

# Some Answered Questions, Commentary on the Twelfth Chapter of the Revelation of John

'Abdu'l-Bahá

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## Commentary on the Twelfth Chapter of the Revelation of John

We have explained before that what the Sacred Scriptures most often mean by the Holy City or divine Jerusalem is the religion of God, which has at times been likened to a bride, or called “Jerusalem”, or depicted as the new heaven and the new earth. Thus in Revelation, chapter 21, it is said: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.”

Consider how unmistakably “the first heaven” and “the first earth” refer to the outward aspects of the former religion. For it is said that “the first heaven and earth were passed away; and there was no more sea”. That is, the earth is the arena of the last judgement, and in this arena there will be no more sea, meaning that the law and teachings of God will have spread throughout the earth, all mankind will have embraced His Cause, and the earth will have been entirely peopled by the faithful. Thus there will be no more sea, for man dwells upon solid land and not in the sea—that is, in that Dispensation the sphere of influence of that religion will encompass every land that man has trodden, and it will be established upon solid ground whereon the feet do not falter.

Likewise, the religion of God is described as the Holy City or the New Jerusalem. Clearly, the New Jerusalem which descends from heaven is not a city of stone and lime, of brick and mortar, but is rather the religion of God which descends from heaven and is described as new. For it is obvious that the Jerusalem which is built of stone and mortar does not descend from heaven and is not renewed, but that what is renewed is the religion of God.

Furthermore, the religion of God is likened to an adorned bride who appears with the utmost grace, as it has been said in chapter 21 of the Revelation of John: “And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” And in chapter 12 it is said: “And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.” This woman is that bride, the religion of God, that descended upon Muḥammad. The sun with which she was clothed, and the moon which was under her feet, are the two governments



TRANSLATION

which are under the shadow of that religion, the Persian and the Ottoman, for the emblem of Persia is the sun and that of the Ottoman Empire is the crescent moon. Thus the sun and the moon allude to two governments under the shadow of the religion of God. Afterwards it is said: “upon her head a crown of twelve stars”. These twelve stars represent the twelve Imáms, who were the promoters of the religion of Muḥammad and the educators of the nation, and who shone as stars in the heaven of guidance.

Then it is said: “And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered”, meaning that this religion will suffer great difficulties and endure great toil and trouble until a perfect offspring is produced therefrom—that is, until the subsequent and promised Manifestation, Who is a perfect offspring, is reared in the bosom of this religion, which is even as its mother. By this offspring is meant the Báb, the Primal Point, Who was in truth born from the religion of Muḥammad. In other words, that sacred Reality which was the child and the result of the religion of God—its mother—and which was its Promised One, came into being in the heavenly kingdom of that religion, but was caught up unto God to elude the ascendancy of the dragon. After 1,260 days the dragon was destroyed and the offspring of the religion of God, the Promised One, was made manifest.

“And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth.” This dragon represents the Umayyads, who seized the reins of the religion of Muḥammad; and the seven heads and seven crowns represent the seven dominions and kingdoms over which they came to rule: the Roman dominion in Syria; the Persian, the Arabian, and the Egyptian dominions; the dominion of Africa—that is, Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria; the dominion of Andalusia, which is now Spain; and the dominion of the Turkish tribes of Transoxania. The Umayyads gained power over all these dominions. The ten horns represent the names of the Umayyad rulers, for, barring repetition, they are ten sovereigns, or ten names of chiefs and rulers. The first is Abú Sufyán and the last is Marván. Some of their names have been repeated, including two Mu’áviyih, three Yazíds, two Valíds, and two Marváns. If, however, these names are each counted only once, they number ten in total. These Umayyads—the first of whom was Abú Sufyán, the former chief of Mecca and founder of the dynasty, and the last of whom was Marván—destroyed a third of the holy and sanctified souls who descended from the pure lineage of Muḥammad and who were even as the stars of heaven.

“And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.” This woman is the religion of God, as was before explained. The dragon’s standing near her signifies that it was keeping watch to devour her child as soon as it had been delivered. This child was the promised Manifestation, Who is the offspring of the religion of Muḥammad. The Umayyads were ever anxious to lay hold on the Promised One Who was to appear from the lineage of Muḥammad, that they might destroy and annihilate Him, for they greatly feared His advent. And so wherever they found a descendant of Muḥammad who was respected in the eyes of the people, they killed him.

“And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron.” This glorious son is the promised Manifestation, Who was born of the religion of God and reared in the bosom of the divine teachings. The iron rod is a symbol of might and power—it is not a sword—and

means that He will shepherd all the nations of the earth by virtue of His divine might and power. And by this son is meant the Báb.

“And her child was caught up unto God, and to His throne.” This is a prophecy concerning the Báb, Who ascended to the Kingdom, the Throne of God, and the Seat of His sovereignty. Consider how closely this conforms to what indeed came to pass.

“And the woman fled into the wilderness”; that is, the religion of God betook itself to the desert, meaning the vast desert of Hijáz and the Arabian Peninsula.

“Where she hath a place prepared of God”; that is, the Arabian Peninsula became the home, the habitation, and the focal centre of the religion of God.

“That they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days”. According to the terminology of the Bible, these 1,260 days mean 1,260 years, as was before explained. Thus for 1,260 years the religion of God was fostered in the vast desert of Arabia, until the Promised One appeared. After these 1,260 years that religion ceased to be in effect, for the fruit of that tree had been manifested and its result had been produced.

Consider how closely the prophecies correspond one to another! The Book of Revelation fixes the advent of the Promised One after forty-two months. The Prophet Daniel specifies three times and a half, which is also forty-two months or 1,260 days. Another passage of the Revelation of John directly states 1,260 days, and it is explicitly indicated in the Bible that each day signifies one year. Nothing could be clearer than this agreement of the prophecies with each other. The Báb appeared in the year A.H. 1260 according to the calendar followed by all Muslims. There are no clearer prophecies than this in the Bible for any Manifestation. If one be fair, the agreement between the times indicated by these glorious Souls is the most conclusive proof and can in no wise be subject to any other interpretation. Blessed are the fair-minded who search after truth.

When justice is lacking, however, the people challenge, dispute, and deny the obvious. Their conduct is like that of the Pharisees in the time of Christ, who would obstinately deny the interpretations and utterances He and His Apostles made, and who would wilfully obscure the truth before the ignorant masses, saying, “These prophecies do not apply to Jesus, but to the Promised One Who will ere long appear according to the conditions mentioned in the Torah”—among which being that He would be a king, sit upon the throne of David, enforce the law of the Torah, inaugurate the most great justice, and cause the wolf and the lamb to gather at the same spring. And thus did they veil the people from recognizing Christ.