

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

EXTRACTED OUT OF THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION.*

THE Book of the Revelation is a tragi-comical vision of the occurrences of the world through all times and ages; whereof this may truly be the title, 'The story of Christ's kingdom.'

Chap. iv.—The *stage* for this is set up in the 4th chapter; there being a representation of the universal church in all ages set forth, according to the exact pattern of a church visible and instituted, into which all saints on earth should be cast.

Chap. v.—Then the *prologue* follows in the 5th chapter, where is Christ's taking on him the government and kingdom, by 'taking the sealed book,' and thereby undertaking to be God's commissioner, to execute the decrees contained in this book, and to give the vision of it unto John; at which instalment of him into the kingdom, there is a song of praise sung to the Lamb, by the twenty-four elders and four beasts, who are the chorus in this show, with a triumphant assurance and expectation of what will be the happy conclusion of all, that 'we shall reign on earth with him.'

The *scene* or place where all that was acted here in these verses is the Roman empire, and the several dominions of it east and west, called *οικουμένη*, or the whole world.

Then begins the *story* itself to be acted at the 6th chapter. The general argument of which is: That whereas Christ's government was to be executed and seen, (1.) in 'putting down all opposite rule and power' that stands in his way, as Paul speaks, 1 Cor. vi.; and then, (2.) in a visible taking the kingdom to himself and his saints, which makes the fifth monarchy; accordingly here the story of this book *first* shews how Christ puts down all the opposite rule, and power, and dominion whatsoever, in the fourth and last foregoing Roman monarchy, in the several successions and revolutions of it, one after another, till that he hath worn them all out that were ordained to stand up in it. And these many difficulties of his coming to and obtaining

* This tract is merely a Synopsis, or Table of Contents, of the *Exposition of the Revelation*; and is therefore subjoined to it, although the two stand far apart in the original edition of the author's works.—ED.

his kingdom, do exceedingly serve to make the story of it appear glorious. Then—

Secondly, It closeth and endeth in a glorious visible kingdom which Christ on earth sets up, and possesseth peaceably with his saints, as the catastrophe of all.

More particularly, the story is this, according to the several contents of each chapter :—

Chap. vi.—Christ, when he ascends up to heaven, finds the Roman monarchy, whose room he was to possess, stretched over east and west, even over all those parts of the world where he was to seat his church and kingdom ; and this wholly in the hands, and under the government and power, of one entire monarch or emperor, and under him altogether heathenish and idolatrous, and subjected wholly to Satan, set up as ‘the god of this world.’ Christ first sets upon the conquest of Satan’s ministry and worship in it ; and by the preaching the gospel, overturneth that vast empire as it was heathenish, throws down Satan from his throne and height of glory in it, and brings it into subjection and acknowledgment of him as king, chap. xii., and turns both it and emperors of it Christian in three hundred years. This is the sum of the sixth chapter of the seal-prophecy, and the twelfth chapter of the book-prophecy.

Chap. viii.—But this empire, though turned Christian in outward profession, yet having persecuted his church whilst idolatrous, and after it was Christian, when Arian ; therefore, at the prayers of the martyrs slain, mentioned chap. vi. 11, and in vengeance of their blood, chap. viii. 4, he further proceeds to ruin the civil imperial power of it, the empire itself, by the trumpets in the 8th and 9th chapters. And the empire then becoming divided into two, the eastern and western empire, as they were commonly called—

1. He ruins the imperial western state and power in Europe, by the four first trumpets, the wars of the Goths, by four several steps in the 8th chapter. Then—

2. Chap. ix.—He destroys the imperial eastern state, which stood after the other, by two degrees,—first, by the Saracens, then by the Turks,—who are the fifth and sixth trumpets, who possessed all the eastern part to this day ; and that is the contents of the 9th chapter. Only, chap. vii., ere ever these trumpets bring these evils on the empire, he seals up a company of a hundred and forty-four thousand Christians in the eastern part, as chap. vii. 2, to be preserved and continued in the true profession of his name, under these two, the sorest and longest, and there called the woe-woe-trumpets, which were to fall upon the eastern part of the empire, in which parts these servants of his there sealed were to lie, as appears, chap. ix. 4. And this their sealing is the sum of the 7th chapter.

Now then that old Roman empire being thus removed in both parts of it, yet still look, as that eastern part of it is left possessed by the Turks, in the 9th chapter ; so the western part of it, in Europe, being broken into ten kingdoms by the Goths, they consent to give their power to the beast, the Pope, who so becomes a successor to the western emperor, and possesseth his seat and power, though under another title, and so heals that wound given. And this beast the 13th chapter describes, and gives the vision of his rise, power, time of his reign. And the 17th chapter doth expound and interpret under whose antichristian tyranny—as great as that of Rome heathenish, or of the Turks themselves to Christians—Christ yet preserves another like company of a hundred and forty-four thousand, chap. xiv, even

the like number of virgins who are sealed Christians in the west, as under the tyranny of the Turks and Saracens he had done the like in the east; so himself keeping possession still by his church, preserved under both, of both these parts of the empire, as his inheritance. And this opposite company of a hundred and forty-four thousand Christians, opposite to the whore, there called virgins, and their separation from her and opposition to her, are recorded chap. xiv.

But now these two, the Pope and Turk, both enemies to Christ, thus succeeding in the empire, and sharing the two parts of it between them, Jesus Christ, we see, is still as far off from his designed kingdom as he was before. For Mohammedanism tyranniseth in the one, idolatry overspreads the other, as heathenism had done the empire; and so he hath a new business of it to come unto his kingdom, as difficult as ever.

Chap. xv., xvi.—Therefore Christ hath seven vials, which contain the last plagues, for he means to make this the last act of this long tragi-comedy, to despatch the Pope and Turk, and root them out, even as the seals had done heathenism, and the trumpets had done the empire itself. And the plagues of these vials are the contents of the 15th and 16th chapters.

The first five vials do dissolve and ruin the Pope's power by degrees in the west; then the sixth vial breaks the power of the Turk in the east; so making way for the Jews, whom he means to bring into fellowship of his kingdom in their own land.

But by these six vials their power and kingdom not being wholly ruined and removed, both Turk and Popish party join, and putting to their utmost forces, and together with them, all opposite kings of the whole world, against the Christians, both east and west, who, whenas the Jews are come in and converted, make up a mighty party in the world; unto the help of whom, against these and all opposite power whatsoever, Christ himself comes, and makes but one work of it, and with his own hand from heaven destroys them. And so 'it is done,' as the voice of the last vial is in the 16th chapter.

Chap. xvii.—The 17th chapter is an interpretation who is the beast and whore.

Chap. xviii.—The 18th chapter sings a funeral-song of triumph for this whore's ruin; after which comes in Christ's kingdom, the New Jerusalem.

Chap. vii.-ix.—Which new kingdom of his shall be made up of, first, eastern Christians that endured the bondage of the two woe-trumpets, the Saracen and Turks, yet continuing to profess his name; and therefore unto those hundred and forty-four thousand in the 7th chapter, do succeed an innumerable company with palms in their hands, who have the same promises of the New Jerusalem made to them, (the very same that are found mentioned in the 21st chapter,) which shews their interest therein. And—

Secondly, This kingdom of Christ shall be made up of western Christians also, whose hundred and forty-four thousand in the 14th chapter do arise in like manner to an innumerable company: who, after the rejection of the whore, chap. xix. 1-9, are brought in singing in like triumph, decking themselves for the marriage in fine linen. But—

Thirdly, This kingdom of Christ shall be made up especially of Jews, dispersed both east and west, and over all the world; and therefore hath the name from them, the New Jerusalem. With whom—

Fourthly, Come in as attendants of their joy other Gentiles with them, that never had received Christ before: the 'glory of the Gentiles' is said to be brought into it.

Chap. xx.—xxii.—And so both east and west, Jew and Gentile, and the fulness of both, comes in, and becomes one fold for a thousand years, under one shepherd, one kingdom under this ‘root of David,’ their king, King Jesus the conqueror, even as it first was under one heathen idolatrous emperor, when first Christ set himself to conquer it. And so is fulfilled that prophecy of this his kingdom, Isa. lix. 19, where, after the final destruction of all Christ’s enemies, foretold ver. 18, ‘then,’ he says, ‘they shall fear his name, from the east unto the west, and the Redeemer shall come unto Sion.’ Which words, Rom. xi. 26, Paul interprets of the Jews’ final call, and this restauration of the world with them. ‘Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.’

Chap. v.—In the 5th chapter we have an account of a book with seven seals, which none could open. In this strait comes Christ, and takes upon him the opening and fulfilling of the book, and the decrees therein. At this the chorus fall down and worship.

Ver. 1.—First, What is this book? Many make it the Scriptures. But it is plain it is a book containing the affairs of the world and the church, and God’s decrees about it. For upon the opening of every seal he sees a vision containing the matter of the ensuing chapters, the 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th; and when the seals were all taken off, chap. x., John is bidden to eat the book, that he might prophesy again the other part of this prophecy. So as it is this book of the Revelation, and the government of the church and world set forth therein, which Christ takes, and, by taking the book, undertakes to manage and exercise that government, which agrees with what is said at the beginning of this book, Rev. i. 1.

Ver. 2.—A strong angel proclaimeth, ‘Who is worthy to loose the seals thereof?’ &c. The use of the seals is not simply to shew it cannot be known, as Daniel’s sealed book is to shew it could not be known till the end, Dan. xii. 4, but for the further setting out the glory of Christ, who was only able to take the book and to loose the seals. To take the book, first, God causeth a general proclamation to be made to all creatures, as some kings have done for a noble service, promising great reward, as Saul did, 1 Sam. xvii. 26, 27. Secondly, an angel makes it, to shew that none among angels could, and a strong angel, that his voice may reach all creatures. The end of this was, first, to stir up strong desires in John, and all else, to search into the meaning of this prophecy; what he did in the 1st chapter of Revelation, ver. 3, here he provokes unto the same by this proclamation. Secondly, another end of it was to set out the weakness of the creature, that the honour of Christ might appear that he only can do this. It is the manner of God thus to endear mercies to us, as he endeared a wife to Adam. He first brought all creatures to him, that he might first see that there was not a meet help for him among them. So in the work of salvation, he lets the soul try all means first, to run to duties, and to all helps, and then brings it to Christ. So, 1 Cor. i., that the power of God might appear, he first lets the world try their wisdom, and then sends the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe, ver. 21, 25. It is a question among the school-men, whether any mere creature could satisfy for sin? Some say they could, and some say it is a needless question. But it is a necessary thing to know that a creature could not; for it glorifies Christ the more, as in the present case it doth that all creatures here were first challenged. And this here is an argument for that also; for if they could not open the book, they could much less have redeemed us, for that is made a greater thing, ver. 9, where they sing that ‘Christ was therefore worthy to open the book, because he

had redeemed us.' Heb. x., God was not pleased with the blood of bulls and goats, ver. 5.

Use.—Hence learn we to renounce all kings, priests, and prophets, in comparison of Christ; he is a priest to redeem, and a prophet to teach and reveal the mysteries of God, and he is the king to execute all God's decrees. It is good to go over all the creatures, and to renounce them, and say, I will be saved by none of you. Suppose the work of redemption was yet to work, and God should make this proclamation as here, Find me out a party able to redeem, I'll speak to him; call a council, seek one, (none would be found;) and how should we have howled and wept, as John did here, and say we were undone? And then suppose God should have set out Christ at last. But he would not put you to this plunge; it is the more love shewn by him to find out Christ, and to speak to him himself to die for us, and do it to our hands.

Observe from those words, *Who is worthy?*—It is not simply an act of power to break open the seals, but to have authority by worth; so that which puts the value on Christ's satisfaction was the worth of his person, and so in this act to open the book. A mere creature might have had as much habitual grace, and performed as much duty, but who is worthy? It is the personal worth which did it: 'Such a high priest became us, who is higher than the heavens,'—that is, than the angels,—Heb. x. Secondly, None was found worthy: the word is *none*; it is not restrained to man, no man, but never a reasonable creature, in the heavens angels, nor in earth men.

Neither to look thereon—that is, to look in it to understand it, for else John could and did look on it, ver. 1. Now, to loose the seals and open the book is not simply to know God's mind in his decrees, but to make the vision of them to John, and to execute and fulfil them in times; it is an allusion to those which take a commission, who take it not only to look on it, but to fulfil it. It is a commission sealed, so as this proclamation is in effect, Who shall be able to be God's commissioner to take this book, and make the visions to John, and execute and produce them in their time?

And this appears from chap. vi. 1. Still as the seals are opened by the Lamb, there is a vision made to John of what should be done; therefore the Lamb is presented not simply as one that should take the book, but that hath eyes and horns—eyes of providence, and horns of power to execute. And this agrees with the allusion unto Gen. xlix. 9, 10, where Judah is made a type of Christ, and called a lion's whelp, and the sceptre given him; and is called God's lawgiver, to take his laws from him and execute them, for in that respect it is that Judah is called God's lawgiver, Gen. xlix. 11: not in respect of the giving the laws of God, but in respect of the executive power to see them kept. So Christ here; and he so takes this book as to deliver it to us to execute the decrees of it.

Ver. 4. *And I wept much.*—John weeps. He was called up to heaven to see visions; and now there was a stop: it was to set off the mercy, and to try his heart, and make the joy greater.

Obs. 1.—Our infirmities shall not hinder God's revealing himself, though unbelief may say it will never be; yet Christ will go on to reveal himself, as here to John.

Obs. 2.—God in greatest mercies may make greatest stops, enough to bring to despair; you shall see no hope ere he grants them, so to John here. So in the first works of conversion many times; and so in great works he calls

men to, he may make a stop. John was called to see visions, yet a stop and pause was in his view made.

Obs. 3.—If by John's weeping were meant his praying to God in this stop put, then you see the way to obtain revelations of God is by tears and praying; so Daniel prayed and wept, Dan. x. 2, and then God revealed himself.

John is comforted by a stander-by, (1.) by something to uphold his heart; (2.) by the sight of the Lamb, ver 6.

Obs. 4.—The degrees God uses to comfort his people :—(1.) To let fall something that gives hopes of Christ, to draw the soul to wait; then, (2.) to shew them Christ himself. God might have shewed John the Lamb at first, but first he comforts him by a stander-by; so Job first 'heard by the hearing of the ear, and then his eye saw him.'

Ver. 6.—Christ, the only opener of this book and giver of this prophecy, is diversely expressed :—

1. He is called the 'root of David,' out of Isa. xi. 10. Christ put this riddle to the Pharisees, How David could call him Lord, if he were his son? So how could he be called the root, if he were David's son and a branch of him? The truth is, he is the root of David, and of all the saints; he was the root of his ancestors, the father of his mother. The root of any family in Scripture is put for the eldest son in it, who is as the root of the rest. So, Isa. xiv. 30, 'I will kill thy root with famine,'—that is, thy first-born, the root of thy house,—for in opposition he says, and 'the first-born of the poor shall be fed.' So, Mal. iv. 1, that therefore Christ is the root of David, the meaning is, that he is the 'first-born among all his brethren,' as, Rom. viii., he is called; and, Ps. lxxxix. 27, so God calls David in the type, but intends Christ thereby, when he says, 'I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth;' and, ver. 29, 'His seed shall endure for ever.' This is to be the root of David. 'He is the first-born of every creature, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,' Eph. iii. 15.

2. He is called the 'lion of the tribe of Judah;' but why a lion of the tribe of Judah? It is a manifest allusion to the prophecy, Gen. xlix. 9, wherein Judah, as this place shews, is made a type of Christ; and it warrants the application of all there unto Christ.

Judah is called a lion—

(1.) Because out of Judah came all the worthies and lion-like men, Joshua, Othniel, David, all the shadows of Christ; therefore, Gen. xlix. 11, he is called 'an old lion,' as the word is, a courageous, hearty lion: so, 2 Sam. xvii. 10, valiant men are called lions; such was Christ, who 'durst engage his heart to draw near to God,' Jer. xxx. 21.

(2.) Judah had that kingdom whereof a lion is the emblem; therefore sceptre and lawgiver, ver. 10, are attributed to him, so that it is as much as to say, Christ the king by inheritance, as Judah was, hath overcome.

(3.) Judah did take the prey, the land; it was done by the worthies of Judah—Joshua, David; and when, as a lion, they had taken that prey, they couched and had rest, as in Solomon's days, 1 Kings iv. 21, which was also prophesied of, Num. xxiii. 24, 'Behold, they rose up as a great lion, and shall not lie down till he eat the prey;' and Gen. xlix. 9, 'He couched as an old lion; who shall raise him up?' So Christ, when he had led captivity captive, sits down quietly in heaven, couching, as lying in wait till the day of judgment, when he will appear like an old lion that coucheth as if asleep, and then suddenly leaps on the prey. Especially in the latter days, when the gatherings shall be to him, his kingdom shall be as of a lion among beasts; so, Micah v. 8, he prophesies there of Christ's kingdom in the

calling the Jews, and of his birth, ver. 2. Now that kingdom is the scope of this book.

Ver. 6, *And in the midst of the elders stood a lamb as it had been slain.*—John had heard of Christ as a lion, but he sees him as a lamb. So many a poor soul are afraid of him, but when you see him, and come to be acquainted with him, you will find him to be a lamb, and a lamb that hath eyes to run to and fro through the earth for you, and seven horns, not to hurt you but to butt his and your enemies. We have not all lion-like thoughts of Christ; as he hath the heart of a lion, so he hath the meekness of a lamb. You may wonder at this mixture; he is a lamb to you.

1. Why is he called a lamb? It is in allusion to the sacrifices of the old law, which were most of lambs; the ordinary sacrifices were two lambs a day, Num. xxviii. 3. Here he was to represent Christ as a priest; as before, in being called a lion, he was represented as a king; and therefore it follows, 'as it had been slain.'

2. *In the midst of the throne, &c., stood a lamb.*—The Lamb stood nearer than the four beasts, between the throne and the elders, for he is a mediator betwixt his church and God.

3. *As it had been slain.*—That is, *first*, as if he were newly slain, for his blood is fresh continually, as if he were slain to-day; thou seest thy sins, as if they were committed yesterday, and God views Christ's blood as if he were slain yesterday, Heb. ix. 12. *Secondly*, but 'as slain,' to shew he doth not remain slain, but is alive: Chap. i. 18, 'I was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore.'

4. *Stood a lamb.*—Standing, to shew he is ready to help. When Stephen died, he saw Christ standing at God's right hand as ready to receive him. It is also to shew his readiness to intercede.

5. *Having seven horns.*—Horns are put for power to push with; so, Rev. xvii. 12, 'The ten horns are the ten kings.' The seven horns here, all kingly power; seven is a number of perfection, to shew Christ hath power to open the seven seals; and there are seven trumpets and seven vials, and Christ hath seven horns,—that is, power to fulfil all these. Antichrist rises like Christ, and comes with power, Rev. xiii. 11; but what discovers him? He hath but two horns; the church needs not fear him. The Lamb hath horns to vindicate himself of his enemies; fear not kings, though ten kings, he is King of kings; and fear not the devil, who is a roaring lion, for Christ the lion of the tribe of Judah is stronger than he, and will bind him.

6. *And seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.*—The Spirit, not in his personal subsistence, is here meant, but in his instrumental working in gifts and providence, and so is called seven spirits. Before, in chap. iv. 5, the 'seven spirits before the throne' are gifts in the church which are from Christ, for he is the fountain of spiritual gifts, and hath the Spirit without measure; but here, by the seven spirits in Christ is not meant gifts poured out, but eyes of providence sent into the earth, by which he knows and sees all things, in allusion to that, Zech. iv. 10; and it implies the perfect knowledge and providence of Christ to order all affairs on earth for his church; so, 2 Chron. xvi. 9, as before in Zechariah, he did the affairs of the Persian monarch for the building of his church.

Obs.—Christ as man hath both horns and eyes to guide and discern all things here below; his human nature is the instrument of all God's power, all goes through his hands, and all the works of God's providence go all through his sight; he knows all is done in the world.

The next thing is, why Christ should be presented here under these

notions of a lion of the tribe of Judah, and a lamb, and the root of David, rather than any other. He speaks, (1.) In the language of the Old Testament, and of John Baptist, who was under the Old Testament, (who all spake of Christ.) So Luke xxiv. 27, 'Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them the things concerning himself.' Now Moses called him a lion, Gen. xlix. 9; Isaiah calls him a lamb, chap. liii. 7, and the root of David, chap. xi. 10; and John Baptist calls him the 'Lamb of God which bears the sins of the world.' Now as all other things in this book are set forth in allusion to the Old Testament, so these descriptions of Christ also. (2.) He gives him these titles in relation to the work of redemption, of which mention is made ver. 9. Now to that two things are required:—*First*, A price to God; and so as a lamb 'thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood,' ver. 9. *Secondly*, Power to deliver us out of the hands of our enemies; so he is 'a lion that overcomes.' (3.) It hath relation especially to the opening this book, and executing the affairs in it; and so these titles are most proper: for—

First, He needed to die for it, and so is presented as a lamb slain; for that price that salvation did cost, each revelation to us must cost as much also. Not simply his being the Son of God, and so knowing the counsels of God written in his decrees, was enough for him to make them known to us; but to reveal this counsel to us, as in a book to be opened to us, he must die; for our sins hindered, and therefore he must die. Hence it is said, 'Thou art worthy to open the book, for thou wast slain,' ver. 9. And so, as a lamb, he is said to take sin away that hindered the revelation to us.

Secondly, As a lion he needed courage to approach God's wrath, break through a consuming fire to his throne to take the book; 'Who hath engaged his heart to draw near to me?' No angel durst have presumed to come so near.

Thirdly, As a lion he needed to overcome death, and rise to execute the contents of this book. A lion, they say, sleeps at first three days when brought forth, and then with the roaring of the old lion is roused, and sleeps the least of any creatures; so Christ rose by the power of his Father to sleep no more.

Fourthly, Being risen, he is set forth, (1.) As a lion of Judah, for in that prophecy, Gen. xlix. 11, as also Psalm lx. 7, Judah, in respect of his kingly office, is called God's lawgiver, not simply in respect of giving the laws,—that Moses, of the tribe of Levi, did,—but because Judah executed them; now because Christ did here take the book of God's decrees, and undertake to execute and fulfil them as God's commissioner, therefore he is in this place most properly in that respect the lion of the tribe of Judah. (2.) He is here set forth as a lamb with seven horns and eyes, in as fit and proper respect to this as might be, as one not fit only to give this prophecy, but to effect the things contained in it by his horns and eyes; and seven horns and seven eyes, to shew his full power to open the seven seals and the seven trumpets, and to pour out the seven vials. Such a prophet never was, who is not barely to reveal things, but to bring them to pass, and make them good. God gave Christ the platform of the occurrences to come, and power and wisdom to order the accomplishment of them.

He is set also forth under both, as a lamb and a lion, to shew his kingly and priestly office: to shew how, by virtue of both, he makes 'us kings and priests,' as they sing, ver. 10, and so they, having his kingdom in their eye, are confirmed in the promise of it by a remembrance of him. As a lamb and a lion thus strong and powerful; as a lamb he purchaseth the revelation of

what concerns the church; as a lamb with horns and eyes, he effects the accomplishment of it. And the sum of this book being to shew how Christ rules the world and his church, till he hath put down all rule, and how he takes the kingdom himself, therefore he is described as a lamb in respect of his quiet governing the affairs of the world and the church until that his kingdom come; and then as a lion, by open force, takes the kingdom and his church as a prey, out of the enemies' jaws, and that by the right of a promised succession from Judah and David; for which cases, those titles of the root of David and lion of Judah do here come in. In a word—

First, This title of his being the root of David, is to shew his right and title to that kingdom he is to receive, of which David and his kingdom was but a type.

Secondly, His being a lamb slain, is to shew both the right and title to that kingdom, and the price by which he purchased this his kingdom, even his blood.

Thirdly, His being a lion, is to shew the power by which he conquers and obtains, and then possesses it. Therefore this heavenly chorus or company here, when they do but see Christ, by taking this book to undertake the accomplishment of this prophecy,—the conclusion of which is his instalment into his kingdom,—they, in the joy and faith of it, cry out beforehand, 'We shall reign on earth,' as looking on all was to go before it as good as already done, and overlooking it all, having this kingdom chiefly in their eye.

Now, from the 8th verse to the end is a doxology, or a giving praise for the Lamb's taking the book, which consists of four parties or companies:—

First, Of twenty-four elders and the beasts; the church of men on earth. They begin and raise the song, ver. 8.

Secondly, Angels; they join and sing after, ver. 11.

Thirdly, Then all creatures come in also, ver. 13.

Fourthly, The beasts, as the leaders, say in the end, *Amen*, and close it, ver. 14.

Obs. 1.—Observe, in the general, that the sons of men are the eminentest praisers of God; they are the precentors in this heavenly choir, and they conclude the song. The reason is, because the highest work God did is the work of redemption, which concerns us, not the angels. For which, yet, the angels praise him in the 2d of Luke, as also here; yea, all the creatures rejoice in our redemption, ver. 13: but still we are the first-fruits, the top leaders. The angels follow; it is not said by them, 'Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood:' that concerns us; yet they sing praise.

Obs. 2.—Learn to bless God for his mercy and goodness to others; so, you see, the angels do for us. They cannot sing, as we, with an interest, yet they praise God for it; and this is their highest grace. Canst thou do so? Then comfort thyself, thou hast as good grace as any in the angels.

Obs. 3.—Yet learn to bless God with a sense of thy interest; that will raise thy heart a degree higher, as the church of men are here raised, ver. 9, 10, in their song by their interest. The praisers of the sons of men are described, (1.) having harps; (2.) golden vials. It is an allusion to the Levitical service in the temple, where they had musical instruments, and incense in bowls or vials, which, Zech. xiv. 20, are called 'the bowls of the altar:' not that musical instruments are to be in the worship of God now, no more than incense; but as incense was the type of prayer and praise, Ps. cxli. 2, 'Let my prayer come up before thee as incense,' so these harps are of that spiritual melody, as the apostle calls it, which we make to God in our hearts, even of spiritual songs in Christ, Eph. v. 19. Therefore John

himself interprets the odours or incense here to be the prayers of the saints: their hearts are the golden vials, having faith purer than gold, as Peter speaks, it being the spring of all their prayers; and their harps also are their hearts: *corda et chordæ* are near akin.

And every one is said to have harps; for in public worship all should join: the little strings go to make up a concert as well as the great. Though thou hast but little grace, yet God's worship would not be complete without thee.

And whereas John calls these odours the prayers of the saints, it makes nothing for what the Papists would collect hence, that the saints in heaven offer up the prayers of the saints on earth. For, *first*, this company are, as we said before, the church of men on earth. *Secondly*, these here offer not the prayers of others, but their own; for both themselves make the song, and it is a new one of their own making, and also the benefit they praise God for in it is their own: 'Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.' Those words therefore, 'the prayers of the saints,' are but the interpretation which John adds, and imply but this, that these were saints, and their odours were their prayers.

Ver. 9, *And they sung a new song.*—(1.) You shall find in the Psalms that when David had a new occasion in a further degree to praise God, he says, 'I will sing a new song;' and here was a new occasion given. (2.) *New*, in opposition to the *old* song under the Old Testament, as John xiii. 14, 'I give you a new commandment;' that is, of the gospel, called new in opposition to the commands of the old law. In the 4th chapter of this book, these elders had sung a song for the work of creation, ver. 11; but here they sing for the work of redemption, as ver. 9, which is the eminent work of the New Testament, as creation was of the Old, and therefore it is called a new song. (3.) Here there is a more special reason why they should sing a new song, for the New Jerusalem was in their eye, Christ's kingdom and their kingdom; 'we shall reign on earth,' there all things shall be made new, and therefore their song is new: a new song for the instalment of their new king; thus Ps. xevi. 1, which is a psalm of this kingdom of Christ, as appears ver. 10, 13; that psalm therefore begins, 'O sing to the Lord a new song.'

Obs. 1.—Learn to frame new matter of praise and affections upon every new occasion.

Obs. 2.—We are to bless God for creation and redemption both; to take in the mention of old blessings when we give thanks for new, as a good scribe is said to bring forth of his treasure things new and old: so in thanksgiving we are to sing the old song and the new.

The matter of the song is praise to the Lamb.

First, The person praised is the Lamb; 'Thou art worthy.' In answer to the proclamation, 'Who is worthy?' Thou, and thou alone; for to him, and by him, and for him are all things, Col. i. 16.

Secondly, The things for which they praise him are, (1.) for his death, that he died to redeem; (2.) for his resurrection, intimated in this, 'Thou wast slain:' the one making us priests, the other kings; as follows, ver. 10. And 'to this end Christ died and rose, that he might be lord and king,' Rom. xiv. 9. The word which is translated here *redeemed*, is in the original *bought*.

Ver. 9, *For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and people, and tongue, and nation.*

Obs. 1.—That the blood of Christ was paid as a price to God to purchase

our redemption, 1 Cor. vi. 20, 'bought with a price;' and in 1 Tim. ii. he calls it a ransom.

Obs. 2.—That Christ hath not redeemed all men; for it is not every nation and tribe, but out of every nation, the elect only.

Obs. 3.—In that they say Christ is worthy to receive the book because he was slain, it argues this Book of the Revelation is a special fruit of his death, and so should be the more prized by us; before Christ's death, we hear Christ himself say he knew not when the day of judgment should be, but now he is slain, and hath taken this book, he doth, ver. 10.

Ver. 10, *And hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.*—Christ was before set forth as a lion for a king, so as a lamb for a priest; and both were mentioned to shew the grounds of our being both kings and priests, who shall reign on earth.

Obs. 1.—That this comforted the saints of old, even the consideration of Christ's kingdom on earth; and how peremptory are they, 'We shall reign!' They mention that, because that is the end and scope of the Revelation, the conclusion of this book, when the seals are off and the book finished, and so they have it in their eye; and they seeing Christ undertaking the accomplishment of all in this book, whereof this is the issue, are confirmed in the faith of it.

Obs. 2.—That this kingdom of Christ on earth to come is a far more glorious condition for the saints than what their souls have now in heaven; for these here overlook that condition which yet they were to run through, and their thoughts fly to comfort themselves with this, 'We shall reign on earth.'

Ver. 11.—In this verse come in the other company of the angels singing; who, first, for their *number*, are ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands. In the 7th of Daniel, where the same throne and kingdom of Christ is prophesied of, there is the same number of his guard of angels mentioned.

Obs. 1.—God hath another world of rational creatures, which we see not; and what a story then will the latter day produce!

Obs. 2.—What need we fear when there are so many for us? as 2 Kings vi. 17.

For their *station*; they are behind the elders, &c., yet round about the throne; not so near as the elders, they are the guard of the queen of heaven, the Lamb's wife, the church. Ps. xxxiv. 7, 'Angels encompass round about them that fear him;' and are sent out for their good, Heb. i. 14.

Ver. 12.—The song follows, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive,' &c.

Obs. 1.—Christ, though he were worthy by inheritance, yet he was also worthy by purchase, to receive all these; so the words imply, 'that was slain.'

Obs. 2.—As he hath seven horns and seven eyes, so he hath a sevenfold praise.

Obs. 3.—And because they cannot praise him enough, they heap up words to praise him with.

Obs. 4.—None is worthy to be the king of all the world but only Jesus Christ; and indeed it were too much for any creature. The angels themselves were top-heavy of their glory, which made them reel out of heaven; but Christ hath the Godhead to poise him. No beast is naturally a king of beasts but the lion, says the philosopher; nor none worthy to be king of all creatures but this lion of the tribe of Judah.

The things which they attribute to him are—

First, Power; that is, authority over all: so Christ says, John xvii. 2, 'To me all power is given.'

Secondly, Riches; that is, possession of all creatures: 'all things are his,' and so ours. 2 Cor. viii. 9, 'Christ, who was rich, was made poor;' riches of glory, knowledge, all are his.

Thirdly, Strength, joined with power and authority. Able he is to work anything; not as other kings that have great power and authority, but no more personal strength than other men: he hath therefore seven horns.

Fourthly, Wisdom; and this as large as his power and dominions: he knows all God means to do, and sees all with his own seven eyes; not other men's, as other kings do.

Fifthly, Honour; that respects what all creatures bring in to him: they all adore and bow the knee to him, Phil. ii.

Sixthly, Glory, both in his personal excellencies, and also what his Father gives him; he sits at God's right hand, and with his Father governs, and shall come in his Father's glory, and in his person is the brightness of his glory.

Seventhly, Blessing; which respects that glory which, for his special goodness to them, his saints do give him. Others give honour to Christ,—the devils do,—but not blessing; that the saints only do, for that respects communication of goodness: they only bless him whom he blesseth first.

Obs.—Christ hath all desirable excellencies in him: beauty, glory, honour, esteem, riches, strength, wisdom.

Ver. 13, *And every creature.*—Every creature in its kind shall worship Christ, Phil. ii. Every creature comes in here, because when Christ's kingdom is set up, they shall be renewed, Rom. viii. 19, Ps. xcvi. 10, 11; both creatures under the earth, bodies of saints departed, and precious stones, &c.; for all creatures shall be used in a glorious liberty.

The church of men began the song, and these continue it; for it is this mercy to them that is matter of the song, and the instauration of their king; and therefore we are to be stirred up the more to do it in that we see even all the creatures do it, whom it doth not so much concern.

Ver. 14, *And the four beasts said, Amen;* and the elders follow: the officers begin and end.

Amen seems to be an ordinance, a word to be used by officers first, and then by the people; as 1 Cor. xiv. 16.