

The Synopsis

J. N. Darby

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1 THE REVELATION

1.1 Chapter 19

Chapter 19: 2 clearly shews the aspect in which she is judged-the great whore who corrupted; and God avenges the blood of His servants. This judgment of Rome is the great joy of heaven. Hallelujah and salvation are sung. The elders and four living creatures fall down and worship, and the voice of the multitude proclaims the bringing in of the marriage of the Lamb, when the false woman is set aside. Till then, though espoused, the assembly was not thus actually united in the heavenly marriage of the Lamb. Still there was no greater event could be than a judgment of Rome. No doubt the beast had to be destroyed. Power, when God gave it scope, would soon do that. But here the old corruptress and persecutor was set aside for ever. Heaven is full of joy. There is no celebration of joy like this in the Revelation.

The rest of the book is simple and clear enough, for the mystery of God is closed. I do not myself attach any importance to the distinction, as a class, of those called to partake of the joy of that day. It means, I believe, just that, according to the parable of the marriage of the king's son, the guests are those who have share in the marriage joy. But several points have to be noticed: God in power has come in to set up His reign.

The true though not yet the open seat of the power of evil has been judged and destroyed. Two characters of evil, falsehood or deceitful corruption and violence, have existed since Satan himself began his career; false in himself, he was a murderer to others. The mystery of iniquity contained both, though hiding the latter and using others for it. Still she was characterised by corruption and what was false. Direct violence was in the hands of the beast. The destruction of that would, no doubt, relieve the earth of oppression; but for heaven and all that was heavenly-minded, the destruction of this Christ-dishonouring, soul-enslaving, and soul-debasing corruption, was joy and gladness, and the witness that divine power had come in. It had set aside the worst evil, the corrupting what was God's under pretence of being what Christ had purchased for Himself, the one precious object of His especial love. They sing, "Hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!"

This was to make way for the introduction of what was His own-the manifest power of His Christ. But, before that, the assembly must have her place of association with Him in that must have Himself: the marriage of the Lamb is come. Till the evil woman had been set aside, this could not be. This is the character of heavenly joy and redemption by which we are brought into it. Man on earth is first good, then yielding to temptation. Redemption supposes first evil, and even slavery to it, but then deliverance from it and our being set beyond it, God having taken to Him His power. The assembly is presented to Christ without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, cleansed and white, suited to Christ. The apostle was disposed, in sight of all this blessedness, to fall down and worship him who had revealed it. His mind was thrown into devotion by these scenes. Its immediate object was the heavenly messenger, and he turns to bow to him, but is forbidden. He was a fellow-servant, and the same to all who had the testimony of Jesus; for the spirit of prophecy, we are told, is the testimony of Jesus. The testimony not to worship intermediate beings is the last warning left to a declining assembly, as, so to speak, one of the first (in Colossians).

We now arrive at the great announcement of the coming of Christ in power. Heaven, which had been opened on Jesus and to Stephen, now opens for Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords. Holy and true He had been known by faith, and the faithful and true Witness. The last He is now; not as witness, but in judgment, save as judgment itself is the witness of His faithfulness and truth. The characters in which He appears are plain but all-important. It is first in general judgment but in the form of war, not what we may call sessional judgment, but overcoming power. Sessional judgment is in chapter 20 from verse 4. His eyes have the piercingness of divine judgment. He had many crowns, witness of His various and universal dominion. But, though thus revealed as man, He had a glory none could penetrate into ; ¹ of which He had the conscious power, but which was not revealed. He was the avenger-His garment was dipped in blood. All characterised Him, we may note here, according to that in which He is manifested by the judgment itself. It was the Revealer, the Word of God-His eternal character-what He was before creation; now making it good in judgment.

The armies in heaven had not garments dipped in blood. They were triumphant; they followed Him in His triumph, pure and perfect, His chosen, called, and faithful ones. The vengeance of Idumea was not their part, though

¹* * So it was as to His Person and service. No one knew the Son but the Father. It was the secret of His rejection. He was that, and so necessarily such in the world. But the world under Satan's influence would not have that. In His humiliation His divine glory was maintained in the unsounded depths of His Person. Now He is revealed in glory; but there ever remained what none could search or penetrate into-His own Person and nature. His revealed name was the Word of God. As revealing God in grace or power so as to make Him known, we know Him. But His Person as Son always remains unsearchable. His name is written, so that we know it is unknowable-not unknown but unknowable. But He made good now the character and requirements of God in respect of men-what they ought to be with God, and what God was to them in their natural relationship, revealed in respect of their responsibility. Judgment refers to these, and to ourselves.

they share His victory over the beast. The vengeance in Edom had a more earthly character, and is connected more with Judah. The Assyrian is there (see Psa. 83), not the beast. The beast and the false prophet are destroyed by Him as coming from heaven. He smites the nations with the rod of His mouth, He rules them with a rod of iron: this the saints will have with Him (chap. 2: 26, 27). He treads the wine-press too.² This is the part that is more earthly, as Isaiah 63 shews. So He that sits on the cloud thrusts in His sickle on the earth. It was an angel who cast the grapes into the wine-press, and the winepress was trodden³ -it is not said, as by one sitting on the cloud. The character of the judgment of the beast and the false prophet is heavenly-it is the Word of God, the Lord from heaven; the wine-press is earthly. He is publicly, officially, and intrinsically King of kings, and Lord of lords. The beast and the false prophet are cast alive into the lake of fire: this was a present final judgment-the rest were judicially slain. The final judgment of these deceived ones is not said to take place here. Satan is not yet cast into the lake of fire, but into the bottomless pit, where the legion of devils besought the Lord they might not be sent. He is bound there so as not to deceive the nations for a thousand years. There will be no seduction by Satan during the thousand years.

²This too He does alone; not that the saints may not be with Him as His cortege, so to speak, but the execution of judgment is His. In Isaiah it is only said that of the people none were with Him. In sessional judgment, judgment is given to them.

³I have already stated that the harvest is discriminative judgment: there is wheat for the garner. The wine-press is vengeance, righteous vengeance.