

Outline of Revelation

—J. van Dijk

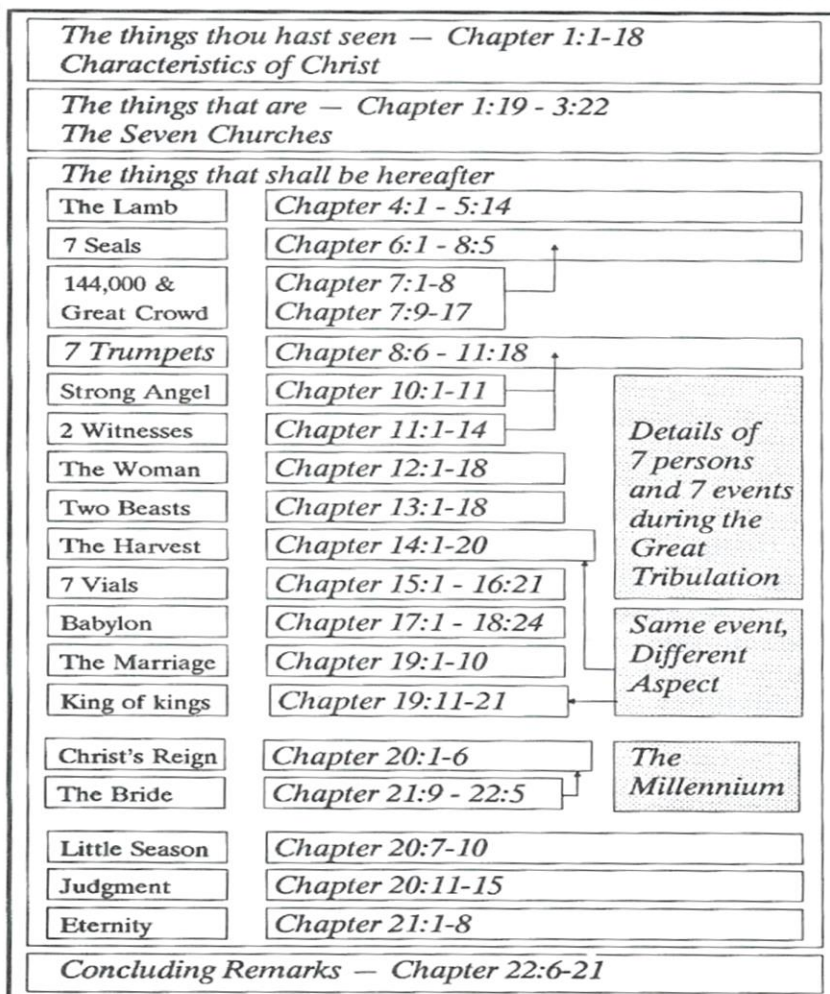
Many Christians feel that history is approaching a "rendezvous" with Revelation. The final world climax is approaching. However, many other Christians find the Book of Revelation difficult to understand. Perhaps this is because they fail to see the key divisions in this book, though they are largely self-evident. In this study we will point out the internal evidence for these divisions.

Introduction

The three great divisions are clearly stated in chapter 1:19. The Lord, in giving this revelation to the apostle John, outlined a three-fold task. He had to write:

- A. The things thou hast seen,
- B. The things that are, and
- C. The things that will soon take place after these things.

This outline clearly divides the prophecy into three parts: past, present, and future. This logical order is generally maintained throughout the book, although, as in any historical account, there is also a certain amount of repetition. At any given time there are various powers, persons, and nations involved, with whom God is dealing in a particular way. We see the Church, the political and religious powers of the world, God's people Israel, together with Satan's grip on world affairs. Just as any historical book will contain some repetition when the author views the same events from the perspective of various countries, so Revelation, being a historical book written ahead of time, is no exception.



The things thou hast seen — Chapter 1

The things John had just seen when the Lord spoke these words were the vision of the Lord Himself as recorded in chapter 1:1-18. These things form together the small, introductory division of the book. This vision in itself is not a prophecy in the fullest sense, although, as time progresses, the Lord will take on in an increasing manner the character of Judge in which He is seen in these first 18 verses. Notice some of the details: He was clothed with a garment down to His feet; His head and hair were white like white wool; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. This first part then serves to establish the visionary approach of the book and the Lord's judicial character. While giving us a taste of its logical construction, it prepares us for what is to follow.

The things that are — Chapters 2-3

We should expect next that which deals with the present. In the New Testament those things that have to do with the time of grace, the time in which its authors lived, are always spoken of as that which is present. And in this portion we have an undeniable reference to the Church as seen in the seven churches in Asia Minor, Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. We will not concern ourselves with the interpretation of these chapters. We just like to remark that they have a definite prophetic character, as might be expected in a book that calls itself more than once a prophecy. The question is, Where does this division end? Why do we say it is at chapter 4:1?

There, a voice from heaven, from the presence of God, addresses John saying, "Come up here, and I will show thee *the things* which must take place *after these things*." Knowing that the Holy Spirit is the author of God's Word, the parallel character of these words to those in chapter 1:19 cannot be a mere coincidence. These words are identical on purpose to help the reader along. Two additional points indicate the same thing. First, we believe that the words spoken to John (who belongs to the Church), "Come up here," are prophetic, symbolizing the calling up to heaven of the Church (hereafter called: the Rapture). Secondly, there is no further mention of the Church on earth. In the following chapters, we see individual believers on earth, just as there were in the Old Testament, but the Church is never mentioned again in connection with the earth. The first time that she is indisputably mentioned again is in chapter 19 where we see her in heaven as the bride at the marriage of the Lamb. There is no other point throughout the book at which she could be considered to have gone there then here in chapter 4:1.

Another reason for claiming that 4:1 marks the end of the Church's time on earth may be a little harder to understand, but it is nevertheless quite evident to those who read carefully. The description of the twenty four elders in chapters 4-19 shows them to have the characteristics of persons who belong to the Church. We see this from their sitting in white clothing on thrones (4:4), their singing (5:9), and their worshipping (7:11; 11:16-19; 19:4). Thus we see that from Chapter 4 onward the Church is in heaven; a new order of things begins on earth.

The things that will soon take place after these things — Chapters 4-22:5

The third division begins therefore with chapter 4. This largest division of the book can be further divided into two main sections: First *from the Rapture to the Millennium*, which is largely the time of the Great Tribulation (4-19), and secondly *the Millennium and the Eternal Condition* (20-22:5). Each of these two sections consist of two sub-sections, the first giving an overview of the period, the second giving some important details of the period. We will now look at the first section.

Events between the Rapture and the Millennium — Chapters 4-19

The first section from chapter 4 to the end of chapter 19 has first a mainly consecutive account (ch. 4-11) and then a series of details (ch. 11-19).

a. General account from the Rapture to the end of the Great Tribulation — Ch. 4-11

This sub-section has as subject matter the time between the Rapture and the Millennium. It gives a largely consecutive account of events immediately before and during the Great Tribulation up to and including the Lord's return. Its dominant features are the Great Tribulation, the personages playing a role in that important time, and the events introducing the Millennium. This account is generally viewed from heaven and we see how heavenly actions have a direct effect upon the events taking place on earth.

The Lamb, the Seals, and the Trumpets — Ch. 4-11:18

Chapters 4 and 5 give a description of events in heaven just before God's judgments come over the earth. In chapter 6 the seven seals are opened in a chain of events that continues right up to chapter 8:5. This series is followed by the seven angels with their trumpets, which ends in chapter 11:18. There are no internal indications that would cause us to see the seals and the trumpets in any other way than as one continuous chain of events. In chapter 7 the Great Tribulation is anticipated and from chapter 11:17-18, we notice that with the last trumpet the time has come in which the Lord Jesus will begin His reign (i.e. the end of the Great Tribulation has arrived — 11:15-18).

The 144,000 and the Great Crowd — Ch. 7

Before we continue, however, we need to look at the break in the sequence of events after the sixth seal. The reason for it is this: The Lord's judgments are becoming more and more severe, but during a time of judgment God always safeguards those who are His (Isa. 26:20-21). Here God causes His own in Israel (the 144,000) and among the nations to be sealed. God gives the prophet a view of His care for His people in the midst of this time of distress; they are secured by Him, especially in view of the coming Great Tribulation (v. 14). From this internal evidence we conclude that chapter 7 is a parenthesis, breaking momentarily the general flow of events to take a closer look at this important detail.

The Strong Angel — Ch. 10

Then the chain is picked up and the events continue with the seventh seal until the sixth trumpet has sounded in chapter 9:13-21, after which another interruption in chapter 10 shows us the strong angel. This we believe to be the Lord Jesus Himself. He announces that the time that this world has left to follow its own course is coming to an end. Soon the Lord will no longer reign providentially, as He has done for so many centuries, but will take the government over this world directly into His own hands. There will be no more delay, the mystery of God (God's allowing evil to have its way in this world) will be completed (10:6-7).

The Two Witnesses — Ch. 11:1-14

Before the narrative continues, there is another important detail described in chapter 11. There, two prophets testify for three and a half years. We need to take good notice of the description, for in verse 7 we read of the beast that comes up out of the abyss. This helps us identify the parts of Revelation that we still have to look at. The description of the beast and the length of the testimony of the two witnesses, three and a half years, help us to recognize this beast as the beast out of the sea. Revelation 11:7,17:7-8, and 19:20 all speak of the same beast, as can be seen from its descriptions.

Chapters 10 and 11 focused our attention for a moment on some important persons and events during the time of the Great Tribulation, the three and a half years of the Antichrist's reign. The whole chain of events closes with the seventh trumpet (11:14-18) which clearly shows that the Lord is now ready to assume His direct reign over the earth.

b. Personages and Events during the Great Tribulation — Ch. 11:19-20:3

The Woman, Israel and the Great Tribulation — Ch. 12

Chapter 12 (actually starting with 11:19) begins a new vision. It is not hard to see this, for the woman clothed with the sun is Israel throughout her history (e.g., Gen. 37:9). We recognize her as Israel, for the Son she bears is clearly the Lord Jesus: "He shall shepherd all the nations with an iron rod" (Rev. 2:27 — "as I also have received from My Father" — 19:5). Besides, "The child was caught up to God," speaks of the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus. "The woman fled into the wilderness" speaks of Israel dispersed among the nations, particularly seen during the Great Tribulation, for she is kept by God for three and one half years (v. 14). Meanwhile Satan is cast out of heaven. This is an event immediately preceding the Lord's return, for it causes the voice in heaven to say, "Now is come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ" (v. 10). But the earth will still experience a terrible time, described before under the fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpet.

Satan, we believe, is the fallen star of chapter 8:10 and 9:1. He opens the abyss so that the beast of the abyss (17:8) or of the earth (13:1) can arise. That this is one and the same beast can be seen by carefully reading chapters 13:1-10; 17:3-8.

The Two Beasts and the Harvest. Political Powers during the Great Tribulation — Ch. 13 and 14

In chapter 13 we meet another detail of that same eventful time of the Great Tribulation. It describes the two main persons of that period and presents them as the two beasts. The first beast, that of the earth (in ch. 17:8 said to be out of the abyss), receives its power from the dragon. Since, as we saw, it is the beast also encountered in chapter 11, we know that we have here another detail of that same period. This helps us to see that this chapter does not continue the history, but rather focuses on important details.

Chapter 14 begins with the Lamb standing on mount Zion, and speaks of Babylon fallen. Now if we look ahead to chapter 17, we see there a description of Babylon prior to her fall. She is portrayed as a harlot riding on the first beast, the beast out of the earth. It is therefore obvious that chapter 14:8 is subsequent to what we have read in chapter 13 and also to chapter 17. In chapter 14:9 the beast is still honoured. We are not yet at the very end of its rule. This end, however, is close, for from verse 17 on, we see the great slaughter on this earth, an event also referred to later in chapter 16:12-16 and in chapter 19:11-21. We evidently have in chapter 14 a view from God's side of the very last days before the Lord's return. Chapters 13 and 14 form a continuous account ascribing some details besides those recorded in chapter 11 right up to the time of the Lord's coming.

The Vials. God's Wrath during the Great Tribulation — Ch. 15 and 16

Chapters 15 and 16 give the preparation for, and the actual outpouring of the seven vials of God's wrath. These by themselves give one continuous account. The timing of these events relative to those we have had before becomes clear from the fifth vial. It is poured out on the throne of the beast so that its kingdom becomes darkness. These vials are therefore contemporary with what we had in chapters 13 and 14. Under the sixth vial, the unclean spirits leave the beast and the false prophet. Apparently they realize that their judgment is near and they seek other channels for their mischief. This leads to the battle of Armageddon, the slaughter we saw from another angle in chapter 14:20. Then under the seventh seal Babylon is judged, which is again an indication that we have come once more to the time just before the Millennium. And with this another detail comes to a close.

Babylon. Religious Power during the Great Tribulation — Ch. 17 and 18

These chapters give again one continuous account. In the Great Tribulation we have seen the first and second beast, Satan, and Israel. But there is another one that has been referred to already but who has not been looked at in detail. This one is Babylon, the great whore. In chapters 17 and 18 John is shown the details of this harlot. In chapter 18 we find for the third time the mention of Babylon's fall. This helps us to understand that we are looking at this momentous period for the third time (Ch. 14:8 and ch. 16:19 were the previous instances), and again from a different viewpoint.

The Marriage of the Lamb and the King of kings — Ch. 19 and 20

In chapter 19 we again hear praise rising up in heaven to God, the righteous Judge. It is the same scene we saw earlier in chapter 11: the last moments in heaven prior to the Lord's coming down to earth. But first we get the marriage of the Lamb, a display that takes place, not on earth, but in heaven. In the previous chapter the one who claimed to be the bride, but who was a harlot, has been judged. Now that her pretensions have been shown for what they were, the marriage can take place. And then the Lord returns. His coming begins with the great slaughter (v. 15-16) which we saw in chapter 14:17-20, and for which we saw the preparations in Chapter 16:16. In verse 20 we find the end of the beast and the prophet who did wonders before him, deceiving those who worshipped the image of the beast. The beast is that of chapter 13:1-10, and the prophet who did the miracles is the second beast (ch. 13:11-17). These two are cast directly into hell. The Great Tribulation ends here.

The Millennium and Eternity — Chapter 20-22:5

With chapter 20, the second section of the third division of Revelation begins. As mentioned, this section has again two sub-sections. The first is a general, consecutive account, the second gives details of the Bride in Millennium.

a. General account from the Millennium to Eternity — Ch. 20-21:8

Satan Bound — Ch. 20:1-3

The Millennium (1000 year period) is introduced with the binding of Satan with a chain. He is cast into the abyss. The abyss is shut and sealed over him. Clearly these things are future, for today Satan is walking about, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8); a description totally incompatible with what we read in these first verses of chapter 20.

Christ's Reign — Ch. 20:4-6

Then we read of reigning with Christ. This is a theme that has often been presented as a hope to the believers (1 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:27; 5:10). The duration of that reign is just as long as the period in which Satan is bound. Believers who had died will live and the rest of the dead (i.e. the unbelievers) will not live till these thousand years are past. This is the time in which the Lord Jesus judges the living (2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:5).

Satan loosed and the Great White Throne — Ch. 20:7-15

But the end of the Millennium shows us that the environment does not change our hearts. In that best of all environments there will still be people born and growing up in unbelief, ready to rebel. When Satan is ultimately set free, he shows himself to be another Napoleon. In no time he has an outright rebellion going. But now God answers rebellion with immediate destruction. And then the final judgment of the dead comes. In verses 11-15, we see the Great White Throne, judgment, and the lake of fire.

The day of God. Eternity — Ch. 21:1-8

Chapter 21 introduces the new heaven and the new earth. From verse 1-8 we see a description of the eternal condition as it will be on the new earth. Finally God can dwell with man. God's heart is satisfied. The New Jerusalem is like a city coming out of heaven from God. Later we learn that it is the bride of Christ, the Church or Assembly. All unbelievers will be in eternal fire.

b. The Bride in the Millennium — Ch. 21:9-22:5

Then from chapter 21:9 until 22:5, we find a detailed description of the true bride in contrast to the false bride described in chapters 17 and 18. The bride is described in the way she will be during the Millennium, not in her eternal condition. We see this from three things. First of all, verses 24, 26, and 22:2 speak of the nations. Once the eternal condition comes, there no longer will be nations on earth. Secondly, there is mention of abominations that will not be allowed to enter the city. Although the Millennium will be a glorious time, much better than the best times this earth has ever known, there will be evil present, for some will not believe and still have their sinful nature, although Satan cannot tempt them in those days. Thirdly, we find in chapter 22:2 that the leaves of the tree of life are for healing of the nations. This latter point clearly indicates that we are not in the eternal condition described in chapter 21:4 where there will be no tears, no sickness, no distress, and so there will be no healing of the nations either.

What this section teaches us is this: The conditions during the Millennium will very closely approximate those of the eternal condition, but the eternal condition itself is, apart from a mere outline, impossible to describe to men who are still in their present, non-glorified state.

Concluding remarks — Chapter 22:6-21

It seems to be clear enough that from chapter 22:6 to the end of the book we have closing remarks, rather than a description of coming things. How good it is that after all that has been presented, the Lord sets the hope of His soon return as the last point before the believer. Amen; come Lord Jesus!

The End

Sarah, Mother of Israel

—W.D. Hayhoe

When we think of Sarah, we are often reminded of her failures. Who can forget her fateful suggestion to Abraham that he try to have the promised son through her Egyptian maid, Hagar? Or the time when she laughed at God's angel for telling her that she was to have a child? Nevertheless, the prophet Isaiah holds up Sarah as a great example to the nation of Israel at a crucial time in its history, "Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain" (Isa. 52:2). In this article I would like to point out seven ways in which Sarah can be a great example to us today.

1. Total Commitment

Several years ago at my brother's wedding, the bride recited the well-known words of Ruth as part of the ceremony: "Where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God" (Ruth 1:16).

Sarah was perhaps the first bride who expressed the spirit of these words. Imagine what it must have meant for her to pack up and leave Haran, the city of her upbringing and the centre of many amenities of the ancient world, never to return! How many wives today would be willing to leave their comfortable homes for a life of wandering in a new land full of enemies? That is why I have termed this "total commitment," total commitment to her husband, to her husband's people, and to her husband's God.

2. Patient Endurance

The great faith chapter of Hebrews, which mentions Sarah as one of the examples, is followed by these words, "Let us... run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1). Many Christians start out well, like Sarah, with strong commitments to the Lord, to their spouses, and to their calling. But how many finish well? Sarah faithfully lived out her commitment for over 50 years. Speaking of Abraham and Sarah, Hebrews 11:15 says, "Indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return." But Sarah did not look back. She faithfully endured to the end.

3. Kitchen Hospitality

Not only was Sarah faithful in the great decisions of life, but also in the small details. Notice what happened in Genesis 18 when three strangers unexpectedly arrived at Abraham's tent. He hurried to Sarah and said, "Quickly, prepare three measures of fine flour, knead it, and make bread cakes." Sounds like what we husbands often do today? She didn't complain however. Abraham knew he could count on her hospitality. And, as Hebrews 13:1 reminds us, they had the privilege of "entertaining angels without knowing it." (Men, notice that Abraham prepared the calf!)

4. Submission to her Husband

Sarah was no "push-over" as a wife. The Genesis narrative makes this clear. She had a mind of her own, and she used it! She was no doubt Abraham's most important asset among his clan of three hundred men and thousands of animals. Nevertheless, Scripture makes it clear that "Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord" (1 Pet. 3:6). Peter wasn't just referring to one or two occasions, but to the whole tenor of Sarah's life. Her attitude towards Abraham was that of obedience and respect.

5. Faith in God's Promise

Most people remember Sarah's unbelieving laughter when the angel told her that she would have a son. But Scripture also reminds us that "by faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive" (Heb. 11:11). Although Abraham was a great man of faith, Sarah's faith was not second hand. She also had a living link with the infinite and personal God. Like Sarah, we must learn not to depend on the faith of others, but to develop our secret relationship with our Father in Christ.

6. Thankfulness to God.

We have mentioned several times Sarah's laughter when God visited Abraham, but actually Sarah laughed twice, first in secret unbelief at the angel's promise (Gen. 18:12) and then in open thankfulness at Isaac's birth (Gen. 21:6). "And Sarah said, 'God has made laughter for me: everyone who hears will laugh with me.'" What an example this is for us! How many times do Paul's epistles remind us to be thankful? Has God recently blessed you with a baby? A new job? A house? New friends? A vacation? A birthday? An anniversary? Have you stopped to give God thanks? Ungratefulness is one of the marks of the last days (2 Tim. 3:2).

7. Wise Discernment

Although Sarah was noted for obeying Abraham, on one occasion at least Abraham had to learn to obey Sarah. When Sarah saw Hagar's son mocking after the birth of Isaac, she advised Abraham to "drive out this maid and her son." When Abraham was reluctant to do so, God said to Abraham, "Whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through Isaac your

descendants shall be named" (Gen. 21:12). Sarah saw that it wouldn't do to have in the same household the heir of the flesh and the heir of promise. In Galatians, Paul comments on Sarah's wisdom calling her advice to Abraham "Scripture."

Our wives were intended by God to be our "helpmeets," and Sarah was certainly this to Abraham. May Christian women be in touch with God so that they can have the mind of the Lord, like Sarah, when their husbands need their advice! And may Christian men, like Abraham, have the wisdom to listen to their wives when God has confided to them His mind on the issue at hand.

(Scripture quotations from the NASB)

The Nature of the Church (4) — The Appointment of Elders

—William Kelly

Paul, in writing to the saints at Rome, exhorts "him that ruleth" to do it with simplicity. Now all the evidence we have goes to show that there was no official nomination as yet, if ever at Rome. Peter's primacy there is a dream, Scripture affirming in a positive way that *he* was distinctively the apostle of the circumcision, as Paul was of the uncircumcision. Now the latter had not yet visited the faithful in the Gentile metropolis. Accordingly there is not a word which supposes elders to have been appointed there. Nevertheless it is evident that those at Rome, like the rest of the church, had gifts of grace in their midst — prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhorting, ruling, etc. These they might possess, and they are exhorted to use them diligently; but not a word is said about elders. It has already been observed that at Corinth elders are not even implied, and yet the brethren were asked to submit themselves to those who "addicted themselves" to the ministry of the saints.

Again, in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, "We beseech you, brethren, to know them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." Do not the exhortations "to know" them which labour and rule and preside (the same word as in Rom. 12:8), suggest that it was not a class officially appointed? Office must have been self-evident, and therefore would render needless an exhortation to recognise such labourers. The esteem and love was for their sake. An official place was not alluded to. In Hebrews 13:7,17,24, certain chief men are named (ἡγέομαι, leaders or guides); but there is nothing indicative of exterior appointment. Probably they were persons whose age, character, and gifts, gave them a certain place, such as those mentioned in Acts 15:22.

Now if any one in our day could give satisfactory (i.e., Scriptural) proof that he was an apostolic delegate, his appointment of elders ought to be respected; and respected I have no doubt it would be by all whose eye was single to the Lord in the matter. If such proof be wanting, they ought to be as decidedly disowned. If then in Scripture we see not elders appointed by any, save apostles or their delegates, can any denomination justify by the Word of God their respective appointments? Apostolic succession seems to be the only consistent plea in its pretensions as to this. I say pretensions, for there is no real basis for it — it is Christianity Judaised, or rather it is Judaism Christianised.

The case of Paul in Acts 13, which is sometimes referred to in proof of the necessity of a human commission, proves in fact the contrary. It would be strange indeed if it did, seeing that in Galatians 1:1 he takes such pains to insist that he was an apostle, "not of men" (as the source), "nor by man" (as the channel). He had been preaching for years, before his separation by the Spirit to the special work recorded in Acts 13:1-4. Further, those who fasted and prayed and laid their hands on him and Barnabas had been cherished and taught by them, as by those who were over them in the Lord. To such an imposition of hands I know of no objection. It pretends to confer neither gift nor authority, but is a simple commendation to the grace of God, which it would seem might be repeated (Acts 15:40). Is there one feature in common with the ordination of our day and for ages? Is it possible that Christians, in order more thoroughly to justify a modern ordination by Acts 13, have pretended that Paul was only an inferior apostle, a messenger of the church like Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25)? (But see Acts 14:4; Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 9:1-6; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; Gal. 1:2; 1 and 2 Tim. 1:1; Ti. 1:1). Here, if we may so say, the highest form of the apostolate is claimed, and its entire independence of man.

In Acts 1, Matthias was chosen Jewishly, by lot, *before* the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven to baptize the believers. The church, properly speaking, was not yet manifested. His election therefore can furnish no precedent for a state of things which was changed and governed by presence of the Spirit. Nor do we read of the use of lots ever afterwards. Yet some denominations have tried to copy this and other forms which were peculiar to Jerusalem.

In the instance of Timothy, there were prophecies going before (1 Tim. 1:18), and an actual gift imparted *by* prophecy, *with* the imposition of the hands of the presbyters (4:14), and *by* the imposition of Paul's hands (2 Tim. 1:6). It is not only

impracticable to imitate this case without an apostle and a duly chosen presbytery, not to speak of prophecy, but to do so is a mischievous pretension, unless there is the power to bestow the gift which was bestowed then.

Lastly, in 2 Timothy 2:2 it is evident that the question is one, not of authority to appoint, but of passing on the things which Timothy had heard of the apostle by many witnesses. It was not to consecrate a clergy, but to commit sound doctrine to faithful men who should be able to teach others also.

On the other hand the practise of electing a pastor is purely human, derived not even from Judaism, much less from Christianity. One who was himself thus chosen said, "It is not without some amazement that we find a congregational church, on the modern scheme, proceeding in the momentous act of creating or electing to itself a pastor and teacher, without being able to allege from the New Testament any law or licence to that effect, or any one example, satisfactory or unsatisfactory... On secular principles nothing can be more simple or reasonable than that those who pay should command; and in the present temper of mankind, especially in certain circles, it may be nearly impracticable to secure submission to any other law. Nevertheless this serious question returns upon us, Is this the law or this the principle recognised as the basis of church polity in the New Testament? We are compelled to answer, It is not."

Yet some have professed to see it in Acts 14:23; "When they had ordained (or *chosen*, as seems better) them elders in every church." But this proves not that the church, but that *they* (i.e., Paul and Barnabas) chose the elders. Some argue from the etymology (i.e., from the original meaning of the word); but usage, not etymology, is the only safe guide. The word (χειροτονέω) meant originally to stretch out the hand. Hence, it was applied to voting in this manner, and by an easy transition to choosing without reference to the manner. Thus in Acts 10:41 the same word, compounded with a preposition, is applied to God's choice, where the notion of the church's voting is of course excluded. When it was a question of serving tables, as in Acts 6, the assembly did choose; though even in Acts, the disciples looked out for seven faithful men, yet it was the apostles who appointed them.

(Scripture quotations from the KJV)

Outline for Bible Study (47)

97. Daniel in the Lions' Den — Daniel 6

Outline

1. The Trap Dan. 6:1-9
2. The Lions' Den Dan. 6:10-18
3. The Release Dan. 6:19-28

Explanation

1. Daniel's promotion aroused the hatred and envy of his colleagues. They couldn't touch him, however, for he was a faithful servant of the king (v. 5), but the princes knew of his relationship to God (v. 6) and used this in an effort to harm him. They urged Darius to pass a law that forbade prayer.
2. Daniel, now the highest official in the land, remained faithful even in the face of death (Rev. 2:10) and continued to pray to God three times daily. The king discovered too late the evil intent of his princes and he could not deliver Daniel.
3. But God gave a marvellous delivery (Mt. 10:28,32). The king's love for Daniel was stronger than ever and his anger fell on those who tried to harm the man of God (Ps. 9:15-16).

Lesson

The princes exploited Darius' pride, enticing him to take God's place. Pride caused Darius to become a type of the Antichrist (2 Th. 2:3-4). But God always uses the wrath of man to bring glory to His name. And, when possible, God uses His children for this purpose. Only if we trust God fully will all the glory come to His name. God's miracle and Daniel's faithfulness made a deep impression on the king (vv. 26-27; Ps. 86:17).

98. Return Under Zerubbabel; The Temple Rebuilt — Ezra 1-6

Outline

1. The First Return Ezra 1:1-5;
2. The Altar and the Feast of Tabernacles Ezra 3:1-7
3. The Temple Rebuilt Ezra 3:8-5:15
4. The Temple Dedicated, The Passover Ezra 6:16-22

Explanation

1. God remembered His people and His promises and He raised up king Cyrus. The first carrying away of the Jews had been in 606 BC, the first return took place in 536 BC, 70 years later. The order of king Cyrus had been foretold by Isaiah (Isa. 4:28). Only a remnant of some 50,000 men went to Jerusalem.

2. First of all they rebuilt the altar, "for fear was upon them because of the people of the countries." Then they held the feast of Tabernacles.

3. Then the actual temple-building began. In doing this, they kept themselves separate from the Samaritans who wanted to help but were not allowed. These therefore weakened their lands and hired counsellors who prepared a letter to the new king, Artaxerxes, who ordered all construction to be halted. But the prophets Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the Jews, and the building recommenced. When the surrounding nations sought once more the help of the king, this time Darius, they were ordered rather to provide all that the Jews needed for the construction and not to hinder them. They finished the temple in the last month of 515 BC.

4. Then they kept the feast of the dedication of the temple. Immediately after, in the first month, they held the Passover which was followed by the feast of Unleavened Bread.

Lesson

When we do the things the Lord has commanded us, we should never be discouraged by the opposition of those who do not know the Lord. What we do for the Lord we ought to do whole-heartedly. The Jews were already slack in building the temple, so the least bit of opposition was sufficient to stop their efforts. But when they turned to do the will of the Lord upon the prompting from Haggai and Zechariah, the Lord changed the heart of the king Darius and paved the way for the completion of the temple. This is a tremendous lesson for all who desire to serve the Lord in times of decline and opposition.

To be cont'd

The Gospel

The perfect righteousness of God
Is witnessed in the Saviour's blood;
'Tis in the cross of Christ we trace
His righteousness, yet wondrous grace.

God could not pass the sinner by,
Justice demands that he should die;
But in the cross of Christ we see
How God can save, yet righteous be.

The judgment fell on Jesus head,
'Twas in His blood sin's debt was paid;

Stern Justice can demand no more,
And Mercy can dispense her store.

The sinner who believes is free,
Can say, "The Saviour died for me:"
Can point to the atoning blood,
And say, "This made my peace with God."

A. Midlane

Questions and Answers (5)

Q12. How can someone avoid spiritual seduction? So many work miracles that are not the evidence of the Holy Spirit's power (Mt. 24:24). Even in the Bible we see one prophet deceiving another (1 Ki. 13-11-19). Might one not accidentally fall victim to such and perish?

A12. First of all, we should be well aware of this: We are an easy prey if we do not stay close to our Lord. But secondly, if we are truly the Lord's, we will never perish. He has promised this (Jn. 10:28). So we need not fear that we will perish.

But let us look a little closer at the passages you refer to in your question. The prophet from Judah had received direct instruction from the Lord not to eat bread or drink water, and he had to return by another way. Now someone else said that God had spoken things to him that completely contradicted God's former instructions. Don't you think that the prophet from Judah should have answered, "Look, if what you say is indeed from God, I will wait until God tells me so Himself. Since He spoke directly to me before, He will do so again."

Today the Lord does not speak like this to you or me, but God has given us His Word, and we can check it to see whether what others tell us is true or not. We cannot say, "Mr. So-and-so told me this." God will say, "Couldn't you read My Word?" And here is the test for all things: God's Word. Moreover "If any one desire to practise His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is of God" (Jn 7:17). If anyone says or does anything that is not supported by God's Word you know that you are listening to one who speaks from other sources than the Holy Spirit.

One more remark on that prophet. God took his life away, but that does not mean that he is lost for eternity. He no doubt trusted in God and was His. Such a one we will meet again in heaven, although his disobedience cost him his life on earth.

Q13. How can someone be aware of his or her salvation in Christ? What does Paul mean in Philippians 3:12-13? Does he speak of salvation or of perfection?

A13. "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:16). "Beloved, now are we children of God" (1 Jn. 3:2). The first is written By Paul, the second by John. Both had no doubt about their salvation. But Paul longed for perfection, as we all should. Yet, he knew too that as long as he was in the flesh he would not possess it, but would always be reaching for it.

Look how he says, "I have been taken possession of by Christ" right in the midst of the verses you referred to. That was his certainty: Christ had laid hold of him. And everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus may know this. Those who believe in His name have everlasting life (Jn. 5:24).

Q14. Is it evidence of the Holy Spirit indwelling when I speak in tongues even during a nightmare?

A14. Many claim that speaking in tongues is a sign of the Holy Spirit indwelling, but in 1 Corinthians 12-14 tongues are always the last in the lists of gifts, and many did not have this gift. In 13:8 we read that prophecy and knowledge will be done away, or abruptly end when we go to be with the Lord. But tongues shall cease, or slowly disappear, as they have today. This is very evident for, in the Bible, tongues were always intelligent remarks in other languages or dialects, but what is said to be tongues today is unintelligent muttering such as is common among the heathen in a trance. It is not worthy of the Holy Spirit. Most who speak in tongues practice and teach things contrary to Scripture, such as women speaking in the church (1 Cor. 14:34). We do well to watch for false prophets!

To be cont'd