

## Publishers' Note

For two hundred and fifty years *Matthew Henry's Commentary* has been the most widely used of all Bible Commentaries. The complete Commentary was originally published in five volumes, and is still available in an attractive modern setting in six handsome library volumes.

The need for a condensed version of this great work, which would retain all the best of the larger work in a form easier of access to the busy student, and unencumbered by material now of little help or quite out of date, has long been apparent.

Rev. Dr. Leslie F. Church, formerly President, and for many years Connexional Editor to the Methodist Church in Great Britain and Ireland (Epworth Press), was so greatly impressed with this need that, in the midst of an extremely busy period of his life, he consented to read, examine with care, and reduce the contents of the six volumes into one handy book. The masterly way with which this brilliant piece of editorial work has been done will be readily discerned by all who are familiar with the larger work, and will arouse the admiration of older students. It was a monumental undertaking, and it has given a new lease of life to one of the most useful books of reference ever produced for the Bible student.

The Publishers take this opportunity of expressing very sincere thanks to the Editor for his great achievement. They would like also to make acknowledgment of the help given to the Editor by the Rev. C. Lester Johnson, B.Sc., and to express their appreciation of the diligence and care of the Rev. F. S. Fitzsimmonds, B.A., B.D., M.Th., in the formidable task of reading the proofs.

C. H. Spurgeon is reported to have said that "every minister ought to read *Matthew Henry* entirely and carefully through once at least". That these ministers have been able to give the time to do much more than that and bring to their task the necessary thought, critical appreciation and editorial work, places all who will use this book greatly in their debt.

All the best in *Matthew Henry*—the expositions, commentary, the metaphors, analogies and illustrations of the complete work—has been retained here in *Matthew Henry's own words* in condensed form. This preserves for a new generation of Bible students all that is most valuable in the larger work, which has been the mainstay of preaching for more than two centuries.

# Matthew Henry's Commentary

IN ONE VOLUME

GENESIS TO REVELATION

*Edited by*

*Rev. Leslie F. Church, Ph.D., F.R.Hist.S.*





noisome and grievous sores on all who had the mark of the beast. They had marked themselves by their sin, now God marks them out by his judgments.

2. The second angel poured out his vial. Where it fell—upon the sea. It turned the sea into blood, as the blood of a dead man, and every living soul died in the sea. God discovered not only the vanity and falsehood of their religion, but the pernicious and deadly nature of it.

The next angel poured out his vial. Where it fell—upon the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters. It turned them into blood. The following doxology (v. 5, 6). The instrument that God makes use of in this work is here called the angel of the waters, who extols the righteousness of God in this retaliation, to which another angel answered by full consent, v. 7.

#### Verses 8-11

The fourth angel poured out his vial, and that fell upon the sun. That sun which before cherished them with warm and benign influences shall now grow hot against these idolaters, and shall scorch them, which yet will be so far from bringing them to repentance, that it will cause them to curse God. They will be hardened to their ruin. The fifth angel, v. 10. Where this vial fell—upon the seat of the beast, upon Rome itself. The whole kingdom of the beast was full of darkness. Darkness is opposed to wisdom and penetration, and forebodes the confusion and folly which the idolaters should discover at that time. It is opposed to pleasure and joy.

#### Verses 12-16

The sixth angel poured out his vial.

I. Where it fell—upon the great river Euphrates. Some take it literally. Others take it for the river Tiber.

II. What did this vial produce? The drying up of the river. A way is hereby prepared for the kings of the east. The last effort of the great dragon; he is resolved to have another push for it. The instruments he makes use of: Three unclean spirits like frogs. These would muster up the devil's forces for a decisive battle. The means these instruments would use. They would work pretended miracles. The field of battle—a place called Armageddon; that is, say some, the mount of Megiddo. The further account of it is suspended till we come to the nineteenth chapter, v. 19, 20. The warning which God gives of this great and decisive trial, v. 15. When God's cause comes to be tried, and his battles to be fought, all his people shall be ready and be faithful and valiant in his service.

#### Verses 17-21

An account of the seventh and last angel pouring forth his vial, which was the finishing stroke.

I. Where this plague fell—on the air, upon the prince of the power of the air, that is, the devil. Here is a vial poured out upon his kingdom, and he is not able to support his tottering cause and interest any longer.

II. What it produced. 1. A thankful voice from heaven, pronouncing that now the work was done. It is finished. 2. An earthquake, so great as never was before, and this ushered in by thunder and lightnings. 3. The fall of Babylon (v. 19). God now remembered this great and wicked city. Now he gives unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath, and every island and every mountain, that seemed by nature and situation the most secured, were carried away in the deluge of this ruin.

III. How the antichristian party were affected with it. Though it fell upon them as a dreadful storm, as if the stones of the city, tossed up into the air, came down upon their heads, like hailstones of a

talent weight each, yet they were so far from repenting that they blasphemed that God who thus punished them.

### CHAPTER 17

This antichrist is now described as a great whore. I. The apostle is invited to see this vile woman, ver. 1, 2. II. He tells us what an appearance she made, ver. 3-6. III. The mystery of it is explained to him, ver. 7-12. And, IV. Her ruin foretold, ver. 13, &c.

#### Verses 1-6

Here we have a new vision. 1. The invitation given to the apostle, v. 1. This is a name of great infamy. She had been a prostitute to the kings of the earth, whom she had intoxicated with the wine of her fornication. 2. The appearance she made, v. 4. 3. Her principal seat and residence—upon the beast that had seven heads and ten horns; that is to say, Rome, the city on seven hills. 4. Her name, which was written on her forehead. She is named from her place of residence—Babylon the great. She is named from her infamous way and practice; not only a harlot, but a mother of harlots. 5. Her diet: she satiated herself with the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus. She drank their blood with such greediness that she intoxicated herself with it.

#### Verses 7-13

Here we have the mystery of this vision explained. But it is so explained as still to need further explanation. 1. This beast was, and is not, and yet is; it was a seat of idolatry and persecution; and is not, not in the ancient form, and yet it is truly the seat of idolatry and tyranny. It ascends out of the bottomless pit, and it shall return thither and go into perdition. 2. This beast has seven heads, which have a double signification. Seven mountains—the seven hills on which Rome stands. Seven kings—seven sorts of government. Five of these were extinct; one was then in being; and the other was yet to come, v. 10. This beast makes an eighth. 3. This beast had ten horns; which are said to be ten kings which have as yet received no kingdoms.

#### Verses 14-18

I. War begun between the beast and his followers, and the Lamb and his followers. One would think an army with a lamb at the head of them could not stand before the great red dragon.

II. Victory gained by the Lamb: The Lamb shall overcome. He will be sure to meet with many enemies, but he will also be sure to gain the victory.

III. The ground or reason of the victory. 1. From the character of the Lamb: He is King of kings and Lord of lords. All the powers of earth and hell are subject to his check and control. 2. From the character of his followers: They are called, and chosen, and faithful. Such an army, under such a commander, will at length carry all the world before them.

IV. The victory is justly aggrandized. 1. By the vast multitude who paid obedience and subjection to the beast and to the whore, v. 15, 18. 2. By the powerful influence which God hereby showed he had over the minds of great men. It was of God, and to fulfil his will, that these kings agreed to give their kingdom unto the beast. It was of God that afterwards their hearts were turned against the whore.

### CHAPTER 18

I. An angel proclaiming the fall of Babylon, ver. 1, 2. II. Assigning the reasons of her fall, ver. 3. III. Giving warning to all who belonged to God to come out of her (ver. 4, 5), and to assist in her destruction, ver. 6-8. IV. The great lamentation made for her by those who had been large sharers in her sinful pleasures and profits, ver. 9-19. V. The great joy that there would be among others at the sight of her irrecoverable ruin, ver. 20, &c.

#### Verses 1-8

Here is another angel sent from heaven, v. 1. He had not only light in himself, to discern the truth of his own prediction, but to inform and enlighten the world about that great event. This angel publishes the fall of Babylon, as a thing already come to pass. Here seems to be an allusion to the prediction of the fall of pagan Babylon (Isa. xxi. 9), where the word is repeated as it is here: *has fallen, has fallen*, v. 2. This is also borrowed from Isa. xxi. 9, and seems to describe not so much her sin as her punishment, it being a common notion that unclean spirits, as well as ominous and hateful birds, used to haunt a city or house that lay in its ruins. The reason of this ruin is declared (v. 3). She had not only forsaken the true God herself, and set up idols, but had drawn all sorts of men into the spiritual adultery, and by her wealth and luxury had retained them in her interest. All that expect mercy from God should not only come out of her, but be assisting in her destruction, v. 4, 5. God may have a people even in Babylon. Those that are resolved to partake with wicked men in their sins must receive of their plagues. Though private revenge is forbidden, yet God will have his people act under him, when called to it, in pulling down his and their implacable enemies, v. 6. God will proportion the punishment of sinners to the measure of their pride, and security, v. 7. When destruction comes on a people suddenly, the surprise is a great aggravation of their misery, v. 8.

#### Verses 9-24

I. A doleful lamentation made by Babylon's friends for her fall.

1. The mourners, those who had been bewitched by her fornication, and those who had been gainers by her wealth and trade—the kings and the merchants of the earth.

2. The manner of their mourning. They stood afar off. Even Babylon's friends will stand at a distance from her fall. Though they had been partakers with her in her sinful pleasures and profits, they were not willing to bear a share in her plagues. They made a grievous outcry, v. 19. Those who have most indulged themselves in pride and pleasure are the least able to bear calamities.

3. The cause of their mourning; not their sin, but their punishment. The spirit of antichrist is a worldly spirit, and their sorrow is a mere worldly sorrow. The wealth and merchandise of this city, all which was suddenly lost (v. 12, 13), and lost irrecoverably (v. 14). The church of God may fall for a time, but she shall rise again; but the fall of Babylon will be an utter overthrow. Godly sorrow is some support under affliction, but mere worldly sorrow adds to the calamity.

II. The joy and triumph there was both in heaven and earth at the irrecoverable fall of Babylon, v. 20. 1. How universal this joy would be: heaven and earth, angels and saints, would join in it. 2. How just and reasonable. (1) Because the fall of Babylon was an act of God's justice. Though they did not take pleasure in the miseries of any, yet they had reason to rejoice in the discoveries of the glorious justice of God. (2) Because it was an irrecoverable ruin (v. 21). The place shall be no longer habitable by man, no work shall be done there, no comfort enjoyed, no light seen there, but utter darkness and desolation, as the reward of her great wickedness, v. 24. Such abominable sins deserved so great a ruin.

### CHAPTER 19

I. A further account of the triumphant song of angels and saints for the fall of Babylon, ver. 1-4. II. The marriage between Christ and the church proclaimed, ver. 5-10. III. Another warlike expedition of the glorious head of the church, ver. 10, &c.

#### Verses 1-4

The fall of Babylon being finished, and declared to be irrecoverable, this begins with a holy triumph over her. The form of their thanksgiving, *Alleluia, praise you the Lord*: with this they begin, with this they go on, and with this they end (v. 4); their prayers are now turned into praises, their hosannas end in halleluias. They praise him for the truth of his word, and the righteousness of his providential conduct, especially in this great event—the ruin of Babylon (v. 2). When the angels and saints cried *Alleluia*, her fire burned more fiercely, v. 3. Praising God for what we have is praying in the most effectual manner for what is yet further to be done for us; the praises of the saints blow up the fire of God's wrath against the common enemy. The blessed harmony between the angels and the saints in this triumphant song, v. 4.

#### Verses 5-10

An epithalamium, or marriage-song, begins, v. 6. I. The concert of heavenly music. The chorus was large and loud, as the voice of many waters and of mighty thunderings.

II. The occasion of this song, v. 7. 1. A description of the bride, how she appeared; not in the gay and gaudy dress of the mother of harlots, but in fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints; in the robes of Christ's righteousness. These her nuptial ornaments she did not purchase by any price of her own, but received them as the grant of her blessed Lord. 2. The marriage-feast which is declared to be such as would make all those happy who were called to it, a feast made up of the promises of the gospel, the true sayings of God, v. 9. 3. The transport of joy which the apostle felt. He fell down at the feet of the angel to worship him. The angel refused it, and this was with some resentment: "See thou do it not. I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren which have the testimony of Jesus. Thou, as an apostle, having the Spirit of prophecy, hast the same testimony to give in; and therefore we are in this brethren and fellow-servants. Worship God, and him alone."

#### Verses 11-21

The glorious head of the church is called out to a new expedition, which seems to be the great battle that was to be fought at Armageddon.

I. The description of the great Commander. The seat of his empire; and that is heaven. His equipage: he is again described as sitting on a white horse. He is faithful and true, he is righteous in all his proceedings, he has a penetrating insight into all the strength of his enemies, he has a large and extensive dominion, many crowns. His armour; and that is a vesture dipped in blood. His name: The Word of God, a name that none fully knows but himself. His perfections are incomprehensible by any creature.

II. The army which he commands (v. 14).

III. The weapons of his warfare—a sharp sword proceeding from his mouth (v. 15).

IV. The ensigns of his authority, his coat of arms, v. 16.

V. An invitation given to the fowls of heaven, that they should come and share in the spoil and pillage of the field (v. 17, 18).

VI. The battle joined. The enemy falls on with great fury; the powers of earth and hell gathered, to make their utmost effort, v. 19.

VII. The victory gained by the great head of the church: The beast and the false prophet are taken prisoners, and cast into the burning lake, and their followers are given up to military execution, and made a feast for the fowls of heaven.