

Heavenly Light – A Concise Overview of the Book of Revelation



One of the frequent visitors of this website shared with me a chapter of a book entitled "*The Revolutionary Movement: A Diagnosis of World Disorders*" by John Findlater and published by Lutheran Library.org. It gives insights into the book of Revelation I never heard before. Yes, you can call it another interpretation but so are all the other commentaries I have read about the book of Revelation. This one, however, is based on Historicism and is undoubtedly more accurate than interpretations based on Futurism. I think we will fully understand the Book of Revelation only after chapter 22 has come to pass and we are together with our Lord Jesus in His Kingdom.

Heavenly Light

THE REMARK OF A FRIEND that, liking greatly to converse with Christians who often read the Book of the Revelation, he yet tried to give as wide a berth as possible to any who claimed to be able to expound it, was not so paradoxical as might at first sight appear. For in that Book, as in the realm of Nature around us, there are elements of two vastly different kinds, some perfectly intelligible to every reasonable being, others whose constitution and meaning are wrapped up in the deepest mystery. We speak of those earthly things as the plain facts and the mysteries of life. But in the things of the Book of the Revelation there is a third class also, belonging in part to each of those two categories though it cannot fairly be said to lie between them. It is composed of the mysteries whose unfolding is the main purpose of the Book – the mysteries it does in fact reveal to every sincere Christian believer. This third class is made up of the facts of faith.

If then in closing these articles we can link up some of the facts of faith as they appear in the Book of the Revelation with some of the plain facts of life, our brief study may be to our great advantage.

The divisions of the Book into chapters and verses is comparatively modern, made for convenience' sake. It does not belong to the original. Yet in it these divisions seem to correspond wonderfully well with its subject matter.

Its habitual readers must have noticed there are broader divisions also. At the beginning there are three chapters which constitute the prologue of the

Book. And the three chapters at the end form its epilogue. The former deals with things existing at the time the Apostle John wrote the Book. The latter relates events to take place subsequent to the coming again of Christ with power and great glory. The intervening sixteen chapters contain a prophetic survey of the course of the Christian Church between those two termini.

Attentive readers of the Book can scarcely have failed to observe that these sixteen chapters are themselves divided up, at the end of the eleventh, into two fairly equal portions. For in the eleventh chapter, as again in the nineteenth, the future coming of our Lord to take possession of the kingdoms of this world is expressly foretold. If then we now assume hypothetically this division of this the main part of the Book, it is to be observed that, whereas in the first half (chaps. 4 to 11) we read of the opening of the seven seals and under the seventh seal the sounding of the seven trumpets, in the second half (Chaps. 12 to 19) we hear seven mighty angels uttering their great voices and under the seventh great voice the pouring out of the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth, which in the expending complement the fury of the Divine vengeance on disobedient and evil men.

A close comparison of the two halves with one another will leave little or no doubt that, from different angles, they give two views of the same subject. But the full force and meaning of this can be felt only when each pair of symbols – a seal and a great voice; a trumpet and a bowl – is set side by side. It will then be seen that every pair relates to one and the selfsame subject, usually presenting two different chronological parts, and in one case two antithetical parts. Let them be briefly stated here: –

The First Seal—Rev. 6¹⁻².
Christ rides forth on a white horse, conquering and to conquer.

Second Seal—Rev. 6³⁻⁴.
Judgment being executed, by War, on the wicked of the earth.

Third Seal—Rev. 6⁵⁻⁶.
Privation to the wicked, protection to the good.

Fourth Seal—Rev. 6⁷⁻⁸.
Fearful afflictions fall on the wicked within the Church.

Fifth Seal—Rev. 6⁹⁻¹¹.
The souls of those slain for the Word of God appear praying under the altar.

The First Voice—Rev. 14²⁻⁵.
The hundred and forty-four thousand follow Christ, arrayed in white.

Second Voice—Rev. 14⁶⁻⁸.
Judgment being executed on the wicked Babylonians.

Third Voice—Rev. 14⁹⁻¹².
Torment for the Babylonians, comfort and blessing to God's people.

Fourth Voice—Rev. 14¹³.
Rest and blessedness made to abound to faithful followers of Christ.

Fifth Voice—Rev. 14¹⁴⁻¹⁶.
The harvest of the earth reaped—a great ingathering of God's folk at the mowing-down time.

Sixth Seal—Rev. 6¹²⁻¹⁷.
One of the Great Days of God's
wrath begins on earth.

Here an interlude (Chap. VII.),
in which the faithful servants of
God are sealed in the forehead.

Seventh Seal—Rev. 8¹⁻⁶.
The seven angels with the seven
trumpets sent forth to sound.

The First Trumpet—Rev. 8⁷.
Plagues sent "upon the earth".

Second Trumpet—Rev. 8⁸⁻⁹.
Plagues sent "into the sea".

Third Trumpet—Rev. 8¹⁰⁻¹¹.
Plagues fall "on the rivers and
fountains of water".

Fourth Trumpet—Rev. 8¹²⁻¹³.
Sun, moon, and stars smitten.

Fifth Trumpet—Rev. 9¹⁻¹².
Apollyon, fallen from heaven,
establishes his throne on earth.

Sixth Trumpet—Rev. 9¹³⁻²¹.
Loosing the Powers surround-
ing "the great river Euphrates."

Interlude here (Rev. 10¹⁻¹¹),
containing loud warning of
grand crisis to ensue immedi-
ately.

Seventh Trumpet—Rev. 11¹⁵⁻¹⁹.
The kingdoms of this world
become the kingdom of our
Lord.

Sixth Voice—Rev. 14¹⁷⁻²⁰.
The winepress of the great
wrath of God is trodden on the
earth.

Here an interlude (Chap. XV.),
in which God's faithful witnesses
appear in a most joyful triumph.

Seventh Voice—Rev. 16¹.
The seven angels with the seven
bowls commanded to go and
pour out their bowls.

The First Bowl—Rev. 16².
Poured out "upon the earth".

Second Bowl—Rev. 16³.
Poured out "upon the sea".

Third Bowl—Rev. 16⁴⁻⁷.
Poured out "upon the rivers and
fountains of water".

Fourth Bowl—Rev. 16⁸⁻⁹.
Poured out "upon the sun".

Fifth Bowl—Rev. 16¹⁰⁻¹¹.
Poured out "upon the throne
of the beast".

Sixth Bowl—Rev. 16¹²⁻¹⁴.
Poured out "upon the great
river Euphrates".

Interlude here (Rev. 16¹⁵⁻¹⁶),
in which the midnight cry goes
forth.
BEHOLD THE BRIDEGROOM.

Seventh Bowl—Rev. 16¹⁷⁻²¹.
Consummation of all things
announced by the Proclamation
"IT IS DONE".

Such is the skeleton framework of the building whose plans are given in the main portion of the Book of the Revelation. It is but a skeleton, consisting of two rows of pillars, one on what may fitly be called the eastern side of the building and the other on its western. Or it might be termed a twofold sketch of the Church of Christ, from two quite different points of view outlining the things which would befall it from the end of the first century till the still future return of our Lord. The first portrait presents the Church as being primarily Israelite in character, and only secondarily Gentile. The innumerable multitude of Gentile martyrs follow, both in the divine order of precedence and in point of time, the hundred and forty-four thousand of the twelve tribes of Israel. But in the New Testament is not this the view of the Church uniformly presented, as consisting of a Hebrew nucleus with a Gentile body surrounding that nucleus? A close study of the Apostolic Writings cannot fail to create what further study will but help to deepen — an impression that this is the truly divine order of the Church's constitution. The seals and trumpets appear to foretell the lot of the Church so constituted up to the time when Christ will come again to take possession of the kingdom.

In Chapters 12 to 19 we see the Church from a very different point of view. The narrative opens with the birth of the man child. As to the meaning of that Bishop Newton has noted a most significant fact, perhaps decisive even. The Emperor Constantine was converted to Christianity in 313 A.D., just 280 years from the time when the Church received the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Now, "as the time of gestation from the conception to the birth of a child is known to be 40 weeks or 280 days", says Bishop Newton, "so, according to the prophetic reckoning of a day for a year, from the first rise of our Saviour's kingdom in 33 A.D. to the year 313 was exactly 280 years. If this is the true interpretation of Rev. 12., it suggests several things – that the Emperor Constantine, in his capacity of protector of the Christians, was Heaven-sent; that his term in that office was but short; that his successors in office adopted a different policy – Chapter 13. tells of the rising of the first beast from "out of the sea", followed by the rising of the second beast, also called "the false prophet", from "out of the earth", indicating that the early promise of Constantine's time had been nipped in the bud; that under his successors the nominal church became officially perverted, while the real Church was driven out "into the wilderness"; and that the view of the official church given in this second half of the prophecies concerning it shows how it sank to the status of one of the kingdoms of this world.

To put those two views of the Church side by side again – we have the history of its eastern face presented in Chapters 4 to 11, showing the vicissitudes through which it must pass in its original and diviner character; and in Chapters 12 to 19 we trace the course it was to follow and did follow on the western front, where it adopted a policy of earthly sensual devilish wisdom, and became just the reverse of all our Saviour intended it to be.

Our space limits do not permit any detailed survey of the facts of faith embodied in this main portion of the Book. But there is a historical interpretation of the meaning of "the seven bowls of the wrath of God" which will greatly interest most readers and ought not to be omitted. In the year 1701 the Rev. Robert Fleming, then a minister of the Church of Scotland in London, published a little book entitled "Rise and Fall of the Papacy", giving an exposition of the meaning and application of the Seven Vials or Bowls. In it Mr. Fleming, having explained the previous stages of the execution of God's wrath upon the Latin Church up to that time (1701), from Rev. 16:8-9 (the pouring out of the Fourth Bowl upon the sun) drew "a conjecture" that the French Monarchy, the mainstay of the papacy for about a thousand years, would be extinguished not later than the year 1794 – that is, 1260 years from 534 A.D., when the Emperor Justinian had appointed the Bishop of Rome chief spokesman of the whole Christian Church. Many years after Mr. Fleming had gone to rest from his labors that "conjecture" was verified to the letter.

The outpouring of the Fifth Bowl "upon the throne of the beast" was due, he thought, to culminate in 1848 – in retrospect seen as one of the most memorable years in European history, when the Pope, dreading the revolutionary forces threatening him on all sides, fled from Rome disguised as a lackey. That period, covered by the Fifth Bowl, appears to terminate in

1870, the very year in which the Pope's Temporal Sovereignty was extinguished.

In the next period (Sixth Bowl) God's judgment's on the Moslem Power are executed. As to when the Turkish Caliphate would be abolished, Mr. Fleming has no conjecture. But he has stated his full conviction that immediately after its destruction the agents of "mystical Babylon" would succeed in creating a great League of Nations germane with "their idolatrous and spurious Christianity" – a League aiming at complete dominion over the whole world. Then, says Mr. Fleming, "when the forces of this apostate confederacy shall have been brought to that place of battle which is called Armageddon – that is, the place where there will be a most diabolically cunning and powerful conspiracy against Christ's followers – then immediately will the seventh angel pour out his vial, to their utter ruin and destruction."

Heaven's multitudes then lift up their voices (Rev. 19:6-9), "saying, Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth. Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.

"And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.
135" And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are bidden to

THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB."