

of God, the hope of Israel, the establishment of a returned Christ upon the throne of David in Jerusalem. Nor did they know the mortal state of man and the essentials of atoning truth as it is in Christ Jesus. So much of the Apocalypse would remain a puzzle to them and their writings on the subject make this plain. So whilst we acknowledge the consistently accurate interpretations of so many of these past commentators when identifying key aspects of the symbols, we are the more grate-

ful that the whole of the Book has been made plain to us with a proper comprehension of the gospel of the Kingdom. 'Eureka' is a very special Christadelphian treasure!"

In conclusion, this booklet is unusual and gives us confidence that our understanding of Christ's last message to us is sound, and that we can look forward very soon to the return of the Lord and the fulfilment of the remaining prophecies in that wonderful message. It is heartily commended to the Brotherhood.

The Lamb on Mount Zion (2)

Ralph Green

REVELATION 14:2 contains several features that call for comment. The verse reads: "And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps".*

The words "voice from heaven" indicates that these redeemed are already ruling in the symbolic heaven, the Kingdom of God, at least in its early stages. It will take some years fully to subdue all nations to the authority of Christ. The next phrase, "like the voice of many waters", indicates that the redeemed consist of a great multitude of men and women, said in chapter 7 to have been taken out of "all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues" (v. 9).

Then we are told that the sound is "like the voice of loud thunder". This indicates that the process of subduing the nations to incorporate them into the Kingdom of God will inevitably mean war, the war of Armageddon. 'Armageddon' is a term used to identify the seventh and last vial of God's wrath (Rev. 16:16,17). Here we read, "And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth" (v. 18).

Included in this seventh vial is the destruction of the cities of the nations that will be necessary to achieve the submission of the nations to Christ. Also, and of particular significance, is the sentence, "And great Babylon [the papal and ecclesiastical system of the Roman Catholic Church] was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath" (v. 19).

The Roman Catholic Church

This church is remembered particularly for her cruel treatment of God's true worshippers for a period of 1,260 years. They were unrelentingly persecuted and put to death because they refused to "receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads" (13:16), that is to say, to conform to the erroneous dogmas of the pope. To describe His hatred of this ecclesiastical system, God portrays it in symbolic terms as a profane harlot, "having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH". John continued, "And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (17:4-6). Without doubt, this would be one of the main reasons for her destruction during the seventh vial.

When this war of Armageddon is finished and all nations have been brought to submission to the authority of the Lord Jesus, there will be peace for 1,000 years. This peace is represented in the vision of chapter 14 by these "harpists playing their harps". What a happy time this will be for the redeemed, for they will then be ruling the nations of the whole world under the authority of the Lord Jesus!

The Lord Jesus in Isaiah 9

The long-lasting peace following the war of Armageddon is briefly referred to in a well-known

* Quotations are from the NKJV unless stated otherwise.

passage in Isaiah's prophecy: "For unto us [Israel] a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder. And his name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over his kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this" (9:6,7).

The name "Mighty God" (Heb. *El Gibbor*) could well be rendered 'mighty warrior', which is an apt title for the leader in "the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Rev.16:14). When this war has been won, and peace arrives to a chastened world, these other titles, "Everlasting [Age-lasting] Father, Prince of Peace", will be equally applicable to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The new song

Returning to Revelation 14, verse 3 reads, "They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth".

This song could only be sung by the hundred and forty-four thousand because it was applicable only to them. This becomes clear when its details are revealed, as they are in Revelation 5:9,10: "And they sang a new song, saying: 'You [the Lamb] are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth'".

This redemption and glorious exaltation of the singers is attributed to the loving sacrificial work of the Lamb. Having been raised from the dead and judged worthy of everlasting life, they have now been made free from the moral and physical infirmities, the weaknesses and pains experienced in their former mortal lives. Their redemption would be especially appreciated by those who also suffered persecution and death at the hands of their enemies because of their faith and loyalty to the Lord Jesus and their heavenly Father. They are now to be rewarded with the high honour of being made kings and priests during the Millennium that is soon to follow. No wonder they want to sing this new song of

praise, giving glory to the Lamb who has made their redemption possible!

A description of the redeemed is given in Revelation 14:4: "These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb".

The Book of Revelation is uniquely, in the Bible, one that uses mainly symbolic language. We can therefore readily perceive that the import of the phrase, "the ones who were not defiled with women", had to do, not with their previous marital status, but with the nature of their worship of God and His Son the Lord Jesus. We have already referred to the symbol of the depraved woman called "The Mother of Harlots" when dealing with the judgement on the Roman Catholic Church. The apostate churches of Christendom constitute the women with which these redeemed had no association since their baptism into Christ, in some cases having come out from them. They had sought to live lives in harmony with the teaching of the Lord Jesus, doing all that he has commanded and seeking to keep their garments unspotted from the world. In so doing they followed the Lamb in the past and will continue to do so in a more literal sense in the future, particularly during the outpouring of the seventh vial.

"First-fruits to God and to the Lamb"

This phrase alludes to one of the types in the Mosaic Law, as detailed in Leviticus 23, which states that the Israelites were required to offer to God a sheaf of the first-fruits of their harvest as soon as the corn was ready to cut. There was also a burnt offering of a lamb without blemish, a grain offering and a drink offering of wine (vv. 9-14). Fifty days later they were to offer two wave loaves baked with leaven, together with seven lambs, a bullock and two rams, with their grain and drink offerings (vv. 15-22).

It is suggested that the sheaf of the first-fruits and the lamb symbolise the gathering to God by resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and the two wave loaves, called "the bread of the firstfruits" in verse 20, symbolise the two groups of the redeemed, the Jews and the Gentiles. The main harvest will be reaped later, at the end of the Millennium (Rev. 20:12,13).

The Apostle Paul, when writing to the Corinthians concerning the resurrection of the dead, also uses this figure. He writes, "For as in Adam all

die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at his coming" (1 Cor. 15:22,23). Christ is the first man to be raised to immortality. His faithful followers have to wait for their turn, which will be when he returns.

The redeemed without fault

Of the redeemed it is said, "in their mouth was found no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God" (Rev. 14:5). By this statement the redeemed are put into the same class as the Lord Jesus, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Pet. 2:22, AV). This does not mean that they had been like Jesus, sinless in their former lives, but that as, by faith, their sins had been washed away in the blood of the Lamb, they are now deemed to be faultless before the throne of God, God having forgiven them all trespasses (Col. 2:13). What a merciful provision this is for all of us who are in Christ Jesus!

Why the vision?

It may be asked why this vision of the Lamb standing on Mount Zion is placed immediately after that of the beasts of chapter 13. One answer may be that many of those faithful saints who lived during the period when these beasts flourished would have had to endure great hardship and possibly violent death. In this connection we are informed, "It was granted to him [the sea beast] to make war with the saints and to overcome them" (v. 7), and "He [the two-horned beast] was granted power to . . . cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed" (v. 15).

For many centuries, the Catholic Church, fearing that the spread of Bible-based teaching would undermine the authority of the church in religious matters, sought to suppress dissenting communities by war with ever-increasing cruelty. For instance, in A.D. 1184 Pope Lucius III excommunicated the Waldensians, the followers of Peter Waldo, a French reformer who had translated the four Gospels into French. Waldo, because of his preaching, was hounded from place to place but found refuge eventually in Bohemia.

In A.D. 1208 Pope Innocent III, by formal decrees, required all 'heretics' to be seized, condemned and handed over by the bishops to the civil authorities to execute the 'lawful' sentence, that is to say, capital punishment. Catholics at this time were intent on exterminating all 'heretics' wherever possible.

Many Bible-believing saints who had been able to understand the visions of the beasts of Revelation 13 had the faith and courage to stand out against the persecutions of the Catholic Church. They would be able to take much comfort from the vision of the 144,000 who had been redeemed and raised from the dead, standing with the triumphant Lamb on Mount Zion, their trials and sorrows now over. Their decision to maintain their faith in Jesus and to obey him in the face of cruel persecution was to be rewarded in the joyful consummation when the time comes for the Lamb to assume the God-appointed role of King of kings and Lord of lords (19:16) in God's everlasting Kingdom.

(Concluded)

A new resource for Jewish history and archaeology

The Centre for On-line Judaic studies (www.cojs.org) is an internet portal and Website that works with museums and archives to provide on-line access to books, documents and artefacts. It is described as an on-line Judaic studies encyclopaedia which has its own pages as well as links to other sites. Its own pages provide articles and images of artefacts, and educational resource guides divided into subject areas of Jewish history. For example, a time-line of American Jewish history can be followed, with videos and radio broadcasts; another section deals with the Jews in Medieval Europe; another presents documents and pictures relating to the infamous Dreyfus trial in Paris, which stimulated Theodore Herzl to found the Zionist movement. High-resolution images of steles, seals and inscriptions from Biblical times are available, and some can be manipulated to view them from various angles. There is a virtual archaeological dig of the City of David in Jerusalem, enabling users to view excavations layer by layer. Links to other sites enable users to view material stored in various Jewish institutions across the world, such as the Jewish Publications Society, the oldest publisher of Jewish works in North America, the Jewish Theological Seminary library, with 400,000 volumes, and the Yad Ben-Zvi Institute in Jerusalem, where the Aleppo Codex, the oldest surviving Hebrew Old Testament, is stored.—T.B.