

the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors (incense), which are the prayers of saints." (Rev. 5:8). Here is given the work of the elders and the living creatures. As the Lamb ministers constantly before the throne of God, these who have been redeemed to God "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation," (Rev. 5:9) bow before the throne, offering to Him who sits thereon the prayers which ascend from the earth.

With the prayers, is a cloud of incense. "This holy incense is the merits and intercession of Christ, His perfect righteousness, which, through faith, is imputed to His people, and which alone can make the worship of sinful beings acceptable to God." (SSP 105.1). In the tabernacle service on earth, the altar of incense burned continually before the ark of the covenant, where shone the visible presence of God. When the high priest entered on the day of atonement into the Holy of Holies, he made his offering for the people with much incense, a cloud ascended from the censer as long as he remained in Divine Presence.

To-day in heaven those who once lived on earth, representatives from every kindred, nation, and people, having passed through every phase of earthly experience, take the prayers offered by penitent sinners, and present them before the Lamb. Repentance is a sweet odor before our God; for it tells of sorrow for sin, and the acceptance of the life of Christ. Since the death of Christ, the lamb is no longer slain; but the morning and evening prayers, when the blood of Christ is presented by faith, touch the heart of God, and from His throne angels speed their way on rapid wings to fulfill the petition.

If to prayer there does not seem to come an immediate answer, there is still the assurance that no earnest petition escapes the notice of our Father. They are represented as preserved in vials, in "bottles," as David says; and when the family of the redeemed is at last gathered on that crystal sea with the Lamb and the four and twenty elders, it will be found that every prayer of faith is answered. The lowliest believer, the most burdened sinner, who turns his face heavenward, can see the rainbow of promise above the throne.

For him the Lamb was slain, and in his behalf, some one in that company of elders, who surround the throne, can plead, "I have passed over this same road and I have been rescued by the Saviour." Look up, and take heart; for all heaven is

working for the redemption of man! (SSP 106.1). In anticipation of the final cleansing of the universe from sin, and the restoration of man to his place beside the Father, there is sung in heaven the song of the redeemed. The four beasts and the four and twenty elders sing a new song,-a song of Redemption; for they have been raised from the depths of sin to the position of kings and priests unto God.

Those now in heaven, look forward to their reign with Christ on the earth made new. When the plan is completed, the few who now minister in heaven, together with the multitudes who come forth at the first resurrection, will reign as kings and priests on the earth. "Thine is the kingdom, Thine is the power, and Thine the glory," will be the grand chorus when Christ as King of kings receives His everlasting dominion, and the redeemed reign with Him. To the earth renewed, and reflecting again the glory of God as when it first came forth from the hand of its Creator; with the discord all gone, and the music of the spheres rolling in ceaseless pæans through endless space; is the scene which heaven looks forward to in anticipation. (SSP 107.1).

And then in the chorus of voices, angels, elders, and every creature from earth and sea and sky, joined in singing, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." And the four beasts answered, "Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down, and worshiped Him that liveth for ever and ever." If man but caught a glimpse of the joy of salvation, his lips would repeat the songs of heaven. Angelic beings are looking forward to the completion of the plan. So may we. (SSP 108.2).

References

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The Sealed Book

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In the fourth chapter he (John) describes the appearance of the throne; this is followed by a view of the work of Christ and others connected with the plan of salvation. The fifth chapter is only a continuation of the subject introduced in the fourth;-it is an introduction to the history given in the sixth chapter. (SSP 101.1).

A BOOK WITH SEVEN SEALS

John was made to understand this truth in a most solemnly impressive way. He says," I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back side, sealed with seven seals." The right hand of the Father holds the record of our lives, and unless one can approach within the inner circle of the majesty of the Eternal One, he cannot look within this book. It is written both within and without.

Within, is the life which is known only to God,-the secret, known only to the soul and its Creator. Without, is the reflection of that inner life, the outward part which is open to the gaze of others. As the condition of the individual, so is the condition of the church of God. The one created in the image of Jehovah, has received of His Spirit, and the soul history can be understood only by Him of whom it is a part. This connection between God and man, is the mystery of the Gospel. (SSP 101.2).

As the host of heaven gazed upon the One on the throne, a strong angel proclaimed with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" Heaven's arches rang as the challenge was given. It was not a reproof, but a call to all the universe of God, to witness anew the glory of the Son of man.

THE BOOK WHICH NO MAN COULD OPEN

This was a fresh unfolding of the plan of salvation. John, a representative of the fallen race, was near, and he wept when "no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon." Must the work of earth cease? Was the sacrifice a failure? Would history cease even after Christ had died? Hosts of angels, marshaled under their leaders, bowed before the throne. They had known of the mighty power of Jehovah, they had watched the work of creation, and had ministered in the utmost bounds of space; but they were silent when the herald's voice was heard. (SSP 102.1).

Though angels held their peace, one of the elders broke the silence. He who had once lived on earth, who was born in sin, who had fought and conquered in the name of Christ, and who had risen with Him a victor over that last and greatest enemy-death-spoke to his fellow man. He knew the full meaning of life on earth; he knew the terrors of the grave, and he could also speak from experience of the righteousness of Christ, for he was clothed in the white garment, and on his head was the golden crown of victory.

CHRIST PREVAILED TO OPEN THE BOOK

He approached John, saying, "Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book." (Rev 5:5). The elder, who had seen the mighty power of Christ so often manifested, took the strongest objects in the vegetable and animal kingdoms to represent His power,-the root and the lion. Massive rocks are torn asunder by the noiseless power of the root. Hidden beneath the soil its power is mighty. So the power of the Root of David, hidden in the heart, can break the strongest bands of sin.

The Saviour speaks of those who had no root in themselves as not being able to endure tribulation. The Root of David bears the tree of righteousness. None can be trees of righteousness who have not this pure and holy Root hidden in the soil of the heart. The elder used language familiar to the prophet, for John was a Jew, and from infancy, had listened to the prophecy of Christ read from the book of the law. He was promised as the "Lion of the tribe of Juda," the King for whom the nation looked as temporal ruler.

The sure mercies of David were repeated in the synagogue services as the prophecies of Jeremiah were read. "Behold . . . I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, . . . and this is His name whereby He shall be called, The Lord Our Righteousness." "I will bring forth My servant the Branch," the Lord had said through the prophet Zechariah. "In that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people." (Isa. 11:10).

Christ, in the presence of John, had used these same symbols to designate His own work in the earth. As a lion of the forest, He was born to rule, and the power of the Spirit within drew all men unto Him. Like the tree, which, springing from a seed hidden in the cemented vault, burst asunder the tomb of the dead, so the Root of David prevailed to

loosen the seals and to open the book. It was not the simple reading of the book that was called for. The angel's call was for one whose life could accomplish what was written therein. There, was written the work of God in the earth. This is seen when the seals are broken, as given in the following chapter. (SSP 102.2).

As John watched, "lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain." (Rev. 5:6). In the center of all the glory, in the very presence of Life, before adoring angels and witnesses from earth, stood a Lamb, slain, its life-blood dripping from its veins. (SSP 104.1).

There was a time when sin did not exist; when the harmony of perfection reigned supreme. Man broke the chord. Life began to ebb. All nature mourned. Slowly, one by one, the stately trees shed their leaves; the flowers faded. Each blossom as it fell, sounded a death knell throughout the universe of God. But Christ had already covenanted with the Father. His life was offered for this very time. And man,-penitent, sorrowful man,-brought a lamb from the flock, slew it; and its life-blood became a token of the life of Christ.

THE HEART OF THE FATHER BROKEN

Every creature, from the highest form of creation, down to the insect mote in the sunbeam, lives in the life of God; and when death occurs, a vibration is felt in the heart of the Eternal. In every lamb, slain in all the sacrificial offerings, God saw the blood of His own Son. The heart of the Father was broken when the first lamb was slain; and every time the knife was stained with the blood of an offering, it brought afresh to the mind of God the death of His Son. Christ died of a broken heart. Heaven knows the meaning of a broken heart,-of a life spent,-of hopes blasted. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." (Psa. 51:17).

So when John watched for one to open the book, there appeared, as it were a Lamb slain. That all power was given to the Lamb, that all heaven was poured out in this sacrifice, is shown by its seven horns and its seven eyes. "He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne"; (Rev. 5:7) for not even Christ could do the work alone. The power came from the Father. Father and Son unite in the work of Redemption. "And when He had taken