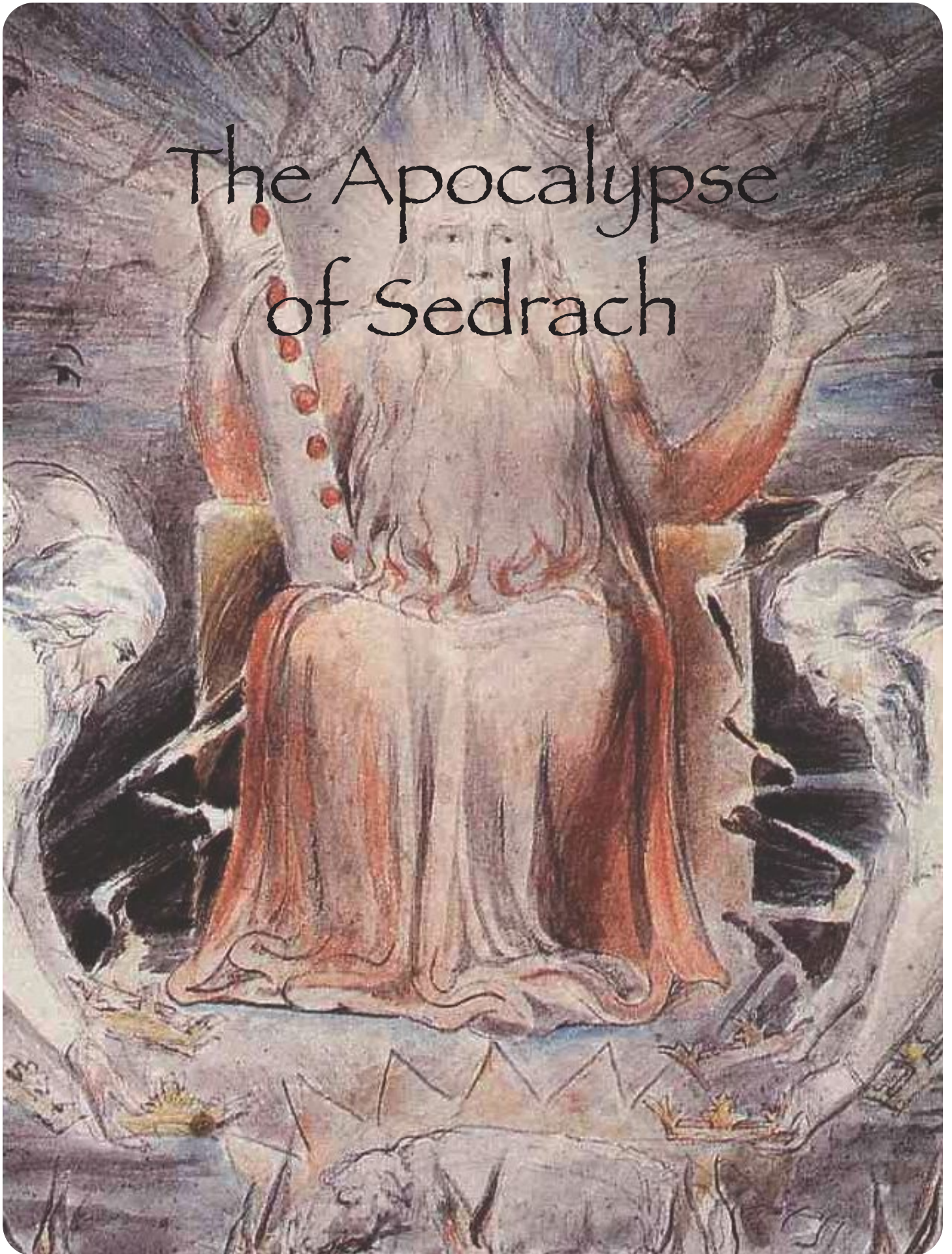


The Apocalypse of Sedrach



Beloved, we must prefer nothing more than unfeigned love. *We commit many faults every hour, day and night, and for this reason let us acquire love, because it covers a multitude of sins. *What do we gain, my children, if we possess everything yet do not have saving love? *

How does one benefit, my children, if one gives a great banquet and invites king and nobleman and prepares every sort of expensive fare in order that nothing should be missing; nevertheless, if there is no salt, that banquet cannot be eaten; and one not only bears the expense but one also wastes (his) efforts and is disgraced by the guests. (5)

It is the same in our situation, my brethren; what will we profit, for what grace do we possess without love? *Our every deed is false, even if one has virginity and fasts and keeps vigil and prays and gives a banquet for the poor. *

And if one brings gifts to God, or offers the first fruits of all his goods, or builds churches or does anything else without love, it shall be counted by God as nothing, for (these things) are not acceptable. *Thus the prophet says: The sacrifice of the impious is an abomination to the Lord. *Do not be advised to do anything without love. (10)

If you say, "I hate my brother but I love Christ," you are a liar, and John the Theologian rebukes you, for how can one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, love God whom he has not seen? *It is clear that anyone who hates his brother but thinks that he loves Christ is a liar and is deluding himself. *

For John the Theologian says that we have this commandment from God, that he who loves God should also love his brother. *And again the Lord himself says,

Upon these two (commandments) depend all the law and the prophets. *

Oh, how extraordinary and paradoxical is the miracle that he who has love fulfills all the law; love is the fulfillment of the law.

(15) Oh, power of love beyond imagination; oh, power of love beyond measure! *

There is nothing more honorable than love, nor is there anything greater either in heaven or on the earth. *This divine love is the capital (virtue); among all the virtues love is the highest perfection in the world? *It dwelt in the heart of Abel; it worked together with the Patriarchs; it guarded Moses; it made David the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit; it strengthened Joseph. *But why do I say these

things? (20)

The most important is that this love brought the Son of God down from heaven. *Through love all good things were revealed; death was trampled (from death), and through love one flock was made thereafter of angels and men. *

Through love Paradise has been opened; the kingdom of heaven is promised; the waste places it made? (into) cities, and filled? the mountains and the caves with song; it taught men and women who were treading the narrow and sorrowful path. *But how long shall we prolong this sermon on the achievements of love which even the angels cannot accomplish? *

Oh, blessed love which bestows all good things! (25) Blessed is the man who possesses true faith and unfeigned love; for, as the Master said, nothing is greater than love for which a man lays down (his) life for his friends. (THE APOCALYPSE OF SEDRACH CHAPTER ONE)

THE APOCALYPSE OF SEDRACH 2

And he [Sedrach] heard a hidden? voice in his ears: Here, Sedrach, you who wish and desire to talk with God and to ask him to

reveal to you the things that you wish to ask. *And Sedrach said, What (is it), my Lord? *And the voice said to him, *

I was sent to you that I may carry you up into heaven. And he said, I want to speak to God face to face? but I am not able, Lord, to ascend into the heavens. (5) But the angel, having stretched out his wings, took him and went up into the heavens, and took him up as far as the third heaven, and the flame of the divinity stood there.

THE APOCALYPSE OF SEDRACH 3

And the Lord said to him, Welcome, my dear Sedrach. *What kind of complaint do you have against the God who created you, for you have said, I want to speak with God face to face? *

Sedrach said to him, Indeed, the son does have a complaint against the Father: My Lord, what did you create the earth for? *

The Lord said to him, For man. (5) Sedrach said, What did you create the sea for and why did you spread every good thing upon the earth? *The Lord said,

For man. *Sedrach said to him, "If you have done these things, why did

you destroy man? *And the Lord said,

Man is my work and the creature of my hands, and I discipline him as I find it right.

THE APOCALYPSE OF SEDRACH 4

Sedrach said to him, Your discipline is punishment and fire; and they are very bitter, my Lord. *It would be better for man if he were not born. *Indeed, what have you done, my Lord; for what reason did you labor with your spotless hands and create man, since you did not desire to have mercy upon him? *God said to him,

I created the first man, Adam, and placed him in Paradise in the midst of (which is) the tree of life, and I said to him, Eat of all the fruit, only beware of the tree of life, for if you eat from it you will surely die. (5) However, he disobeyed my commandment and having been deceived by the devil he ate from the tree.

THE APOCALYPSE OF SEDRACH 5

Sedrach said to him, It was by your will that Adam was deceived, my Master. *You commanded

your angels to worship Adam, but he who was first among the angels disobeyed your order and did not worship him; and so you banished him, because he transgressed your commandment and did not come forth (to worship) the creation of your hands. *

If you loved man, why did you not kill the devil, the artificer of all iniquity? *Who can fight against an invisible spirit? (5) He enters the hearts of men like a smoke and teaches them all kinds of sin. *He even fights against you, the immortal God, and so what can pitiful man do against him? *Yet have mercy, Master, and destroy punishment; otherwise receive me also with the sinners, for if you will not be merciful with the sinners, where are your mercies and where is your compassion, O Lord?

THE APOCALYPSE OF SEDRACH 6

And God said to him, Be it known to you, that everything which I commanded man to do was within his reach. *I made him wise and the heir of heaven and earth, and I subordinated everything under him and every living thing flees from him and from his face. *

Having received my gifts, however, he became an alien, an adulterer and sinner. *

Tell me, what sort of a father would give an inheritance to his son, and having received the money (the son) goes away leaving his father, and becomes an alien and in the service of aliens. (5) The father then, seeing that the son has forsaken him (and gone away), darkens his heart and going away, he retrieves his wealth and banishes his son from his glory because he forsook his father. *

How is it that I, the wondrous and jealous God, have given everything to him, but he, having received them, became an adulterer and sinner?

THE APOCALYPSE OF SEDRACH 7

Sedrach said to him, You, Master, created man; you know the low state of his will and his knowledge? and you send man into punishment on a false pretext; so remove him. *Am I alone supposed to fill the celestial realms? *If that is not so, Lord, save man also. *Pitiful man has transgressed by your will O Lord. (5)

Why do you throw words around me as if they were a net, Sedrach? *I created Adam and his wife and the sun and I said,

Look at each other (to see) who is illuminated. *

And the sun and Adam were of one character, but the wife of Adam was brighter than the moon in beauty, and she gave life to her. *

Sedrach said, What is the use of beautiful things if they wither away to dust? *How is it that you said, Lord, Do not repay evil for evil? (10) How is it, Master, for the word of your divinity never lies? *And why did you thus repay man, if you do not wish (to return) evil for evil? *I know that among the four-footed beasts the mule is a crafty animal? it is none other; yet, with the bridle we turn it where we wish. *You have angels; send them to watch (over man) and when he makes a move toward win hold onto his foot, and he will not go where he wants.

THE APOCALYPSE OF SEDRACH 8

God said to him, If I hold his foot, he says. You have given me no grace in the world, and so I left him to his own desires because I loved him and thus I sent my righteous angels to watch him night and day. *

Sedrach said, I know that among your own creatures, Master, you loved man first; among the four-footed creatures, the

sheep; among trees, the olive; among plants which bear fruit, the vine; among things that fly, the bee; among the rivers, (the) Jordan; among the cities, Jerusalem. *But man also loves all these, Master.

*God said to Sedrach, I will ask you one thing, Sedrach; if you can answer me, then you have rightly challenged me, although you have tempted your creator. (5)

Sedrach said, Speak. *The Lord God said, Since I created everything, how many people have been born, and how many have died and how many shall die and how many hairs do they have? *Tell me, Sedrach, since the heaven and the earth have been created, how many trees have been made in the world, and how many shall fall and how many shall be made, and how many leaves do they have? *

Tell me, Sedrach, since I made the sea how many waves have billowed, and how many have rolled slightly, and how many will arise, and how many winds blow near the shore of the sea? *Tell me, Sedrach, since the creation of the world of the ages when the air is full of rain, how many drops have fallen upon the world and how many shall fall? (10)

And Sedrach said, You alone know all these things, Lord; you alone are

acquainted with all of these; I only beg you to make man free from punishment, for otherwise I myself am going to punishment and am not separated from our race.

THE APOCALYPSE OF SEDRACH 9

And God said to his only begotten Son,

Go, take the soul of my beloved Sedrach, and put it in Paradise. *

The only begotten Son said to Sedrach,

Give me that which our Father deposited in the womb of your mother in your holy dwelling place since you were born. *

Sedrach said, I will not give you my soul. *God said to him,

And why was I sent, and why did I come here, and you make a pretense to me? (5) I was commanded by my father not to hesitate in taking your soul; hence, give me your most desired soul.

THE APOCALYPSE OF SEDRACH 10

And Sedrach said to God, From where will you take my soul, from which member? *And God said to him,

Do you not know that it is placed in the middle of your lungs and your heart and that it is spread out to all the members? *It is removed through the pharynx and larynx and the mouth; and whenever it is due to go out (from the body) it is drawn with difficulty at the beginning and as it comes together from the fingernails and from all the members there is, of necessity, a great strain in being separated from the body and detached from the heart. *

When he had heard all these things, and recalled the memory of death, Sedrach was very troubled and he said to God, "Lord, give me a little while that I may cry, for I have heard that tears accomplish much and can become a sufficient cure for the humble body of your creatures.

THE APOCALYPSE OF SEDRACH 11

And crying and lamenting he started saying, O wondrous head, ornamented like heaven; O sunlight upon heaven and earth; your hair is known from Theman, your eyes from Bosra, your ears from thunder, your tongue from bugle, and your brain is a small creation; the head, the movement of the

whole body, is trustworthy and very beautiful, beloved of all but as soon as it falls in the earth it is unrecognized. *

Hands which hold so well, which are easily taught and hard-working, through which the body is fed. *O hands so adept, gathering materials, together you ornamented houses. *O fingers, beautified and adorned with gold and silver; even great structures are made by the fingers; the three joints stretch the palms and they gather good things together; but now you have become strangers to this world. (5)

Feet, which walk so well, moving by themselves so very quickly and untiring. *O knees, thus joined, without you the body does not move; the feet run together with the sun and the moon, night and day, gathering all things together, food and drink which nourish the body. *O feet, so swift and well moving, stirring up the face of the earth and ornamenting houses with every good thing. *O feet, which bear the whole body, which walk straightway to the temples, making repentance and supplicating the saints, and now suddenly you are to remain unmoved. (10)

Head, hands, and feet, O till now I have held you fast. O soul, what placed you in the humble and

wretched body? *Yet now, separated from it, you ascend where the Lord calls you and the wretched body goes away for judgment. *O beautiful body, hair shed by the stars, head like heaven adorned. *O face sweet-smelling, eyes like windows, a voice like a bugle's sound, a tongue which talks so easily, a beard well trimmed, hair like the stars, head high as heaven, a body adorned, the illuminator? elegant and renowned, yet now after falling within the earth, your beauty beneath the earth is unseen.

THE APOCALYPSE OF SEDRACH 12

Christ said to him, Stop, Sedrach, how long will you shed tears and groan? *Paradise has been opened to you, and after dying you will live. *

Sedrach said to him, Since more will I speak to you, Lord, while I live, before I die; and do not ignore my supplication. *The Lord said to him,

Speak, Sedrach. (5) (And Sedrach said,) If man lives eighty or ninety or a hundred years, and lives them in sin but in the end is converted and the man lives in repentance, for how many days of repentance do you forgive (him) his sins? *God said to him,

If he returns after living one hundred or eighty years and repents for three years and bears the fruit of righteousness and death should reach him, then shall I not remember all his sins.

THE APOCALYPSE OF SEDRACH 13

Sedrach said to him, Three years are too many, my Lord. *His death perchance will arrive and he will not fulfill his repentance. *Have mercy, Lord, upon your image and be compassionate, because three years are too many. *God said to him,

If, after a hundred years, a man lives and remembers his death and confesses before men, and I find him, after one year? I will forgive all his sins. (5)

Again Sedrach said, Lord, I beg for your mercy again upon your creature; one year is much, and his death will perchance arrive and suddenly snatch him away. *The Savior said to him,

Sedrach, my beloved, One question will I ask you, then you can resume your inquiries; if the sinner repents for forty days, shall I not indeed remember all the sins he has done?

THE APOCALYPSE OF SEDRACH 14

And Sedrach said to the Archangel Michael, Hear me, strong protector; help me and intercede that God may be merciful to the world. *And falling upon their faces, they besought God and said, Lord, teach us in what way and through what repentance man may be saved, or by what labor. *God said,

By repentances, supplications, and liturgies, through draining tears and fervant groanings. *Do you not know that my prophet David (was saved) because of tears, and that the rest were saved in one moment? (5) You know, Sedrach, that there are nations which have no law, yet fulfill the law; they are not baptized, but my divine spirit enters them and they are converted to my baptism, and I receive them with my righteous ones in the bosom of Abraham. *

And there are some baptized with my baptism and anointed with my divine myrrh, but they have become full of despair and they will not change their mind. *Yet I await them with much pity and much rich mercy, that they may repent. *

But they do that which my divinity hates, and they did not hear the wise man who asked and said,

We in no way justify the sinner. *Are you not at all aware that it is written, *And those who have repented will not see punishment?* (10) And they heard neither the apostles nor my word in the Gospels and they cause sorrow to my angels, and of a certainty in my meetings and in my liturgies they do not heed my angel and they do not stand in my holy churches;? they stand and do not prostrate (themselves) in fear and trembling but they pronounce long words? which neither I nor my angels accept.

THE APOCALYPSE OF SEDRACH 15

Sedrach said to God, Lord, you alone are without sin and very merciful, showing pity and grace to sinners, but your divinity said,

I did not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. *

And the Lord said to Sedrach,

Do you not know, Sedrach, that after changing his mind the rob-

*ber was saved in one instant? *Do you not know that even my apostle and evangelist was saved in an instant? [. . . but sinners are not saved]?*

Because their hearts are like decayed stone; they are those who walk along impious path and who perish with the Antichrist. *

Sedrach said, My Lord, you also said,

My divine spirit entered the nations which though having no law yet do the things of the law. (5)

However, as the robber and the apostle and the rest who have stumbled (are) in your kingdom, my Lord, in the same manner forgive those who in recent days? have sinned against you, Lord, because life is full of toil and (is) obdurate.

THE APOCALYPSE OF SEDRACH 16

The Lord said to Sedrach,

I made man in three stages; when he is young, I overlook his mistakes because

of his youth; again, when he is a man I watch over his mind; again, when he grows old I preserve him so that he may repent. *

Sedrach said, Lord, you know and are acquainted with all this; yet have compassion with sinners. *The Lord said to him,

My beloved Sedrach, I promise to have compassion even less than forty days, as far as twenty, and whoever remembers your name will not see the place of punishment but he will be with the just ones in a place of refreshment and rest, and the sin of him who (copies?) this admirable sermon will not be reckoned for ever and ever. *

And Sedrach said, Lord, also whoever preforms a liturgy in honor of your servant, rescue him, Lord, from all evil. (5) And the servant of God, Sedrach, said, Now, Master, take my soul. *And God took him and put him in Paradise with all the saints. *To him be glory and power for ever and ever, amen.