



the
Golden
Candlestick

**THE THRONE OF GOD
AND OF THE LAMB**

Part 1

T. Austin-Sparks

Volume 158

JESUS CHRIST, THE FIRST AND THE LAST

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, which is and which was and which is to come, the Almighty ... And when I saw Him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive unto the ages of the ages” (Rev. 1:8,17-18).

“These things saith the first and the last, which became dead, and is alive” (Rev. 2:8).

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (Rev. 22:13).

“And He showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the midst of the street thereof. And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits, yielding its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no curse any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein: and His servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 22:1-5).

That phrase and designation, “The first and the last, the beginning and the end”, is the thing that will govern our meditation for a little while. We shall seek to see something, maybe but little, of what it means. “I am the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” The end of this passage at the commencement of chapter 22 is a great help in this particular connection for here, as we near the end of this wonderful, remarkable book, we are coming to a summary of everything in it. As you notice, after this point, things become fairly general by way of application, warning, exhortation, but in these verses, Revelation 22:1-5, we have the explanation and the

consummation of all things. They take us back to the beginning and they carry us right on to the end. They set before us what was the divine thought from the beginning and they show us that divine thought realized at the end. It is a wonderfully comprehensive passage. In a few sentences we have all the ages explained. We are allowed to enter into what God has had in His mind from the beginning, and to see that God will achieve what He has had in His mind from the beginning and have it as a glorious realization at the end. When you come to think about it in the light of the whole book, you find that it is all gathered up in the Lord Jesus and in that way He is the beginning and the end, the first and the last. All that took its rise in the thought of God at the beginning is centred in and realized through His Son, and all at the end is gathered up into that Son. One Person dominates the book of the Revelation, and the book of the Revelation is the whole history from Genesis 1:1 to the end of the ages of time, the beginning of the ages of the ages. I wonder if you have realized that the book of the Revelation compasses all history from Genesis onwards. We may see by hints as we go along how that is so.

The throne of God as Creator

Here you have some statements, some clear-cut phrases: “The throne of God and of the Lamb”. That is, in a word, God’s full and final place of honour in His universe. Well, that is an eternal thought. It is not that God is God supreme, almighty; He has ever been that. Nothing can make any difference to that; history has no effect upon that, but it is now as it was intended to be in the beginning — God in the place of full and final honour in the heart of His universe, in the acknowledgment, in the delight and ascription of honour from His universe. The whole universe agrees to that, accepts that, delights in that, glories in that. You find, as you move through the book, again and again that comes up: worship, universal worship, to God. It is not just His isolated being of eternal and almighty sovereignty, but He is now the centre of the worship of His universe. The throne of God — that comes out at the end; that was from the beginning.

But the completion of the sentence is “and of the Lamb”, and that carries you back to chapters 4 and 5. As you remember, in those passages you have two great ascriptions of praise. “And when the living creatures shall give glory and honour and thanks to Him that sitteth on the throne, to Him that liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders ...” (you remember the four and twenty elders are representative of the whole in all

dispensations) "... shall fall down before Him that sitteth on the throne, and shall worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power: for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they were, and were created" (Rev. 4:9-11).

Here you have the throne of God as Creator, creating all things according to the good pleasure of His will, now at length the centre of that creation and of that creation's worship, extolling His honour.

But then the other half of the sentence in Revelation 22 has to come in, and you have that in chapter 5, as you notice. "And I saw, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a great voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and glory, and blessing.' And every created thing which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them, heard I saying, Unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever. And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped" (Rev. 5:11-14).

The throne of the Lamb as Redeemer

Now you want to know what the particular significance is. Well it is here, in the earlier part of the chapter, "Thou art worthy." Why? "Thou wast slain, Thou hast overcome, Thou hast redeemed by Thy blood." The throne of God and of the Lamb! God created, the Lamb redeemed. God gets His place and rights by reason of the blood of the Lamb. That is the whole story in a few words. The throne of God and of the Lamb! So that it is the triumph of God's thought from eternity by way of the blood of the Lamb, and the Lamb is there alongside of the Almighty as one with Him in the securing of that great end upon which His heart was set from all eternity. That is inclusive and comprehensive. In that sense, He is the first and the last. The throne is first and the throne is last, and He is with the throne at the first because by His blood He has secured all that that throne of honour means. We come into the application of this presently to ourselves; it is not just objective contemplation. Let us look at one or two other things here as we go on.

A river of water of life proceeding out of the throne

“He showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal”. In that symbolism, we are plainly, clearly told that the prevailing feature, when God reaches His end and when God has things as He ever intended to have them, will be incorruptible life. Throughout His universe the characteristic will be life, crystal clear, incorruptible life, and again that is an eternal thought. That was what God had in mind for His universe in creation, and was lost or missed by man, but, as by a man came death, so by a Man came the resurrection of the dead, so by a Man came life. “I am the beginning”, God’s thought from the beginning; “and the end” — here is the thing realized. It is through the Lord Jesus, through His blood, that this incorruptible life, bright as crystal, will fill God’s universe at the end. The symbolism is very close to the truth you notice: “Proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb”. The incorruptible life of God now released for the universe because of the Lamb and the blood of the Lamb; the incorruptible life of God’s Son. “I am the beginning and the end, the first and the last!”

It is a mighty victory. This throne is no mere passive thing. This throne throughout this book is a mighty thing; the symbol of a mighty conquest, a governing thing. When all other antagonisms in God’s universe have been put down, that throne stands as a symbol of a mighty triumph, and the triumph is through the blood of the Lamb. That is what runs through the book of the Revelation. “They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb.” It is life released, incorruptible life, and I am quite sure our hearts today go out in a new way to the Lord to hasten that day when this universe will be flooded with incorruptible life, for never was God’s universe more nauseated by the corruption of this fallen creation than today. Oh, the corruption! Every day brings us fresh revelations of the corruption, and even ungodly men revolt in the presence of the manifestation, the dragging out, the pouring forth, of the corruption, the corrupt life, of this creation. Blessed be God, the Lamb has overcome! “I am he that liveth; I was dead but I am alive unto the ages of the ages.” “I am the beginning and the end.” Our hearts go up in prayer, ‘Lord, hasten the day when incorruptible life shall fill this creation!’ The Lamb’s victory shall be universally displayed in that river of the water of life.

The tree of life

“And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” The only thing we need say about that is that it stands, as you notice, over against the curse. “And there shall be no curse any more” — literally, there shall be no more cursed thing. We have only got to look back and see we are starting at Genesis with the whole history of creation. The tree of life from which the leaves and fruit were never taken, which man had never enjoyed until Christ came. The curse came in, and what is its mark? Well, we know through the Bible by illustrations of it, as well as by the whole manifestation of it, that the curse always speaks of barrenness, loss, disappointment through death. Everything is blighted by death; everything is cut short by death; all hopes are disappointed by death. Death is that cold hand which comes upon the fruit before it is ripe, before it has reached perfection, and snatches it away. Death as the curse causes the fruit to fall from the trees before it is ripe, nothing reaching the full purpose of its being, of its creation.

Over against that, here is the tree of life, which tree is the Lord Jesus Himself, and here is abundant fruitfulness, and not only abundance, but continuance. The suggestion of the symbol here is that, not only do you get a rich full crop, but no sooner do you have one, than there is another coming on, and we know the significance of the number twelve — fulness of government. Here is a continuous reign of fruitfulness by life without any trace of the curse whatever. The tree of life, the beginning and the end, just God’s thought for His creation. It will not do us any harm to contemplate this today. It might inspire us in a day like this. Oh, in a word, it is full, complete satisfaction when the curse is for ever removed! But the removal of the curse, remember, is because of the Lamb. The water of life comes from the throne of God and of the Lamb and that water is the life of this tree. This tree yields its fruit by reason of that water. We are taken back to Ezekiel 47. A great river of life and the trees on the banks whose leaves and fruit never fail. And here it is the Lord Jesus as that.

His servants serving and reigning

And one more fragment here — “His servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face; and His name shall be on their foreheads ... and they shall reign unto the ages of the ages.” Reign unto the ages of the

ages! I don't want to make mental pictures of the meaning of that. I am quite sure it is not of great interest to us that that should be a literal thing. We shall find our hearts very much more responsive and ravished by drawing in that little phrase of Paul's, "they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life through the one, Jesus Christ". Here it is: "They shall reign for ever." Reigning in life; life regnant, life triumphant. Well, this is the prospect, this is what is set before us in Him who is the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

The eternal purpose

If we take these five verses from Revelation 22 and put them right at the beginning of the whole book of the Revelation, we shall have our key to the book. Now I suggest that you do that. Take this little section of five verses and put it at the beginning of the book of the Revelation, and you have got your key to the whole book. I am not saying that you have answered all the questions of the students of prophecy as to when this happens and when that happens, and where we must place this and that and the other thing. Less and less am I concerned with that because I do not feel life coming along that line. There is a good deal of confusion and very often the old creation begins to manifest itself when you get to the thousand and one interpretations as to the book of the Revelation. If this book should mean one thing to us more than any other, it ought to mean *life*, because that is the thing that runs right through from the first chapter — "I am He that liveth." It is the whole question of life gaining the mastery, triumphing, overcoming through the blood of the Lamb and issuing in this glorious thing at the end — life everywhere and death no more. "There shall be no more death." So, if we want to have a living time in the book of the Revelation and not be afraid of it, this is the way to come to it. Put this paragraph forward and let it govern all that follows in the book. Of course, you can go further back than that if you like, as I have suggested. You can put it back at Genesis 1 because the book of the Revelation is the history from Genesis 1 onwards. I mean that it touches the whole course of sin, antagonism to God, the work of Satan, the going wrong of the nations. It gathers all that up in the last dispensation. It looks right back to the beginning so that this fragment is the key to everything in the Bible. It is a key to this book. It tells us quite clearly what God ever had in view from the creation. If you want to know what it is all about — when you take up your Bible or when you take up your book of the

Revelation, the one question that should be in your mind is this, What is it all about? If you have never taken that position, you will find that a very helpful one. When you pick up your Bible and read in it anywhere — it does not matter — ask yourself this question, *What is it all about?* And you can resolve your Bible as a whole or any part of your Bible into one answer to that question. It is all about God's intention that life should triumph in His universe. You can put that in different ways if you like, but that is the issue, that life and not death should prevail throughout God's universe — incorruptible life. Now every part of the Bible bears upon that.

All the dealings of God with you and with me in our own personal lives and histories with Him are about that, but we have got to recognize that it is not something that is going to be ushered in at a certain point or date in the history of this universe. It is something which God is doing in us now. What is God doing in you and in me? What is the object of His dealings with us? Why is He allowing all these fiery trials to come our way? Why is He allowing the enemy to have so much liberty with us? Why the history of the saints? To teach them the meaning of the blood of the Lamb. In other words, to bring them into the good of the Lamb's victory, which good is life triumphant *now*; not to wait for the coming new heaven and new earth, but you and I are now being taught to live by another life, a life which is not the life of this old creation, but it is the life which is the life of the Son of God — “that life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

All this has a present application. It is important that we recognize that before we go any further. That very life is in us because that tree of life is in us, or, in other words, because that Christ who has overcome is in us. We have to learn to live more and more by the glorious fact that there is a life in us which is not that old creation life but the new creation life. There is a life in us which is incorruptible life and we have to learn to reign by that life. That is why it is not long before you come in this book of the Revelation to the overcomer.

I have suggested that we take this paragraph and place it at the beginning of the book of the Revelation and let it govern all and we will see what God is working towards. Bring the end forward, and what is it all about? It is all about the throne of God and of the Lamb, the river of water of life bright as crystal, the tree of life, and His servants reigning for ever. That is what God has ever had in mind. Let us bring that forward and view everything in the light of that.

The light of the eternal purpose applied to the church

What are the seven messages to the seven churches all about? They are all about that. You can break it up, if you like, into its specific application to each, but when you come to the final issue it is that. Something has happened to corrupt, and the testimony of triumphant life is therefore nullified. That is the trouble. The inclusive and comprehensive message to the churches is, Back to the position of triumphant life! Get rid of this corruption! Overcome! How do you overcome? What is an overcomer? Firstly an overcomer is one in whom the incorruptible life stands supreme, holds on its way and overcomes that continuous effort of the adversary to bring in corruption. I do want you to realize that this is what God is dealing with. We bring His end forward and we see this. God is dealing with everything on the basis of His end, His intention, and judgment must begin at the house of God. Therefore it is for the churches, for you, for me, for all the Lord's people to be faced with the significance of the blood of the Lamb, and what is that significance? The blood of that Lamb without spot, without blemish, is the incorruptible life of Christ which is released and given to us. "Except ye drink the blood of the Son of Man ye have no life in you." It is to that that we testify every time we come to the Lord's table. When we take the cup we are testifying to the fact that we are recipients of His life and that is incorruptible life and that is a life which is distinct from all other forms of life. It is a unique perfect life. It is not just a form, it is a testimony, and the church and the churches, the people of God, are called upon to maintain that as their testimony.

The lampstands with a living sevenfold flame. Instead of having one central lampstand as in the Old Testament, you have seven complete lampstands — seven sevens. You have not just taken one branch of the lampstand and put it at Ephesus and another branch somewhere else until you have seven branches distributed. No, it is seven in every place. It is the completeness of spiritual testimony as a living flame and what flame is it, what life? It is this triumphant life of the Lamb. It is He who lives, became dead but is alive unto the ages of the ages, who moves in the midst of the lampstands. It is the testimony to His triumph over death. That is what the churches were brought into being for. That is what all believers exist for — the testimony to the completeness of His life as triumphant. Oh, this is what brings in the battle for the overcomer! Truly it is a battle for life and of life, an intense battle. One thing the enemy has in view is to bring death among the Lord's people. The one thing which is the hallmark

of the Lamb's presence is life, the victory of His blood.

Well, here we see what God is working towards, and I just close by pointing out that here we have the great things of the scripture explained. You have, first of all, the throne of God, a phrase which signifies all that we mean by the kingdom of God. It is this that is meant when we are told to pray, "Thy kingdom come". It is this that is in view when the declaration is made (in spite of the Revisers dropping it out and putting it in the margin), "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever." The proof that that ought to have been left in the text is Revelation 12:10: "Now is come ... the kingdom of our God and ... of His Christ." The throne of God! This corresponds to Matthew, the kingdom of God. When the kingdom comes, what will it be like, what will be its supreme characteristic? Life, triumphant life everywhere. This explains for us those terms, the Lamb and the blood. What do we mean by the Lamb? What is meant by the blood? Well, go back to Genesis and onwards, and all the way through you will find that the Lamb and the blood speak of a mighty testimony against death. Take the sprinkled blood of the lamb in Egypt. When they took the blood of the Passover and sprinkled it upon the doorposts and lintel, having slain it on the threshold, making a complete circle of blood, there is no passage for death through there. That is circumcision, the circling of the cross cutting off the whole body of the flesh — there is life. The testimony of the blood of the Lamb is life, mighty life against death. Why? Not as some 'thing' called the blood, but because of the nature of the One whose blood it is — sinless. "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me". The infinite power of an incorruptible nature! Praise God that that is given to us as an earnest now and our whole being will be governed eventually by the principle of incorruptible life. "This mortal shall put on immortality; this corruption shall put on incorruption. Then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54); the testimony of the blood of the Lamb all unto this glorious life.

Then you have here also the explanation of the words church and the churches. The same thing governs them. What is the church, speaking of the whole church, the whole Body of Christ, the universal spiritual church which is His Body? It is the vessel of the testimony that Jesus has conquered death and all that that means. The church does not come in until He is resurrected, until the Spirit of His resurrection, His triumph, has come from heaven and sets it on its course of testimony. The church is the vessel of the fact that Jesus lives and He lives in the power of an

incorruptible, deathless, triumphant life. The church exists for that testimony. The churches are microcosms of the church, to be in every place a testimony to that universal fact. That is explained here by this passage in Revelation 22.

Finally it gives us an explanation of the overcomer. Again, what is an overcomer? Who are the overcomers? Not people who have a special kind of teaching; not people who are always talking about the overcomer as something to be talked about. Overcomers are just those among the Lord's people who are living in the good of His resurrection. (That cannot be said of all the Lord's people.) Those who come into their midst know that it is true; Jesus is alive, He is here. The overcomers are such and so the overcomer is a necessity to the Lord and very important to the Lord. The Lord can never be satisfied, as this book makes perfectly clear, with having a lot of people who believe on Him, who acknowledge Him. The Lord's satisfaction can only come when He has a people who livingly express Him in the power of His risen life. That is speaking in general.

Revelation 22:1-5 is the governing thing throughout the whole Bible and throughout this book. When you have done with the churches, then you begin with the nations and the judgment of the nations is on the same principle — corruption and death to be met, judged and abolished. That is the issue of the rest of the book of the Revelation — “The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” I do not mean that as universalism. The literal word there is “for the health of the nations”, the nations that shall be saved, the nations that shall walk in the light of the city. It is another aspect of things, but their glorious condition will be based upon this same principle, the life of the risen and reigning Lord. The leaves of heaven for their life. This does not mean that they will have to take medicine to prevent sickness or to heal sickness. It means that they will be in a condition of health because of this life triumphant.

May we know more and more what it means to live by the life of our risen and victorious Lord!

THE SEVEN SPIRITS OF GOD

Reading: Revelation 22:1-5.

“And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; and in the midst of the lampstands one like unto a son of man ...” (Rev. 1:12-15).

“And out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God” (Rev. 4:5).

“And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God” (Rev. 5:6).

“... the lamp thereof is the Lamb” (Rev. 21:23).

The background of the book of Revelation

We will try to see what it was that led to the book of the Revelation. There were one or two things that brought the book of the Revelation into being. First of all, there was the radiant morn of the church. We go back to the book of the Acts and in the first chapters of that book we see that radiant morn of the church. Jesus is risen, Jesus has ascended, Jesus is exalted, enthroned, glorified, crowned with glory and honour! The Son is in the heavens and it is like a new day. In the light of what that meant to the believers at that time, everything is radiant and catches something of that glory; everything is marked by the light of a new day; everything about these believers is full of throbbing vitality. The glory of the Son has lighted upon them. They are rejoicing in the realization of Him as risen and on high. Their gathering together from house to house is just full of that glory. Their testimony to the world, everything in themselves and out

from themselves, is a radiant morn. It is just an all-too-brief but very real and wonderful taste of the incorruptible life in expression, a beautiful going forth of the river of the water of life. The Lord is on the throne and the river is flowing from beneath that throne, just a foretaste of this that we have in Revelation 22; a radiant morn!

But this is too good for the enemy; this anticipates his downfall; this represents the end for him! This implies far too much for the great adversary and so there is his reaction, a mighty uprising of hell, and that with the intention to spoil this testimony, to mar this vessel, to corrupt this fair virgin and he moves to do it along two lines — from without and from within.

From without there was terrible persecution. The enemy set that in motion, so the later chapters of Acts find persecution and opposition developing from without along every line; enemies all around in the world, in the religious realm, moving right on to those terrible days in which Paul and Peter died, to destroy this testimony, to break this vessel. But that is not enough.

He also moves in another way, from the inside, to corrupt it. Balaam tried the outside way and it did not succeed. He tried the inside way and it did succeed. Satan quite clearly saw that the outside way was not succeeding: “And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad ... They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word” (Acts 8:1,4). You see, the outside way did not succeed and so he turned to the other way of Balaam. You find Balaam in the churches in Revelation. Balaam on the inside, corrupting with error, false doctrine, evil practices, insinuating the world, corrupting from the inside.

Well then, as the result of this twofold onslaught of the enemy from without and from within, you have all the letters that were written by the apostles to meet those two situations. Some of the letters are written especially to comfort, to encourage, to cherish the saints in their trials. Peter wrote his letters especially for that. “Concerning the fiery trial”, he says, “which is come upon you”. The apostles wrote some of their letters particularly to encourage the persecuted. The letters to the Thessalonians were especially for such a purpose — wonderful letters of encouragement, encouragement which took its strength from the coming of the Lord. Others of the letters were written especially to deal with the internal corruption, the errors, the false teaching and the conduct and behaviour of the saints one towards another, as at Corinth. So we have a full quota of

the Lord to meet both situations, to help in both cases: to encourage and comfort and strengthen to go on; to correct, to rebuke, to admonish, to instruct, so that Satan should be defeated from the inside. You see, the need was twofold.

Firstly, it was the need or assurance regarding how all this onslaught from the outside would end. The saints were suffering and no doubt the question was often in their hearts, How will all this end? Shall we be swamped, shall we be submerged? Will there be anything left? It was the question of what the issue would be in light of the ravages of Nero and suchlike against the church.

And the other side was the dealing with the errors and wrongs on the inside. On that side of things, the stuff of Satan to divide the church had to be judged by the church and put out. He had something on the inside, he had introduced things, and the church or the churches were called upon to judge that in order that Satan might be defeated from within. Then as the judgement was carried out, they would see that, so far as the outside work of Satan was concerned, the end of that would be its utter destruction; that Satan and all his power in the world against the people of God would go down into the abyss. But in order that there might be outward triumph, there must be inward judgment and inward purity. That is the book of the Revelation from the beginning to the end. That is why it was brought in by the Lord; on the one hand, to show the church the secret of victory on the inside, and then on the other hand to show the church the fact of ultimate triumph on the outside. The whole book of Revelation is filled with those two things.

Now, we can take all the encouragement and the comfort that we need from the fact made clear in this book that, so far as Satan's work in the world against the church is concerned, it is doomed and he is doomed. You cannot find anywhere any worse pictures than those which you have in the book of the Revelation of the work of Satan against the people of God. In that book you see him making war upon the saints, making war upon the Lamb, and some terrible things happen. There is great tribulation, there *is* suffering, the enemy *does* for a time get the upper hand and prevails. The saints *do* know intense suffering. It is all written in that book. You cannot have more terrible pictures of the sufferings of the saints than you have in the book of the Revelation. "I saw under the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held" (Rev. 6:9). You have it all there, but then the glorious issue is revealed. They are in the glory, they are around the

throne, they are worshipping, rejoicing, victorious, they do overcome to the last, they do follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes. They are with Him in His glory and all that other has been blotted out and destroyed. That is perhaps a word needed by many of the Lord's people today in some parts of the world, a very much needed word. It may be needed by us as we go on. We know, whether or not in those forms of persecution through which the church has passed and in some parts is passing now, something of the onslaught of the devil. We know what his malice means. We know we are up against a terrible enemy. We know what his attitude towards us is. Well, let us remind ourselves of what is here. The Lord has given us, in view of it all, the verdict, the end, how it is going to finish, and may our hearts be strengthened by that today!

But then there is this other side, and it is this side with which we must be really concerned: the inside, that is, the condition within which secures Satan's overthrow. We must remember that Satan's overthrow will not be only or merely by sovereign acts of God. There is nothing in the Word to prove that. It is not just going to be that the Lord on His own and of Himself, is coming out to smite the adversary with blows and cast him down. Everything in the Word of God points to the fact that the final overthrow of Satan is in virtue of the church's standing upon the victory of Christ; and that victory of Christ is not only something objectively to be appropriated, but to be wrought inwardly, something wrought within us. The Lamb's victory! When we speak of the Lamb, we are not just speaking of a Person, we are speaking of a work, a nature, a power in that Person, the Lamb.

“The seven spirits of God”

The point is, what is it that represents Satan's overthrow from the inside? The answer is that things shall be according to God. But what are those things? It seems to me that we have that suggested in this highly symbolic language of the seven lamps, the seven eyes, the seven horns, all of which are the seven Spirits of God. If we understand what that means, then we have the key to this whole matter of an inward state that makes Satan's power nil. What God is doing here, what God is doing with the church and with the nations at the end, is reacting in accordance with His covenant. God has made a covenant; that covenant has certain terms and He is reacting to what He finds here on this earth in accordance with the terms of that covenant. Do you know that the word 'seven' means oath or

covenant? The Hebrew word ‘Shabar’, which is a verb, means ‘to swear’. The noun ‘Sheba’ is seven, and that is used in various ways in the Word of God. You remember in Genesis 21 you have Beer-sheba where a covenant or an oath was made of seven sacrifices. Beer-sheba, the oath of seven, a covenant made with seven. The covenant made with Noah was symbolized in the rainbow — seven hues. And that covenant comes up in the book of the Revelation; around the throne a rainbow. The sign of the covenant made with Abraham was circumcision, which had to be carried out on the completion of seven days. The sign of the covenant made with Moses was the Sabbath, the seventh day. The Lord Jesus gathers all that up in Himself. He is Messiah, the ‘Anointed’ — seven letters gathering up everything in Himself, all the covenant, and the new covenant in His blood. It is sealed by the Holy Spirit. We are sealed by the Spirit, the Spirit of the covenant, and that Spirit is sevenfold in expression. The seven Spirits are only symbolic of the one Holy Spirit operating in spiritual fulness and completeness, on the basis of the covenant in the blood. That may all be technical and may only be interesting, but it is valuable to get to our point. God is reacting on the basis of His covenant, and you have got seven: seven lampstands, seven churches, seven lamps before the throne, seven eyes, seven horns. Look at the sevens all the way through the book of the Revelation, and you find that God is working on the basis of a completeness of a spiritual condition.

But let us look again at ‘seven’. Seven is four and three. Four is the number of creation and it runs right through this book; the four living ones, the four and twenty elders. The four living ones, cherubim, as we know, are the symbols of creation. Four — creation; three — God, so that it is God and the creation in covenant — seven; God’s covenant with the creation now in the blood of the Lamb. All that is very simple and very clear as typology, but it is this sevenfoldedness of the nature of things according to God’s mind that governs everything; the seven Spirits.

Now, in chapter 4 it is God who created all things. The worship is accorded to Him that sits on the throne, who created all things, “Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created”. Before the throne of Him that sits thereon are the seven burning lamps of the Creator. Remember that a lamp is always a testimony. So here, with these seven lamps before the throne of Him who created all things for His pleasure, is the sevenfold testimony about His thought, His mind and His creation. What is in God’s mind about His creation? When you pass over to the next chapter, chapter 5, you do not have the Creator but the

Redeemer being worshipped and the Lamb, the Redeemer, having seven eyes and seven horns. Horns are symbols of power, and here are the seven eyes. What are they? They accord with the seven lamps before the throne because in both places they are the seven Spirits of God. What are these seven eyes, these seven lamps, which in effect are the same? The things which are according to God's mind. If the horns represent power, then the Lamb is going to deal with everything in the light of what is according to God's spiritually perfect mind. The power of the Lamb is going to operate, and what power it is! Before the wrath of the Lamb, kings and nations will flee presently. In the blood of the Lamb the saints will wash their robes and make them white and they will overcome. This is power in the blood of the Lamb! But the power works with that which is altogether according to God's mind, and the judgment is coming in, weighing up and testing everything, as to how far it accords with these seven lamps before the throne.

It is rather interesting that the churches are represented as seven lampstands, every lampstand having seven branches, seven lights, the fulness of spiritual testimony — to what? Why, they are golden lampstands and the gold is that which is God's mind. It is the divine nature, the divine standard. It is pure gold. We know that from the Old Testament.

The Spirit of life

The sevenfold nature of God expressed in testimony by the Holy Spirit is, first of all, the Spirit of life. The very first expression of the Spirit of God is life. No matter where you look in the Word of God from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, you will find that the first expression of the Spirit of God is life. The Spirit brooded over death and darkness and chaos. The first movement of the Spirit was to bring out from a state of death. That is true in the natural creation; that is true in the new creation. The first movement into the new creation is life from the Lamb in virtue of His precious blood: the Spirit of life.

What are those eyes doing there before the throne? They are testifying in the first instance to the fact that God is the source of perfect spiritual life. All that belongs to God, all that is centred in that throne, the full thought of God, is incorruptible life. It is where everything begins. It goes right through the scriptures and comes out here in fulness in the Revelation — life! The lamps burning before the throne testify to fulness of life. The Lamb comes out from the presence of God and says, "I am come that

they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” — in fulness. The full testimony of God in the first place is a life which is the very life of God in its nature.

He looks for that in the first place in the seven churches. He says to Ephesus: ‘Yes, I know thy works, thy patience, thy labour. I know lots of things, but there is an element that is not there as it ought to be.’ It is life. Apply that law of the Spirit. Everywhere you find that that is what the eyes are after, what those seven eyes are dealing with — the question of life. As to the church or the churches, their very existence means that they are supposed to be vessels of the testimony of a life which has overcome death. Those flames are to correspond with the lamps before the throne, to be living witnesses here on the earth to the fact that now death, since Jesus conquered death, is not universal. Him that had the power of death has been dealt with and that power has been broken and here is the evidence. The churches are the evidence that neither Satan nor the world can take it for granted that their state of things is universal. The world does seem to take it like that sometimes. You go into the world among men and they immediately begin to take you for granted as being after their sort. They begin to talk to you as they would to anybody, and our presence in this world is to let men know that everybody is not the same. ‘We are not all alike; we do not think as you think, talk as you talk; our minds are not occupied with the things with which your minds are occupied. Our level is not your level of life. It is not that we are superior, but there is a difference.’ Oh, you know how you come up against that. We have travelled about, and someone of the world, in their own way, which is not often pleasant, not often clean, begins to talk to us and take for granted that we know all about their kind of life. There is a world between them and us and the clash comes, the distance is felt. It is not artificial, it is not put on, it is a fact. Satan has got to feel that sort of thing by the presence of the church, and he is ever out to bridge that gap and that is what happened in the churches in Asia. For the most part, Satan had bridged the gap and the clear line of distinction between life and death was not apparent. So the Lamb has overcome death and is in Himself the embodiment of the fact that the universal reign of death in Adam is no longer universal, but Another has come into the conflict and conquered. The churches are here for that. The saints are here for that and it is not the number of things the churches or the saints may be doing, not the work and the labour and all that they may be occupied with for the Lord, it is the mighty impact of that risen life upon the power of Satan and death that is the thing that matters.

In the first place, the expression of the Spirit of God is in life.

The Lord Jesus is introduced in the book of the Revelation as the One whose eyes are as a flame of fire. And then He is presented a little later as the Lamb with seven eyes. At the end He is presented as the lamp of the new sanctuary and the lamp of the heavenly Jerusalem. These eyes! Those lamps burning steady before the throne of God! The Spirit of God comes out in the power of that to take account of everything here, and we need to be impressed with what that means. It is a fact that the Lord, the Spirit, overlooks nothing; there is nothing He fails to see. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews says, "All things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). "Him with whom we have to do" — all things are naked and bare before His eyes. Now, the Lord has given to His church a full revelation to which nothing is to be added, to which no thing need be or can be added, and His eyes are the eyes of judgment in relation to what He has revealed of His mind to the church, and you and I and all the Lord's people are responsible for what the Lord has revealed. That is what this means. He is reacting to the revelation that has come. His eyes are looking in, looking everywhere, to see what is according to that revealed mind of God and what is contrary to it. The Lord knows us through and through.

That, on the one hand, is a great comfort. On the other hand, it is something to bear in mind by way of a check, perhaps; a correction. We may deceive one another or others; we may be able to pass off as this or that. We may get through and feel that we are not detected. But let us not deceive ourselves, let us not be foolish. It is not with one another that we have to reckon. It is not even with the elders of our church. It is the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. The Lord knows; the Lord sees; and here is perfect vision — seven eyes. Perfect vision, and it is with that that He approaches His own people first of all. It is a very solemn thing for our remembrance, and I think we must ask the Lord to save us from our own self-deceptions and from our own blindness and, in the grace represented by the rainbow around the throne, in the mercy represented in the blood of the Lamb, let us ask Him to keep us alive, awake, to what He sees to be contrary to His thought. And even though we really do feel that we love the Lord and we want to be all for God, and in our hearts we would say, 'Yes, we want the Lord to have everything and be everything, and we want nothing for ourselves, we want all for Him.' Yet at the same time there may be much, if only we knew our own motives, our own hearts, that could not bear the light of those eyes. We would be smitten to the

ground as dead if those eyes really fell upon us and we realized it is not our sincerity, not what we think to be our pure, good motives, what we believe to be our devotion that the Lord sees. No, Ephesus would have stood up and proclaimed most vehemently, devotion to the Lord, love for the Lord, but the Lord saw lack. It is not what *we* see, what *we* think or believe about ourselves; it is what those eyes see. We must ask the Lord in His grace and His mercy, according to His own covenant in grace, to be faithful and true with us. He is introduced as the Faithful and True. As such, He deals with the churches. Let us not shrink from that. Let us ask the Lord to do the looking in. Let us ask the Lord not to allow us to go on blindly or ignorantly falling short of His full thought. No, presently those eyes will fall upon us and we shall see as He sees.

Now, so far as our testimony is concerned, what He is looking for is the expression of an incorruptible life. He is looking that we should be living in the power of that life which, having conquered sin, has conquered death: a deathless life, because an incorruptible life.

The Spirit of fervour

Then there are other things which I hardly dare launch upon, but I will just mention what this sevenfold expression of the Spirit of God is. First then the Spirit of life, then the Spirit of fervour, for these are lamps and they are as fires before God; the Spirit as a lamp, the Spirit as burning. The Spirit as fire ever speaks of spiritual fervour, and you remember that that is one of the things concerning which the Lord dealt with some of the churches at least. At Laodicea that was the issue: "Thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot. So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of My mouth." Writing to the Romans, the apostle said, "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit". Fervent in spirit! The Lord is looking for the fervour of His life and His Spirit in His saints. Are we fervent in spirit? Look up that word 'fervour' and words which mean the same — diligence, devotion, energy. Are we characterized by that? Has first love gone? The eyes are looking; they know. Let us stand in the light of those eyes now. If we feel that the Lord, as He looks upon us, may find us wanting in this matter of real spiritual fervour, let us judge that lack of fervour before Him; judge it, deal with it, see that the lamp is more fervent.

Fervour — that was the thought of God concerning the lamp. It was never to be allowed to go out in the sanctuary. It was to be trimmed

morning and evening; the flame was to burn with a steady, unabating fervour. This is the Spirit; this is the fruit of the Spirit, and this is the effect of the Spirit, the oil being in our vessel; a steady fervour unto the end. This was lacking in the case of the five virgins and therefore they were not overcomers. The overcomer, then, is one in whom, first of all, the Spirit of life is triumphant; secondly, the Spirit of fervour, divine energy burning for God.

The Spirit of truth

You come to the end where you see the vessel which expresses the full thought of God (and it is a pity that chapter 22 begins where it does; it ought to begin before that); and you notice that it is very necessary, in order to understand those five verses, that you go back a little earlier. What leads up to that is the Lamb's wife, the church, the new Jerusalem. That new Jerusalem, the Lamb's wife, is the vessel, the embodiment, of the full thought of God when it is realized at last, and one feature of that vessel is that its light is as a jasper — clear, transparent. This is the Spirit of truth: absolute transparency; no murkiness, no fogginess, no muddiness, no duplicity, no dishonesty — truth! “Thou desirest truth in the inward parts.” He is the Spirit of truth. When the Holy Spirit gets hold of a life, He will steadily work to get rid of all that shadiness, all that you cannot put your finger upon, something all the time deceiving. The Holy Spirit will make us transparent.

The Spirit of love

Ephesus, thou hast left thy first love! Philadelphia, thou hast that love and they shall know that I have loved thee! This is the Spirit of love.

I will not go any further, but I want you to realize God has a full thought and the realization of that thought in us is made possible by the Lamb. All that the Lamb has done and all the virtue of His precious blood has made it possible for us to dwell in the eternal light, to stand in the presence of the seven lamps before the throne. Praise God for the mighty efficacy of the blood! We can dwell in the eternal light, but He is looking for things in us, in His church, to answer to His perfect thought because of the perfect provision. The covenant in the blood has, as its terms, the full thought of God. What God has undertaken is, through our faith in that blood, to conform us to the image of His Son; that is, to bring us into

perfect correspondence with His own thought for the creation. He has undertaken that. The blood is the seal of that. But what is the matter with us? Why are we so other? Well, that is what the Lord wants to show us; the Lord would reveal that to us. I do believe that in any life and in any company of the Lord's people, as members of the one Body, when the Spirit really gets hold of a life, when we really put ourselves right into the hands of the Holy Spirit and have a definite understanding with Him on the matter of God's mind, the Spirit of God will deal with us very definitely, in checking us up on all matters contrary to the will of God. I believe He does do that. If He does not do that, it is not because He is not willing. There is something there that stands in His way that will not yield. There is the issue of our pride, and God cannot deal with us if there is pride — it is an abomination to Him. There is some of our self-will, there is some of our opinion, our reason, our judgment; there is some of our affection, desire.

Remember that God's end is only by means of the cross and that is why the Lamb is always in evidence. God's end is by means of the cross, but the cross has to be something *applied*, applied to our pride, applied to our will, our mind, our desires, our affections. The cross has to be applied, and then God gets His end as that cross brings us down, breaks us, empties us, and the Spirit of God checks up all the way along and deals with us. Oh, the Christian life is a real thing! One of the strongest things for us in our confidence is that it is such a real thing. It does not matter wherever we go, even to some remote, uninhabited place on this earth, away from all men, the Spirit of God is there. We cannot get away from Him. He deals with us, and we know that, whether it is alone or in the crowd, before the Spirit of God we are as though we were the only creature in God's universe. It is just as though we were alone — as though there were no other. It is a very real thing, this spiritual life, this Christian life, and the Lord would have it like that. It must become like that. We must have our walk with God and God must have His dealings with us. Seven eyes! Perfect knowledge, perfect intelligence, a perfect standard of divine thought and all His dealings with us on that basis, Well, we do not want it otherwise, do we? Then before the Lord let us ask that, on the one hand, the cross shall make a clear way for us, and, on the other hand, the Spirit shall go on with His work.

To be continued