part of the counsels of God.

Verses 3-8 We have here an apostolic benediction on those who should give a due regard to this divine revelation; and this benediction is given more generally and more especially.

I. More generally, to all who either read or hear the words of the prophecy. This blessing seems to be pronounced with a design to encourage us to study this book, and not be weary of looking into it upon account of the obscurity of many things in it; it will repay the labour of the careful and attentive reader. Observe,

1. It is a blessed privilege to enjoy the oracles of God. This was one of the principal advantages the Jews had above the Gentiles.<sup>2</sup> It is a blessed thing to study the scriptures; those are well employed who search the scriptures.<sup>3</sup> It is a privilege not only to read the scriptures ourselves, but to hear them read by others, who are qualified to give us the sense of what they read and to lead us into an understanding of them.<sup>4</sup> It is not sufficient to our blessedness that we read and hear the scriptures, but we must keep the things that are written; we must keep them in our memories, in our minds, in our affections, and in practice, and we shall be blessed in the deed.<sup>5</sup> The nearer we come to the accomplishment of the scriptures, the greater regard we shall give to them. The time is at hand, and we should be so much the more attentive as we see the day approaching.

II. The apostolic benediction is pronounced more especially and particularly to the seven Asian churches, v. 4. These seven churches are named in v. 11, and distinct messages sent to each of them respectively in the chapters following. The apostolic blessing is more expressly directed to these because they were nearest to him, who was now in the isle of Patmos, and perhaps he had the peculiar care of them, and superintendency over them, not excluding any of the rest of the apostles, if any of them were now living. Here observe,

1. What the blessing is which he pronounces on all the faithful in these churches: Grace and peace, holiness and comfort. Grace, that is, the good-will of God towards us and his good work in us; and peace, that is, the sweet evidence and assurance of this grace. There can be no true peace where there is not true grace; and, where grace goes before, peace will follow.<sup>2</sup> Whence this blessing is to come. In whose name does the apostle bless the churches? In the name of God, of the whole Trinity; for this is an act of adoration, and God only is the proper object of it; his ministers must bless the people in no name but his alone. And here,

(1.) The Father is first named: God the Father, which may be taken either essentially, for God as God, or personally, for the first person in the ever-blessed Trinity, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and he is described as the Jehovah who is, and who was, and who is to come, eternal, unchangeable, the same to the Old-Testament church which was, and to the New-Testament church which is, and who will be the same to the church triumphant which is to come.<sup>3</sup>(2.) The Holy Spirit, called the seven spirits, not seven in number, nor in nature, but the infinite perfect Spirit of God, in whom there is a diversity of gifts and operations. He is before the throne; for, as God made, so he governs, all things by his Spirit.<sup>4</sup>(3.) The Lord Jesus Christ. He mentions him after the Spirit, because he intended to enlarge more upon the person of Christ, as God manifested in the flesh, whom he had seen dwelling on earth before, and now saw again in a glorious form. Observe the particular account we have here of Christ, v. 5.

[1.] He is the faithful witness; he was from eternity a witness to all the counsels of God (Jn. 1:18), and he was in time a faithful witness to the revealed will of God, who has now spoken to us by his Son; upon his testimony we

may safely depend, for he is a faithful witness, cannot be deceived and cannot deceive us.?[2.] He is the first-begotten or first-born from the dead, or the first parent and head of the resurrection, the only one who raised himself by his own power, and who will by the same power raise up his people from their graves to everlasting honour; for he has begotten them again to a lively hope by his resurrection from the dead.?[3.] He is the prince of the kings of the earth; from him they have their authority; by him their power is limited and their wrath restrained; by him their counsels are over-ruled, and to him they are accountable. This is good news to the church, and it is good evidence of the Godhead of Christ, who is King of kings and Lord of lords.

[4.] He is the great friend of his church and people, one who has done great things for them, and this out of pure disinterested affection. He has loved them, and, in pursuance of that everlasting love, he has, First, Washed them from their sins in his own blood. Sins leave a stain upon the soul, a stain of guilt and of pollution. Nothing can fetch out this stain but the blood of Christ; and, rather than it should not be washed out, Christ was willing to shed his own blood, to purchase pardon and purity for them. Secondly, He has made them kings and priests to God and his Father. Having justified and sanctified them, he makes them kings to his Father; that is, in his Father's account, with his approbation, and for his glory. As kings, they govern their own spirits, conquer Satan, have power and prevalency with God in prayer, and shall judge the world. He hath made them priests, given them access to God, enabled them to enter into the holiest and to offer spiritual and acceptable sacrifices, and has given them an unction suitable to this character; and for these high honours and favours they are bound to ascribe to him dominion and glory for ever.?[5.] He will be the Judge of the world: Behold, he cometh, and every eye shall see him, v. 7. This book, the Revelation, begins and ends with a prediction of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We should set ourselves to meditate frequently upon the second coming of Christ, and keep it in the eye of our faith and expectation. John speaks as if he saw that day: "Behold, he cometh, as sure as if you beheld him with your eyes. He cometh with clouds, which are his chariot and pavilion. He will come publicly: Every eye shall see him, the eye of his people, the eye of his enemies, every eye, yours and mine." He shall come, to the terror of those who have pierced him and have not repented and of all who have wounded and crucified him afresh by their apostasy from him, and to the astonishment of the pagan world. For he comes to take vengeance on those who know not God, as well as on those that obey not the gospel of Christ.

[6.] This account of Christ is ratified and confirmed by himself, v. 8. Here our Lord Jesus justly challenges the same honour and power that is ascribed to the Father, v. 4. He is the beginning and the end; all things are from him and for him; he is the Almighty; he is the same eternal and unchangeable one. And surely whoever presumes to blot out one character of this name of Christ deserves to have his name blotted out of the book of life. Those that honour him he will honour; but those who despise him shall be lightly esteemed.

Verses 9-20 We have now come to that glorious vision which the apostle had of the Lord Jesus Christ, when he came to deliver this revelation to him, where observe,

I. The account given of the person who was favoured with this vision. He describes himself,

1. By his present state and condition. He was the brother and companion of these churches in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Christ. He was, at their time, as the rest of true Christians were, a persecuted man, banished, and perhaps imprisoned, for his adherence to Christ. He was their brother, though an apostle; he seems to value himself upon his relation to the church, rather than his authority in it: Judas Iscariot may be an apostle, but not a brother in the family of God. He was their companion: the children of God should choose communion and society with each other. He was their companion in tribulation: the persecuted servants of God did not suffer alone, the same trials are accomplished in others. He was their companion in patience, not only a sharer with them in suffering circumstances, but in suffering graces: if we have the patience of the saints, we should not grudge to meet with their trials. He was their brother and companion in the patience of the kingdom of Christ, a sufferer for Christ's cause, for asserting his kingly power over the church and the world, and for adhering to it against all who would usurp upon it. By this account he gives of his present state, he acknowledges his engagements to sympathize with them, and to endeavour to give them counsel and comfort, and bespeaks their more careful attention to what he had to say to them from Christ their common Lord.

2. By the place where he was when he was favoured with this vision: he was in the isle Patmos. He does not say who banished him thither. It becomes Christians to speak sparingly and modestly of their own sufferings. Patmos is said to be an island in the Aegean Sea, One of those called Cyclades, and was about thirty-five miles in compass; but under this confinement it was the apostle's comfort that he did not suffer as an evil-doer, but that it was for the testimony of Jesus, for bearing witness to Christ as the Immanuel, the Saviour. This was a

cause worth suffering for; and the Spirit of glory and of God rested upon this persecuted apostle. 3. The day and time in which he had this vision: it was the Lord's day, the day which Christ had separated and set apart for himself, as the eucharist is called the Lord's supper. Surely this can be no other than the Christian sabbath, the first day of the week, to be observed in remembrance of the resurrection of Christ. Let us who call him our Lord honour him on his own day, the day which the Lord hath made and in which we ought to rejoice.

4. The frame that his soul was in at this time: He was in the Spirit. He was not only in a rapture when he received the vision, but before he received it; he was in a serious, heavenly, spiritual frame, under the blessed gracious influences of the Spirit of God. God usually prepares the souls of his people for uncommon manifestations of himself, by the quickening sanctifying influences of his good Spirit. Those who would enjoy communion with God on the Lord's day must endeavour to abstract their thoughts and affections from flesh and fleshly things, and be wholly taken up with things of a spiritual nature.

II. The apostle gives an account of what he heard when thus in the Spirit. An alarm was given as with the sound of a trumpet, and then he heard a voice, the voice of Christ applying to himself the character before given, the first and the last, and commanding the apostle to commit to writing the things that were now to be revealed to him, and to send it immediately to the seven Asian churches, whose names are mentioned. Thus our Lord Jesus, the captain of our salvation, gave the apostle notice of his glorious appearance, as with the sound of a trumpet.

III. We have also an account of what he saw. He turned to see the voice, whose it was and whence it came; and then a wonderful scene of vision opened itself to him.

1. He saw a representation of the church under the emblem of seven golden candlesticks, as it is explained in the last verse of the chapter. The churches are compared to candlesticks, because they hold forth the light of the gospel to advantage. The churches are not candles: Christ only is our light, and his gospel our lamp; but they receive their light from Christ and the gospel, and hold it forth to others. They are golden candlesticks, for they should be precious and pure, comparable to fine gold; not only the ministers, but the members of the churches ought to be such; their light should so shine before men as to engage others to give glory to God.

2. He saw a representation of the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of the golden candlesticks; for he has promised to be with his churches always to the end of the world, filling them with light, and life, and love, for he is the very animating informing soul of the church. And here we observe,

(1.) The glorious form in which Christ appeared in several particulars.

[1.] He was clothed with a garment down to the foot, a princely and priestly robe, denoting righteousness and honour. [2.] He was girt about with a golden girdle, the breast-plate of the high priest, on which the names of his people are engraven; he was ready girt to do all the work of a Redeemer. [3.] His head and hairs were white like wool or snow. He was the Ancient of days; his hoary head was no sign of decay, but was indeed a crown of glory. [4.] His eyes were as a flame of fire, piercing and penetrating into the very hearts and reins of men, scattering terrors among his adversaries. [5.] His feet were like unto fine burning brass, strong and stedfast, supporting his own interest, subduing his enemies, treading them to powder. [6.] His voice was as the sound of many waters, of many rivers falling in together. He can and will make himself heard to those who are afar off as well as to those who are near. His gospel is a profluent and mighty stream, fed by the upper springs of infinite wisdom and knowledge. [7.] He had in his right hand seven stars, that is, the ministers of the seven churches, who are under his direction, have all their light and influence from him, and are secured and preserved by him. [8.] Out of his mouth went a two-edged sword, his word, which both wounds and heals, strikes at sin on the right hand and on the left. [9.] His countenance was as the sun shining, its strength too bright and dazzling for mortal eyes to behold.

(2.) The impression this appearance of Christ made upon the apostle John (v. 17): He fell at the feet of Christ as dead; he was overpowered with the greatness of the lustre and glory in which Christ appeared, though he had been so familiar with him before. How well is it for us that God speaks to us by men like ourselves, whose terrors shall not make us afraid, for none can see the face of God and live! (3.) The condescending goodness of the Lord Jesus to his disciple: He laid his hand upon him, v. 17. He raised him up; he did not plead against him with his great power, but he put strength into him, he spoke kind words to him.

[1.] Words of comfort and encouragement: Fear not. He commanded away the slavish fears of his disciple. [2.] Words of instruction, telling him particularly who he was that thus appeared to him. And here he acquaints him, First, with his divine nature: The first and the last. Secondly, With his former sufferings: I was dead; the very same that his disciples saw upon the cross dying for the sins of men. Thirdly, With his resurrection and life: "I live, and am alive for evermore, have conquered death and opened the grave, and am partaker of an endless life." Fourthly, With his office and authority: I have the keys of hell and of death, a sovereign dominion in and over the invisible world, opening and none can shut, shutting so that none can open, opening the gates of death when he pleases and the gates of the eternal world, of happiness or misery, as the Judge of all, from whose sentence there lies no appeal. Fifthly, With his will and pleasure: Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and which shall be hereafter. Sixthly, With the meaning of the seven stars, that they are the ministers of the churches; and of the seven candlesticks, that they are the seven churches, to whom Christ would now send by him particular and proper messages.

## Chapter 2

The apostle John, having in the foregoing chapter written the things which he had seen, now proceeds to write the things that are, according to the command of God (ch. 1:19), that is, the present state of the seven churches of Asia, with which he had a particular acquaintance, and for which he had a tender concern. He was directed to write to every one of them according to their present state and circumstances, and to inscribe every letter to the angel of that church, to the minister or rather ministry of that church, called angels because they are the messengers of God to mankind. In this chapter we have,

The message sent to Ephesus (v. 1-7).

To Smyrna (v. 8-11).

To Pergamos (v. 12-17).

To Thyatira (v. 18, etc.).

Verses 1-7 We have here,

I. The inscription, where observe,

1. To whom the first of these epistles is directed: To the church of Ephesus, a famous church planted by the apostle Paul (Acts 19), and afterwards watered and governed by John, who had his residence very much there. We can hardly think that Timothy was the angel, or sole pastor and bishop, of this church at this time,—that he who was of a very excellent spirit, and naturally cared for the good state of the souls of the people, should become so remiss as to deserve the rebukes given to the ministry of this church. Observe, 2. From whom this epistle to Ephesus was sent; and here we have one of those titles that were given to Christ in his appearance to John in the chapter foregoing: He that holds the seven stars in his right hand, and walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, ch. 1:13, 16. This title consists of two parts:—

(1.) He that holds the stars in his right hand. The ministers of Christ are under his special care and protection. It is the honour of God that he knows the number of the stars, calls them by their names, binds the sweet influences of Pleiades and looses the bands of Orion; and it is the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ that the ministers of the gospel, who are greater blessings to the church than the stars are to the world, are in his hand. He directs all their motions; he disposes of them into their several orbs; he fills them with light and influence; he supports them, or else they would soon be falling stars; they are instruments in his hand, and all the good they do is done by his hand with them. (2.) He walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks. This intimates his relation to his churches, as the other his relation to his ministers. Christ is in an intimate manner present and conversant with his churches; he knows and observes their state; he takes pleasure in them, as a man does to walk in his garden. Though Christ is in heaven, he walks in the midst of his churches on earth, observing what is amiss in them and what it is that they want. This is a great encouragement to those who have the care of the churches, that the Lord Jesus has graven them upon the palms of his hands.

II. The contents of the epistle, in which, as in most of those that follow, we have,

1. The commendation Christ gave this church, ministers and members, which he always brings in by declaring that he knows their works, and therefore both his commendation and reprehension are to be strictly regarded; for he does not in either speak at a venture: he knows what he says. Now the church of Ephesus is commended,

(1.) For their diligence in duty: I know thy works, and thy labour, v. 2. This may more immediately relate to the ministry of this church, which had been laborious and diligent. Dignity calls for duty. Those that are stars in

Christ's hand had need to be always in motion, dispensing light to all about them. For my name's sake thou hast laboured, and hast not fainted, v. 3. Christ keeps an account of every day's work, and every hour's work, his servants do for him, and their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.?(2.) For their patience in suffering: Thy labour and thy patience, v. 2. It is not enough that we be diligent, but we must be patient, and endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ. Ministers must have and exercise great patience, and no Christian can be without it. There must be bearing patience, to endure the injuries of men and the rebukes of Providence; and there must be waiting patience, that, when they have done the will of God, they may receive the promise:

Thou hast borne, and hast patience, v. 3. We shall meet with such difficulties in our way and work as require patience to go on and finish well.?(3.) For their zeal against what was evil: Thou canst not bear those that are evil, v. 2. It consists very well with Christian patience not to dispense with sin, much less allow it; though we must show all meekness to men, yet we must show a just zeal against their sins. This their zeal was the more to be commended because it was according to knowledge, a discreet zeal upon a previous trial made of the pretences, practices, and tenets of evil men: Thou hast tried those that say they are apostles and are not, and hast found them liars. True zeal proceeds with discretion; none should be cast off till they be tried. Some had risen up in this church that pretended to be not ordinary ministers, but apostles; and their pretensions had been examined but found to be vain and false. Those that impartially search after truth may come to the knowledge of it.

2. The rebuke given to this church: Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, v. 4. Those that have much good in them may have something much amiss in them, and our Lord Jesus, as an impartial Master and Judge, takes notice of both; though he first observes what is good, and is most ready to mention this, yet he also observes what is amiss, and will faithfully reprove them for it. The sin that Christ charged this church with was their decay and declension in holy love and zeal: Thou hast left thy first love; not left and forsaken the object of it, but lost the fervent degree of it that at first appeared. Observe,

(1.) The first affections of men towards Christ, and holiness, and heaven, are usually lively and warm. God remembered the love of Israel's espousals, when she would follow him whithersoever he went.?(2.) These lively affections will abate and cool if great care be not taken, and diligence used, to preserve them in constant exercise.?(3.) Christ is grieved and displeased with his people when he sees them grow remiss and cold towards him, and he will one way or other make them sensible that he does not take it well from them.

3. The advice and counsel given them from Christ: Remember therefore whence thou hast fallen, and repent, etc.

(1.) Those that have lost their first love must remember whence they have fallen; they must compare their present with their former state, and consider how much better it was with them then than now, how much peace, strength, purity, and pleasure they have lost, by leaving their first love,—how much more comfortably they could lie down and sleep at night,—how much more cheerfully they could awake in the morning,—how much better they could bear afflictions, and how much more becomingly they could enjoy the favours of Providence,—how much easier the thoughts of death were to them, and how much stronger their desires and hopes of heaven.?(2.) They must repent. They must be inwardly grieved and ashamed for their sinful declension; they must blame themselves, and shame themselves, for it, and humbly confess it in the sight of God, and judge and condemn themselves for it.?(3.) They must return and do their first works. They must as it were begin again, go back step by step, till they come to the place where they took the first false step; they must endeavour to revive and recover their first zeal, tenderness, and seriousness, and must pray as earnestly, and watch as diligently, as they did when they first set out in the ways of God.

4. This good advice is enforced and urged,

(1.) By a severe threatening, if it should be neglected: I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of its place. If the presence of Christ's grace and Spirit be slighted, we may expect the presence of his displeasure. He will come in a way of judgment, and that suddenly and surprisngly, upon impenitent churches and sinners; he will unchurch them, take away his gospel, his ministers, and his ordinances from them, and what will the churches or the angels of the churches do when the gospel is removed??(2.) By an encouraging mention that is made of what was yet good among them: This thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate, v. 6. "Though thou hast declined in thy love to what is good, yet thou retainest thy hatred to what is evil, especially to what is grossly so." The Nicolaitans were a loose sect who sheltered themselves under the name of Christianity. They held hateful doctrines, and they were guilty of hateful deeds,

hateful to Christ and to all true Christians; and it is mentioned to the praise of the church of Ephesus that they had a just zeal and abhorrence of those wicked doctrines and practices. An indifference of spirit between truth and error, good and evil, may be called charity and meekness, but it is not pleasing to Christ. Our Saviour subjoins this kind commendation to his severe threatening, to make the advice more effectual.

III. We have the conclusion of this epistle, in which, as in those that follow, we have,

1. A call to attention: He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. Observe, (1.) What is written in the scriptures is spoken by the Spirit of God.?(2.) What is said to one church concerns all the churches, in every place and age.?(3.) We can never employ our faculty of hearing better than in hearkening to the word of God: and we deserve to lose it if we do not employ it to this purpose. Those who will not hear the call of God now will wish at length they had never had a capacity of hearing any thing at all.

2. A promise of great mercy to those who overcome. The Christian life is a warfare against sin, Satan, the world, and the flesh. It is not enough that we engage in this warfare, but we must pursue it to the end, we must never yield to our spiritual enemies, but fight the good fight, till we gain the victory, as all persevering Christians shall do; and the warfare and victory shall have a glorious triumph and reward. That which is here promised to the victors is that they shall eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God. They shall have that perfection of holiness, and that confirmation therein, which Adam would have had if he had gone well through the course of his trial: he would then have eaten of the tree of life which was in the midst of paradise, and this would have been the sacrament of confirmation to him in his holy and happy state; so all who persevere in their Christian trial and warfare shall derive from Christ, as the tree of life, perfection and confirmation in holiness and happiness in the paradise of God; not in the earthly paradise, but the heavenly, ch. 22:1, 2.

Verses 8-11 We now proceed to the second epistle sent to another of the Asian churches, where, as before, observe,

I. The preface or inscription in both parts.

1. The superscription, telling us to whom it was more expressly and immediately directed: To the angel of the church in Smyrna, a place well known at this day by our merchants, a city of great trade and wealth, perhaps the only city of all the seven that is still known by the same name, now however no longer distinguished for its Christian church being overrun by Mahomedism.?(2.) The subscription, containing another of the glorious titles of our Lord Jesus, the first and the last, he that was dead and is alive, taken out of ch. 1:17, 18.

(1.) Jesus Christ is the first and the last. It is but a little scantling of time that is allowed to us in this world, but our Redeemer is the first and the last. He is the first, for by him all things were made, and he was before all things with God and was God himself. he is the last, for all things are made for him, and he will be the Judge of all. This surely is the title of God, from everlasting and to everlasting, and it is the title of one that is an unchangeable Mediator between God and man, Jesus, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He was the first, for by him the foundation of the church was laid in the patriarchal state; and he is the last, for by him the top-stone will be brought forth and laid in the end of time.?(2.) He was dead and is alive. He was dead, and died for our sins; he is alive, for he rose again for our justification, and he ever lives to make intercession for us. He was dead, and by dying purchased salvation for us; he is alive, and by his life applies this salvation to us. And if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled by his death, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. His death we commemorate every sacrament day; his resurrection and life every sabbath day.

II. The subject-matter of this epistle to Smyrna, where, after the common declaration of Christ's omniscience, and the perfect cognizance he has of all the works of men and especially of his churches, he takes notice,

1. Of the improvement they had made in their spiritual state. This comes in in a short parentheses; yet it is very emphatic: But thou art rich (v. 10), poor in temporals, but rich in spirituals—poor in spirit, and yet rich in grace. Their spiritual riches are set off by their outward poverty. Many who are rich in temporals are poor in spirituals. Thus it was with the church of Laodicea. Some who are poor outwardly are inwardly rich, rich in faith and in good works, rich in privileges, rich in bonds and deeds of gift, rich in hope, rich in reversion. Spiritual riches are usually the reward of great diligence; the diligent hand makes rich. Where there is spiritual plenty, outward poverty may be better borne; and when God's people are impoverished in temporals, for the sake of Christ and a good conscience, he makes all up to them in spiritual riches, which are much more satisfying and enduring.?(2.) Of their sufferings: I know thy tribulation and thy poverty—the persecution they underwent, even to the spoiling of their goods. Those who will be faithful to Christ must expect to go through many tribulations;



but Jesus Christ takes particular notice of all their troubles. In all their afflictions, he is afflicted, and he will recompense tribulation to those who trouble them, but to those that are troubled rest with himself.<sup>3</sup> He knows the wickedness and the falsehood of their enemies: I know the blasphemy of those that say they are Jews, but are not; that is, of those who pretend to be the only peculiar covenant-people of God, as the Jews boasted themselves to be, even after God had rejected them; or of those who would be setting up the Jewish rites and ceremonies, which were now not only antiquated, but abrogated; these may say that they only are the church of God in the world, when indeed they are the synagogue of Satan. Observe,

(1.) As Christ has a church in the world, the spiritual Israel of God, so the devil has his synagogue. Those assemblies which are set up in opposition to the truths of the gospel, and which promote and propagate damnable errors,—those which are set up in opposition to the purity and spirituality of gospel worship, and which promote and propagate the vain inventions of men and rites and ceremonies which never entered into the thoughts of God,—these are all synagogues of Satan: he presides over them, he works in them, his interests are served by them, and he receives a horrid homage and honour from them.<sup>2</sup>(2.) For the synagogues of Satan to give themselves out to be the church or Israel of God is no less than blasphemy. God is greatly dishonoured when his name is made use of to promote and patronize the interests of Satan; and he has a high resentment of this blasphemy, and will take a just revenge on those who persist in it. 4. He foreknows the future trials of his people, and forewarns them of them, and fore-arms them against them.<sup>1</sup>(1.) He forewarns them of future trials: The devil shall cast some of you into prison, and you shall have tribulation, v. 10. The people of God must look for a series and succession of troubles in this world, and their troubles usually rise higher. They had been impoverished by their tribulations before; now they must be imprisoned. Observe, It is the devil that stirs up his instruments, wicked men, to persecute the people of God; tyrants and persecutors are the devil's tools, though they gratify their own sinful malignity, and know not that they are actuated by a diabolical malice.<sup>2</sup>(2.) Christ fore-arms them against these approaching troubles,

[1.] By his counsel: Fear none of these things. This is not only a word of command, but of efficacy, no, only forbidding slavish fear, but subduing it and furnishing the soul with strength and courage.<sup>2</sup>[2.] By showing them how their sufferings would be alleviated and limited. First, They should not be universal. It would be some of them, not all, who should be cast into prison, those who were best able to bear it and might expect to be visited and comforted by the rest. Secondly, They were not to be perpetual, but for a set time, and a short time: Ten days. It should not be everlasting tribulation, the time should be shortened for the elect's sake. Thirdly, It should be to try them, not to destroy them, that their faith, and patience, and courage, might be proved and improved, and be found to honour and glory.<sup>3</sup>[3.] By proposing and promising a glorious reward to their fidelity: Be thou faithful to death, and I will give thee a crown of life. Observe, First, The sureness of the reward: I will give thee. He has said it that is able to do it; and he has undertaken that he will do it. They shall have the reward from his own hand, and none of their enemies shall be able to wrest it out of his hand, or to pull it from their heads. Secondly, The suitability of it. 1. A crown, to reward their poverty, their fidelity, and their conflict. 2. A crown of life, to reward those who are faithful even unto death, who are faithful till they die, and who part with life itself in fidelity to Christ. The life so worn out in his service, or laid down in his cause, shall be rewarded with another and a much better life that shall be eternal.

III. The conclusion of this message, and that, as before,

1. With a call to universal attention, that all men, all the world, should hear what passes between Christ and his churches—how he commends them, how he comforts them, how he reproveth their failures, how he rewards their fidelity. It concerns all the inhabitants of the world to observe God's dealings with his own people; all the world may learn instruction and wisdom thereby.<sup>2</sup> 2. With a gracious promise to the conquering Christian: He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death, v. 11. Observe,

(1.) There is not only a first, but a second death, a death after the body is dead.<sup>2</sup>(2.) This second death is unspeakably worse than the first death, both in the dying pangs and agonies of it (which are the agonies of the soul, without any mixture of support) and in the duration; it is eternal death, dying the death, to die and to be always dying. This is hurtful indeed, fatally hurtful, to all who fall under it.<sup>3</sup>(3.) From this hurtful, this destructive death, Christ will save all his faithful servants; the second death shall have no power over those who are partakers of the first resurrection: the first death shall not hurt them, and the second death shall have no power over them.

Verses 12-17 Here also we are to consider,

I. The inscription of this message.

1. To whom it was sent: To the angel of the church of Pergamos. Whether this was a city raised up out of the ruins of old Troy, a Troy nouveau (as our London was once called), or some other city of the same name, is neither certain nor material; it was a place where Christ had called and constituted a gospel church, by the preaching of the gospel and the grace of his Spirit making the word effectual. 2. Who it was that sent this message to Pergamos: the same Jesus who here describes himself as one that hath the sharp sword with two edges (ch. 1:16), out of whose mouth went a sharp two-edged sword. Some have observed that, in the several titles of Christ which are prefixed to the several epistles, there is something suited to the state of those churches; as in that to Ephesus, what could be more proper to awaken and recover a drowsy and declining church than to hear Christ speaking as one that held the stars in his hand, and walked in the midst of the golden candlesticks? etc. The church of Pergamos was infested with men of corrupt minds, who did what they could to corrupt both the faith and manners of the church; and Christ, being resolved to fight against them by the sword of his word, takes the title of him that hath the sharp sword with two edges.

(1.) The word of God is a sword; it is a weapon both offensive and defensive, it is, in the hand of God, able to slay both sin and sinners. (2.) It is a sharp sword. No heart is so hard but it is able to cut it; it can divide asunder between the soul and the spirit, that is, between the soul and those sinful habits that by custom have become another soul, or seem to be essential to it. (3.) It is a sword with two edges; it turns and cuts every way. There is the edge of the law against the transgressors of that dispensation, and the edge of the gospel against the despisers of that dispensation; there is an edge to make a wound, and an edge to open a festered wound in order to its healing. There is no escaping the edge of this sword: if you turn aside to the right hand, it has an edge on that side; if on the left hand, you fall upon the edge of the sword on that side; it turns every way.

II. From the inscription we proceed to the contents of the epistle, in which the method is much the same as is observed in the rest. Here,

1. Christ takes notice of the trials and difficulties this church encountered with: I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, etc., v. 13. The works of God's servants are best known when the circumstances under which they did those works are duly considered. Now that which added very much lustre to the good works of this church was the circumstance of the place where this church was planted, a place where Satan's seat was. As our great Lord takes notice of all the advantages and opportunities we have for duty in the places where we dwell, so he takes notice of all the temptations and discouragements we meet with from the places where we dwell, and makes gracious allowances for them. This people dwelt where Satan's seat was, where he kept his court. His circuit is throughout the world, his seat is in some places that are infamous for wickedness, error, and cruelty. Some think that the Roman governor in this city was a most violent enemy to the Christians; and the seat of persecution is Satan's seat. 2. He commends their stedfastness: Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith. These two expressions are much the same in sense; the former may, however, signify the effect and the latter the cause or means.

(1.) "Thou holdest fast my name; thou art not ashamed of thy relation to me, but accountest it thine honour that my name is named on thee, that, as the wife bears the name of the husband, so thou art called by my name; this thou holdest fast, as thine honour and privilege." (2.) "That which has made thee thus faithful is the grace of faith: thou hast not denied the great doctrines of the gospel, nor departed from the Christian faith, and by that means thou hast been kept faithful." Our faith will have a great influence upon our faithfulness. Men who deny the faith of Christ may boast very much of their sincerity, and faithfulness to God and conscience; but it has been seldom known that those who let go the true faith retained their fidelity; usually on that rock on which men make shipwreck of their faith they make shipwreck of a good conscience too. And here our blessed Lord aggrandizes the fidelity of this church from the circumstance of the times, as well as of the place where they lived: they had been stedfast even in those days wherein Antipas his faithful martyr was slain among them. Who this person was, and whether there be anything mysterious in his name, we have no certain account. He was a faithful disciple of Christ, he suffered martyrdom for it, and sealed his faith and fidelity with his blood in the place where Satan dwelt; and though the rest of the believers there knew this, and saw it, yet they were not discouraged nor drawn away from their stedfastness: this is mentioned as an addition to their honour.

3. He reproveth them for their sinful failures (v. 14): But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there those that hold the doctrine of Balaam, etc., and those that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which

thing I hate. There were some who taught that it was lawful to eat things sacrificed to idols, and that simple fornication was no sin; they, by an impure worship, drew men into impure practices, as Balaam did the Israelites. Observe,

(1.) The filthiness of the spirit and the filthiness of the flesh often go together. Corrupt doctrines and a corrupt worship often lead to a corrupt conversation.?(2.) It is very lawful to fix the name of the leaders of any heresy upon those who follow them. It is the shortest way of telling whom we mean.?(3.) To continue in communion with persons of corrupt principles and practices is displeasing to God, draws a guilt and blemish upon the whole society: they become partakers of other men's sins. Though the church, as such, has no power to punish the persons of men, either for heresy or immorality, with corporal penalties, yet it has power to exclude them from its communion; and, if it do not so, Christ, the head and lawgiver of the church, will be displeased with it.

4. He calls them to repentance: Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, etc., v. 16. Observe here, (1.) Repentance is the duty of saints as well as sinners; it is a gospel duty.?(2.) It is the duty of churches and communities as well as particular persons; those who sin together should repent together.?(3.) It is the duty of Christian societies to repent of other men's sins, as far as they have been accessory to them, though but so much as by connivance.?(4.) When God comes to punish the corrupt members of a church, he rebukes that church itself for allowing such to continue in its communion, and some drops of the storm fall upon the whole society.?(5.) No sword cuts so deep, nor inflicts so mortal a wound, as the sword of Christ's mouth. Let but the threatenings of the word be set home upon the conscience of a sinner, and he will soon be a terror to himself; let these threatenings be executed, and the sinner is utterly cut off. The word of God will take hold of sinners, sooner or later, either for their conviction or their confusion.

III. We have the conclusion of this epistle, where, after the usual demand of universal attention, there is the promise of great favour to those that overcome. They shall eat of the hidden manna, and have the new name, and the white stone, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it, v. 17.

1. The hidden manna, the influences and comforts of the Spirit of Christ in communion with him, coming down from heaven into the soul, from time to time, for its support, to let it taste something how saints and angels live in heaven. This is hidden from the rest of the world— a stranger intermeddles not with this joy; and it is laid up in Christ, the ark of the covenant, in the holy of holies.?(2. The white stone, with a new name engraven upon it. This white stone is absolution from the guilt of sin, alluding to the ancient custom of giving a white stone to those acquitted on trial and a black stone to those condemned. The new name is the name of adoption: adopted persons took the name of the family into which they were adopted. None can read the evidence of a man's adoption but himself; he cannot always read it, but if he persevere he shall have both the evidence of sonship and the inheritance.

Verses 18-29 The form of each epistle is very much the same; and in this, as the rest, we have to consider the inscription, contents, and conclusion.

I. The inscription, telling us,

1. To whom it is directed: To the angel of the church of Thyatira, a city of the proconsular Asia, bordering upon Mysia on the north and Lydia on the south, a town of trade, whence came the woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, who, being at Philippi in Macedonia, probably about the business of her calling, heard Paul preach there, and God opened her heart, that she attended to the things that were spoken, and believed, and was baptized, and entertained Paul and Silas there. Whether it was by her means that the gospel was brought into her own city, Thyatira, is not certain; but that it was there, and successful to the forming of a gospel church, this epistle assures us.?(2. By whom it was sent: by the Son of God, who is here described as having eyes like a flame of fire, and feet like as fine brass. His general title is here, the Son of God, that is, the eternal and only-begotten Son of God, which denotes that he has the same nature with the Father, but with a distinct and subordinate manner of subsistence. The description we have here of him is in two characters:—

(1.) That his eyes are like a flame of fire, signifying his piercing, penetrating, perfect knowledge, a thorough insight into all persons and all things, one who searches the hearts and tries the reins of the children of men (v. 23), and will make all the churches to know he does so.?(2.) That his feet are like fine brass, that the outgoings of his providence are steady, awful, and all pure and holy. As he judges with perfect wisdom, so he acts with perfect strength and steadiness.

II. The contents or subject-matter of this epistle, which, as the rest, includes,

1. The honourable character and commendation Christ gives of this church, ministry, and people; and this given by one who was no stranger to them, but well acquainted with them and with the principles from which they acted. Now in this church Christ makes honourable mention,

(1.) Of their charity, either more general, a disposition to do good to all men, or more special, to the household of faith: there is no religion where there is no charity.?(2.) Their service, their ministration; this respects chiefly the officers of the church, who had laboured in the word and doctrine.?(3.) Their faith, which was the grace that actuated all the rest, both their charity and their service.?(4.) Their patience; for those that are most charitable to others, most diligent in their places, and most faithful, must yet expect to meet with that which will exercise their patience.?(5.) Their growing fruitfulness: their last works were better than the first. This is an excellent character; when others had left their first love, and lost their first zeal, these were growing wiser and better. It should be the ambition and earnest desire of all Christians that their last works may be their best works, that they may be better and better every day, and best at last.

2. A faithful reproof for what was amiss. This is not so directly charged upon the church itself as upon some wicked seducers who were among them; the church's fault was that she connived too much at them.

(1.) These wicked seducers were compared to Jezebel, and called by her name. Jezebel was a persecutor of the prophets of the Lord, and a great patroness of idolaters and false prophets. The sin of these seducers was that they attempted to draw the servants of God into fornication, and to offer sacrifices to idols; they called themselves prophets, and so would claim a superior authority and regard to the ministers of the church. Two things aggravated the sin of these seducers, who, being one in their spirit and design, are spoken of as one person:—

[1.] They made use of the name of God to oppose the truth of his doctrine and worship; this very much aggravated their sin.?[2.] They abused the patience of God to harden themselves in their wickedness. God gave them space for repentance, but they repented not. Observe, First, Repentance is necessary to prevent a sinner's ruin. Secondly, Repentance requires time, a course of time, and time convenient; it is a great work, and a work of time. Thirdly, Where God gives space for repentance, he expects fruits meet for repentance. Fourthly, Where the space for repentance is lost, the sinner perishes with a double destruction.

(2.) Now why should the wickedness of this Jezebel be charged upon the church of Thyatira? Because that church suffered her to seduce the people of that city. But how could the church help it? They had not, as a church, civil power to banish or imprison her; but they had ministerial power to censure and to excommunicate her: and it is probable that neglecting to use the power they had made them sharers in her sin.

3. The punishment of this seducer, this Jezebel, v. 22, 23, in which is couched a prediction of the fall of Babylon.

(1.) I will cast her into a bed, into a bed of pain, not of pleasure, into a bed of flames; and those who have sinned with her shall suffer with her; but this may yet be prevented by their repentance.?(2.) I will kill her children with death; that is, the second death, which does the work effectually, and leaves no hope of future life, no resurrection for those that are killed by the second death, but only to shame and everlasting contempt.

4. The design of Christ in the destruction of these wicked seducers, and this was the instruction of others, especially of his churches: All the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and the hearts; and I will give to every one of you according to your works. God is known by the judgments that he executes; and, by this revenge taken upon seducers, he would make known,

(1.) His infallible knowledge of the hearts of men, of their principles, designs, frame, and temper, their formality, their indifference, their secret inclinations to symbolize with idolaters.?(2.) His impartial justice, in giving every one according to his work, that the name of Christians should be no protection, their churches should be no sanctuaries for sin and sinners.

5. The encouragement given to those who keep themselves pure and undefiled: But to you I say, and unto the rest, etc., v. 24. Observe,

(1.) What these seducers called their doctrines— depths, profound mysteries, amusing the people, and endeavouring to persuade them that they had a deeper insight into religion than their own ministers had attained to.?(2.) What Christ called them— depths of Satan, Satanical delusions and devices, diabolical mysteries; for there is a mystery of iniquity, as well and the great mystery of godliness. It is a dangerous thing to despise the mystery of God, and it is as dangerous to receive the mysteries of Satan.?(3.) How tender Christ is of his faithful servants: “I will lay upon you no other burden; but that which you have already hold fast till I come, v. 24, 25. I will not overburden your faith with any new mysteries, nor your consciences with any new laws. I only require your attention to what you have received. Hold that fast till I come, and I desire no more.” Christ is coming to put an end to all the temptations of his people; and, if they hold fast faith and a good conscience till he come, all the difficulty and danger will be over.

III. We now come to the conclusion of this message, v. 26,29. Here we have,

1. The promise of an ample reward to the persevering victorious believer, in two parts:—

(1.) Very great power and dominion over the rest of the world: Power over the nations, which may refer either to the time when the empire should turn Christian, and the world be under the government of the Christian emperor, as in Constantine’s time; or to the other world, when believers shall sit down with Christ on his throne of judgment, and join with him in trying, and condemning, and consigning over to punishment the enemies of Christ and the church. The upright shall have dominion in the morning.?(2.) Knowledge and wisdom, suitable to such power and dominion: I will give him the morning-star. Christ is the morning-star. He brings day with him into the soul, the light of grace and of glory; and he will give his people that perfection of light and wisdom which is requisite to the state of dignity and dominion that they shall have in the morning of the resurrection.

2. This epistle ends with the usual demand of attention: He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. In the foregoing epistles, this demand of attention comes before the concluding promise; but in this, and all that follow, it comes after, and tells us that we should all attend to the promises as well as to the precepts that Christ delivers to the churches.

### Chapter 3

Here we have three more of the epistles of Christ to the churches:

I. To Sardis (v. 1-6).

To Philadelphia (v. 7?13).

To Laodicea (v. 14 to the end).

Verses 1-6 Here is,

I. The preface, showing,

1. To whom this letter is directed: To the angel of the church of Sardis, an ancient city of Lydia, on the banks of the mountain Tmolus, said to have been the chief city of Asia the Less, and the first city in that part of the world that was converted by the preaching of John; and, some say, the first that revolted from Christianity, and one of the first that was laid in its ruins, in which it still lies, without any church or ministry.?(2. By whom this message was sent—the Lord Jesus, who here assumes the character of him that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars, taken out of ch. 1:4, where the seven spirits are said to be before the throne.?(1.) He hath the seven spirits, that is, the Holy Spirit with his various powers, graces, and operations; for he is personally one, though efficaciously various, and may be said here to be seven, which is the number of the churches, and of the angels of the churches, to show that to every minister, and to every church, there is a dispensation and measure of the Spirit given for them to profit withal—a stock of spiritual influence for that minister and church to improve, both for enlargement and continuance, which measure of the Spirit is not ordinarily withdrawn from them, till they forfeit it by misimprovement. Churches have their spiritual stock and fund, as well as particular believers; and, this epistle being sent to a languishing ministry and church, they are very fitly put in mind that Christ has the seven spirits, the Spirit without measure and in perfection, to whom they may apply themselves for the reviving of his work among them.?(2.) He hath the seven stars, the angels of the churches; they are disposed of by him, and accountable to him, which should make them faithful and zealous. He has ministers to employ, and spiritual influences to communicate to his ministers for the good of his church. The Holy Spirit usually works by the ministry, and the ministry will be of no efficacy without the Spirit; the same divine hand holds them both.

II. The body of this epistle. There is this observable in it, that whereas in the other epistles Christ begins with commending what is good in the churches, and then proceeds to tell them what is amiss, in this (and in the epistle to Laodicea) he begins,

1. With a reproof, and a very severe one: I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Hypocrisy, and a lamentable decay in religion, are the sins charged upon this church, by one who knew her well, and all her works.

(1.) This church had gained a great reputation; it had a name, and a very honourable one, for a flourishing church, a name for vital lively religion, for purity of doctrine, unity among themselves, uniformity in worship, decency, and order. We read not of any unhappy divisions among themselves. Every thing appeared well, as to what falls under the observation of men.?(2.) This church was not really what it was reputed to be. They had a name to live, but they were dead; there was a form of godliness, but not the power, a name to live, but not a principle of life. If there was not a total privation of life, yet there was a great deadness in their souls and in their services, a great deadness in the spirits of their ministers, and a great deadness in their ministrations, in their praying, in their preaching, in their converse, and a great deadness in the people in hearing, in prayer, and in conversation; what little life was yet left among them was, in a manner, expiring, ready to die.

2. Our Lord proceeds to give this degenerate church the best advice: Be watchful, and strengthen the things, etc., v. 2.

(1.) He advises them to be upon their watch. The cause of their sinful deadness and declension was that they had let down their watch. Whenever we are off our watch, we lose ground, and therefore must return to our watchfulness against sin, and Satan, and whatever is destructive to the life and power of godliness.?(2.) To strengthen the things that remain, and that are ready to die. Some understand this of persons; there were some few who had retained their integrity, but they were in danger of declining with the rest. It is a difficult thing to keep up to the life and power of godliness ourselves, when we see a universal deadness and declension prevailing round about us. Or it may be understood of practices, as it follows: I have not found thy works perfect before God, not filled up; there is something wanting in them; there is the shell, but not the kernel; there is the carcase, but not the soul—the shadow, but not the substance. The inward thing is wanting, thy works are hollow and empty; prayers are not filled up with holy desires, alms-deeds not filled up with true charity, sabbaths not filled up with suitable devotion of soul to God; there are not inward affections suitable to outward acts and expressions. Now when the spirit is wanting the form cannot long subsist.?(3.) To recollect themselves, and remember how they have received and heard (v. 3); not only to remember what they had received and heard, what messages they had received from God, what tokens of his mercy and favour towards them, what sermons they had heard, but how they had received and heard, what impressions the mercies of God had made upon their souls at first, what affections they felt working under their word and ordinances, the love of their espousals, the kindness of their youth, how welcome the gospel and the grace of God were to them when they first received them. Where is the blessedness they then spoke of??(4.) To hold fast what they had received, that they might not lose all, and repent sincerely that they had lost so much of the life of religion, and had run the risk of losing all.

3. Christ enforces his counsel with a dreadful threatening in case it should be despised: I will come unto thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know the hour, v. 3. Observe,

(1.) When Christ leaves a people as to his gracious presence, he comes to them in judgment; and his judicial presence will be very dreadful to those who have sinned away his gracious presence.?(2.) His judicial approach to a dead declining people will be surprising; their deadness will keep them in security, and, as it procures an angry visit from Christ to them, it will prevent their discerning it and preparing for it.?(3.) Such a visit from Christ will be to their loss; he will come as a thief, to strip them of their remaining enjoyments and mercies, not by fraud, but in justice and righteousness, taking the forfeiture they have made of all to him.

4. Our blessed Lord does not leave this sinful people without some comfort and encouragement: In the midst of judgment he remembers mercy (v. 4), and here

(1.) He makes honourable mention of the faithful remnant in Sardis, though but small: Thou hast a few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; they had not given into the prevailing corruptions and pollution of

the day and place in which they lived. God takes notice of the smallest number of those who abide with him; and the fewer they are the more precious in his sight.?(2.) He makes a very gracious promise to them: They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy—in the stola, the white robes of justification, and adoption, and comfort, or in the white robes of honour and glory in the other world. They shall walk with Christ in the pleasant walks of the heavenly paradise; and what delightful converse will there be between Christ and them when they thus walk together! This is an honour proper and suitable to their integrity, which their fidelity has prepared them for, and which it is no way unbecoming Christ to confer upon them, though it is not a legal but a gospel worthiness that is ascribed to them, not merit but meetness. Those who walk with Christ in the clean garments of real practical holiness here, and keep themselves unspotted from the world, shall walk with Christ in the white robes of honour and glory in the other world: this is a suitable reward.

III. We now come to the conclusion of this epistle, in which, as before, we have,

1. A great reward promised to the conquering Christian (v. 5), and it is very much the same with what has been already mentioned: He that overcometh shall be clothed in white raiment. The purity of grace shall be rewarded with the perfect purity of glory. Holiness, when perfected, shall be its own reward; glory is the perfection of grace, differing not in kind, but in degree. Now to this is added another promise very suitable to the case: I will not blot his name out of the book of life, but will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Observe,

(1.) Christ has his book of life, a register and roll of all who shall inherit eternal life.

[1.] The book of eternal election.?[2.] The book of remembrance of all those who have lived to God, and have kept up the life and power of godliness in evil times.

(2.) Christ will not blot the names of his chosen and faithful ones out of this book of life; men may be enrolled in the registers of the church, as baptized, as making a profession, as having a name to live, and that name may come to be blotted out of the roll, when it appears that it was but a name, a name to live, without spiritual life; such often lose the very name before they die, they are left of God to blot out their own names by their gross and open wickedness. But the names of those that overcome shall never be blotted out.?(3.) Christ will produce this book of life, and confess the names of the faithful who stand there, before God, and all the angels; he will do this as their Judge, when the books shall be opened; he will do this as their captain and head, leading them with him triumphantly to heaven, presenting them to the Father: Behold me, and the children that thou hast given me. How great will this honour and reward be!

2. The demand of universal attention finishes the message. Every word from God deserves attention from men; that which may seem more particularly directed to one body of men has something in it instructive to all.

Verses 7-13 We have now come to the sixth letter, sent to one of the Asian churches, where observe,

I. The inscription, showing,

1. For whom it was more immediately designed: The angel of the church of Philadelphia; this also was a city in Asia Minor, seated upon the borders of Mysia and Lydia, and had its name from that brotherly love for which it was eminent. We can hardly suppose that this name was given to it after it received the Christian religion, and that it was so called from that Christian affection that all believers have, and should have, one for another, as the children of one Father and the brethren of Christ; but rather that it was its ancient name, on account of the love and kindness which the citizens had and showed to each other as a civil fraternity. This was an excellent spirit, and, when sanctified by the grace of the gospel, would render them an excellent church, as indeed they were, for here is no one fault found with this church, and yet, doubtless, there were faults in it of common infirmity; but love covers such faults.?[2. By whom this letter was signed; even by the same Jesus who is alone the universal head of all the churches; and here observe by what title he chooses to represent himself to this church: He that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, etc. You have his personal character: He that is holy and he that is true, holy in his nature, and therefore he cannot but be true to his word, for he hath spoken in his holiness; and you have also his political character: He hath the key of David, he openeth, and no man shutteth; he hath the key of the house of David, the key of government and authority in and over the church. Observe,

(1.) The acts of his government.

[1.] He opens. He opens a door of opportunity to his churches; he opens a door of utterance to his ministers; he

opens a door of entrance, opens the heart; he opens a door of admission into the visible church, laying down the terms of communion; and he opens the door of admission into the church triumphant, according to the terms of salvation fixed by him.?[2.] He shuts the door. When he pleases, he shuts the door of opportunity and the door of utterance, and leaves obstinate sinners shut up in the hardness of their hearts; he shuts the door of church-fellowship against unbelievers and profane persons; and he shuts the door of heaven against the foolish virgins who have slept away their day of grace, and against the workers of iniquity, how vain and confident soever they may be.

(2.) The way and manner in which he performs these acts, and that is absolute sovereignty, independent upon the will of men, and irresistible by the power of men: He openeth, and no man shutteth; he shutteth, and no man openeth; he works to will and to do, and, when he works, none can hinder. These were proper characters for him, when speaking to a church that had endeavoured to be conformed to Christ in holiness and truth, and that had enjoyed a wide door of liberty and opportunity under his care and government.

II. The subject-matter of this epistle, where,

1. Christ puts them in mind of what he had done for them: I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it, v. 8. I have set it open, and kept it open, though there be many adversaries. Learn here,

(1.) Christ is to be acknowledged as the author of all the liberty and opportunity his churches enjoy.?(2.) He takes notice and keeps account, how long he has preserved their spiritual liberties and privileges for them.?(3.) Wicked men envy the people of God their door of liberty, and would be glad to shut it against them.?(4.) If we do not provoke Christ to shut this door against us, men cannot do it.

2. This church is commended: Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name, v. 8. In this there seems to be couched a gentle reproof: "Thou hast a little strength, a little grace, which, though it be not proportionate to the wide door of opportunity which I have opened to thee, yet is true grace, and has kept thee faithful." True grace, though weak, has the divine approbation; but, though Christ accepts a little strength, yet believers should not rest satisfied in a little, but should strive to grow in grace, to be strong in faith, giving glory to God. True grace, though weak, will do more than the greatest gifts or highest degrees of common grace, for it will enable the Christian to keep the word of Christ, and not to deny his name. Obedience, fidelity, and a free confession of the name of Christ, are the fruits of true grace, and are pleasing to Christ as such.?[3.] Here is a promise of the great favour God would bestow on this church, v. 9, 10. This favour consists in two things:—

(1.) Christ would make this church's enemies subject to her.

[1.] Those enemies are described to be such as said they were Jews, but lied in saying so—pretended to be the only and peculiar people of God, but were really the synagogue of Satan. Assemblies that worship God in spirit and in truth are the Israel of God; assemblies that either worship false gods, or the true God in a false manner, are the synagogues of Satan: though they may profess to be the only people of God, their profession is a lie.?[2.] Their subjection to the church is described: They shall worship at thy feet; not pay a religious and divine honour to the church itself, nor to the ministry of it, but shall be convinced that they have been in the wrong, that this church is in the right and is beloved of Christ, and they shall desire to be taken into communion with her and that they may worship the same God after the same manner. How shall this great change be wrought? By the power of God upon the hearts of his enemies, and by signal discoveries of his peculiar favour to his church: They shall know that I have loved thee. Observe, First, The greatest honour and happiness any church can enjoy consist in the peculiar love and favour of Christ. Secondly, Christ can discover this his favour to his people in such a manner that their very enemies shall see it, and be forced to acknowledge it. Thirdly, This will, by the grace of Christ, soften the hearts of their enemies, and make them desirous to be admitted into communion with them.

(2.) Another instance of favour that Christ promises to this church is persevering grace in the most trying times (v. 10), and this as the reward of their past fidelity. To him that hath shall be given. Here observe,

[1.] The gospel of Christ is the word of his patience. It is the fruit of the patience of God to a sinful world; it sets before men the exemplary patience of Christ in all his sufferings for men; it calls those that receive it to the exercise of patience in conformity to Christ.?[2.] This gospel should be carefully kept by all that enjoy it; they must keep up to the faith, and practice, and worship prescribed in the gospel.?[3.] After a day of patience we must expect an hour of temptation; a day of gospel peace and liberty is a day of God's patience, and it is seldom so well improved as it should be and therefore it is often followed by an hour of trial and temptation.?[4.]



Sometimes the trial is more general and universal; it comes upon all the world, and, when it is so general, it is usually the shorter. [5.] Those who keep the gospel in a time of peace shall be kept by Christ in an hour of temptation. By keeping the gospel they are prepared for the trial; and the same divine grace that has made them fruitful in times of peace will make them faithful in times of persecution.

4. Christ calls the church to that duty which he before promised he would enable her to do, and that is, to persevere, to hold fast that which she had.

(1.) The duty itself: "Hold fast that which thou hast, that faith, that truth, that strength of grace, that zeal, that love to the brethren; thou hast been possessed of this excellent treasure, hold it fast." (2.) The motives, taken from the speedy appearance of Christ: "Behold, I come quickly. See, I am just a coming to relieve them under the trial, to reward their fidelity, and to punish those who fall away; they shall lose that crown which they once seemed to have a right to, which they hoped for, and pleased themselves with the thoughts of. The persevering Christian shall win the prize from backsliding professors, who once stood fair for it."

III. The conclusion of this epistle, v. 12, 13. Here,

1. After his usual manner, our Saviour promises a glorious reward to the victorious believer, in two things:—

(1.) He shall be a monumental pillar in the temple of God; not a pillar to support the temple (heaven needs no such props), but a monument of the free and powerful grace of God, a monument that shall never be defaced nor removed, as many stately pillars erected in honour to the Roman emperors and generals have been. (2.) On this monumental pillar there shall be an honourable inscription, as in those cases is usual.

[1.] The name of God, in whose cause he engaged, whom he served, and for whom he suffered in this warfare; and the name of the city of God, the church of God, the new Jerusalem, which came down from heaven. On this pillar shall be recorded all the services the believer did to the church of God, how he asserted her rights, enlarged her borders, maintained her purity and honour; this will be a greater name than Asiaticus, or Africanus; a soldier under God in the wars of the church. And then another part of the inscription is, [2.] The new name of Christ, the Mediator, the Redeemer, the captain of our salvation; by this it will appear under whose banner this conquering believer had enlisted, under whose conduct he acted, by whose example he was encouraged, and under whose influence he fought the good fight, and came off victorious.

2. The epistle is closed up with the demand of attention: He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches, how Christ loves and values his faithful people, how he commends, and how he will crown their fidelity.

Verses 14-22 We now come to the last and worst of all the seven Asian churches, the reverse of the church of Philadelphia; for, as there was nothing reprov'd in that, here is nothing commended in this, and yet this was one of the seven golden candlesticks, for a corrupt church may still be a church. Here we have, as before,

I. The inscription, to whom, and from whom.

1. To whom: To the angel of the church of Laodicea. This was a once famous city near the river Lycus, had a wall of vast compass, and three marble theatres, and, like Rome, was built on seven hills. It seems, the apostle Paul was very instrumental in planting the gospel in this city, from which he wrote a letter, as he mentions in the epistle to the Colossians, the last chapter, in which he sends salutations to them, Laodicea not being above twenty miles distant from Colosse. In this city was held a council in the fourth century, but it has been long since demolished, and lies in its ruins to this day, an awful monument of the wrath of the Lamb. 2. From whom this message was sent. Here our Lord Jesus styles himself the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.

(1.) The Amen, one that is steady and unchangeable in all his purposes and promises, which are all yea, and all amen. (2.) The faithful and true witness, whose testimony of God to men ought to be received and fully believed, and whose testimony of men to God will be fully believed and regarded, and will be a swift but true witness against all indifferent lukewarm professors. (3.) The beginning of the creation of God, either of the first creation, and so he is the beginning, that is, the first cause, the Creator, and the Governor of it; or of the second creation, the church; and so he is the head of that body, the first-born from the dead, as it is in ch. 1:5, whence these titles are taken. Christ, having raised up himself by his own divine power, as the head of a new world, raises up dead souls to be a living temple and church to himself.

II. The subject-matter, in which observe,

1. The heavy charge drawn up against this church, ministers and people, by one who knew them better than they knew themselves: Thou art neither cold nor hot, but worse than either; I would thou wert cold or hot, v. 15. Lukewarmness or indifference in religion is the worst temper in the world. If religion is a real thing, it is the most excellent thing, and therefore we should be in good earnest in it; if it is not a real thing, it is the vilest imposture, and we should be earnest against it. If religion is worth any thing, it is worth every thing; an indifference here is inexcusable: Why halt you between two opinions? If God be God, follow him; if Baal (be God), follow him. Here is no room for neutrality. An open enemy shall have a fairer quarter than a perfidious neuter; and there is more hope of a heathen than of such. Christ expects that men should declare themselves in earnest either for him or against him.?<sup>2</sup> A severe punishment threatened: I will spue thee out of my mouth. As lukewarm water turns the stomach, and provokes to a vomit, lukewarm professors turn the heart of Christ against them. He is sick of them, and cannot long bear them. They may call their lukewarmness charity, meekness, moderation, and a largeness of soul; it is nauseous to Christ, and makes those so that allow themselves in it. They shall be rejected, and finally rejected; for far be it from the holy Jesus to return to that which has been thus rejected.?<sup>3</sup> We have one cause of this indifference and inconsistency in religion assigned, and that is self-conceitdness or self-delusion. They thought they were very well already, and therefore they were very indifferent whether they grew better or no: Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, etc., v. 17. Here observe, What a difference there was between the thoughts they had of themselves and the thoughts that Christ had of them. (1.) The high thoughts they had of themselves: Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, rich, and growing richer, and increased to such a degree as to be above all want or possibility of wanting. Perhaps they were well provided for as to their bodies, and this made them overlook the necessities of their souls. Or they thought themselves well furnished in their souls: they had learning, and they took it for religion; they had gifts, and they took them for grace; they had wit, and they took it for true wisdom; they had ordinances, and they took up with them instead of the God of ordinances. How careful should we be not to put the cheat upon our own souls! Doubtless there are many in hell that once thought themselves to be in the way to heaven. Let us daily beg of God that we may not be left to flatter and deceive ourselves in the concerns of our souls.?(2.) The mean thoughts that Christ had of them; and he was not mistaken. He knew, though they knew not, that they were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Their state was wretched in itself, and such as called for pity and compassion from others: though they were proud of themselves, they were pitied by all who knew their case. For,

[1.] They were poor, really poor, when they said and thought they were rich; they had no provision for their souls to live upon; their souls were starving in the midst of their abundance; they were vastly in debt to the justice of God, and had nothing to pay off the least part of the debt.?[2.] They were blind; they could not see their state, nor their way, nor their danger; they could not see into themselves; they could not look before them; they were blind, and yet they thought they saw; the very light that was in them was darkness, and then how great must that darkness be! They could not see Christ, though evidently set forth, and crucified, before their eyes. They could not see God by faith, though always present in them. They could not see death, though it was just before them. They could not look into eternity, though they stood upon the very brink of it continually.?[3.] They were naked, without clothing and without house and harbour for their souls. They were without clothing, had neither the garment of justification nor that of sanctification. Their nakedness both of guilt and pollution had no covering. They lay always exposed to sin and shame. Their righteousnesses were but filthy rags; they were rags, and would not cover them, filthy rags, and would defile them. And they were naked, without house or harbour, for they were without God, and he has been the dwelling-place of his people in all ages; in him alone the soul of man can find rest, and safety, and all suitable accommodations. The riches of the body will not enrich the soul; the sight of the body will not enlighten the soul; the most convenient house for the body will not afford rest nor safety to the soul. The soul is a different thing from the body, and must have accommodation suitable to its nature, or else in the midst of bodily prosperity it will be wretched and miserable.

4. We have good counsel given by Christ to this sinful people, and that is that they drop their vain and false opinion they had of themselves, and endeavour to be that really which they would seem to be: I counsel thee to buy of me, etc., v. 18. Observe,

(1.) Our Lord Jesus Christ continues to give good counsel to those who have cast his counsels behind their backs.?(2.) The condition of sinners is never desperate, while they enjoy the gracious calls and counsels of

Christ.?(3.) Our blessed Lord, the counsellor, always gives the best advice, and that which is most suitable to the sinner's case; as here,

[1.] These people were poor; Christ counsels them to buy of him gold tried in the fire, that they might be rich. He lets them know where they might have true riches and how they might have them. First, Where they might have them—from himself; he sends them not to the streams of Pactolus, nor to the mines of Potosi, but invites them to himself, the pearl of price. Secondly, And how must they have this true gold from him? They must buy it. This seems to be unsaying all again. How can those that are poor buy gold? Just as they may buy of Christ wine and milk, that is, without money and without price, Isa. 55:1. Something indeed must be parted with, but it is nothing of a valuable consideration, it is only to make room for receiving true riches. "Part with sin and self-sufficiency, and come to Christ with a sense of your poverty and emptiness, that you may be filled with his hidden treasure."?[2.] These people were naked; Christ tells them where they might have clothing, and such as would cover the shame of their nakedness. This they must receive from Christ; and they must only put off their filthy rags that they might put on the white raiment which he had purchased and provided for them—his own imputed righteousness for justification and the garments of holiness and sanctification.?[3.] They were blind; and he counsels them to buy of him eye-salve, that they might see, to give up their own wisdom and reason, which are but blindness in the things of God, and resign themselves to his word and Spirit, and their eyes shall be opened to see their way and their end, their duty and their true interest; a new and glorious scene would then open itself to their souls; a new world furnished with the most beautiful and excellent objects, and this light would be marvellous to those who were but just now delivered from the powers of darkness. This is the wise and good counsel Christ gives to careless souls; and, if they follow it, he will judge himself bound in honour to make it effectual.

5. Here is added great and gracious encouragement to this sinful people to take the admonition and advice well that Christ had given them, v. 19, 20. He tells them,

(1.) It was given them in true and tender affection: "Whom I love, I rebuke and chasten. You may think I have given you hard words and severe reproofs; it is all out of love to your souls. I would not have thus openly rebuked and corrected your sinful lukewarmness and vain confidence, if I had not been a lover of your souls; had I hated you, I would have let you alone, to go on in sin till it had been your ruin." Sinners ought to take the rebukes of God's word and rod as tokens of his good-will to their souls, and should accordingly repent in good earnest, and turn to him that smites them; better are the frowns and wounds of a friend than the flattering smiles of an enemy.?(2.) If they would comply with his admonitions, he was ready to make them good to their souls: Behold, I stand at the door and knock, etc., v. 20. Here observe,

[1.] Christ is graciously pleased by his word and Spirit to come to the door of the heart of sinners; he draws near to them in a way of mercy, ready to make them a kind visit.?[2.] He finds this door shut against him; the heart of man is by nature shut up against Christ by ignorance, unbelief, sinful prejudices.?[3.] When he finds the heart shut, he does not immediately withdraw, but he waits to be gracious, even till his head be filled with the dew.?[4.] He uses all proper means to awaken sinners, and to cause them to open to him: he calls by his word, he knocks by the impulses of his Spirit upon their conscience.?[5.] Those who open to him shall enjoy his presence, to their great comfort and advantage. He will sup with them; he will accept of what is good in them; he will eat his pleasant fruit; and he will bring the best part of the entertainment with him. If what he finds would make but a poor feast, what he brings will make up the deficiency: he will give fresh supplies of graces and comforts, and thereby stir up fresh actings of faith, and love, and delight; and in all this Christ and his repenting people will enjoy pleasant communion with each other. Alas! what do careless obstinate sinners lose by refusing to open the door of the heart to Christ!

III. We now come to the conclusion of this epistle; and here we have as before,

1. The promise made to the overcoming believer. It is here implied,

(1.) That though this church seemed to be wholly overrun and overcome with lukewarmness and self-confidence, yet it was possible that by the reproofs and counsels of Christ they might be inspired with fresh zeal and vigour, and might come off conquerors in their spiritual warfare.?(2.) That, if they did so, all former faults should be forgiven, and they should have a great reward. And what is that reward? They shall sit down with me on my throne, as I also overcame, and have sat down with my Father on his throne, v. 21. Here it is intimated,

[1.] That Christ himself had met with his temptations and conflicts.?[2.] That he overcame them all, and was more than a conqueror.?[3.] That, as the reward of his conflict and victory, he has sat down with God the Father on his throne, possessed of that glory which he had with the Father from eternity, but which he was pleased very much to conceal on earth, leaving it as it were in the hands of the Father, as a pledge that he would fulfil the work of a Saviour before he reassumed that manifestative glory; and, having done so, then *pignus reposcere*—he demands the pledge, to appear in his divine glory equal to the Father.?[4.] That those who are conformed to Christ in his trials and victories shall be conformed to him in his glory; they shall sit down with him on his throne, on his throne of judgment at the end of the world, on his throne of glory to all eternity, shining in his beams by virtue of their union with him and relation to him, as the mystical body of which he is the head.

2. All is closed up with the general demand of attention (v. 22), putting all to whom these epistles shall come in mind that what is contained in them is not of private interpretation, not intended for the instruction, reproof, and correction of those particular churches only, but of all the churches of Christ in all ages and parts of the world: and as there will be a resemblance in all succeeding churches to these, both in their graces and sins, so they may expect that God will deal with them as he dealt with these, which are patterns to all ages what faithful, and fruitful churches may expect to receive from God, and what those who are unfaithful may expect to suffer from his hand; yea, that God's dealings with his churches may afford useful instruction to the rest of the world, to put them upon considering, If judgment begin at the house of God, what shall the end of those be that do not obey the gospel of Christ? 1 Pt. 4:17. Thus end the messages of Christ to the Asian churches, the epistolary part of this book. We now come to the prophetical part.