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This book of Revelation begins with a pronouncement from heaven that what is going to be shown is –things which must shortly come to pass,– and that pronouncement was made years and years after Christ had gone to heaven. It was as future. Moreover, when Christ went to heaven, Satan was not cast out of heaven as is the case in Rev. 12; for, nearly forty years after Christ went to heaven, Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians, and in chapter 6 we have this revelation of the nature and sphere of the Church’s warfare: –Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies.– Satan was not deposed when Christ was caught up to the throne. Thirdly, the dragon was not cheated of his prey in the case of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus was slain by the dragon, and it is a part of the great and glorious truth that it was through death that He destroyed him that had the power of death, namely, the Devil. Satan, the dragon, thought he had swallowed up Christ perhaps, but he discovered that he had been swallowed up. But the Lord Jesus did not escape the great red dragon by a rapture: not at all. The dragon got him so far and slew him. But therein is the glorious sovereignty of God, and that is another line of truth altogether: God’s sovereignty wrought in the very presence of Satan’s triumph. But that is not this.

Then this woman is a paradox, a contradiction. She is at one and the same time in heaven clothed in glory and on the earth clothed with trouble and travail. She is clothed with the sun in heaven, and yet in the next breath she is travailing on the earth. Is not that just exactly what we have in the letter to the Ephesians about the Church? In the heavenlies, in Christ Jesus blessed with every spiritual blessing, and yet at the same time the letter shows us very clearly right at the heart of it that the Church is down here and in conflict. She has an earthly walk and is meeting things down here while at the same time in the heavenlies. A contradiction apparently: at one and the same time in heaven glorious and yet on earth in tribulation. That is the Church. Well, is not that enough, though there is a lot more here?