

# BIBLE TREASURY VOLUME 2

by Unknown

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*A collection of articles and writings from Bible Treasury Volume 2, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.*

145 Chapters

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## Bible Treasury Volume 2

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## Thoughts on 2 Corinthians 12: Part 1

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THIS chapter presents to us, in a remarkable manner, the way in which the power comes whereby a Christian can walk through this world. It is not merely now a path in which he can walk, but the way how he may have strength to walk in it, and what the perfect work of God is in order to his walking in this path. Here we see the two extremes of what a Christian can rise to, and into what he can fall.

In the beginning of the chapter a man was caught up to the third heaven: he was in the highest extreme of spiritual blessedness. Such blessedness indeed he had been conscious of, that it was not suited to speak of when he got back into his natural state. No doubt his faith was strengthened by it for his work, but he could not speak of such things. Now, there is the highest state of spirituality which you can suppose, and yet it is that which is true for us all. No doubt it was brought home to the Apostle in a special manner, but the thing that he so realized is true of us. Then, at the close of the chapter, is seen the other extreme, viz., the terrible state into which a saint can get. We read of envyings, wrath, strifes, uncleanness, fornication, etc. So bad indeed was their state that the Apostle could not even go to Corinth. It was such a corrupt place that it had even passed into a proverb among the ancients; and it was found true even of the saints there that "evil communications corrupt good manners." Hence the Apostle says, "I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not." At first he would not go back to them, but now his first letter had wrought upon the minds of the Corinthians, and they had put the man, who had committed the dreadful evil, out. Titus, too, had been to them and had come back and had told him of their repentance, and mourning, and fervent desire towards him, so that his heart was comforted. Still they were in a very difficult position, and great snares were around them, for he says here, "I fear lest there be debates, envyings, wrath, strifes," &c. There had even been such fornication among them as was not so much as named among the Gentiles. True, they had received the Apostle's reproof, and the man was put out; but they were so used to it, to see evil everywhere around them, that they did not feel it. It is different with us, for we have been brought up to feel and judge everything by a sort of moral light that has been in the world since Christianity has been professed. But they had been always accustomed to uncleanness; they had corrected things in the main, but still the Apostle was trembling about them. "I am afraid lest when I come again I shall be found such as ye would not." I shall be found very severe with you. I may come with a rod-He trembled lest he should be forced to exercise this kind of severity towards those who had not repented. We get then the extreme, in the beginning of the chapter, to which a Christian can go in spirituality, and in the end of it the extreme to which he can go in the flesh. Such is the awfulness of the evil that remains in us even as Christians, and on the other hand, the blessedness to which a man can be carried in spiritual enjoyment. Of course it is not that every one goes up into the third heaven; but all have the blessedness on the one hand, of a man in Christ and on the other, the incorrigible wickedness of the flesh. I do not say of a man in the flesh, for that is not a Christian state at all. We see what the place of a Christian is, looked at in his privileges, and then what he is, looked at in his path down here, and how it is that a person,

with the possibility of all this infirmity, if he is not walking watchfully-how it is that he can walk according to his privileges. Because here we are in a world of temptation and evil, and we have got this flesh that the devil is always seeking to draw us aside by; and how is a person, walking in the midst of temptation, with the flesh there and the devil too, to walk according to this heavenly condition in which he has been put? The first thing is to know what the privilege is. The Apostle was made to enjoy it in an extraordinary manner; but the place which he gives to himself is one which, in principle, belongs to every Christian. That title that took Paul to the third heaven takes all there. We do not realize it now to the extent that he did, but still that title gives us our place. there. We are come to God in glory now; that is the place that is given to us. And therefore he says, I do not talk about Paul — “I know a man in Christ.” I do not get a man in the flesh, but a man in Christ. That is where the Spirit of God sets a Christian. It is the place of every believer. They may have great exercises of heart before getting there; but where he sets them is not in the flesh, but in Christ. That is not the flesh, it is the glory at the right hand of God: A man in the flesh cannot be there.

Where the Apostle says, “When we were in the flesh,” he means that we are so no longer;” it is a past thing. If I say, “When I was in Bristol, I did so and so,” it means that I am not there now. In that way it is he says, “When we were in the flesh.” He had had the commandment and might assent to it that it was good, but he could not get power through it. It was not with him then, rejoicing in the Lord always, and saying of such an one will I glory. But there was his very being, his nature, his walk all opposed to God; and the consciousness that he had of himself and his flesh was this: “I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” That is what he got the consciousness of before God. Supposing the man was desiring to do the right thing, but did not do it—rather did what was the contrary—he had the consciousness that this was what he was before God. In Rom. 7 he was walking in sin and death in the first Adam, and he had to answer for it. In chap. 8. he says another thing. “Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.” There we have the man in Christ, and “there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” There is not the walking after the flesh, but after the Spirit, that will be seen. But where is now the power for it? “What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” Mark, that where he is under the law, and has got these holy desires, that which the new nature always must desire, he sees that the law is right, he consents to the law that it is good, but he also finds another law in his members, bringing him into captivity to the law of sin. He sees that it is of no use. How can I stand before God? I wish the right thing and do the wrong thing Am I not answerable to God? and how can I answer to Him, if I am always doing the thing that is wrong? All through this part of Rom. 7 mark, he does not speak of Christ, but of man in the flesh. It was not that there were not new desires, but he did not do them; and there he was, a responsible man, having to answer for his own condition before God; and he says, my condition is all wrong, “O wretched man that I am,” &c. That was true, but what was he speaking of all this time? The law. “We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.” It was not merely that the law judged any gross misconduct, but it required from him what he ought to be, quickening his desire and wish to be it, and yet he was not it. “I consent to the law that it is good.” He has got to do with law. Again, what does he delight in? “I delight in the law of God, after the inward man.” I have got a desire after what is right, but I have not got a Savior. I have got a law, and what does this law say? You must love God. with all your heart. But I do not that. Then you are lost-it requires from me what I ought to be, but what I am not. It requires from a man that

he should not covet; that he should love God with all his heart, and soul, and might, and his neighbor as himself. But who is this man from whom that is required? Why it is a man in the flesh, with all the lusts of the flesh constantly dragging him into evil. The law requires from a man that is a sinner that he should not be a sinner. It is just that. If I then, as a reasonable being, am under law, what can it do? Why, condemn me—righteously condemn me. It could not do anything else but condemn me. It comes and requires from me, when I am a sinner, to be what, as a sinner, I cannot be; and, therefore, to a man in the flesh, if the law of God comes, it condemns him. It must condemn him, because the heart is so thoroughly corrupt and bad, that the very fact of a command being given, only brings out the evil that is there. We know it by experience in our own hearts. If there were anything upon this table, and I were to say, nobody is to know what is there, at once every body would be longing to know what it was. This is just human nature; it is not the fault of the law at all. Supposing you have children, they may have no particular desire to go out of the house, but if you tell them not to go, and put a barrier to hinder them, then comes a child that wants to go out, and if it finds the barrier there, it will push all the harder against it, to get out. The law says, I must have obedience; but I have a disobedient will. The law says, I cannot have a lust; but the lust is there, and therefore the law says “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,” — and the law of God is righteous, of course, in saying that. But in all that I do not get a word about Christ. I get the claims of God over man, looked at as responsible, as a child of Adam, when he is in his sins, and calling upon him for no sins. The effect of that is altogether condemning—I cannot get rid of it. It is not merely that I give way to certain evil things, again and again; but the tree is bad—the will is wrong. Now, this is just the contrast of what we find in Christ. When Christ comes He says, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” And so it is with the saint in his measure. But the law being there, and the lust being there, the effect of a claim upon him is morally to bring the consciousness that, looked at in the flesh, he is a sinner in the sight of God. It shows him his real condition, but does not take him out of it, and therefore he cries out, “O wretched man that I am,” &c. He had been striving to be better, and the only result was, that he gets this experience of himself by God giving him this law, which is the standard of what he ought to be. Then he says another thing, “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” He is looking now not at how he, as in the flesh, should be better, but that another should come and take the matter up for him, and go through it all. That is where the soul is brought up when it is converted—when it discovers itself to be not merely a sinner, but without strength. I now get the consciousness of the weakness that sin has produced in my flesh, and I say somebody must take up the work for me; I cannot do it myself. I have the consciousness of what sin has made me in the presence of God, and I cannot get out of that condition. “Who shall deliver me?” Mark the answer. He says, “I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” It is all settled. He is thanking God already. Why so? Because “what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh.”... (The law was all right; but “what the law could not do”).... God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.” There I get God doing the whole thing. What the law could not do, because of this principle of sin that is in me, God sending His Son has done. Supposing I were to say to my child, ‘You love me, and if you do not, I will whip you,’ do you think it would make my child love me? Certainly not. I should not get a bit of love from him. So with the law. The law says, Love God, but that never produces love. Commandment never produces love, nor changes the nature that does not love. What then can do it? “We love him because he first loved us.”

The law tells me that God is a righteous Judge. It tells me what I ought to be; but what does it tell me that God is, except that He will not have unrighteousness? It tells me that I am to love God, but does it tell me what the God is that I am to love? It says nothing about it. It says you are to love Him, and if you do not you will be punished. But it tells me nothing of what He is, that I may love Him. But what does the gospel tell me? It tells me, you have not loved God, but God has been loving you all the time. Now, that is the starting point for the soul. God has loved me when I did not love him. It is true that we get new thoughts and desires; but when I am simple, the effect is, my conscience getting into the light, sees and judges all my sins in the light; but I find that this love of God, having sent Christ, and Christ coming in the same love, God does not say, I will help you to love me, but He says, I will love you; you cannot get rid of that sin in the flesh, but will love you. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son.... for sin condemned sin in the flesh." Where did He condemn it In the cross. Now, then, I am pardoned; now I am free. I see the love of God that when I got into this terrible condition of death in sin, in the flesh, Christ has been there, and has condemned it. The sentence of God has been put upon it, and it is done. And that is why, looking at Christ, he can say, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ." When he has seen what a man is, looked at as responsible to God under the law, he says, "O wretched man that I am." But then he sees that Christ has been here, and done it all for him, and he can say, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

(To be continued.)

## Thoughts on 2 Corinthians 12: Part 2

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THE man now is not standing as himself, a sinner responsible to God, because he has owned himself entirely lost in that state; and now, what he has learned is this, that God has sent His Son, and has condemned sin in the flesh. Therefore there is no condemnation. God has condemned it already; and thus he comes to be not a man in the flesh, but a man in Christ. This is what we got in chap. viii. He is looked at as in Christ; he has Christ as His life in the presence of God; he is no longer as in the flesh, but in the Spirit. Now he can say, I am in Christ. The second Adam, after having put away my sin on the cross, and having risen again, communicates this life to me. It is the eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us. I have seen this life; I have looked at Christ walking through this world, and there I see what love, what blessing, was in all His ways; what tenderness, what patience with His disciples. Then, I say, That is eternal life, the life of God; and it has been manifested to me. In the second chap., John says, "Which thing is true in him and in you." And now my standing in the presence of God is not in the old wretched flesh, but I am a man in Christ, because Christ is my life. That is the place in which we are set. Christ is my new life, and I am in Christ, in the presence of God.

In the case of Paul, when this truth was carried to the highest possible realization, he was in the third heaven. The body could have no part in such a place as that. There he was, not knowing whether he was in the body or out of it; and this is what he calls "a man in Christ." He is a man that is living, and really having his life from Christ, and united to Him in the power of the Holy Ghost, joined to Him in one Spirit, and this not in his condition as a child of Adam, but as born of God; so that, when I look at Christ, as walking in this world, I can say that this is my life. I see this life in him in all its perfectness, and I say, 'This is very precious.' I see that very eternal life, which was with the Father, and I say, 'That is my life. I had a life in the first Adam, that brought in the bitter fruits of sin and corruption, but now I have got the life of Christ.' But Paul could not stay in the third heaven; he had to walk in this world. But even as walking through the world, it must still be taking this blessed One as our life. When I see Christ walking in this world, was there anything inconsistent with this heavenly place? Never. He was the manifestation of the divine nature down here. Now this is what you ought to be. "He that sayeth he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked." I get, that is, not merely what man under the law, but what the divine nature is, expressed in a man on earth; and that is what a Christian ought to be. He is one who has become a heavenly man; who has got his place in the presence of God, sin forever put away, and the Holy Ghost uniting him to Christ, and in spirit and faith in the presence of God. And now he has to act so in the world, not as the flesh, but the flesh being there; and in trials and duties of all kinds that he has to go through, he is to abide with God. If he cannot abide with God in what he has got to do, he must give it up.

But Paul gets back to the world, and now comes trial. The flesh comes in. He had been in the third heaven; he had got this wonderful abundance of revelations, and the flesh says to him, There has not been a person in the third heaven but you. Now he is puffed up, and certainly this is not heavenly; it is the very contrary of it. And that is the way the flesh will use even being in the third

heaven. He is not puffed up when he is there, because it is the presence of God, and nobody can be proud in the presence of God. Persons fancy that it makes people proud to be in the third heaven. Never! The danger is, when you get out of the third heaven, of the flesh being proud of having been there. We feel our nothingness in the presence of God. But now Paul finds that the flesh was just as bad and mischievous as ever. Wherever the flesh works, if it gets into the thought of the third heaven, it makes mischief, and if you could give a man the thought of a fourth heaven, it would only be worse. There is no mending it. And what does God send? A thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him. There is grace, that Satan himself must be God's servant in the world, just as it was in Job's case. Who begins the business with Job? Was it Satan? No, it was God. God says to Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth," &c. And then God allows Satan to bring Job to the very point where He wanted him—the discovery of what he was. Job said, "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me. Because I delivered the poor that cried," &c. And he had done it: that was his third heavens, and therefore the Lord allows Satan to break him down entirely. And what does he say then? "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." That is exactly what He wanted; Satan had been used as an instrument of God to bring Job into the condition of being made nothing of in his own eyes, and then God can bless him. It is very disagreeable work to get to know ourselves, but very useful work. Peter is sifted, and has to learn that this confidence that he has in himself is the very occasion of his failure. In the end, the Lord not only restores his soul, but makes him the channel of blessing to others. When you know your own utter nothingness, then you can go and help others. Go and feed my sheep, the Lord says to Peter. It is very humbling and trying to be made nothing of, but very useful, because we are all disposed to think too good of ourselves.

Lest then Paul should be exalted above measure, a thorn in the flesh is given to him. We learn from the Epistle to the Galatians that it was something that made him contemptible in his preaching. It was something to keep Him from being puffed up, but that is not strength. We have got the blessedness of Paul, in the third heavens. We have got the man in Christ who can think and bless God for what we are made in Christ—who can say of all of us, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." But after this we have another thing, the flesh and its inclination to be puffed up. And then we find a third thing, the flesh made exceedingly disagreeable. But that is not strength—on the contrary, it is the emptying of strength. You cannot get God to help the flesh and to help self-will. He will break it down. He will humble you by it, but He will never help it. He breaks the vessel, that we may know that the power is not of man, but of God. So that he says here, "When I am weak, then I am strong." When I am weak, I feel that I am weak. I know the truth about myself. Here the Apostle was preaching, and his manner of preaching was contemptible, and yet hundreds of people were converted through it. Well, that does not come from what is contemptible; it does not come from Paul, but from God. The Lord, then, when He had made him feel his weakness, says, "My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in weakness." If Paul had got strength, Christ need not have had so much for him; but if Paul had none, the strength that came from Christ was in him. The man had been brought into conscious weakness that the power of Christ might rest upon him. Now there I have got, not the man in Christ, but Christ in the man, and that is what I want down here. If I think of the man in Christ, it is perfection. But when it is a question of walking down here, we want strength as well as sincerity—we want power. If the power be in myself, there is the old

man set up, and that will not do. The old man must be set down, and then another power comes in. I have got Christ with me;-I am a dependent man. Christ said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." We see Him constantly dependent and always right. There is what is so difficult for us. We get into mischief just when we get into independence of God; and therefore it is that we so often see a Christian have a fall after a season of great joy. Why? Because his joy has taken him away from dependence upon God. When I am emptied of self, and am in distresses, and infirmities, and necessities for Christ's sake, then I can say, I will glory in them. Why? "That the power of Christ may rest upon me." Now there is where there is blessing: to be made nothing of in one's own consciousness, but then to have the consciousness of the power of Christ resting on me. That is not the man in Christ, but the power of Christ resting on him as he walks down here =it is Christ in the man. Supposing I am emptied of self, and Christ is living in me, what shall I get? I shall not be always in the third heavens, but Christ is always there. I have got my security there, my life there, my righteousness there, everything there that I need. Christ is my title-I am in Christ and not in the first Adam.

The robe that was put upon the prodigal son when he came home, he had never had before. It was not a patching up of his old rags, but a new robe. The best robe was brought out and given. So what we had in Adam is lost, and never can be recovered; but we get a new and far higher thing, An innocent man is one who does not know good and evil; a holy man knows good, and loves it; It is not now mere innocence, but what Christ is worth in the presence of God that I have got. The robe that the father put upon the prodigal was a new robe out of the treasures of his own house, that he had never had before. God has given us Christ in heaven. I am not always in the third heavens, but Christ is there, and my place and title is to be there by faith, according to the working of the Spirit of God. If Christ is my life, there is nothing in that life inconsistent with the third heavens. The Christ that is in heaven, even when He was walking upon earth, could say, "The Son of man which is in heaven;" and all His life down here was the expression of that. Our union with Him is a real, living union. I am in Christ above, and this Christ is in me below; and there I get the principle of all my walk, and the power of it too. I may be about my work and business; but in that work and business I have to live Christ-to walk in the spirit of Christ whatever circumstances I am in. Supposing I am doing that, the Spirit is not grieved, and I enjoy the third heaven -I have not been inconsistent with it. I have not been there; but I have walked consistently with it, because I have walked in the Christ that is there. He is both my life and the power of my life. I have been in the third heavens and come out of it to be engaged in service; I may go on with my affections the same spiritually and morally, and when I go back to it, I enjoy it all the more. Take a man working for his family all daylong. He may have to labor hard, and away from them; but when the work is done, he comes back and enjoys them all the more. So the Christian, besides being in the third heaven, has to walk through the world. But Christ is his righteousness—his title for being there; and therefore his place is in heaven, and walking in the power of that life he is back into the third heaven as happy and fresh as ever. We may fail in it, but that is what the power of Christ resting on us down here works in us. Mark how he speaks as regards our title to such a place. "I knew a man in Christ.... Of such an one will I glory." In that we ought to glory. If I say I am in Christ, I glory in it. I say, What an astonishing place God has put me in! He has taken me out of the ditch and placed me with His Son. He takes a thief up on the cross and puts him in the same glory as the Son of God. He takes a Mary Magdalene, from when He casts out seven devils, and puts her in the same glory as the Son of God. I am to glory in that. And what is the effect down here.? That I

shall be made a fool of. If you talk of a man in Christ—of such an one he says, I will glory; but if you talk of me, Paul, why I was going to be puffed up about him having been in the third heaven! There can be no good at all for me, unless I am emptied of self. When there, so little thought was there of self that he did not know whether he was in the body or out of it.

People may say all this is presumption. Allow me to say a word about that. Are you in Christ? If you are not in Christ you are lost. It is no good saying it is presumption. If you are not in Christ you are lost; if you are in Christ you are safe. What is the effect? Is not Christ your righteousness? Are you not going to glory in that, not in yourselves? We do not think badly enough of ourselves as sinners in the flesh. If I know what it is to be lost—without Christ—I shall not think it presumption to glory in being in Him I have no need to think of myself, because I am perfectly happy in the presence of God. He has made me happy by the grace that has brought me there, and by the present communion that I have with Himself in the place in which He has put me. We have to be taught practically, and therefore Paul had this thorn in the flesh. After he knew his own wretchedness and Christ his righteousness, there was the perfect learning of his own nothingness. This is the grand work which remains for us. We are in Christ as our righteousness; but if I have only a light thought that is not communion with God, though grace comes in, and there is intercession. The man in Christ has got his standing with God, and when he has this, his business is to manifest Christ before the world. There he wants power, and the power comes not merely from having been in the third heaven, nor merely from being made the righteousness of God Christ. He wants present power. To be sincere is not enough. You will meet with temptation; you will have your business, your trials of one kind and another; and you want the power that gives Christ a preciousness to you that makes everything you meet with to be as nothing to you. It is Christ Himself that becomes your power—the power of Christ resting upon you. Now I ask you whether you can say, “When we were in the flesh?” It is an important thing; and the Apostle speaking of it says, “When we were in the flesh.” Have you learned that the ground upon which you stand before God is not the ground upon which the first Adam stood, but that God has put you upon a new ground, in the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. If so, I say you are a man in Christ, and therefore you must walk as Christ walked. But if not, you have got a lesson to learn, to have your souls realizing that we are lost without Christ; and therefore if we are to have hope of anything, it must be in Christ. And God puts us in Christ; and then I say, oh, I am in Christ before God. He bore my sins and put them away—blotted them out forever. But though there is the power of the new life and the presence of the Holy Ghost, of myself I will not glory, save in what pulls this wretched flesh to pieces; but in Christ I will glory.

Do you desire to manifest Christ to the world? You will say you want power; but if so, you must be emptied of self, and find Him your righteousness before God; and His power you get in your weakness, as your power to walk through this world. Then our hearts can say, Come, Lord Jesus.

The Lord give you to know what it is to value Him now, first as poor sinners, knowing Him as meeting all our need, and then in the communion of His love, as One that is dear to our hearts, whom we long to know face to face, in all His fullness.

Newport, Monmouthshire, June 30, 1858.

## Acts 2 and 3

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Days and years are passing and making the moment still less—may a disengaged heart have a welcome for the last sand.

What a different character is given to the resurrection in the sermon in Acts 2 and in that in Acts 3. In Acts Peter lifts up the risen Christ as Moses brought in the budding rod in Num. 17 for the confusion of the people. It is there a startling object full of judgment on a rebellious people. And Israel cry out under the sense of this, “men and brethren, what shall we do?” as Israel had cried out in Num. 17. Peter declares that the same risen, ascended Christ would return to make His foes His footstool. In Acts 3 he publishes the name of the same risen Jesus for the healing of these people. That name is set for salvation, not for judgment. And instead of the risen, ascended Christ returning to make his foes His footstool, He is declared to be waiting in the heavens till he brings refreshing and restoration with Him. And under this preaching the people do not cry out, but “many of them which heard the word believed, and the number of the men was about five thousand:” for Peter had declared that Jesus was preached for blessing (see iii. 26; iv. 4).

In the second chapter, the resurrection is rather that of the One who had suffered like a martyr at man's hand, and then it was judgment on man, In the third it is rather the resurrection of Him who had been offered up as the Lamb of God, and thus it was healing or salvation.

But what a truth it is to carry abroad, to bear onward into the midst of the human family, to use it like the pillar that was all darkness and judgment to Egypt, and light and deliverance to Israel. For indeed, no more surely was that pillar like darkness and light, than this resurrection is judgment (Acts 10:42; 17:31) and salvation (Acts 10:43; 13:37-39); and thus it is the great thing for the evangelist to use.

## AGAPAO and PHILEO: to Love and to Be Attached to

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1. John 21:15-17. G -y inquires what is the difference between αγαπω and φιλω? You will observe that Jesus says to Peter the first and second times αγαπα με, and that Peter replies φιλω. The third time Jesus says φιλες με. It has been remarked that one means "love," and the other simply 'friendly feeling.' But on referring to the Englishman's Greek Concordance, I find φιλω used in John 5:20, ("for the Father loveth the Son,") and also in John 15:27, ("for the Father himself loveth you," &c.)

It is not surprising that our correspondent is little satisfied with the usual explanation. The true difference seems to be simple. Αγαπω is the generic term for loving, and is applicable in all directions-to superiors, inferiors, and equals. It is said of God's feeling toward man, and of man's toward God. It is predicated of God's love to the world in giving His only-begotten Son, and of Christ's love in giving Himself for the Church. On the other hand, φιλω seems to be a narrower word, and properly implies special affection and endearment. Hence it is often used to describe the outward sign of fondness and also vaguely that feeling which produces the habit of certain actions, though this last is true of αγαπω also. Both are said of God's love to His Son. The notion that αγαπω denotes reverential love, and φιλω mere human affection, is untenable. We are not called to love our enemies reverentially (Matt. 5:43, 44; 6:24). Nor was it thus that Christ loved the rich young man; nor will it be pretended that God reverentially loved the world. Yet this is not a tithe, perhaps, of the absurdity that attends such a thought. As little can φιλω be reduced to the purely human regard of the heart. It is not so that the Father loves the Son or even us; nor can anything be more opposed to the true scope of 1 Cor. 16:22; Titus 3:15; Rev. 3:19, &c, where φιλω occurs.

It would rather appear that while the Lord thoroughly judges Peter's confidence in His own love to Him, He not only hears Peter's declaration of His true and near affection for Him, but Himself takes it up the third time, and that this, flashing on Peter's three-fold denial, went to his very heart, and drew out the deeply-felt and humble confession that it was only the Lord's omniscience which could at all discern such affection. It may be added that in the first case, the Lord's word is, "feed my lambs," in the second, "shepherd, or rule, my sheep," and in the third, "feed my sheep." Peter's last answer appeals to the Lord's knowledge, both subjective, οιδας, and γινσκεις, objective.

## Amos

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Amos was the prophet who went before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah. (Chap. 1:1.) We may say that he was the prophet of that event (8:8; 9:5.)

That earthquake is treated by Zechariah as typical, as a notice of the Lord's controversy with the worn, when again there will be earthquakes and pestilences, ministers of judgment and vessels of wrath. (Zech. 14:5.)

Accordingly, judgment is the great burthen of Amos' prophecy, and it therefore served the purpose of Stephen in Acts 7—for that moment was also a crisis in the history of the Jews. And Stephen there quotes Amos. (See Acts 7:42, 43; and Amos 5:25 -27.)

But, again, Amos treats the Gentiles as dealt with by God, as well as the Jews. He judges them all alike. He brought the Philistines from Capthor, and the Syrians from Kir, as he had brought Israel from Egypt. And in coming millennial days, He will have all the Gentiles called by His name, as surely as He will build again the fallen tabernacle of David. (See chaps. i. ii. ix. 7-12.)

In this character the word by Amos directly answered for James in Acts 15 where the apostle was insisting on the independence of Gentile saints, and that they must not be required to be circumcised and to adopt the customs of Israel. Amos intimates this, and James cites him, to show that the Gentiles were to be adopted of God (or have His name called on by them acceptably) in a way quite independent of the Jews; or that the Lord knew them before Israel knew them.

Thus, those two great occasions in the history of the Church in the New Testament, Stephen's words in Acts 7 and James' in Acts 15 were served by the Spirit through Amos, who may be regarded as somewhat a distant and unnoticed portion of the word of God. But it is beautiful thus to see that we are to live "by every word of God." We know not in what obscure corner of the volume, so to speak, that scripture may lie, which is fitted and destined by the Holy Ghost to stand by the soul in the trying hour. Amos, ministering to Stephen and to James, witnesses this.

I only add a verse or two from George Herbert, which this finding of the words of Amos in Acts 7 and again other words of his in Acts 15 may call to mind. They are in his little piece called "the Holy Scriptures."

"Oh, that I knew how all thy lights combine  
And the configurations of their glory!

Seeing not only how each verse doth shine,  
But all the constellations of the story.

This verse marks that, and both do make a motion  
Unto a third, which ten leaves off doth lie:  
Then, as dispersed herbs do watch a potion,  
These three make up some Christian's destiny."

## As is the Heavenly: Part 1

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1 Cor. 15:48

THERE are two great things that the Scriptures present to us as effectual for salvation. One is, the full vindicating of God's moral character in grace towards us, which the atonement does. There is righteousness in God against sin, and there is love to the sinner—for God's character is not only vindicated in the atonement, but He is glorified in it. But besides this, there is another and a distinct thing, and that is, the coming in of power to bring us out of all the misery and wretchedness which are the effects of sin, and to set us in a new place. Both these things form a part of this great salvation. The one was absolutely necessary, if sinners were to be reconciled to God at all; for the atonement must have been made in order to our being brought near to God. If God had brought us to Himself without His righteousness having been perfectly vindicated, He could not have been the holy and blessed One that He is. But all that God is, has been perfectly cleared and vindicated on the cross, which without the cross never could have been. If God had let every one off in mercy, that would not have been love; it would have been indifference to sin. If one of my children, for instance, were to be naughty, and yet I were to persist in treating him all the same as the others, that would not be love. You cannot have true love unless there is a perfect maintaining of righteousness according to the truth of God's name. But to maintain that, must, necessarily, have shut out all sinners, without the cross -without the death of Christ, as giving Himself up to the perfect righteousness of God—His judgment, His hatred of sin, His authority- for it is a question of authority, as well as of holiness —and, at the same time, of perfect love to the sinner. And this is what the cross of Christ is for us—the full bringing out and vindicating of all that God is, not only in love but in holiness. It is full of blessing. We come to God as needy sinners, and we find there the mercy-seat, and His precious blood sprinkled upon it. But when in peace I can reflect upon the cross, I see how perfectly God is glorified in it. The more it shows me the holiness of God, the more, also, what a wonderful thing the cross was; there is nothing like it in heaven or earth, excepting, of course, God Himself. No creation, nothing that has ever been seen in this world, could be what the cross was. Creation may show God's power, but it cannot bring out God's love and truth as the cross does, and therefore it remains everlastingly the wonderful and blessed place of learning, what could be learned nowhere else, of all that God is.

But while that is true, there is another thing, the coming in of a deliverer to take us out of the condition in which we were by nature—for so indeed we were, poor, wretched, creatures, struggling in the ditch, and no way of getting out of it. Supposing, then, that God had been vindicated and glorified by the cross of Christ, it did not follow that you and I should therefore be brought out of the condition in which we were. This required that God should come down to us, and take us out of all the condition of sin and misery, and put us in another condition altogether, and that needs the coming in of divine power.

SALVATION is a deliverance wrought by Divine power, so as to bring us out of one condition into another. It is true, we are morally changed, but we want more than that—though whoever has got

that, will surely have all the rest. But supposing I get the new nature, with its desires after holiness, what is the effect? It gives me the consciousness of all the sin that is in me. I want to be righteous, but then I see that I am not righteous, and I bow under the power of sin, and of the knowledge of such holiness, which I have learned to desire, only to find out that I have not got it. I say, What is the good of my knowing holiness in this way, if I have not got it? It is no comfort to me. Here we have been speaking of God's righteousness; but when I look I find I have no righteousness. Where can I find a resting-place for my spirit in such a state as this? It is impossible; and the very effect of having this new nature, with all its holy affections and desires after Christ, brings me to the discovery of the lack of what this new nature cannot of itself impart. I have got the cravings of the new nature—all its holy and righteous desires; but the thing craved for I have not got. It is the desire of my nature. I say, Oh! that I could be righteous; but then I am not righteous. In that way God meets us with a positive salvation. He meets us and quickens us into the desire and want of holiness; gives us a nature capable of enjoying it when we get it. But that is not all. When I have got that nature, have I got the thing I want No. I strive, and think, Oh! if I could get more of this holiness t but still I have not got it. I may hate the sin, but the sin is there that I hate. I may long to be with God, to be forever in the light of His countenance, but then I see that I have got sin, and know that the light of His countenance cannot shine upon my sin; I want a righteousness fit for His presence, and I have not got it. It is thus God meets us in the cross. He not only gives the nature that we want, but He gives us the thing that we want. And not only that, but in Christ He gives us both the perfect object and the nature, and that in power.

We get, in the expression of this, a remarkable thing in this chapter. "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." It is not there what we shall be in point of glory, for afterward he adds, "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." We have borne the image of the first Adam, in all the consequences of his sin and ruin, and we shall bear the image of the last Adam. But he lays down first this great truth for our hearts, "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." It is what we are now. There I find what my heart, as quickened of God, wants; and I learn what blessedness is in Christ, by whom God has revealed it to us. He has given us a righteousness in Christ who is the accepted, blessed man in the presence of God, of whom alone God could say, "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." You have been rejected by man, but you are just my delight. "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." It is that which God brings before us. He puts us into a new condition before Himself, and then makes us judge all that is inconsistent with that. Then, besides that, power is given—not a new nature, merely, with cravings after a position which we have not got, but power to judge practically, from a position which we have got, all that is inconsistent with it. There will be that which has to be judged, but I shall judge it in the consciousness of what God has given me in Christ. It is there that I get the measure of what God, come in in power, has made me. "As is the earthy,.... as is the heavenly," &c. Here are these two men, so to speak. There is the first Adam, of the earth, with those that pertain to him, earthy; and there is the second man, the Lord from heaven. There are these two Adams, and I get in both the pattern and model of all other men that are after their image. I get the first Adam, fallen, wretched, and corrupt; then I get the other Adam, that becomes in a spiritual sense the head of a race after He has taken that place in God's counsels in glory.

I say, There is the pattern, and model, and head of that race. It is not merely a truth that the atonement has been made for us, in respect of what we were as belonging to the first Adam; but God has been glorified in respect of our sins. The more we get into the presence of God, the more we shall learn the value of the cross. But then this chapter, in speaking of the resurrection, speaks of the coming in of power. We just see how the Lord first deals with Christ in power of resurrection, and then, at the same time, how we are objects of this very same thing.

Now what I see first in Christ, as He was upon earth, is perfect goodness in His dealings with men -perfect goodness meeting them in all their need. The heart gets cheered and encouraged by that. He feeds them when hungry, heals them when sick, casts out devils. There was power too, but not in those with whom He had to do. It was Divine power. It ministered to their wants. It was the wretchedness and misery in which man was, to which the goodness of God in Christ was applied, and the only thing in the person was the sin and misery to which the goodness was applied. I have felt latterly that the more we get at the facts of the Lord's life on earth, the more power there will be. We do not sufficiently present facts, but we reason upon the value of the facts. I am persuaded the more the facts of the gospel are presented to people's souls, the more power there will be.

Looking then at Christ upon earth, I find God in this lowly man Let me get firmly hold of that simple fact in a world of misery, and wretchedness, and toil: God has come into it and I have found Him I have met Him. It is by faith, of course: but still God was there, and I have met Him. I know what He is and what He is for me. I was a sinner like all the rest of the world, but God was there and He was all goodness to me. I have found Him and I know what He is, because He has been it to me. Christ was upon earth, coming down to all my need, and I have met God in Him and I know Him, Now I say, that is in one sense everything to my soul. You may reason as to what He will be in the day of judgment; but I say I have found Him and know what He is, and that is perfect goodness. I was a vile, wretched creature, troubling myself about nothing but pleasure, or worse; but I met Him and know what He is. When the soul has got that, it has got a key that opens every lock in eternity. I have found God, and I have found that He is perfect light. Of course, just because He is light, I may see failures in myself, I may be ashamed of myself; but still I know what He is and what He is to me, and thus my soul gets a resting-place and a divine acquaintance with the God I have to do with. I see that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." He has been here with me on earth, but now I have another trouble-that I am not fit to be with Him in heaven. Why, here is death, here is sin, here is failure to be dealt with, and sin cannot go to heaven. Therefore I get another fact. I find that this blessed One, who is the expression of this perfect grace that I did not think anything about-I find Him coming down into my condition-made sin for me—going under the death and under the judgment that were due to me, and bearing my sins. I find Christ now not merely as a living Christ upon earth, kind towards my miseries, showing all goodness to me, but as taking my place under the suffering of the wrath and judgment of God, and there I find Him altogether alone. Christ may suffer in a way in which I may suffer with Him. He may suffer from man, and we may suffer thus in our little measure. He may learn what suffering is in this world, in order to comfort me and suffer with me. But when I find the Lord suffering on the cross, there I find Him absolutely and entirely alone, and there I find the great question of sin perfectly and forever settled between God and me. But I was not there at all.

(To Be Continued.)

## As is the Heavenly: Part 2

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I could not be where He was, for He was there just that I might never be there, bearing the wrath of God and drinking that cup of suffering of which, if I had tasted the least drop, it would have been everlasting death. Well, I see the Lord coming down to this place of my deepest misery, and now the power of God comes in there. He has taken my place in grace. Where sin had brought me, grace had brought Him There into that place of death and wrath He came, and now I see power coming in.

Atonement has been made; and where He perfectly glorified God, the power of God comes in and sets Him at His own right hand in heaven. So that I do not merely get God glorified in the cross of Christ, but I see the power of God coming in and taking that very Christ when He was down in the depths of death and setting Him at His own right hand in heaven. Here then I have found a positive, actual deliverance, and so truly was this the case that Christ can celebrate the name of God in association with others. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." He can celebrate that name, knowing it after all which He Himself has gone through for us, bringing Him into the presence of God His Father in all the full blessedness of the light of His countenance, after He had taken all the full weight of sin upon Him But power had come in, as is said in Psa. 16, "Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption; and He did not see corruption. True, He had there to say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" but even He trusts Himself to God His Father, and God puts His seal upon Him by raising Him from the dead. There I get in the resurrection of Christ the coming in of divine power in the very place where we were lying in ruin and helplessness, and where Christ was in grace for us, and it takes Him entirely out of it. Now I have got the man Christ Jesus in heaven after atonement has been made, and after the question of sin has been settled in virtue of His having God about it. I get Him in the place of. power as the object of God's counsels. For it is in Christ that all things are to be gathered together in one, and even now God has set Him Head over all things to the Church.

The whole question of sin is thus settled in the resurrection of Christ. "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins But now is Christ risen from the dead;" and we are not in our sins. There I find the heavenly man, that has been down here and borne my sins, in power of resurrection in the presence of God. He is "the Lord from heaven" too. Mark this. Afterward the apostle says in Ephesians that that very same power that wrought in Christ, when God raised Him from the dead, is exercised in. every one that believes. He desires that they may know "what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." Exactly the same power that wrought when God took Christ from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand, has already wrought in you that believe, and you have got a place with Him there; and, therefore, "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy, and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." We are in Christ in God's presence; and now I get not desires only, but the answer to them. I have not merely a new nature, but I have

got what the new nature wants, because I have got Christ. I have got not merely cravings after something, but the thing I crave. I want righteousness and holiness, and that is what I have got, because I am in Christ. I want to be without fear in the presence of God, and I am in it, because I am in Christ. I have got now, in a word, full salvation—not merely a new nature, but salvation.

God has come down to me and He has saved me. He has come and by His own power has taken me out of the place in which I was lying, in misery and helplessness, in the first Adam, and has put me in the place of the last Adam, before Himself, without a sin upon me—all sin put away, because all was judged in the person of Christ. Such is the condition into which Christ has thus brought us. After the fall of the first man, after the thorough trial of man as man—tried without law—tried under law, then God comes in with perfect grace and sends His well-beloved Son. So to speak, He says that is the last thing I can try man by; but when they saw Him they said, “This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.” Man as the first man has been perfectly tried, and has been found wanting. No means can mend him. But what do I find in Christ? He has taken the place of the first Adam down here for us. He has died in it, and there is a total end of the whole state for those that believe. Now I reckon myself dead to sin, because Christ has died. He was treated as being in that place, and He died, and the whole thing is ended—ended for me, under judgment of another’s bearing. As a believer I shall still feel the workings of the old nature and have to judge it; but I see Christ taking it for me and judgment executed upon it in His person on the cross, and now He is out of it all, alive again for evermore. That life is wholly gone in which He laid it down, and the old nature to which sin and judgment applied is gone—just as a man who may be in prison, awaiting there the punishment of his crime, and he dies: the life to which the punishment is attached is gone. It is impossible that there can be any longer a question of punishment for the sin: the life is gone to which the sin and its punishment attached. Just so was it with Christ. And therefore the apostle always addresses the believer as dead to sin. “You are dead,” he says to him; “you are not a living man at all.” “Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

It is never said in Scripture that we are to die to sin, for if that were said, it would be ourselves that would die, and that would be an end of us altogether. But what is stated in Scripture is, that we are dead to sin, through Jesus Christ. Now that Christ has died unto sin once for me, let me reckon myself to be dead to sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ. This is what I get as the principle of the Christian’s place:—that while as a fact he is alive, yet as Christ has died, the very nature that God dealt with, as to the question of sin, in the first Adam, is done with, and now a power has come in that has made me alive with Christ. The very nature that had to be dealt with is looked at as a judged and dead thing, and I am brought into the position of Christ, as risen and in the presence of God. When we sit with, Him, we shall be like Him; but as to our real condition before God, even now we are sitting in heavenly places in Christ. Divine love has reached down to the place of sin and death in which we were, and divine righteousness has taken us up and set us in the place of light, where Christ is; for there is no middle place. If I know what sin is, I see that it deserves condemnation. It would not be mercy to leave the sin alone, and pass it by. It must be put away; but how? It must be put away by death, because its merits are condemnation.

(To be continued.)

## As is the Heavenly: Part 3

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IF God is dealing with sin, looked at in my relationship to Him as a sinner, He must deal with it in death. There is no forgiveness for the sinner, looked at as guilty before God, without the real work which deals with it according to God's nature; and it was dealt with thus in the cross. He hath appeared once to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. But that is not all. Having thus put away sin, He has done with the old thing altogether, and has got into a new one, that very nature left behind in which He was responsible, and suffered for sin, and now He is the heavenly man in the presence of God; and there we are set in Him. "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." Therefore it is that in the Epistle of John we get the same truth brought out. First of all we have there (chap. iv. 9.) that "the love of God was manifested toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." There I see divine love that visited this world in the person of the Son of God. There were two things that were needed. That He should be the propitiation for our sins, because we were guilty, was one; but besides that, he goes on to say, "Herein is love with us made perfect," &c. There is the perfectness of love—not merely that God's love visited us in this world, in all our need and sorrow, to leave us there; but herein is the love of God "made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world."

How can I have boldness in the day of judgment? Why, I am the same as my Judge,—and in this world too; "As he is, so are we in this world." Just what I get here, "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." It is the same truth. What a thing that is! What a salvation it is! not merely mercy that forgives sin. It is a real perfect salvation; a deliverance which has taken us, as in Christ, out of the condition in which we were and has put us into another, and that other is Christ. It is true that we shall all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ; everything must be brought out there. But even so, why, I am like Himself. What is He going to judge? How do I get there at all? Because Christ has come and fetched me. I am going, He said to His disciples, "to prepare a place for you. And if I go,... I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." So that when I come to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, it is because Christ has so loved me that He has come to fetch me there! and in what condition? I am in glory before I get to the judgment-seat. Everything will there be brought out, and with immense profit and gain to us. We shall know right and wrong then, as we are known. We shall be manifested, but manifested before Him who is in the presence of God as the warrant of our salvation. We shall not thoroughly bear the image of Christ till the time of glory. But even now, as to our standing before God, "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." Now as regards my soul and my eternal life, He has come and brought us into this condition, making Christ to be my life, and in Christ my righteousness and life. He has brought me in faith, and in the truth of my new nature, into this wondrous place in Christ. The realization of it is another thing, and may be hindered through failure or infirmity. You begin to search, perhaps in yourself, and find such and such a thought contrary to Christ. But I say, that is the old man If you take yourself by yourself, there is not righteousness for God, and therefore you cannot stand an instant in God's sight. I must

look at Christ to see what I am, and I say, "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly;" and that is what I am in the presence of God. There is no veil: we are to walk in the light, as God is in the light.

Now, the measure of the judgment of the working of my flesh, and of everything else, is according to this love and grace. The moment I have got Christ, and I can say, I knew a man in Christ, (and so thoroughly was this the case with Paul that he could say, "I knew a man in Christ, whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell" —he is not thinking of himself at all,) then everything is judged according to what I am in Christ. It is not there I glory of Paul. Paul knew what infirmities and distresses, &c., were. But "I know a man in Christ," and I am glad of such an one to glory. I will glory with all my heart in it—because he is not looking at himself and at his righteousness— "of myself," he says, "I will not glory, but in mine infirmities." Here I get to the true reality of what my condition, as a poor feeble creature down here below, is. But then God has put me in Christ, and now whatever passes in my mind must be judged according to Him. "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." I may come short, but this is the only measure. In 2 Cor. 12 he takes this very ground. "I will glory," he says, "in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." It is not that he was always in the third heaven, or that we shall be in the full enjoyment always of our position. But this is true, that the Christ in whom we are is in heaven. He is not here, He is in the presence of God, and we are in Him there; and even though we do not realize always our place in Christ, yet, I say, that Christ is never inconsistent with what He is in that presence, and Christ dwells in me; and this is where I get the perfect rule of life that I need. The power of Christ dwells in me, even upon earth. If Christ walked upon earth, His walk was perfectly consistent with a heavenly man I find Him to be the perfect expression of the love and grace and holiness that He was in the Father's house.

It is true Paul says, "I know a man in Christ," &c. But does that mean that the Christ he had then was a different Christ from the one he had known in the third heaven? No; he had got the very power that was suited to a Christ in heaven. We get the principle of all holiness of walk from the fact of our position being in Christ. I must know that this is my place before God, if my walk is to be according to Christ. "For their sakes," said our blessed Lord, "I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth." He is set apart to God as this pattern-man in heavenly places, that the Holy Ghost may take and apply it to us here. I see this perfect Christ set apart for me in heaven, and I say I must walk according to that pattern. I will walk in love, because Christ also hath loved us, and given Himself for us. I get there, "Be ye imitators of God." And in another place, "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." He sets before us, as walking through this world, the kindness of God even to His enemies. The starting point of all my measure of conduct is the place in which I am already set in Christ.

Since the fall of man, since our judgment has been a fallen one by sin, our thought of obligation and duty is always as a means of gaining something. People often fancy that if there is not the uncertainty attendant upon this responsibility to get life, there must be carelessness. But supposing you have got children—they are your children, and never can cease to be your children. But does that destroy their responsibility? Their relationship to you is the very thing that forms their responsibility. The principle of a real responsibility, till sin came into the world, was a blessed one. It was this—I am to act up to the condition that I am in.

The Christian responsibility is not that of a man hoping and trying to be a Christian. It is not at the time of the difficulty and danger that we get the capacity of walking according to Christ. The way to walk in a time of difficulty is not by valuing Christ for the temptation, but for His own sake. If we live in the constant valuing of Christ for His own sake, we shall assuredly have Him delivering us from the temptation. If my heart is full of Christ, the things that are contrary to Him do not attract me. I may feel my failure and weakness all the more; but the God that, by power, has brought us into this place in Christ, can sustain us in it. The whole of our relationship with God upon the ground of the old man is closed in the cross; and then in a risen Christ all is begun afresh in perfect blessing in the power of the deliverance in which we have been brought in Christ. The place in which we are thus set begins from the cross, where I see my old nature judged and set aside. And therefore it is that the apostle can say such a thing as "when we were in the flesh." There are multitudes even of true believers that say, What are we but in the flesh now? But the apostle says, "When we were in the flesh," evidently implying that we are not in the flesh now. It is what we were in the first Adam. The standard of our walk gets its real power and blessedness when once we see that we are no longer in the flesh, but are set in Christ before God. The government of God comes in, and that is another thing; but we are brought into that blessed place in the light, in the perfectness of the grace which has brought us there. We ought to be able to come, our hearts set at large by God, and, as we deal even with the world, say, What we have to talk to you about is a salvation that we have got. I have found God, and I am come to tell you of a salvation that I have got through the delivering power of God.

Bridgewater, June 17.

## The Home at Bethany

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Matt. 26:1-16.

IT was a wonderful six days that the Lord spent at Bethany. The beginning was His entry into Jerusalem, as King and Jehovah, according to the testimony of Zechariah, on an ass—the meek and lowly though true Messiah of Israel. Then, how marvelously all passed in review before Him, the Judge of quick and dead, even when they thought only of judging, condemning, and perplexing Him. But, in fact, He, though never for a moment abandoning His own place of humiliation, though always and only the faithful Witness, pronounces divine judgment on every class that crossed His path. Chief priests, elders, scribes, lawyers, Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, all were confounded, one after another. Next, in chap. xxiii. the nation was judged, but its restoration was predicted, when it should be prepared in heart to welcome the rejected Messiah. Closely connected therewith is the prophetic strain in chaps. xxiv. xxv., in which the Lord instructs the disciples, or faithful remnant, touching the intervening circumstances, and, above all, touching the effect of His coming on the Jews, on the Christians, and on the Gentiles at large.

Now, when this is finished, and the time of His entire and final rejection is at hand, He finds a home for a little season at Bethany. It is most sweet to follow Jesus into that momentary retreat of love, where His heart, straitened though it ever was till the cross in a world which understood it not and refused it, enjoys the answer which itself had produced.

The opening of the chapter shows us how calmly the Lord awaited the judgment which was about to fall on and how simply He announced it to the disciples; “Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.” If He had judged all according to God, and finished all His sayings in these respects, He is ready to be judged and to suffer to the uttermost, fulfilling His own love according to the counsels of God. “Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast-day, lest there be an uproar among the people.” How little they knew that all was known to Jesus, and that what they muttered in the darkness was spoken by Him in the light, with the openness of One who came for this very end! He communicates with His friends about His crucifixion: they, His enemies, plot about it with each other. It was all ordered beforehand of God, who has a long look out, and accomplishes a great deal with a little. We, looking at the beginning of things, may think they are all going wrong when they seem to be adverse. The happy way is to trust in the Lord, and to believe He is guiding. But we must abdicate our own wisdom for this. Faith alone gives the perspective of what God does: to human understanding all looks crooked.

How laborious wickedness is, and what pains men must take about it! (ver. 3-5.) With what ease Jesus had spoken and acted, let the circumstances be ever so heart-breaking to Himself!

There is often great difficulty felt by His people in turning from one thing to another of a different character. The truth is, we want to be nothing, which is the secret of this power. Jesus was always ready for everything. He was of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. Divinely perfect, He was also thoroughly human. In us, that which is immediately from God must be given, if we would be kept from the inroads of our own character in each case. The Lord could one moment expose the Pharisees and their temptations, the next moment take up young children in His arms and bless them. And again, we repeat, it is very striking to see how, when events are closing in around Him, He finds, as it were a home. If the world is completely against Him, He can take rest for His spirit with this family of Bethany He lets His heart out in accepting what is done unto Him. How perfectly human is the Lord here! He delights in accepting all their kind thoughtfulness and love.

Throughout His course, there had always been tension of service. Save in communion with His Father, when was He, for an instant, unbent? He found not so much as time, to eat. When He wanted sleep at another time, it must be in a boat. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Here, however, it is not the same thing. For a brief season He has a kind of home. He takes the kindness which the heart can give, and likes it.

And let us mark how the heart that is entirely devoted to Jesus gets into the right place, and does the right thing. (Ver. 6, 7.) There may not have been intelligence in this woman, of what she was going to do, but her feeling seems to have been that she was about to lose Jesus, and that she must spend all she had most precious upon Him there. There is an instinct of affection, that finds its expression when wanted. "Me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial." Jesus interprets it. She broke the alabaster box. It was really of no use, but sanctified affection is of use. Disciples might say, to-what purpose is this waste? and talk about giving the money to the poor; but whatever is spent on Jesus, God delights in. And Jesus accepts the affection, and is conscious that He should be the object. "Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me," &c. There is nothing so acceptable to God in the saint as knowing the person of Jesus, and appreciating Him in love. If in service we anticipated the mind of the Lord, how we might help one another! and how graciously He reckons! For ignorant as the woman was, the Lord speaks as if she had known about His death and burial, as He did Himself. And He rewards accordingly.

It was just so that He said to the disciples, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me." He owned their devotedness as a heavenly value, though, in fact, it was He who had deigned to continue with them. Rom. 8:26, 27, is in character with this love, and most encouraging for us.

"Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." She did everything, as it were, in that one act. So, in one sense, Paul did more during the two years of his imprisonment, than in all the rest of his ministry. The great thing is to cultivate that kind of devotedness to Christ, which makes Him the one object. It was thus the woman acted, and got Christ's approval. It is not an easy thing to be satisfied with His approval, and nothing else; but this it is which strengthens the soul, and puts it on seeking His direction.

But in the next verses, 14-16, what a contrast of darkness with light? The little picture we were looking at is soon gone. How thoroughly a passing scene, and now how changed! Judas thought he could deliver up Christ to whom he liked, but he could not, nor could the band, with their officers and weapons, take Him "They went backward and fell to the ground." He gave Himself up, or they could never have taken Him. And what was Judas' estimate of Jesus? "What will ye give me," etc. "And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him." Alas! Judas was the instrument of the enemy's malice as the woman was of the love of the Spirit, now that that most solemn hour approached, when the full truth of man, of Satan, of God Himself was disclosed in the cross of Jesus.

## Christ Our Passover

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WE always find in the deliverances of God's people that God is also going to punish the world. He bears testimony against it—a universal testimony without excepting anybody. The law distinguishes men according to their acts, but the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sins, because they have not believed on Him whom God has sent. Hence the gospel begins with treating the world as already condemned. God has made trial, in every way, of the human heart. The gospel supposes that this probation is closed, and declares all the world lost, Souls often desire, and therefore need, to prove what their own strength is, and find they have none; even converted souls sometimes try to commend themselves thus to God. But it is to dishonor Jesus and to deny their own condition as judged of God.

In Egypt God was content with the first-born of each house as a manifestation of His judgment. Pharaoh would not let the people of God go. When God demanded, as a right, that they should serve Him, the world—Pharaoh its prince—would not yield. Signs and plagues were then wrought to arrest their attention and enforce the rights of God, but Egypt would not listen. Pharaoh was hard, then hardened, and at last become a monument of judgment for the instruction of all men. So it was in the days of Noah, and so it is now that the world once more is warned of the approaching judgments of God. The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and on them that obey not the gospel.

Meanwhile God demands a complete submission to His revealed will. He demands that the world should submit to Jesus: all those who will not shall be forced to do so when judgment comes, and then to their own confusion and endless sorrow. God presents His Son in humiliation in order to save the world; but without submission to Jesus all is useless, because this is what God requires and values. To believe in the Son is eternal life, is salvation; to reject the Son of God is judgment. God will have a surrender of the heart to Jesus, as Savior and Lord, a surrender to His own grace in Him. Thus is the heart and everything else changed, and all question as to good works is set aside.

All here turns on receiving or rejecting Jesus. God passes over anything. Zacchaeus may speak of what he has been in the habit of doing, but that is not the point now: "This day is salvation come to this house." If Jesus is welcomed, there is life; if Jesus is refused, there must be vengeance by and by, for those who do not submit. How happy for the poor convicted sinner that he has not to search in himself for something to present to God. If the heart is open, Christ is the grace and glory and perfection that is needed, and the moral effects soon and surely follow.

Still the word of God presents the certainty of judgment. Satan has possession practically of the world, but God retains His rights. The unconverted are deceived by the enemy and are in his power. Satan does all he can to make the world believe that they are free and happy—that they are, or may be righteous and good enough. But God has His rights. The world will not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and hopes to escape judgment. Satan, too, takes advantage of all that God would employ to awaken and bless the soul. Thus, with the unconverted in Christendom,

natural conscience is ashamed of that which the heathen do even in their religion. But this is used of Satan to persuade men that they can present themselves before God, and worship Him in private or public, because there is nothing in these lands so gross as among Pagans. But God holds to His rights, and nothing is well if Jesus be not received in faith.

In Jesus all that is perfect in God and man is presented to the conscience. The holiness of God is there, not condemning, but in perfect grace; but God will have an entire submission to Jesus. Nobody that comes is cast out. He is God in all His goodness to attract hearts, He is man in all His lowliness to exercise no will, no choice, but to receive every one that comes to Him, for such is the will of Him that sent Him; but God desires submission to Jesus. If Jesus is rejected, that is the conclusive proof that the heart will not have God in any way that He takes in presenting Himself to man. It is the evidence of man's heart, of his pride, his hardness and his levity. Nothing like these can stand in the presence of God, and Jesus manifested His presence in love. Pride is ashamed of the cross. Vanity cannot go on before Jesus, despised and rejected of man. God searches the heart in this way and man does not like it. He is bound to own himself a sinner, to submit his conscience, and give up his will, but he will not. It is the joy of Jesus to seek the wanderer; but to return in his rags, to show his wretchedness, is most distasteful to man's nature: grace alone can make him do so. His pride therefore hates grace more even than law. The heart cannot endure to be laid completely bare; but if man is to be blessed, God must search the heart and save the soul forever. God acts according to what He is, not according to our thoughts. If man will not believe in Jesus, God will manifest what He is by judgment.

Egypt must be smitten. But first we have the security of such as submit to God, confiding in the sprinkled blood of the Lamb. Israel was well aware of the judgment about to be executed upon the land of Egypt. It should always be thus with saved souls. They ought to consider the ways of God when He will judge the world in righteousness.

When God reveals the judgment, He reveals also the means of escaping it. The soul which has the fear of God keeps close to His word, and the question is raised between God and Israel. Could Israel stand if God came in judgment? The Egyptians were sinners and would surely be judged, but if God came down to judge, what were the children of Israel? Where were their sins? God directs Moses that they should take of the blood of the slain lamb and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door-post of their houses. "And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." To the mind of man it was folly, but the simplicity of faith honors the word of God and acts upon it. The destroying angel of Jehovah passed through the land, and if there had been Israelites ever so honest, but without the blood on their door-posts, he must enter and slay. For God was, under this sign, judging sin, and sin levels all distinctions; and where the blood was not, there sin was in all its hatefulness to a holy God, sin unatoned for and unjudged.

So now it is Christ and salvation, or no Christ and no salvation. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not on the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. There is the utmost certainty for those within the blood-sprinkled doors. It is the Lord who executes the judgment by His angel. It is impossible for Him to be deceived and impossible for man to escape; but He says, "when I see the blood, I will pass over you." There need not be a

doubt, whatever the judgment.

God, then, sees the blood: on that we rest to escape judgment, not upon our own view either of sin or of the blood of the Lamb. God Himself estimates the blood of His own Son, as He it is who fully hates our sin: we feel both most when we enter into this and rest on it in faith. Faith lays hold of His judgment of sin and feels the need of His value for the blood of Christ.

The more we know Christ and enjoy His purity, the more gravely shall we feel our sins. It was then that the Israelites eat the lamb, but they eat it in security. It would have been sin to have thought that God could fail in His word or His deliverance; and it is sin now to doubt that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses from all sin.

Israel may be in Egypt, but they are no longer slaves there. Their loins are girded that night, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in hand. Such, too, is our position in the world. Israel begin their journey with the question of sin settled. They had been secured, and they knew it, even in the midst of God's judgment of sin. When the revelation of God enters the heart, one cannot find peace till the revelation of His grace is as clear to us as that of His dealing with sin. The Christian finds his judgment fallen on Christ Himself; he begins with submitting to the righteousness of God who condemns our nature and acts, root and branch, but who shows us the condemnation borne by the Lord Jesus.

Have you submitted to Jesus? God demands it. He asks for no offering or sacrifice; He presents Jesus and shows you what you are. The worst sinners in the world may be received in grace by Jesus. "Behold now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation."

## Christ Our Prophet

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In John 3 the Lord speaks of earthly and heavenly things (ver. 12). He puts the doctrine of the new birth among the earthly things, but quite owns that without it there is no entrance for any soul into God's kingdom at all, whether in its earthly or heavenly places. But still that doctrine was earthly inasmuch as it was common, in this way, to all, and not needed only for the heavenly people.

There are, however, heavenly things in distinction from earthly, and He speaks of Himself as the prophet or revealer of such (ver. 13), in which character John also speaks of Him, contrasting Him with the former prophets of Israel. "He that is of the earth is earthly and speaketh of the earth; he that cometh from heaven is above all, and what he hath seen and heard that he testifieth" (ver. 31, 32).

In this way, both the Lord and the Baptist, in this chapter, distinguish between things earthly and heavenly, and speak of Jesus as the great distinct prophet of the things heavenly. So that we are by this prepared for two conclusions, that in the old prophets we must expect to find earthly things, and in the teaching of Jesus to His apostles, heavenly things. There may be notices of the heavenly things scattered, or shining, through the prophets—there may be also, notices of earthly or Jewish hopes and calling in the apostles—but the main purpose of the Spirit by the prophets is to tell of the earth's interests, and the main purpose of the same Spirit by the apostles is to tell of the Church's heavenly interests.

Moses was the type of our Lord as our prophet, or the prophet of heavenly things. (See Deut. 18:15; 34:10.) He was distinguished from the ordinary prophets. For God speaks to them by visions and dreams, but to Moses "face to face," or apparently. Moses had access to all God's house. His place was in the holiest, as well as in the courts, of the tabernacle. (Num. 12)

So the Son. He has access to all that is of God, according to Moses who was His type. He has fellowship with God Himself, being the brightness of His glory, the express image of His person. And He has fellowship with Him in all His works and counsels, His ways which were before the world and His ways which will be after the world, His ways in all ages or dispensations or worlds, His ways in providence or in upholding of all things, and His thoughts and counsels at the two extreme points, the cross of Calvary, when He purged our sins, and the right hand of highest majesty, where He is now sitting down. (Heb. 1:1-3.)

Thus as Moses had access to all God's house and was spoken to "face to face," so the Son is in the fullest and deepest intimacies with all of God, His glory, His person, His counsels, and ways and works at all times and in all places.

And our interests flow from this, in contrast with the interests of the fathers. For the fathers were spoken to by the prophets, by those who had but visions and dreams. We are now spoken to by the Son, by Him who sees face to face, who has access to all that is of God And this lets us into heavenly things as well as earthly. This discloses the holiest to our view as well as the courts, because our Prophet is there, while the prophets of the fathers were more in the distance, in the

place of visions and dreams.

## The Church of God

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GOD has “a Church.” God has not been ashamed to connect His name with one Church—the Church of the living God. (1 Tim. 3:15.) Oft He calls it “the Church of God.” (See Acts 20:28 Cor. 15 9; Gal. 1:13; 1 Tim. 3:5.) This it was which Christ called (Matt. 16:18) “My Church.” And oh, how wondrous! In Eph. 1:22, Christ given of God to be head over all things to the Church, which is His body, tire fullness of Him that filleth all in all. (See also iii. 10; v. 23, 25, 27, 29, 32; Col. 1:18, 24.)

Child of God! can you show me this Church? I have a picture of it, dear to my heart, in the Scriptures; but I have sought that which the Word of God describes as the Church, and have not found it, as it could once be found and seen at Jerusalem, at Ephesus, &c.

What am I to do? Humble myself down into the dust, so far as I know how, (and I have sought to do so these last twenty-five years,) not because saints are scattered, but because of man's entire failure in responsibility to God as to the Church? Then you will say, “You look to see what God will do for you and His saints as to communion.” Not so; if my eye be single, I look then to see what God will do for His own honor and for the glory of Christ, with all His believing people, under these circumstances; and this is quite another thing. He may count it to be for His honor, and for the glory of Christ, and for our blessing in the Spirit, to make us taste the fruit of man's doings, and the failure, and taste it with inward bitterness and individual experience. May God do with us as seemeth Him good! No union, no communion which is not that of the Church of God, in the power of the name of the Lord Jesus, could satisfy the Spirit of God in us.

Has not OUR taste of communion of saints assumed a wrong place in many hearts? Are not many shirking the cross of bearing, outwardly, a state of things which God has brought up to make us realize what we had concealed from ourselves, as to failure?

Let the Lord do as seemeth Him good. Do thou study His word to see what the Church of God is, and avoid, on one hand, the narrowing down of truth to human forms and rigid crystallizations; and, on the other, the neutralization of truth by confounding multitudinous association and intercourse with communion of saints. And, above all things, judge self, and correct self, rather than the churches. The formative truth, which acted on man's heart to form the Church at first, remains, and each individual soul can say, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God” —as to all it has to do; and as to all it has to suffer, “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”

Christ's ascension was the accomplishment and proof of His person as mediator, on which the whole religion was founded. Besides, a heavenly priest, a man always in heaven, gives its character to the whole moral system. The person of the Lord Jesus Christ claims the adoring recognition of the soul—is entitled to it as divine—as human by His work of love. This is neither history nor a proposition. Owning Him for what he is, is the first of all affections, the highest of all moral claims. Thus God Himself is known; to this He claims subjection. That salvation from future punishment may awaken the soul is quite true; but our first business is to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Once known, we bless God for present enjoyment and for present sorrow; for we

know He loves and has saved us, and we rejoice in hope of His glory, looking for that bright and morning star, and saying, "Even, so, come Lord Jesus;" while sure if he tarries, it is His love, His long suffering, not willing any should perish; so that we heartily acquiesce in the delay which His love counts as long as He does ours. It is the word of His patience we keep.

## Clean Saints, Defiled Feet

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All saints are clean; only they may defile their feet. The Spirit, through the intercession of Christ, applies the word and rebukes evil, shows the starting-point of it, and after a while restores the soul of communion. But God never deals with the conscience to falsify the relationship of the saint. The distress may be the greater, because everything is judged by the light we are brought into, but confidence in God will be untouched. If I apply 1 John 1:7 to failures, I ought to read, "If we do not walk in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us," &c. In truth, that verse gives the whole Christian standing. It is, abstractedly, the portion of the Christian, which can never be lost.

The Christian is looked at, if we may so say, in one point in 1 John 1:7, and neither before nor after. He is in the light, has fellowship with God and His people, and is cleansed. The verse does not say that the blood of Jesus has cleansed or will cleanse, but it cleanseth. God sees me as a believer sprinkled with that blood, which can never lose its value or have to be sprinkled again. Many that have been brought to God have not learned what it is to be purged worshippers, having no more conscience of sins: a mistake the Lord may bear with, because of the value that Christ's death has in their souls. God alone can give the consciousness of being in the place in which Christ is before God.

## Correspondence to the Editor of the Bible Treasury

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Sir, If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. Walking in the light, as God, &c., is not walking as perfectly as God is perfect, as must be manifest; but if the darkness is past, Judaism, and all its power to evil, is past, and the true light now shineth. God is light, and if a man walks in his standing in Christ, by faith, he is in the light, as God is in the light, and the blood of Jesus Christ takes its full cleansing power. I would compare this with the view in "Fragments gathered up," in your May Number. It does not apply to failures, but to standing, to fellowship, and advance in the divine life. I could now add much of the latter part of the second paragraph, "The verse does not say, has cleansed," &c. The use of the present tense is in perfect keeping with the mind of the Spirit, as manifested in this Apostle. Then follows the rejection of the claims of being free from sin practically or actually.

## Death and Resurrection

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### Ex. 15

THERE are two things which it is very important for every person to get clear hold of. First, that which the death and resurrection of Christ bring into in principle; and second, what they teach as a matter of practice. Both these things are brought out in the chapter before us. First we have this loud and joyful song, on the shores of the Red Sea—a song never heard before. God had been displaying Himself unmistakably on the side of His people. Israel, trembling and fearful, had thought they were brought out of Egypt to perish, they distrusted the Lord, and they stood in doubt of Moses. (Ex. 14:10-12.) But then comes this mighty and triumphant work, skewing how thoroughly God was in favor of His people. This sets forth the death and resurrection of Christ as a matter of principle. At the Passover, where the blood of Christ is the sole screen from destruction, there is no song. The thought of judgment is connected with it, and one wailing is heard throughout the land. “And there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead.” But, while the Israelites had the sense of security, there was nothing that could draw out the full praises of their hearts. For it was a solemn time, that midnight: and even Israel must eat the lamb with bitter herbs. The judgment of God, even though we know the Holy One substituted for us, is necessarily and rightly connected with the thought of what suffering for our sins has cost Christ—God pouring out His judgment on One holy and unblemished, that He might pass over sin in us, and put it away. A song here would show that what Christ passed through was not appreciated, and that our consciences did not feel what our sin was in God's sight.

But now the people were no longer in their houses, eating the passover; they were simply called to “stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.” Thus, having witnessed His full deliverance, they could sing, “The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation.” The judgment and passing by of sin does not comprise all the salvation of God; it is only the groundwork. When sin is forgiven, then comes a free space for God to accomplish His full salvation. He is not satisfied with simply meeting the demand of His own holiness; but now He wants to show me how completely He is for me. In the Passover, God manifested Himself as against sin; but there the blood of the lamb stayed the hand of the destroyer, while on the enemies of His people judgment was dealt, but dealt individually, on each first-born alone—the destroying angel entered the houses of the Egyptians to smite. But here it is a different thing: the enemies are now mustered in full force; and this is just the opportunity for God to show that He is for His people.

In Rom. 5 we have the fuller opening out of this truth in the death and resurrection of the Lord. We are apt to content ourselves with the very smallest measure of the blessing in which God has set us; but it is only and just according to our apprehension of this that we can be on God's side. I cannot be thoroughly for God, unless I see that God is thoroughly for me. So the Apostle Paul reasons, “Much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” (Rom. 5:10). This salvation then, is not in connection with the blood of Christ alone; it takes in all the triumph of resurrection that follows. True, the shedding of His blood was absolutely necessary, for “without shedding of

blood is no remission.” Christ’s blood vindicated God amply and in every way, and was the fullest possible confession that we were guilty sinners, and that He is inflexibly righteous. But that is not all. When I look at Christ suffering, do I see the love of God towards His Son? The death of Christ forever vindicates God; but in the resurrection God is vindicating His Son, and vindicating me through Him He puts me in and with Christ, into the place where there can be no further question of sin.

No wonder Moses and the children of Israel sang on the shores of the Red Sea. Those waters of death had seemed, and really were, tremendous; but now the people were on the other side, and saw their enemies dead upon the sea-shore, to vex them no more forever. Thus, too, for us, where sin abounded grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.” God is not content with showing us that we are justified by the blood of Christ. And now that He is risen, will God ever raise the question of sin with Him again? Thus we see how God hath blessed us, who hath nothing but sin. All that was due to sin broke out upon Christ, and now we are brought into the community of the blessing in which Christ is. There God is opening to us His heart. Such is the place the resurrection of Christ brings us into. How can there be condemnation there? “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” He suffered that He might bring us to God, but it is in the power of His resurrection, that we know and enjoy it by the Holy Ghost. There was no such condition as being “in Christ,” before He rose again. Alone He walked in unapproachable holiness; alone He suffered for sin on the cross. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat,” &c. This changes everything for my soul; and now if I am put in Christ, when all judgment of sin is over for those who believe, I share His glory and exaltation. There is the difference in my state in the flesh and in the Spirit, which can only be measured by the distance between the cross and the right hand of God. I am free now, and stand in the favor of God, in the infiniteness of His love to His Son. The only law that I know now as the principle of my relationship to God is “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” This is not the responsibility of a man under the law, which was all closed before Jesus rose from the dead. The law was always addressed to individuals, “Thou shalt,” “Thou shalt not,” &c. That blessed One came, and not only put Himself under its responsibility, but exhausted its strength and curse in His death. He becomes the head of a family only as risen. And now (it is not said that by and by only we shall enjoy such blessedness, but) “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free,” &c. We are not related to Christ on this side of the grave. How, then, is He associated with me? or rather how am I with Him It is with Him risen on the other side of death; and this portion is our’s, not only at some future day, but now. Therefore, as far as regards our old bondage to Satan, we have nothing to do but to sing this song. Here, then, we see what the death and resurrection of Christ bring us into as a matter of principle. “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Rom. 8:1-4). The power of righteousness, day by day, depends upon this. The whole condemnation fell on Christ, that we might be free to “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world,” glorifying God as those alive unto Him through Jesus Christ our Lord.

But when we come to the death and resurrection of Christ as a matter of practice, it is a different thing—there is no song then. It is death realized, as well as resurrection. Blessed it is that God should first give me “no condemnation” before Himself—that when everything was hopeless, He should bring in deliverance; this is just what we have seen. But where did the people go out afterward? Was it into the garden of Eden?—into Canaan? No, but into the wilderness; and they went three days there and found no water. You would think there was no room for anything but joy after such a deliverance; but now they murmured. They thought it wonderful that God should deal thus with them. Yet God was just as good to His people those three days as He was before. He had proved Himself for them, and now they must prove themselves for Him; if not they must be proved by Him. But because they could not drink of the bitter waters of Marah, they murmured. This just serves to show that as far as the people were concerned, their hearts were not practically right towards the Lord. God does not deal with us merely according to what we hear of Christ—it must be learned. The apostle says, “I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” It is exactly so when the death and resurrection of Christ are applied to practical circumstances. Supposing they had really apprehended the lesson at the Red Sea, what would they have done now? If they had not soon forgotten His works, they would have sung another song. The Lord looks that we should give thanks always for all things, even in trials and difficulties, to Him who is God and Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Are we not then to feel such things! Yes, but it is not the trial only that is to be felt; but God is there for us, in and above the trial. Am I to give up the blessed sense of victory vouchsafed to me two or three days before, just because the trial comes now?

The people were now proving the utter worthlessness of all the resources of the desert. It is an immense truth to realize, practically, that there is nothing here to give comfort. If at first sight it appears to do so, it proves bitter. When this is learned, then they come to Elim. Thus, the first thing to learn is, that there are no real resources here; and then we see that what seems so bitter and what we should throw away as such, God makes sweet. This is the application of the death and resurrection of Christ to the bitter circumstances of the wilderness. And such is the blessed way of God. Supposing trial comes, it tests how far there is love, patience, gentleness, waiting on God, above all, confidence in His love. Does it all lead us to look to the Lord? Moses entered into His ways, while Israel only saw His acts. And His way is to bring out better blessing through the trial. Even the waters of Elim were not so sweet to Israel as those of Marah when God had changed their bitterness into blessing. It was so assuring to find that God listened to them. This must have made the waters of March sweeter than those of any other well, however refreshing it might be in itself.

And how would God have us count on Him now, when weakness, fears, murmurs, heresies, &c., abound in the Church! Are we to think that He has forgotten us? The very difficulties of the way become a means of learning the Lord now, that will strengthen the soul in dependence and obedience. So with Israel: they had cried to the Lord and He had answered them, saying, “I am the Lord that healeth thee.” Thenceforward they need fear for nothing whatever. Why should His people doubt the Lord for the way, any more than for the end? Let us be always confident. It is not the habit of faith to be looking down at what is painful in the wilderness; but to reckon on the mercy of God according to His own mercy. He would have us to know the blessed secret of grace which brings in His power to heal. Let us then be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work

of the Lord, knowing that our labor is not in vain in the Lord.

## Assembly Discipline

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Q. 1 Cor. 5 Is the assembly competent and responsible to judge known evil? Or is it the function of elders or other rulers only, which the body is sound to carry out? Does the ruler's verdict bind all? Or is it open to discussion or reconsideration? How does the true principle differ from that of dissent on the one hand, and from clericalism on the other?

A. "I recognize that guides (elders, if you please, in principle) can inform and clear up the conscience of a body of Christians. No doubt, if they have, by reason of use, their senses exercised to discern good and evil, and are deeply acquainted with God's ways in the Scripture, and with the human heart, it is just their service in such case, and, I believe, God's order; and saints will be always thankful for it, as far as I have seen. One may have spiritual discernment to suggest what all may have spirituality enough to see is right when suggested, but never would themselves. have thought of. Now it is by no means necessarily a teacher that does this. But to impose a verdict which cannot be debated is the most monstrous thing that ever was heard of. It is pure, unmasked popery- the clergy dictating to the conscience of the church, which can only register and give their weight to its decrees. Is the conscience of the church to be disposed of thus by others, be they ever so wise? A thing may be urged on the church; may be insisted on; let it be that rebuke be given; but it is always to bring the conscience of the church up to the right level. This the Apostle Paul did with Corinth (where, note, elders never appear at all), but he never acts for them without it. "You have proved yourselves clear in this matter." That is the principle the apostle goes on. No doubt he could guide and rebuke them too, and tell them he had judged the case already; but to impose a verdict on their consciences they could not debate, not an apostle even attempts. How could that be proving themselves clear? It is monstrous. No one who reads Scripture can question, however weak we may be now, that there were guides, leaders, who watched for their souls as accountable to do it, men of reputation, and at that time appointed elders. But it is a very different thing to govern or rule or guide the church, which is Scriptural, and to govern instead of and for the church, which is popish, and then call the Scriptural principles democracy. And even so the apostle declares he was as a nursing mother with the saints. And the government of the church is not a setting of points right, but of souls right, and therefore nothing is done unless the conscience of the church is carried into the act. It is evident that the apostle did bring the whole church round to separate from evil which he had already judged himself. Had he not done it, the Corinthians would not have been set right at all; they would have remained associated with the incestuous person. Had their consciences not heeded his appeal, he might, in the exercise of apostolic authority, have used severer means, and come with a rod. But he is anxious to show that whom they forgave he forgave; and if he forgave it was for their sakes, so that they might act together, and Satan get no advantage over them by dividing them from him about a point of discipline.

The principle of dissent, I believe, should be utterly and entirely rejected for the same reason that I reject the clerical one,—namely, that the presence of the Spirit in the body is not owned by it. Among the dissenters they vote, and though there may be happy unanimity and the Lord guide

them, as I doubt not He often may, yet they do vote on the questions, and a majority determines the matter. Now it is quite evident a minority may be the most spiritual. In the case of Corinth, all, as far as appears in public, were gone wrong, and allowed, and were puffed up about evil. A majority, judging as such, cannot be said to have the Holy Ghost guiding them because they are a majority. This is quite manifest. It is a mere human principle, such as the world is obliged to act on, because it has no other way of getting out of its difficulties. But the Church of God has. It has the presence and guidance of the Holy Ghost. The dissenting principle (for I doubt not in practice they are often guided by the Spirit, according to the grace of the gospel), their principle, I say, denied this presence and guidance. They acted on another. The “Brethren” believed this guidance of God could be reckoned upon. Hence they denied the necessity of the other human extreme—the popish one of a clergy settling the matter among themselves and announcing it publicly, and the Church having nothing to do but add its weight by its acts to a decision pronounced by the authority of others, which they were bound to receive implicitly, and as a conclusion arrived at for them, which could not be debated.

The “Brethren” denied the necessity of this alternative. They affirmed that the presence of the Spirit of God was in the church, and that He would guide them in the faithful love of Christ to a right mind; that it might require, especially in the present state of things, patience, humble waiting in the sense of weakness, a working out as in the absence of apostolic power with fear and trembling; but they believed that that could be because GOD worked in them to will and to do. They did not deny in the least that that there were those among them, who, through greater spiritual wisdom and maturity, could help and guide them in this: it would have been quarreling with their own mercies. Nor would they refuse the help and godly assistance of any brother of spiritual attainments and wisdom from elsewhere: it would have been resisting the unity of the Spirit and body, and God’s authority in the church, and the common comfort of the saints—the increase of God by what every joint supplied. They might not see clearly all at once, and they would have to wait in any given case, but they believed in the faithfulness of the Lord to guide them. Their being obliged to wait might show them the failure of their own state of conscience in spiritual power, and do them good. Now the clerical principles denies all this. It declares positively that this is the alternative, either the dissenting principle of debating, voting, and majorities, or a verdict imposed by the clergy without any debate at all. That is, it entirely denies the guidance of the body by the Holy Ghost—His presence there—the very point as to this, which the “Brethren” were called out of God to bear witness to, alike against the dissenting and popish principles.

It is in vain to say that it is not denied. We have not the honest confession of this in terms, it is true, but we have the thing itself. The guides pass the verdict. The body are to register it without a debate. The judgment of their consciences is in the hands of a clergy. I can well suppose this reply to this plain and evident truth as to the case: “We do not deny the presence of the Spirit in the body. But, God having put this office into the hands of those who have addicted themselves to the ministry, the proof of the Spirit being in the body is their submission to the judgment of those whom God has placed over them. And thus the verdict is the verdict of the body by the Spirit.” Now, this is exactly Popery. The verdict there is alleged to be the verdict of the Church, and the body are called upon to act, and do act as a body upon it. But it is arrived at by the clergy. It is in vain to say that it is presented to the body when arrived at, which the Roman clergy do not. They must not debate their verdict. They must take what is given them. For, supposing they are dissatisfied with

the verdict stated, what can they do? Debate it before they make it theirs? No, that is positively refused. Examine witnesses? No, that is denied them. What then? Submit, or leave. The answer will be: "But God is with His Church, and He will guide the leaders into a right judgment, and they will only propose clear, evident cases." That is, the clergy are not only to be guides, but infallible guides; for they have come to the conclusion, which is to be taken to be the leading of God Himself! If the verdict be undebatable, it certainly ought to be infallible.

Is debate to be desired then! It is just this alternative which is denied. The word debate is just used as alarming a quiet, godly, conscientious mind—innocent in the hands of the leaders, where it is assumed to be a godly, spiritual weighing of the matter, and implying a discussion in the case of the assembly; but, guides or assembly, the godly weighing before God what is His will, where our conscience is concerned, is "debate" neither in one nor the other. The conscience of the church must be satisfied for it to act for God and before God. If it is not, the conscience of the body is not clear. It may be gracious to do some act not yet done. It may be right, at the suggestion of some, nay one godly brother, to prosecute the inquiry further. God is in the assembly without having any debate at all. The Holy Ghost may there suggest some step not yet thought of, the neglect of which would destroy the weight of the judgment, even if a right one. It is specially when speaking of discipline, and looking to the Lord for producing the unity of mind of two or three. That the Lord says, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

## Death of Christ

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The death of Christ has annulled my existence before God in the flesh, by faith. Supposing there is a man who is a thief, and he is put into prison to be punished, and he dies in prison, what is to be done with him? The life that sinned is no longer there to be punished—the man must be buried and put out of sight. So, speaking of Christ as taking, in grace, the sinner's place, it is said, “in that he died, he died unto sin once.” There is an end of the whole thing. And now, the very principle I get the thought of being dead and alive again is this perfect law of liberty, in which the flesh has no kind of title in any shape or way. You are not alive in the world; you are dead with Christ. How then can you go on as if you were still alive in the world.

## Discipline: 1. Abel and Enoch

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I PROPOSE to consider the nature and effect of discipline as taught in the histories of the early witnesses. Not that I deem them connected, but my limits will not allow me to make longer comments than either one or two would afford. I take them separately.

### THE DISCIPLINE OF THE WITNESS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Abel as the first in faith, on whom by birth was entailed the penalty of sin, is one whose history we might expect to furnish us with outlines of that discipline which a life eminent for faith would require.

It is a mistake, and one which causes no little trial to the soul at times, to conclude, because a train of truth or grace is strong in me, that therefore nature must be less assuming. The fact is the contrary, and it is well to understand the reason of this. If our nature had been of a lower order before the fall, the fall would not have put it lower than it is now; but then its aspirations and assumptions to escape the effects of the fall would not be so violent and daring. It could not aspire to more than it lost. The fact then of our being made in the likeness of God and not anything lower, gives ground for assumption now that we are fallen from it. A great man reduced naturally reverts to what he was once. If he be a fool, he assumes it without the ability to sustain it. And this is just what our nature does. The more conscious of, or rather the more it is pressed to feel, its fall from a once high estate, the more it struggles for recognition and assumes importance wherever it can. The less its assumption is canvassed and desired, the more it labors to make it good; and here it is that souls who are in earnest to deny its position are opposed by it at every step, and learn practically that they alone who have suffered in the flesh have ceased from sin—that death alone morally in the cross of Christ frees me from the power and thralldom of nature, and that the process of death in discipline physically gives effect to the moral truth of it through God's grace. That is, we are dead through Christ, and as such freed from the law and before God in Him. Consequently the Father by discipline leads us into the practical advantage of our position in Christ, so that we are not only dead in Him, but we are dead in ourselves—the practical effect of our knowing that we are dead in Him, for which discipline is the instrument. The soul that learns fully its acceptance before God as righteous before Him is taught that it must not be dependent on the nature from the effect of which it is delivered; and that its existence is outside. The apostle could say that he died daily, carrying about the dying of the Lord Jesus that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. If the acceptance is veritable—if it be truly a deliverance from our natural state—ought we not to evidence morally and practically the effect of it? And it must be so, for acceptance in righteousness is above and beyond our natural condition, and the more it is enjoyed and maintained, the more must the other be lost sight of. It would be only a worthy acknowledgment of the service. Would you maintain your natural condition and yet rejoice in deliverance from it? If you rejoiced in deliverance, would you not show it by your renunciation of that from which you were delivered?

If Abel be the first witness of acceptance in righteousness, we shall find that he was the first witness that surrendered his natural existence—a witness in one as well as in the other: of acceptance, to the joy and rest of his own heart; by death, how true and glorious it was—so that he being dead yet speaketh. This is the first and proper order of discipline. Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin. Mortify your members which are upon the earth. We have this position of death, because of our life in Christ; for if living in Him, we are dead. in ourselves; and discipline in its simplest and primary lessons instructs us in this. No saint but learns what death is, either in the slow process of a continual dropping of constant small trials, or through a last illness or one overwhelming calamity. Death must be learned to make good in our souls the deliverance from it; for testimony it is also necessary. Abel's history is very scanty in details; but it comprises the two grand points of a saint's life in a vividness and -vigor not to be surpassed—namely, acceptance with God, and death to every natural tie and sense; the former the easy action of faith, the latter declared, not willingly, but consequent on an altered condition in an evil world, through violence from which death gave relief. God allows the persecution of Cain to afford an opportunity to declare His grace and the giver of it; and suffering for righteousness sake, while it is discipline to ourselves, is the highest place of service in the gospel.

Let it be granted that if I know acceptance well, death is my portion here, and that discipline will never overlook this; for this makes it sure to me and witnesses to others also that the acceptance is true. Thus we shall derive much benefit from Abel's history. Abel started, as we say, in life, not according to the rule and direction given to Adam, “to till the ground from-whence he was taken.” Abel, on the contrary, is a keeper of sheep. This discloses at the outset that Abel had no intention of improving the scene around him, or of deriving by his own efforts anything from earth which could mediate between him and God. The sense of death was before his soul, and to be delivered from this could alone satisfy him. He was a keeper of sheep. Not listless and unoccupied, he tended his flock, passing from pasture to pasture as their need required. As He expected nothing to spring from the earth to relieve him, so no one place on it was his permanent abode. He was a laborer, a wanderer, and, suffering from the curse, he felt there was one on everything around him, and himself under the penalty of death in such a scene. Tending a living flock brought him into association with life—the very thing his own spirit needed. He therefore took of the firstlings of his flock, what was the “beginning” and the “strength,” and he offered it to God. It was God's own, typifying the life of Christ. This he presented to God, and it met his own sense of death; but he had still more to meet before he could encounter the presence of God. There was the needed acceptance also. This was met and answered by presenting the “fat,” which is the excellency of the animal only obtainable through death—the result in resurrection of the death of Christ, which now satisfies the conscience as to its full acceptance with God. Thus Abel entered into the mind of God as to his own state before Him, and thus he obtained witness that he was righteous, not merely as to what he did, but how he stood. Happy as accepted of God, he has to learn the place and suffering of one so blessed down here. If he were accepted of God, he must be dissociated from a scene which was under God's curse. If he were delivered from the sentence of death, death could be no penalty to him; but he must expect it where everything is contrary to the life in which he was accepted; consequently he is called to give unequivocal proof that acceptance with God and deliverance from judgment are such real blessings that actual death cannot deprive him of them. This is his testimony and this is his discipline. As it was with Stephen, the first martyr of resurrection, so it was with Abel, the first martyr of acceptance. Stephen gave better evidence in

his death than in his life of the virtue of Christ's resurrection, and his own soul advanced more into its realities in the moment of his death than it could during his lifetime. His last testimony was the brightest. While they, the agents of the world's evil, were stoning Stephen, he was only responding to their fatal blows by consigning his spirit to the One they denied and disowned, and to prove then how perfect and assured he was in Christ's care and charge of him, he knelt down to expend all the strength their malignity still spared him in their behalf!

The witness of acceptance or the witness of resurrection has no part in this evil world. Everything must be death to him, and in discipline he learns this in order to actualize to himself the greatness of the gift of God, which is eternal life outside and beyond it. Try to walk in it any way you will and you must learn this—the Father will have it so. He must have His own life true to its proper instincts. Make a fire of sticks and the viper will remind a Paul that this is a scene of death. It is only from one tomb to another. In a shipwreck yesterday, afflicted by a viper to-day! We need this discipline. We think we can pass on like other men, enjoying the new and blessed portion we have received; but the contrary is the case. And it is well to understand this, that the Father will have us to appreciate our portion in His Son, in contrast to everything here. We shall try in vain to combine both. A great deal of our time is spent in learning that there is nothing here to meet the requirements of our new affections. There is a wandering in the wilderness in a solitary way, and yet no city is found to dwell in. But God does allow this in order that His children may find that their desires can only be satisfied by Him. We must learn that we are not of the world. We cannot trust it. Christ would commit himself to no man. If you had the face of an angel, they would stone you. And though Cain “talks” with Abel, and they are “in the field” apparently in happy unity, Abel soon learns that he cannot trust him, for in that very social moment Cain rose up against him and slew him.

Our profession declares that we have done with earth. God's discipline will always lead us practically into this, as will also faithful testimony. In our discipline we may give a testimony; but it is better, like Stephen, to be disciplined in our testimony. God makes true in either way His blessing to our souls, and our history closes.

## Discipline: 2. Abraham

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The discipline which is necessary and suited to the life of faith is what we shall find pre-eminently exemplified in Abraham's history.

Man, at Babel, had disclosed the secret purpose of his heart. He built a city and a tower, whose top was to reach to heaven; he felt he must escape coming judgment, but he determined to escape it by his own works, and independently of God. God confounded him in his attempt, and the whole human family is made to feel that it is debarred from intelligent combination by the loss of a common medium of communication, so that man became estranged from his fellowman; whatever might be his sense of common kindred with him, his thoughts were checked or became incommunicable. When God had thus confounded the independence of man, He, ever true to the purpose of His love, as soon as the evil is checked, unfolds (and by a man too) how that desire which man had aimed at, in independence of God, can be attained, in a supreme degree, by dependence on God. And this, I may remark in passing, is always His manner with us; we feel our need and attempt to supply it by our own means; the Lord must confound us in the attempt, but, having done so, He leads our souls to find and acquire an inconceivably greater answer to our -wishes than even that which we had described for ourselves. The prodigal only sought "sustenance" from the citizen in the "far country," but in the father's house he found not bread merely, but abounding welcome and a fatted calf.

But to resume. The confusion of tongues being executed, God now enters the scene and calls out from it a man-even Abram-to be the witness of faith and of dependence on Him, and to look, not for a "Babel," but "for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." And we are graciously given the history of this witness and servant of God, in order to, instruct us as to what is our nature in its action under the call of God, and how God deals with it under its many phases of self-will and independence, how He corrects, subdues, and leads it into His own ways, which is for our blessing.

The word of God to Abram is, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land which I will show thee," and the word becomes the discerners of the thoughts and intents of the heart. We never know the real intent of our own wills until we demand them to submit implicitly to the expressed will of God, which His Word unfolds. We may not see any very great divergence in our course from the mind of God, until we measure it with the exact requirements of the Word of God: and, mark not the requirements of a part of that Word, but of the whole of it. In fulfilling it partially, we alter or qualify His mind as revealed; in departing from the spirit of it, we lose the instruction; but it is in adopting it, and adhering to it as a whole, that the soul is delivered from self-will, and led into the blessing which its instruction proposes; but then it is here that comes in all the trial and exercise, for exercise and conflict there must be from the continual effort of the natural mind to evade or qualify the Word of God, and the inflexibility of God's purpose (because of His love) to confine us strictly to His own mind; and this conflict necessitates discipline, and thus explains incidents in our history which would otherwise be

inexplicable to us. The call of Abram was very clear and definite. It required him to relinquish locality and all kindred associations, and to enter on a scene prepared of God. The accuracy of his obedience tests the measure of his strength; he begins to obey the call; he went forth from -Ur of the Chaldees to go into the land of Canaan; he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt at Charran. He received the Word and undertook to obey it, and yet we find he did so imperfectly; he only relinquished his country, and not his kindred associations; he remained at Charran till his father was dead. Nature had come in to check full obedience to the call of God, and this is a great warning to us. We approve of and adopt the call, but it is only as we walk in accordance with it that we discover the demands it makes on our nature. Nothing so proves our want of true energy as inability to accomplish what we readily undertake. How many enter on the life of faith eagerly and cheerfully, who find ere long that they cannot "let the dead bury their dead," and though they are ready in heart to seek "another country," are detained and turned aside by some link to nature. Nothing is so difficult to man as to relinquish the ties of nature without compensation, because such relinquishment must produce isolation, unless he has found some other absolute association; and this is first what the Lord proposed, when He added, "follow thou me." But if a relinquishment of these ties be an isolation and a denuding of the nearest communication with natural existence; so much the maintenance of them be the maintenance of all the most direct avenues to the human heart, and hence it is written, a "man's foes shall be they of his own household." There is no escaping nature outside grace. When Barnabas chose his nephew Mark, he also chose Cyprus, his native country. His failure was not only in nature, but unto nature.

Abram, then, failed at first in performing the second part of God's call; he did not leave his "father's house," and consequently is detained till his father is dead. This is the first stage in the life of faith, and though he entered on it readily and heartily, as it is written, "he went out, not knowing whither he went," he found that he could not perform it until death had severed the bond, which still attached or connected him with nature. Faith is dependence on God, and independent of everything human to sustain it. The path proposed to Abram accordingly demanded the distinctest expression of dependence on God alone. It could not be without sacrifice, neither was it meant to be; and besides the exercises which his own heart must have passed through in treading this path of faith, he is taught that death must practically sever the tie which detains him on their way. This first stage is not traversed without the heart tasting of sorrow through death, but death which brings its own deliverance. If Abram had not been detained by his father, but had pursued the unknown path without halting till he reached the place to which God had called him, he would have escaped the sorrow which death entailed; but having allowed himself to be detained, nothing could relieve him but death; and therefore under that discipline he passes. Thus it is in mercy with many of us; our dependence on God is not simple and distinct; we halt in the path of faith and are detained by some link to nature, until it dies, for die it must, if we are to pursue our course with God, unless we die to it.

Death then having dissolved Abraham's tie to nature and freed him from it, he must renew his course, disciplined, no doubt, by that which has removed the weight which impeded him, a discipline which he might have escaped, had he walked in more energy of life, but by which he was nevertheless a learner; (and how wholesome the lesson!) that faith does not sway the natural will in the recesses of the heart, that, though the blessing is great, if it submits to the dictation of God without exposure, yet it rarely does, and even if it does, for a while it is ever contending for an

open expression of itself; and, if openly acting, it must be openly subdued.

To young believers, to all, it is important how we undertake and accomplish this first stage of the life of faith, for failure and vacillation here may entail sorrow and indecision throughout our course; for we never diverge from the path of faith without picking up "a thorn" from that nature which we are called on to repudiate. It will be either nature gratified, or nature exhausted, or nature bereaved; and though we may be freed, as was Abram, by the death of his father, the failure, though amended, may not be eradicated in its effect, and if so, the discipline which it demanded must be continued. Lot went with Abram, but not only was he ever a trial to him personally, but his descendants were the great scourge to the descendants of Abraham; and their malignant enticements at the instigation of Balaam are set down in Scripture as a type of the worst machinations against the Church of God. (Rev. 2:14.) Wherever we fail once, like a horse that stumbles, we are likely to fail again, consequently there must be, through God's care of us, a continual reminder to warn us of our tendency. Thus Abram, not having "let the dead bury their dead" in the first instance, must bear with him a constant thorn in his brother Lot, as a needed discipline for the detention from which death alone had freed him.

Abram now enters on the second stage of the life of faith, and is a stranger in a strange land, depending on God: and he builds an altar for the strangership into which faith leads us, fixes our souls on God, and worship follows. But when the consequences or circumstances of our strangership occupy us, we lose the rest which faith supplies, and seek relief elsewhere. Thus Abram, when he found that there was a famine in the land, turned aside from the path of faith in which he had before halted, and went down into Egypt.

How humbling is it to find how vacillating we are in that path; and however happily and firmly we seem to be walking in it, how needful to say, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall!" Although Abram is graciously restored to the path from which he had departed, and even returns to the place where he had the altar at the beginning, we find that the thorns which he picked up in his wanderings pierce him in his restoration. The cattle, the fruit of Egypt, provoke a collision between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot; but restorations always advance us in moral power, for true restoration sets us above that from which we are restored; and Abram, now truly restored, looks not to consequences or contingencies, but, depending on God, maintains the path of faith in high moral power. My first difficulty in a walk of faith is to get clear of nature, (place and kindred,) and, being delivered therefrom and in felt strangership, my next is the tendency to advance or exalt myself, or find rest in this new position, even as an emigrant to a wild and distant land seeks to make a home for himself as speedily as possible. This desire to advance, so strong a passion in the human soul and the moving principle of all the great efforts of Babylon, may be designated ambition, but must be subdued by the man of faith, as God's witness in this evil world. Thus Abram's ambition is tested by the cattle, the fruit of his own failure; but discipline has done its work, and his restoration is now complete. Does he seek any acknowledgment or advancement in this new country? No! he is walking by faith and resigns all present superiority to Lot, who, gratifying his ambition, chooses the well-watered plain, while Abram is blessed with a fuller revelation as a reward for his faith. But even this is not to be enjoyed without suffering, for the moment I am on the path with Christ, I am on the path of one sent of God to minister to His people down here; and Abram, the dependent man, pursuing his unseen and separate path, has now come forward and renders the very service which Christ fulfilled, and rescue his brother Lot, who,

on the contrary, had gratified the ambition of his nature by mixing himself with the course of this world and had been consequently embroiled in its sorrows. And if, in the dangers and exercises of this service, Abram was made to feel what he had to suffer from this natural tie which he had brought from Ur of the Chaldees, his soul was at the same confirmed in the path of dependence on God, and, as his faith had on the former occasion been rewarded by a fuller revelation of the promised inheritance, his conflict and service are now rewarded by the refreshment and blessing of Melchisedec in the name of the Lord God, possessor of heaven and earth; surely more than enough to compensate for the renouncement, of the ambition of mere nature!

Here let me add, that though we separate from home and kindred, and still further take heavenly standing, yet if the tendencies of our nature be unsubdued and we seek in any wise to distinguish or advance ourselves in our new position, we shall be as Lot; while on the other hand, though we may often need discipline and be taught to renew our course after failure, yet if we really seek to maintain the path of dependence and separation, our faith will be strengthened by increased revelations, and our service will be invigorated by association with Him who is the forerunner within the veil, even Jesus, an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

We now enter on the third stage of Abram's history in the path of faith and one in which he is brought under an entirely new line of instruction, even in the exercise of his affections. The ambition of his nature had been tested before; now his affections are to be put under discipline, and this is brought about in the first instance by the promise of a son, which is the subject of chap. xv. Let me say, in passing, that in tracing the history of this servant of God, I confine myself, to the one subject, even discipline. I pass over many episodes on which others have dwelt largely, such as his communion with God, intercession, &c., most interesting as it all is, but which has already been entered into fully.

It appears to me that the true state of Abram's heart is exposed in his reply to God's most gracious appeal to him in the commencement of this chapter. True, it was quite right for him to wish for a son; it was a wish responding to the counsels of God respecting him and the lack of which would not have been according to the mind of God. But still his reply, "What wilt thou give me?" does not arise to the elevation in which God sought to establish him, even in perfect contentment and satisfaction with Himself, for what could He "give" Abram greater than the assurance of being Himself his "exceeding great reward?" Nevertheless, God in His grace meets Abram on his own level and promises that which He had before counseled to give; but a long course of discipline lies between him and the fulfillment of the promise, and as Abram must learn in his own home a preparation for that trial to his affections which awaited him so many years afterward, and which it was necessary for him to pass through in order to perfect him in the life of faith. It was not at all that he undervalued the fullness and nearness in which God had revealed Himself to him, but he disclosed the secret feebleness of the human soul to rest in God apart from any human link. God knows this and offers graciously to supply it; but if he promises and gives Isaac, Abram must hold him from God, not as his link to God, but God's link to him, foreshadowing that perfect Antitype who would forever link us to God and God to us.

Abram believed God, but his heart needed preparation and discipline, as we see by the impatience of nature which he evinces while waiting for the fulfillment of the promise, and this he is subjected to in his own private circle. Perhaps there is no greater cause of delay to what the accomplishment

of what God purposes to confer on us than the natural mind (if I may so say) getting a hint of it; for as it is with Satan to spoil what he cannot defeat, so is it with the willfulness of our nature, which would fain adopt and accomplish what originated entirely outside itself and with God; just as Eve, interpreting a spiritual truth by a natural mind, takes Cain for the promised seed. In everything it is beyond the heart of man to conceive the extent and nature of what God prepares for them that love Him. An Ishmael was Abram's measure, an Isaac was God's. In the meantime Abraham must learn, through contention, strife and sorrow what is the fruit of his impatience, and in the end do what was very "grievous in his sight," even to banish his son. Thus our inventions do but postpone our real blessings, for it is necessary that we should see the end of them. It must have been a period of nearly twenty years from the time of the promise to the birth of Isaac, and many were the exercises Abraham had to pass through during that time, as well as many and great communications made to him by the Lord.

But we are now come to the fourth stage of Abraham's path of discipline. (Chap. xxi.) His cup seems to be full—Isaac is given—the bondwoman and her son cast out—the Gentile powers typified by Abimelech come forward to acknowledge that God is with him in all that he does, and he plants a grove and calls on the name of the everlasting God. But more discipline was necessary to ensure to his soul that the filling of that cup was entirely from God, that He could fill, empty, and fill it again, and that He alone was the filler of it. Abraham had given up expectation from the world—can he now surrender the object of his affections and hopes? and not only so, but will he be the actual perpetrator of the wrench himself? It was "very grievous in his sight" to cast out Ishmael; what must it be now to hear the word, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of!" The surrender is not like Jephthah's, viz., of his own proposing, but is distinctly required of him by God; and required not only that he should assent to it, but that he should execute it himself! Abraham obeyed. He treads the path of dependence on God, high and elevated, above every influence either of ambition or affection. But what discipline! what denial of long-cherished hopes and affections? The object to be surrendered was not like Jonah's gourd which grew up in a night and withered in a night, but the fruit of many years of patience, trial and interest, and now he was to be himself the agent in dashing the full cup from his lips. Where was nature?—where its demands? Was he like Jephthah, "very low" that day; or like Jonah, "very angry?" No! the man of faith, in that moment terrible to mere nature, rose up early in the morning and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son, and slave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went to the place of which God had told him. What a continuance of calmness and dignity does faith impart! There was nothing sudden or hurried here: the period for reflection was lengthened, for after the third day the place was still "afar" off. Who can traverse in the spirit of his mind such exercises as those of a soul which faith held true in obedience to the Word of God and not wonder at the transcendent vigor which that faith confers? The surrender is complete! Abraham with his own hand takes the knife to slay his son, but he reckons on God, "accounting that He was able to raise him up, even from the dead." Dependence on God has triumphed over the demands of nature, and now follows the reward. "The ram caught in the thicket" —Christ, the true burnt-offering, who places us in an excellency before God, which none of our own offerings ever could—He is the compensation to us after all surrender, and also the true, real, and entire satisfaction of our hearts. And thus the place is called Jehovah-Jireh, it is the "mount of the Lord," because there the Lord provides what fully meets our

need, and in addition, there also Abraham receives the largest and fullest revelation of blessing ever communicated to him. Nature was so silenced, and dependence on God so true and practical that the Lord can unfold to him the deepest counsels of His love. He was so perfect and full-grown that he has an ear to hear, and a heart to understand wisdom. God's discipline had effected all this; and this, according to the measure of His grace, is what He is leading each of us into. May we indeed have grace and wisdom to discern the path of faith, and so abide in it that our walk may be to the praise and glory of Him who, in all His education of our souls, seeks our blessing and joy.

## Discipline: 3. Isaac

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Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were distinctively the “fathers of Israel,” the heads of a people called of God, to walk in the earth, as happily dependent on Him. Abraham leads the way; and while most exemplary for the faith which characterized him, he had also to contend with peculiarities of natural character and conflicts, unknown to Isaac and Jacob. If the path was higher, the difficulties were greater; if the faith was more vigorous, the resistance and denial of nature were more obstinate and severe; but in leadership, this became him. The mighty agencies of divine faith engaged in fatal conflict each daring opposition, which willful nature, struggling for existence, raised against it. The combat was a close one:—dependence on God, wresting the creature from the government of his own will in order to subject it to God's will, must have evoked nature's bitterest antagonism. Abraham properly presents the leadership in this momentous engagement. Isaac follows: a leader, to be sure, but in a subordinate degree. Abraham, as it were conquers the country; Isaac is required to retain it. Abraham storms the fortress, endures all the contingencies of a protracted siege, effects an entrance, and possesses it; Isaac must hold the position against the common foe. Abraham suffers while contending for possession; Isaac, while keeping it. Abraham's hindrances are generally from the force of circumstances outside him; Isaac's, almost always from personal weakness. Isaac presents to us the inability of nature, in its best and fairest condition, to hold the path of faith, on which, through grace, man is set. His failures are not so much the strength of the enemy turning him aside, as the mere weakness of humanity. The disciples slept when the Lord asked them to watch, not from evil, for “the spirit was willing,” but because “the flesh was weak,” and it could not demonstrate the very feelings it commended. Isaac teaches us how weak and rickety the best part of our nature is in the path of faith, how it fails therein, and hence the discipline necessary for it.

Isaac enters on the scene as the child of promise; and, as his name indicates, under the happiest moral auspices. No wonder that we should be prepared to see in him a pleasing sample of fallen humanity, obedient, affectionate, and domestic. Our first notice of his opening manhood being the ascension of Mount Moriah, a scene so wonderful, that we hardly know which may most rivet our solemn gaze, the elevated and self-possessed action of Abraham, or the lamb-like acquiescence of Isaac. Though it may be said, that he did not know beforehand that it so fatally affected himself; but, even when he did know, by being laid on the wood of the altar, and the knife in his father's outstretched hand to slay him, we do not find that he in the least resisted its accomplishment. To obey in ignorance evinces unlimited confidence in the one to whom I yield such unsuspecting submission, and, still more, proves that I can bend and set aside my own will, in subjection to the one who has claim on me. Obedience must stand at the head of the list of all the activities which would conduce to order and blessing. The demand (even as it was in the first instance with Adam) is to surrender the will to one rightly invested with a claim to it. Subjects, servants, wives, children, come under it; and the first commandment with promise is such, because the surrender of the will to one having a just claim to it, is an activity contrary to the very genius of our nature; and this activity, God owns and blesses. The path of the Lord Jesus was one of unqualified obedience, but

He had always vividly before Him what the consequences of that obedience would be; so that He submitted because of the service He should render, and the joy He should contribute to His Father, and not as did His type, Isaac, because He was ignorant of the issue, or only sustained in his obedience by confidence in the one who required it. This obedience of Isaac in the opening of his history, however, warrants our estimate of him.; but if (like the young man in the gospel, whom the Lord loved) it proceeded only from natural character, it must be (even as was his) subjected to an unequivocal test.

The more lovely the character, the more unmistakable must be the evidence that such an one has renounced all of himself. He is required to sell all that he has and give to the poor whence it could not be recalled; and thus, bereft, and denuded, to follow the Lord. Isaac then, the gentlest of natures must in figure pass through death! Death! That end of all nature, the only true goal for it, to which unreserved submission to the divine mind unfailingly leads; a discipline, so necessary and blessed for him, in the very opening of his history. It is not, as with Abraham, separation and self-mortification; but it is nothing short of death, moral death. The more refined and perfect the nature, the more complete must be its negation; where there is nothing very manifestly to be denied, all must be denied. Where there is something manifest, the denial of it will always break the will, because the will is expressed in the palpable passion, and breaking the will is really moral death to nature, which all must pass through, only with some it is accomplished directly through the crushing of some prominent feature or evil; while with others, of a more even nature, such as Isaac's, where nothing stands out prominently to be broken; the whole thing must be negated (I mean, of course, practically).

The next notice we get of Isaac is also one of death; but death of a different description, and which prepared him for a new order of life. The gift of Rebekah, is connected with the removal of Sarah, his mother, as if to repair the blank of one who had suited his gentle nature, and he emerges from the gloom and sorrow of death to enter as it were, on the consolation which the Lord has provided for him; but even then, so true and faithful are the dealings of our God with His people, Isaac, the promised seed, has no heir; nor has he, until cast on God, he is taught to look to Him instead of to nature. He must learn that God's blessings, whatever they be, will not yield desired results apart from Him. But, when this lesson is learned, the preordained purpose may be accomplished, and thus to Isaac children were given. At their birth is vouchsafed a revelation of their destinies, sufficient to guide an ear open to God's mind and counsels, as to what the divine mind respecting them was, and what should be their respective place. Isaac should have understood this, and acted towards them accordingly; but he does not appear to have done so, or else his habitual nature swamped the counsel of God in his mind, for he does not seem to have discerned in Jacob the heir to the promises, and "he loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison." The divine intimation is overlooked, because the father's heart is gratified in the attentions of the son, and is more influenced by the dictates of nature than by the counsel of God. Natural and paternal as this feeling was, it was man's will, opposed to God's will, and therefore Isaac must be taught to relinquish it,—for the word of the Lord, that shall stand!

But this does not happen in a moment. He appears to have enjoyed his preference for Esau for a long time. In the course of discipline to which God subjects His people, we often find that there is a manifest reluctance on His part to deprive us of simple natural enjoyments. Nay, we are often allowed to share in them, until we attempt, in the presumption of nature, to give them a place

contrary to God; until, like King Uzziah, we seek to give that which has only a place in nature, a place with God; and accordingly invest it with dignities only applicable to another. This almost necessarily occurs where there is disposition to follow the Lord, and even where pleasing God is the approved motive of the soul; in fact, where the conscience is in exercise, but the will is not subject. Hence, the Lord's demand may be acknowledged in the soul, without the will being really subject to God's will; and, when this is the case, there will be an effort (and often a momentarily successful effort) to appropriate for the creature that dignity and province which the divinely-appointed alone should occupy. In Christendom we see remarkable examples of this, right names attached to the most unfit exponents of them. For instance, "the church," as used in common parlance, no more represents the true thing than the golden calf did the God who brought Israel out of Egypt; and yet the majority of consciences are satisfied because the true and scriptural name is retained. Alas! we may all fall into this in our way and practice. We may calm our conscience, while we gratify our will, by offering to what is but its own offspring, a divine characteristic. Where this tendency is at work there must be discipline; but for some discipline we are not prepared, until we pass through that of another order. And mark, while Esau, by his hunting, is ingratiating himself with his father, and so far annulling the word of God in his mind, the effects of that very hunting oblige him to sell his birthright to the one whom God had designed it for: thus, at the same time, preparing the needed discipline for Isaac, and the fulfillment of the Lord's own purposes. Satan's most apparent success always contains the seed of his own ruin. As in the death of Christ, his power was at once concentrated and lost; as in every minor assault of his, we should find, if we had but patience to wait for the issue, that his direst plot against us eventuates in our sweet deliverance. "Out of the eater comes forth meat."

The next notice we have of Isaac, is of a different order. There was a famine in the land; and Gen. 26 gives us a detailed account of the exercises which he passed through, from the time he departed from the land until he returned to it again. This famine is expressly distinguished from the "first famine," in the days of Abraham. The first tried Abraham, the leader; the second tried Isaac, the occupier. Abraham had turned aside through it, and gone down to Egypt. Isaac takes the same direction, and goes to Abimelech, king of the Philistines; but God there warns him not to go further, but to sojourn in Gerar. He allows him to sojourn there, in order to test the possibility of it; but adds, "Dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of." Isaac not only sojourns in Gerar, but dwells there, and, as a consequence, his troubles commence. He has another lesson to learn here: even that however prosperous he may be in the land of the Philistines, he can never enjoy the peace and calm which his soul desired, while he is mixed up in association with them. He attempts, at first, to secure an undisturbed residence among them. by false representations, which falsity, being discovered, humbles him before them; as one not able to trust God in the circumstances in which he had placed himself. Still he does not leave the place. We often strive to remain where we have been unfaithful, as if we could regain what we had lost; but if our position be one of unbelief, no course of conduct there will ever alter its character. The Lord teaches Isaac the unprofitableness of gain in Gerar. He may be blessed, his corn yielding a hundred fold, until he becomes very great. But what of it all? The Philistines envied him! The position of stranger would be happier for him, for he might then eat his bread in quietness, and drink from his own fountain in peace; but with all his greatness and possessions these mercies are denied him in Gerar.

Isaac, by a slow and painful process, is taught that he must abandon the land of the Philistines in toto: each successive well which he had to dig, marking the stages of this process. First, "contention;" then "hatred;" next "room;" but having found "room," and being debarred from the association which hampered him, he advances to Beersheba, which is on the confines of the land. He again takes the place of a stranger and pilgrim, depending on God; and the moment he does so, he gets his reward. "The Lord appeared unto him the same night," and blessed him. The discipline had produced sanctification, and he builds an altar and worships. It had taught him that it is better to have a little with God, than great possessions in a position outside his calling; and now he enjoys his mercies and his well in peace. It is the same lesson, only in a milder form, which Abraham had to learn; even to crucify his ambition and desire for eminence in this evil world. Ambition seeks to be an object of consideration to others; affection seeks an object of consideration peculiar to itself. Abraham had to pass through the trial and crucifixion of both; Isaac also, only, as we have said, in a milder form. He is brought to the end of the mm, even ambition, in a way very common to the people of God, by finding that no acquisition with evil association can be enjoyed, and by being driven, after various struggles, to abandon the wrong position, for the untroubled waters of Sheba, and the presence of the Lord.

But the greater discipline, that of affection, awaits him; one for which he was being prepared, as it were, for a long time; indeed it was the grand discipline and lesson of his life. It was commenced when, on Mount Modal, his whole nature, the good as well as the bad, was negated by passing, in a figure, through death; and is never lost sight of throughout his course. For all that we hear of him, in connection with his favorite son, Esau, bears the same character, and seems to be a preparation for the trial of his affections, which he was to undergo respecting him at the close, for having unduly indulged nature in preference to the counsel of God. The weakness of the flesh was Isaac's lesson, often a more humbling one than its evils. It caused the beloved disciple to sleep in Gethsemane, and allowed Peter to curse and to swear that he knew not the One whom he loved best on earth!

But, to resume:—Esau not only had disposed of his birthright, but he had socially disintitiled himself to heirship by marrying a Canaanite. This being known to Isaac, is, as we read, a "grief of mind" to him. Yet even this did not displace Esau from that place in his father's affections which he had held for so many years. Esau was forty years old when this marriage took place. Years after this, as we may suppose, when "Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see," he calls Esau to him, and says, "My son,.... Behold now I am old, I know not the day of my death; now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out into the field, and take me some venison, and make me savory meat, such as I love, that I may eat; and that my soul may bless thee before I die." Thus, to the last, does Isaac cling to the son he loved, overlooking, in the strength of his natural affection, every divine intimation, and every act of his, which should have influenced him to a different course; and he here comes before us in a truly humbling point of view, as the saint always does, when uncontrolled nature rules the day.

But God will subdue nature, unjudged nature, and in Isaac too! And not only this (so perfect and complete are God's ways), but He will use that very gratification, the indulgence of which had served to pervert Isaac's mind and judgment, as the direct instrument wherewith to discipline him. He is allowed to be deceived. Through means of the "savory meat," his mind was diverted from sound judgment; and through the "savory meat" he is compelled, unconsciously, to act according

to the will of God; not as in the elevated and intelligent action of Jacob, who, in pronouncing his blessing, did so in full accordance of spirit with the mind of God, but as failing, humbled, deceived—carrying out the will of God, almost in spite of himself; and without any intelligent communion with Him—the sad effects of nature unjudged, and unmortified.

However human counsels are frustrated. Jacob, the rightful heir, the appointed of God, receives the blessing, and Isaac must bear it. And now the conflict between the natural will and the word of God takes place in his soul. What is the result? Nature surrenders. “Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who I where is he that path taken venison, and brought it to me, and I have eaten of all before thou earnest, and I have blessed yea (the word of the Lord is triumphant), and he shall be, blessed.” We should note here a fact of great moment, viz., that the walking after our own will may not, as it cannot, vitiate truth in our souls, yet, if our spirit is not in subjection to God, we shall attempt to apply truth very erroneously. It is only when nature is subjected that we can happily accord with the only true and right application of the word of God.

In conclusion, note how the discipline of the Lord works. Isaac has now submitted to the counsel of God; but what a scene of sorrow surrounds him! His affection for Esau wrenched; and the now rightful heir, the hope of his house an exile! All this the bitter fruit of natural affection indulged, contrary to the of God!

Yet we hear no expression of impatience from Isaac, he blesses Jacob, and sends him to Padan-aram, in the vigor and faith of his best days. And his history closes with the account of how his last days were cheered by the presence of Jacob. Thus we see what is the “END of the Lord,” even very pitiful and of tender mercy,” restoring to the bereaved one, when discipline has clone its work, all, and even more than it lost. May this comfort all who mourn in Zion!

## Discipline: 4. Jacob

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The history of Jacob is peculiarly interesting to us, for in it are developed the activities of the natural will, not so much in contravention of the expressed counsel of God, but rather in an attempt to secure, by its own instrumentality, what was pre-ordained of God. The more intelligent and impressed the mind of man is with the purpose of God, the more does it need subjection to God; for otherwise, it will seek to accomplish, by natural means, what ought to be left to the ordering of God; and this produces restlessness.

The mind, thus active, has great need for self judgment; for its error is not refusing or misapprehending the will of God, but in attempting to promote and secure it, by its own unaided efforts. Now, when this is the case, the Lord allows His servant to find, by sorrowful experience, the fruits of his own plans. And though the purposes of His love remain the same, they must be reached by the intelligently willful, in circumstances which declare, that He who blesses, and addeth no sorrow to it, has not been the undisturbed agent in the scene. "The fear of the Lord is wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy, that is understanding." If I have not God before my eyes, I never can, with a natural mind and in a world of evil, walk wisely: for God is the fountain of wisdom. Therefore mere knowledge in itself is nothing; that is, it never leads a man to walk with God.

Faith comes before knowledge: the link to knowledge is lost, if faith does not precede it. If I am depending on God, all true knowledge must increase that dependence; for, if I learn correctly, I find out that there is none so worthy of dependence as HE. If I love God, I know Him, but my love supplies my knowledge: otherwise, "Knowledge puffeth up."

Jacob is a remarkable example of one appreciating blessing, but ever and anon intercepting and anticipating the ways of God by his own plans. The heart was right, we might say; but the mind was unsubdued, and the natural mind cannot act, but according to its own perversity.

Thus, in the first act of his life presented to us, he evinces a greater regard for the blessing, and the position which the birthright would confer, than for the means by which he should secure them. He takes advantage of his brother's destitution to seize the valued, the justly valued, prize, which Esau ought not to have surrendered for any gain. Yet the possession of the birthright failed to give Jacob that assurance of the blessing which it represented; for if it had, he would not afterward have so readily complied with his mother's unworthy expedient to secure it for him. And why? The desired mercy had been grasped by him in a natural way; and he derived none of the satisfaction from it which he would have experienced, had it reached him in a divine way; for a divine way always connects the soul with the Lord. If a mercy is not connected with the Lord, it may often make me more miserable; but if it is, if I know that it flows from His love, the heart receives it in tranquility and peace; for I know that though I may lose the proof of His love, I cannot lose the love itself, and that the love cannot exist without declaring itself.

Moses was soon discouraged in his effort to rescue Israel from the bondage of Egypt. He appreciated the service, but, by not connecting it with God, he soon lost assurance in its success. The Lord in His grace will bring us sooner or later to connect all our mercies or services with Himself; because He knows that without this we cannot reckon on His strength in supporting us. Thus Moses is forty years in the land of Midian, being prepared for the tidings of the burning bush. Paul in prison, at Rome, is confirmed in the reality of truths, which had been communicated to him long before. And Jacob, when he wrestled and obtained through grace the name of Israel, was confirmed in the assurance of blessings, which he became entitled to, many years previously. The possession of the birthright, his father's blessing, the vision at Bethel, the dream at Padan-aram—all failed to assure Jacob's soul of the reality of the portion which he so prized and needed. The wrestling at Mahanaim, where he was brought into personal nearness and subjection to God, alone established him in the assurance of it.

The dream at Bethel was the divine communication of the blessing; but not until Jacob is made to feel the bitter fruits of his own willfulness, during a period of twenty years in Padan-aram, is he brought into that closeness of exercise with the Lord, which, though successful, results in personal disparagement.

What a course of discipline to subdue a willful soul! Jacob is blessed in everything that he desires, although often thwarted, and always in what he most prizes. His elder brother surrenders him the birthright; his father blesses him with the best of blessings; the Lord reveals the purpose of His love towards him, when a wanderer from his father's house; in Padanaram everything succeeds, but through hard labor and a series of thwartings, and, when he returns to enjoy the accumulated blessings in the land of promise, he is met at the very entrance by his brother Esau, and the question must be decided whether he is really possessor of the blessing after all. What a moment of agony and suspense this must have been to his willful spirit! Still unable to trust God, he fears that the cup, which God Himself has filled, is about to be dashed from his lips, and all his blessings annihilated. The issue was now at stake. All the previous education of his life was in reference to this moment. He was the blessed one; but was he self-renounced enough to be invested with full and satisfactory possession? Has he come to such an end of himself that he rests on God, and God only, for the security of those blessings?

This the wrestling determines. From that struggle he emerges as an Israel, but with the deep sense of personal weakness, the marks of which he bears in himself. The sinew of his thigh shrank. A loser personally, he is a gainer positionally; or rather, he loses in a natural way, but gains in a divine way. Jacob had sought to appropriate to himself the blessings of the land in the strength and resources of nature; and after twenty years of discipline, when about really to enter it, he is brought to such straits and exercises of soul, that God is his only resource. He is cast upon Him and cannot proceed after all, unless God not only blesses but subdues him. But this being attained, Jacob enters the land, by faith, and as Israel; blessed, humbled, and having the mark of personal weakness.

And in this character, as the Israel, though halting, can he meet Esau, or any one who may dispute his title. All the toil and success of twenty years are lost, as to their bearing on that title; for it is God's blessing, not the proof of it, that really establishes his soul and sends him forth as the humbled Israel, the indisputable possessor of the, land! A history all this of ourselves! Seeking for

blessings, but too unsubdued to confide the ordering of them to the Lord alone: apprehending the loss of them, and finding our own insufficiency when the demand is made on us. But the God of Jacob is our God, and He will not only discipline but bless us.

This properly closes the first stage in the life of Jacob. He now takes the place of faith, the only true link to blessing, and is a pattern to us of the honor set on one who surrenders his own will and comes out of the conflict prevailing with God and man. We then find that, worthless as the will is in itself, the breaking of it is what God distinguishes with the greatest eminence, even giving such an one power to prevail with Himself and man.

We have now to consider Jacob in the land. Though the will must be broken, in order to facilitate our entrance into a sphere of blessing, we seldom abide in that sphere, without exhibiting a recurrence of the same willfulness which delayed and obstructed our entrance. The path, to be a true one and suited to us, must ensure that suppression of nature which would exert a counter-influence; and hence the sphere of blessing which I have entered on, through the denial of my will, must be retained and enjoyed in the same spirit. If I think or act otherwise I must suffer, and learn, by God's discipline, that the subjection, which fitted me for entering, I must not relax one whit, because I have entered and am in possession.

How often do we observe, and know, too, the very contrary to this, in ourselves! How often, after using great watchfulness, treading softly, and really humbly seeking to enter, do we, when we obtain and enjoy what we have sought, forget the mode and spirit by which we have obtained it, and thus, fresh discipline becomes necessary for us! Israel fought and suffered in order to reach the blessings of the land, but when those blessings were obtained, and enjoyed, Israel waxed fat and kicked, and forgot the God who had exalted him. It is more difficult to nature to walk with God in the fullness of mercies, than in the dearth of them. The water was a greater test to Gideon's army than any of the sufferings consequent on the undertaking.

Jacob now, in peaceful enjoyment of all the blessings with which God had surrounded him, and in that land with which every blessing was connected, ought to have repaired to Bethel, according to his pledge. But, instead of this considers for his own immediate necessities, and builds a house at Succoth. It might be asserted that his necessities required this; but still it was a departure from the principle of faith by which he had entered on possession. It was a divergence, however small, from the path of a pilgrim, and moreover, a halt on the way, which should have been steadily pursued onward until Bethel was reached. And as one shortcoming always leads to another, the next thing that we read of Him is, that he bought a parcel of a field, of the children of Hamor. He requires some other guarantee for his possession than the will and arm of the Almighty. It is a repetition of that willfulness which so characterized him; always seeking to secure by his own means the blessing which were derived from, God, and which he, doubtless, owned as such. This is a very common tendency, and much more difficult of exposure and correction than that which seeks what is simply of the world. God Himself is not the first object of the soul. His gifts, alas! too often shut out God Himself; and where he is not paramount, will must be somewhere at work, and we are in reality thinking of enjoying ourselves with the gifts instead of with Him.

So with Jacob at Shalem. Having yielded to nature, and departed in willfulness from the path of simple dependence on God, he now erects an altar, and calls it, "El-elohe-Israel;" not surely forgetting that he was Israel, the blessed one; but magnifying this fact more than the grace of God

that made him so. The true state of our souls is revealed by the title of our altar, if I may so express it; or, in other words, the character of our worship, and nearness to God. When the soul is occupied with itself; that is when its own condition is more before it than the greatness and excellency of the Lord, it is evident that the latter cannot be fully apprehended, or its superiority would necessarily supplant the other. Then we are in the presence of God, we cannot be occupied with our own state, save as to the exaltation we have received by being admitted to such a place. When really with God, we are lost in God, and in His interests: but when we are occupied with our own blessings or necessities, it is an occupation, right in its place, but lower than that which makes Him the supreme object; than that which Paul knew when his aim was to “win Christ.”

Jacob is here not only occupied with his blessings, but indulging his willfulness, and for this discipline is needed. The weight must be removed. He must learn that his own plans only produce sorrow and discomfiture. Thus, his residence at Shechem entails shame and sorrow on his family, and the only relief from it is to obey the word of the Lord.

Jacob is made to feel the shame and humiliation of the position which he had himself chosen, and then, the word of the Lord falls freely on his soul, and the discipline has prepared him to respond to it. “Arise,” says the Lord, “Go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee, when thou fleddest from the face of Esau, thy brother.” In pursuing “the race set before us,” all goes right! Jacob, on departing from Shechem for Bethel, leaves all his defilements behind him. The idols must be left at Shechem; they cannot be taken to Bethel. The moment we take God's path—the way to God's house, we must be clean; “holiness becometh his house forever.” Now the title of Jacob's altar is “El-Bethel.” He has become enlarged in the purposes of God, and sees himself merely as an agent in expressing and unfolding them on earth. His thoughts now dwell less on Jacob, the blessed of God, than on God, the blesser of Jacob. Another step on the path of faith has been taken.

But now, although he has apprehended the Lord's teaching, he is not subdued into accurate adherence to His word. The Lord had told him to dwell at Bethel; instead of which we find that, after a little, he journeyed from thence; and, consequently, fresh discipline awaits him. The trials in his circumstances, up to this, had been many and various; but now it is the trial of his affections which he is called upon to suffer. Death created a blank that can never be supplied, for his bereavement, in the loss of Rachel, was not forgotten for the remainder of his course. Compare Gen. 35:16, with 48. 7. In the latter passage Jacob alludes to his sorrow as if it had closed his own hopes as to earth. “As for me,” he says, “when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan, when yet there was but a little way to come to Ephrath, and I buried her there, on the way to Ephrath; the same is Bethlehem.” He buried the object of his affections, where Christ, the real balm for every bereaved heart, was to be born. If he leaves Bethel, the house of God, the place where God had appeared unto him, and told him to dwell, he is taught that there must be nothing but a desolate path outside. The clouds gather round his path. The immorality of his first-born, and the death of his father quickly follow. How deeply the former affected him, we learn from chap. xlix. 3, 4, where the bitterness of his heart, unnoticed here, finds a vent in reviewing all in the light of God's counsels.

The next notice we get of Jacob, is in chap. xxxvii. where we read that “he dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger.” This was his proper position, the one to which faith had called

him, but nevertheless, the discipline, after a respite, is continued. It was still necessary that he should be weaned from dependence on any object whatever. Though Rachel be gone, her two sons remain; and, through them, Jacob undergoes a continued process of crucifixion to his affections.

If we were more careful to observe the manner and links of God's dealings with us, we should find, that though there may be a suspension in the sorrow, and often a long interval of repose, yet, that the trials are continued very much in the same line, until the desired effect is produced.

We might have thought that Jacob's spirit was so broken, so shaken out of his interests and affections, that his path would, henceforth, be one of easy subjection to God. But no! when the strong will is the man of natural might, there is not complete surrender while any link of nature remains; and all the sorrow of heart which we read of in chaps. xxxvii. and xliii. touching Joseph and Benjamin, is necessary to bring Jacob's heart and will into entire submission. That the discipline produced this effect we cannot doubt, if we compare his expressions in chap. xxxvii. 34, 35, and in chap. xliii. 14. In the first instance he rent his clothes, put sackcloth upon his loins, and refused to be comforted. "For," said he, "I will go down into the grave with my son mourning" But in the last he says, "If I am bereaved, I am bereaved;" in other words, "I submit." What a difference! what a desolation, when the heart is wrenched and there is no resource in God, but what a contrast, when the Almighty God is a refuge, and the bereaved one can say, "If I am bereaved, I am bereaved!" "I take that place." It is simple submission to the will of God, and effects, for us, what God so much desires—even, that we should find our resources in Him; and the soul, brought to this, is never unsatisfied. The happiness of His people is the great purpose of God; and we often find that, when a trial has effected the necessary discipline, the tried one is given back the objects, the loss of which had occasioned its sorrow, and which it is now prepared to use and enjoy in dependence on God.

Jacob receives both Joseph and Benjamin again. But so unprepared is the heart of man for the tender mercy of our God, that the very announcement of it caused Jacob's heart to faint. So great had been the depth of his sorrow, that the unaccredited attempt to relieve it, for a moment almost annihilated him. Much discipline had been needed to break his strong will and unsubdued nature, but it had amply done its work. How broken is he now! To bind up the broken heart is one of the special services of Christ; but many a Jacob cannot believe it possible that such tender mercy awaits him, and even when known, it often causes more fainting of the heart than did the very discipline itself.

But the Lord always makes sure of His work. He stoops to our weakness and gives us evidences. The nobleman (John 4) was assured by evidences, that it was at the very hour that Jesus said to him, "Thy son liveth," that he was made whole. And so here: Jacob is first convinced by evidences of the reality of the mercy, and then, after recovering Joseph again, the relief is so complete, that he utters sentiments similar to those of the aged Simeon, when he held the infant Jesus in his arms: "Now let me die," he says, "since I have seen thy face," &c. The cup is full! The heart, already so broken and subdued, is now satisfied, having received back what it had lost, directly from God, and with increased honor and glory to Him. Discipline having done its work, we find that fullness of joy is the great desire of the heart of God for us.

Jacob's life in Egypt is, properly, the third stage of his checkered pilgrimage, and a bright stage it is. His last moments are the great event noticed by the apostle as the highest evidence of faith: "By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, leaning on the top his staff." He there appears before us as the witness for God, intelligent as to his counsels, broken in will, holy and elevated in utterance. What a bright and tranquil close to his distracted, self-willed and disciplined life! How much we have to learn from his history! Valuing blessings, but ever resorting to his own means and modes in order to secure them; learning, by sorrowful experience, the folly of his own plans, and that in whatever measure a man metes, it will be measured to him again. But on the other hand, he learns also, that God is the only true rest and resource in sorrow; and this priceless lesson he reaches, to the satisfying of his heart, before his course ends.

Oh! how sweet and instructive it is, to retrace all the ways and dealings of God with us, when we are at last "settled in Him" as our sure resource.

## Discipline: 5. Joseph

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The history of Joseph unfolds to us the trials and duties of a servant of God. The evils and failure of human nature, are not brought before us in his course, as in that of some we have already studied. Joseph is regarded, primarily, as a servant and instrument for God's work; and, consequently, we have to trace the exercises and purgation to which he must be subjected, in order to fit him for that work.

The first notice we have of him is respecting his position in his father's house. "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age, and he made him a coat of many colors." Thus loved and signalized by his father, his heart was enlarged. Tasting the sweetness of affection its own was drawn out; for nothing generates affection in us so much as the assurance of its existence for us; as it is written, "We loved him because he first loved us." When love asserts its claim, every other claim is acknowledged and valued as only opportunities for its expression. So Joseph's heart in tender age expanded in the genial atmosphere of his father's love; but this, at the same time, exposed him to the envy of those who had proved themselves unworthy of it. "His brethren hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him" While on the one side he learned the tenderness and resources of his father's affection, on the other he suffered reproach and persecution for being so favored. If the one attracted him to his father, the other painfully warned him that he must be dependent on his affection, for, outside it, and on account of it, he was a sufferer.

Thus, early in life, and in the domestic circle, did Joseph learn (as indeed of all God's servants) the elementary principles of that truth which must sustain him, in the highest services by and by; even that as the loved of God, he is the hated of man. The love of the father, conspicuously indicated by the coat of many colors, must compensate him for the hatred of the brethren; must nerve and prepare him for all their opposition and envy, and this is the first and greatest lesson which the servant of God has to learn on entering his course, that which Christ (of whom Joseph is the, type) so fully and perfectly apprehended; He who, ever dwelling in the full consciousness of the Father's love, was thereby enabled to meet unmoved all the hatred and malice of man. And still further, the one who best knows the father's love must be the best exponent of that love—the best qualified servant for the father to send on a mission of interest to those who were ignorant of it. "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Joseph, still bearing out his character of type and servant, is deputed by his father to see how his brethren fared; but before this event there are two intimations given him of the position which he must occupy by and by with respect to these communications. He receives no support from his father, who rebukes him, and this, with the concomitant and increased opposition of his brethren, laid the groundwork of that dependence on God and dependence of man which so distinguished his after course. The prospects which divinely occupy my soul may be ill received by all around me, even by valued friends and guides; but they are mercifully given in order to confirm the soul, and still more to convince me, when the realization supervenes, how true and constant has been God's care of me.

How little we notice or value the small circumstances of our early life and the large effect they exercise on us! From infancy we are forming for the place destined for us of God; and our whole history is but a succession of processes preparing us for the end, the very first of them, in all material points, bearing strict analogy to the one which closes our course. Thus was it with David. The first notice we have of him is, feeding sheep in the wilderness; from whence he was taken, after an intervening process of discipline, "to feed Israel his people, and Jacob his inheritance," a position which he held, in many a varying circle, to the end. So also with Moses. Alone for God, with God, and under God, in the ark of bulrushes, every era of his life is of the same order, whether in Midian, in the Mount, or on Pisgah at last.

Joseph then starts on his mission, assured of his father's love, aware of the hatred of his brethren, and secretly impressed with an unknown, and as yet incomprehensible, idea of future greatness. Responding to the will of the father, he did not shrink from the post of danger which the father did not apprehend for him. If the One greater than we are, in love and in wisdom, appoint us a path of service, which would be grateful to Himself, and He, knowing all, apprehends no danger for us; we may surely enter on it in simple confidence. It is the only true and happy spirit for any path of service. Emerging from the private home—known expression of our Father's love—to launch into the tumultuous ocean of unreasonable and unloving brethren, and be messengers of the Father's interest respecting them. Thus Christ came and thus must every true servant of His be sustained or be useful. Joseph pursuing this path of service, bearer of his father's message, and exponent of his father's interest, came to Shechem, but is checked in the execution of his mission by finding his brethren not there. Such checks often occur in order to test our reality as to whether the Father's will is wholly our desire. Joseph's heart was evidently set on its accomplishment, for instead of returning when he could not find them, he lingers at his post until he gets tidings of them, and then follows them to Dothan, unprepared for the murderous and malicious reception. which awaited him.

After various modifications of these evil purposes, (for wicked counsels must always be multifarious, whereas there is but one fixed way for doing right) Joseph is sold to the Ishmaelites" and again sold by them into Egypt, unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, and captain of the guard. What a change for him, from the glow of a parent's love, uppermost and chief, to be first murderously assailed by his own brethren, and now a bondsman in Egypt! Had the divine communications vouchsafed to him in his dreams made him independent of everything from man, (be it love or hatred,) and dependent only on God! If they had, he needed it at this juncture,; and, undoubtedly, that was the value of the discipline he was now undergoing. Truth is communicated to us first, and we may greatly value the acquisition of it: but the winter can alone season the succulent growths of spring and summer. The great reality of the truth must be learned by us; Joseph must be cast on God.

But the winter is seldom without some gleam of sunshine; and often before its depths, as well as before its conclusion, a bright season intervenes. Before the sternest part of the discipline befalls us, we are often cheered by an unexpected reprisal. Thus Joseph is a prosperous man in the captain's house. But from this he is soon driven—a snare being then prepared for him by the adversary of souls, which he has integrity and dignity to fly from; for it only addressed the depravity of his nature, and offered no alleviation to his condition as a slave. We may regard Potiphar's wife as a type of the world, the allurements of which she symbolizes; and, failing to attract the

prosperous servant of God, she becomes his direst and most unscrupulous foe. Evil association too often accompanies prosperity; but prosperity in evil association cannot remain for the God-fearing soul. The latter will extinguish the former if there be faithfulness. But how great is the compensation for the loss of both! God remains—unto whom, and before whom, Joseph now so distinctly acted. How checkered is the life of this future witness for God! First sold as a bondsman for being the messenger of his father's love unto his brethren; and now cast into prison by his master because he was the righteous guardian of his master's property.

He learned that neither love nor righteousness could be comprehended by man. To God alone he must look, and on God alone be cast. And God did not disappoint him “The Lord Was with Joseph, and chewed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.” The one who is really cast on God improves the circumstances of trial in which he is, whether they be temporary or permanent. No adverse circumstances can crush the true living energy; they may limit and determine it. The scene may be changed, but not the spirit of it. Moses in Midian helps the woman and waters their flocks, when no longer allowed to help and serve the Hebrews. He is a savior in Midian, as well as in Egypt to the nation of Israel: and the Lord becomes a sanctuary to him and provides alleviation for him in his bondage and sorrow. And Joseph also is found ere long to be as useful in prison, as he was in the house of the captain of the guard. “The keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand, because the Lord was with him, and that which he did the Lord made it to prosper.” In every trial, however gloomy, there are gleams of light and relief; but full deliverance is often delayed by our anxiety to obtain it. God is to be the satisfaction of His servant, and not the deliverance; consequently, the latter is often postponed until we are without prospect or expectation of it: and then, it may be accorded in a manner so transcendently beyond our perception, that we must see and understand the love and interest which surrounded us during the whole period of our trial. Thus was it with Peter in Acts 12, with Paul and Silas in Acts 16, and with Joseph in the sequel of what we are considering. His abilities as God's servant, and as the one acquainted with His mind, are first in the most distinct manner displayed in the prison. Trials, the effect of man's enmity, do not obstruct the truth of God. Opportunity for its development will occur, in apparently the most disastrous circumstances. Paul, in jail, is blessed to the jailer: Joseph, in prison, reveals to the chief-butler the purposes of God; but he probably errs in soliciting the latter to negotiate for his release; and two full years longer must he remain a captive. He is again taught that no confidence can be placed in man. The prolonged incarceration must have deeply tried one who was conscious of having done nothing to merit it. It must have almost seemed as if God had forgotten him; and nothing is so painful as the sense that one from whom you expect much knows of your need, and does not come forward to your help. This was Job's great trial—that God did not manifest care for him, and John the Baptist's, when he heard in prison of the works of Jesus. Whether Joseph felt thus we are not told; but we know that God had a purpose in his prolonged imprisonment: and when that purpose was answered, “the time came, and the word of the Lord tried him; the king sent and delivered him, even the ruler of the people, and let him go free.” How little we understand the exercises and purgation to which the fruitful branch must be subjected that it may be fit for God's work! Chastening is needed, to take out of the way that which we do not seek to remove; and purging, to rid us of what we desire and seek to be rid. Joseph underwent a deep process of purgation, from the day he left his father's house, clad in the coat of many colors, as a distinguishing mark of love. He had to learn, through a remarkable series of sorrow and discipline, that in order to be fit for God's service he must find the favor of

man is deceitful: he is allowed to taste of it from time to time, in order to show him how little it can avail him in any moment of need; and slowly, but surely, he learns what it is to be from God, and to God. But deliverance comes in the end; and Joseph appears before Pharaoh, in the highest sense, as a servant and witness of God. He declares things to come, and receives the distinction and position to which righteously he is entitled, and which the world even is compelled to accord him. All this time, probably, he knew little of the service which he was to render to his brethren, or how fully that which he once attempted to render to them, and which was so cruelly rejected and requited, would now be offered and so humbly appreciated. God all the time was working for his people, and preparing for them; and in process of time, Joseph knew this and admitted it.

In his several interviews with his brethren, he presents to us the loveliest portraiture of the man of divine wisdom and judgment, struggling against the finest emotions of his heart; restraining the expression of his affection until he was assured that the right and safe time for the denouement had arrived. How touching the anxiety and distress which he inflicts on his brethren, in order to secure to them the ways and doings which his heart craved! His love for them prompted it all; and, in surveying his behavior, we cannot but see how self-possessed and controlled he had become, and how fitted for the service he was called to render and maintain. What a moment it must have been to this long-suffering and humbled, but now exalted and disciplined man, to present himself to his father, fall on his neck and weep! What a course of preparation he had passed through, before this great climax of his life and service was obtained! But attained it was. He had, through mercy, accomplished and provided for every need of his brethren, evincing, at the same time, how equal he was to the mission he first entered on, at the commencement of his course: namely, to convey to them a just idea of their father's love.

In conclusion, we have only to observe the faith for which he was distinguished. After all the eminence he had attained in Egypt, and all the service he had performed, by faith he sees a better and a greater inheritance beyond it. When about to die, he makes mention of the departure of Israel, and gives commandment concerning his bones. Thus, as a faithful servant, he closes his course, testifying the proper object of hope; serving the people of God to the full, and according to their need, while he lived; and, when dying, leading them to the only true prospect and hope of their souls; even the inheritance of the promised land. No present advantages must cloud or intercept this. Faith overlooks the brilliancy of present things, and faithfully serving his people to the end, he enjoins on them with his latest breath, their proper hope, and future course.

And thus determined the career of one of the most disciplined and honored of servants; after great trials, but greater successes; great sorrows, but greater joys; great humiliation, but greater exaltation; and a grateful study it is, for every suffering servant of our God—to whom be praise forever and ever.

## Drawing Nigh to God

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As regards drawing nigh to God, the position of the Christian is entirely changed from that of the Jew. Then (Heb. 9) the way into the holiest was not made manifest, and no one, not even the priests, could go into the presence of God, within the veil; and the services were a remembrance of sins. Now, the work of Christ being accomplished, the veil is rent. It is not a people in a certain relationship with God, yet always remaining without, drawing near to the altar. It is full grace going out to the world, every believer having perfect boldness to enter the holiest.

Christ must be known by faith to the individual himself, in order that he may be changed into the same image. No ordinance can do this.

## Faith in Christ

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Faith in Christ as He was in His humiliation and resurrection, makes a man a Christian. Faith in Christ as He is, guides Christians in fellowship. And faith in Christ as He shall be, gives a hope that maketh not ashamed.

## Feeding Upon Christ

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Q. John 6:51, and 2 Cor. 3:18. What is the difference between “feeding” upon Christ in “his humiliation,” and the “being changed into the same image” by beholding His glory 2 T. T.

A. By feeding on Christ in His humiliation the soul's affections enter into the preciousness of His path and death, His human path down here. We are touched, moved, softened: Christ has a place in the heart. We abide in Him according to this love, in the delight of this lowliness, and He in us. In being changed into the same image by contemplating God's glory in His face, we are drawn out energetically to that which is glorious to God's glory as set before us: but in One who is a man, who has loved us and died for us, so that we are associated with this glory. The Holy Ghost, who reveals it, interests us in the glory of God, but that in man, and lifts above what is below it and everything connected with life in flesh. The result is, we are formed into the image of what Christ Himself was when on earth. Christ was the display of it practically on earth. Compare Acts 7:56-60, where all this is brightly realized.

## **Fifth Seal: Editor's Reply to T.G.R. (Correction)**

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The Editor thanks Mr. T. G. R. (Chester) for his kind remark and wishes. What He Says on the fifth seal is quite true, but consistent with the "Remarks." He has misconstrued the observations on the sixth seal, which the writer believes with him is no more anticipative than its predecessors. — As to the paper on the obscurity of which he animadverts, Mr. R. must bear in mind that much is due to the depth of the subject. A popular style is seldom, if ever, the vehicle of profound thought, and the difficulty is increased, if the tone is spiritual, and the matter beyond the usual limits of Christian research or experience

## Fragment: the Authority of God's Word

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People often confound the effect produced on man, the effect which makes him own the truth and the authority of the Word, with a judgment passed by man upon this Word, as upon a matter submitted to him. Never could the Word be thus presented as subject to human judgment; it would be to deny its own nature; it would be to say that it is not God who speaks. Could God say that He is not God? If this cannot be, no more could He speak and admit that His Word has not its own authority.

## **Fragment: the Church, Christ's Epistle**

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It is the Christian, or the church, which gives Christ his character before the world. They are His epistle to the world. We may know how to distinguish and understand the representation; but the world, the infidel, judges of what Christianity is, by what Christians are.

## Fragments Gathered up

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Power, the power of Christ practically, depends not upon revelations, knowledge of the glory, &c., but upon our feeling our own nothingness (2 Cor. 12) Affection in unjudged flesh will not do—and we must look to that. Sentiment is worth nothing: you may have plenty of it with sincerity, but it will not carry a man through. That can only be in the power of the Holy Ghost.

### Fragments Gathered up

There may be great confidence in devotedness, as with Peter, and yet a want of acquaintance with God's mind. Where affection is real, it is instinctively just. We have to see that our zeal for the Lord is not in the flesh.

## God's Word

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God's word has a hold on natural conscience from which it cannot escape. The light detects the “breaker up,” though it may be hated. And so the word of God is adapted to man, though he be hostile to it- adapted in grace as well as in truth. This is exactly what shows the wickedness in man in rejecting It; and it has power thus in the conscience, even if the will is unchanged. Men resist it because it is true. Did it not reach their conscience, they would not need to take so much pains to get rid of it and disprove it. Reader, it speaks of grace as well as truth. It speaks of God's grace and love, who gave His only-begotten Son that sinners like you and me might be with Him, know Him—deeply, truly, and intimately know Him, enjoy him forever, and enjoy Him now: that the conscience perfectly purged, might be in his presence without a cloud, without a reproach, without fear. And to be there in His love, in such a way, is perfect joy.

## The Heir of All Things

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Heb. 1:2

THERE is a great secret in Heb. 1:2 “The Son” being appointed “Heir of all things,” takes His appointed inheritance as a Redeemer.

The inheritance has become lost to man by sin. Adam forfeited it; and it was itself corrupted, and under the burden of sin. If it be again inherited, it must be taken with this burden upon it, as others have long since expressed it. The Son, appointed Heir, is therefore to take it as a Redeemer, or as One that relieves it of its burden.

This secret or mystery is suggested in Psa. 8 cited in Heb. 2 There, the Lord Jesus, the Son of man, (who is “the Son,” the “appointed Heir,” of chapter i.) is seen with all things put in subjection under Him; but He is seen also to have reached such lordship as One, who, by the grace of God, had tasted death for the inheritance. He is therefore a Redeemer-Inheritor, and not a simple Inheritor.

Therefore, we may say to His praise, He will enter the kingdom as a Redeemer-Inheritor, while the inheritance itself will appear there as a redeemed thing. And in this manner, He alone will be glorified there. All around Him or under Him will be in blessing and security. And let me add, this mystery of the redemption of the inheritance is set forth in Col. 1:20, where Christ is declared to be the Reconciler of all things in heaven and in earth, through the blood of His cross. And the cross itself bore witness to the same mystery, or His lordship of the world by reason of His death; for His royalty, with which His dominion and inheritance are linked, was there inscribed, (and inscribed not to be erased,) in all the languages of the nations. There it was made known therefore, that the crucified One was the King, that the cross was His way and title to the crown. (See John 19:19-22).

All this makes “the world to come,” or this inheritance of Christ, a new creation, that is, creation under new conditions, In the old creation, all things were “of God,” it is true; but they were of God who created them. But in the new, all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.” (2 Cor. 5). All these will witness redemption; the blood of the Lamb of God, and not simply the power of the hand of God, will be traced there.

And this distinguishes the dominions of the Second Man from those of the first, or Christ from Adam. Adam received lordship of the creatures from the hand of God at once: Christ, the Son, the Man of Psa. 8 takes it, after having been made lower than the angels, that, as man, or in manhood, He might taste death for it.

But there is more in this mystery. The redemption of the inheritance by blood, as we have been speaking, is to be made good by power. Power will have to reduce or rescue the inheritance; or, in other words, to clothe the title of Christ with possession. This action is given to us in the Apocalypse; and it is an action, consequently, conducted by strength on the ground of purchase;

that is, conducted by Him who is “the Lion of the tribe of Judah,” and who had already been “the Lamb that was slain.” (Rev. 5). This is to be noticed. And thus it is, by the action of that Book, that “all things are actually “put in subjection” to Christ. As to “the Son” therefore the “appointed Heir of all things,” the Man, of Psa. 8 the Lord of “the world to come,” we see these things.

The decree which puts all things under Him is recorded in Psa. 8 That decree, commented on in Heb. 2, is declared to be not as yet made good to Him. The action by which this is accomplished, (the manner in which all things are made subject to Christ, is given to us in the Book of the Apocalypse; and then, the results of that action are displayed to us in the pages of prophets and apostles; for there we see “the world to come,” or “the kingdom,” or “the inheritance of all things;” is in the hand of “the Son.”

Thus, “the Son” is the “Heir of all things;” and after this manner and in this due time, the inheritance will be His, brought into actual possession.

But, in the riches of His grace, He will have heirs of this inheritance together with Himself—as we read of the saints, “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.” Or, as we read in our Epistle, (chap. ii. 10,) as the Captain of salvation He leads the sons to the glory; and as these Heirs had redemption by blood, as the inheritance itself does, this Captain of salvation is also a “Sanctifier,” as our chapter goes on to teach us. (ver. 11). For if He takes us up He must take us up with all our burthens likewise. He must charge Himself with us, from the place of our ruins to the place of His glories. And this is just what He has done, as we still further read in ver. 16, “For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.” He laid not hold of angels, as the meaning is, but He laid hold of the seed of Abraham. That is, the Son, who is the Christ, made the interests of elect sinners (here called “the seed of Abraham”) His care, charging Himself with their blessing, and having respect to them in all His ways and doings, till He take them into the glory, or into the inheritance of all things with Himself. In all the successive parts of his history from the first to the last, He never lets them go. They are always seen with Him This, I judge, is the force of those words, “He took on him the seed of Abraham.” And this is necessary to that great mystery, the Sanctifier making the sanctified joint-heirs with Himself of the appointed inheritance—and this we find to be so, as we read Heb. 1 ii. throughout. For we there find, that we never lose sight of ourselves, while we are tracing Him from the beginning to the end of His blessed, mysterious, journey. And surely this is a great and precious truth. I would notice this, as these two chapters give it to us.

1st. His incarnation.

This, of course, was the beginning of His path. But this we here learn took place, because of us. Because we, the children, were partakers of flesh and blood, He likewise Himself took part of the same (ch. ii. 14).

2nd. His life of suffering temptation.

This, as I may say, followed immediately upon His incarnation. But all His life He went through, because of us. It was, that He might succor us in our temptations. (ch. ii. 18).

3rd. His victorious death.

This closed as we know, His life of suffering temptation. But this death was likewise for us. It was that He might deliver us who through fear of death were all our life-time subject to bondage. (ch. ii. 3; ii. 9).

4th. His ascension.

This gloriously succeeded His death and resurrection. But in this He appears also for us. For He took His seat in heaven as the Purger of our sins. (ch. i. 3; ii. 9).

5th. His present Priesthood in heaven.

His ascension led Him to this service and dignity. But it is all exercised for us. He makes intercession in the tabernacle for us according to our need. (ch. ii. 17).

6. His future coming and kingdom.

This will be in due season, after the present service on high is over. But on this great occasion, and in this age of the glory, He will still appear for us. As the Captain of salvation, He will lead us to this glory, that we may sit with Himself in the sovereignty of all things in the world to come. (ch. ii. 10).

And thus we see ourselves with Him, throughout all this wondrous journey, from the womb of the virgin to the throne of the kingdom. We see ourselves interested in every character which He bears, and in every action or suffering that He fulfills. He is the incarnate One, the Tempted One, the Dead One, the Risen and Ascended One, the Priest in the heavens, and the Captain of salvation entering the world to come, where the glory is, but in each and all He is either with us or for us. We are never allowed to lose sight of ourselves or of our interests for a single moment, while tracking His path from the beginning to the end of it. He is "Heir of all things," but we are joint-heirs with Him, having been made meet to be so by Himself in the earlier parts of His ways.

We have a fuller, brighter view of all this mystery, now in the light of the day of Heb. 2 than they could have had who walked in the light of the 2nd Psalm only. But this is of grace and of God also. The light shines brighter and brighter as we pass on, through the oracles of God. And the day is still to come, when, an emphasis beyond even this, it shall be said, "O LORD, our Lord, how exalted is thy name in all the earth."

## Humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ

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Q. Heb. 10:5. D. S. Invites remark on current lowerings of the Holy Person of our Lord, and the attempt of some unhappy men in our day, as in times gone by, to insinuate that because He was truly and perfectly a man, His body was a dying body like any other's, and Himself all his life under the curse of God, not merely made a curse on the cross

A. I agree with our brother that such views are the fruit of the enemy's effort to dishonor the Son of God on the side of His humanity; that capable of dying the Lord was, and that as a fact, (the blessed foundation of all our peace and hopes, as well as the vindication of God's grace and truth in dealing with men,) He died, as every believer knows and confesses; but that this is quite distinct from being, like a sinful man, per se under a necessity of dying; and that, whatever the importance to us, and the divine perfection of His ways of goodness and holy suffering during His life, never till the cross did He suffer atoningly, never was He forsaken of God but there and then. Ignorance is one thing, and, more or less, is our common lot; opposition to fully declared light of God, is quite another. Thus, some have even held that our Lord went into the hell of the damned to suffer there, else His work had not been complete. But it would be a very different thing, now that the truth as to atonement is better understood, for people to systematize crotchets like this. Such antagonism to truth is the enemy's work, and tends to heresy. Though an old and abused form, it is none the less of value to bear in mind that the true faith is that we worship.

## Inspiration of the Scriptures

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ONE of the great efforts of the enemy in these days is against the written word of God. Ecclesiastical office and orthodoxy is in its nature no barrier against this inroad. In its most pretentious forms and highest claims it is injurious to true confidence in Scripture, because the authority of the church, not that of the word, lies at the root of these pretensions. Divinely given authority is its first principle, not divine truth from God.

If its true principle be scrutinized beneath conventional habits and fears, it will be found that the authority of the word is founded, according to this system, on the authority of the church—that is, the word has none, properly divine in itself. I say this, not with a view to controversy with that system, but as a warning that, in the struggle which is going on, such a barrier against unbelief is not to be trusted to.

The confidence in man and his intellectual powers and progress, which characterizes another considerable portion of the professing church, is surely no security against man's assuming to judge what does and will surely judge him. The word has its authority from God, and God will make it good, and prove that authority in judgment, as He blesses us with it now in grace. The word, if it be the word of God at all, calls for submission. It forms, as a means, the link of renewed connection with God, granted to us by sovereign mercy when sin and flesh had separated us from God. It is sent out from Him, as was the living and eternal Word, as a point of contact in mercy and power for man with God, which comes to him where he is, deals with man exactly in the state man is in, and reveals God, and as He is pleased to reveal Himself to man in that state. But for this God must be its author; none but God can rightly reveal Himself. Otherwise that word cannot bear witness of the love, the purpose of love, which is in God.

It cannot have the wise adaptation to the end which that love proposes to itself, and the gracious consideration for all the infirmities, all the varied circumstances, of those to whom it is addressed so as to reveal divine love and truth, divine love and plans, to and in spite of those infirmities, if the purpose of doing so be not there—**■ρχ■ τ■ς θεωρ■ας τ■λος τ■ς πρ■ξεως**. Now, I meet a great deal which takes the form of condescension to believers in divine inspiration, while it really assumes human intellectual powers to be on superior ground on this question, and adapts its reasonings with great deference to their claims, to the theory of inspiration, so as to save something for the more feeble-minded. Help is allowed on God's part, the aiding the memory according to the Lord's promise. It is thought much to rescue such points as these from the invading grasp of rationalism. Now I do not doubt that the Holy Ghost did help, did recall to the memory of the New Testament writers what our Lord had said. But who was the author of the New Testament? How came it to be written? Is there no purpose in the history and other writings of the New Testament? and if so, whose purpose was it? Whence do the writings flow? Is the existence of the New Testament an accident which has its origin in the will or circumstance of four men (I speak particularly now of the gospels, though the principles apply to the whole New Testament, and with increasing force, when it is looked at as a whole) who were afterward, when they thought

fit to undertake the work, graciously assisted? Or is the scripture New Testament history the consequence of a purpose of God, a fruit of a divine intention and plan, of whose execution the Holy Ghost is the author?

We read in Peter, holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Here we have the source—the motive power in this work. The word of the Lord came to them. I have no theory as to the manner in which the New Testament writers were inspired. I recognize, in the fullest way, the diversities of style and the stamp of individuality in the different writers. The Lord was pleased to use men. But when I say that, it implies that He used them. I see the Lord declaring that He would use their memories. I see the apostle preferring an inspired communication in which his understanding had a part. But it is evident that if God recalled by the Holy Ghost certain events to the memory of a writer, He could recall them in such a way and form as He pleased, or as it had particularly struck the writer at the time the event happened, or while the facts were presented anew to his memory, with such additional apprehensions as the spiritual state of the writer made him capable of at the time of writing, and according to that peculiar form of apprehension wrought by His power and presence in the writer. He might recall these events to the writer's mind in the succession He thought fit, so as to produce a given order in the narration. But all this supposes the action and purpose, the will of a divine Author, who acts with a plan and wisdom suited to its accomplishment. The wisdom of such an author might (by the combination of the events in a given order, and the selection of such as He recalled) produce a result from them, as a whole, which had a bearing and gave a witness to Christ entirely beyond the thoughts of the writer, though he might in every part be used according to the state of his own mind under the influence of the Spirit of God. Now you will find that many discussions on inspiration, or statements on the subject, leave the thought of any purpose or motive power of the Spirit of God wholly aside, or deliberately deny it. The fact of distinct order in the recital of events in two gospels is assumed to be a proof of the writers being left to themselves in these points, and such ne, as I judge, short-sighted arguments are used.

Now either the Holy Ghost moved the inspired writers to compose their accounts, or He did not. If not, then, the existence of the written accounts of the life of Jesus are a providential accident and flow from no intention of God towards His Church and even a ruined world. If He did, then it was with a plan and purpose flowing from, and suited to, the object to be attained and to the divine wisdom which so moved them. If this be so, God has thought it right to give to us an account of the wonderful facts of incarnation and redemption and all that accompanied these great events. And if He has done so, He has done so with a purpose and plan. For the carrying of this out He used fitted instruments, but the plan was His. He worked in and by them, but to produce what? The uncertain fruit of their own researches or that which would not answer to His intentions and the glory of Christ and the truth as it is in Him? It were the height of absurdity—a contradiction of the nature and working of God—to think so for a moment. It is in vain to talk of helping them. Whose will was it that it should be done? Whose purpose to be carried into effect? Whose work was it which was done? Was it God's will to have it done? Did the work flow from the action of the Holy Ghost? And was it, in carrying it out, left to go wrong and be executed contrary to the divine will and wisdom? I press the question—whose action and purpose was it? The moment I believe it to be God's, I get a divine work. I look for divine wisdom, divine purpose displayed in carrying it out. One tells me that the various arrangements of contents prove human agency in their selection,

and disposition. Why so? If Christ be presented in various characters, why may not the Holy Ghost present facts which display those characters in a way calculated to do so, employing diverse human agency to do it? The whole argument assumes that there is no purpose or plan of the Holy Ghost in the New Testament narrative. The moment I believe there is, I must expect the materials to be selected and arranged according to that purpose and plan. And nothing can be more absurd and contradictory than the contrary supposition. It is admitted by such authors that the Holy Ghost recalled facts to the memory of the evangelists. Did He do it at haphazard—out of place, time, and order, and differently to the different evangelists, so that they have put them in different, and, as to some, or perhaps all, in incorrect order?

Where inspiration is wholly denied, then, it is easy to understand that men hold that each evangelist did the best he could, and put things out of due order, because he did not know any better. If, on the other hand, God would glorify His Son Jesus, and give to us an adequate account of His life and sufferings, an object so perfectly suited to His grace and our need, we can easily understand the Spirit of God so ordering various accounts, as to present, for those who know in part and prophesy in part, the various aspects of His path on earth, its bearings and results on Jews, on men at large, or on the heart of sinners, or as unfolding before men the divine nature; and thus we should have the same true facts, but variously arranged, and with diversity of details. But of all theories, that which makes the gospels the result of no purpose, or will, or plan of God at all, but that when men took the thought up, the Holy Ghost helped them, and recalled things to their memories, but so as to have all in disorder and confusion, without a purpose; and that He did thus with several independent writers, so as to have inconsistency, as well as disorder, is of all theories—for theory it is—the most unworthy of God, and absurd for man.

No man can doubt, for a moment, that the four gospels present Christ each in a different way. Did this flow from the purpose and intention of God, or is it an accident? if from divine purpose, I must look for an ordering of the materials, according to that purpose. It is in vain to say, that this is an **■** priori theory. It is an **■** priori theory to say that the putting the history of the deliverance of the demoniac in Galilee before Matthew's call or after is a proof of human arrangement. Why not of divine? If chronological order had been alleged to have been preserved, or was it the object, then I should see that men had been left to their own weakness. But who says that chronological order is the object, say, in Matthew? I am satisfied it is not. This is not the place to prove that he had another. But the assumption that the gospels are a compilation of memoirs in chronological order, as far as the writer was competent (which is not true even in many a well-arranged human history) is the sole ground on which arrangement can be attributed to human agency. But the assumption is a very foolish one. That the selection of facts depended on human agency is still more absurd. It is held that the Holy Ghost recalled to the remembrance of the writers what Jesus said. Where, then, is the writer's selection? Did the Holy Ghost come in aid, when the evangelist remembered something imperfectly, and left we know not what—perhaps something much more important—wholly unremembered? Such an operation of the Holy Ghost as is here pretended is as irreverent an idea as it is absurd. But if He did move, the writer did not select and could hardly be said to arrange. God may have led the writers to use all sources, all they had in their memories, or directly recalled or revealed what they had not. I make no limit as to the divine use of means: all are at the disposal of God. The question I urge is, Who is the author and mover in the history we have of the blessed Lord? If it be the Holy Ghost, then is He the source of this history, and He had

a purpose in giving it: He has carried it out according to that purpose. To suppose that the Holy Ghost wrought to leave us an imperfect, wrongly arranged, inconsistent account of the Lord Jesus, and of the unspeakable intervention of God in redemption, is the most irreverent—I do not say intentionally so, I do not the least think so—but in fact the most irreverent and absurd of all theories as to inspiration.

I have not a doubt the New Testament history bears the stamp and contains the proof of the most perfect divine arrangement, and that harmonies are wrong in principle. But into so large a subject as this I could not here enter. This would, of course, be a matter of spiritual intelligence and instruction, from the contents and order in which they are formed, and, if extended to the whole New Testament, the scope of the whole book and the combination of its parts. My object, in this flying communication, is merely to draw attention to the question which is often, in so strange a way, silently dropped—Who is the author of the New Testament history? From whose will or purpose does it flow? Whose plan is this history of the Lord Jesus? Is it a divine or human one?—a thing flowing from human will in aid of which the Holy Ghost has wrought, or the fruit of God's counsels and the agency of the Holy Ghost accomplishing the purpose of God? If it be from the purpose and moving of the Holy Ghost, I must look for His carrying that purpose out.

I add one word as to the preface of Luke's gospel. I say nothing as to the extent to which the writers were conscious of the Holy Ghost's purpose and action; but I wholly deny the construction put upon the words of Luke as a matter of fact. It is constantly stated, both by rationalists and others who hold loose views of inspiration, that he declares he gave his own account from what he heard and from his inquiries. He does no such thing. He says, Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to compose an account of what is most surely believed among us, as it has been delivered to us by those who were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having accurate knowledge of all things from the origin, to write to thee with method, &c. Now the evangelist contrasts here the ground on which he wrote with that on which others had gone. I do not allege, as some of the fathers have, that he blames those others as having “taken in hand” themselves, in contrast with inspiration; but it skews that many having done it in that way was a motive for his doing it on more trustworthy ground. He does it because he has thorough personal knowledge of all from the outset. Paul says of Timothy (2 Tim. 3:10), “Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life,” &c. The same word is here used. The others had known what was delivered. Now it is not said Luke knew them himself, but *ταρηκ* *λουθηκ* *τ* *νωθεν πασιν κρφως*. It would be hard to express personal accurate knowledge more strongly. It has nothing to do with the question of inspiration. It is the fitness of the instrument which appears. Whether the Holy Ghost made use of it is not touched upon; but the conclusion which is drawn from it (that Luke denied it and derived his materials from other accounts) is wholly unfounded.

## Is It Right to Ask Forgiveness of Sins?

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Q. Why may not a believer use the prayer, "Be not angry with us forever?" Is not God displeased, or angry with us, when we sin? Must we not, in this case, seek to be forgiven? And is not God displeased with us until we have sought His forgiveness? E. J.

A. The first point that requires to be noticed is, that the word of God expressly declares the believer in Christ to be free from condemnation. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). Nor is this their present privilege alone; its continuance is pledged to them by the same word. "He that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). Besides, the state of the believer in this respect is contrasted in scripture with that of the unbeliever. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). If then that which distinguishes the one class from the other be, that the wrath of God abides on the unbeliever, while from the believer it has passed away, how evident that no believer can intelligently use the prayer, "Be not angry with us forever."

As to the remaining queries, it is of all-importance to distinguish between the natural relation we all sustain to God, as creatures, and those new, blessed relations to Him on which we enter, the moment it can be truly said of us that we are believers in Christ. As creatures, we are responsible to God, the holy, righteous Judge of all. As fallen creatures, we are utterly and hopelessly condemned. "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified" (Psa. 143:2). Such was the confession of the psalmist, prior to the accomplishment of redemption, and the full triumph of grace in the death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord. It was because of our total inability to stand thus in judgment before God that Christ took our place, and bare our sins in his own body on the tree. If grace has drawn our hearts to that blessed Savior, we have God's word to assure us that in His death on the cross, our whole standing as condemned, sinful creatures before God came to an end. Believing in Him, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph. 1:7). The believer is himself a justified, accepted person. "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). "Accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1:6). The believer enters thus, the moment he is a believer, on entirely new relations to God. He is no longer condemned and under wrath, but a pardoned, justified, accepted person, through the boundless grace of God, and the infinite efficacy of Christ's precious work. He is adopted, moreover, into God's family;...yea, born of God, and thus really His child. He is one with Christ, as a member of His body,— "for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Eph. 5:30).

Standing in these new relations to God, it is, no doubt, possible for the believer to fail in the service and obedience suited thereto. It is even possible that through want of practical dependence on God, and watchfulness against the enemy, he may fall into sin. He may thus need His Father's forgiveness, or need mercy of "the Lord—the Lord Jesus Christ. But in neither case does his sin

need forgiveness in any such sense as he himself once needed it, in order to his becoming a child of God, and a member of Christ. The forgiveness and justification which attend my introduction to God's family are bestowed once and forever; and the relations to God into which I am thus brought, are as unchanging as Himself. But if, being God's child, I am against my Father, his fatherly government extends to such a case, and I may have to suffer the present chastenings of His hand. "And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear" (1 Peter 1:17). But how wide the contrast between the chastenings of the Father, which flow from love, and are sent in order "that we may be partakers of his holiness" (Heb. 12:10), and that "wrath" or "anger," which rests upon unbelievers, and from which we are once and finally delivered, when the eye rests in faith on Christ and on His precious blood!

It is to this state of things, moreover, that the advocacy and priesthood of Christ apply. Nor is it the object of these blessed provisions of grace to turn to us the heart of our God and Father, as though our sins and failings had alienated us from that heart of love. "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 1; 2) Our Father would have us so occupied with the revelation of Himself in Christ, the Son of His love, as to be kept from sinning. But if, to our shame and sorrow, we do sin, it is not that He ceases to be our Father, or that we need a new justification. We have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ, who, on the ground of His accomplished righteousness, and of His having been the propitiation for our sins, pleads for us, and obtains those supplies of grace by which our souls, humbled and restored, again enjoy the undimmed brightness of our Father's countenance, the unchanged sweetness of our Father's love.

There could scarcely be a more specific answer to the queries before us than is afforded by the words of the apostle in Rom. 8 where, having considered every aspect in which the subject of the believer's safety and blessedness could be regarded, he triumphantly asks, "What shall we then say to these things? if God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us?" W. T. 2. 1 John 1.—G-y asks whether  $\text{περ} \blacksquare \text{του } \lambda \blacksquare \text{γου } \tau \psi \zeta \omega \blacksquare \text{ς}$  should not be translated, "of the word, the life," rather than "of the word of life." He refers to Phil. 2:16, where  $\lambda \blacksquare \text{γου } \zeta \omega \blacksquare \text{ς}$  occurs without the article, and in the sense of the quickening testimony of God. Here it is the person of the Son, who is so often called the Word, and the Life, but not (save here) the Word of life.

A. It is obvious, however, that this proposal would give a phrase still more remote from the language used elsewhere in Scripture; so that the usual version seems preferable.

3. Rev. 11 Are there two half-weeks in the Apocalypse? (See Vol. 1, pp. 276, 277.)

2. Assuming that Rev. 11:2, 3, speaks of the last half week, and that it coincides with the continuance of the beast for forty-two months, (Rev. 13,) how comes it that after this full time is expired, the beast, far from ceasing to work, overcomes the two witnesses and kills them; that we have at least three and a half days subsequently before God interposes in any measure to

vindicate His servants; that it is again after this that the seventh trumpet announces the worldly kingdom of our Lord and His Christ as come, which trumpet, it is generally considered, resolves itself into the fresh and subsequent series of vials, in their successive inflictions of wrath, and necessarily supposes a certain lapse of time? Is there not then a prolongation of the beast's power beyond the 1260 days of the witnesses? And does not this, the third woe, await its fulfillment? Certain it is that when the seventh angel sounds in chap. xi. 15, no details are given, but we have loud voices in heaven celebrating the advent of the worldly kingdom of our Lord, and the thanksgiving of the elders who anticipate the results to the very end. Now are not some of these details given under the seven vials, which, after chap. xii - xiv, resume the historical course of events on earth? And, though Rev. 11:15 differs in character from chap. xii. 10, does not the latter show that heavenly celebration may long precede an earthly accomplishment? Is not xiii. 5 limited to the beast's action after he takes Satan's throne? Is it not more natural to suppose that the ascent of the beast out of the bottomless pit opens his half-week, as it closes the career of the witnesses and their half-week? With this ascent, the casting down of Satan (Rev. 12) and his gift of authority (chap. xiii.) would coincide in time. These queries are put to the author of the above communication, not so much as objections, but as difficulties, and in the hope of eliciting further light.

J. M., &c.

## Isaiah 66

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In the last days, when the things of Israel become the subject of divine notice again, we know that two objects will present themselves-the nation in a state of apostasy, and the remnant in the midst of them. It will be like the two at one mill, or in one bed, between whom the day of the Lord is to make solemn discernment. But as this will be so in the time of the Jewish nation by and by, so is this the style very commonly in the Jewish prophets now, anticipating that time and action. The Spirit in them passes from the one of those objects to the other, in rapid and broken style, and this, also, often in the very same strain or discourse. And this we shall find in the closing chapter of the prophet Isaiah.

Verse 2. In these verses, the Lord, by the prophet, looks at the true Israel, the faithful remnant. He sees them, however only in one character, but that of the deepest and most affectionate interest to Himself, as a humble and broken-hearted people. It is not what they have heard from Him, done to Him, or suffered for Him, that the Lord here notices, but simply the fragments of their broken, and therefore affectionate, hearts. This is the ornament which with Him is of great price. He knows how to value it. It is that which draws His eye beyond all the bright and wondrous works of His hands, though they be, as we know, His delight and glory. But that which sympathizes with our mind or taste is really nearer to us than that which serves our interests. We know this among ourselves. The one who abroad in the affairs of life will promote our good in the world is of course valued by us; but the one who can sit with us and enter into the senses and enjoyments of the heart and mind, is still nearer and more prized: and so with our God. That which serves His glory is not so near as the poor brokenhearted sinner, as the meek or quiet spirit, for there the deepest sympathies of the Divine mind meet their object; and in a character like this the remnant are here under the eye of the Lord.

Ver. 3, 4. The other thing is then looked at in these next verses-the nation in their abominations, and in their own ways, and in their apostate work, and reprobate mind, bringing a visitation from the Lord, and a (lay of judgment from their God.

Ver. 5. The Spirit returns to the true Israel with a word of comfort, and they are invited to listen to a promise that the Lord would appear to their joy and to the confusion of all that hate them.

Ver. 6. Here this matured confusion is executed and brought on the wicked, all of a sudden. It is, as the Lord Himself says, like the lightning which cometh out of the east, and shineth unto the west; so rapid, so much as in the twinkling of an eye, is this judgment from the Lord, rendering recompense to His enemies.

Ver. 7-14. Such was the doom of the wicked under the glance of the Lord. But these verses tell us that there is another scene of rapid action. For if the judgment, as of lightning, have removed the wicked, the presence of the Lord has adopted and filled Jerusalem, and seated her in her millennial place, as the mother of children on the right hand and on the left. For "the Lord is there." The new covenant is the mystic freewoman, or Sarah, the mother of the children, and it will have

its blood and its priest in these days of the kingdom at Jerusalem, when the wicked have been removed. Jesus, now hid in the heavens, in the Jerusalem above, is there ministering this new covenant, (Gal. 4) but then He will have come to Zion as the Deliverer, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob; and Zion will then be the mother, the Zion of the land of Israel, as the "Jerusalem above" is now the mother; and the ancient pain and penalty will be taken off. It will not be said to her, "in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children," but "as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." Because the Lord is there, in His own proper energy. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth, saith the Lord?" "I will come, and Sarah shall have a son." This explains to us this birth without the ancient penalty. And when she has thus brought forth her children, this mother will nurture and cherish them; she will satisfy them from her breasts, and nurse them on her knees; the children of the kingdom shall feed on the choice provisions of Zion, and then keep their holidays to the Lord delighting themselves with the abundance of her glory. All the people shall have the thoughts of children towards Zion. Zion shall be their center, and their source; and from the east and the west, the north and the south, their streams, and their glory, and their flocks shall ebb and flow there. And their "bones shall flourish like an herb," —they shall be, as it were, young again. For as sorrow makes the bones old, (Psa. 32,) joy, as it were makes them young. The lame shall dance, and the dumb shall sing, and the eye shall see out of obscurity. Their flesh shall come to them as the flesh of a little child after the leprosy, and the vigor of the preserved Israel shall be like the greenness or spring-time of the herb: it will be a season of resurrection to them.

Ver. 15-18. Again the prophet returns to the scene of judgment, in which he here lets us know that the Gentile nations will be involved together with the apostate Israel. All shall be gathered then as to "the valley of decision," where the Lord will display Himself in the glory of righteous, omnipotent, irresistible judgment. (See Joel 3)

Ver. 19, 20. But in the midst of this tremendous day of His anger on the nations, the prophet here intimates that the Lord will give some sign, at which, it may be, there will be repentance and return of heart, and then an escape out of this day of wrath. This is striking. This is a remnant from the nations brought to the Lord, as at the eleventh hour. Zechariah intimates the same thing. (xiv. 14.) Only Isaiah teaches the additional fact that this repentance has arisen from taking heed to some sign given by the Lord in the midst of that terrible day. And Zechariah tells us that this preserved Gentile people shall wait on the Lord's feast year by year, and Isaiah here tells us that they shall be engaged both in publishing the glory to their distant fellow Gentiles and aid in gathering home the still dispersed ones of Israel to Judah, then to be taken as ministers of the Lord's sanctuary in the holy mountain Jerusalem.

Ver. 22-24. In these closing verses the kingdom to which all the previous action was preparatory, is understood to have come, and the Lord looks at Israel, the nations, and the scene of the recent judgment. Israel He promises shall remain before Him as sure as the new heavens and the new earth, of which we know it will not be said, as of the present heavens and earth, that they shall pass away; all flesh around His Israel, He then graciously declares, shall hold their new moons and sabbaths to the Lord in Zion; and as they do so, they shall witness the end of transgressions in the undying worm and unquenchable fire of the Lord's righteous anger, as Sodom is set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. And of all this Zechariah is again another witness, for he in like manner talks of the horrible spectacle which judgment will in that day make

of the invaders of Jerusalem, and he also speaks of the nations from year to year holding their feast of tabernacles in Zion to the Lord. (xiv. 12, 16.)

## People and Land of Israel: Deuteronomy 32:8

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We are expressly told in Deut. 32:8, that when the Most High divided unto the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. God made Israel the center of his earthly government. The profane history of nations, in fact, centers round it. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, all contend for it, are known in connection with it, or actually get their full imperial possession and character at the time they acquired possession of it (i do not say, by gaining possession of it, but at the epoch at which they did). Clouds of dark traditions, scarce pierced by modern researches, hang over all the rest, and obscure their history, while they reveal their existence

In the neighborhood of Israel all is light. Prejudiced, ignorant, barbarous as they might have been, they possess and shed the light of their history on all the nations around them. It is preserved almost with modern accuracy, when a few fragments scarce rescue from entire oblivion other ancient histories. We must disentomb the remains of the Thebes and the Ninevehs to get at the history of their ancient monarchs, to know their dynasties, and say even if there were two Assyrian empires or one, while, by God's providence, that which gives some historic data to the glories of Mizraim and Asshur, confirms in its detail that of which we have already the minutest particulars in Israel's authentic history. We find in pictures yet fresh on the lore-covered walls of the country of the Pharaohs, the very kinds of overseers over the Jews making their bricks, of which Moses speaks in the book of Exodus. Modern research alone has given the place and importance to these countries which the scriptures had already assigned them.

## Jacob at Bethel

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THIS is full of beauty and meaning. Pollution cannot be allowed by one that is in the sense and joy of abounding grace. Gods and earrings, idols and vanities, are together buried under an oak of Shechem and left behind. The patriarch rises up with all that was his, and is quickly on the road to Bethel. He had kept the feast of unleavened bread in company with the Passover, as Israel afterward did in Egypt; but, like Israel too, he is at once, with staff in hand and shoe on foot, leaning his Egypt behind him. And the Lord accompanies him, as He did Israel in the day of their Exodus afterward, and accompanies in strength too; for, as the rod of Moses opened the way for Israel in the face of enemies, and He that was in the cloud looked out and troubled the host of Pharaoh, so now, we read of Jacob and his household; “they journeyed, and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.”

This is surely full of beauty and meaning, I may again say. There is mercy and blessing here, but there is humbling also. Israel had lost the power of God's name, and Jacob must now learn that he had lost the honor of his own name. But all shall be given back to him. “God Almighty,” and “Israel,” and “Bethel,” are revealed afresh at this moment of revival.

God must be worshipped as the God of salvation. To be sure He must, in such a world as this. Such worship is the only worship “in truth.” (John 4:23.) In Lev. 17 and in Deut. xii. the divine jealousy touching this is strongly expressed. It is as “Savior” He records His name in a scene of sin and death. As He says by His prophet, “there is no God else beside me, a just God and a Savior; there is none beside me.” (Isa. 45:21.) This is the revelation of Him; and on this, all worship is grounded. In this He records His name, and there is His house of praise. At Bethel, God has thus recorded His name, and there was His house, and there Jacob now brings his sacrifices. He raises his altar, and calls it, El-Bethel. With Jacob, that was the Tabernacle of the wilderness, or the Temple on Oman's threshing-floor. And this was infinitely acceptable, and God gave fervent and immediate witness of such acceptableness, for He appeared to him at once at the altar there and blessed him, and said, “Thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name; and he called his name Israel.

And God said unto him, I am God Almighty; be fruitful and multiply, a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; and the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him.

### JACOB IN EGYPT

We find Jacob in his own person and ways, very much the same widowed solitary man in Egypt, as we saw him to have been for years in Canaan ere he came out. Only it was thus, under very strong temptation to be otherwise; for he maintained his stranger-ship, though he now had opportunity to make the earth again the scene of his efforts and expectations. For we like reflected dignity. We know the charms of it full well. If nature were given its way, we would be making the

most of our parentage and connections, and set off before others our affiance with that which is honorable in our generation. Jacob, in Egypt, had some of the very best opportunities for indulging his heart in that way. His son was then the pride of that land. Joseph was the second man in the kingdom, and Joseph was Jacob's son. Here was a temptation to Jacob to come forth and show himself to the world. Joseph's father would have been an object. Would not all eyes be upon him? Would not place be given to him and way made for him, whenever or wherever he appeared? Nature would have said, if Jacob had such opportunities, let him show himself to the world. The spirit of the world must have suggested that, as long afterward to a greater than Jacob, who had no reflected glories to exhibit, but all personal glories, "If thou do these things, show thyself to the world." (See John 7:4.) But, in the spirit of one who, in his way, had overcome the world, Jacob continues a retired man through all his life of seventeen years in Egypt. He was a stranger where every human attraction joined in tempting him to be a citizen.

To me, I own, this is exquisite fruit of a chastened mind, fruit of divine discipline, the witness of a large participation of the holiness of God, the holiness that suited the calling that made Jacob a stranger and pilgrim on the earth. At Shechem he reminded us of Lot in Sodom, but here he reminds us of Abraham in his victory over all the offers of the king of Sodom.

But with this separation from the world, there is nothing of false humility. In the midst of all this practical stranger-ship, he knows and exercises his dignity under God. As he enters, and as he leaves the presence of king Pharaoh, (chap. 47.) he blesses him. This is to be observed. As he stood there in the royal presence, he owned himself a pilgrim on the earth, somewhat poor and weary too; but at his introduction and on his exit he blesses him, as one who knew what he was in the election and grace of God; for "without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better." This is not what old Simeon did when he had the infant of Bethlehem in his arms, but this is what old Jacob now does, when he has the greatest man on the earth before him. He made no requests of the king, though he might reasonably have expected whatever he asked. He was silent as to all that Pharaoh or Egypt would do for him, but he speaks as the better one blessing the less again and again. This was like the chained prisoner of Rome before the dignitaries and officers of Rome. Paul let Agrippa know, he let the Roman governor know, that he, their prisoner, carried and owned the good thing, and that he could wish no better wish for them all, than that they were as he was. And this is faith that glorifies grace—the proper business of faith—precious faith indeed, whether in a prisoner-apostle, or in an exile stranger-patriarch. Rome and Egypt have the wealth and power of the world, such as men will envy and praise, but Paul and Jacob carry a secret with them, that makes them speak another language.

All this shows us another Jacob, than what we once knew him to be. He is now partaker of God's holiness; his mind and character are in consistency with the call of God. He is a stranger with God in the earth, but in sure and certain hope of promised inheritance. This is fruitfulness; I say not that it is service; but it is beautiful fruitfulness in the inner man.

In chapter 48 which follows, we get that one act in his life which is signalized by the Spirit as the act of faith. (See Heb. 11:21.) But the whole chapter is beautiful. All is grace on God's part, and all is faith in the heart of Jacob. For it is the proper business and duty of faith, to accept the decisions of grace, and that is just what Jacob is doing here. Grace adopts the sons of Joseph, who had no title in the flesh, and takes them into the family of Abraham. Grace gives them the place and

portion of the firstborn, the double portion, as though they were Reuben and Simeon. Grace sets the younger of them above the elder. And grace gives Joseph, or the adopted first-born, an earnest of his coming inheritance. To all this Jacob bows and is obedient. In faith he accepts the decisions of grace. Nature may resent this; but Jacob is true to the word of grace committed to him. Joseph was moved when Jacob was setting Ephraim above Manasseh Jacob feels for him; but he fulfills the word of God committed to him, let nature be surprised or wounded as it may. He does not listen to nature in his son Joseph, as he had listened to it on a like occasion, years and years ago, in his mother Rebecca.

Surely this is beautiful; faith thus accepting the decisions of grace. But in this Jacob was also God's oracle. He was not only in faith obedient to the purpose or counsel of grace, but he was used of God as a vessel of His house, used to declare His mind, to represent and act His purposes, in these mysteries of grace, the adoption, the inheritance, and the earnest.

## Jacob: Review

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Jacob.— “By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the Sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.” (Heb. 11:21.) (London: J. B. Bateman, Ivy Lane, Paternoster Row. 1857.)

This, as will be felt is the natural successor to the little book on “Isaac,” brought before the readers of our last Volume. It especially dwells on Genesis xxvii. - xxxvi.; after which chapter, Joseph becomes the principle figure. The leading thought which the author first developes is, that as in Abraham election, and in Isaac sonship, so in Jacob discipline is the prominent thought. “And upon this let me observe,” says the author, “that in all circumstances there are two objects, and that nature eyes the one and faith the other. Thus, in divine discipline, such as Jacob was now experiencing, there is the rod, and also the hand that is using it. Nature regards the first, faith recognizes the second. Job, in his day, broke down under the rod, because he concerned himself with it alone. Had he eyed the counsel, the heart, or the hand that was appointing it, (as we are exhorted to do, Mic. 6:9.) he would have stood. But nature prevailed in him, and he kept his eye upon the rod, and it was too much for him.

“So in failures, as well as in circumstances, there are two objects. Conscience has its object, and faith again has its object. But conscience is not to be allowed to rob faith of its treasures, the treasures of restoring pardoning grace, which the love of God in Christ has stored up for it.

“There is great comfort in this. Nature is not to be over-busy with circumstances, nor conscience with failures. Nature is to feel that no affliction is for the present joyous, and conscience or heart may be broken; but in either ease, faith is to be at its post and do its duty; and much of the gracious energy of the Spirit in the epistles is engaged in putting faith at its post, and encouraging it to do its duty. The apostle, under the Holy Ghost, takes knowledge of the danger and temptation we are under by nature; and while it is abundantly enforced that conscience is to be quick and jealous, yet it is required that faith shall maintain itself in the very face of it.”

“Prattler, no more, I say;

My thoughts must work; but like a noiseless sphere,

Harmonious peace must rock them all the day.”

“To know God in grace is His praise and our joy, We naturally, or according to the instincts of a tainted nature, think of him as one that exacts obedience and looks for service. But faith knows him as one that communicates, that speaks to us of privileges, of the liberty and the blessing of our relationship to Him.

2. Five Letters on Worship and Ministry in the Spirit. (London: George Morrish, 24 Warwick Lane, Paternoster Row. W. H. Broom, 112 Pentonville Road.)

It is with great pleasure that we recommend to our readers this plain, sound, and seasonable tract. The letters were bona fide communications from the author to Christians, in whose midst he had been laboring, and whose help, and profit, and continued blessing, he was seeking thus to promote. It seems from the preface that some alterations have been made. here and there, but the letters still carry with them their original tone of affectionate interest, such as could hardly be in papers written with a view to publication. This will not detract from their worth in the eyes of most Christians. The general heads are, 1, God present in the assembly; 2, The Church edified by gifts; 3, How to distinguish the guidance of the Spirit, negative marks: 4, Do., positive marks; and 5, Miscellaneous observations on the mutual dependence of saints in meetings for mutual edification, and on other subjects. It will be seen that the aim is eminently practical.

## The Law

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That the will of God, where it is expressed in the word, ought to govern the Christian, every soul truly converted will own. But the word of God is wiser than man; never does it set the Christian under the law since the death of Jesus. It was a schoolmaster until Christ. The word speaks of commandments; they are dear and precious, and are not painful to the living Christian. But it never places the Christian under the law; I repeat, the word comes from a God who knows the heart of man, and who knows what is necessary for Him, and what is injurious to Him or impossible. He has employed the law to convince him of sin. The law, says the word expressly, is not for the righteous man; men say that it is. I believe the word, the wisdom of my God more than men. I believe that He can guard holiness, without which none shall see Him, better than human wisdom can. He knows, and the man who is taught of Him, and is familiar with his own heart, knows that the law—all law—is a ministry of death and condemnation, and that it could not be anything else. He knows that if man is set, in any measure whatever, under a law, you must either condemn him or enfeeble the obligation of the law. In a word, men do not understand the mind of God about the law. They speak vaguely of the notion of obligation of law, of being bound by the law. But if they are bound by the law, assuredly even Christians have not kept it in fact, though their new nature loves it, and love is the accomplishing of it. Now, if they have not kept it, and yet are bound by it, they are condemned; the law drives them, even as Christians, from the presence of God. If you are bound by the law, and have failed in your obligation—which is just the truth, either the obligation must be weakened and destroyed, or you must perish. The only obligation which the law knows is to keep it or be lost—nothing else. The law knows nothing of grace, and it ought to know nothing of it. You, Christian, have not kept the law. Are you under the obligation of doing so? In order to escape, the obligation must be blotted out. Such is the inconsistent conclusion of those who could place Christians in subjection. We know that the law is good if a man use it lawfully: they desire to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

Faith and the grace of God alone maintain the authority of the law—and for this reason: I own myself lost if I am under the law, and I see that Christ has undergone its curse, and has placed me in a new position which re-unites two things; perfect righteousness before God, because it is the righteousness of God, accomplished in Christ; and life, the participation in the divine nature, according to the power of resurrection. I cannot have the two husbands, the two obligations, at the same time—the law and Christ. In Christ I am dead. Now the law has authority, and binds as long as we live; but being dead (because Christ is dead for me) I am delivered from the law, in order that I should belong to another—such is the positive language of the word—to Him who is raised from the dead, that I should bring forth fruit unto God. If you are bound by the law, the law will maintain its authority and this obligation with rigor; it ought to do this, and it will condemn you as sure as you are a sinner. If I am dead, it has no more authority over me, for it does not pass over that barrier. I belong to another. I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. Christ was under the law while he lived; risen, He is no longer so. Now the commandments, whether we say of God or of Christ,

have another character for the Christian. All that Christ has said, all His apostles have said, all the things in which the Old Testament enlightens us upon His will, direct and govern the life that we already possess, and have the authority of the word of God, that is, of God Himself over our soul. I have the life; the words of Christ, His commandments, (and that which is found elsewhere in the word of the same character, is the same in principle) are the expression of this life in Him, its fruits in all respects, according to the perfection and the will of God Himself, and the direction of this life in me. I walk, following them according to the thoughts of God and His will; it is the law of liberty, because I possess already the life, the perfection, of which it lays down; and being the expression of the will of God, it is also of obedience. But if you return to the law, you return to death and condemnation. The law does not give life, nor does it give strength for holiness, any more than it justifies. If people felt what the law is, they would feel that upon that ground they are lost, because the law has not lost its strength, and it is always and everywhere (for man) a ministry of condemnation and death. Not that we would make such a thing a reproach; for many dear souls are found under the law-not, of course according to God's will, but through their own want of faith, and through bad teaching.

But the New Testament speaks to us of the law as a thing from which we are delivered. It tells us that the law has dominion as long as we live, but that we are dead and cannot have two husbands at once, the law and Christ; that is, that we cannot be bound, in two ways, to two objects. The apostle expresses himself thus: "to them that are under law, as under law, while I myself am not under law, [a most important clause left out in the common text,] that I might gain them that are under law: to them that are without law, as without law, being not without law to God, but ■ννομος Χριστω, i.e. subject, or bound by obedience, to Christ." We cannot be too watchful for holiness; we are sanctified unto obedience. The independence of the will is the principle of sin; but the law is not the means of arriving at holiness. It does not give a new will, nor strength when we have one. The New Testament always speaks of it as a means of death, condemnation, and weakness. Those who are of (or on the principle of) the works of the law, (and these are not bad but good,) are under the curse (Gal. 3). It is not for a righteous man,- ■δικαι■ ■ν■ ■μος ο'ν ■κα■ ■παι nothing more absolute. It is to ignore what the heart of man is to suppose that he can be under a law coming from God, and live.

The word of God is clear as the day. and it is evident to him that understands what man is, that, unless one be condemned, there is no such thing as having to do with the law without weakening its obligation. Grace alone maintains its authority, If I put myself under a mixture of law and grace, I ought to beseech God (like the people with Moses) to hide from me His glory as an unbearable thing; whereas, when I see it in Christ, by the ministry of righteousness and the Spirit, I can contemplate this glory with unveiled face, and be changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

## Life in the Son

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### John 5

THE main subject in the Gospel of John is life. "The Word was with God, and the Word was God. In him was life, and the life was the light of men." The first Epistle of John gives just the same thing—"the word of life," and life given in atonement—but the main subject is life. Christ gives life on the ground of forgiveness, and then comes the power of righteousness. Abraham walked with God, in wonderful elevation of character; but the full question of righteousness had not been raised: it was not brought to light, because the way into the holiest was not yet made known. There was a righteousness which was owned, whilst he that sinned with a high hand was cut off. But there was not then the presence and power of the Spirit witnessing to, and acting on, eternal life, which could lead inside the veil, and give a new and accomplished righteousness, such as God has complacency in and could accept. All then was outside the veil, but there can be no outside now, for the veil is rent. I cannot stand before God now, on the ground of the past. When the way of righteousness was not fully known it was, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect" The whole question of what man is had not been tried, nor was his utter inability and helplessness understood. But it is a different thing now altogether, for it has been seen that man has not power to avail himself of the very remedy that could deliver him. Life is given to him, and righteousness has been wrought out for him, and grace gives the power of faith, which can lay hold of it. There was the promised seed for Abraham—the true Isaac which his faith could lay hold of. To us there is accomplishment and not promise only. The law held out life on obedience; but it did not give power: indeed, that was just what it did not. "If ye will obey, then ye shall be," &c. (Ex. 19:5). The Israelites in their foolishness take upon themselves to work for that which had been unconditionally promised to the fathers, and immediately make the golden calf. The law is bold in its requirements, but it never pretends to give strength; so that the very need makes that which the law could do unavailable. It is like the Bethesda pool to the helpless man If I am searching within to know if I have done what the law demands, I shall find not only that I am without power to meet its claims, but that the very link is broken on which I could have had the slightest hope of getting help through it. My heart can get no comfort until I see that there is power to be had in some other way, for I have no strength to keep the law, and consequently I have no hope of getting life and righteousness under its principles. And it is just when I come to this that I learn Christ is the only One who can meet my need, for in Him I have both the remedy and the power that can use it. If I am trying to resist evil, that cannot comfort me; but I have comfort in the knowledge that Christ has life and righteousness for me. Strength for my need is found in looking at an object outside myself. If I look within, I only see that which will distress, perplex, and condemn me, but if I look to Christ I get rest and peace, for He is both life and righteousness. The more I know of Christ, the more I shall be judging myself, it is true—the more desiring to apprehend that for which I am apprehended. But as there will be a knowledge of God's righteousness, so there will not be the going about to establish a righteousness of one's own, which must always raise the question as to its being my ground of standing before God. Christ is all I need, and the heart that is true to Him will not look at

its own deeds of righteousness, but at Him who gives alike life and righteousness. In myself I see only sin, and evil, and all sorts of disorder. Now God requires holiness. Dare I look to what I am? No; but at Christ. "In him was life and the life was the light of men." The Lord Jesus Christ in passing through this world was the expression of perfect love and holiness. There was in Him all that law-nay, all that God—could demand.

Now what can I say for myself? Outward sins, in their gross form, may not trouble or distress me; but there is another thing; have I communion with Christ? with God's righteousness? Is there in me constant, unmingled love to God, as the one spring and motive of all my actions before Him? You know there is not. Self, alas! in its varied shapes, is but too generally your object. Is it not? Self-pleasing, self exalting, self-advancing are ever the principles of men's actions-of men as they are. It is self present or self future with which he is occupied. In the blessed Lord there was the total absence of all selfishness: there was true devotedness of heart, and affection, and service, without the smallest particle of self-seeking. The believer gets the benefit of His holy walk and testimony, and his own selfishness is overcome by the grace he sees in Him. The very thing man so much covets, there was the perfect absence of in Him "I receive not honor from man." Now what is the spring, and stimulus, and motive of almost every action? What is it that makes man-perhaps you-strive to be amiable, and pleasing, and agreeable? Is it not that you may "receive honor one of another?" And yet of such the Word says, "I know you that you have not the love of God in you." Man's acts begin and end in one continued effort to elevate self, instead of which there must be the death of self. It is no use to be striving to mend and improve self, for self must die. Death has to be written upon all the actions, and efforts, and motives of man: he must learn his entire helplessness and the utter uselessness of every remedy; for his very need deprives him of the power of using the remedy. "There is no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool."

We are a long time learning that there is no power in man—that the spirit of his nature and the very principles of his heart are but sin. Even when we are brought to this as regards the past, and have to own that as yet all has been evil, we do not give up the hope of being better in the future, and so acquire a righteousness this way. It comes to one thing. I failed as to yesterday, but I may improve for to-morrow. I have not reached this yet, that I must appear before God to day, bad as I am just as I am, in all my selfishness and sinfulness. We may be humble enough too in a way and say, "I am in a bad plight;" but where there is a question of debt, there is always a talking about to-morrow. But this putting off until to-morrow will not make my position any better. I cannot appear in the presence of God without holiness; my conscience must be made clear. Where can I look for help? I do not desire that the holiness of God should be lessened; yet I have no power in myself to meet it. What is to become of me?

The Lord Jesus Christ said to the impotent man, which had an infirmity for thirty and eight years, "Rise, take up thy bed and walk." It was God's power, not man's, and in the using of this power man gets the blessing., The grace of God puts the strength in him, "and immediately the man was made whole."

On Christ hangs all. He both provides the blessing and gives power to use it. He gives life. "The Son quickeneth whom he will. "From His own word we learn the wondrous truth, that He is become our life: for as we have partaken of the nature and fall of the first Adam and got the sentence of

death through him, so do we get life by Jesus Christ. Life is come down from heaven, and if I am resting in faith on this, it is mine. There may be self-judging, but my conscience will be at rest. I have seen this power of Christ on earth. "Take up thy bed and walk; and immediately the man was made whole." There was no need of the pool—there was the life-giving presence of Christ. He had power to heal without the water. In Him was grace, strength, love, sympathy, and all the poor man could require. The helplessness of the man made him the very object for Christ to strengthen; his need was that which called forth the Lord's help. This is the place in which He met us. "When we were without strength, Christ died for us." He has made full atonement for sin. He, "when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." We are "quicken together with him." When I see Christ before God, I know that my sin is all put away, and that I have life in Him, I have life in the Son, and not in the creature. My sin is all gone, for Christ is up there at God's right hand, and He has not got the sin with Him. If I am hunting out life in myself, I must break off with Christ.

Eternal life is never said to be in us: we have it; but it is in Christ; and the standard is kept up in my soul by looking at Him. (2 Cor. 3:18,) God has been perfectly glorified in the putting away of my sins; and I have got eternal life, for I have got the Son. If I have not the Son of God, I am yet in my sins. But the moment I see Christ risen and in heaven, I cannot but know that my sins are all gone, and I have life and righteousness, and He is the standard of both. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation [or rather, judgment]; but is passed from death unto life." It is written that we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. Does this thought distress me? He "quickeneth whom he will." Do you think He is going to judge those He has given life to? Is He going to judge Himself? No, the thought is monstrous. What power can be found to judge me? Great confusion arises in the mind from mixing up the resurrection of life with the resurrection of judgment. Christ will execute judgment because "He is the Son of man." (Every knee shall bow before Him. He shall get glory from every creature. Is He going to judge what He has already glorified? We shall appear, we shall be manifested, before the judgment-seat of Christ, it is true; but it will be to receive from Him, for we shall be with Him in the glory before we get there. We are one with Him who is to judge. We shall have our glorified bodies then. "This mortal shall have put on immortality." This vile body shall be changed and fashioned like unto His glorious body. It shall have what my soul has already got. Christ bore my sins, and is He going to judge what He has put away? "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life." It is he that submits, "he that hears," he that owns himself to be without strength, dead altogether as to hope or help from self. If I am brought into such a place before God as to listen to Christ and receive from Him, then have I life. "He that heareth my word... shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life." If my soul has bowed to Christ—if I have listened to Him—if I have learned from Him, owning that I was lost—then have I a portion in life which settles every question of judgment. "He that heareth my word," &c. This is the very way I have learned that I am lost, and it is just come to this—I must either take my place with those who have the real life, and shall not come into judgment, or with those who will be in the resurrection of judgment, because I am rejecting Christ. I am a vile sinner, but I do believe the Father sent the Son; and this settles every question of my guilt. Am I mixing up the resurrection of life with that of judgment, so that the thought of judgment is still distressing me? God has committed all judgment unto the Son. Will He judge what He has quickened into life? Most assuredly He will not. Shall I

find some other God to judge me? The thought would be blasphemy. The word is particularly clear; but we, in confusing the two, lose the comfort of their meaning. "They that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment." (ver. 29.) Well, if we have heard His word and believed on Him that sent Christ, we have eternal life. "You hath he quickened who were dead." We have that perfect, blessed holiness that can stand before God. Believing on Him, I have got a life in which I have the blessed certainty that I shall not come into judgment. I have got eternal life. I have passed from death unto life. I was dead, but I am raised, as to my soul, by the power of God. I have got Christ. He has made me whole. He has given me both life and righteousness. As regards my present position, I am emptied out of myself into Him He redeemed Inc. He died for me. There is a judgment, sure and inevitable for man; but it is altogether outside this eternal life. I must be in the one place or the other; either raised in the resurrection of life, or in that of judgment. I cannot have a portion in both. This vile body shall be changed like unto His glorious body. The full power of life will then be upon my body, as it is now in my soul. God must vindicate His holiness. This he did upon the cross; but the cross, while it showed out, did not procure His love. Who sent the Son? Sin was put away by putting God's Son in the sinner's place; but His love was not created by the cross. His holiness was vindicated therein, but we make a great mistake if we suppose His love commenced at the cross. "God so loved the world that he gave his Son." "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." And we have life in Him. He "bare our sins in his own body on the tree." It is no question of what I shall be to-morrow, but of what I am, or rather what Christ is to me to-day. May the Lord give us to be humble, remembering the love that made Him sin who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him!

## The Facts of the Lord's Resurrection in Their Relative Order

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Each gospel has only a selection or summary connected with its own immediate subject. Thus, in Matthew, no interview of our Lord with His apostles is mentioned, but on the mountain in Galilee where a specific commission is given. Now, we know from the Acts that He was seen of them forty days, and conversed on the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. John gives His meeting with the apostles on two successive Lord's days, not to speak of the subsequent scene at the sea of Tiberias. 1 Cor. 15 relates several distinct appearances of the risen Savior, in one of which He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once.

All this shows how entirely these accounts are matters of inspiration, and not merely the memory aided or directed by the Holy Ghost: the things which, in such a case, Matthew, for instance, must have recollected, and might naturally have been expected to record, he does not, but simply gives (or rather the Spirit by him), what was suitable to the special aim of his gospel. Not a hint is dropped of those meetings with the apostles in Jerusalem, though Matthew beyond doubt was there. But the Spirit led him purposely to omit all notice of Jerusalem, and of the Lord's visits there after the resurrection. His business was to show the Lord in His accustomed place with the disciples, only widening their mission from the lost sheep of Israel to all the nations, in virtue of the universal power given to Him, the risen Son of man, and the name of God now fully revealed according to the dispensation which superseded Judaism. The scene of the ascension is also omitted there. A similar principle applies to the three other accounts.

Comparing the gospels, we find, first, that the disciples were all in great perplexity. They had no idea of resurrection. So John expressly tells us; and this same thing appears in the avowal of the two on the road to Emmaus. "Yea, and certain women, also, of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulcher, and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain," &c. Though some of the particular circumstances, or facts, were credited by individuals, there was no understanding of the great truth. Then we learn that Mary Magdalene, the other Mary, and Solome, if not more, came to the sepulcher with spices. These found the stone rolled away. Mary Magdalene runs and tells Peter and John of the empty tomb, and they hastening, found it so, and went away again. to their own home. The women go in, and the angel or angels address them, announcing His resurrection according to His own word. At this moment, as at the former, Mary Magdalene seems to have been alone outside, weeping, when the angels addressed her: then, turning round, she sees and converses with Jesus Himself, receiving a special message to the disciples. Jesus met all the women subsequently, and gave them a general message to the disciples. They had fled away affrighted before, and said nothing; reassured now, they told all. It appears that Mary Magdalene went off as soon as she saw the stone rolled away, and had then seen nothing of the angels; and that as the women went in fear to tell the disciples what the angel said the Lord met them, and added His personal testimony to that of the angels". From Mark we learn that He was first seen of Mary Magdalene. From Matthew we gather that, soon after, He met the women on their way to the disciples, In Luke 24:10, Mary Magdalene is united in a common general

statement with the other women—no unfrequent thing both in Matthew and Luke. In verse 12 the authorized version might mislead. “Then went Peter,” &c. It is not τ■τε, an adverb of time, but δ■, a conjunctive particle used to mark opposition or mere transition. In the course of that day, the Lord appeared to Simon Peter, also to the disciples journeying to Emmaus. When these two got back that night, they found the disciples occupied with the Lord's appearing to Peter. But there was much incredulity in their minds, though such a testimony seems to have had much influence on them. But there was not real faith in the matter. -Then came the statement of there turned disciples, but, as Mark lets us know, “neither believed they them.” While thus gathered and speaking, Jesus Himself appeared. They were, or had been, at supper—at least the eleven. Even then, till He eat, they believed not for joy.

Of the remaining facts I need not speak, as their course is plain. But it seemed desirable to give an historical outline as it appears to me, where many find difficulties.

## The Love of Christ and the Experience That Flows From It

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Eph. 5

THERE are two points seen distinctly in our salvation and in the ways of God. The first is God bringing His thoughts to pass about us in grace; the second is the dealings of God with us so as to bring our souls into the full enjoyment of both the source and effects of all His thoughts. And I am sure we ought to take heed to the difference of those two things, if we are to walk wisely as Christians. We need to hold both distinctly -God accomplishing His thoughts about us in grace, and His dealings with us to bring us into the enjoyment of them. The first is as sure, settled, and steadfast as God Himself is, because "hath He spoken, and will He not do it?" But the other is His work also, and it is a process that must be carried on in our souls. For God never can depart from what He is. None of His counsels can deny His nature; His nature is holy, and He must have us holy; His nature is love, and He must have us love. He cannot have us to enjoy Himself, which is His purpose in grace, in a different way to what His nature is. What man got in the fall is the knowledge of good and evil. That must be wrought up in our hearts, if I may so say, to the measure and thoughts of God. It is there that all kinds of exercises come in, discipline if needed, sifting processes, &c., which go on in people's hearts.

If it is a question of the accomplishment of God's thoughts, He brings them about. He has called us, and when the time comes He will glorify us, as it is said, "Whom He called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." So we find here, "Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it that he might present it unto himself a glorious Church, not having spot nor wrinkle," &c. But then there is this other thing which our hearts have to notice; (and it is all grace:) but we are brought—our minds and souls are brought—to enjoy God. Now we must all be conscious how often, either positively or negatively, our souls are short of enjoying Him. Sometimes we enjoy something else, or our hearts are dull and cold with God. But we must not confound in our hearts the full certainty of salvation through God's work, and the actual enjoyment we have of it; nor, on the other hand, by shortness of enjoyment, dim or cloud the certainty of His work. Our foolish hearts are apt to do both. But if we look at the truth—the word of God, I see as to ale first that it is all quite settled. The apostle can even speak of it as a thing past. "Whom he justified, them he also glorified." I am perfect in Christ. But then still the knowledge of good and evil is there, in our hearts—alas! sadly dimmed, but still that is what we have got. I am brought into that condition, so that, if my heart is not according to the light I am brought into, I get the consciousness of it at once. There might be a person going on outwardly well for years, and yet all that time he is not brought into the light of God.

As to the first of these points, it is important to look at it as all settled. While our souls are exercised and have got perhaps under law, we cannot understand that. We are looking at our own responsibilities and are not thoroughly brought down and emptied of self. We have not got real faith that the first Adam never has reached God and never will. These are exercises of the heart short of the full knowledge of redemption. But when I have understood that our whole condition as

children of the first Adam is a rejected one—that all are sinners, and that sin cannot get into the presence of God—when that is wrought, I look to another thing. I see in a sense that that responsibility is over—that I am entirely lost. Through grace Christ takes my place and I get into another position altogether. I am a new creature in Christ Jesus. That is not speaking of my practical condition, but of the place that I have got into in Christ. Not one single bit of the old nature can come in there. And this is as true of the life I received from God as it is of redemption—“that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us.” Of course when the glory comes, there will be no difficulty in saying, it is entirely of God. All is perfect and settled, whether I look at the individual saint or the Church of God as a whole. He has loved it and given Himself for it. So again when I look at all that has to be done “that he might sanctify and cleanse it,” &c. He takes God's word and cleanses it, and then presents it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing. Just as God in the garden of Eden presented Eve to Adam, so Christ will present the Church to Himself, a glorious Church and faultless. All that is blessedly certain; and if received as a divine truth and mixed with faith in our hearts, we become thoroughly clear before God as to the new ground we have got; and no question remains whatever, because it is a question of the efficacy of God's work. It is a settled thing for my soul that, looked at in Adam as a sinner, I am utterly rejected, and that it is a question now of whether Christ has done His work well. I have done my work which virtually sent me to hell; and now it hangs upon God's work, which of course is perfect.

The more one looks into it, the more there really is a deep sense of its perfectness. I see the perfect love that is the source of it all—infinite, unspeakable love, a love which God's very nature, and being, and purpose about us too express. When I look at the way it is accomplished, I get the perfectness of Christ's work, the absoluteness of His obedience in giving Himself up entirely. He gave Himself for us altogether, not merely His life, but Himself. He “hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God,” &c. The more I study it, the more I see the intrinsic blessedness of it and the delight that God takes in it. It is a “sweet smelling savor to God.” We cannot see it too completely in God's hands. Christ “loved the Church and gave himself for it;” that is the first thing. And then He sets about, after He has got it and made it His own, to sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. It is according to His own mind that He does it, and then He presents it to Himself a glorious Church.

Now the effect is, to put us into the light, as God is in the light—into that light which makes all things manifest. It is the fullest and completest work, in effect redeeming us from all iniquity. I need my conscience to be brought into the presence of God according to His own delight in what is blessed. There is no evil there, and we are made light. This is just as completely true as the redemption is perfect. “Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.” Not merely you were in the dark, but you were darkness; but now you are light, and not merely in the light. My nature, as born of God, exactly answers to what God is.

But now I come to another thing. I have a nature capable of enjoying God and being in the light. Yes. But—what is this knowledge of good and evil? What place am I brought into by that knowledge? I am brought into the light and I am light. And when these two things come together—when this divine nature in me and the perfectness of the divine nature in itself come together, practically and consciously—what comes of our judgment of all other things? It is then that the knowledge of good and evil takes its true, and full character.

When we as light come into the light as God is in the light, having a nature capable of resting in it, in the power of this, all in my heart becomes judged according to God. How can I enjoy this light? How enjoy God in fact? It is not a question here of salvation and peace, because it supposes you are in the light of God, i. e., brought to God. My new nature takes cognizance of all that is not of God, and I say, What is this? I get my conscience occupied with all these things and in the presence of God. Here exercises come in for the Christian, on the very foundation of salvation. The very thing that gives the judgment of evil in his heart is that he has got to God, and that there, in His presence, he gets the rich estimate of everything. It is not absolutely perfect of course; but he gets the just estimate, according to the decree in which he knows God, of what he is himself. All these exercises may go on, either gently or painfully; but there must be a bringing up in our souls—a dealing with good and evil, according to God's estimate of it.

This is founded on grace. I never should be able to think about good and evil on my part, and to walk according to such an estimate, except as knowing that Christ suffered, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. And here is the practical importance of the fullest clearness as to salvation. You will never see a person safe against the corruptions of Christianity where that full assurance is not known in his soul. If I am not brought to God, I must get something in the shape of a mediator between me and God. But Christ has brought us to God. And this assurance of salvation really is a part of Christianity; because what Christ has done, in suffering, the Just for the unjust, is to bring us to God. But if I am looking for anybody or any ordinance, as something that is to carry on anything between me and God, I am not brought to God. As regards my walk here, I do not want these supplies of grace; but if I want anything, as keeping up my condition with God, I am not brought to God. That was the principle of the Jewish system. There was the holy place, and there was the holiest into which the way was not then opened. The principle of all priesthood supposes that the man has not got to God Himself. He cannot go himself and he will be glad to get some one to go for him; whereas, as a believer now, I do not want even Christ to go for me, because He is there already. Thus assurance of salvation is connected with Christ, and, in one sense, it is the very essence of it; because we are brought into the presence of God, and the effect of that, in our new nature, the divine nature that is in us being in God's presence, it is to make us judge, about good and evil. His presence makes us judge it, just because we are there and have a title to enjoy everything that is there. If a man is walking with God, he has the light of God upon his path—no part is dark. And this is what St. Luke himself tell us. "The light of the body is the eye; therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light," &c. "Awake, thou that sleepest and Christ shall give thee light." Paul speaks there of a real Christian that has got asleep. You get this perfection of Christ as the light of your path. But then you are gone to sleep. You are not dead really as to your condition before God, but you are walking like a dead man You must awake and arise from among these dead people, and you will have this perfect light of Christ. But supposing I have been asleep, and I wake up and find myself to have been walking among the dead, What is the effect of this light? It is to bring in the light of God upon the conscience, perhaps to the extent of clouding all joy or even for the moment causing me to doubt of salvation. But the exercises of the soul that is holding fast the certainty of salvation, founded upon the word of God, (which is the real starting point of the Christian, and in virtue in which it is that he gets any exercises of soul,) flows from this—that he looks at the inward state of his soul and sees that it ought to be up to that full character of the presence of God in which we are placed. It is there that our daily exercise go on. God has brought us to Himself—brought us all to Himself, because that is the every position of

the Christian. We may be passing through the world with different degrees of knowledge and acquaintance with Christ and the power of communion, but as far as His work goes, we are brought to God. The conscience has nothing inconsistent with that light. Brought to God, as certainly as if we were in heaven, the effect is, as we are not really in heaven, to bring all our thoughts and ways into the light.

How far are we, from day to day and from hour to hour, walking where we are set We walk in the light as God is in the light; that is, we are brought to God, who is slight, and then it is a question of degree of realization. Are you walking according to the light, as God is in the light? That is another question, and it is where practical exercise of soul comes in, founded on salvation, whether from day to day and hour to hour, I am not looking on the things which are seen, and temporal, rather than on the things which are not seen and are eternal. His word is that which is the revelation of all that is not seen, but alone real and enduring. All the rest will perish—every thought of our hearts. Nothing but the word of the Lord abides forever.

You will find, when speaking of Christ's work which He carries on, Paul speaks of sanctifying and cleansing the Church. He is bringing it up towards this light that He may present to Himself a glorious Church, etc. That is, in virtue of God's having brought us to Himself, we start from Him to pass through the world, with a divine nature and the knowledge of God according to that divine nature that is in us, and to judge everything that is in the world by that light. As it is said in 1 Cor. 2, "He that is spiritual judgeth all things."

How does he judge all things? It is not his own judgment. It is by that light which maketh all manifest.

Whatever the will of God allows as a path in the world, He gives light for it in His word. He shows us a path and He gives the light for it, if I am walking in the light. The question is, whether the path in which I am walking and my ways hinder or are the effect of my communion with God?—whether they are in the light? Does my path in every-day life come from the light, and is it guided by it? Does it flow from, and is it the effect of, my new nature being in communion with the divine nature—with God? That is the question. If not, it has not glorified God. I may not have sinned outwardly or done anything positively wrong; but so far I am asleep. I am not thinking about it, and it dulls the spiritual sense. But when I awake, I find out that I am away from God, and all is disturbance with my spirit. I cannot see God clearly. The practical enjoyment of God by the new nature is interrupted by the workings of the old, so that the things of God and God Himself have got out of sight, and I am not quite sure where I can get hold of them. All will be bright where it is with God. There will be trials, and trials with God are perhaps the brightest spots in any man's life. If not, the soul's condition of enjoying God has got injured. When it cannot enjoy God, what a disturbed state it gets into! God is perfect love, I say, but I cannot enjoy it, if it is not a positive uncertainty as to His love. I am sure of the sun while it is raining, but still I say, What terrible weather we have!—there is not a bit of sunshine God will never make us doubt about His love, but He will make us feel the loss of it. He will bring us into the conscious sense of the loss of His love. He may make us find out some positive wrong thing that has done it, or a slothful state of soul in not acting in the light. But He loves us too well to let us go on, without finding it out sooner or later. God is perfect in His grace, and He deals with us so that if a person is walking with God, we shall find weakness, but we are with Him about it directly. But where there is a failure in walking up to

the light, where it is anything habitually wrong, there the soul gets away, not from the knowledge that God loves it, but it goes on asleep, and, when it wakes up, as it does through mercy, it finds perhaps darkness as to everything—certainly as to the enjoyment of God. It is there where the exercises of soul come in and the need of constant watching unto prayer. If it be not so, there will be the loss of the enjoyment of divine love; and when we get back into the presence of Him that loves us, that is the very time we get distressed and miserable.

But then we have that second part of Christ's work on the other hand, which is in constant exercise towards us—not His finished work of redemption. In the very verses before us, the first part looks at His finished work, and the second at His carrying on the work till He presents us in glory. "He loved the Church and gave himself for it that he might sanctify and cleanse it," &c. That cleansing is still His work, to bring us up to the level of what God is; and then what is connected with it? "That he might present it to himself a glorious Church," &c. It is that work which He carries on perfectly to the end. But there is another thing and that He adds in the 29th. verse: "No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." Here I get the daily care of grace: the priesthood of Christ comes in. And it is of all importance that there should not be insensibility to it. The walk not being in the light makes us to have less intimacy with His daily care over us. That is going on constantly. A man takes care to do all for his wife as he would for Himself; so does Christ to the Church. He nourishes and cherishes it. And our faith, if we are walking with God, can look for that for the Church, in spite of everything. He nourishes and cherishes it through all and spite of all, as a man does his own wife. We may speak of the ruin of the Church, but Christ is faithful. You never can touch that—never can touch the fact for faith that Christ always nourishes and cherishes the Church as a man does his own wife. He never ceases to do it. And it is our privilege to go along with Christ, to be associated with Christ in caring for the Church. But in caring for it I may cast over all that very consciousness that He nourishes and cherishes it. There is the continual exercise of faith in communion with God. We can count upon Christ actively. If I love the Church and the saints rightly, I shall have the consciousness of Christ's love to them and sympathy with Him in it. I shall have it, and my heart in its love toward the saints will be reckoning always upon Christ's love towards them, and so making it active. But we have this comfort, even where we fail—He restores us, He intercedes for us. He is either maintaining or bringing the soul, which has got away, back into the full enjoyment of the sunshine of God's perfect light. Only remember this, that it will always be wrought in the conscience and in the affections. I grant His love will attract us. He will tell me of His love and make me find out, by recalling it, that I neglected it. It gets into the conscience, and then comes exercise of heart in order that the divine life should be perfectly unclouded upon my soul. And when I can give thanks for everything; I can glory even in infirmities. The Apostle Paul himself besought the Lord that the thorn in the flesh should be taken away. But the moment he got the clue of divine love working in it, he said, I would not have it gone for the world. He glories in his infirmities that the power of Christ might rest upon him. Christ's every-day care over us and the exercise of His love reveal that love and bring the heart back to it. But all this is carried on in the conscience. The conscience gets exercised, and then the heart returns into the unclouded brightness of God's face, where we see everything is ours—life, death, things present and to come. This is founded upon this blessed truth that we are brought to God, that the very meaning of salvation is that we are brought to God and have a nature which comes from God enjoys God. The Holy Ghost has the power to keep up the communion and we are walking in the light.

How far has my soul been walking thus in the presence of God? Enoch walked with God and God took him. Only let us remember that the life of Christ has been given to us and that we are in the light, as God is in the light. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the holy Ghost given unto us. How far are our lives going on in this grace? God always has the state of the heart in His mind. He has various ways of dealing with the individual soul as He has with His Church. But it is wondrous to see that God is every moment thinking of us—how to bring us up to the full enjoyment of His love.

The Lord give us to know the perfectness of that love. And then, while in the world where everything is passing and where evil has come in and produced all kinds of confusion, there is a sense of divine grace, that if the sin had come in, grace has come in. The Lord give us to walk in the consciousness that we are brought into that, and then we may seek to enjoy it in communion. It must be by faith and not by sight. We cannot see these things but there is a divine work always going on. It may be either recognized or forgotten by us; but it is always going on. There is not an instant that we have not to say to God; there is many an one that we forget; and then I have to start up again and say, Ah! where have I got to?

The Lord give us, in the full sense of His grace, to have our souls exercised before Him

## The Love of Jesus

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(John 13:1.)

It is evident that Jesus here addresses the disciples who were then around Him; but what we see there of Jesus attracts the soul to Him. What draws out the sinner and gives him confidence is that which the Holy Ghost reveals of Jesus.

I desire that we should occupy ourselves with that which is found in the first verse-that is to say, with the constancy of Christ's love-a love which nothing slackened or enfeebled. If we think what were the disciples, the world and the adversaries, we shall find that Jesus had a thousand reasons for giving up His love. We see around Him three sorts of persons-the disciples, the indifferent, and the adversaries. These last are more peculiarly the children of the devil. These are they who, seeing that the Lord is about to take the kingdom and reign over all things, say, "We will not have this man to reign over us." There are some at the bottom of their heart have the certainty that Jesus is the Christ, and who will not have Him. The adversaries may ensnare the indifferent. All that there was in this world was calculated to destroy the love of Jesus, if He had not been perfect and unchanging; for nothing wounds love more than indifference.

Naturally we love sin, and we wish to avail ourselves of everything God has given us for satisfying our lusts. Jesus has seen all that. He has seen the disgusting state of this world, and has said, "How long shall I suffer you?" When we are in the light of God, it is thus that we judge of sin.

What parents would not desire their children to avoid the corruption which they themselves have known? It is because Jesus has known the sad state of man that grace constrained Him to come and extricate men from it. God sees everything. In His compassions He takes knowledge of all, that He may come to the relief of our wants. But what does He meet with? Indifference of heart. The heart of the natural man sees in Jesus something despicable. He cannot own his state, and he will not be indebted to God to get out of it. He prefers remaining in indifference with respect to the God who loves him. Let us remember that nothing repels love more than indifference.

Jesus met with hatred also. All those who loved not the light because their deeds were evil, hated Jesus. Pride, carnal confidence, self-will, everything in man drove God back! There was nothing in defilement, in indifference, and in hatred, which could attract the love of Jesus. This love might be punished to despair, when Jesus saw, for example, that Judas betrayed Him.

If a person were to betray us, we should be too occupied with ourselves to think of those who would not betray us. This was not the case with Jesus.

Though iniquity abounded, Jesus shows all His love; but at last His disciples also abandon Him. Those who loved Him were so selfish and so enslaved by the fear of man, that it was impossible for Jesus to reckon on them. The heart of man is such that, though he loves Jesus, yet his heart is worth nothing. Jesus had to love in the presence of a hatred which never relaxed. He loved us when we were covered with defilements, indifferent, filled with hatred for the light, and having

denied Him a thousand times. He that knows himself best, knows the best how true this is. If we treated a friend as we treat Jesus, the friendship would not last long.

What a contrast we shall have if we consider how different that which Jesus found on earth is from what He enjoyed in heaven! There He found the Father's love, and in presence of this perfect love the purity of His own could not so be manifested, because it found no obstacles. But here below, remembering what He had left, He loves His own people in their very defilements. Nothing turns Him back; but these defilements draw His compassion upon them. The object of grace is where iniquity and evil are found. The indifference of His own people proved to Jesus all the extent of their wretchedness, and the need they had of Him! The very hatred of man showed that he was lost. God is come to seek man, because he is far away from the state of seeking God. What things God has borne with! What indifference, what betrayals, denials! People would be ashamed to do with Satan as they did with the Lord. Nevertheless, nothing stops Jesus- He loves His own even to the end. He acted according to what was in His heart, and all the wickedness of man was only for Him an occasion of manifesting His love.

The Lord has done all that is necessary for putting a soul into relation with God. Sinful as we are, the grace of God is come to seek us. Righteousness and law demand that evil and the evil man be taken away. John the Baptist demanded repentance. There was the beginning of grace, but pure grace, far from saying to man, Leave thy state to come to me-comes itself to man in his sin-enters into relationship with him, that God may be much more manifested than if there had been no sin whatever.

Grace applies what is in God to the need which is produced by the ruin in which we are. Jesus loves unto the end.

What a consolation to know that Jesus is all that is needed for all that we are. That sets us in what is real and true; that disposes us to confess the evil which is in us, and not to conceal it. Grace alone produces sincerity. (Psa. 32:1.) A man who has a career to follow wishes to appear strong even when he is feeble. Grace produces the truth—makes us own our feebleness and infirmity. In Peter's place we should do what he has done, if we were not kept. Jesus loves His own, "in the world," in their pilgrimage, in their circumstances, in spite of their wretchedness, their selfishness, and their feebleness. All that Satan could do, and all that was in man, was well calculated to hinder the love of Jesus. Nevertheless, "He loved them unto the end."

Can you say, I have part in this love, notwithstanding my weakness: I have understood in Jesus the grace, and the manifestation of the love of the invisible God? Have you owned that it was needful Jesus should come to the world, in order that you should not go where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth Have we taken our side to acknowledge ourselves just what we are? This is disagreeable to the flesh: it is painful; it is the thorn of Paul, something which incessantly tells him, "Thou art feeble;" and this is precisely the reason why God permits that it should remain. Is the flesh sufficiently mortified in us for us to be happy, though Jesus should be all and we nothing, for us to rejoice in seeing our infirmities, since that is to display the strength of God in us?

Jesus has forgotten none of our wants. The heart set free from selfishness only thinks of the things that love desires to do. Thus it is that Jesus, on the cross, does not forget His mother, but commends her to the disciple that He loves.

## Notes on Luke 1

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THE Savior is presented to us in Luke in his character as Son of man, displaying the power of Jehovah in grace in the midst of men. At first, doubtless, we find Him in relationship with Israel, to whom He had been promised; but afterward moral principles are, brought out, which apply to man, as such, wherever he might be. And indeed what characterizes Luke's account of our Lord and gives special interest to his gospel, is that it presents to us Christ Himself, and not His official glory, as in Matthew, nor His mission or service, as in Mark, nor the peculiar revelation of His divine nature, as in John. It is Himself, such as He was, a man upon the earth, moving among men day by day.

Ver. 1-4. Many had undertaken to give an account of what was historically received amongst Christians, as it had been related to them by the eyewitnesses. However well intended this might be, yet it was a work undertaken and executed by men. Luke had an exact and intimate knowledge of all from the beginning, and he found it good to write in order to Theophilus, that he might know the certainty of the things he had been instructed in. It is thus that God has provided for the whole Church by the teaching contained in the living picture of Jesus that we owe to this man of God. For Luke, although he might be personally moved by Christian motives, was, of course, none the less inspired by the Holy Ghost to write.

Ver. 5-17. The history brings us into the midst of Jewish institutions, feelings, and expectations., First, we have a priest of Abia, (one of the twenty-four classes: 1 Chron. 24), with his wife, who was of the daughters of Aaron. "They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." All was with them in accordance with God's law Jewishly; but they did not enjoy the blessing so earnestly desired by every Jew; they were childless. Yet it was according to the ways of God to accomplish His work of blessing while manifesting the weakness of the instrument which He was using. But now this long-prayed-for blessing was to be withheld no longer; and when Zacharias draws near to offer the incense, the angel of Jehovah appears to him. At the sight of so glorious a being, Zacharias is troubled; but the angel says to him, "Fear not, thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John," i.e., "the favor of Jehovah." And not only should the hearts of many rejoice in him, but he should be great in the sight of the Lord and be filled with the Holy Ghost. "Many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." The "spirit of Elias" was a firm and ardent zeal for the glory of Jehovah and for the re-establishment, through repentance, of Israel's relations with Him The heart of John clung to this link of the people with God, and it is in the moral force of his call to repentance that John is here compared to Elias.

Ver. 18-23. But Zacharias's faith, as is alas! so often the case, was not equal to the greatness of his request. He knows not how to walk in the steps of Abraham, and he asks again how such a thing can be. (ver.. 18.) God's goodness turns the unbelief of His servant into a chastening that was profitable for him, and that served, at the same time, as a proof to the people that he had

been visited from on high. Zacharias remains dumb until the word of Jehovah is accomplished.

Ver. 24, 25. Elizabeth, with feelings so suitable to a holy woman, remembering what had been a shame to her in Israel, (the traces of which were only made the more marked by the supernatural blessing now granted to her), hides herself; whilst, at the same time, she owns the Lord's goodness to her. But what may conceal us from the eyes of men, has great value before God.

Ver. 26-38. And now the scene changes, in order to introduce the Lord Himself into this marvelous scene that is unfolding itself before our eyes. In Nazareth, that despised place, there was found a young virgin, unknown by the world, whose name was Mary. She was espoused to Joseph, who was of the house of David; but so out of order was everything in Israel, that this descendant of the king was a carpenter. But what is this to God? Mary was a chosen vessel; she had found favor in the eyes of God.

We must remark that the subject here is the birth of the child Jesus, as born of Mary. It is not so much His divine nature as the Word which was God and which was made flesh; (though, of course, it is the same precious Savior presented here as in John's gospel;) but it is Jesus as really and truly man- born of a virgin. His name was to be Jesus, i.e., Jehovah the Savior. "He shall be called the Son of the highest, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David" — still looking at Him as man born into the world. But He was God as well as man. Holy by His birth, conceived by the power of God, this blessed one, who even, as born of Mary, is spoken of as "that holy thing," was to be called "the Son of God."

The angel then tells Mary of the blessing God had bestowed upon Elizabeth. The wonderful intervention of God had rendered Mary humble instead of lifting tier up: she had seen God and not herself in what had happened. Self was hidden from her because God had been brought so near, and she bows to His holy will. "Be it unto me according to thy word."

Ver. 39-45. Afterward we find that Mary goes to visit Elizabeth, for her heart loves to see and acknowledge the goodness of the Lord. Elizabeth, speaking by the Spirit, acknowledges Mary as the mother of her Lord, and announces the accomplishment of God's promise. "Blessed is she that believed," &c.

Ver. 46. The heart of Mary is filled with joy, and she breaks forth into a song of praise. She acknowledges God her Savior in the grace that has filled her with such joy, whilst, at the same time, she owns her utter littleness. For whatever might be the holiness of the instrument that God might employ, and that was found really in Mary,—yet she was only great so long as she hid herself; for then God was everything. By making something of herself she would have lost her place; but this she did not. God kept her in order that His grace might be fully manifested.

The character of the thoughts that fill the heart of Mary is Jewish. It reminds us of Hannah's song in 1 Sam. 2, which speaks prophetically of this same blessed intervention of God. But Mary goes back to the promises made to the fathers, and takes in the whole of Israel.

Ver. 56. After remaining three months with Elizabeth, she returns to her house, humbly to follow her own path, in order that God's ways may be accomplished. Nothing is more beautiful in its way than this account of the conversations of these holy women, unknown to the world, but who were the instruments of God's grace to accomplish his glorious designs. They moved in a scene where

nothing entered but piety and grace. But God was there Himself, no better known to the world than were these poor women, but preparing and accomplishing what the angels would desire to look into.

Ver. 57-59. But what is only known in secret by faith is at last to be accomplished before all men. The son of Zacharias and Elizabeth is born, and Zacharias, no longer dumb, pronounces the blessed prophecy we have in ver. 68-80. The visitation of Israel by Jehovah, which he speaks of, embraces all the happiness of the millennium, connected with the presence of Jesus upon the earth. All the promises are Yea and Amen in Him. All the prophecies encircle Him with the glory which will be then realized. We know that since He has been rejected and while He is now absent, the accomplishment of these things is necessarily put off till His return.

## Notes on Luke 2

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When God is pleased to occupy Himself with the world, and to take a part in what passes therein, it is marvelous to see how He acts and the instruction He gives. There is no agreement, but a total opposition, between His ways and those of men. The emperor and his decree are but insignificant instruments.

Cesar Augustus acts in view, of His subjects; yet he is, without knowing it, the means of accomplishing the prophecy that Jesus should be born in Bethlehem. The entire course of the world is outside the current of God's thoughts. The capital fact for Him and for His kingdom here, is the babe's birth at Bethlehem; but the emperor has no thought about it. The decree puts the world in motion, and God makes good His thoughts here below. How wondrous! All the world is in movement to bring about this event, needed to fulfill prophecy, that the poor carpenter, with Mary his espoused wife, should be in the city of David, and David's heir should be born there and then. And this is the more striking, for the census itself was first made some years afterward, when Cyrenius was governor of Syria: God is accomplishing His purpose of love. But man was blind to it, Who cared to notice the poor Jew, though he might be of the house and lineage of David? The things that are perfectly indifferent to man fill the heart and eye of God.

Still we are in Jewish atmosphere. Premises are being accomplished; the babe must be born in Bethlehem. "The city of David" is nothing to the Christian as such, save as showing prophecy fulfilled: to us the Son comes from heaven. On earth the babe is the object of God's counsels; angels and all heaven are occupied with His birth; but there is no place in the world for Him! Go where the great world registers every individual, go to the little world of an inn, where each is measured by the servant's knowing eye, and place is accordingly awarded from the garret to the first floor; but there is no room for Jesus And the manger led, in due time, to the lowest place-to the cross.

What a lesson for us as to this world! What a difference, too, between giving up the world and the world giving us up! We may do the one with comparative ease; but when we feel the world despises us as Christ was despised, we shall discover, unless He fills and satisfies the heart, that we had a value for its esteem that we were not aware of. When obedience is as important to us in our measure, as obeying was to Christ, we shall go right on whatever be before us, without regarding the world: not that we shall be insensible but when Christ is the object, we shall only be occupied with Him.

All intelligence of the things of God comes from His revelation, and not from the reasonings of men. Hence, the simple go farther in spiritual understanding than the wise and prudent of the earth. God acts here so as to set aside all appearance of human wisdom. Happy he who has so seized the intention of God as to be identified with it, and to want none but God! This was the case with the shepherds. They little entered into the great intent of the registration; but it was to them, and not to the prudent, that God revealed Himself. Our true wisdom is through what God reveals. But we never get God's fullest blessings till we are where the flesh is brought down and

destroyed-I speak as regards walk, We cannot the heart is emptied of what is contrary to the lowliness of Christ. These shepherds were in the quiet fulfillment of their humble duty; and that is the place of blessing. Whoever is keeping on terms with the world is not walking with God; for God is not walking with you there. From the manger to the cross, all in Christ was simple obedience. How unlike a Theudas, who boasted himself to be somebody! Christ did all in God's way; and not only so, but we must come so too.

The glory of the Lord shines round about the shepherds, the angel speaks to them the sign is given; and what a sign! "Ye shall find a babe wrapped up in swaddling clothes, lying in the manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God" —and for what? "The mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh." The hope of Israel tis revealed to them-glad tidings of great joy to all the people. For Jesus is the pivot of all God's counsels in grace. Adam himself was but a type of Him who was to come. Christ was ever in the mind of God. Such displays of glory are not shown to mortal eyes every day; but God sets them before us in His word, and we must every day follow the sign given, follow Jesus the babe in the manger. If He filled the eye, the ear, the heart, how we should see the effects in person, spirit, conversation, dress, house, money, &c.

Such, then, is the sign of God's accomplishment of promise and of His presence in the world— "a babe in the manger" —the least and lowest thing. But God is found there, though these things are beyond man, who cannot walk with God, nor understand His moral glory. But God's sign is within the reach of faith. It is the token of perfect weakness; a little infant who can only weep. Such, born into this world, is Christ the Lord. Such is the place God chose- the low degree. God's intervention is recognized by a sign like this. Man would not have sought that. The heavenly host praise God and say, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." Nothing higher nor more astonishing (save the cross) for those who have the mind of heaven. The choir above see God in it-God manifested in flesh, and praise God in the highest. They rejoice that His delights are with the sons of men. Of old God had displayed Himself to Moses in a flame of fire, without consuming the bush, and here, still more marvelously, in the feeblest thing on earth: infinite thought, morally, though despicable in the eye of the world! How hard it is to receive that the work of God and of His Christ is always in weakness! the rulers of the people saw in Peter and John unlearned and ignorant men. Paul's weakness at Corinth was the trial of his friends, the taunt of his enemies, the boast of himself. The Lord's strength is made perfect in weakness. The thorn in the flesh made Paul despised, and he conceived it would be better if that were gone. He had need of the lesson: "My grace is sufficient for thee." It is God's rule of action, if we may so say, to choose the weak things. Everything must rest on God's power, otherwise God's work cannot be done according to His mind. One can hardly believe that one must be feeble to do the work of God; but Christ was crucified in weakness, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For the work of God we must be weak, that the strength may be of God; and that work will last when all the earth shall be moved away.

Ver. 21-38. But besides the additional testimony rendered by the offering of his mother to the circumstances in this world, in which the Lord of glory was born, we may see that while God all through the gospel is settling man in his new place with Himself, He did not forget His ancient people. He shows us here that He met every thought in every heart that was touched by grace in Israel. His heart was especially toward those who sorrowed over the sins and desolation of His

people; and who, withal, waited for redemption, crying from the darkness, "How long, O Lord?" God will accomplish in power that wherein man has failed in responsibility. Should we therefore be content if God's people do not glorify Him? No; faith is not hard; it will sorrow, but it will wait for God, and. God's time too; for faithful is He who hath promised, who also will do it. He will bring about His own purposes.

Ver. 25. Thus was Simeon "waiting for the consolation of Israel." Thus Anna departed not from the temple, but served with fastings and prayers night and day. Thus all they that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. There were those who watched, and Anna knew and spake to them. The rest doubtless were occupied with Roman oppression, but these few waited for Him, bowing before His hand in judgment of evil, but looking for His deliverance.

I believe there was something more in Simeon's soul than the joy of holding in his arms the babe, the expected Messiah: Simeon felt he had God, and was satisfied. So he says, without even looking on to the glory, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word." In Rom. 5:11, the apostle, after speaking of rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God, says, "and not only so:" what could be more than that hope? Yes; there is more: "we also joy in God." The eyes of Simeon have seen God's salvation, and he begs of the sovereign Lord that he may go.

We often see something like this in dying saints, who deeply joy in the Lord's love to His own, and in the nearness of His coming for them. Why, one might say, what is His near coming to those who are dying, and departing to Him? Just this—the nearer we are to God, the more precious is all the truth of God, and everything which is near to His heart. So in verses 30-32, Simeon rejoices as he surveys the extent of the divine deliverance. It was for the revelation of the Gentiles, who had been, till now, hidden in the dark of idolatry and ungodliness, as well as for the glory of Israel. But his soul is satisfied possessing Christ, and anticipating the effect of His presence in the whole world: he has gall in Him, and desires to depart. If a man walks with God, and has finished his course, he knows that his work is done, and is conscious of the Lord's time being come. He has a companionship and communion with the Lord he has walked with. If simply brought to a bed of sickness, he is not then ready to go; not that he fears, but God is teaching him something else. But when God's time is come, all is joy and readiness. He feels like Simeon, Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.

But, further, when Simeon blessed Joseph and Mary the Spirit gives him to disclose the more immediate results of the babe's presence in Israel. He should be the touchstone of many hearts, an occasion for the fall as well as the rise of many; He should be a sign spoken against, a rejected Messiah: and Mary's heart should be pierced through, whatever the present joy or the future glory.

Israel was low indeed, but did not know it; Israel must be made to know it, and Christians too; for Christ had to descend to the grave and rise again. The thoughts of the heart must be revealed, whatever the outward garb. But then He is the one who brings out God's thoughts too. If He is the Christ, the glory of God's people, He is also the one who will abase the flesh, and meet and humble man in his pride; He is the one who will make you know whether He in His rejection is more precious than all beside.

Ver. 39. When all was done according to the law, they returned to Galilee to Nazareth. Jesus would not be the Christ we need, if He had taken any glory from Jerusalem, His place is among

the poor of the flock—His place all through in Israel.

Ver. 40. “And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him” Luke gives us more of the reality of His childhood than the other gospels, He was not made man full-formed like Adam.

If one only reads the account without comment, how the soul feels it unspeakably precious! When we see WHO it was, we see human nature in Him filled with God, so to speak. It is not official distinction, but the heart feels God brought nigh. The blessedness of the child's intrinsic loveliness fills the heart. Deeply instructive too is the incident recorded in connection with the passover when He was twelve years old. His true character comes out, though He was not yet to act upon it. He came to be a Nazarene- to be about His Father's business. This is here stated distinctly before He enters upon His public ministry, that it might be seen to be connected with His person, and not to depend merely upon His office. He was the Pastor of the flock in spirit and character. It belonged to Him. He was the Son of the Father, though abiding God's time for showing it.

Ver. 51. Nevertheless, “He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them.” What a majesty in His whole life! His being God secured His perfection as a child and man here below. He had ever the blessed consciousness of His relationship to His Father-an obedient child, but conscious also of a glory unconnected in itself with subjection to human parentage. He belonged to Mary and even Joseph: in another sense he was not theirs. His divine Sonship was as well known to Him, as His obedience to His parents was in due season absolutely right.

Ver. 52. “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.” His human intelligence being developed, He, though ever perfect became so in a fuller way—the perfect child grows into the perfect man. The lovely plant grew up and unfolded before God and man.

## Notes on Luke 3

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THE two preceding chapters have given the general character: they have shown the going out of the thoughts of God to man. Accordingly we find that the gospel, as a whole, is particularly occupied with what is not Jewish. Still the Jewish part is given at first with considerable detail, inasmuch as Israel, because of their unbelief and moral worthlessness, are to be set aside, in order to make way for new relationships, founded on what God reveals Himself to be for man in Jesus, the true and only Mediator. But if chap. i. disclosed the faithfulness of God to the Abrahamic promises, to His covenant and His oath, chap. ii. puts us in the presence of the actual government of the world and of the Lord's land and people under the fourth beast, the Roman empire. What confusion does not sin create? The Jews are subject to the Gentiles: Joseph and Mary, of David's royal house, go up to be taxed. Nevertheless, the ways of God shine so much the brighter for the darkness that surrounded them: He was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. Israel, however, would be put to a new moral test by His presentation of Himself. Alas! it would soon appear that if they had not kept the law, they hated grace. "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against."

In chap. iii. we have the ministry of God coming in by a prophet as of old by Samuel. "The word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness." It is not without object that the Spirit mentions the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, &c. All the earth was seemingly at rest under its heathen lord: the word of God found its suited sphere in the wilderness. The law and the prophets were until John; and where should he be in such a state of things but the wilderness? Could he morally own it? God will not have His messenger in Jerusalem.

Prophecy is the sovereign means whereby God can communicate with His people when they are ruined and departed from Him. John understands this, and preaches the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And such was the place assigned him many centuries before by Esaias the prophet. It was vain for Israel to plead their privileges and rights. All was wrong, and the Judge was at the door. John's work was not to lead the people back to the law: he was preparing the way of the Lord. Herein he differed from the prophets as well as the law, or rather, he went farther; for God's time was come for a step in advance. The prophets led back to Horeb: John says not a word of this, though his father was a priest, and himself, of course, an Aaronite. He does. not try to set up again what was closed: he announces the kingdom. He may not introduce the Church, nor even the glad tidings of God's grace, (both awaited the accomplishment of the work of redemption,) but he drops the law, and shows that God's purpose is the kingdom.

The quotation from Esaias sets aside Israel-not the Gentiles merely, but Israel-as grass, withered grass, without a green blade left. Yet the word of the Lord endureth forever; and this when all hope from man was gone. Israel may have failed, but the word of the Lord shall stand. Moreover, since it was the Lord who was coming, every valley should be filled, &c. Not the Jews alone, but all flesh should see God's deliverance. If sin plunges all in indiscriminate ruin and a common judgment, God can meet man thus ruined, but His glory will not be shut up in the narrow limits of Israel.

Ver. 7-14. But to be blessed, man must repent. God would have realities, and not a mere nominal people; He must have fruits answering to hearts which felt and judged their moral condition, and which, therefore, turned from themselves to God. Ordinances, formal claims, &c., which should have been means of blessing, would be no shelter against the coming wrath; nor would God permit them to hinder His creating true children of the promise, if this generation were but Ishmael over again. Judgment must begin at the house of God.

In fact, as we know, John was beheaded, and the Lord was crucified, and the kingdom, presented in Him and by Him, was rejected by Israel. By and by it will be set up visibly and in power. Meanwhile the Church is set up, because the kingdom is not set up in this manifested way. And those who now take their place with the Lord share his rejection. They are members of his body, the Church. They shall share His glory, but it will be heavenly, and not earthly glory. In another sense we are in the kingdom now. To faith heaven rules now, and we own it and know it; but Satan is actually prince and god of this world; and hence those, who are made kings to God (for that is our true place) are called to suffer. Therefore Paul went everywhere preaching the kingdom of God, as well as Christ and the Church. We have that by virtue of which we shall reign with Christ; but even that is not our best portion. To be one with Christ—His body and bride—is far more blessed. If your mind only rests on the person of Christ, there is no difficulty in seeing that when He is cut off, all must cease as regards the earth. He is the center of all, and when rejected, what prophecy spoke of, and what seemed about to be accomplished, breaks off. Thereupon Christ ascends, and takes up a glory above the heavens, and there now the saints find their place with Him. (Comp. Psa. 2 and viii.)

John Baptist, then, addresses himself to the Jews, demanding repentance, and righteousness as its fruit; shows them that if they were nearer to God outwardly as Jews, they must expect judgment the sooner. If the Lord was coming, He must have what became the Lord. The ax was even then lying at the root of the trees: if there was not good fruit on the trees, every one must be hewn down and burnt. Repentance, or wrath—which? The Lord would allow no plea of descent from Abraham, if their ways belied Abraham: He must have righteousness. It is the Lord that is just at hand, and He must have a people fit for Him; or He would out of the very stones make a suited people for Himself.

Evidently John's word is not a voice of mercy to the poor sinner. God is presented in the way of judgment, not of sovereign mercy. He does not say, "Come unto me." John could not, because he was not Christ, and none but He could say, "Come unto me." John came in righteousness.

In ver. 10-14 moral testimony is given, and that in detail. John deals with the practical iniquity of each set of people. So even when the question of the Christ is raised (15-18), "one mightier than I cometh," says he. It is of His power especially he thinks—His power morally as outwardly. "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." It is the power of the Holy Ghost and His consuming judgment. He could not speak of the grace of the gospel which we know now. He proclaims One who was coming after him, not a present salvation. Whatever would not stand the fire was to be burnt up. For His fan "is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable. (Comp. Isa. 21:10, &c.) God's floor was Israel: there He was getting His wheat, if any were to be found. But His fan is in His hand: He is going to make short work. Titus finally set aside God's floor upon the

earth; Israel's sin had lost it morally when they rejected Christ; but at the destruction of Jerusalem it was done with thoroughly for the present.

Ver. 19, &c.—Luke's method of instruction is to be noticed in passing. He shows that John had preached and exhorted moral truth, and then disposes of him, putting him, as it were, out of the scene in order to bring Christ in. It was not that historically John was imprisoned at that juncture by Herod the tetrarch; it took place long after. But it is a sample of Luke's manner, who returns to the Lord's taking His place amongst the remnant of Israel. For the Lord does not identify Himself with the nation; but directly there is a poor remnant, He identifies Himself with it.

This history opens with verse 21, and how wonderful and full of grace. “Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.” One may have looked and listened mournfully, as one reads of John Baptist and his testimony. We might have asked, as the dying record of men passed before us, What is man? But now my eye rests on Jesus:

I find the Lord from heaven a man. All is to begin again. Do I ask again, What is man? At once Christ comes out. Do I look at myself? at all around? What do I see? Enough to break my heart, if there is a heart to be broken. The only thing which prevents people being utterly broken down is that they have not a heart to feel things as they are. But a rest is here! I have got a man now who satisfied God—this blessed man on earth in the presence of God, looking to God, and an object to God! not Messiah purging His floor, but Him in whom God's thoughts and purposes are all folded up— not man perishing before the moth, but Jesus the Son of man, not merely coming down from Abraham and David, but traced up, “which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God” — the second man, the last Adam, the quickening Spirit. What a relief; for what is man? What one's self when the heart's sin is known—giving up God for an apple from the beginning hitherto! But now a man, a blessed man, appears, “and praying.” We are not told this elsewhere, and why here? Because Luke presents man in his perfection—the dependent man: for dependence is the essence of a perfect man. Truly we see God shining all through, but yet in Jesus the dependent man, in the place and condition of perfectness as man. The root of sin in us is self-will, independence. Here my heart has rest! A dependent man in the midst of sorrow, but perfectly with God in all. See Luke's account of the transfiguration also: in humiliation or in glory it makes no difference as to this: the perfect is ever the dependent one.

And when that blessed heart thus expressed its dependence, did He get no answer? “The heaven was opened.” Does heaven open thus on me? It is open to me, indeed, no doubt, but I pray because it is open; it opened because He prayed. I come and look up because the heavens were opened on Him.

It is, indeed, a lovely picture of grace, and we may be bold to say that the Father loved to look on—to look down, in the midst of all sin, on His beloved Son. Nothing but what was divine could thus awaken God's heart; and yet it was the lowly, perfect man. He takes not the place of His eternal glory, as the Creator, the Son of God. He stoops and is baptized. (Psa. 16) He says, “in thee do I trust.” He says to Jehovah, Thou art my Lord; my goodness extendeth not to thee: He says to the godly remnant in Israel (i.e., to the saints that are in the earth and to the excellent), All

my delight is in them. He needed no repentance, yet is He baptized with them; just as when, later on, He puts forth His sheep, He goes before them. He identifies Himself in grace with Israel, even with such as were of a clean heart. And the Holy Ghost descends like a dove on Him—fit emblem of that spotless man!—fit resting-place for the Spirit in the deluge of this world. And how sweet, too, that Jesus is pointed out to us as God's object. I know the way the Father feels about him. I am made his intimate, and admitted to hear Him expressing His affection for His Son, to see the links reformed between God and man. Heaven is opened, not on something above, but upon a man upon the earth. Thus I get rest, and my heart finds communion with God in His beloved Son. It is only the believer who enjoys it, but the link is there. And if I have that in and about me which distresses the soul, I have that in Him which is unfailing joy and comfort.

The genealogy quite falls in with the thought that God is showing grace in man and to man. Jesus, the beloved Son of God, is traced. up to Adam and to God. Jesus is Son of man; He is heir in this sense. He takes up the inheritance God gave to man. O what a truth! Where could one's heart turn for rest, if it had not Jesus to rest in? With Him let heaven and earth be turned upside down, and still I have a rest. What blessedness for the heart to have the object God Himself is occupied with! May our hearts also be more and more occupied with Him.

## Notes on Luke 4

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WE saw the Lord taking His place of servant with the excellent in Israel, and thereon the heavens opened, and Himself owned by the Father as His beloved Son. His delights were with the sons of men, and He is traced up, not to Abraham only, the root and depository of Jewish promises, but to Adam and God Himself. Independently of His proper divine glory as Son of the Father, Jesus should be called the Son of the Highest, the Son of God. As man on earth, He was sealed with the Holy Ghost. He took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. His entire perfectness now was to fulfill, as a servant, the will of Him who sent Him; for a servant doing his own will is a bad servant. Dependence, waiting, and obedience, were the characteristics of this place, and they are found in Him to the uttermost. Hence, as in the Psalms, "I waited patiently for the Lord." He would not ask for power, but waits on God. "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" Put thoroughly to the test, He would do nothing but His Father's -will. He was to learn obedience. Having taken the place, He would go through it wholly, not in one act, but experiencing the force of that expression, learning obedience, without one comfort here, with enemies around, bulls of Bashan besetting, dogs compassing. He had to learn obedience where obedience was always suffering, even to the yielding up of life. Every single step was humiliation till the close came in the cross, where the wrath of God was borne in love to us. No doubt He found, in His rejection, fields white for harvest, and so shall we, in our measure, when walking in the same path. But the cross was always before Him,—everything that could stop a man. Nevertheless, He went on, patiently waiting, and not asking for deliverances. Thus, He presented perfect God to man, and perfect man to God.

Ver. 1. In this chapter He begins this walk of suffering obedience publicly. And the first thing to be remarked is, that being full of the Holy Ghost, He is led by Him into the wilderness, where He is tempted by the devil. There are two ways in which the enemy has power: first, by allurements, and secondly, by terror. In the one, he works upon us through our lusts, presenting what is calculated to attract, and so he rules over us naturally. In the other, he has the power of death. Thus, Judas being a covetous man and without the faith -which purifies the heart, Satan suggested the occasion and gets him. He has no right to rule over men, but he acquires dominion through the lusts of the flesh. Another way is through the terror of death. In both he assailed the Lord, but found nothing in Him. Here, then, we have the devil meeting many in the power of the Spirit of God—man tempted, not in paradise, but in the wilderness. Jesus does not say, "I am God, and you are Satan; go away." That would not have glorified God, nor have helped us. But as the Lord was led into the wilderness, not by lust, (God forbid the thought!) but by the Holy Ghost, so in His blessed grace He puts Himself in the place where man was. He has help from none, not even from John the Baptist. There was all that might have stumbled rather, had it been possible: through all He goes as man. He must be tempted, and must overcome where man not only had failed, but was lying under the power of wickedness.

Ver. 2, 3. There was no harm in hunger; it was no sin. He could have commanded stones to be made bread, but to do so, save at His Father's word, would have been doing His own will, and

then He had not been the perfect man Satan tries to introduce into His heart a desire which was not in the word of God; He succeeded in insinuating a lust into the heart of Adam; he fails with Jesus, though He was for forty days exposed to his presence and power. Jesus had to know by experience what it was to have working at Him, without a single support, without a friend, in solitary dreariness (save indeed the wild beasts) with the devil! Thus He measured the power of Satan. The strong man was there, putting forth all his weapons, but the stronger than he overcame: Jesus binds the strong man. He was abstracted from human condition for forty days, not like Moses to be only with God, but as the one who was always with God, to be exposed to Satan. None other man needs to be abstracted in order to be tempted, he has only to go on along with men. In this case, this extraordinary separation was to be with the devil. To be with God He did not need anything out of His every-day path, for it was His natural place; but to be with Satan, He needed it. Others are strangers to God, and at home with Satan. He, in the most adverse things, is a stranger to Satan, and dwells in the bosom of the Father. But He emptied Himself as God to become a servant as man, and there He waits in dependence on the word of Him whom He served. The living Father had sent Him, and He lived by the Father. He was as man under His authority, and His meat was to do His will. "By the words of thy lips, I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer."

Ver. 4. It is the written word He ever uses, and Satan is powerless. What amazing importance Jesus gives the Scriptures. God now acts by the word, and Satan is resisted morally in this way. A man cannot be touched by Satan while the word is simply used in obedience. "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." It was not as an exercise of divine authority He dismissed Satan, but the enemy is proved unable to grapple with obedience to the word of God. If he cannot take out of the path of obedience, he has no power. What more simple! Every child of God has the Holy Ghost acting by the word to keep Him.

Jesus does not reason with Satan. A single text silences when used in the power of the Spirit. The whole secret of strength in conflict is using the word of God in the right way. One may say, I am not like this perfect Man: it might be so with Christ, but how can I expect the same result? True, we are ignorant, and the flesh is in us, but God is always behind, and He is faithful, and will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able. Temptation may be simply a trial of our obedience, as in Abraham's case, not a snare to lead us astray. Satan presents what has no appearance of evil. The evil would be—doing one's own will. Now it solves every difficulty to ask—not, what harm is there in doing this or that?—but, why am I doing it? Is it for God or myself? What! am I to be always under this restraint Ah! there the secret of our nature comes out: we do not like the restraint of doing what God will approve. It is restraint to do God's will! We want to do our own will. To act merely because one must, is law, and not the guidance of the Spirit. The word of God was the motive of Christ, and such is Christ's guidance. Not fencing the old man, but the new man living on the word is our defense against Satan.

Ver. 3-13. The first temptation is an appeal to the need of the body. The second in Luke (not in Matthew) is the inducement of the world's glory. The third in our gospel is the religious temptation through the word of God, and therefore morally the hardest of all to one who values that word. And this is the reason why Luke departs from the actual order of the events, in order to group them morally, as is the habit of this evangelist elsewhere also. Thus we have the tempter assailing the Lord Jesus, first, as to man's life; second, as to the power given to man; and third, as to the

promises made to Christ Himself.

The Lord might have argued with the devil, but He does not even tell him that the dominion of the world would be His by and by. He takes His stand on that which settles everything, and is a perfect example for us. He stands to God's word, and God's worship. He awaits His word, He worships Him, He serves Him only. How simple and how blessed! It was the immediate link of an obedient heart with God. The question was one of relationship to God. So of old, Eliezer receives blessing, but before he begins to enjoy it, he gives thanks. He had the word first, then the blessing—and what follows forthwith? He bows his head and worships. God is the first thought of his heart. And so still more fully with the Lord here. The last and subtlest temptation was grounded on the promises to Messiah. (9-11.) If thou art the Son of God, why not try? But why should He try, who KNEW that God was for Him? Why should He be like presumptuous Israel of old, who would go up the hill in disobedience, to prove whether the Lord was among them? Not even when Lazarus was sick would He stir, till it was the Father's will, though all nature would have moved; and He knew well the sorrow of that house which was His refuge; for "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus."

The Lord did not listen. Who would? you say. But you do listen to Satan, every day of your lives, that you seek a very little bit of the world. But was there not a promise? Doubtless there was; yet why should He throw Himself down to see whether God would be as good as His word? Did He not know that God was with Him And so with us: let us only have the word behind us, no matter what may be before us. Never should we raise a question whether God is with us. If He does not send, let us not move, but let us never question His presence. If we are in the simple path of His will, the Holy Ghost will act in us to guide, and not merely on us to correct.

Thus then, in the order of Luke, which, as we have seen, is not historical, but moral, we have the progressive exercises of a man. First, natural lusts; secondly, worldly lusts; and lastly, spiritual temptations. The Lord Jesus was tempted here, not in Eden, but in the great system where we are. He put Himself, by the will and wisdom of God, in the place of our difficulty in the world, where man is. He has gone through all the difficulties a saint is in. Who wants His help? Not a sinner, for he wants salvation: but a saint needs help and sympathy in his path. We have practically to keep our first estate, as renewed. Satan cannot touch the new man, but he tries to entice out of the path of godliness. We want succor to walk as obedient ones where Christ walked.

Ver. 14. "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee; and He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all." In all things His obedience is shown. Untouched by Satan, He goes forth in unhindered power; as we shall in a measure, if like Him we pass through temptation, so as not to be touched by Satan.

Ver. 16. "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up" — the low, despised place, but just the place where spiritual power is found. Was it not ever thus? When was it found allied to the great things of this world?

Ver. 18. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor," &c. It was the characteristic of grace to come to such. The great business of Christ was to preach, i.e., to present God. The Holy Ghost gives the right word at the right time, and in the right way. "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." (Ver. 21.) The Lord does not reason; He

says, Here it is. The way of God is to present what we want. You want salvation, there it is; you want mercy, and there it is. God alone can thus come, by grace, into the place of a sinner. They wonder, for His were precious words, but soon they ask, Is not this Joseph's son? Was He ashamed of being the carpenter? Grace goes down to the lowest need. But man will take occasion to despise grace, because it is clothed in humiliation:

he cannot but see God, but he steps aside to look at the humiliation, and so show out the hatred of his heart. God's grace is despised and His sovereignty is hated. God did not despise Nazareth, but man despises Jesus because He came out of Nazareth. Even the guileless Nathaniel asks, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" How little appreciation of the way of grace there is even in the godly! Christ comes into man's misery, and finds him where he is. Could an angel? No: he stays in his proper position, doing the Lord's commandments, and hearkening to the voice of His word. An angel ought not to come down to me in my sins: God only can in His grace. And man despises the lowliness to which grace brought Him-wretched man! But Israel ever resisted grace, and yet it was ever the way of God's delight. Witness the widow of Sarepta in Sidon, and Naaman the Syrian leper. Grace over-leaped the bounds of Israel. (Ver. 25-27.) They might be enraged, but grace does over-step their limits. They rose up to thrust Him down who had denied their privileges, but He passed through (ver. 30) to renew the work of grace elsewhere. (ver. 31, 32.) This does not move Jesus; it tries Him and breaks His heart, but it does not move Him. The reproach of man turns Him to God. His comfort in His rejection is His Father's will: "Even so, Father." It was perfectness in the scene of grace, as before in the scene of temptation.

There was also the manifestation of power, and not merely promise. There was the accomplishment of promise for the deliverance of man in power as well as grace: and this remains true for us, who know Him as a man risen, and at the right hand of God. Mere promise does not give a center for the corrections: Christ Himself is that—Christ to whom promise pointed. He awakens divine feelings and thoughts in us, which find no response or satisfaction from anything in this world. It is the special character of Christ: when He presents Himself, it is perfect peace and grace; and in fellowship with Him, the soul can praise and rejoice in what He is.

This grace adapts itself to all difficulties, so as to bring man into peace with God. The very demons knew who He was; man alone was dull and blind. The devil held captive, but a single word of Jesus sets the captive free. He was there, not a promise merely, but power accomplishing, the living power of the Lord Himself among men, the power of God in man overcoming Satan. Such was Jesus in the synagogue of Capernaum, dealing with the unclean spirit. (Ver. 33-37.) And it is the same when He goes out and enters Simon's house. Disease disappears, the weak is made strong. He ministers unto Simon's wife's mother, as she lay taken in a great fever, "and immediately she arose and ministered unto them." (Ver. 38, 39.) What can resist this delivering power in the person of the Lord Jesus? "Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick, with divers diseases, brought them unto Him, and He laid His hands on every one of them, and healed them; and devils also came out of many." He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. Therefore when men stayed Him that He should not depart, He pleads His mission to preach elsewhere also. He is ever the obedient one.

## Notes on Luke 5

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IT is interesting to know the progressive power of the word of God. The Lord was preaching, as related at the close of chap. 4., and in so doing, as well as in the miracles He wrought, He was manifesting the power of goodness. Thus, in performing miracles, two purposes had to be accomplished—confirmation of the testimony given, and present deliverance from the power of Satan. But His great business was preaching the kingdom of God, He will set up the kingdom in power by and by, but His great object then was (and is) to bring the heart into contact with God; and the word does this more than miracles.

Ver. 1. In a measure even the unconverted are sensible of the presence of God. Adam was, when he tried to hide himself. When the gospel is preached with power, crowds are gathered together by it, touched, perhaps, by something new, but without fruit. So it was with the Lord's preaching and miracles. We know their motives were selfish often, yet He went on all the same. Come for the blessing of man, He would associate others with Himself in this work of grace; but He calls them in such a way as leaves no glory to man. He "saw two ships standing by the lake, but the fishermen were gone out of them and were washing their nets. And He entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would launch out a little from the land; and He sat down and taught the multitudes out of the ship. Now when He had left off speaking, He said to Simon, Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draft." (ver. 2-4.) The word had authority in the conscience. Peter and Andrew had seen Jesus before, but had not yet staid with Him: there had not been sufficient power in their faith to attach them to Christ. There are many now, as ever, who own the authority of the word, and yet not attached by its power to His person—many absorbed by their everyday pursuits, the word not having laid hold of their souls so as to make them walk thoroughly with Christ, It is one thing simply to hear His word when spoken to them; quite a different thing when the word reaches them, and becomes the spring and motive of all their ways. So, here, these men had spent a little time with Jesus, had heard Him speak, and owned Him as Messiah; so, now also, we see obedience to His word when it comes to them. They launch out at His word, and at His word they let down their nets.

The miracle which the Lord wrought was one every way suited to act on those concerned. Their own powerlessness was confessed. (" Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing.") Man could do nothing in such a case: if Jesus could, it was because everything was at His disposal. "At thy word I will let down the net." (ver. 5.)

Ver. 6-8. "And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes, and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners... and they came and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink." There was not even strength to receive of themselves. "When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." If the word of Jesus had not reached Peter's heart, he would merely have obeyed it as a means of temporal help; but he owns him as Lord, hearing far more in the words spoken. His conscience was reached. The Lord Himself is revealed to Peter, and that shows Peter himself. When the eye

of God is consciously upon us, we see in ourselves what He saw. This was Peter's case. He, when brought into God's presence, feels that he has been deceiving himself, Grace begins here, but we have not the end yet. So Paul was blind three days, and his soul so wrought on that he could neither eat nor drink. Here Peter falls down at Jesus' knees. So with us: when brought really into His presence, there is the discovery of our sinfulness. The means used to bring us there may be various—circumstances of life, providential occurrences, (with Luther, a thunder-storm). But when we are there, there is the revelation of Christ Himself, and wherever He is, He takes his right place in the soul. It is not only that a man then has salvation, but he cannot longer be content without God having His due place before him.

Peter does not fly away from the Lord, like Adam hiding himself: he is attracted to Him. At the same time he is there a judged, convicted, sinful man in his own conscience, which takes the part of Christ against itself. "Depart from me," he says, but he says it at Jesus' knees. This might seem like a contradiction. It was really love to the Lord and care for His honor, because His word had become the revelation of Christ to him. His heart has not perfect peace, but Christ has got possession of it. Grace draws to Christ, but there is withal the sense of unfitness till His work is known in all its peace-giving consequences. God sees the thoughts and intents of the heart, and we are made to see these as He sees them. Righteousness is planted in the conscience; God and man are brought together. It was not that Peter could be happy anywhere but at the knees of Jesus, but he felt all the while how unfit he was to be in such company.

But the Lord deals in perfect grace. He does not leave Simon Peter. He knew all his sin before He went into the ship, and says to him, (Ver. 10) "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Jesus went into the ship to show Peter that he had nothing to fear. Truly "perfect love casteth out fear." Fear has torment till grace is fully revealed; and now it was, with as much authority as that miracle-working word, "Let down your nets for a draft." It was the word of Christ to his heart. If he trusted it for the fish, why not for his fears? Peter had said, "Depart," but instead of that, Christ had already come, knowing all he was better than Peter. He was come as a Savior; nay, more, He intimates to Peter that He was going to make him an instrument in gathering others. Everyone who has the love of God shed abroad in his heart becomes a vessel of living grace himself: not the source, but the river flows through him, so that people may come and drink. Recipients of grace, we are associated with Christ in the activity of love. Outward gift is not meant here, but that, as members of His body, there is living fellowship with the Head in the testimony of His grace and power.

We see in these disciples the effect of all. They are absorbed with Christ now. They not only look to Him for salvation, but they think of nothing else for life, speaking now generally and apart from any particular failure. "They forsook all and followed Him." Christ becomes their life. It is a new line altogether- not merely obedience to an express command, with the reserve of thinking and saying, perhaps, "there is no harm in this or that." Christ pleased not Himself. His reason for action was His Father's will, and not the absence of a prohibition. And we are sanctified unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. "They forsook all," and where Christ went they went. They are associated with their Lord in His love to souls, and in the walk of life. This is liberty. May we, having Christ our life, have Him as our one motive! detached from all to Him, yet channels for all the blessing and grace we have ourselves tasted in Him There is power to attract out of every corruption around, and to gather the soul into the thoughts and ways of God, by the revelation of

Christ Himself, Verse 12. Christ was the manifestation on earth of God's power and character-of grace. Of this the leper's case which follows is a striking witness; for leprosy was an evil which none but God could remove. But God was there in grace. Leprosy presented sin in the aspect of uncleanness. A man full of it on seeing Jesus, fell on his face, and besought Him, saying, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." There is the recognition of Divine power in Jesus, but he has not full confidence in His grace. He seems disheartened by misery, and almost in despair says, "If thou wilt," &c. But He who alone on earth had the title so to say, says, "I will." It was God only-not in heaven, but come down in man and among men. Christ was there, who could touch the leper and the leprosy without being touched by it. Divine power was needed, doubtless, and the very priests could not but attest the results of its intervention, but there was Divine and perfect love in His touch, while it was the touch of a man, a man who acknowledged the ordinances of God, as one who had been born under law. Thus this "turned for a testimony." For the leper must go to the priest, and what could he think? Why, who has been here? Jehovah must have been to heal the man.

Verse 16. And what next? Jesus "withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed. Let the power exercised be ever so great, and manifestly Divine, He is the dependent man; and this is just where we fail.

Verse 18. Here we have another thing-not the power of Satan, as in chap. iv., nor the uncleanness of sin, typified by leprosy, but the guilt of sin. They brought the man, because they felt the need; and there was the perseverance of faith, which would not be put off till another day. And Jesus brings forgiveness of sins, as well as cleansing from defilement. This is what appears in the instance of the palsied man. The first and grand point is that Jesus pronounces his sins forgiven. Authority to pardon was come in the person of the Son of man on earth, whatever scribes and Pharisees might think. It was God, the Lord Jehovah, but the Son of man withal, having on earth power to forgive sins, and using it. It is in the way Israel is to be forgiven by and by; (compare Psa. 103:3;) and accordingly, the Lord gives the proof of that authority to forgive by the healing the disease of the paralytic. "That ye may know," &c. (Verse 14.) The man was to know in his relationship to God, that his guilt was gone. Through infinite grace, we are entitled to more than even this; for we have the righteousness of the accepted man in God's presence. We are made the righteousness of God in Him. This palsied man was a sample of what will be, in the future day, Israel's portion. Jesus was forgiving iniquities and healing diseases. He had shown the power to do the one; now He would show that He could do the other also. It is God's delight to do it all. You may not believe that you can have such a boon, but it is ours in Christ. The perfect Man has come with perfect title in His person. God wrought there, but it was also as a man filled with the Holy Ghost. The believer walks, too, a proof not to himself so much as to others that God was there. The man ought not to say, "I wonder if I can walk;" if he has faith, he will get up and do it.

Two things are here present. First, the exceeding blessed grace that the Lord is come, the power of God within the sphere of human misery, which, extreme as it may be, does but make that power evident. If I look around as a man, I am lost. I cannot unriddle the history of the world-abominations committed in the name of Christ, Himself rejected by His people Israel, and crucified by those Gentiles to whom God had entrusted the government of the world, Mahometanism, heathenism: what kind of a God have you, says the reasoning heart, when it is such a world! But here I have the Lord come down into all the wretchedness, sickness, sin; and my

heart is drawn away from pleasure and sorrow to Him. How beautiful to see heart after heart brought around this One, the only due center, soon to be the risen head of the new creation, Himself the object drawing out feelings and affections of which He alone is worthy; He who by His excellency gives excellency, and by His gracious thoughts towards us produces and draws out gracious thoughts in us. Next, our hearts are fixed just so far as we have an object-fixed according to God, when we have Christ Himself before us. How can I love if I have nothing to love? A man is what he feels, and likes, and thinks. If my soul lives and feeds upon that which is most excellent—Christ the bread of God, Christ becomes, in a practical sense, formed in the heart. In Him, the man Christ Jesus, God has had all His delight, and the display of it too.

Remark further, that in the accounts we have seen, Divine power in the person of Jesus, the Son of man, is exercised in the midst of Israel. First, chap. iv. 31-41, its triumph over the enemy's power in sicknesses and in demoniacal possessions, and the testimony of the kingdom, when all such effects of Satan's work should disappear. This last opens the way for the more positive and deeper blessing of souls, being put in relationship to God. Hence from chap. v. 1-26, (the call of Peter, the cleansing of the leper, and the pardon of the palsied man,) it is a question of the state of the soul, (whatever the outward accompaniments might be) of the authority of the word over the heart, of faith, and of Christ's personal glory. Still it was grace in operation towards Israel; grace, if one may so speak, in government. To Israel God had said that He would not put upon them the plagues of Egypt, save for their sin. They were an outwardly elect, redeemed people, but they were under God's government; and hence chastening came, of which the leprosy and the palsy were peculiar samples. Jesus shows Himself to be "Jehovah that healeth thee," in the midst of Israel, though He was passing away from them into a wider display of power and goodness. He could have healed every one, leprosy or paralytic; He could have removed all the diseases, now, alas! brought on the Israelites; but in these cases it is where they come to Him in quest of healing, i.e. it is in answer to faith that He works. He was there, showing Divine power and grace in healing.

Verse 27, &c. But this grace, being of God and sovereign, could not be bounded by human circumstances. Wherever a want appeared to Him, could He gainsay His power or His love? Now, see how that connects itself with what follows. There was full deliverance for all who trusted in Israel, but He could not, and would not, limit His grace. The law limited, but when Himself, the God who gave it, came, everybody who needs Him is welcome: His house is a house of prayer for all nations. Hence He calls a publican, a Jew indeed, but detested by the Israelites, and in a sense rightly, when viewed as the mark of their servitude nationally. A publican was one who profited by their Gentile masters, to extort money from Israel, and therefore naturally regarded with horror. But Jesus calls one named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom,—calls him to be an apostle! Grace must act according to its own rights. If God has been good to you or me, does that hinder His mercy and love to another? Grace creates the instrument it wants to act by; and it will flow farther than the publican yet, even to the most distant Gentile. True, Israel had the promises, the Gentile, strictly speaking, had none; but for that very reason it was more purely grace, and grace would act towards the Gentiles. The Lord Himself, God, was there, and Israel could not be the center, nor the temple, when He was there, the despised Lord of both. He is the door, the new center and turning point of blessing; not a mere branch of the old vine, but Himself the true vine. As a Jew, He was subject to ordinances, but as the Lord, He is above them, and He breaks out beyond all the old restrictions.

“Levi made him a great feast in his own house, and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them; but their scribes and Pharisees murmured.” It was a terrible sight and blow to such. But Jesus answers, “They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” They mistook the Lord altogether: He came to show how grace could deal with those who had no righteousness.

Verse 33, &c. He is now breaking, as it were, out of the old thing. He is faithful to Israel, but breaking up that order of things. How could they fast who owned the presence of the divine husband of Israel, the Messiah? The time was coming when the cross must be taken; but when the Bridegroom is there, fasting was out of place and season.

Ver. 36-39. Further, the old garment cannot be patched with new cloth. Jesus would do no such thing as tack on Christianity to Judaism. Flesh and law go together, but grace and law, God's righteousness and man's, will never mix. Neither can the new wine, the power of the Spirit, be put into the old legal ordinances without loss on all sides. A man accustomed to forms, human arrangement, fathers' religion, &c., never likes the new principle and power of the kingdom; he says, The old is better. Such is nature; grace is offensive to it. Nor does man improve in divine things. He can degrade himself and give up what his heart never relished. And this goes on rapidly to-day.

## Notes on Luke 6

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HERE we have a most weighty thing spoken of—the Sabbath. It is a question that often agitates the minds of men, and was then specially important as closing Jewish relations. And this, it will be borne in mind, was just where the Lord had morally arrived at the close of the preceding chapter. The rights of His person and His grace, now becoming more rejected by the religionists of Israel, reach out beyond the narrow bounds of that proud people. God thereon, by degrees, intimates the coming purpose of His mercy: His salvation in due time shall be sent unto the Gentiles, and they will hear if the Jew judges himself unworthy of everlasting life. God will have His own joy of saving souls somewhere.

Now it is very evident that the incident of the cornfields, (ver. 1-5,) “on the second sabbath after the first,” thoroughly falls in with the object of the Spirit in hand. “The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.” His person entitles Him to supremacy over that which was the sign of the covenant of the law. In the next case, (6-10) He asserts the right to do good on the sabbath-days, as His adversaries on the same day show their disposition to destroy.

The sabbath, in any real sense, man had entirely lost; indeed, He had never entered into God's thoughts of rest. It was His rest, and had not sin spoiled all, man should have enjoyed that which was the result not of his own, but of God's, labor. This is the proper character of that rest which belongs to man distinctively; but sin having come in, the necessity has arisen that God should work afresh, if man is ever to share the rest of God. (See Heb. 4) Meanwhile, Christ has appeared and finished the work which God gave Him to do. Hence, we who believe, find rest in Christ, as does God Himself. In Him, by virtue of the accomplished and accepted work of redemption, we have our sabbath spiritually.

The day was set apart and hallowed from the beginning (Genesis) Afterward it came in, first in grace to Israel, marked by the cessation of the manna and a double portion to provide for that holy day; (Ex. 16) and, secondly, as a part of the law of Sinai, and incorporated with every new and special dealing of Jehovah. (chap. xx.; see also xxxi 13, 14; xxxiii. 14; xxxiv. 21; and xxxv 2) It was a memorial thenceforward of the deliverance out of Egypt. (Deut. 5:15.) Accordingly, the prophets expressly treat it as a sign of Israel's separation from all other nations unto God, and of God's covenant with them. (Ezek. 20:12-20; 22:8.; xxiii 38; xliv. 21; Isa. 56; 58 Jer. 17:4.) But then, in the past, Israel, a sinful people, had the sabbath as a legal ordinance, and consequently are condemned by it as by all else.

Where is this covenant with Israel? All gone, because of their iniquity. Hence they were thrown into the hands of the Gentiles, and became slaves. “Behold we are servants this day; and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we are servants in it: and it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us, because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle at their pleasure, and we are in great distress.” (Neh. 9:36, 37). If they had a temple after the captivity, it was only at the mercy of their Persian masters. The outward emblem lingered on no doubt, and was especially

made much to dishonor Him, of whom and whose work it was so significant; but where was its reality when Jesus was on earth? Alas! He lies in the grave all the day which His murderers kept as a day holy to Jehovah (“for that sabbath was an high day!”) awful testimony to the Jews of their position. Their own Messiah slain by His own people: such was the truth which that sabbath-day uttered to him who had ears to hear. Israel never had the rest of God. If Joshua had given them rest, &c. (Heb. 4). There remaineth therefore a rest. They must own Jesus first.

But the rejected Jesus was Son of man, and the Son of man was Lord of the sabbath (ver. 5)—a truth of the utmost gravity, to be asserted with all strength. Those who confound the Lord's-day with the sabbath are in danger of forgetting this. It was the very point here in controversy with the Jews who maintained that the sabbath was superior to the Lord. But He shows that another new principle had come in, which wholly over-leaped the old, and that to remain in the old was to have no deliverance. For there is no possibility for a lustful creature to be under a commandment that condemns lust, without being condemned. Grace, however, has entered through a rejected Christ, and now there is rest for us who believe- not for those who are on the ground of law.

This is the reason why Christians keep the first day of the week, and not the seventh or sabbath-day. The rest was acquired by the power of Christ's redemption, and the first day, when He arose from the dead, was that which proclaimed it to faith, spite of man's guilt and ruin. The seventh day will be the rest of man on earth; the first day celebrates Christ's taking us in Him to heaven. Then was life from the dead, life more abundantly, liberty from the law and every consequence of sin—in a word, the victory of grace. The Christian therefore has the first day distinctively, because it belongs to and witnesses of the perfected work of Christ, and consequently introduces heavenly rest. The first day is in contrast with the seventh, which appertained to the round of man's labor in nature and of the Jew's under the law, in which Adam and Israel utterly broke down. It is the Lord's-day emphatically, and thus testifies of the triumph of Christ's word and the glory of His person—not the day which guilty unbelief would have perverted into the proof and means of His inferiority. It is positive, direct blessing to Him who owns and honors it—not because it is the close of legal toil, but the commencement of Christian hope -the resurrection-day when we begin our spiritual life; and look on for what will crown so precious a pledge.

Here, however, the grand thing is the maintenance of the rights and authority of the Son of man. You never can, according to God, raise up the title of the sabbath against the Lord of the sabbath.

Ver. 3-5. What did David, the anointed of the Lord, when Saul persecuted him and sought his life Was it of God, then, to uphold the ritual and so starve the man after His heart? No; the foundations were out of course, and everything became common in Israel when the chosen king was thus iniquitously rejected. But a greater One, and graver sin were now in their midst. The Son indeed, but the Root of David, God Himself was there; He who instituted the sabbath, its Lord, was there in the person of the Son of man.

Ver. 6-10. But if God was there, would He deny His own goodness or restrain His power in presence of human misery, because “the Scribes and Pharisees watched Him whether He would heal on the sabbath day?” Divine love must act and heal the withered hand, even if wretched man should seek to find therein an accusation. And they were filled with madness and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus; (11;) but Jesus in those days retired to a mountain to

pray. He drew near to God, to commune with Him what He was to do for them. (ver. 12). His was the activity of grace—of love displaying itself holily and mightily in the midst of evil.

Ver. 13-16. “And when it was day he called his disciples,” &c. In this call He proves that He was the only One who could empower others to bear this testimony also: and yet here, as in all that passed before, He is the lowly dependent One—perfect man, as well as God. He was in perfect, unbroken communion with His God and Father, though Himself God manifest in the flesh. How blessedly near us this brings Him, though so infinitely above us! What He did, we should aim at, whatever our measure and our little sphere. In Him we see man perfect in that place of power wherein He came.

He knew whom he chose. He knew that one of them had a devil; but He sent them out. Twelve He chose specially, whom also He called apostles, “sent ones.” It was an important and significant word, as quite a distinct thing both from law and promises. No one was sent out by law. Now God is active; He is sending His Son, and the Son is sending out apostles. The love of God is active in gathering souls. This first Sent One is a man, really and truly. God's work of His grace must be done by His Son: not by angels, but by His own Son, as the man Christ Jesus, and He sends men out from Himself. The gathering point is Man—Himself of course. To Man God has committed all things. While it must be God who shows grace, the Son of man it is who comes on the mission of love and sends out men to men.

Ver. 17-19. Whatever He attracts by, He gathers round Himself to worship, surrounds Himself with them, and then comes down and stands in the plain. The great multitude are attracted by His miracles and their wants, coming to hear and be healed. The company of the disciples were an inner circle. “The whole multitude sought to touch him.” It is not said that they were converted, which is another thing; but living power went out of Him, healing their bodily misery and delivering from the power of Satan.

Ver. 20, &c. He now lifts up His eyes on His disciples and speaks to them, not as in Matt. 5 &c., giving them the developed principles of the kingdom; but distinguishing those before Him as the remnant. Hence it is “ye” here. He puts seal and stamp on those actually gathered round Himself. They are to be like Him. He is at once their center and their pattern. He was God, but the fullness of the Holy Ghost dwelt in Him as man also; and so He could say, “I do always those things which please him.” So should it be with those around Him.

Ver. 20-26. “Blessed [are] ye poor; for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed [are] ye that hunger now; for ye shall be filled. Blessed [are] ye that weep now; for ye shall laugh. Blessed are ye when men shall hate you,” &c. These words of the Savior give the contrast of those He pronounces blessed with all that are at ease in this world. Those who, if in this life only they had hope in Christ would be of all men the most miserable, are the only happy few: they are severed from all others, and put in relationship with Him the source of blessing, to be blessed. If you can make yourselves happy and comfortable in this world which has rejected Jesus, count not on His blessing.

It is the poor, the despised with Jesus who shall have the kingdom. He says, if we may so speak, “I am distinguishing you,” (for there is no enunciation of abstract principles, as in the beginning of Matt. 5, but a speaking to the hearts of those gathered around Him). “I am come as the center of power and active love. There is but one sole place of blessing on earth. With Me you are blessed.”

Others may be gay and cheerful where Christ has no place; but it is a time when a true spiritual soul can get no good save with Christ. It is a definite distinction of, and address to, the disciples who attached themselves to Him. This is made clear in verse 22, where the persecution for righteousness, which St. Matthew carefully records, is omitted. Here it is only a question of suffering "for the Son of man's sake."

In the midst of a world of misery and selfishness, there came One who displayed not law nor judgment, but grace. But the light shines in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. Like the adder that hears nothing, the world goes on as deaf as it is blind. No; you who are "full" now Jesus has no charm for you; but you, disciples, are weeping now, the sorrow and the sin of man distress your spirit: you shall rejoice. When God has His way, you, who cannot be satisfied with the husks, shall be filled. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. You have your portion with Christ here, you shall have it with Christ in heaven. You suffer with the suffering One, you shall have glory with the glorified One. But the others!—they shall have what they seek. For the full there shall be a famine by and by, for they have lost God. If you can laugh in such a world as this, you shall weep when God's time for blessing comes. They are of the world, and the world loves its own. "So did their fathers to the false prophets." Are the times altered? Is Christ's character changed? It is not a whit more agreeable to the flesh. And if you can find your joy, ease, and pleasure in the world, Christ could not, and you have not His Spirit. He that will be its friend, is the enemy of God. Can the disciple of Jesus be merry and gay in a world which has sin wrapped up in it? There is communion with Jesus, joy in the Spirit, while patient in tribulation; but this is quite another thing. It is a serious joy, though very real and blessed.

From verse 27, He shows what must be the conduct of the disciples as such. They were to manifest God, to be the unfolding of what was displayed in Him. Grace which was in Him in fullness and perfection should be reproduced in them, sadly as we all fail in this—the principle of our path. "Love your enemies," &c. God loved us when we were His enemies, and we have now to show practically what God is. Verse 29 brings us into entirely human circumstances, patiently learning in them; or, as in 1 Peter 2, doing well, suffering for it, and taking it patiently. This may seem poor comfort. But Jesus did so, and love must so manifest itself in an evil world. The time comes when God will judge, instead of bearing long as now; but now, at whatever cost to self, show love as Christ did. Flesh can love for love (v. 32, 33), but the disciples of Christ are called to imitate God, and walk in love. "Love ye your enemies, and do good and lend, hoping for nothing again, and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest; for he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil."

What a blessed character of God comes out here! It is not righteousness, though surely there was that, but in the world where God had to do with the unthankful and evil, He shows grace. For the angels He has not grace, but love; but Christ in this world of sin is grace (i.e. love to those who deserve it not.) "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." It is not with but "as your Father." As He loves His enemies, so do you; He is merciful, be ye also merciful. In all this, God's character is displayed—perfect love in a world of sinners. It must cost us something; it cost the life of Christ. His love was a stream which, if it met with hindrances in its way, only went on flowing over, and leaving them behind till it reached the cross.

Ver. 37. This is not certain things required in order to get life, but the result of certain conduct shown. "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged," &c. As though He had said, You will find the consequences of your conduct as Christ did. He took the lowest place, but He has got the highest now. He humbled Himself; "wherefore God also hath highly exalted him," &c. He came not to judge, and now "all judgment is committed to the Son." Thus we not only have the display of grace, but divine character meeting its consequences. It is a question of government—of walking with the Lord; it must cost a great deal in the path, but in the end it will be "full measure, pressed down," &c. There will be God's blessing, too, in the way; though self is mortified. Grace will abound, according to God's way.

Ver. 39. See the contrast of those who are utter blindness, and the blind leading the blind. You must let them alone; leave them to go on their own way; but you have to take your place with Me; and the disciple is not above his master, but you shall be as your Master. If your Master suffers, you suffer; if it has cost your Master much, it must cost you much. If Christ teaches you, it is to make you possess the divine learning that He has Himself. And see what a place He gives us! When He gives, what does He give? The very same that He has Himself. "As he is, so are we in this world." "Not as the world giveth," which, if it gives a little, reserves the chief for itself; but as though he said, "I am putting you in the very same learning that is in my nature: the grace that I have you are to have." But people do not like to do those things that Jesus did. Why is there so much argument about that one passage, "resist not evil?" It is because you like to resist evil. Your will is touched, your conscience is reached; for it is given you as matter-of-fact exhortation; but you do not like it, and you will get rid of it if you can. These things are given as tests for the conscience; they judge the eye, not the path only. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." The object is wrong, if you have not light for the step. There may be difficulties in going up a steep hill, but if the object before you is clear, you get over them as quickly as you can. This is what is meant by the expression, "This one thing I do," &c. It is having one object, and the mind intent on accomplishing it. If it is so with you, there will be sure to be light in the path—light not for ten years hence but for this one step that is before you, and then for the next. It was said to Moses, "Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward;" and when they were out in the wilderness, the pillar was given to be their constant guide. So with us; we are called out to go after Christ on the principle of obedience, and this puts us into connection with Him in the revelation of His will, not giving us to see all the path onwards. A man may see a wall, and say, "I cannot go that way: there is a wall," while if he but takes a single step, he will find that there is a path all down by the side of the wall.

Ver. 44. "Every tree is known by his own fruit." Not only bearing fruit, but fruit that Christ produces, should be ours. There is fruit that an upright nature produces, such as that of the young man who came to Jesus, but that was not divine fruit—"its own fruit;" and where Christ is the root and the stock, it is Christian fruit, i.e. fruit that will remain (John 15:16). Two men may go together up to a certain point, and then some test for Christ comes; one goes on with Him, and the other turns aside. "Its own fruit"—fruit shows itself, springs of itself. There will not be the question of, What harm in this or that? What harm in being rich? as a person once asked me. If it shuts you out of heaven, is there any harm in that? Oh, I did not think of that! But the secret is, that you like the things. The evil is not the things themselves dug out of the earth, but the love in the heart for them. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." An impatient word betrays the heart. A

blow I may restrain and yet utter the word.

Ver. 47. In the hearing of all the multitude the Lord speaks now about the house built upon the rock, &c. This is not a question about building upon Christ, the Rock, for the salvation of the sinner. It is the path of the saint. But where Christ's word does connect with Himself, see the result. The very thing people are called upon to do is to follow Him; and when I follow, it proves that the Master's words have taken such hold upon my soul that they have power to carry me over the difficulties. "My soul followeth hard after Thee." A man's affections, heart, will, are taken and connected with Christ, instead of with himself. Is Christ sufficiently precious to make me leave all beside and follow Him, to do those things that please Him? "If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, but shall have the light of life." "As when the bright shining of a candle cloth give thee light." Keeping close to Christ, the light shines upon us. If we have to get into the light, we may be dazzled by it. Thus He has gathered round Himself in light and love those whom He will have to enjoy Himself, and be as their Master, at length to be conformed to His image in glory.

## Notes on Luke 7

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WE have seen the Lord, rejected by Israel, gradually, in virtue of His person and rights, breaking out beyond the ancient limits, and gathering the remnant round Himself, the new and only just object of God, the source of a mission in grace, and the full development and exemplification of holy love in an evil world; for whatever the principles laid down in chap. vi., they are but the expression of God's character in grace, as displayed in Christ here below.

In accordance with this, we have now (ver. 1-10) the case of the centurion, and a very full and striking one it is. It is not merely an act of grace, but grace, to a Gentile. Nor is this all. The principle on which the apostle rests this question is brought out. "It is of faith, that it might be by grace, that the promise might be sure to all the seed." Faith, as the great turning-point, is introduced. It was no mere theory: it was living faith, and such faith as had not been seen in Israel. Neither was there presumption, but on the contrary, remarkable humility. He recognized the honor God had put upon His people; he sees, holds to it, owns and acts upon it, spite of their low and debased, and in every other respect, unworthy condition. Despised and failing as they might be, he loved the Jews as God's people, and for His sake, and he had built them a synagogue. Unfeigned lowliness was his, though (yea, rather, for) his faith was far beyond those he honored. Consequently, he had a very high apprehension of the power and glory of the person of Christ as Divine, reaching out beyond Jewish thoughts altogether. He does not refer to the Lord as Messiah, but recognized in Him the power of God in love. This was blessed faith which forgets itself in the exaltation of its object. He saw not Jesus, it would seem, but assuredly gathered from what "he heard," that diseases were nothing to Him but occasions wherein to display His absolute authority and His sovereign mercy. He was a stranger and the Jews were God's people: must not they or their elders be the fittest to bring this wonderful person? For he confided in His mercy as well as His power, and his servant, "dear unto him," was sick and ready to die. He needed Jesus.

"Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof; wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed." There was surely the deepest personal respect and affection. Untaught as he might be in other things, he strongly felt the excellency of Christ's person, and here again with humility correspondent to the measure in which His glory was seen. This message of the centurion's friends admirably depicts his character and feeling. He told nothing to Jesus of his service to the Jews, spoke of nothing personal save his unworthiness, and this so consistently, that he begged Jesus not to come to his house, as unworthy to receive Him. There was in this soul the exact opposite of doing Christ an honor, by believing on Him, and far from him was the pretense of receiving Christ to set himself up: both, alas! found often elsewhere. The simplicity of his heart is as apparent as his strong faith. There was none such in Israel, and yet it was in one who loved Israel. It was a lesson of grace, in every way, for the crowd that followed Jesus-for us, too, most surely.

Along with grace to the Gentiles came the evidence of power to raise the dead, but here it was manifested in human sympathies, in witness that God had visited His people. (Ver. 11-17.) It was the power of resurrection, a power which was yet to be shown more gloriously and to be the source of that which is new for man according to God-the God who raiseth the dead. It was another and wondrous proof that He is here going, in the character of His action, without the sphere of the law and its ordinances. "For the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth." What can it avail for one who is dead? "But what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh," &c. It was grace, indeed, and divine energy, but withal displayed in One who was touched with the feeling of our infirmities. And how astonishingly all the details bring this out? The dead man was "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." "And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother." How exquisitely human, and withal how unmistakably divine!

It is manifest that these two cases illustrate the change which the Spirit is attesting in this part of St. Luke. Nor is it otherwise with the scene that follows, which brings out in fact the hinge of the dispensation. The Lord bears witness to John Baptist, not John to the Lord. John sends two of his disciples, on the report of the Lord's miracles, to learn from Himself who he is. Are we surprised? He had preached and baptized in the confession of sins and in faith of the coming Messiah. But now all was changed. John was in prison, not delivered, and it was no longer a people preparing for the Lord. Was it not strange? At any rate, John sought a plain answer, and well could he trust the word of One who did such mighty and holy works. But what a comment upon the marvelous change was this very inquiry. It was a sort of turning over the disciples of John to the Lord. "And in the same hour he cured many of their infirmities, and plagues, and evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way and tell John," &c. At the same time, if he receives no longer testimony from John, He bears it to him, owned John and his work. But they were owned from a higher ground where the Lord in grace and resurrection power had placed Himself; and this was based on entire rejection in and by the world, so that, though He was doing all good, still it was "blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." Hence in the very verse where the Lord recognizes, in the fullest way, John the Baptist, He marks the change about to take place, - "he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." Happy they who justified God in being baptized of John -wretched the self-righteous who rejected His counsel against themselves. Wisdom is justified of all her children. They understand the ways of God, whether in the servant or the Lord. The ways are quite different, but understood in grace. This generation, alas! understands none, finds fault with all. John is too righteous for them, Jesus is too gracious. The mourning of the one and the piping of the other are utterly distasteful. Such is man's wisdom to the ways of God. But the children of wisdom justify wisdom notwithstanding And in spite of the perverseness of men, our Lord did not stop manifesting Himself to the world. Accordingly a tale follows (36-.50) which shows how God's wisdom is justified by and in those who own it in Jesus. It is a tale of grace, of pure, plenary, pardoning grace, which rests not till its object is dismissed in perfect peace. Jesus is in the Pharisee's house, who failed entirely in the essential point: Simon perceived not the glory of Christ. In this the Lord meets him, and shows, in contrast with the woman "which was a sinner," the point where this Pharisee was exercising judgment to be precisely that wherein he failed. God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways. What if the despised Jesus were not a prophet only, but a Savior of poor lost sinners? Ah,

God was unknown-that was the secret. The converted soul sees the glory of the Lord as grace towards itself; he who is unconvinced, however interested humanly, judges according to his own thoughts, and therefore necessarily fails to see the glory which is not according to these thoughts. Man's judgment of the gospel must be wrong therefore; his reception of it, as grace, is alone right, and alone the way of coming to the knowledge of it.

This was, then, a direct and distinct example of God's ways. It was a forgiving of sins in grace, sovereignly and freely, to any poor sinner, manifesting and producing love in the forgiven, who loves God, because God is love, and this in respect of his sins, in Jesus the Lord. It was proper grace-the ground on which any one, a Gentile or not, would be received, and God manifested not in requirement from man (and so making man in the flesh of importance), but making God all, and His character in sovereign grace; so bringing in blessing, and its blessed effect upon the heart, developing the fruits of grace in a heart restored to confidence in God by the sense of His goodness.

What a blessed picture! Goodness known not only in the act, but in Him who did it. The discernment of guilt in its gross forms by man was one thing, but the grace of God which could blot out and forgive all was quite another. It was not Christ there to judge, and sanction Pharisees, but love to a sinner, manifesting God in this new character of grace, producing thankful, holy love to God, and a blessed relationship, sovereign, and beyond the reach of man. But how has God always to prove Himself right in His goodness to man! so hard is man's heart. But the Lord identifies Himself with the believer, and vindicates him against the haughty world, and this gives assurance. Perfectly regardless of comments, He applies Himself, not to unbelief, which were useless, but to those who have faith, and having communicated forgiveness, shows the soul his uprightness, i.e. the right thoughts of God and self, which faith has. The last word settles the whole question. The soul's love was a ground of evidence and reasoning, not, of course, the cause. "Thy faith hath saved thee" said the Lord to the woman, "go in peace." All is discharged from the conscience, and the heart finds itself infinitely and everlastingly a debtor to the continual fountain of all grace.

## Notes on Luke 8

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We have seen, in what has preceded, the Lord presenting Himself, by His words, and His work, as a new center, to which and round which His people were gathered. Before this, Jehovah had been the center, when Israel was the gathering point—for Jehovah was among the Jews, and the temple the place where He met with the people, But now the Son is here, “God manifest in the flesh,” and He must be the center of everything. But Israel would not be gathered, as the Lord Himself said in Matt. 23:37, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, but ye would not.” Again in Isa. 65:2, “I have spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people.” Israel could not have the blessing, for the flesh could not hold it. The flesh simply looked at as such, is “as grass.” (Isa. 40). “All flesh is grass.” We have these two great principles running through the latter chapters of Isaiah: first that flesh, as flesh, could not hold the blessing, and be the depository for the promises. For when all grace came, in the person of the Lord, the people to whom He was sent He found withered down like grass. “Surely the people is grass: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever.” But God was not going to give up His purpose. Therefore in chap. xlix we find Jehovah says unto Christ, “Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.” Then Christ says, If God is to be glorified in Israel, “I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for naught, and in vain, yet surely my judgment is with Jehovah, and my reward with my God.” Then saith Jehovah, “Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorified in the eyes of Jehovah. I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth.” This is what Christ is becoming in Luke's gospel— “a light to lighten the Gentiles,” &c. And afterward we find Paul quoting, with the perfect accuracy of the Spirit, this very scripture, so exactly fitted for them, to the Jews at Antioch. “It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken unto you, but seeing ye judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles,” &c. (Acts 13:46-47; and again, Acts 28:28). Israel will be gathered afterward, for Christ will hereafter raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the preserved of Israel; but before this, He turns to the Gentiles. All this the Lord pictures to us in Luke. In chap. 7. we see Israel refused both John the Baptist and Christ, but “wisdom is justified of her children.” The Pharisees and lawyers did not justify God at all, for they saw no beauty in Jesus, whereas the publicans did; and thus the poor woman, “who was a sinner,” whose heart was touched by the grace of God, is the true child of wisdom, and is brought in here as an illustration of Christ being the new center of blessing, “though Israel be not gathered.”

The Lord then goes on with his testimony, gathering by the word, first, by parables, as in chap. viii., and then in chap. 9. sending forth his disciples to preach, with this commission, to shake off the dust from their feet, if they are not received, a token of the last testimony being given, when they are given up.

Here are two classes of persons gathered round Christ. First, the twelve apostles were public witnesses, fitted by Divine grace to be the vessels of testimony, manifesting the electing power of God in calling them, and sending them forth in all the energy of ministry; Christ's apostles, sent out by Himself— “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you” —His chosen ones. “Ye have not

chosen me, but I have chosen you," &c. Then, secondly, there were others who were gathered by affection round Him, having no place of office in the Church, but those whose hearts were touched and drawn round Him, not sent out like the first class, but not less devoted in heart than the apostles, for they followed Him, and ministered to Him of their substance.

Ver. 4-8, we have the parable of the sower; and here, as previously remarked, it is not the kingdom brought out, as in Matthew, but the testimony as to what and whom Christ was gathering, and not as to the form the kingdom would take afterward. The very fact of Christ coming as the sower, proved that Israel was set aside; for had it been now to Israel as His vineyard, He must have come seeking fruit from the vine He had long before planted. He had come to Israel previously, seeking fruit, and finding none. He now comes in the new character of the sower, which is quite another thing. He comes into a waste world, where there was nothing, and He begins a fresh work. God is not now looking for fruit from man in one sense, because man has been proved to be a bad tree; and the more you dig about and dung a bad tree, the more bad fruit it produces. "A tree is known by its fruits." Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. God is now going to produce the fruit He requires. He is not now looking for man to produce anything, for John Baptist said, "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." Therefore, the Lord now comes as sower, not looking for fruit, but doing that which will produce it.

He then goes on to describe the character and effect of the sowing, and the disciples ask the meaning of the parable. (Ver. 9-15). Israel, as such, had forfeited its place and therefore was "a people of no understanding." (Isa. 27:11). Long patience had waited on Israel. Seven hundred years had passed since the word was given to Isaiah, "Go tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not." As individuals, they might be drawn round the person of the Lord, but as a nation they were blinded. The disciples had an explanation of the parable, but as a nation, the Lord speaks to them in parables; (see ver. 10); thus fulfilling to the nation the very words spoken by the prophet so long before. Now the testimony is closed as to Israel, though not as to God's final purpose respecting them.

The seed is sown indiscriminately, and although man rejects it, because his will is opposed, nevertheless it is sown in his heart; for this parable shows how the word of God is perfectly adapted to the need of man, meeting his conscience and heart. "Never man spake like this man." Christ's word came with a power that reached the heart and affections: the WILL is corrupt and therefore resists it. It is not abstract grace here, but the condition of man that is recognized; therefore we find the word so perfectly suited to the need, not claiming righteousness from man, but coming in with power to show him that he is a sinner, and laying open the thoughts and intents of the heart. When the heart is thus detected, the word comes, with all gentleness and comfort, for healing and rest, because there is grace to meet a soul in whatever state it may be found. The heart is spoken to, and therefore the gospel leaves man without excuse. Some received the word with joy. (ver. 13). This was a proof that the conscience was untouched; for when that is reached it is anything but joy, until forgiveness is known." The feelings may be moved for a time, and the word be listened to with a joy which will give place to sorrow. The reason truth is thus flippantly taken up with joy is because there is no root, and so it is received in joy and given up in trouble.

Another class is where thorns spring up and choke the word. The understanding may be convinced and receive the truth, but the cares, pleasures, and riches of this world come in and choke the word. Now these “cares” are most subtle things, because they enter as necessary duties, and there is no sin in doing one’s duty. Nay, it is right that a man should do his duty in his daily calling. But if these duties choke the word, and a man loses his soul through it, what then? The natural tendency of the heart often needs to be met with that word, “Take heed and beware of covetousness.” (chap. 12.) It is the love of possession. One came to the Lord, saying, “Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.” The heart wanted to keep it. If love of the world or covetousness gets in amongst the saints, it is an insidious thing and most difficult to meet, because it is often not open to discipline; and yet, if covetousness slips into the heart, it checks the power of Christ over the soul and conscience, and eats out the practical life of the Christian, and his soul is withered, withered, withered. It may be checked by the power of God coming in; but this covetous care about earthy things is so subtle that while there is nothing on which to lay the hand, the practical power of Christian life in the soul is gone, though of course, I need hardly say, eternal life can never be lost in those who once had it.

“That on the good ground are they which, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.” There may seem to the world to be fruits bright and blessed, but if people have not got Christ, they tire. There will be no enduring, unless Christ has possession of the soul; but if He has, there will be an abiding motive, and people will go on, and “bring forth fruit with patience.”

They that hear and keep go steadily on, having their motive for action in the Lord. Trouble may come in, in the Church; disappointment may arise, even from brethren; but they go on just the same, because they have got Christ before them; for the word they have heard and keep connects them with Christ, and He is more than anything else.

This is a question, not of eternal salvation, but the practical effect of the word as seen in this world (ver. 16-18)—the growth of the word in the soul, and that will not be hidden under a bushel. “Ye are the light of the world” and “the salt of the earth.” In those who only appear to be Christians it soon comes to nothing. “Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he seemeth, to have.” But those in whom the word works effectually are to be as a “candle” set on a candlestick. Israel being set aside for a season, God sets up a new light in the World; light lit up by God, because of the world’s darkness. When Christ was here He was the light of the world, because of its darkness, and now we should be a light in the world, as we are “light in the Lord.” The light is here set up by Christ’s word, and people are responsible for the word received. Suppose you have heard the word and bring forth no fruit, it will all come out, by and by, that you have heard the word and lost it, and the spiritual power accompanying it. For, even if you are saints, all that you have heard, without fruit or power resulting there from, it will come out; for nothing is hid that shall not be known or come abroad. “Take heed how ye hear.” Christ is looking for the results of His sowing. There must be not only the hearing, but the possessing, and in this rests the responsibility; for if you keep the word which you have heard, more shall be given you. If, on hearing, I possess that which I hear, not merely have joy in receiving it, but possess it as my own, then it becomes a part of the substance of my soul, and I shall get more; for when the truth has become a substance in my soul, there is a capacity for receiving more. Suppose, e.g., you hear the truth of the Lord’s second coming and see your portion as the bride of Christ, and you do

not lay hold of it practically, so as to possess it, (have communion with God about it, which is possession); you will presently lose the expectation of His coming and forget your place of separation from the world, and the truth will gradually slip away, because you are not holding it in your soul before God. Consequently your soul becomes dead and dull, and you lose the very truth you have received. Thus, if one lives daily as waiting for the Lord from heaven, there will be no planning for the future, no laying up for the morrow; such a man will learn more and more, as other truths will open round this one grand central one, and he will be kept in the truth. If, on the other hand, he drops this center truth by saying, "He cannot come yet; so many things must happen first," then is the progress of such an one's communion with God hindered, for, as we have said, it is according to what a man has heard and holds with God that there can be any growth; for what is the use of teaching me that the Lord may come to-morrow, if I am going on living as though He were not coming for a hundred years? Or where is the comfort and blessedness of the truth to my soul, if I am saying in my heart, "My Lord delayeth his coming?" Though I cannot lose my eternal life, yet if I am losing the truth and light I have had, I shall be merely floating on in the current of life, half world and half Christ, and all power of Christian life will be dimmed in my soul. If the truth is held in communion with God, it separates to Himself. Truth is to produce fruit, and you have no truth that does not bear fruit. Truth must build up the soul. "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." Christ becomes precious in and by the truth that I learn; and if it has not that power, it all drops out, comes to nothing, and is taken away. If Christ is precious to me, I shall be waiting for Him with affection, and if it is not so, the bare truth will soon be given up.

Ver. 19, 21. Here He closes up His connection with Israel after the flesh, for the relations of mother and brethren put Him into connection with Israel after the flesh. Observe, He here distinguishes the remnant by the word "these," as He did in chap. vi. by the word "ye." His mother and His brethren came to Him on the ground of natural relationship only; and there was all natural affection in the Lord, as on the cross we find Him remembering His mother, and commending her to the care of John. But He replies here, as much as to say, "I am not on that ground now—my mother and my brethren are these, which hear the word of God and do it." Israel was now given up as to that position, the Lord owning and acknowledging only those to be His relations on whose hearts and consciences the word of God had taken effect. It was not what was found in nature, but what was produced by grace, and being thus produced by power, through the word, the principle is hereby established, that it might go out to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews, although not fully brought out until after His resurrection. In these three verses we have a judicial sentence on Israel, which closes in ver. 21.

In ver. 22-26, it is a parabolical display of what we may expect if we follow the Lord, and the opening out of what the Lord would be to those tried by such circumstances. The consequence of being the disciples and companions of Jesus is that they get into jeopardy every hour—they are not on terra firma, but are tossed about on the troubled sea, and Christ Himself absent ("asleep"). There came down a storm of wind on the lake, the ship was filled with water, and they filled with fear and were in jeopardy. But the fact was, Christ was in the same boat with them. He who made the worlds, the Son of God, was with them, and yet they are afraid! and cry out, "we perish;" as though He could be drowned, thus showing they had no sense of who He was that was with them in the boat. To us, now calmly reading the circumstances, what absurdity there seems in such unbelief; when alas! is it not just the same with ourselves, spiritually? Have we no sense of

jeopardy, when tossed about, and trouble is in the Church? In truth we have, for there is many a heart saying, "Who will show us any good," forgetting what God is acting and doing, though man is battling to all appearance against God's purposes; but God is not baffled, and He is calmly carrying on His purposes, through all the storms of men's or devils' raising. In John 16 we find the disciples sorrowing because Jesus was going away; and the Lord had said to them, (chap. xiv.) "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go to the Father." In chap. xvi. Jesus says, "Now I go my way to Him that sent me, and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? but because I have said these things, sorrow hath filled your hearts." God was accomplishing His blessed purposes in redemption by Christ's going. You forget that God is acting in all this, for you cannot suppose that God is so baffled as to give up His purpose. The disciples thought, when Jesus was crucified, that all their hopes were disappointed; they say, "we thought it had been He that should have redeemed Israel." In fact, in that very act and at that very moment, all was being accomplished for them. Where is the Lord going should have been their question. It is not now that there seems no jeopardy, no confusion, no sorrow; but faith looks at and through it all to God, and asks, What is the Lord doing? Where is the Lord going? In and through all the trouble, the Lord has not turned a hair's-breadth out of His way. We may be in distress, but faith will not say the Lord is far away, but will know Him nigh at hand. The Lord let them be in jeopardy, the ship filled with water, and Himself asleep, on purpose to put their faith to the test, to prove if they were really trusting Him; and that it might be seen if such foolish thoughts would arise, when they were put into jeopardy. They say, "Lord, we perish;" but they were in the ship with Christ, and could they be drowned? He said to them, Where is your faith? Well might He say thus to them, for though the water was in the boat, He was there too, and could sleep through it all. It was not so much of Him they were Thinking as of themselves. "We perish," (said they,) and it is just the same now; for the fact of being in danger with Christ in the boat is the same at one time as at another- just as impossible now as then; and in truth Christ is much more with us now, being more perfectly revealed to us, and we are united to Him, one with Him, so that He is with us every moment in the power of the Spirit. However high the waves may rise, there is no drowning His love and thoughts towards us. The test is to our faith. The question is, Have we that faith which so realizes Christ's presence as to keep us as calm and composed in the rough sea as the smooth? It was not really a question of the rough or the smooth sea, when Peter was sinking in the water, for he would have sunk without Christ, just as much in the smooth as in the rough sea. The fact was, the eye was off Jesus on the wave, and that made him sink. If we go on with Christ, we shall get into all kinds of difficulty, many a boisterous sea; but being one with Him, His safety is ours. The eye should be of events, although they be ever so solemn, and surely they are so at this present time, and I feel them to be so; for none perhaps has a deeper sense than I of the growth of evil, and of the solemn state of things, but I know all is as settled and secure as if the whole world were favorable. I quite dread the way many dear saints are looking at events, and not looking at Christ and for Christ. The Lord Himself is the security of His people, and let the world go on as it may, no events can touch Christ. We are safe on the sea if only we have the eye off the waves, with the heart concentrated on Christ and on the interests of Christ. Then the devil himself cannot touch us.

Ver. 26. We have a solemn picture of the consequence of Christ's rejection by the world! Christ comes and finds them utterly under the power of the devil. A man of the Gadarenes was possessed, but He delivers him, thus showing that the Lord had complete power over the enemy. With a word of Christ the devils were off. "The Son of God was manifested that he might destroy

the works of the devil.” What was the effect of His thus casting out Satan? Why, the whole multitude of the country round about “besought him [Christ] to depart from them.” These Gadarenes, who had borne with the devils because they could not help it, will not bear with Christ, and they beg Him to depart! Man would be glad to bind legion if he could, for he does not like the effects of the devil's power; but man's will is against Christ; he has a deliberate, determined hatred to Christ. The Lord came to the world full of love and power, to deliver from the consequences of sin, but man rejected Him, cast Him out; and God will not stay where the will is determined against Him. When the Gadarenes request Christ to depart, He immediately went up into a ship and returned back again. And mark, the world in which we live is just going on as having quietly rejected Christ. But does God give them up, though Christ is gone away for a season? No, He did not give them up, but sent amongst them this man, whom He had healed, to tell them what great things God had done for him This is what the disciples did in the world, and the delivered residue also are to tell the world what great things God has done for them.

The swine appear to represent the state of the Jews after their rejection of Christ. The Lord, doubtless, permitted the devils to enter the swine, (as the -swine having no passions of their own, it was their being possessed with these devils which made them run violently to destruction,) showing it was not merely the evil passions in the men, but their being possessed by wicked spirits, which hurried them on to destruction. And we know historically, from Josephus and others, that one can hardly conceive the infatuation with which the Jews rushed on to their own destruction, when those Gentile powers went and plowed up the holy city. This is just a consequence of Israel's rejecting the Lord. Then the Lord gives us two other pictures, through the medium of real events, of His dealings in deliverance. In verse 41 we have Jairus' daughter, who lay a dying; and here is a picture (dispensationally) of Israel. The Lord was going to heal Israel, who was just like one dying, but while in the way, the people throng Him. What He came to do He did, for the world crowded Him while on the way to heal the sick “daughter of my people;” whosoever could touch Him by faith got healing, the activities of grace going forth from Him. Jairus' daughter “lay a dying.” Man was not pronounced to be dead until Christ was killed. Before Christ came, there was no healing for man. Abraham longed for the day of Christ. There were prophets who spoke of Christ as a healer, blessing was promised, but there was no physician. “Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?” There was none; for no physician could be found to heal man's condition until Christ came, and Him they put to death. In Him there was living power, for when the people thronged Him, a woman does but touch the border of His garment, and virtue goes out of Him to heal her. Healing depended not on the condition of those who were healed, but in the power of the healer. Physicians might apply remedy after remedy, but it is of no avail, until One came who could impart life: then the case was changed. When the multitude press upon Him, and He recognizes the touch of one to have been the touch of faith, He says, “somebody has touched me, for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.” And now, before the Lord comes forth in resurrection power and glory, to bring life from the dead in Israel, there is perfect healing where there is faith- for the Lord is always alive to the exercise of faith. The woman hid herself, for there was shame in her, because of the consciousness she felt of the disease which had needed to be healed. “But she could not be hid.” The heart always shrinks from opening itself, when within itself; but when it looks at Christ, it is opened to Him-for that is always the effect of being in the presence of Jesus. Shame, reputation, character, all give way before the sense of what He is. When grace gets to the bottom of the heart, all else is easily set aside, A link was

formed between this woman's soul and Christ. "Thy faith hath made thee whole: go in peace." He brings perfect peace and comfort into her heart, for His way is not only to heal, but to make Himself known. She is not only to be cured, but to have the assurance of peace from his own mouth.

Meanwhile they come, saying that Jairus' daughter was dead; "Trouble not the master." They thought He might, possibly, heal her, while she was living; but now she is dead, they supposed He could do nothing. This is a picture of Israel, who are dead before God, (as are Gentiles, too, of course). But Jesus encourages them, and says, "Only believe and she shall be made whole." When He came to the house, He suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, (the pillars of the future glory, when He will come forth as the resurrection and the life to the dead nation,) and the father and the mother of the maiden.

In this chapter, we get a picture of what was then doing, and what will come to pass. We have the seed, the word sown, and the effect of it, the use man made of it. We have God's explanation of all that was going on, as being all known and settled in His mind; and if a storm arise, and if Christ appear asleep, and insensible to the danger, - though "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep," — as disciples we are in the same boat with Him. The Lord give us to rest on that with undivided, undistracted hearts; for Christ is in the boat, as well as the water. Only let the eye of faith rest on Christ, then come what may, we shall say, "Who shall separate us," &c.—nay, in all, "more than conquerors." Then the more the trouble, the more the blessing, because of the exercise of faith.

## Notes on Luke 9:1-36

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AFTER the Lord had given a picture, as it were, of all that was going on in chap. 8., He raises the question in chap. 9. as to who He was, and He tells His disciples some should see His glory—for the mount of transfiguration shows what the glory of the kingdom would be. Peter speaks of the power and coming, “when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory when we were with him in the holy mount.” But it is a closing testimony at that time, though the glory would come; and as a signal that it was, the disciples were to shake off the dust from their feet, when they were not received. It is interesting to mark all the circumstances which bring out the fact of its being the Lord Himself there, and a test to Israel. He worked miracles, and could confer on others the power, as we have seen. Now we find another thing He is committing the power to several together, giving to those men, a number of them together, power and authority over the devils, and not only entrusting it to whom He pleases individually.

Three things we have noticed in connection with the testimony of the Son of man:

- 1, the testimony of God to Him;
- 2, the misery of man set aside by Him; and
- 3, devils cast out,

so proving that it was really the Lord visiting this world in grace and power. There will be the display of power by and by; but He was bringing in, in His own Person, the manifestation of that which will be then full and perfect, so being an earnest of the “powers of the world to come,” alluded to in Hebrews. This was not redemption, but the exercise of power in dealing with the enmity of man against Himself, and they would not have Him in this way.

Ver. 3, &c. He is sending out His disciples, and in so doing He disposes of all their circumstances. While He was with them, He supplied them with everything—they lacked nothing. The power of the Lord was there to take care of them, wherever they were. Afterward when He was going to leave them, He tells them to take a sword. They would have to shift for themselves, as it were; but while He was with them He was their shelter, &c. As in the demand for the ass to ride into Jerusalem, He proves His authority royal and divine altogether— “the Lord hath need of him.” The disciples depart, preaching the gospel, and healing everywhere. Then comes the question of who He was; He would have the conscience awakened about Him. There are two things in man brought out by the question—curiosity is excited on the one hand, and perplexity and dismay on the other.

Ver. 7-9. He goes on, and wherever there is an ear to hear, He ministers to them according to the grace of the kingdom.

Ver. 11, 12. The disciples ask Him to send the multitude away. Let them go and get lodging. No, says the Lord, “give ye them to eat.” He does not now say He would feed them, but He is committing to others the same power as He had himself, and He would exercise their faith in what He could do by them. This applies to the church now. Faith uses the power that is in the Head.

“Give ye them to eat.” What He expected was for faith to exercise His divine power, that which they saw in Him. We should be so reckoning on the power in the Head. The Lord was trying their faith in Him, “Give ye them to eat.” But no; they had no faith; they began to reckon on their resources— “We have no more but five loaves and two fishes.” So it is with us! No faith! Memory is not faith. “He smote the rock, that the waters gushed and the streams overflowed. Can he give bread also?” He gave us water, but can He give us food? We know He has done that one thing, but can He do this other thing to-day? We want to count on the energy of the Lord's love, and expect Him to be interested for us. When He said, “Give ye them to eat,” they should have expected He would give them the power. Jehovah was amongst them, exercising His own power; but we see in their answer the horrid principle of unbelief. Unbelief shuts out God, and limits itself to what it sees— “except we go and buy meat,” &c. “He made them all sit down by fifties in a company. And they did eat and were all filled.” It was said in Psa. 132, “I will satisfy her poor with bread,” and here He was doing it. This was said of their King, and He had chosen Zion; He had desired it for His habitation. He was here giving a sign that He was the One to accomplish this blessing, for He was feeding their poor with bread. He was not only sending out the power through His disciples, but Himself among them; not only as a man, a messenger, but as it is said in Hebrews, “the word began to be spoken by the Lord.” He was the Apostle. There were others sent afterward, but He Himself was there first as their Apostle. It is a solemn thing to think that the Lord has really visited this world! He has come and presented Himself first to His people Israel, but they would not have Him. It shows us what the world is we are in. God is now dealing with it in grace, though His Son has been rejected.

“Twelve baskets of fragments.” Just observe, in passing, that the number twelve is significant of power exercised in the way of government—twelve apostles, twelve gates to the city in Revelation, &c.

Hitherto we have been looking at Christ presenting Himself among the people as Jehovah, the Messiah; we now see Him as the dependent man, praying. He was Immanuel, God with us; Son of David; Son of man He was to be all. Then the question is started among the disciples, who He was. Some said one thing, and some another; but Peter said, “the Christ of God.” Upon this, He charges them to tell no man that thing. There was faith, however feeble, dictating this answer, and therefore there is no thinking about it. With perfect certainty, Peter says, “The Christ of God.” So it always is with faith. When the Spirit of God brings home the truth with power, there is no uncertainty about it. A man may not doubt whether Christ is the Son of God, or not; but the mind may work upon it, and think, perhaps, I do not love Him enough to be saved; then there is uncertainty. But when the Spirit, with power, shows whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him; then I believe it, and I see that my sins and my iniquities He will “remember no more.” It may set a man thinking about the consequences of a truth.

Ver. 22. He now passes by the thing that has been already brought out, and He presents Himself to them as the Son of man, and He is going to suffer,—to be crucified. They must therefore be content to take up their cross. A new thing was coming in; He was going to be rejected, going to be slain, and the third day rise again. It is no longer Messianic ground, but in another sphere altogether beyond this their hopes must lie. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily.” “Daily” —this is the trial. A man might heroically do it once for all, and he would have plenty of people to honor him, and have books written about him, but it is terribly

difficult to go on every day denying oneself, and no one knowing anything about it. It came to this, that if you spare the flesh in this life, you will lose your life in the next; and what if a man gain the whole world and lose his own soul? what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? It is not a question of bringing life down to the flesh; but if you lose your life here, you will get it elsewhere—above and beyond this world; “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.” It is giving up the world for eternal life, or for eternal misery, that is the real question. “What is a man advantaged?” You must give it up; you cannot keep it.

There is the glory of the kingdom; there is the manifestation of glory coming. Those tastes and dispositions which are attracted by Jesus, cannot find their portion here. “They declare plainly that they seek a country; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God,” &c. “Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, &c., of him shall the Son of man be ashamed,” when He comes in the display of His own glory. (See Dan. 7:1; 3) One like to the Son of man came to the Ancient of days, &c., and there was given Him dominion, &c. Then He comes too in the glory of the Son of God - His Father's glory, and in the glory of the angels. The angels are waiting upon Him who created them, for they were created for Him as well as by Him, and thus give glory to Him as Son of man; giving Him His proper glory, for He has not lost a tittle of His glory: “Thou hast set him over the works of thy hands:” “Let all the angels of God worship Him.” There was the same thing at Sinai. “The law was ordained by angels.” “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels.” (Psa. 68).

We are now finding the displayed glory in this triple character spoken of. (v. 26). It is that glory when He appears; and it is a question of His being ashamed of those who have been ashamed of Him—they could not deny themselves present advantage. I do not here allude to the Father's house, which of course has another character. Here it is the kingdom manifested in its glory to the earth.

Ver. 28. “He went to pray.” This is not mentioned in the other gospels He was going to show His disciples His glory, to give the declaration of His power and coming. From the other gospels we find that a week after this, He went up to Jerusalem where He was to be crucified. “The fashion of his countenance was changed.” An entire change of things is here. He talks of His decease, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem, where He ought to have been crowned; but there He is going to be crucified. There, where this horn of David was to bud, shall this root of David be taken, and by wicked hands be crucified and slain. This is the deep center of all the change “There talked two men with him, Moses and Elias.” This we may look at in two ways: dispensationally, as representing the law and the prophets; and in this way Moses held a very peculiar place, for it was through Him the law was given—Elijah had nearly as important a place also, for though the Jews were in a right position, they had failed in it, and he goes back to Horeb. The other prophets were never called to work miracles. Except the account of the dial of Ahaz, we hear of no miracle in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Habakkuk, &c. Those prophets, sent of God, gave proof that He was caring for Israel; but there was nothing like the calling back in Elijah Elias stood as the maintainer of the law, when the people had departed from it most grossly, though all the prophets, even to Malachi, called back to law.

Moses and Elias were taken away, and Jesus is left alone. Law was gone, prophecy gone, and Christ is alone, and He was going to be crucified. All the fabric built up by law and prophets (not the testimony given by them, but law as given to man in the flesh,) is broken up, because man ended by killing the Lord come in the flesh; therefore all is gone. Peter would have had the three established together, taken all alike, "Let us build three tabernacles," &c. But that moment Moses and Elias disappear, and the voice is heard; "This is my beloved Son, hear him." It is now the righteousness of God without law, in Jesus. Law did not send Christ. What law could have been put upon God to do it? Nothing but divine love could have originated such a thought. "Grace reigned through righteousness." The law was good and perfect, but Christ was far beyond the law. Moses and Elias, therefore, were not to have any place with Him. God the Father put them aside, when Peter wishes to put them in connection. They disappear immediately. This is the important thing for us. Every word of law and prophets is the truth of God, but these were until John. Now the Son of God is the messenger of the Father's love, and the accomplisher of Divine righteousness. When He is there, the voice says, "This is my beloved Son; hear him," —and He is left alone.

Mark, too, that they were occupied with His death, while talking with Him. One thing occupies the minds of heaven and earth. He was going to be crucified where He ought to have been King. Under such circumstances, there was nothing for heaven or earth to talk about but His death. And so for us, the great thing to talk about Messiah is, that He died. Though He could destroy all the evil that had come in, He must die—in grace of course. It must all end in death, because the carnal mind is not only under Satan's power, but enmity against God: therefore heaven has to speak.

Zion, the very place He had chosen, where He had been and is to be—the special place of God's favor, is to be the scene of His death. There they cast Him out of the world He came to save. The One in whom all human and Divine righteousness and perfections were centered, must die there. All man's nature, under the most advantageous circumstances; all man's wickedness, spite of the public, and patient, and varied ways of God in government, are brought out here.

Moses could deal with man as man; and bring water from the rock for them, in answer to their murmurings; the prophet the same, "Plead with me," "Put me in remembrance, let us plead together." But now, all this was gone. God had cultivated the vineyard, done all that could be done for it. There was yet one thing, His Son—the best of all. Him He sent, and they cast Him out and slew Him. And now the testimony concerning man is, that he has "killed the Prince of life," and "denied the Holy One and the Just." We never can have peace then, till we get pardon through Christ on the cross. Then we see a true picture of heaven; but all the intermediate dealings of testimony are entirely short of what we have in Christ on the cross, because short of the ground of what man actually is, which fully came out only when he "killed the Prince of life."

## Notes on Luke 9:37-50

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WHEN the Lord's Messiah-ship was given up, we have seen He takes the place of translation from earth to heaven. He, being rejected, was no longer to be looked upon as the Head of Israel down here, but as the heavenly Christ; for He takes His place on high, when cast out by man, and this fact was to give a character to the path of those who follow Him. The two things go together—rejection on earth and a heavenly place. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” (ver. 23.) The Lord shows them that this heavenly calling involves the cross down here, as it was with Christ Himself. The peculiar place given Him in heaven was, in God's counsels, dependent on the cross which He bore as the Man. “He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, &c.; wherefore God hath highly exalted him,” &c. It was through the cross that He went there; and if we are to have a place in heaven, we must have it too. The cross was for the destruction of sin and for the destruction of self, in which sin dwells. We have the same place; therefore He says, “Let these sayings sink deep into your ears, for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.” We want the heavenly calling to give power to take up the cross; and it is at the same time in proportion as we are dying to things down here, that the heavenly things are realized. When the blood was taken within the veil, the sacrifice was taken without the gate: so we are to go “without the camp, bearing his reproach” and if we apprehend the value of the blood, and go within the veil, we get too the place of being where the burning outside the camp was; for while we are in spirit where His blood has been carried in, our bodies are where His body was burned. Judaism only put men between the two; for they did not go in within the veil, His blood not having been shed; and they never went without the camp. (18-22). He is going to take another place, and they are to follow Him in it; and then, in order to strengthen them for it, He shows them what the heavenly place was. “He took Peter, and James, and John, and went up into a mountain to pray,” &c. (ver. 28). The heavenly part of the kingdom is here represented by Christ, Moses, and Elias—the earthly part by the disciples (and there is one part in which the Church on earth is alluded to as down here). Peter speaks of this scene as the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, &c. Christ Himself, in the position of the dependent man, (praying), takes them up into a mountain. “Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep;” asleep in the presence of the glory, just as in Gethsemane, showing what human nature is. There is no power in it, in suffering or glory, to fix the attention on Christ and His interests.

Moses and Elias were in the same glory, (30- 32,) and we are made the associates of Christ in the same glory (the glory of the kingdom in its broad character), not of course, the essential glory. “As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly,” even of God's Son in glory. “We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him.” “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory.” The portion is not to be under Christ, but with Christ. “We shall appear with him in glory” —with him in the same glory. We look for the Lord from heaven, “who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned,” &c. We shall be with Him and like Him, and this we shall all alike share, though there will be different degrees of glory for one and another: e.g., Paul's measure will not be mine. What we speak of now is all the same

glory, and we are predestinated “to be conformed to the image of his Son.” “The glory thou hast given me I have given them.” The next thing that we see is the perfect familiarity in this glory. They are talking with Him -not presenting a petition-not at His feet (though this is our blessed place too); but this part of the scene represents communion, familiarity of intercourse, the same as that of the disciples on earth, though better of course. On the holy mount they had a higher understanding about it, but it was the same subject occupied them. This shows us the kind of intercourse we have with Jesus now, for we belong to the heavenly part of the kingdom.

A third point to mark is the subject they talked of. This is quite a new thing, for He ought to have been a king. But man was a sinner, and there was the determinate counsel of God to be fulfilled-redemption. Jerusalem was the place of royalty, and His decease was to be accomplished there, where He ought to have been acknowledged King. There was full intimacy on the theme which occupied His heart, for they talked on this, His decease. Then He told His disciples afterward the consequences of it to them. They must deny themselves. “Let these sayings sink down into your ears.” The great subject on God’s heart should be that for us. Another thing is, it is the glory which enables us to talk on this subject. We cannot talk of it until we have peace with God through the knowledge of forgiven sin. When a man has not this, he has to come in his need and get it; but when he is in it, he can contemplate and enjoy it. Besides this, God saw all that was passing in Christ’s soul as to obedience unto death, &c. We shall never cease having interest in this subject: when with the Father in the glory, it will be the absorbing theme. He said Himself, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life.” How much more shall we not love Him for the same cause? Think what it must have been to be occupied with Christ about His decease! What His knowledge was, of what He was going to do! He knew what man was, what the counsel of God was. He came to “reconcile all things to himself.” It was so effectually done that the eye of God could only see the effect of that blood in what was washed away. The rejected Christ a Savior! and this the subject of intercourse with Christ Himself! “They speak of his decease.” Peter says, “Master, it is good for us to be here,” &c. Then immediately there was a voice from the cloud: “This is my beloved Son; hear him” The effect on Peter’s mind is a wish to put Moses and Elias on a level with Christ. We have spoken of this, viewing it dispensationally, law and prophecy mixed with Him; but there is another thing to be noticed in it; viz., that which characterized the Son was peculiar. Nothing could be put on a level with Him. There necessarily comes out, therefore, the Father’s testimony to the Son. “This is my beloved Son,” &c. When a saint knows Jesus, though he also knows he will be like Him hereafter, and that all the saints will be like Him too, yet Christ has the supremacy in his heart. He is single and alone in blessedness, having supremacy in the heart, as well as being the object of faith. I delight in the saints, but Christ is the alone object of faith. Then I get into this fellowship with the Father. I have the Father’s thoughts about the Son, as well as the Son’s thoughts about the work. I have fellowship with the Father and the Son. We cannot have communion with the Father about redemption work because He has not been made a man Notice, the Father does not say, This is the Son whom you ought to adore and admire, but He tells us His own thoughts about Him. “This is my beloved Son.” Wherefore “beloved!” “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life;” thus I know that I have one thought with the Father, in delighting in the Son and in His death. The Father communicates His own thoughts about the Son, and by the power of the Holy Ghost they are put into my heart, and I have fellowship; and as a consequence I know that he that hath everlasting life shall never come into judgment.

Mark, further, how they came into the excellent glory. There came a cloud and overshadowed them. The cloud is the Shechinah, the dwelling place of God, which the people had to guide them through the wilderness, and they were to stay or move according to it. It was the divine presence, and "they feared as they entered into the cloud." They were not protected by the cloud, as Israel were, and as they will be by and by. "Upon all the glory shall be a defense;" but here they enter into the cloud. The fact was, coming into the cloud was coming into the presence of the Father now, a dwelling-place for us. It was thence the Father's voice was heard. "This is my beloved Son," &c. Thence they were told who this Son was. He had been with them as one of them. He was the Father's beloved Son, in a place worthy of adoration, but the companion of their hearts. He brought them to the Father the only place into which redemption brings us (as to our relationship). Until a man knows redemption, and is brought into His presence, He can never know the Father's love: but when there, he can never know the end of it. It is the kind of love the prodigal never knew till he was in his father's arms. He had doubts and fears as he went on, and thoughts about the hired servants, but none when he was in his father's house. It is known only by the teaching of the Holy Ghost in us-in the cloud-God in us. It is in the presence of the glory, realized by faith now, we know the power of redemption; and by its brightness and its truth, it blots out all other relationship. Notice who are learning this glory. Saints walking on the earth-Peter, James, and John; and so with us. The truths written in this book are not for us to know in heaven. Is the Father's love not to be known till we are in heaven? Is redemption only to be known there? Was God less intimate with those on earth than with those in heaven? Not at all. It was to Peter, James, and John this was communicated, not to Moses and Elias. The Father's voice was to men on earth. We learn the rejection of man here and the grace which has brought us to share in the glory. In what follows we find the Lord coming down into the crowd of this world, not remaining on the mount. We may listen and enjoy, but we have to come down and pass through this world. The Lord comes down and meets three things, a throng of men, Satan's power, and the disciples' unbelief. There was no seclusion here for Him, but He comes to a crowd. What a picture of distress this is! The son of one possessed with a devil (ver. 39;) and the father's heart racked more than the son's body. The world will weep till they are tired of weeping, and then go on with the same thing again.

We have seen before how the Lord was come in the display of His power and bound the strong man. The disciples could not do it. The power of Satan remains the same unto this day. He is not literally cast out, but remains the "prince of this world," the character he has gained, not lost, by Christianity. He will be bound; his power will be overthrown as a fact, and not to faith only. The question was to be settled about Satan's right, and what did the Lord say of him?

"Now is the judgment of this world" — "Now is the prince of this world cast out." His title is "cast out," but Christ has not yet exerted this power. Therefore in the epistles we find him spoken of as still ruling in this world. In Ephesians he is called, "the prince of the power of the air," "the spirit that now worketh," &c. Then we hear of the "rulers of the darkness of this world." When "the powers of the world to come" are in their full display, Satan will be cast out entirely; but these instances and more show he was here then as he is still. "How long shall I be with you," &c (ver. 41.) It was not because Satan was here that Christ said this, but because the disciples could not use the power He had brought in, and that closed the dispensation. So it will be in this. The power and goodness of God brought Christ into the world, but the incapacity of man to believe so as to use that power, will close it. So we read in Rom. xi. "Toward thee (the professing body now,) goodness, if thou

continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off;" but until His grace ceases, there is refuge for us to go to Him. While He was here, the moment the father of the child sought to Him, He cast out the spirit. As long as Christ's grace is at work, if there is only one saint on the earth and everything else failed around, he would find the power of Christ ready to be exercised on his behalf. There can be no failing in meeting the need of a soul, because as there is Christ to go to, there is help in Him. However dark the dispensation may be, there is exactly the grace that is needed for the position. Not that God would have our eyes blinded to the darkness around, for if we do not take heed to the ruinous state, conscience is not in its right place. If I am ready to say, Why should He not stay? when He says, How long shall I be with you? I am insensible to the state of things around me, and I am not awake to the response that Christ's love to the Church demands; but, on the other hand, if I am not able to look up and count on the grace of Christ to meet that state, however bad it may be, I am powerless.

Ver. 43. "They were amazed at the mighty power of God." It is very humbling to see how amazed they were about this power. They did not wonder at the power of the evil. But they ought so to have counted on His power as to have been amazed if the power were not exerted. Christ brings them back to the cross. "Let these sayings sink down into your ears, for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men." (ver. 44). You ought to have been able to get this power; but you must now know not only the power of Christ, but the cross of the rejected One. "Rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." We have more to be rejoiced at in this than if a miracle were to be performed to-morrow. It is more blessed to know the cross. It was as though He had said, "I had rather you should come now to own the rejected One than be looking for this power even." Beloved friends, you are not thinking of what God is doing at this present time, if you do not see that now it is not power on the earth, but rejection.

Ver. 46. There arose a reasoning which should be the greatest. What a tale this tells! What a selfishness runs through and through! Even at the Lord's supper it was the same thing. In Luke we find it, where there is so much of what man is brought out.

We see then, from what we have been tracing, that we need to come down from the hill; not to be without Jesus, but to learn what man is.

It is not necessary to come down from the mount, as some people say, lest we should be puffed up there; for we shall never be puffed up while on the mount. Like Peter, we may be afraid, but we are never puffed up in the presence of God. It is when we quit it that we are in danger.

Paul was not exalted above measure when in the third heaven, but after he came down, he needed the thorn in the flesh to prevent it.

Besides, there is an historical necessity for us to get through this world. But Jesus was as much with His disciples when they came down as while they were on the mount, and that is our comfort. Do not let us suppose we have lost Christ. We have to serve Him, walk with Him, learn from Him, and mark His patient grace towards us in and through all circumstances. The Lord give us to know, while passing through this world, what a Christ we have, taking our hearts clean out of the defiling circumstances around, so that, whether we get a taste of the glory, or are passing through the crowd of this world, He may be everything to us, as He is everything for us.

Ver. 46, &c. The Lord is now showing His disciples the place they are to take upon earth. They are not to be in a position connected with Him as Messiah in earthly glory—heavenly glory they could not have till the end. In the meantime they have to take their place with Him in rejection, and this put them to the test, for they were to give up things right enough in themselves; e.g., to hate father, mother, wife, &c., all which earthly relationships had a claim upon them, and especially so upon the Jew. “Honor thy father and mother,” &c. But all these relationships would not stand in association with the cross. Everything must be sacrificed, everything that linked man with the earth must be snapped asunder to faith, when Christ was rejected. The character of the world was fully manifested in His rejection: its deeds were evil and it rejected the light. The incarnation, which should have been the link to man's blessing, is rejected. He accomplishes redemption by His rejection on earth, and He has a place in heaven. This alters the character of everything. It brings in the judging of self. There never would have been this if Christ had been crowned on earth. He was “delivered into the hands of men,” &c. He whose very name carried power and authority is to be delivered up. If Christ had had His place on earth, the heart of man would never have been put to the test. Why? Because, if men had seen all the dignity and glory displayed on earth which was His right, it would have gratified their flesh with its greatness. But flesh cannot inherit heaven, and what place has it on the cross? There they go together so blessedly—the cross and heaven; and for the flesh there is no place in either. There was a terrible breach between man and God, and the One who would have healed it they crucified. Then every carnal thought that was in accordance with such an act must be judged. The disciples were disputing who should be the greatest—not greatest in., the world, but the greatest in the glory. It is self after all. They have not to tell Him much, but their thoughts are judged. When in the light, everything is judged. Jacob had the word from God to go to Bethel (Gen. 35), and he immediately says to his household, “Put away the strange gods that are among you.” And why so? Everything is detected when getting into the presence of God. Jacob could get the blessing before he went to Bethel; but when he goes into God's presence, the idols are judged. When he has got rid of the idols, it is “El-bethel,” the God of Bethel. The disciples were reasoning which should be the greatest, and when He detected their thoughts, He “took a child and set him by him,” &c. This shows us our place: we ought to seek the lowest place. We never can have it, because Christ has taken it. He went down under sin, wrath, death. He took the lowest place, because the servant of all. This is the truly happy place for us, but how it judges self/ This is what the cross does. Not only are the idols judged, but self is judged.

It is a blessed thing to have done with self. When there is room for God, we can be full of joy and happiness. We are not humble, even when we are occupied with our own nothingness, or how bad we are; but we are humble when we do not think of ourselves at all. When we have to learn our nothingness and badness, that is being humbled. If we get away from the Lord, we have to be brought back, and that is a humbling process. We want to judge the flesh in ourselves. It is pretty easy to judge it in another, but it is in ourselves we miss it. (ver. 50). Things are brought to a crisis. “He that is not against us is for us.” Mark how thoroughly conscious the Lord was of His utter rejection by man; so utter that He said, he that is not against us is proved to be for us. Christ was perfect; therefore He was a perfect test to men's consciences; and as far as He is manifested in us, we shall be so also. Paul could say, “If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.” Why could he say so Because it went out from him as pure as it went in. John said, “We forbid him, because he followeth not with us.” That tells the whole tale. They were thinking of themselves, not of Christ; of their own importance, and not His honor. If it had been his importance, they would

have thought how blessed it was to find the effect of His name, and rejoiced to know how His power was being exercised by man. But no; they were looking at themselves as well as at the Messiah. Even John was thus using Christ Himself to further his own importance. And is there not something in us of the same thing, a satisfaction at that which aggrandizes self as well as Christ, instead of seeking the honor of Christ alone? The Lord takes him up and answers him on the ground of His utter rejection, which was coming. "He that is not against us is for us." And mark that the very selfishness of John brings out the grace of Christ. He says "us." You do not know the lot you have with me. If you find one who can use the power of my name, rejoice in it.

Ver. 5. "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." I am going to get a portion in heaven, and you are to have the same portion, but it must be through rejection here. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily," &c.

## Notes on Luke 9:51 and 10:1-37

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Chaps. 9:51, &c.; 10:1-37

“When the time was come that He should be received up, He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem.” In Isaiah, “I set my face as a flint” He was accomplishing His Father's will here, as in all His course. Redemption must be accomplished through the cross. He “learned obedience by the things which He suffered.” It was the same obedience as at the beginning, when He was coming amongst them with “Blessed are the poor,” &c—more painful, and of course He felt the difference; but still He goes in the same blessed spirit and earnestness. Are there not twelve hours in the day If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, &c. He had found it His meat to do the will of Him that sent Him. There was joy to Him in this; but in the cup of wrath which He was going to drink there was no joy. He had met with scorn here, smiting there, rejection all through, but nothing like this cup, and therefore He cried, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me,” &c. Christ proved his perfectness, for He felt what it was to be “made sin,” &c. His holy nature shrunk from it, yet there was the same quiet, steady, patient obedience, for “He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem,” as all through. He knows His Father's will and He does it. He sets His face there, where His Father's will is to be done, not looking to this side or to that, but there—Jerusalem.

We, according to the measure we have of the single eye, shall be following in the same course, going to the cross steadily, with one purpose; and in proportion as we do so, will those who do not so set their face oppose us. But the Lord says, “If any man serve me, let him follow me.” Service is not doing a great deal, but following the master, and the world and half-hearted Christians do not like that. There is plenty of doing in the world, but “if any man serve me, let him follow me.” Paul wanted to serve every way, but we find the Spirit forbidding him to go into Bithynia or Troas, and yet two years afterward we read that “all Asia heard the word.” God's work was to be done, but it was to be in His time and of His ordering. His servant had only to follow in obedience. It was the same with Moses. Nature would say of him, Why not stay in Pharaoh's court that the people there may be converted, instead of leaving it? Flesh cannot understand what faith, leads to. Then after he goes out in all the earnestness of his spirit, natural energy comes in, but then there is no deliverance. Moses has to go and keep sheep for forty years, to be broken down, and made nothing of, and what were Israel to do all that time To wait. Then when he comes back to serve them, how is it done? There is the flesh appearing in another way. “Lord, I am not eloquent.” Then Aaron is sent back with him, and the work is done in the power of God.

Ver. 52. “They went and entered into a village of the Samaritans,” &c. (ver. 53.) We see the very reason they did not receive Him was because His face was set towards Jerusalem. His very obedience, singleness of eye, going to do God's will without honor, or attractiveness, or repute, going to Jerusalem, is the very reason they would have nothing to do with Him. (ver. 54.) See the religious opposition of the disciples to them. The Samaritans would not submit to God's way: Christ did. That is the difference: and the disciples went to command fire to come out of heaven as Elias did, and at the very place where Elias worked the miracle. In fleshly reasoning they think

Christ was as worthy as Elias to call down fire. This is a more subtle kind of self than the other. It seemed like direct zeal for Christ, but they did not understand the zeal of Christ. He was not come for judgment; not to destroy men's lives, but to suffer Himself for them. If they had known God's thoughts they would have submitted quietly. Peter again understood not the Lord's mind when he drew his sword and smote the servant of the high priest. All the miracles of Elias were characterized by the spirit of judgment, not like Elisha who had his commission from heaven. Elijah stood in the place of judgment and righteousness, like John the Baptist who came in the spirit and power of Elias, saying, "Every tree that bringeth not forth fruit shall be hewn down," &c., and "the ax is laid to the root of the trees." Elisha had life-giving power, on the contrary, and was a type of grace. Elijah passed through Jordan, (death in type,) while Elisha starts from the other side of Jordan in resurrection.

Ver. 56. He turned round and went to another village. It is not pleasant to be trodden upon in this world, but Christ was. To do well, and suffer for it, and take it patiently, is what we have; and is it to end there Yes, and that is "acceptable with God." Christ came to suffer, to bear anything for the sake of others, and He would not have been doing that, if He had called down fire from heaven upon the Samaritans. We have to follow Christ in carrying the testimony of God's love into the world in all our walk through it. The world needs it. We must not be seeking for ourselves, but having Christ the object.

At the end of the chapter He goes on to show how the links with this world are to be broken.

Ver. 57, 58. One says, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," but Christ puts him to the test. You cannot go if you do not take up your lot with One who had not where to lay His head; for you may sooner go to the birds of the air for a nest, or to the foxes for a hole, than to the Son of man for a home in this world. They were not now to come to Him as the One who had the promises, &c., but to One whose portion was utter and entire rejection. Following Him could not be accompanied with ease and comfort here. He was to be delivered into the hands of men. At His birth we see the same thing. Every one found room in the inn save He, but any who wanted to find Him whom angels celebrate, must go to the manger!

Ver. 59. He says to one, "Follow me." The first one wanted something with Christ; but here where He says, "Follow me," then immediately a difficulty is started; and it is when He calls a man that difficulties are felt. There was no sense of the difficulties in the one who said, "Lord, I will follow thee," without His call. But this man who is called, says, "Let me first go and bury my father." He is going presently, but there is a link felt. Jesus says, "Let the dead bury their dead:" you must leave them to follow me. You may be ready to say, the things of the earth have no power over you; but just try what it is to have them, and you will learn the extent of their power. A man may go to the length of his cord, but when he gets to the end he is checked. A father had the first claim in nature, and especially to a Jew, but Christ says, I am calling you out in the power of life; I am putting in my claim for the life I give you, and it breaks every bond here. It is a question of life in the midst of death. This word, "first," (let me first go and bury my father), shows something put before Christ, as though the man said, There is something I put before your calling. Death had come in, and this very plea told Christ they were all under death. It was quite a right thing for the man to bury his father; but if life has come in, and the question is one of redemption, to be lost or saved, you must give yourself up to it. In the divine light which is in the cross, He saw all dead, and therefore He

said, "Let the dead bury their dead." The one thing to be done now is to follow Christ. The question is, Death in the world or life in Christ? Where are the affections?

Ver. 61. "Another also said, Lord, I will follow thee, but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house." In the previous case it was just this: When my first affections are settled, then will I come and follow thee. There is no good in that, the Lord says: "Let the dead bury their dead." But this case shows that those at home were not left in heart. He felt he had to break with them, and yet his heart lingered. "No man looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." "Remember Lot's wife." "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." If Christ be not first and last, He will always be last, for faith is not in exercise. The question is, whether we are walking as seeing what the cross tell us. The cross lifts the veil, showing the skeleton of this world, and when I see this sentence on all that is in the world, self as well as what is outside, and our links of affections with it, I learn that all is to be given up; but there is Christ Himself and the love there is in Him to meet it. It will and must judge self; and it brings out the will too, for there is a great deal of will in all this shunning of the cross. People may speak of the claims of affection, but it is not really and only family affection, &c., but the end which connects with self is felt. Natural affection there should be—indeed it is one of the signs of the last evil days to be without it—but if you have power to judge yourselves, you will find that many an excuse you make has this secret at the end. So in affliction, bereavement, &c. It is not only the affection that is touched, but the will. There is sweetness in the sorrow, so long as we realize Christ in it, and affection only is sorrowing. But if the will is touched, there is rebellion, resistance, struggling, and all this the Lord must judge, for a mass of flesh and self can never follow Christ. What a wonderful detail all this is? It is God going through our hearts entering into every corner and crevice. Why? Because of the constant, undeviating steadfastness of His love; and as a father loves his child when it is naught, as well as when it is good, so our God takes pains, at it were, with us all, even when so bad.

The effect of all is not only to make us practically righteous, but happy— "imitators of God as dear children." It is well, on the one hand, for us to judge ourselves and see what there is to detect in us, and, on the other, to see the fullness of his grace in Christ.

May the Lord give us to feel more and more that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God," and that the energy of the flesh cannot accomplish the work of God, so that we may learn to work from God, for God, and with God.

Chap. 10. The Lord pursues the subject we have been looking at in the preceding chapter, connected with the change that has taken place in His own position amongst them. It is no longer the Messiah on earth, but the heavenly Christ, they are to look to. There is another thing brought out here in the amazing importance attached to that moment, the last testimony being applied to them; and those who heard it would be more the subject of judgment than Tire and Sidon. Any among them would have repented with the truth you have, but they had it not. The blessing now was the Lord Himself being there; and he was so glorious and excellent that to hear Him was the prime source of blessing. All hung upon their reception or rejection of Him. In the sending out of these seventy, we see the same patient grace at work as when He sent out the twelve. If they were not received, they were to shake off the dust from their feet, &c. God's love never stops, whatever the wickedness of man, until His work is done. His grace never fails. Christ looks at the power of grace in God, more than at the wickedness of men, and he went patiently on, and said,

“the harvest is great,” though knowing what there was all around him. The Lord was not like Elijah, who needed to be reminded of the seven thousand, who, as God knew, had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. He came in by the door, and went through everything with God. Nothing stopped Him from seeking out His sheep, scattered on the dark mountains. He laid down His life to save His sheep, and not one should be lost. To gather them, He went on in the power of grace. Paul was of this spirit when he says, “I endure all things for the elect’s sakes.”

Did Christ suffer nothing in it? Look at Him, weary with His journey, sitting at the well, and a poor, wretched, vile sinner coming to meet Him, to whom He gives the water of life. There He finds meat to eat that they know not of; and He says, “the fields are white unto harvest.” He was as fresh and happy in His testimony, while sitting at the well with this poor woman, as if all Jerusalem had received Him; because the fountain was within In Him was “a well of water, springing up,” &c. So with us. If we are going on with him, we shall be “troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; cast down, but not destroyed.” The testimony is in the earthen vessel, it is true, but the fountain is within, and they were to be perfectly dependent on God, and independent of everything else. They were to expect to meet enemies, wolves. “Go your ways, behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.” You cannot turn a lamb into a wolf to defend itself. Peter was for taking a sword to smite off the servant’s right ear, but the Lord forbids him, and says, “All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” It is difficult to receive everything and do nothing, to be a lamb among wolves—like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in prospect of the fiery furnace, saying, “we are careful, O king, to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver,” &c.

“Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes; and salute no man by the way.” Not be uncourteous, but waste not time in useless ceremonies, &c.

When in God’s service, and among God’s enemies, God must be everything. It needs concentration of heart in Him, as knowing that the world has rejected your Master, and will reject you, if you are faithful to Him. Faith knows this, and goes on, not with carnal prudence and worldly wisdom, but as knowing what to do and going on to do it. Faith always carries to the house peace; it produces enmity,—two against three, and three against two,—because some will receive it, and some not; but the thing brought is always peace. (ver. 7-9.) “The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.” Not merely such and such a thing is God’s will, but whatever you do, whether you receive or reject it, the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.” The condition of the world now is, that it has rejected it. The Son of God, the King, has come into the world, put it to the test, and it says, We will have Him This fact has not lost its solemnity now, for we are walking through the world that has rejected Christ; we bring the testimony of peace to it—peace that has been made, for the sacrifice has been offered. It is also true that the testimony has been rejected. “Notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.” (ver. 10, 11.) Faith carries things in its own sphere, needing nothing but God’s word. The sight of the eyes is constantly tending to dim the estimate which faith forms; and if faith is not nourished by the word, it sinks down and fades away. If I am not feeding on the word, faith is not fed, for it cannot be fed by sight of things all around. When the Lord spoke to Jerusalem, saying, Their house should be left unto them desolate, and there should not be one stone left upon another, they could not actually see the stones then falling, but it was Christ’s word for them to believe. Natural reasoning is fed by what we see, but faith is fed by what God has revealed to the soul.

Ver. 15. "Thou, Capernaum, shall be thrust down to hell" —in God's eye, not man's. In man's eye, it might be exalted to heaven. So with this world. And what does that prove? That it may last as long as God permits, but that His word will be fulfilled, "the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up." There is nothing stable here. When God comes in, where will it all be? though there are scoffers who say, "Where is the promise of His coming?"

Ver. 16, "He that heareth you, heareth me." That is where faith has its resource. In hearing the word the disciples spoke, I am hearing Christ Himself. That is where faith walks. I know it must be true, for Christ has said it. Everything may go wrong, the world, Jews, the Church, &c., but God's word never. And it has been given. It never changes, for it has been given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, &c. The Church, as ground of confidence in testimony, is gone, (though we know it is founded upon a rock; and as to its security, it can never be destroyed,) but God's word will not fail. Whatever we see tends to weaken and deface faith, puts to the test what the affections of the soul are, because it is not to be what I like, but what God says.

Ver. 17-20. "Rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." This shows the change of everything Devils may be subject to you, but the Lord says, That is not the portion for you to rejoice in; I am now showing my power in another way. This word, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven," alludes to the time when Satan the "accuser of the brethren" will be cast down. Now he is in heaven—not in God's presence, in light inaccessible, but before the throne of judgment—two different things. "Hast thou considered my servant Job." Proving that when others came before the throne, Satan came also. Contrast ver. 19 and 20. The one speaks of what can be seen, the other what could be known only to faith. The unseen thoughts of your heart are much more important than what can be seen. The invisible is always more important than the visible.

In this world, it is not merely that man is a sinner, but there is the introduction into it of the power of evil. Satan has got hold of this world through man's sin. So in the case of the poor woman it is said, "whom Satan has bound these eighteen years," But when the Church has been caught up, Satan will be cast down. There was war in heaven; but when he is on the earth, he will for three and a half years be raising up the man of the earth against the Lord from heaven. When He comes, Satan's power will be put away. He is not put into the "the lake of fire" until the close of the thousand years, but into "the bottomless pit." That is just what the devils asked to be saved from when cast out of the man whose name was Legion; (chap. viii. 31;) "deep" meaning "bottomless pit." The Lord did not cast them down to it, because the time was not then come.

This ability to cast out devils was a great thing. The communicating of the power by the Lord was a power above the immediate working of the miracles themselves. It required divine power, and none but that could give the power, to others. In the millennium, there will not be the power of good and evil together; the latter will be cast out. "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee," &c. The pit shall be digged for the wicked. Satan must be cast out. And when Christ was upon earth, He was presenting Himself in the power of God to bind the strong man, and spoil his goods, &c. It was a wonderful thing to meet a man under the power of Satan, and to cast Satan out. It was an earnest of the "powers of the world to come;" the "world to come" referring, not to heaven, but to this earth being renewed. He was then putting forth the same power, that He will exercise fully in the coming kingdom.

Ver. 19. "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents," &c.; and it was at the point when He was rejected that He says this. He knew what was really going on, and though He said peace, they did not say peace to Him. "I give you power" over all the power of the enemy. "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." That is the Church's place. When Christ was manifested on earth, it was a blessed thing; but it is better to be His companion in heaven, as we shall be when He comes to take us. Far better to be with Himself and as Himself in the Father's house. We have nothing to do with earth, our names are not written in the earth,—kings in it indeed, but our portion is not in it. "He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places." We shall have the inheritance with Him, but it is below us; our hope is to be with Himself above it. The inheritance is the consequence of having this place with Him. (Eph. 1) We are children of the Father, to be "holy and without blame before him in love." Now we have our portion according to the riches of His grace, of poor sinners whom He has saved; and we shall be to the glory of His grace in the manifestation of it. The inheritance comes in afterward., "Rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." As though He would say to them, Do not let your minds be filled with things down here, but think of what you have in me and with me. We find two things brought before us in God's ways: first, the government of this world—that which is still prophetic, connected with the kingdom; and then the Church up in heaven. When the inheritance is spoken of, it is always future; but when our place is spoken of, it is always up in heaven. The Lord saw that the present setting up of the kingdom would all fail, and He was bringing in a better thing than any kingdom, and He rejoiced in that; for when He gives joy to another, He cannot help having it also Himself. When the thief on the cross asked Him to remember him in His kingdom, He said, "this day shalt thou be with me," &c. He was gratifying the thief and also Himself. So with these disciples. He would have them not be rejoicing in the good down here, for it is not good enough. Not only do not be troubled with the bad, but rejoice not in the best thing in this world. "In that hour, Jesus rejoiced in spirit." "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." He felt the circumstances deeply, but His soul was up to the source, and He would say, It is quite right that these proud and haughty ones should see they are nothing, and that these poor despised lambs should get the glory. "Even so, Father." He must bow to the evil, because the time to judge it was not yet come. Evil is going on; people are saying, Where is the God of the earth? We have to bear it; the Lord did. We must get our thoughts away from the expectation of having things better down here. The soul that enters into God's thoughts and purposes bows to His will. "Even so, Father."

Then He, as it were, retires into the glory of His own person. The Son has to reveal the Father. The world rejects Him, and He submits to the rejection of the kingdom, and brings out, instead of it, the blessedness of the heavenly thing, and now speaks of Himself as the Son, and glories in that. The present result of His coming is the Son revealing the Father; and this is even better than the kingdom. The testimony is brighter, as to what God is about, when I take things quietly and submit, not desiring to be a wolf among the wolves. It is exceeding difficult for one's heart to bow and say, will be nothing but a lamb; but that is our place, for the Lord says, vengeance is mine," "rather give place unto wrath;" (Rom. 12) and "neither give place to the devil." (Eph. 4) But if you do not give place to wrath, you will give place to the devil. Shall we loose anything by being quiet, and taking things patiently? No, "all power," he says, "is given unto me in heaven and on earth." We must bow to what is, without, and be satisfied with what is written. If not we shall be only wearying ourselves in the greatness of our way. May we be satisfied to have our "names written in

heaven.”

(To be continued.)

## Notes on Luke 10:38 and Luke 11

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Ver. 23, 24, “He said to them privately.” These things could only be enjoyed by faith. He would have them in consciousness of present blessing.

Ver. 25. Now that the Lord has shown out the dispensational change, He shows the moral change. A lawyer comes and asks how he is to get eternal life. The Lord brings him to the law—keep the law, and you shall live. But he is stopped directly with the simplicity of this, “thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” He does not love his neighbor as himself! He asks, “Who is my neighbor?” “This do and thou shalt live.” Who does love his neighbor as himself? The good Samaritan is the one who does not ask who the neighbor is, but acts in grace, without asking what title the other had. Christ has the title of doing good to him that is in need and misery. This is grace that gives without a title.

See how thoughtful this grace and love is. He went to him, did not send some one else, but went, bound up his wounds, poured in oil and wine, set him on his own beast, brought him to an inn, took care of him, gave him in charge to the host, and said, “When I come again, I will repay thee.” How beautiful are all the details of the actings of this love which flows from what is within, and acts according to what is working there, and not according to the claims upon it!

In the closing part of chap. x. (ver. 38-42) we see the one great thing was to hear Jesus' word. Hence the approval given to Mary above Martha, who, in a certain sense, was doing a very good work. She received Him into her house and served Him; but there is something better than this: “Mary hath chosen that good part which shall never be taken away from her.” He wanted His words to enter and to have power in the heart. The only thing that endures forever is “the word of the Lord.” The wisdom of this world is against it—human reasoning is against it; but it is the only thing worth waiting upon diligently; and if Christians reason about the things of God instead of appealing to the word, they are sure to be going down. We want to have the word in our hearts, to sit at Christ's feet that we may understand and treasure it up. To hear Jesus is the “one thing” needful. No attention, even to Himself in the flesh, though it were from one who loved Him and whom He loved, could replace this. The “many things” end only in disappointment and death, instead of leading into life eternal, as did the words of Jesus, issuing from a heart broken, that it might let forth the stream of life. The hearing ear for His word delighted Him. He was bringing in truth to people's souls. “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” “Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth.” “Now are ye clean through the word which I have spoken to you.” Truth sets everything to rights; it sets God and man in their place, or it is not truth. Sin, and righteousness, and love—these never came out fully by the law; but “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” Everything was set morally in perfect light by Him; but men saw it not because they knew Him not. The word now is the instrument of revealing truth. The law was perfect because it was of God, but it did not tell what man was, much less what God was—it told what man ought to be. Christ comes in as the light and says, You are all dead, but I can give you life. His coming into the world showed out everything exactly as it was. As the living Word He came and revealed to those who could see

God—not at first in redemption, but in testimony. What value to Him was it that Martha cumbered herself about serving, in comparison of a soul listening to His word! It is the same now to a Christian. When God's word comes with nothing else, it has a right to have power over the soul. It makes its way by its own authority and its attractive grace to the heart, and where received it gives life in Christ. There is no living power in a miracle to quicken a soul, but there is living power in the word. It is by the word that any soul can get into heaven. We are begotten by the word, If the word cannot do it, it will never be done. There are three things constantly pressed in connection with the power of the word. 1st, the words spoken will all come up against them another day (John 12, &c.); 2nd, though perilous times come (2 Tim. 3), the word is able to make wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. There is another thing also. When a soul is quickened by the word, the moral effect is to make it dependent and obedient -. “sanctified to obedience.” Such is the character of the new man, as the old man would be independent.

Chap. xi. 1. At the beginning of this chapter we have another instance of our Lord praying, the expression of dependence. And there the disciples ask Him to teach them to pray. They had not learned the simple confidence in the Father that would go up naturally to Him and tell him all. There may not always be wisdom in asking, but there should be confidence of communion by the Holy Ghost. Even Paul had not always intelligence of God's mind, or he would not have asked to have the thorn in the flesh taken away; but he was not afraid to make his request. The disciples had not this simple-hearted confidence. They understood not their place as children of the Father. He condescends to teach them when in this condition and gives them this prayer. The Lord teaches them to pray for things about which His own heart was occupied. “Father, glorify thy name,” was expressive of the grand desire of His heart. “Hallowed be thy name.” He first tells them of Him with whom they are brought into relationship. Not that they had the present power of the Holy Ghost, giving them the consciousness of their relationship—that they did not get till the day of Pentecost, but He teaches them to say, “Father, hallowed be thy name.” There we have perfection. It is the desire for Him to be glorified, though I cannot tell what it may involve me in. There will be the desire not to sin, &c. This was the expression of the perfect desire that was in Christ Himself— “Hallowed be thy name.”

“Thy kingdom come.” There will be the removing of those things that are made, that “those things which cannot be shaken may remain.” Are you quite sure that you would like Him to come in this kingdom that will involve the shaking out of everything that may not remain? Surely that will wrench the heart from a quantity of things that are attaching you to that which does not belong to the kingdom to come. There may be the desire for these things, while at the same time the consciousness that I have not the sense of the object, but a sense of distance from it which hinders my enjoyment, though I know Him to be “the chiefest among ten thousand,” and the “altogether lovely.” There are often complaining prayers, because there is not the present enjoyment of seeing Him in the sanctuary, though the remembrance of it. We may have the hope of the Lord's coming, being glad to get to the end of this desert, because it is a desert; or we may long to get out, because Canaan is at the end. If it is not the latter, we shall be in danger of being tired with running, which is always wrong. We should be in the spirit of waiting pilgrims, not weary ones. We ought not to be weary; I do not say we are not, but we ought to be ever desiring His coming, because He is precious. In Rev. 22:17, the bride says “come,” in answer to what He is, when He says, “I am the bright and morning star.” God does not reject the cry which comes to Him

as “out of the depths,” but there is a difference between the cry of distress and the cry of desire.

When Christ was on earth, there was an answer in Him to all God's will, for He always did the things which pleased His Father. He did it as no angel ever could. Then He comes down to notice our daily need, and there is dependence, indeed, in this. “Give us day by day our daily bread.”

“Forgive us our sins,” &c. This chapter does not go into what we may call proper church privileges; the desires are perfect, but the place is not known. The Lord touches upon all the circumstances down here. Man is looking up from the earth, he is walking there, and needs his feet washed. There are trespasses to be forgiven, and the spirit of grace is wanted. There is no sin imputed to us now; it is all put away. But will that make me hard when others fail? No; my seeing that Christ has agonized on the cross for me, will give me a sense of my freedom, but not indifference about sin. Instead of hardness, it will give us tenderness and softness of spirit.

“Lead us not into temptation.” Why should God ever lead us into temptation? it may be asked. Sometimes the Lord has need to put us through a certain process to make us learn our weakness. Look at Peter. The Lord saw he needed to be sifted, or He could have prayed for him to be saved from that fall. A soul would always desire that he may not have this sifting. Christ Himself, though it was a different thing for Him, desired to be delivered from it when bearing sin. Paul prayed for the thorn to be removed. But Paul did not get a fourth heaven, that would have made him worse, but a “thorn in the flesh;” something to make him despicable in preaching, (otherwise people might have come to him and said, Paul, you must be better than any one else, for you have been to the third heaven,) to prevent his being puffed up, and to keep him even. It was a gracious provision for him, though it is a right thing for the soul to desire not to be led into temptation, but to be delivered from the evil.

(To be continued.)

## Notes on Luke 11

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Verse 5. "Which of you shall have a friend," &c. This is another character of prayer earnest waiting upon God. There is majesty in God's goodness, and yet He takes knowledge of all our wants, and we must wait His will and pleasure. Suppose one asks his father for anything, and he says, "you must wait five minutes," is the child to say, "No, I cannot; I must have it directly?" Meantime, while waiting, faith is exercised, and the spirit broken down in the sense of need. Look at Daniel, and see another thing. God gave him a deep sense of his identification with Himself in what he was doing, so He must make him pray three weeks before he has his request granted. This is a great privilege, for it is to have fellowship with God. In the case of this friend, there is a depth of interest excited in desire for the thing, and because of his importunity he gains it. There is a certainty of God's answering in blessing, though He delay.

Ver. 9-13 This is prayer for the Holy Spirit, which they, though believers, had not then received. In one sense a man may pray for this now, when he has not the Spirit of adoption, like the disciples then. But now, the Holy Ghost has been given, consequent upon the Lord's ascension to the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:22). There could be no union with the man Christ on earth. It is as a heavenly people that there is union with Him. Christ was looked upon alone until His work was done. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." The Holy Ghost was the seal of Christ's work, not of John's preaching righteousness. The second time He received the Holy Ghost was for the church. He received it Himself (Matt. 3) at His baptism, but for us when He ascended, having finished the work of our salvation. The fruits of the Spirit in us are the consequences of the grace and righteousness in Him, He being the only righteous man. The first fruits of the Spirit in us are love, joy, peace—then come the practical fruits toward men. The first-named fruits are toward God, then patience, temperance, &c., towards men. The Holy Ghost cannot be the subject for the Church, as such, to ask for now, seeing He has thus been given. Christ received Him for us. We pray by or in the Holy Ghost, not for Him now. We should pray for more of the working of the Spirit in us, and desire to be filled with the Spirit—poor little hearts indeed, but they may be filled. It does not at all follow that we are filled with the Spirit because sealed with the Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit would keep out evil thoughts. It will not take away the evil nature, which ever remains, but thereby that will be kept down.

Ver. 14, &c. See the dreadful opposition of man's heart against Him, which brings out a very important test. "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." When Christ is manifested, it is for or against Him that people take their stand. We have spiritual enemies to contend with, and Joshua leading the people in conflict was figurative of the Spirit leading the soul against our spiritual enemies. It is not Christians but Christ who is become God's center. We may gather Christians together, but if it is not Christ in one's own spirit, it is scattering. God knows no center of union but the Lord Jesus Christ. It is Himself the object, and nothing but Christ can be the center. Whatever is not gathering round that center, for Him and from Him, is scattering. There may be gathering, but if not "with it is scattering. We are by nature so essentially sectarian, that we have need to watch against this. I cannot make Christ the center of my efforts, if

He is not the center of my thoughts. It is a great thing for a man to say; I have no other object but Christ—no other activity in my heart but for Christ; not only that He is the chief object at bottom every Christian has that—but there may be a quantity of middle things in our hearts between the inside and the outside. These must be judged in the soul. Besides love to Christ, there may be love of company, &c.; and we must judge all that is between Christ, the root, and the offspring.

Ver. 27, &c. “Blessed is the womb that bare thee, etc.” They speak of the honor of being His mother. No, we would say, that has nothing to do with it. The closest connection with the Son of man is not equal to keeping the word of God. Religionists make a great deal of natural affection, but though blessed in its way, it is nothing to the life of God in my soul. Of course it was a blessed thing to be the mother of the Lord; yet, it was but a natural relationship, though a miracle; nor could it have been a light thing to her heart. Still, it was not equal to the blessing of the word of God bringing a soul to Himself. O! beloved friends, if you will only let the pure word of God abide in your hearts, you will find that it will sweep away all the cobwebs of the flesh.

Ver. 29. They are seeking a sign, another natural thing,—but He says, “There shall no sign be given.” Jonah is a sign; he preached, and they repented. Now my word has come to you, and that is the test to you. “The queen of the south,” &c. The word of God is so perfectly suited to man's heart, even the natural feelings are touched by it. The word is sown in the heart, though it may bring forth no fruit.

Ver. 33-36. Light is there, and the question is about the man's eye. If a man has bad eyes, the light is painful. So the word to one who has not clear eyesight or the single eye. This is a solemn word, but if a person was converted only yesterday, it might be true of him; he might be full of light. It applies as much to the babe in Christ, as to the grown man. Where God is in the soul, His light is seen. “If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not.” “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light, having no part dark,” &c. When the candle is there, we see all around. It shows itself, and thus shows all around. The eye receives the light, single or evil. It is not single or double, but single or evil. If Christ is not the object, there is some evil object. If the eye be single, it is all simple, though there will be difficulties in the path, as with Paul. The light is set on a candlestick, that all who come in “may see the light.” The man is forced to the question, Do you see it or not? Christ has set up the light in the world. God has displayed Himself in Him, and the effect of that is to show your condition. Do you say, “Suffer me first to go and bury my father?” Ah, you have something first. If my body is not full of light, there is something not single in my eye—something has not given way before the power of Christ—something not given up. People say, I cannot see. No, of course you cannot; you have some other light. Further, what you do see now will presently be given up if you do not walk in the power of what you have. “Take heed that the light that is in thee be not darkness.” Our manner of judging may be wrong, because the standard is not Christ, and then the light becomes darkness: we are guided wrong and mistaken in our path. If the eye be full of Christ, and we judge everything by that light, when I see anything that would not glorify Christ, I say, that will not do for me. I may be a little vessel, but I must be wholly for Christ. May we be walking in the power of the Holy Ghost, and by the divine teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, content to follow Him, and desire no other path, having the eye upon Him, and only upon Him, so that when other objects are put before us, we may be able to say, “This one thing I do.” While walking through the world, may we be occupied with Christ, not making it our business to judge evil, but simple concerning it From verse 37 we have the sure judgment of the Lord on the various

forms which the lifeless religion of those who led the people took up, expressed in different ways, but His constant and unmingled judgment upon it all. The first ground of condemnation is the substitution of outward cleansings and services, which the flesh can render, for purity of heart and the spirit of love: where these last are, external things are clean. Thus money occupies the heart, where there is only a religious form, for it represents the world; and pre-eminence is another expression of the same thing. Next, (verse 45, &c.) the doctors of the law are sentenced, and with them the imposing of burdens on others, while they spared themselves from the trouble. It might not at first appear why building the sepulchers of the prophets showed approval of those who killed them; but the truth was that the lawyers sought in this their own honor, instead of receiving the testimony of the prophets, which would have humbled them, for the moral and utter ruin of the nation. But they were adorning, as if all were right, the tombs of the righteous and good. It was the spirit of the world, arrogating credit to itself for piety to the dead, not holy fear at the prophet's rebukes. But a clearer proof should be in the wisdom of God that they sympathized not with the word of the prophets, but with the works of their fathers. Prophets and apostles would be sent, and once more he slain and persecuted. The Pharisees were hypocrites, and so judged; the expositors of the law perverted their nearness to scripture in their hatred of any real testimony to their own conscience. These could, least of all, bear what detected their evil. Hence, in pride and fear, they took to themselves all the springs of knowledge, neither entering themselves (for they must do that as learners, and needy, and lost), nor allowing those to enter who would (lest they should condemn themselves, and besides, their honor and characters go for nothing) The closing verses show us the invariable conduct of false religionists. Having no answer of moral truth to the evidence of deceit and evil exhibited in their ways, their effort was to perplex and to entrap. Convicted of sin, and incapable of truth, they sought to make void God's goodness in accusing even Christ of error. It was mercy towards others to be plain as to these false guides, and therefore the Lord denounced them unsparingly.

## Notes on Luke 12

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THE last section of this gospel (chap. x. 38; xi.) showed the two great means of blessing to the soul—namely; the word of God and prayer, the precious gift of God, and the true need of man in the presence of a rejected Messiah. It showed withal the doom of the people who refused every testimony of God. Chapter 12 presents the disciples carrying on their testimony in the midst of hypocrisy and opposition, but in the power of the Holy Ghost. The Lord addressed His disciples first of all; but fearlessly, and without compromise, before a vast throng, as one who acted in the spirit of what He taught. He warns them against that religious formalism which consists of what could be presented to man, and insists strongly and explicitly upon the sure bringing of all things into the light. (Verses 1-3.)

But just as the breaking down of forms and the revelation of the full light of God had its highest operation and effect in His own death, so the disciples must look for the world's hostility, must be prepared for it in their own case, it might be up to death itself. If Messiah were rejected and slain, what could they look for in the same scene, while Satan's power is not set aside? Hence, also, in these chapters it is a question of the soul's relationship with God. It was not the unfolding of the Church yet, but the kingdom in its Jewish application is set aside, and the consequence is that the disciples are to look for the Lord's coming again, and until then, trial and violence. His return would have two aspects: one for such as are in relationship with Himself, and the other for the world; and both are taken up here. They were to beware of hypocrisy, and to remember God's necessary determination to bring everything to light. "For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops."

Vers. 4, 5. Next, as to the danger of walking in the light. They were not to fear them who kill the body, but God, who could cast into hell. Jesus perfectly feared God, and called on His friends to fear none but Him "Yea, I say unto you, fear him." But further, (verses 6, 8), not even a sparrow is forgotten before God; and the very hairs of their head were all numbered. Therefore they were not to fear. Our God has made it of faith to be assured that He cares much for us.

On the other hand, they were not to trust in themselves—in their own courage or their own wisdom, but to confess Christ. There was the result in relation with the humbled, but yet to be exalted, Son of man. There would be a return of love or shame before the angels of God, according as He should be confessed or denied before men. (Ver. 8, 9.) He had hidden His glory to effect grace. He had come among men and into the midst of evil, that God might be fully glorified in His humiliation. This was the patience of God, for Christ claimed nothing But the Holy Ghost would come asserting the glory of God, and claiming subjection to it, witnessing the grace, and proving the glory in power. Hence a word spoken against the Holy Ghost would not be forgiven. Wonderful to say, this is attached to the disciples (verse 10) to console and strengthen them in their weakness. The Son of man might be slighted, and yet there was forgiveness; but if He by whom they would speak was

blasphemed, it would be unpardonable. Further, (ver. 11, 12), the Holy Ghost would speak by them, whatever the power ecclesiastical or civil, that arraigned them.

Such were the principles, the warnings, the motives, and the encouragements the Lord attached to a mission which, rejected by and outside Judaism, was the introduction of light by grace into a world of sin and darkness.

Thereupon in ver. 13, 14, the Lord, by positively refusing to adjudge in Israel, shows that Jewish blessing had lost its place. It was no longer a question of dividing the inheritance, but of the soul in its position before God. Only He warns against the folly of loving the things which gave occasion to such disputes. Righteousness on earth is not looked for now: Jesus declines the place of regulating it and proceeds to show the inward principle of the kingdom in contrast with the world. Hence He told the multitude to beware of covetousness, for a man's life is not in what he possesses, ——adding a most solemn parable, as to the doom of the rich man, who was not rich toward God. Whatever he might say to his soul, God required it that night. "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself." (Verses 16-26).

Ver. 22-31. If it be thus with the world, do you who have a father, even the Father, not be anxious for your soul or body. Food and clothing were not just objects for disciples' care, but rather to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Their thoughts should be in another channel, rising above a mere natural view of the life and the body. But he proceeds to assign positive grounds operative upon them as believers. Needful things were subsidiary which God provided, for they were His and under His ordering. He cared for much less than they were. The fowls of heaven and the grass of the field read them no un instructive lesson, as interpreted of Christ. And if there was, on the one side, God's provident care for the least of His creatures, on the other side let them bear in mind the utter weakness of their anxieties. Whatever might be natural to those who knew not God, they were not to be seeking what to eat or drink: their Father knew they wanted such things. Let them seek the kingdom of God, and all the rest should be added.

32-40. The Lord now takes higher ground for them. "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Therefore were they rather to get rid of what they had as men, and to provide things such as the Father gives to the heirs of the kingdom. They were to act the part of kings called to and having an higher inheritance. The heart follows the treasure. Let them provide a treasure in the heavens, and their heart will be there also. The great saint is not the value of what they gave meritoriously, but the effect internally suitable to their position and their calling. God is not ashamed to be called their God. Further, (35, &c.,) they were to wait for their Lord. This was especially to form their character, and to be continually and outwardly expressed—the habitual expectancy of the Lord. Their loins were to be girded, and their lights burning, as if Christ was actually on His way. And He that shall come will come; and "blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them."

They were now associated with the heavenly character of the kingdom. This world was naught; what they had of it they could return into the privilege of doing good, unselfishly, and have their treasure above, where there would be no losing it, and so their hearts would be kept there. Thus their character would be heavenly. Meanwhile, they were to be as men who waited their Lord returning from the wedding. The general aim of the heavenly effect of the calling is here in

question. They were to be on the watch. It is not prophecy, but character and position. There are no signs or historical circumstances, as in chaps. xvii. and xxi. for people on earth; here there is heavenly separation from it. For those who thus wait, Jesus is still a servant. He will make them sit down to meat, and come forth and serve them. Girded to serve as man, His ear bored in death, in joy He comes forth delighting in disciples so walking. Gladly He releases them from their endurance and watching and service; He sets them at the feast, and honors their faithfulness thus. They were therefore left in uncertainty; and so the Church, when formed, was left. The Church is always to wait for Christ, having no special time: every moment is its time in desire and duty, as alas! it is the world's for negligence. The Jews have a time: days, years, and earthly computations belong to them, and therefore signs. To us it may be second watch or third watch: blessed only if we are found watching!

Ver. 41-48. Peter puts the question of the application of what goes before, which brings out the portion of those who serve faithfully. They will be set over all the Lord's goods when He returns to take possession of all He made and will inherit: a very encouraging thought, though not the highest. On the other hand, Christendom apostatizes by putting off in heart the Lord's calling. The great stay of heavenly-mindedness is lost thereby, and, so our peculiar calling and hope. To expect the Lord detaches from the world; putting it off left the servant to his own will. It is not doctrinal denial, but he says in his heart, "My Lord delayeth his coming;" and then he acts with violence towards the fellow-servants, and his fellowship with the world. But that servant has a Lord, let him act ever so independently; and He will come when not expected, and set that servant's portion with the unbelievers, whatever may have been his boasted rights and privileges. Further in detail, there would be a righteous adjudgment; (vers. 47, 48;) for here we have the principles of service, as before of position. The ignorance of heathenism, will not be spared, but far more tremendous will be the doom of Christendom. Most righteous but oh! how solemn.

Verse 49. There is another thing to be noted—the import of our Lord's coming then into the world. Had man been what he ought, peace would have been the result; but man saw no beauty in Christ to desire Him, and the effect was hatred—not peace, but a sword. The nearer the relation, the deeper the grievance. The will of man comes out, and is utterly opposed to God. They would not endure to be told that they were under God's judgment. But there is this peculiarity in the character of division which the entrance of grace makes. He who is converted in a family becomes generally, and at once, the slave of the rest. Nature even is subverted in such cases. How often thus a husband or parent loses his authority! There is a fire kindled before Christ comes again in judgment to kindle it. He was not then come to judge, but they, by their rejection of Him, kindled the fire of judgment.

Now look at the Lord's part. "I have a baptism," &c. What could straiten the Lord's heart? The perfect, infinite love of God in Him was, as it were, shut up. If He spoke to His disciples of His death, "That be far from thee, Lord" was all the response He met with even in Peter. How painfully was He thus shut up into Himself! But on He went in His service of living love through the world, looking forward to the baptism of His death; and His being straitened showed the fullness and strength of His love. Till then, there could be no letting out of heart; for who understood Him? The Jews said, "Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!" They were shut up within the walls of Judaism; so that, though One was there with a flowing river of blessing, they would not receive Him. Divine love was, we may say, pent up and driven back into

the heart of God. But all is met. "How am I straitened till it be accomplished?" He is not straitened now. The barrier is broken in His death.

How could they as sinners have communion with Christ? There could be none. When He came to meet man's need, they hated and rejected Him. But on the cross He has put away sin, and now grace can flow out without hindrance or measure, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Man is not changed, but God can act in His own way through redemption. Christ's love and glory did come out in a measure before, for "he could not be hid." But at the cross all overflowed; and looking back from that over His life, we see what infinite love and sorrow and suffering filled it up.

In ver. 54-57, the multitude are addressed on the principle of personal responsibility:—first, upon the evident signs of God's dealing with the world, and, next, from their moral judgment of what was right. The conclusion was, that God was in the way with the Jewish people; and that if they did not agree with Him then, they would turn Him into a judge, and must incur the full penalty of their iniquities. In human affairs, man would be prudent enough to come to terms with his adversary, knowing himself wrong and anticipating the judgment. If they did not submit and be reconciled to the Lord now in the way, they would soon be delivered to His judicial dealings and not cease from them till they had received of His hand double for all their sins.

## Notes on Luke 13: Part 1

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THERE are two great principles or subjects in connection with man on the earth—the Church of God as such, and the government of God in the world; and these are very distinct. In the Church the riches of His grace are manifested. In His governmental dealings, we see the display of His justice, mercy, and goodness. An example of God's governmental power as to Israel we have in Ex. 34:5-7. This is not sovereign grace, bringing a soul to eternal life, but government of the same character as we may see every day around us. If a man wastes his fortune or ruins his health by intemperance of any kind, his children suffer for it. "What a man sows, that shall he also reap." See God's dealings with David, because of the matter of Uriah. "The sword shall never depart from thine house.... Thou didst it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, &c., because by this deed thou has given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child that is born unto thee shall surely die." And we know that this judgment for his sin was accomplished in David's after-history. This is not grace, but government. God deals in the same way with a saint now—that is, both in grace and righteousness.

In Luke 12 we see the Jews had this thought of government in their minds, nor was it wrong in itself. They thought that God could not let such a guilty fellow live as this Pilate, who had been mingling the blood of the Galileans with their sacrifices. But Christ brings them to a new principle by which to judge, and tells them judgment was coming upon themselves if impenitent. "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners," &c 2 "I tell you Nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." It refers to judgment in the government of this world, which would overtake all who repented not. They had God's Son there, and they were practically rejecting Him; and how many of the Jews had their blood mingled by Titus? Christ had said to the Jews at the close of chap. xii., "When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate,.. give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him, lest he hale thee to the judge," &c.; but of the state of the Jews, who were under God's dealings and would not escape till the chastenings of the Lord upon them are complete. Thus it is very evident that this passage refers simply to God's government of His people. Natural conscience ought to have told these Jews not to reject the Messiah, for God was going all the way along with them to the magistrate, dealing with them in patient grace, and He would say to them, If you do not repent and be reconciled, judgment must come upon you, when it will be the same with you as with those whom ye think to be such sinners Ver. 6. The Lord is dealing here with the same state of things. The fig-tree is Israel, and God comes seeking fruit in them and finding none. In the gospel there is this difference, that grace, instead of seeking, sows in order to produce fruit. He found none, and the sentence therefore upon it is, "Cut it down." He not only found it useless, but His vineyard was encumbered by it. "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, through you." Then comes in Christ's mission. Last of all, "He sent his Son." God had planted a vineyard and pruned it, but there was no fruit. Then a new Gardener comes in, and He says, "Spare it this year also, till I shall dig about it," &c. It must bring forth fruit then, and be dugged up. He has done as He said, but still there is no fruit.

Ver. 11. The woman with an infirmity, whom Jesus heals on the Sabbath day, brings out another thing that was working in their hearts, in the place of the law, which left room for hypocrisy. They would lead an ox or an ass from the stall on the Sabbath, but they would not bear that a daughter of Abraham whom Satan had bound these eighteen years should be loosed on that day. One of the infirmities of man's mind is to use possessed truth to resist revealed truth. Paul was an example of this,— “as touching the righteousness of the law, blameless;” still, he “thought he ought to do many things contrary to Jesus of Nazareth.” So also Christ says of the Jews in John 16 “These things will they do unto you,” &c. They were using the name of the one true God, which had been given them (“ the Lord, thy God, is one God “) to reject the Son; for when Christ came in humiliation, they would not receive Him. Orthodoxy is used to stop the reception of truth. When truth is the ground of a man's standing, it gains him credit; but when a new truth comes in, it puts faith to the test. Truth that requires faith to walk by, is resisted by the natural heart; and the root of this is hypocrisy. The ruler of the synagogue said, “There are six days in which men ought to work: in them come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.” But he ought to have known that the Lord of the Sabbath was there; for that single word “daughter of Abraham” ought to have told him who He was that stood there. The Lord answered him, “Thou hypocrite!” A solemn word this!

Ver. 18. He goes on to show what the kingdom will be like when the king is rejected and gone away. A kingdom without a king! who is sitting on His Father's throne, until he comes to take His own throne. The kingdom is like a little seed thrown into the ground, which springs up and becomes a great tree,—just what we call Christendom. This fills up the gap between His rejection and His coming again. There is no power exercised while the King is away. As in Mark's Gospel, it sprang up, men knew not how. When the harvest is ripe, He will come again. He sowed the first time, but He will put in the sickle the second time. He is looking for heavenly fruit now; but when He comes, He will find Christendom a great tree with the fowls of the air lodging in its branches. Pharaoh was a great tree—Nebuchadnezzar a greater still; they were the high and mighty ones of the earth, representatives of worldly power. Even Israel, which had been planted a noble vine, wholly a right seed, was bearing no fruit. Therefore, as it is said in Ezek. 15, “what is the vine-tree more than any tree,” if it bears no fruit? It is only fit to be burned. Otherwise useless if it does not bear fruit, it only makes the best firewood.

Ver. 21. Here the kingdom is likened unto leaven, and leaven is that which spreads throughout the whole mass, and also gives a character to that in which it works. It is nominal profession of Christianity which is spread into a vast system. There is not a word here about the Holy Ghost, but about the effect in the world. In Matt. 13 in the first parable, there is individual result, and not the kingdom spoken of. In the three first of the six parables, it is the public appearance; in the three last, the inward character is described.

Ver. 23. “Are there few that be saved? The word used here is the same word that through the LXX. signifies a remnant, or such as shall be saved. The question really was as to whether this remnant would be few or many, who were to be spared when the judgment came; but this being a mere idle question, the Lord does not answer it, but says to them:-

Ver. 24. “Strive to enter in at the strait gate.” The strait gate was receiving Christ at that time,—the real but narrow entrance of faith in Him and conversion to God. There will be some come and knock when the door is closed, to whom He will say, “I know you not whence you are;” you are not

changed, Strive to enter in at the strait gate, through which Christ goes before you—that is, rejection. “Many shall seek to enter in, [not at the strait gate] and shall not be able.”

It is most simple when we see the rejection of Christ. Those who reject Him in the day of His humiliation, will themselves be rejected in the day of His glory; and instead of being His companions in the kingdom, they will be thrust out. The unbelieving -Jews will see the Gentiles come into the glory of the kingdom, while they, remaining in unbelief, will be cast out.

Ver. 31. The Pharisees say to Him, “Get thee out and depart, for Herod will kill thee.” Now Herod was an Idumman, and what right had such a stranger to be their king? What had he to do with the promises to Israel? Nothing. In Herod we have a figure of the willful king. He tried to kill Christ, and therefore the character of opposition-king belongs to him. He had no faith in God's purposes or in Christ's glory; and the Lord says, “Go and tell that fox.” I shall do my Father's will till the moment come for me to be glorified. I am here as long as my Father wills, and then I shall be perfected. The power of God must be fully known. What divine contempt for the apostate king, but what perfect, human obedience combined! “Nevertheless I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets,” &c. After all, Jerusalem is the guilty place. Let the Edomite king do and say what he will, it is “the holy city” that is guilty, for it was nearest to Himself. The nearer I am to God, if I reject Him, the worse is the sin and the more dreadful the judgment. See Psa. 132 “The Lord hath chosen Zion,” &c., and Psalm 88:65-68, the same election of Zion. Christ does not put the sin upon them till they have rejected both Him and His Father. He brings out a purpose of grace in these closing verses. The old man is condemned and profitless—Israel and all of us. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?” The gospel begins with seeking and saving that which was lost. Here we see that though they have rejected Him in responsibility, He has not rejected them in the day of His grace. Grace shines out in His yet choosing Judah.

Notice how the divine person of the Lord comes out here. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered,” &c. A prophet could not say this, and He was a prophet too, and more than a prophet: He was Jehovah, for none but Jehovah could gather Israel as “He that scattered Israel will gather him.” Israel had rejected Jehovah under responsibility; but Jehovah will own them when He comes in sovereign grace. How blessed is the way; the circumstances through which He passed in His path down here did bring out in a far brighter way WHO HE WAS than any text to prove it, important as that is in its place. For suppose you believed there was a God, yet if He were to come down by your very side and say I am, would not that be a very different thing? Christ was the humbled man all through His path down here, for He was ever the servant of all; yet when the service was done, and rejected as of no use, His glory shines out. “Before Abraham was, I am.” See in this chapter of Luke the connection between ver. 33, 34, and 35 as illustrative of this. “How often would I have gathered thee... desolate... desolate... until ye shall say, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” The complaint in the Psalms is, that there is none to say, “how long” —none to count upon the faithfulness of God to His people. (See Psa. 74:9.) This expression is often used in the Psalms and in Isa. 6 and refers to chastening, not retribution. How long is Israel to stumble and fall? (Rom. 11) In Isa. 6 the prophet, having uttered these words, “Make the heart of this people fat,” &c., taken up by the Lord in John 12, then says, “how long?” He waits in faith, and reckons upon God, and having God's mind, he cannot believe that God will give them up, and therefore asks, “how long” is the chastening to continue (To be continued)

## Notes on Luke 13: Part 2

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To which the Lord answers, "There shall be a great forsaking in the midst of the land, but in there shall be a tenth, and the holy seed shall be the substance therefore." The sap is still there though there are no leaves. So in Psa. 118, "He hath chastised me sore, but He hath not given me over unto death." In the same way the Lord does not say, "Your house is left unto you desolate, and therefore you shall not see me again." No; but He says, "Ye shall not see me until ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." He can give, as Jehovah, the answer in grace, and when He gives repentance to Israel, then He will send Jesus, whom until that day the heavens have received. Meanwhile our connection with Him comes in. The prophet spake only of earthly things, though divine; but to the Church it is, "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," and "hath quickened us together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:" that gives security. How did I get there? By virtue of Christ. He is my title. My desire is to be acquainted with this, that I am one with Christ in heaven—an everlasting portion, that the Holy Ghost seals upon my soul, and would have me enjoy more and more.

When Israel is brought to repentance, "the stone which the builders rejected," will be "the head of the corner," and owned of them, they will say, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for His mercy endureth forever." Alas! they will receive another first; but when their hearts are turned, and grace works, they will use the language of Psa. 119 and find the expression of the law within their hearts; and when faith is thus exercised, and their hearts are broken and open to receive Him, then He Himself will come to them. If there is not a prophet to say, "How long?" Jehovah will give the answer. He never changes: and though He executes judgment and righteousness, grace is found in Him still. "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" Well, if there be not faith to be found, or a prophet to say, "How long?" there is ONE who will lay up, in His treasures, something for faith to lay hold on, in the sovereignty of His own grace.

Thus we see Jehovah in that humbled One, and how He is able to rise above all iniquity. How precious does all this make Jesus to us! and we are one with Him. May we learn Him, and so follow Him, remembering that all that is left outside the narrow way is the flesh and evil.

## Notes on Luke: 14

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This chapter shows out the distributive justice of God. First, it is toward His saints, the consequence of conduct with God, and the place a man will take in view of that. Next, we have responsibility connected with grace, the moral position of the soul, because of having grace presented to it. Slighting God's grace fills up the measure of man's sin. But here it is the presentation, which is a different thing from the possession, of grace. This is brought out in those who refused to come to the supper.

Ver. 1-6. The Lord, in bringing the dispensation to a close, constantly brings before Israel the Sabbath. The question was, could man, as man, find rest with God? Could man ever enter into God's rest? We know man broke God's rest directly-how soon we are not told: but, perhaps, the very day he ought to have rested, he ate the forbidden fruit. Man never entered into God's rest; and now the question was how to enter in-by his own work or Christ's? It was essential to the rest after creation, to have it at the end of the six days of work, and therefore it was on the seventh day. So, afterward, when the legal ordinances were given, the sabbath became a sign of the covenant. The Lord, when here, constantly trenched on the sabbath, to show that, sin being unremoved, He must work. He could not rest, the sabbath being a sign of man's getting rest after work, and the law showing that man constantly broke that covenant. The Lord presses home to their consciences their sin, by showing them that He must work if they were to have rest. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." If man had kept the law, he was entitled to the rest, but he neither did nor could keep it. All that was the sign of God's rest, for man, after work done, failed; but "there remaineth a rest for the people of God." The sabbath continued as a sign; and all through the prophets, we find it insisted on, but they did not get rest. Paul, reasoning upon it, in Heb. 4 says, "We which have believed, do enter into rest." But Canaan, the nominal rest they of old did not enter, save the few faithful ones and these did not get rest, for if they had, another day would not have been spoken of; and so it is said by the Psalmist, and quoted in Hebrews, "If they shall enter into my rest." "IF" means "they shall not." This being the sabbath was no rest to them. The sabbath was still the sign, but no real rest. The whole thing being therefore gone as to man's getting into God's rest, it must be now on an entirely new principle, by faith and not by works. When Messiah came, He would have been rest to the people, but man would not have Him, as we find it here. Man could not have God's rest by law, and they would not have it by grace, and this proves man altogether broken with God. If I have got to God, I have rest, and need not journey further for it. I have my rest in Himself, for grace, not law, has given me a capacity to enjoy what God is. But when the creature had broken the rest of his Creator, there could be no relationship between them. Sin has come in and caused God to be towards me as a judge, and there can be no link of heart between a judge and a criminal. If God judges me as a sinner, the only word I can have from Him is, "Depart from me, ye cursed." Therefore all that man can say, is, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord." There is a link between a father and a child that brings them into relationship; but it is a new thing. All must be put on a new footing, for there is no rest in the old creation.

In chap. xv. we have grace at work to give rest, the Shepherd bringing the sheep home, &c.; and in this chapter we have a case of misery brought out in the man who had the dropsy. Christ said, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?" But they held there peace. He puts the case to themselves. "If you shall have an ox or an ass fallen into a pit and they could not answer him." There was no present rest, no hope of rest, no possibility of rest for man as a sinner, and there could be no rest for God, for God could not rest where sin was. There was no sabbath for righteousness, for man had no righteousness. There was no sabbath for love, for love could not rest where judgment must be exercised. Love might come in and work, but work is not rest. Man has lost his communion with God, through his sin, and this is a solemn thing, for he has made. God a judge through his sin. The very thought of judgment connected with God shows man a sinner, for there was no necessary association of judgment with God; but when sin came in, judgment must follow, for God is holy. If brought to the consciousness of there being no relationship between us as sinners and God, we learn what a place becomes us, when once we have faith in His grace.

Ver. 7-11. "And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms." It is just the place that nature likes. The world which has no relations with God delights in exalting self and shutting Him out. Self gets for self what it likes and forgets God. Man is always setting up self, pushing for self, against God. ff does not think so, for he says he is only using his faculties. But so Adam did to hide himself from God. Do not we use our faculties to please ourselves, rather than for God? While the master is away, the servants go on their own way and do their own will. A man is naturally hurt when he is put down in a corner and despised. Flesh does not relish being thrust aside, but this seeking for a place is to seek for it where Christ had none. "Therefore," he says, "when thou art bidden to a wedding, sit down in the lowest room." The point of this parable is seen in ver. 8 11: it refers the heart to the Master, to "him that bade thee." If I am conscious of being a sinner, and therefore deserving no place, I shall take none, but wait till God, bestows one on me. I shall have honor indeed, when God gives me a place. The point is, What does he bestow upon me? Having the eye upon God, and referring to Him, seek for the lowest place as Christ did. It will not do to say, I will not have a place in the world; the great thing is, the heart resting on God's place in the world. When the eye is thus upon God, self is forgotten; if not, I am thinking of the slights I receive, and neither faith nor grace are in exercise. If I could think nothing of myself, I should be perfect. The man who bade the guests has the right estimate of each and the honor due to them. The evangelist's place, the pastor's, the apostle's, &c., will all be appointed by God. When God gives me a place, it is one of power and nighness to Himself; but when a man takes a place for himself, it is one of weakness and alienation from God, because self is the object.

Then, again, we must guard against the mere refusing to take a place in the world, because we know it is wrong, as followers of Him who has been rejected. A mere legal estimate of what is right can never last. A thing may be very right, but there is no stability in pursuing it, because there is no power to subdue the flesh in merely doing what one knows to be right. There was the sense of obligation with the law, but the law did not set an object before me to attract my heart; it did not bring God to me nor me to God. That lasts which feels that we are nothing and that God is everything. Many have begun very energetically, and taken a certain place, right in itself; but if legality be the source of it, there will be no power of perseverance, for that which is taken up under law will be sure to be lost in the flesh. When God is the object, the low place here is sufficient. He

Himself carries me on; and whatever it be, if the mind and affections are upon Him, what was hard at first is no effort as I proceed. His love which attracted and gave me power at first to take such a position, becomes brighter and brighter when better and longer known; and what was done at first tremblingly, is easy with increasing courage. The only thing which can enable me thus to go on, is to have Christ the object before me, And just in proportion as it is so can I be happy. There may be a thousand and one things to vex me, if self is of importance; they will not vex me at all, if self is not there to be vexed. The passions of the flesh will not harass us, if we are walking with God. What rubs we get when not walking with God, and thinking only of self! There is no such deliverance as that of having no importance in one's own eyes. Then one may be happy indeed before God.

If we look at Christ, we learn two principles: first, that He humbled Himself, because of the sin of the world all around him; second, the world did all they could to humble him, for the more He went down, so much the more they sought to pull Him down.

No one cares for another; so that if a man does not care for himself, he will be sure to be pushed down low enough. Then again, so deceitful are our hearts that it is possible we should be willing to humble ourselves, if we could get anything by it, even the approbation of men. On the other hand, if we, in the usual sense of men, merely seek to imitate Christ in this, it will be but legal effort. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." He humbled Himself. First, "He made himself of no reputation;" that is, He emptied Himself of His glory to become a man. In doing this, He left the Father's glory to become a man. This was a great descent, (though we think a great deal of ourselves.) But was that all? No. He humbled Himself to death, even the death of the cross. It is the same principle which is put before us in this chapter in Luke. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Real lowliness is being ready to serve any and everybody: and though it may to the eye of man look low, it is in reality very high; being the fruit of divine love working in our hearts. God, operating in our hearts, makes us unselfish. The only thing worth doing in the world is this service except it be enjoying God. We should be ready to serve one's enemies. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." This is not only being humbled, but humbling one's self and not doing it before those-who would honor us all the more for being humble. Paul could say of Himself and others, "ourselves your servants for Christ's sake." He felt they had a title to serve in grace; and in proportion as he took the humble place, he will be exalted in the day that is coming.

Vers. 1 2-1 4. The next statement in the chapter goes on to speak of him who bade. Before, it was about the guest; but here it is the principle on which feasts are made. "Call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind and thou shalt be blessed, for they cannot recompence thee, but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." Thus He takes them all out of the world again, to the time when they shall meet God, and makes it a present guide for action. They must not act on the principle of getting reward here, but must wait for the time when they are to meet the Lord, as it is not till the Master of the house returns that the servants receive their wages. This is not a question of salvation, but of reward for service. "Thou shalt be recompensed-at the resurrection of the just." Mark how the Lord brings out the JUST as a separate class. The resurrection is not a common one; there is no such thing in Scripture. There is no thought of confounding in another world what God has separated in this. Grace has separated the believer, so that he has risen in his soul now; but he does not get the reward of his service till "the resurrection of the just." A sinner is quickened here, though not judicially manifested here; because we are in a dispensation of faith, and the

portion is in glory, There is no “general” resurrection to good and bad alike; but there is the “first resurrection,” which is God separating in power those whom in grace He has made His own. It was the resurrection from among or out of the dead that awakened such wonder among the Jews. The Pharisees could teach resurrection, though the Sadducees denied it. A resurrection was commonly believed, as Martha said, “I know that he shall rise again at the last day.” But they could not comprehend divine power coming in to Satan's house, and taking the righteous dead out from among the rest of the dead Jesus replied to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life” —speaking of the living power that visits a man when he is in a state of death, and takes him out of it. They knew nothing of the discriminating process of the one to life, and the other to judgment. (John 5)

The master of the house will show His approval of the faithful servant. There will be degrees of glory given according to the service done. Not that I shall be saved for what I have done; but my service will be rewarded, whatever may have been produced by the Holy Ghost answering the desire of Christ in working in me; for it is service of which I could not do an atom without His power. It is likewise the answer of God according to His counsels; as we may see in the reply to the mother of Zebedee's children, “It shall be given to those for whom it is prepared of my Father.” The service of love is never influenced by recompence. Reward is not set before the soul as the motive for doing anything; but when we find difficulties in treading the path of service, then the crown is set before us to encourage us to go on. So, even Christ, for the joy that was set before Him, “endured the cross, despising the shame.” So also Moses, while esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, had respect unto the recompence of the reward. If the recompence and not love be the spring of our service, it would just amount to this, “Take thy penny, and go thy way.” But if the world is broken with, no recompence can be looked for from that source, which is as great a deliverance as the deliverance from self.

Now (ver. 15-24), see how grace, when brought in, is rejected. The supper was ready; the guests were bidden, but they would not come. The Lord had before spoken of the kingdom, and here He chews what the reception of the kingdom would cost. All things are now ready-but they all make excuses. They do not care enough for the supper to leave their yoke of oxen, the piece of ground, &c. The supper was in God's thoughts from the beginning, and it was to be when He came to the Jews, as their Messiah, at the close of the day; but they rejected Him they did not want Him. It does not say that their sins shut them out from the supper, for God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Neither was it the piece of ground, the oxen, or the wife that were, in themselves, the evil; but in their case they became so, because their minds were intent on them, to the slighting of the supper. And is it not just the same now? What harm is there in these things, do you say? If they have occupied your heart, and made you slight God, that is the harm. In the kingdom of God where are you? There was not one link of heart between Christ and the people He came to, and therefore they rejected the supper. This is also a test to our souls all through the day. It is not a question of whether a thing be right or wrong, but what savor have the things of Christ to our souls in it? It may be a very small thing. If we find the reading of a book makes the manifestation of Christ to become less precious to us, we have got away from God, and we cannot tell where the next step may take us. Satan often cheats us in this way. Thus, soul is put to the test day by day, whether the things that are revealed by God in Christ have so much power over us as to engage the heart; but if other things have come in between when we want the enjoyment of the things of Christ, we shall not have it, and this will skew us how

far we have got away. If anything comes in and takes the freshness of Christ from your soul, take heed! for, if the oxen, &c., are thus cared for, when you have opportunity for the things of Christ, you will have no taste for them.

In ver. 21, the Lord turns to “the poor of the flock,” those who have no yoke of oxen, and are glad of the feast. The priests and chiefs of the Jews had the first invitation, but they rejecting it, the Master of the house sends out into the streets and lanes of the city, to bring in the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind of the people, still the house is not filled; and then he sends outside the city, into the highways and hedges, and compels them to come in, that the house may be filled. These are the Gentiles. In this Gospel the poor of the flock and the Gentiles are distinguished from each other. But in Matthew, whose aim is Jewish, there is no mention made of both classes as distinct. “The wedding was furnished with guests” includes the Gentiles, gathered in after the Jews are brought into the blessing. Then mark the lowliness of the servant and the patient grace of the Master; that goes right on to the end. He cannot rest till He gets His house filled with guests. What perseverance there is on the part of God! and we are called to go on in the same spirit. It does cost a great deal, to go on, and on, and on, in spite of everybody and everything; and for us to do so, marks the presence of Divine power in us, for God's grace is-unwearied. There is indeed judgment at the same time, for it is said, “Not one of those that were bidden shall taste of my supper.” But God's acting thus shows us what lowliness there should be in us, as regards self, and grace as regards everyone else, and all grounded on this one fact, that all man's relationships with God are morally broken, and if you are really going to take such a path as that of following Christ, you must count the cost. It is all very well to see such grace and admire it, but there is no power to persevere in it, without such love in the heart as the establishment of a new relationship with God gives. There must be a link in the heart with the new thing, and Christ must have such strength in the heart as to give power to break with old things.

Ver. 25-33. Multitudes were attracted by the hearing of such grace, so in verse 26 He tells them what discipleship will involve. There may be an allusion here to Mic. 7:5, 6. Friends must be given up for Christ. A man may have to leave everything else, but the question is, Am I to leave God? What! life too? Yes—no matter. in that life you are linked with the world, and that must be given up too, if I am in question: you cannot have two hearts -a heart for the world and a heart for me, Christ would say. I tremble when I see people who have not counted the cost, setting out in the profession of following Christ. It is God's way to put the barrier at the first start. If you can leap that, you will do. Legal obedience will not stand, but following Christ. If He is in the path, it is happy and easy; but it is a path between two hedges. If Christ is not with you in it, there will be nothing but trouble and difficulty.

Ver. 34, 35. “Salt” is grace in spiritual energy; that is, the saints being witnesses in the world of the power of holy love, instead of selfishness. Salt is the consecrating principle of grace: if that is gone, what is to preserve? Salt is rather grace in the aspect of holy separateness unto God, than in that of kindness and meekness, though of course these are also inseparable from grace. If the salt has lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? If I have meat without salt, I can salt it; but if there is no saltiness in salt, what can I do? What a character we have here of an unspiritual church, or an unspiritual saint! Like the vine which represented Israel, good for nothing at all but to dishonor the Lord its owner and be destroyed. Mercy, it is true may recover us; but as saints we should have the savor of Christ. Whatever enfeebles attachment to Christ, destroys power. It is not

gross sin that does it, which of course will be met and judged; but it is the little things of every-day life which are apt to be chosen before Christ. When the world creeps in, the salt has lost its savor, and we show that a rejected Christ has little power in our eyes.

The Lord keep us in the path with Christ, where all is bright and blessed. If the film of this world has been drawn over our spiritual vision, hiding Christ from us, He alone can remove it,

## Notes on Luke 15-16

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WE have seen the Lord showing out his own rejection, in grace, followed by an entirely new order of things. The Church, brought in subsequently, is not an age, properly so called, but a heavenly episode between the ages. There are three ages spoken of in Scripture: the age before the law; the age under the law; and the millennial age. Christ was “made under the law,” and that age is not finished yet. The disciples said to Him, “What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age?” That was the age when He was there, but when they rejected Him, the age was suspended. As He straitly charged Peter to tell no man He was the Christ, saying, “the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected,” &c. Therefore, He says to them, “Ye shall not see me, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” We, who form a part of the Church of God, and not having anything to do with the earth, are in no sense an age, but are a heavenly people united to Christ above, during the suspension of this age, filling up the gap between the Lord's leaving the Jews, and His return to them again. So in Rom. xi. we have the olive tree with some of the branches broken off, and others grafted in. This is a tree With its root in the earth, and consequently could have nothing directly to do with the Church in heaven. Some of the branches were broken off, and some left; but this could never be said of the Church, the body united to its head, at the right hand of God. The Church, of course, does fill up a certain place and time, but it is during the suspension of the age to which Christ came. Characteristically we belong to that which is above and beyond anything connected with this world. It is grace that has set us there, and that is riot of earth but of heaven.

In chap. 15. we find the Lord rising above Jewish dispensation altogether, to the full display of God's own nature—love—in the gospel. At the close of chap. xiv. He takes up the professing system in its responsibility. “Salt is good, but if the salt have lost its savor,” it is good for nothing. Thus He shows what man is. Then in chap. xv. come publicans and sinners, and we have the display of what God is. Here God is dealing with lost man, in grace. Sinners, who owned their sins and came to repentance, were those who justified God. “Wisdom is justified of her children.” God is vindicated in His ways, whether in the condemnation or salvation of a sinner. The publicans and sinners justified God, being baptized of John, while the Pharisees rejected His counsel against themselves. All that is wanted to justify God is that He should show Himself; and this is what the Lord now does. He manifests what God is in grace, and this it is which makes the chapter ever so fresh and full to our souls: the heart that has been awakened never tires of such a chapter.

Then, in chap. xvi., He shows the responsibility of those who are thus dealt with. The earth was given to the children of men, and God looked for fruit. He first dealt with man as to what he ought to have been on the earth, but there was entire failure. Now there comes out another thing, entire grace, which is irrespective of all that man was, and takes an absolutely heavenly character. Divine love is its source, and its character is heavenly. Revealing heaven, it puts man into connection with it; and the people so put must be a heavenly people. Why so? Because this world is all gone wrong; it has fallen from God, and is become the “far country.” Hence, its riches are of no value, but a great hindrance, unless used in a heavenly way; and chap. xvi. shows how they

should be used. Chap. xv. shows the sinner called out by grace; that which follows shows what he, who is so called out, is to be as a heavenly man. This world is a scene of evil, and that which attaches to it is now ruin and not blessedness (see the rich man and Lazarus.) Adam had a place in this world, and Israel had a place in it; but now that is all gone, and grace has come in, lifting those who are the subjects of it into another state of things altogether. Christ is justifying God. His nature being love, it was His joy to manifest grace to sinners. It is not here the joy of those brought back, but God's own joy in bringing the sinner back to Himself. This gives the tone to heaven. "There is joy" there in the poor wretched sinner brought back.

I have no doubt we have, in these three parables, the unfolding of the ways of the Trinity. In the first is shown the Son, as the Good Shepherd, going after the sheep. In the second, the woman lighting a candle, and searching diligently till she find the piece of silver, we have the pains-taking work of the Holy Ghost, lighting up a testimony in this dark world. The third, is the Father's reception of the returning sinner, when brought back. In this, the prodigal son, we find the work in the sinner: but in the two previous ones, it is the sovereignty and the activity of grace, which goes out in love to find that which was lost, and brings the sinner back without his having anything to do in it. This persevering energy of love is in the Shepherd Himself—the Good Shepherd cares for the sheep, and gives it no trouble in getting home; He carries it on His shoulders. Herein is seen the perfect grace in which the Lord Jesus has so charged Himself with bearing our every burden, our every trial and difficulty all along the road. Christ is thus the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. Then mark, in v. 6, the peculiar character of this joy. "He calleth together His friends and neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost." There could not be a more genuine picture, or a fuller expression of a person being happy than this. Joy always speaks out.

In the second parable, we have the same general principle. The pains-taking of the Holy Ghost is shown in the acting of the woman who sought the lost piece of silver; the piece of silver could have neither trouble nor joy itself. The difference in the two is, that in the first, the Shepherd bears all the burden: in the second, it is the pains taken in finding the lost piece, proving the woman cared enough for it to take all this trouble to search it out. Thus does God's love act toward us, to bring us out of the dark world to Himself. What a work it is to bring man's heart back to God!

"Twas great to speak a world from naught;

'Twas greater to redeem."

If we look at man, as he is in himself, he could never get back to God. But look at what God is in Himself, and who or what can resist His grace! Still it is the joy of the finder, and not of the thing found. "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep—my piece—that was lost." And in the case of the returning prodigal, who made the feast? Not the young man, but the father, saying to those in the house, "Let us eat and be merry, for this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found." All caught the joy of the Father's heart, the servants, he., all except the unhappy, self-righteous elder brother (the Pharisee, the Jew), to whom the father replied, "It was meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead and is alive again," &c. It is the joy God has in receiving a sinner back to Himself. In the parable of the prodigal son, by itself, the full glory of grace is not seen, as these three parables set it forth together. The case of the sheep is the Shepherd charging himself with the whole burden of the sheep: the silver is the pains-taking

of the Holy Ghost. Before actual departure, there was moral departure. When the young man left his father's house it was but a display of the evil in his heart. He was just as wicked when he asked for his portion of goods, and crossed his father's threshold, as when he ate husks with the swine in the far country: he was, doubtless, more miserable then, but his heart was gone before. One man may run further into riot than another, but if we have turned our backs upon God, we are utterly bad. In this sense there is no difference.

The moral evil was just the same with Eve. She gave up God for an apple. She, virtually, thought the devil a much better friend to her than God, and took his word instead of God's. Satan is a liar from the beginning, and at the cross the Lord Jesus proved this. It cost the Lord His life, to prove that God was good. Christ came to contradict the devil's lie, which man believed, and under which the whole world is lying. Grace and truth came by Christ and, at all cost, were set up by Him on the cross. Man can do without God, and from the beginning, the whole world has been a public lie against God. Who could unriddle it? Look at creation, how it groans under the bondage of corruptions. Look at providence—how can I account for the goodness of God when I see an infant writhing with pain? How can I reconcile the two things? The villain prospers—the good man suffers. When I see Christ on the cross, I see what God is. Death came on man by reason of sin. But Christ takes my sin on His own sinless person, bows His head in death upon the cross, and thus sets aside that lie of Satan, “Ye shall not surely die.” Thus was God's truth re-established here below in the work and person of the Lord Jesus, and nowhere else. In Him I see holiness, truth, and love, no matter at what cost.

The natural man is just like this prodigal; he spends his substance in the far country, and ruins himself. A man having £5,000 a year and spending £20,000, will seem very rich for the time; but look at the results. He is a ruined man. The moment man departed from God, he sold himself to Satan, and is spending his soul, his heart, away from God:—he even spends what God has given him against God, and when he is thoroughly spent, and has nothing to live on, he begins to be in want. “There arose a mighty famine in that land,” and all the world feels that. Every sinner does not go to the same lengths of eating the swine's husks, but all are in the same condition of ruin. Every man has turned his back upon God, though all have not run to the same excess of riot, nor fallen into the same degradation. The famine never draws back to the Father's house. The prodigal joined himself to a citizen of that country, not his father's country. “He would fain have filled his belly,” he., and “no man gave to him.” Satan never gives; that is found where God's love is, who spared not His own son. When the prodigal thinks of his father's house, the whole work is morally done, though he is not back there yet. He turns, his heart was changed, and thus his whole desire was to get back to his father's house, from whence he had departed. He was not yet in the full liberty of grace, so as to have peace and happiness, and he says to himself, “make me as one of thy hired servants.” He is brought to a sense of his guilt, and what was it?—feeding with the swine? No, that was the fruit of it, but his guilt was in leaving his father's house, turning away from God. When he came to himself he desired to return. This was truly a right wish, but the form it took in his mind, from his not yet knowing grace, was a legal one. “I am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me -as one of thy hired servants.” But the father does not give him time for that. We hear nothing more about hired servants; for when he was “yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion on him, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.” He could not have been a servant with the father's arms round his neck. It would have spoiled the father's feelings, if not

the son's. It was the joy of Him who was receiving back the sinner to Himself; and it is the knowledge of this which gives peace to the soul: nothing else does. If a man does not know love, he does not know God, for God is love. The full revelation of God is what we have in Christ. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?" God acts from the joy and delight He has in Himself, in receiving back the sinner, and therefore He does not think of the rags but of the child he has got back again. What right has man to call God in question, when He indulges His own heart in the out-flow of love to the sinner? You will never get peace by the mere act of coming back, but by learning the Father's mind about you. Could the prodigal get peace as he was coming back if the father had not met him? No, all along the road, he would be questioning, how will he receive me?—will he be angry with me?—will he spurn me from his presence?—and, if he does, what will become of me? "But when he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him." If not so, he would have trembled even to knock at the door. When the Father's arms were on the son's neck was he defiled by the rags? No; and he will not have the son bring rags into the house, but orders the best robe to be brought out of it. God sends His own Son out of heaven, and clothes the sinner; and, thus arrayed, the young man could bring credit to his father's house. And, surely, if we are so clothed with Christ, we shall do credit to God; and, in the ages to come, He will show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus.

"Let us eat and be merry." It is not, let him eat and be merry. Again, he says, "It was meet that we should make merry and be glad." There was but one exception to the delight in the house. The elder brother (the self-righteous person) was angry, and would not go in. God had shown what he was in Himself, by His Son, in thus receiving the prodigal; and now He would show what they were in themselves. We know the Pharisees murmured from the beginning, and the elder brother had no communion with his father; for if the father was happy, why was not he happy too! He was angry, and would not go in. If such a vile person as the publican gets in, that makes my righteousness go for nothing. It is truly so; for where God's happiness is, there self-righteousness cannot come. If God is good to the sinner, what avails my righteousness? He had no sympathy with his father. He ought not to have said, My father is happy, so I must be. There should have been communion in the joy. "Thy brother is back." That ought to have rung on his heart, but no.

Then see the perfect patience of God's grace: the father goes out and entreats him. And do we not, all through the Acts, see God entreating the Jews to be reconciled, although they had crucified His Son? So Paul, in 1 Thess. 2:15, 16, says that the Jews filled up the measure of their sins by forbidding the Apostles to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved. It is all selfishness in the elder son. "Thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends." To which the father replies, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." The oracles of God, the covenants, the promises, God gave to the Jews, but He will not give up the right to show His grace to sinners, because of the self-righteous selfishness of the Jews, or of any one else.

Chap. xvi. "There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him, that he had wasted his goods." Man, generally, is God's steward; and in another sense and in another way, Israel was God's steward, put into God's vineyard, and entrusted with law, promises, covenants, worship, &c. But in all, Israel was found to have wasted His goods. Man, looked at as a steward, has been found to be entirely unfaithful. Now, what is to be done? God appears, and in the sovereignty of His grace, turns that which man has abused on the earth, into a means of

heavenly fruit. The things of this world being in the hands of man, he is not to be using them for the present enjoyment of this world, which is altogether apart from God, but with a view to the future. We are not to seek, to possess the things now, but, by the right use of these things, to make a provision for other times. "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness," &c. It is better to turn all into a friend for another day than to have money now. Man here is gone to destruction. Therefore now man is a steward out of place. "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward." He is discharged from stewardship—has lost his place, but not the things of which he has the administration. Here is something far better than the alchemy which would turn all into gold. For this is grace, turning even gold itself, that vile thing which enslaves men's hearts, into a means of showing love and getting riches for heaven.

To Israel, God is saying, you have failed in the stewardship, therefore now I am going to put you out. In chap. xv. the elder brother, the Jew, would not go in; and here, in chap. xvi., God is putting the Jew out of the stewardship. With Adam, all is over, but we have a title in grace to use, in a heavenly way, that to which we have no title at all as man. "If, therefore, ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" "If ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" Our own things are the heavenly things; the earthly things are another's; and if you do not use your title in grace in devoting in love these earthly temporal goods, which are not your own, how can God trust you with the spiritual things which are "your own?" Our own things are all the glories of Christ—all that is Christ's is our's, for "we are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold," &c. We were bought with a price, it is true, not with money, but "with the precious blood of Christ," &c. God has not given us eternal life in order that we might be getting money. "No man can serve two masters," and if you want to be rich, you cannot be seeking to serve God. We have to do our duty in this world, but it is never our duty to serve mammon and desire riches.

Now He goes on to show that there are these everlasting habitations, when the grand results will appear of what has been done here. The old thing is fleeting away, and the new coming in. The Jew, who refused to come to the feast, is loosening the law, while rejecting grace. (See chap. xv., verses 18 & 19.)

V. 19. "A certain rich man, clothed in purple," &c. The thought here is Jewish, and the great principle is, that all God's dealings, as to distributive justice on the earth, were no longer in force, and that now He only deals in grace. He draws aside the veil, to show the result in another world. The rich man had his good things here—he belonged to the earth, and the basket and the store belonged to him—his treasure was on earth, and his heart there too. But look into the other world and see the result—"torment," The good things have changed now. "The rich man died and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment" "And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, &c and the beggar died." Was he buried? Not a word about it, for he belonged not to the earth. "He was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." He who had the "evil things" down here, was carried to the best place in heaven. Then mark, it was not the afflictions, sores, &c., of Lazarus made him righteous, any more than the riches of the rich man made him unrighteous. God having done with the earthly things, no earthly circumstances are a mark of God's present favor, or the reverse; though, no doubt, God's dealings with Lazarus were the means of bringing down his pride, breaking the will, &c., and so preparing him for the place he was going to take him to.

Verse. 31. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets," &c. Here this solemn truth comes out, that even the resurrection of Christ will not convince them; for if they refuse to hear God's word as they have it, they will not hear the testimony of God, even though one rose from the dead; and we know they did not.

This chap. xvi. is to let in the light of another world upon God's ways and dealings in this. The whole world is bankrupt before God; so that man is now trading with another's goods. When man rejected Christ he was turned out of his stewardship.

This is man's position. We should, therefore, dispose of everything now, in reference to the world to come, according to this permission in grace revealed in chap. xvi., to use the things of which we have the administration. If we are serving mammon, we shall not get the blessing of serving God, in the tense of God's gifts; for it is retributive justice here, in a sense. If you are not faithful in another man's who will give you that which is your own? If you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches If you are loving money, you cannot have your heart filled with Christ. We are not to be "slothful in business," but "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;" and for this He opens heaven to us. Not as He said to Abraham, "Unto a land that I will show thee." He has shown heaven unto us, having opened it to us in grace. It is the revelation of grace that gives power over earthly things. May the Lord keep before us a living Christ, as our light for guidance and salvation, to walk and trust in!

## Notes on Luke 17

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WE have seen the great principle of divine grace in contrast with self-righteousness, and the Jewish economy, which refused its Messiah, the Son of God, set aside to make way for bringing to light life and incorruption through the gospel. "Then said he unto the disciples, it is impossible but that offenses will come; but woe unto him through whom they come." (Ver. 1.) We enter here on the spirit and way of serving, now that the world to come was let in upon the conduct and faith of the disciples in this world, for none could serve two masters. God is carrying on a work—in a little child perhaps—but it is His own work and individual faith is needed in the path of a rejected Christ. Among those who professed to follow Him and His glory on the principles of faith, there would be alas! many scandals. It was not now, nor yet, to be a reign of judicial power when the Son of man would gather out of His kingdom of all scandals and them which do iniquity. Satan's power is permitted, the exercise of faith is required. It is a time of preying, by the prevalence of evil, that which lasts because of God. The cross must be taken and self denied. It is a hard lesson, but blessed when learned. The cross and the glory are always connected. The cross must be on the natural man not on sin merely, so as to break the will. Christ had no will, showing perfectness; but we need the cross practically, as the means of communion by breaking down that which hinders. Then, again, the whole system of the world is a stumblingblock: there is not one thing in it which is not calculated to turn the heart from God. Take the merest trifle—dress, vanities in the street, flattery of man, of brethren perhaps, &c.—all tend to elevate the flesh. What a different thing is heaven opening on a rejected Savior! And this is our light and pathway through the world, for now the heavens are open to faith, as we pass through it to Him whom we see in glory. There is an active, energetic flow of God's love in carrying on souls. Is our walk a witness? Take care you are not a stumbling-block. You may say, a person must be very weak to feel such or such a thing; but it is the very reason why he is to be cared for. The Lord give us never to hinder but to help the weak! These things are the stumbling-block of the enemy, and the man by whom they come is so far an instrument of Satan. The Lord loves His little ones. Better for that man that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of them.

Ver. 3. But suppose a person does something to stumble you, what then? "Take heed to yourselves." Your part is to forgive. Take heed to yourselves, jealous and self-judging. "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him." What! if he trespass often— "seven times in a day?" Yes, if he "seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him." Watch incessantly yourselves and see to it that the spirit of love (the power of unity and the bond of perfectness, as we know from elsewhere) be not broken, nor the spirit of holiness, that the peace be not false. Blessed path! what condescension to our weakness and danger in the introduction of grace, and the moral judgment of present things, which are the aliment of the flesh and the domain of the world! Watchfulness against self and grace to others bring us through, rising like a life-boat above all breakers.

Ver. 5-10. In such a position there would be need of faith and the energy proper to it. The apostles led of God, though perhaps seeing but a pretty part of the difficulty and with a confused sense or

this new position, pray for an increase of faith. The Lord answers by setting forth the fullness of its energy: for faith realizes a power which is not in the person and thus acts without limit He applies it also, though in general terms, to the removal of the obstacles of a system, which might present the form of what was good and great, but fruitless. In every need we may draw upon God. All consists in looking simply to Him. All things are possible to him that believes. For it is God accomplishing His will, and He has willed to accomplish it by man and to honor Himself in man, after being dishonored of Satan in and by man; but this in faith according to His will, till the Lord Jesus returns in power and glory. God is at work, and if you are co-workers under Him, you could believe that He is and say, Let this be done and this. Is it nothing to wield God's power? If you know not what it is to be opposed by Satan, you will feel how blessed it is to call in the power of God. Your place and work may be very humble—outside—no matter what: still you need God's power to be little. What the Lord says in verses 7-10 is not applicable to a careless servant. If he has neglected his work, he is a slothful one. But I am an unprofitable servant when I have done all that I am commanded. Am I neglected? It is to try me. Something needs it. Perhaps I want to learn that God can do without me. Now that Christ is rejected, God is at work. If He uses me, it is a great honor; if He lays me by because self was elated, it is a great mercy. He is saying, as it were, Be satisfied with myself, be content to know I love thee. Are you content with His love? Do you want man's honor or your own? Remember that, when you have done all, it is the time to say, "unprofitable servant!"

Ver. 11-19. The history which follows shows that, when God brings in new power, those who have had the previous privileges are the last to rise above them into what is better. But there is a faith wrought of God in the heart which sets free from the subsidiary forms thrown around God's will in the past economy. Thus, recognizing God in Jesus; it carries the soul beyond the law of a carnal commandment and associates it with Him in whom is the power of an endless life. It occupies us with His person who is above all, planting us not in dishonor of the law, ("yea, we establish the law" through faith,) but in the liberty wherewith the truth—the Son—makes free. All were cleansed by the word of divine power. The nine went on to show themselves to the priests, acting on the word of Jesus and thus far in faith. But the Samaritan stranger perceived God's glory in what had taken place, and so turned back to Jesus and aloud glorified God. The others owned the power which had come, but remained in their religious habits and associations. He, less pre-occupied with outward institutions, returned to the source of power, not to its shadow and witness, which nature always uses to hide God. He had experienced divine power in Jesus, and instead of merely enjoying the gift, he most humbly, but in the boldness and propriety of faith, went back to own the Giver. "He fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks." He wanted no priest. The priest did not, could not cleanse, but only discern and pronounce a man clean. Evil had leveled the Jew and the Samaritan. They were alike cast out of the presence of divine communion by the leprosy which afflicted them. But He who healed lepers under the law was He who gave the law, and the word of Jesus at once recognized the law and manifested the Jehovah who gave it. The gratitude of faith was a readier reasoner than the instruction of the law; for the blessing afforded by the work and presence of Jesus was to the nine the means of keeping up Jewish distinction, to the tenth it was the evidence of divine goodness. To him, therefore, it was complete deliverance. He was by faith arrived in grace at the fountain-head from which the law itself proceeded, and was let go in peace, made whole by his faith having liberty from God and with God, giving thanks and glorifying Him, and withal knowing how acceptable it was in His sight.

How many reasons might have been pleaded for going on and not returning; to Jesus! How might the nine Jews have said, You are ordered to go and show yourself to the priest! But faith goes straight to the heart of God, and there finds all grace and a dismissal in the liberty of grace. To him who returned to Jesus, cleansed and with heart-felt thanks, the priests were left behind. In spirit and figure the healed Samaritan was passed into another system by faith—the grace and liberty of the gospel. It is blessed thus to be at the source of power and goodness, and there only does God put now those who believe. If under the law before, we are become dead to it by the body of Christ that we should belong to another—to Him who is raised from the dead. It is this way alone that glorifies God, however men may plead the latter. Thus only can we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received (not the law, but) the reconciliation. In Him, thus known and enjoyed, we have all and more than all than the priests ever conceived. We have communion with the Father and the Son by faith in God fully revealed. We have to do with Him in heaven now, not with a temple and priests on earth. “Arise go thy way.” You have found the person and glory of the Lord. You are beyond the priests and the temple, your faith has pierced the veil and found One greater than both. The rest went their way, cleansed, to be under the law. Stupefied by Judaism, they did not return to glorify God. All this, at the point of the gospel we are arrived at, is full of importance. It is another light thrown on the passing away of the law and of that dispensation.

In the next verses (20 et seq.) the question was actually raised as to the coming of God's kingdom. The Pharisees asked when it should come, and the Lord places them on their plain responsibility. “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation,” or outward show. It should not be said, Lo here! or Lo there! for that kingdom was then there among them. The king was speaking to them. Ought they not to have known Him because He came in grace? If He had humbled Himself to know their sorrows and to die for their sins, was that a reason for not discerning His greatness and moral perfection manifested in ten thousand ways? Did not His holy love to the poor and guilty prove, plainly enough, who He was? If man's heart had not been opposed to all that was the delight of God fit the kingdom, if his eye had not been blind to all that was lovely and of good report, he would have felt that the lower Christ stooped, the more wonderful were His works, To His disciples He had other things to say. He was rejected and leaving them. Suffering awaited them. Trying as their position might now be as the companions of His rejection, the days would come when they would long in vain for one of those days when they had enjoyed blessed and sweet intercourse with the Son of man. They would, as Jews in the land, feel the difference. Then Satan, to allure and deceive in that day, would lead men to say, “Lo here,” or “Lo there;” but the disciples would know its falsehood. There was no hope for the nation which rejected Christ. The king had been there but refused; He was no longer “here” or “there.” This day the Son of man would be as the lightning flashing from one quarter under heaven to another. But first He must suffer many things and be rejected of this generation, i.e., the unbelieving Jews.

It is evident that while the Lord takes this name of Son of man to His disciples as revealing a relation higher and wider than that of Messiah, (the link of which was broken and gone in the nation's ruinous rejection of Him,) the whole of this instruction is Jewish and shall find its accomplishment properly in a godly remnant of the latter day. The Christian part is not spoken of here, for that is association after a heavenly sort with Christ, and we have its great moral outlines, at least, in Luke 12. Here we are on the ground of responsibility, not of heavenly grace. We must

separate the Church's place with, Christ from the government of the world by Christ. The very character of the predicted delusion confirms this distinction. For if men said to the Christian, "Here is Christ," he would instantly know that it was of Satan, because we are to meet Him not here or there on earth, but in the air. (1 Thess. 4) But this is not the case when you come to the government of the world. There the hope rests on Jewish ground, and then the witnesses for God must go through tribulation such as has never been. Now, unless expressly forewarned, they would naturally look here or there for the Deliverer: for in that character His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives, and He shall come to Zion and shall come out of it. "Jehovah shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies." All this differs from the Christian's hope and his desire meanwhile; for we do not want our enemies destroyed, but converted, and we are looking to be taken from them all to heaven with the Savior, instead of waiting for Him to join and exalt us under His reign upon the earth.

But, again, the subject here is neither the past siege of Jerusalem nor the future judgment of the dead. Titus' capture of the city was not like the lightning, but a long, fierce, hardly-contested struggle. Nor were the Jews, up to the moment of the final stroke, in a state of ease and carnal security, resting on the continuance of things as they were, as in the days of Noah and Lot. Suddenness of judgment is its first feature, certainty is the next, discriminating certainty, neither of which things could be fairly said of the Romans.

Without or within, at rest or at work, men or women, it mattered not, God would burn up the chaff and preserve the wheat: the one should be taken and the other left. Next, there is a local, earthly stamp, which excludes the scene from that of the great, white throne judgment. For there is no resemblance between the judgment of the dead and the deluge or the fate of Sodom. It is the end of the age, not of the world, and is a judgment on a temporal people, and more especially on their city; for they were not to return into the house, if on the housetop, and if in the field; they were not to turn back. None of these things could be said of the dead, any more than the bed or the mill. It would be no time for human motives, artifices, or concessions. (Ver. 33.) Faithfulness to the Lord and His testimony would be the true and saving wisdom. The day of the Son of man's revelation was in question—His judgment of the quick, and especially of a generation which has rejected and caused Him to suffer. If they asked, "where?" the solemn word for conscience was, where the body, the corpse was, the swift, inevitable judgments of God would fall.

## Notes on Luke 18

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WE saw, from verse 20 to the end of the last chapter (17.), that the kingdom of God was presented, first, in the person of Jesus, as a question of faith, not of outward show, nor of a lo, here! or lo, there! and, secondly, in the way of judgment, which should deliver the remnant by the execution of divine vengeance on their enemies.

Verses 1-8. The first eight verses of our chapter complete the prophetic warning, and show that the resource of the righteous in the last days will be prayer. Nevertheless, though the parable has that special application to the future oppression of God's witnesses who will then be found in Jerusalem, the instruction, as usual with this Gospel, is made general so as to suit any or all kinds of difficulty by which men might be tried. "And he speaks a parable unto them, to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint." Faith would be put to the test. If God were looked to, and not merely the blessing, men would not faint, though there was no answer. They would go on, always looking up, though all seemed against them. The widow represents those who have no human resource: their resource would be constancy in prayer. Such will be the godly seed in Israel, for it is the remnant, not the Church, which is here meant. They will plead with the judge to avenge them of their adversary. Their patience and confidence may be sorely tried, but they will not cry in vain. "And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him" He may be slow in taking up their cause; but when once He shall rise up, a short work will He make on the earth. Meanwhile, patience must have its perfect work. In Jesus it had its full perfection. There was the rejection and the reproach of men, the forsaking of disciples, the power of Satan, the cup of God's wrath: but He went through all to the glory of God. In detail we, too, have to be sifted, and to find all circumstances against us but God for us, yet more than if we had outward help, miraculous power, the Church all right, &c. Even joy may hinder our entire dependence on God, making us forget, practically, that the flesh profits nothing. When no circumstances lead you to have any hope, is your hope then in Him? The flesh may get on for a long while, as in Saul; but faith only can wait, with all against it. It is then the divine life depending on divine power. Thus it was in Christ pre-eminently. "I believed, there. fore have I spoken." He went down into the dust of death, and has introduced a wholly new order of things. And we, having the same spirit of faith—we also believe, and therefore speak. "Wherefore, henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation." Christ is dead, risen, and now set down at the right hand of God. Having this life, we are put to the test practically to learn the lesson of death and resurrection, where nothing but God can sustain.

In the parable there are two considerations. If the unjust judge hear and act for the defenseless, be the motive what it may, will not God? But this is far from all. God has His affections, not only His character, but objects of His delight. "And shall not God avenge His own elect?" &c. It never can become the righteous God, who taketh vengeance to make light of evil or let the wicked go unpunished. For then how shall He judge the world? He notices the cry from the oppressed day and night, and it is the cry of His own elect. "I tell you that he will avenge them speedily." But will

there be the faith that expects His interference? They will cry from distress, and God will hear. Nevertheless, the question is raised, Will there be, when the Son of Man cometh, that faith on the earth, which is founded on God known in peaceful communion? Will it not rather be the cry of the righteous, in bitterness of spirit, a cry forced out of them, and not the cry of desire?

Ver. 9. We have, next, the moral features of, and suited to, the kingdom, the characters which are in harmony or discord with the state of things introduced by grace. The Pharisee and the Publican set forth, not the doctrine of atonement or of justification by faith, but the certainty that self-righteousness is displeasing to God, and that lowliness because of our sin is most acceptable in His sight. The Pharisee does not set God aside. He "stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee." But then he thanks God for what he is, not for what God is. The only hope of the publican was in God Himself. He was very ignorant, no doubt, but he had the right spirit to get at God. Light had broken in and shown he was a sinner, and he submitted to the painful conviction, and confessed the truth of his state to God. He was cast on God's mercy to his soul. He dared not appeal to justice, he did not ask indifference, but that mercy which measures the sin and forgives it. The revelation of grace had not yet come in, the work of reconciliation was not yet done, so that the publican stood "afar off;" but his heart was touched, and God was what he wanted. If a soul is brought to a sense of sin now, it need not, and ought not, to stand afar off. The grace of God that bringeth salvation has appeared. Nevertheless, though he did and could not thus know grace, the publican gives God and himself their true character. It was not full knowledge, but the knowledge, as far as it went, was true. "I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Universal truth! but Where so shown as in Jesus? For if the first man, exalting himself, was abased to hell, He who was God, made Himself of no reputation, humbled Himself to the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, &c.

In one sense, men cannot humble themselves, because they are sinners already, and cannot go lower; a saint may. True humility is forgetfulness of self.

This is illustrated yet more by the incident that follows: (verses 15-17) where they brought infants to Jesus, that He would touch them. It is the lowliness of real insignificance, as the former was because of sinfulness. Who would be troubled with beings of such little consequence? Not the disciples, but Jesus. The Lord delighted in them, and that is the spirit of the kingdom of God. And here, too, a general moral maxim comes out. If a man is to enter that kingdom, all confidence in self must be broken down, and the truth be received simply, as a little child hears its mother. If it is not so, God and man have not their place. When He speaks, all I have to do is to listen. This is the humility of nothingness, as the other was on account of sin.

Next (verses 18 et seq.) comes the question of doing in order to eternal life, not salvation for a lost one, but that which searches the heart to the bottom. The young man was a lovely character, looked at as a creature. For if there are the ravages of sin in the world, there are traces of God there too. This ruler did not see God in Christ. Morally attracted, he came to learn to do good, without a doubt of his own competence. In Jesus he only saw a perfectly good man, and one therefore eminently able to advise and direct him in the same path. Sin, on the one hand, and grace, on the other, were altogether ignored by him. He knew neither himself nor God. There is no man good. All are gone astray. Man is a sinner, and needs God to be good to him: he is

incompetent to do the good which satisfies God. The Lord took up the young ruler on his own assumption that he could do good for the purpose of bringing out what he was.

The good Master that he had appealed to puts to the test what his heart really is. "Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and come, follow me." Would he give up self-importance? After all, he loved his riches too well. "He was very sorrowful; for he was very rich." Had not such things been promised as a blessing to the Jews? Christ shows them to be a snare. But then they do much good! Nay, are they good for your heart? It is not that they may not be used in grace; but the man did not know his own heart. Good is not there, nor the strength to produce it. Every motive which governs man is rooted up by the cross. But all within is bad, and I can never work a thing fit for God out of bad material. I need God therefore, who can give me a new and holy nature, who can be merciful to me because He is above all sin. The spring of all good is, that it flows from God and not man.

It is an impossibility, as far as man is concerned, that any should be saved. Sin has ruined man and all his hopes. If one looks at the means he can avail himself of, they are wholly useless to save him. But, "the things which are impossible with men," said the Savior, "are possible with God." Such is the sole foundation for the sinner. On the other hand (verses 28-30), if Peter is quick to speak of the devotedness of the disciples, in leaving all and following Jesus, the Lord shows the certainty that every loss, for the kingdom's sake, will, turn into manifold gain, both now and in the world to come.

But He binds it all up (verses 31-33) with what was coming on His own person. They were going up to Jerusalem, but for what? He, the Messiah, "shall be delivered unto the gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on; and they shall scourge him, and put him to death." All hopes must end here: "yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." Even He, if He is to deliver the lost, must come down to the dust of death. Christ has no association with sinful man. How then can He deliver? He must die for us; He cannot take corruption into union with Himself. A living Christ, we may reverently say, could not deliver us, consistently with God's nature and character; redemption was a necessity. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

But if it was the only means of a holy salvation, man's full wickedness came out in the rejection and death of Christ. He hated what is in God and Him who is God—hated both the Son and the Father. All question of human justice is settled and negated forever.

Alas! the disciples understood none of these things, neither His shame and death, nor His resurrection. It was the accomplishment of what the prophets had written concerning the Son of Man. But they knew not what He said nor what they wrote. The death of Christ would manifest what man was, and what God was; His resurrection would evince the power of life that can deliver the dead. But He was not understood.

## Notes on Luke 18-19

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Chap. 18:35; 19:1-27.

VERSE 34 closed that part of our gospel which shows the bringing in of the new and heavenly dispensation. With verse 35 we enter on the historical account of the Lord's final intercourse with the Jews. "Son of man" was the general character of the gospel, but now, in the midst of Israel, He takes up that of Son of David. Jericho was the first place Israel had to say to when they crossed the Jordan, and a special curse was pronounced against it. But Israel had not walked in obedience, and the Messiah enters not as the king in outward glory, but as the rejected Jesus of Nazareth, with blessing for the remnant that received Him in faith.

"And it came to pass that as he was nigh unto Jericho," &c. It is not come nigh, as if it were necessarily His first approach, but a general expression, just as applicable to His being nigh on His leaving the city. (Comp. Matthew and Mark). "A certain blind man sat by the way side, begging and he cried, saying, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." He was rebuked by many, but there was the perseverance of faith, and he cried so much the more, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Here was a sample of the gathering to the name that Israel rejected. The eye of the blind was opened then, as it will be in the remnant by and by.

Next, we have the account of Zacchaeus (chap. xix. 1-10), for the Spirit of God did not tie Luke to the mere order of time; and morally viewed, it was the fitting sequel to the healing of the blind man. Found only in this gospel, it is a striking illustration of the grace which receives a man, no matter how low, and in the face of Jewish prejudices. For a publican, a rich chief of the publicans, was justly an object of abhorrence to those who regarded him as the expression of Gentile dominion. All was wrong through sin, and Israel was not humbled. Still it was a sad position for an Israelite, however honest and conscientious Zacchaeus might be in it. But it was the day of grace, and "he sought to see Jesus." There were difficulties, hindrances in him and around; but faith perseveres in spite of opposition. As the blind man was bent on his object, so was the rich publican set on seeing Jesus. This marks the working of God's Spirit-the apprehension of the worth of the object. We want it and more of it, we know enough to want more. It is an appetite produced by the Holy Spirit. It is a terrible thing if we, as Christians, have not this craving, this hungering and thirsting after a greater enjoyment of God; for where this is not, deadness and apathy of soul have come in.

Jesus came to the place, and saw him and said unto him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for today I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully." He had not yet the full knowledge of Jesus, but his desire had been met and he had joy. It was neither law nor glory, but a hidden Messiah come in full grace. There was abundant evidence who He was, but in grace He was come down where they were. No matter what people thought. Finding Jesus is everything. Zacchaeus had the answer to the want which divine grace had created. Grace does not give at first the knowledge of Christ's work: there may be little or no understanding that we are made the righteousness of God in Him Hence the first joy often wanes, because, when conscience is accused, I want the consciousness of that righteousness. The first

joy is constantly that of discovering that we possess the felt need of the soul for Christ; but the full question as to righteousness may still have to be met in the conscience, though of course every believer in possessing Christ does possess divine righteousness. Nevertheless, much as there is to learn, there is joy. New interests are awakened, new desires arise, a new insight is obtained into good and evil. When there is a deep sense of what it is to be lost and saved, the world (man) is a light matter. But when the pressure on the conscience is removed, too often nature resumes a sort of place, and then Christ is not all and everything to the saint.

Zacchaeus' heart is opened. There is confidence, which tells itself out. There might be ever so much honest effort to satisfy conscience in his false position; but after all what a place it was! Men murmured. The Lord passed all over. Self-defense was needless. The Lord did not accuse, and speaks of nothing but the salvation that was that day come to the house. Zacchaeus was a son of Abraham, and the Son of man was come to seek and to save that which was lost. What could a Pharisee object? There had been a work with the conscience of Zacchaeus, but the Son of man was come and salvation was the word. He brings it. He gave what Zacchaeus had little thought of. He was come to meet the need He had created. He was come to seek, i.e., to produce the desire; and to save, i.e., to meet that desire.

The Lord was now nigh to Jerusalem, and so He added a parable to correct the thought that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear; for Jerusalem is the city of the great king, and the question of His rejection would be closed there. He shows, on the contrary, that He was going away—going to a far country, to heaven, where He was to receive the kingdom and to return. The time was not come to set up the kingdom on earth. Meanwhile, the business of His servants was to trade with the money He delivered them. When returned, having received the kingdom, He assigns them places according to their faithfulness; for in Luke it is a question of man's responsibility; in the corresponding parable of Matthew, God's sovereignty is the point. Difference of gifts appears in Matthew, difference of rewards in Luke. In Luke each servant receives a mina from the Lord; in Matthew all who gained in trading enter alike the joy of their Lord. Here the whole force is, occupy. "Occupy till I come." Our position is serving a rejected Savior till He comes again. We are not yet to share in the glory of the kingdom. When He returns, all will be disposed of impartially, and there will be that which answers to authority over ten cities and over five. The righteousness of God is the same for us as for Paul; but as there is very different service, and different measures of fidelity, so there will be specialty of reward. No doubt it is grace that works, still here there is reward of faithful service. The secret of all service is the due appreciation of the Master's grace. If one fears him as "an austere man," there is unfaithfulness too, even on one's own principles.

Verse 26 is a universal principle. When through grace there is the realization in our souls of the truth presented to us, we are of those "who have." But if a truth comes before a man, and he talks about it without its being mixed with faith in the heart, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. Truth, if it reveals Christ, humbles me and deals with the evil within. Then it is not only Christ as an object outside me, but a living Christ in my soul. Knowledge, which has not power over the conscience, only puffs up. If truth be not acted on, it troubles the conscience. But how often one sees a conscience, having lost the light, quite easy at a lower standard than before, rejoicing that it has lost its trouble, though the light of truth be lost with it! The soul has sunk below that which had exercised the conscience, and thus the whole standard, principle, and life are lowered, and

opportunities of winning Christ lost forever. Holding fast the truth—Christ—I have Him as it were a part of myself, and learn to hate the evil and to delight in the good; so that get more, till I grow up into Christ, into the measure of the stature of His fullness. Common duties do not rob us of Him: from these the heart returns with fresh delight into its own center. It is the heart clinging to vanity that spoils our joy; it is anything which exalts self and lowers Christ—an idle thought, even, if allowed in the heart.

As to the citizens, the Jews, on whom he had rights as king, their will was against Him, not only hating Him there while among them, but above all, sending the message after Him, We will not have this man to reign over us. Unsparing vengeance must take its course on them in His presence.

## Notes on Luke 19:28 and 20:1-44

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Chap. 14:28. Jesus enters Jerusalem as Messiah. His rights as Lord of all were to be asserted and acted on (verses 29-36). He presents Himself for the last time to Israel, in the lowliness of grace, which was of far greater importance than the kingdom. This gives rise to the most marked contrast between the disciples and the Pharisees. The whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with loud voice, saying, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven and glory in the highest." Some of the Pharisees appeal to Him to rebuke the disciples, but learn from His lips that if these were silent, the very stones would cry out. There must be a testimony to His glory (ver. 37-40).

When Jesus was born, angels announced it to the poor of the flock, and the heavenly host praised God, saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace -good pleasure in men. Such will be the result, and the angels anticipate it, without reference to the hindrances, or to the means. But Christ was rejected here below; and now the disciples say, "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest." When the question of power is raised, in order to establish the kingdom, there will be war then. (Rev. 12). In fact there can be no peace in heaven till Satan and his host are cast out. Then will the King be established in power, when the obstacles shall be taken out of the way. Psa. 118 celebrates this, His mercy enduring forever, spite of all the people's sins. It is the song of the latter day. If God sends peace to the earth in the person of His Son, it is in vain, not as to the accomplishment, but as to present effect. Meanwhile, to faith there is peace in heaven, and when this is asserted in power against the evil spirits in the heavenly places, there will be blessing indeed. O, what a time will it be! What a relief to the working of God's grace! For now it is ever toil and watching What, always? Yes, always; and that is not the rest. But then it will be, as sure as God takes His great power and reigns. "The Lord shall hear the heavens," &c. Hos. 2 There will be an unbroken chain of blessing, and that too on earth. It will not be one "building, and another inhabiting," but blessing flowing down and around to the lowest and the least. Till then, as now, the word is suffering in grace, not victorious power. Never fear persecution: it will make your face shine as an angel's. But God could not be silent if His own Son were cast out. He might, leave Him to suffer, but not without a testimony. If there were no others, the stones would speak. And so if we are faithful and near to Christ, that will turn for a testimony.

Next (ver. 41-44) we have, not the cursing of the fig tree, but the Spirit of grace, in the Lord's weeping over the city. The counsels of God will surely be accomplished, but we ought also to know His real tenderness in Jesus. Those tears were not in vain, whatever the appearances. It was the time of Jerusalem's visitation, but she knew it not. We ought as having the mind of Christ, to know when and how to interfere spiritually. We are the epistle of Christ, whereby the world should be able to read what God is. Christ manifested Him perfectly. But what did He find in the people? See verses 45, 46. God declares His house to be one of prayer: men-the Jews-had made it a den of thieves. It was a terrible moral estimate, but this is the true way to judge; i.e. having God's word to take facts as they are. We are ignorant and morally incapable of judging without the word of God. Let the eye be fixed on Christ and our judgment be formed on things around by the

word.

Chap. 20. The first question raised was by the scribes, as to the authority of Christ and its source. Jesus questions them about the baptism of John: Was it from heaven or of man? They reasoned without conscience. They owned their incompetency, rather than acknowledge His Messiahship. The simple child of God receives the word as certainly as Christ gives it. Reliance on God's word is the only sure ground. How can you be certain? God has said it. If God's speaking requires proof, I must have something more sure and true than God. Is the Church Alas! alas!... If God cannot speak so as to claim authority, without another to accredit what He says, there is no such thing as faith.

The parable of the husbandmen (9 et seq.) sets forth the Lord's dealings with Israel, to whom the vineyard was first let, and, upon the rejection of "the Heir," the gift of it to others. Nor was this all. The rejected stone becomes the head of the corner. Whosoever fell on that stone, should be broken; but on whomsoever it fell, utter destruction would be the result. The past sins of Jerusalem illustrate the first: for the second we must wait for the execution of judgment when the Lord appears.

Verse 19. The question of tribute to Caesar was very subtle. They used the effect of their own wickedness to tempt the Lord. Abstractedly, the Jews ought not to have been subject to the Gentiles. And, moreover, the Messiah was come, the Deliverer of Israel. If He said obey the Gentiles, where was His delivering power? If He said Rebel, they would have had an excuse to deliver Him to Pilate. Because of Israel's sin, God has broken down the key-stone of nations, and given power to the Gentile. The Jew has been rebellious under the sentence, and ever craving deliverance from their thralldom. But the Lord answered with divine wisdom. He put them exactly in the place where their sin had put them: Caesar's things are to be rendered to Caesar, and God's things to God.

After settling the question as to this world between God and the people, He next meets the Sadducean or skeptical difficulty as to the next world. (Verses 27 - 38). The Lord shows the place of the risen saints in entire contrast with the world. The idea of a general resurrection is set aside. If all rise together, there is uncertainty, a common judgment, &c.; but if the saints are raised by themselves because they are children of God, leaving the rest of the dead for another and distinctive resurrection—a resurrection of judgment—all is changed. No passage of Scripture speaks of both rising together. The resurrection is that which most of all distinguishes, and this forever. It is the grand testimony to the difference between good and bad. The saint will be raised because of the Spirit of Christ that dwells in him—the application to his body of that power of life in Christ which has already quickened his soul. It is a resurrection from among the dead, as was Christ's. So here, "they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that age," for such it is, "and the resurrection from the dead." "They are equal to the angels, and are the children of God." Luke adds another characteristic point omitted elsewhere; "all live unto him." It is the present, blessed living unto God of those who have died, and await the resurrection from among the dead.

Then in verses 41-44 the Lord puts His question, How is David's Son, David's Lord? This was just what the Jews could not understand. It was the hinge on which turned the change in the whole moral system. He had taken the place of the holy dependent One, a pilgrim as others, and He had drunk of the brook by the way. He was going on in meekness and quietness, but living by the

refreshments which came from God His Father. Thus having emptied Himself, humbled Himself, He is now exalted by God. This great universal principle, “he that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be abased,” is fully exemplified in the two Adams. The first Adam, man’s nature, would exalt itself to be “as God,” until in its full ripeness antichrist will exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped. Satan tempted man at the beginning to make himself like God, and at the end God shall send them strong delusion, to believe a lie. Satan, not being able to exalt himself in heaven, will attempt to do it through the seed of man; but the end shall be abasement. (Isa. 14:12-15). In the second Adam we have Him who was God humbling Himself, going down, becoming obedient unto death, even the vilest, and then we see that humbled One going back to the place of power at God’s right hand, but as man, as well as God. God highly exalted Him, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. Having been obedient all through, in humiliation, He is exalted to be David’s Lord. This took Him out of the line of Jewish promises, though as David’s son of course He had them. The Jews did not understand the Scriptures, and fulfilled them though not understanding them. God’s ways have gone on through all, manifesting His grace and patience towards man. He placed man on the earth, and then sent law, -prophets, &c., until man gets to the end in rejecting all God tries man and then brings in the new man, who is the fulfillment of all His blessed counsels—the second Adam. Then He takes up the second Adam as the heavenly man into a heavenly place, and all now depends not on the responsibility of man, but on the stability of God. Life, righteousness, and glory descend from heaven. Is it life that is needed? God gives the life of Christ in resurrection. Is it righteousness? It is a divine righteousness that God gives. Is it a kingdom? It is the kingdom of heaven. All flows down not simply from God in grace, but from the place which man has in glory, from the counsels of God about the heavenly man in glory. He has first taken Him up, and thence the blessing flows down. The man Christ Jesus has fully met all man’s responsibilities. This is the reason of the fullness of the blessing of the gospel, and also that of the kingdom to come. The gospel is the power of God, and the kingdom is to be set up in heaven. The king is gone into the far country, and when he returns, it will be to bring in the kingdom of heaven. All the counsels of God now take their center and seat in heaven. Thus, in the largest way, the turning point in all the plans and counsels of God is Jesus being set at the right hand of God. All the character, the stability, and the perfectness of our blessing takes its source from the exalted Jesus. The character of it is heavenly; the stability is what God has done; and the righteousness that fits me for it is God’s.

The Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost, has come down to bear witness to Him, on which the peace of the soul rests, even on the accomplished righteousness of Him who is taken up into glory. His office is to work within, and make us manifest what God is, down here. All this we have as the result of Christ, instead of accomplishing the promises as David’s Son, bringing them in as David’s Lord.

Mark the moral blessedness of this general principle: “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” Christ humbled himself, not was humbled, that is another thing. “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” That is what we are to do—take the lowest place. We cannot do this till we are Christians; but it is our glory to take the lowest, and hear Him say, “Come up higher.” “He hath left us an example that we should follow his steps.” The Lord Jesus has been rejected as David’s Son. He will come forth as David’s Lord.

Now, while He is thus hidden, we see the Church's place. We are "hid with Christ in God," and have our portion by faith, as united to Him, while He is out of sight. The Holy Ghost, having come down, gives us a place as associated with Him in all the blessedness of the Father's house, and in all the glory which He has to be displayed by and by.

The place of Eve was one of union with Adam in the dominion over all things. (Gen. 1:26-28; 5:2). We find the church in the display of Christ's glory only as by grace the bride and companion of Christ; never as part of the inheritance. Viewed even individually, we are "joint-heirs with Christ." It is of the last importance to the saints in these days, to apprehend the distinct place which we have, as one with Christ, the Heavenly Man.

At the close of chap. 20. and the beginning of chap. xxi. we have a most instructive, though painful, contrast between the selfish hypocrisy of the scribes, whom He condemns before the people, and the real devoted love of the widow, whom He singles out for honor. Remark also that the Lord knows how to separate the intention of a sincere soul from the system that surrounds it, judging the whole state of that with which the individual is associated. Observe, further, the difference of giving one's living and one's superfluity. It is easy to compliment God with presents, and thus really minister to self; but she who gives her living, gives herself in devotedness to God, and proves her dependence on God. Thus, the two mites of her who had these only, expressed all this perfectly; for there was need and everything else to hinder, while the applause of men and the pride of the donor found no place here. For Jewish splendor the act had little worth; but the Lord saw, and bore witness of, the poor widow, blessed in her deed.

Ver. 5 and seq. The account which the Lord gives in this gospel of the sorrows of Jerusalem is also, like the preceding, much more allied to the simple fact of the judgment on the nation and the change of dispensation. It differs much from Matt. 24 which fully refers to what is to arrive at the end; while our gospel bears, more than the first two, on the then present time and setting aside of Jerusalem. Hence, Luke plainly sets forth the siege and destruction by Titus, and the times of the Gentiles. Let it be observed also that the question in verse 7 extends only to the predicted destruction. Consequently, in what follows, we have the judgment on the nation taken as a whole, from its then destruction till the times of the Gentiles (with whose economy this gospel is so much occupied) be fulfilled. Nation should rise against nation, signs from heaven and sorrows on earth follow. And before all these the disciples would be objects of hostility, but that would turn for a testimony instead of destroying theirs. They were to go on testifying, while the unhappy devoted city where they were filled up its iniquity. The Lord would permit trial, but not a hair of their head would be lost. But this would close. The sign given here is in no wise the abomination of desolation, but an historical fact—Jerusalem encompassed with armies. Its desolation now approached. They were then to flee, not to return. These were days of vengeance (it is not said of the unprecedented tribulation, as in Matthew, which is only in the latter day). All that was written was to be fulfilled. Great distress there was in the land, and wrath on this people. Slaughter first and captivity afterward wrought their cruel work of devastation, and Jerusalem till this hour abides, the boast and prey of Gentile lords, and so must it be till their day is over.

In these earlier verses (8—19) the Lord dwells on the dangers, duties, and trials of the disciples before the sack of Titus. Specially were they to beware of a pretended deliverer, and of the cry that the time (i.e., of deliverance) was at hand. Neither were they to be terrified by wars or commotions,

any more than seduced by fair promises. These things must first be, but the end not immediately. Besides, it was not only confusion and woes and signs of coming change and evil outside. Before all these they themselves were to be in affliction and persecution for Christ's sake. Then, in verses 20-24, comes the actual judgment of the city and people, already judged virtually by His rejection. This extends down to our own days in principle. But all is not yet fulfilled. For in verse 25 begins the Lord's description of the closing scene—a judgment not on the Jews merely, but on the Gentiles also; for the powers of the heavens, the source of authority, shall be shaken, as in Hag. 2 and Heb. 12 This is not said to be immediately after the siege of Titus; but, on the contrary, room is left for the long course of treading down of Jerusalem under Gentiles, till their times are run out. It is in Matthew that we must look for the great tribulation of the last days, occupied as the first evangelist is with the consequences of Messiah's rejection, especially to Israel. Therefore, it is said there, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days," i.e., the short crisis of "Jacob's trouble" yet to come. Here, however, after mention of the times of the Gentiles, it is said that "there shall be signs in the sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and waves roaring, men's hearts failing them," &c. Men were astounded because they saw not the end, and trembled as they were dragged along to some unknown, awful conclusion. For principles were at work, they knew not how, dragging them along whether or no. The coming of the Son of man disclosed all the scene to the disciples. But it is clear from the circumstances, and especially from the character of the redemption spoken of, (ver. 28,) that it is a question, not of Christians, but of earthly disciples, and of an earthly deliverance by judgment here below. The Lord in mercy turns the terror of man into a sign of deliverance for the remnant of that day.

## Notes on Luke 21:31-38 and Luke 22

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Vers. 31, 32 are interesting in this point of view here, because they furnish remarkable evidence, first, that the kingdom of God does not mean the gospel of His grace; and, secondly, that this generation cannot refer to the space of time from the prophecy to the destruction of Jerusalem. (1) For when they see these things coming to pass (and He had spoken of the final, universal trouble for the whole habitable earth, and not merely of what has befallen the Jews), they are to conclude that the kingdom of God is nigh. Now, even if it were only the Romans taking away their place and nation, and still more if it include the latter-day trouble, it is undeniable that the gospel had extended far and wide before the first. In fact, the manifestation of its influence was declining rather before that time, as we see in the later epistles. But the things here seen were signs like the budding of the trees, and the kingdom of God is evidently to be at the coming of the king, when the Lord God Almighty takes His great power and reigns. That there was a partial, analogous judgment when Jerusalem fell, is true, but verses 25-28 ought to leave no doubt of a wider, subsequent judgment, with signs which introduce, not the sorrows of the Jews, but the Son of man coming in His kingdom. (2) For a similar reason "this generation" does not apply to a mere lifetime, but is viewed morally, as in Deut. xxxii., Psa. 12 and many other scriptures. It is here expressly put at the close, after not only the fall of Jerusalem, but the totally distinct scene of Christ's coming in power and glory.

The expression in verse 33 is very solemn. Deeper interests were involved than a casual change as to Jerusalem. The time was wrapped up in purposed obscurity, but nothing more sure than the facts predicted.

The Lord has provided for His then disciples what was needful, but also in the written word for the like times to come. Still, though the principle be always true, verse 34 clearly applies to a day to come on the earth. The privilege is to escape the judgments and stand before the Son of man. This again is earthly, not the rapture to heaven. The great moral principles, of course, remain true for all; specially indeed for those who, by virtue of a higher calling, can enjoy them in a more excellent way.

Vers. 37, 38. The Lord yet returned to give testimony, walking and working in the day; but His resting-place was there, whence He did depart, and where His feet shall stand in that day. Patient in service, He taught daily and early in the temple; at night He was separate from the judged city. His time was now come.

22. How was the carnal mind shown to be enmity against God in the rejection of Christ! Wickedness was summed up and brought out in all—people, priests, rulers. If a friend, he is a traitor; if disciples, they either fled when danger approached or denied Him when near. The religious chiefs who ought to have owned the Messiah took Him to the infidel power of the world. He who was in the place of judgment washed his hands, owning His innocence, but gives Him up to man's will and rage. Thus man's evil was brought into complete juxtaposition with that which was perfect, and this in putting Him to death. It is no use to look for good in man Not that there are

no amiable traits of nature, but God has no place at all if man is put to the test. Along with this is the picture of the Lord's perfect patience through it all. Not man only, but Satan was there in temptation. It was the power of darkness, as well as man's hour. And the Lord Jesus passes through this scene of men's wickedness and Satan's power; His heart melted like wax, but the effect always being the manifestation of perfectness. An angel strengthens Him; for He was really man, but perfect man, enduring all that could try Him, and nothing brought out but perfect grace and perfect obedience. Whenever there was sorrow, His love surmounts the suffering to help and comfort others.

Vers. 3-6. It is a solemn thought that the nearer to Jesus, if there is not spiritual life, the more a man resists God, and the more sure and sad an instrument of the enemy he becomes. If truth has been presented and not received, no where has Satan so much power. Covetousness was the means used; but though they plotted to betray and crucify Him in a corner, this mild not be: they were obliged to accomplish it according to God's purposes. Then the light from behind-the scene (vers. 8-13) makes a passage. It is the Lord; and no matter what He suffers, or what is before Him, yet we find the divine knowledge and power. There is the chamber! What calm and peaceful dignity! It is no effort, nothing to display a character. All yields before the unwitnessed authority of this rejected Savior—all but that to which it had been most manifested, the unrenewed heart of man. To the householder, unknown it seems to every eye but one, it was enough to hear, "The Master saith to thee."

Ver. 14, &c. How blessed to see such perfect human affections combined with His divine knowledge of all things. "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer"—like one leaving his family and first desiring a farewell meeting. When we see the divine glory in the person of Christ, we find the human affections shining out. (Comp. Matt. 17:27). It is this which gives Him a power and charm which no object else has; so that God can delight in man and man can delight in God. The Lord breaks every link with the old thing. (Ver. 16.) It is not setting up the kingdom here, but setting up man with God when the old connection was impossible.

He was taking a new place where flesh and blood could not enter. His death and resurrection introduce a new relation with God.

The Lord distinguishes here between the paschal lamb and the wine, and both from the institution of His Supper. He entered in the fullest way into all the feelings of Israel—the Israel of God, into the interests of the people as such, till His rejection put them on other ground, and divine favor passed into another scene by the resurrection, becoming Himself the Substitute, the true paschal Lamb. His disciples held the foremost rank as to this fellowship, as we have Hushai the king's friend. With them He desired the last testimony of parting and love. But while thus expressing His affection to them, He assumes manifestly (verse 18,) the Nazarite character, which was always His morally, but now externally and painfully: "I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God come." He postpones His joy with them as in the common enjoyment of the kingdom, till then.

Then (verses 19, 20,) He institutes the memorial of His better redemption, of His self-sacrificing dying love. If He separated Himself now to God in His joy, it was not want of love to His disciples, but its fullest display. It was to be done "in remembrance" of Him. We remember Him suffering, dead, absent; we know Him as a present living Savior. The new covenant is established in His

blood. We cannot, in all the joy of fellowship with Christ above, forget what brought us into it. On one side, it is a body broken and blood shed; on the other, it is Himself and all the perfectness of love in dying for us. We are united to Him as a risen Christ, but He calls us to remember Him as a dead Christ. The blessedness of this last is in the work He did alone, by virtue of which I am put in union with Himself, alive again for evermore. As to man's part in it, (vers. 21, 23,) it was treachery and wickedness.

The Lord then distinctly sets forth this calling to walk in His own lowliness and not as the world. Earthly grandeur was recognized among the Jews, but now it was sentenced, like all their system, as the rudiments of the world. All other greatness, though under the form of being benefactors, was worldly. He was one that served. The grace of His heart sets them right without a reproach. He lets them know that whatever high place they sought, He took a low one. He might have said, Nothing will break down this horrid selfishness; yet says He, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations." And He is the same now. What we should seek is to have as much of the burden of the Church as we can. Suffering thus with Him, His heart goes on with us.

Ver. 31. Peter was bold enough in the flesh to enter temptation. But it is impossible for man to stand where it is a question of good and evil. He is a sinner and cannot go through that trial. If God judges, flesh comes to nothing. There is the weakness of human nature, but, besides, Satan's title and power over man, who had brought out his own condition in God's presence, and come under death as the judgment of God. I may have learned in grace that the flesh is thus profitless, but it must be learned by intercourse with the enemy, if not with God. For Simon, the Lord prayed that his faith should not fail: all his self-confidence must perish. Nor did he distrust Christ like Judas, who had no faith. What enabled him afterward to strengthen his brethren? He discovered that there was utter badness in himself when he meant best, and that there is perfect grace in Christ even when he did worst.

Vers. 35-38 show an entire change of circumstances. Previously He had protected them and supplied all, as Messiah disposing of everything here. That was now gone, since the Righteous One was being more and more rejected. He had come, able to destroy Satan's power, but it was the Lord, and man would not have Him—that is the condition the world is in. He must be reckoned among the transgressors. What link could there be between God and man? Humanity is a condemned thing, because it refused Christ. You may find a scrupulous conscience as to putting the money in the treasury, but no conscience in betraying and crucifying Him. But it is in a rejected, dead Christ that faith delights. The Christ that man scorns, it requires faith and grace to own. But the disciples still rested on man's strength, not on Messiah crucified in weakness, and said "Here are two swords." The Lord in saying "It is enough," alludes to their words, and implies that they did not enter into His mind. He did not want to say more.

Verses 39-46. There are siftings needed to exercise us and to judge flesh. Christ, of course, did not need this, but dealt with all in communion with His Father. To Him it was a path of obedience, a blessed opportunity of doing God's will: to Peter, it was Satan's power. Christ did not speak of the wickedness of the priests, the will of the people, or the injustice of Pilate, but of the cup His Father gave Him. There was positive intercourse with God about the trial, before the time came. And so it must ever be. It is late to put the armor on when we ought to be in the battle. A man living with God, when he gets into trial, goes through it, in his measure, as Christ did. He stands in the evil

day, because he has been with God when there was no evil day. On the cross it was not a question of communion; in the garden Christ is in communion with the Father, as to Satan's power, which was about to fall on Him. He felt all, but succumbed under nothing. Thus, instead of entering into temptation, He was in the highest exercise of spirituality, accomplishing the will of God in the most difficult circumstances, and the most perfect submission where it cost everything. Our Father never can lead us into sin, but He may into temptation, i.e., into the place of sifting, where the flesh is exposed, when this is needful, because hardness, or levity, or inattention to His patient warnings, has come in. It is the last, and often necessary, means of self-knowledge and discipline. Though it is great grace that He should take such pains, yet seeing our weakness, and the terribleness of the conflict with the enemy, it well becomes us to pray that we may not be cast into the furnace. In such times a bad conscience drives to despair. The flesh, in its undiscerning carelessness, meets the trial in uncertainty-, or carnal opposition, and falls. If, on the other hand, trial comes, we learn our position before God—watching, prayer, entreaty, spreading all before Him in child-like confidence, but submissive desire that His will be done.

The Lord was thoroughly man in this, for an angel appears and ministers, strengthening Him: for the conflict of His soul was great; but it urged Him, in the realization of the trial, to pray more earnestly. The effect of this is to see more clearly the power of evil and the sorrow; and that so as to act on the very body. He was in agony Himself, but always says “Father.” He is, and speaks, in His relationship as Son: not yet the victim before God, but the sufferer in spirit, feeling all the depths of the waters He is passing through, but crying out of them to His Father. Satan tried to stop Christ with the difficulty, when he could not beguile Him with the pleasure. But He went through all with His Father. At the cross was another thing the power of God against sin.

Verses 17-53. It is blessed to see these two things brought together—patience with men, and yet power to stop everything. Having been in an agony with God, He is calm before man. When the servant's ear was cut off, He puts forth His hand to heal. What a picture of man, what a picture of God, if we look here at Christ!

Verses 54-62. When we tremble before men, it is when we have not been with God. Peter breaks down, proving the deceitfulness of the flesh. In Jesus, suffering as He was, there was naught to disable the perfect and simple action of grace at each moment required. When the cock crew, He turned and looked on Peter, who remembered His word, went out, and wept bitterly.

Verses 63-71. The Lord spent the night, not before His judges, who took their ease till morning, before they judged the Lord of glory, but with the men whom they employed, the object of all injury and insult. Then, when it suited the convenience of the Jewish rulers, they brought Him to their council; but the Lord knew it was not the time of testimony, and left them to their weakness. The presenting of Messiah to the Jews was finished: from this the Son of Man was to be seated at the right hand of God. All was settled with God—they could go on. They draw the right conclusion and He conceals nothing. He was the Son of God. They must be guilty, not of mistake, but of condemning Him because He was the Son God and owned it.

## Notes on Luke 23

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Verses 1-25. Religious iniquity had now only to lead on the world to finish the wickedness in which itself had taken the lead. The civil power must give in to the willful evil of the apostate people of God. This is the history of the world, and, of the two, the religious side is always nearest to Satan. The chief priests manifested their enmity by their accusation, which was calculated to arouse the jealousy of the governor; charging on Christ what was entirely false, as to Caesar, buy with the subtle groundwork of that Rich they knew (reckoning on His truth) He could not deny. The guilt of the Jews was complete, as was also that of the Gentiles, for Pontius Pilate declared Him innocent, and desired to release Him. Cruel enough himself, the Roman governor disliked cruelty in others, but he would not go so far as to save Him from the malice of His enemies; it would have cost something to do this; it threatened his interest, and Pilate gave way. The one thing that is strong in the world is enmity against Christ.

But there was another form of evil to be introduced, to wit, Herod, the apostate king of apostate Israel and in rejecting Jesus all are friends, however jealous and divided. How terrible the union between the fourth beast and God's external people? But if the Gentiles failed shamefully in protecting the just and hence fell into basely unrighteous judgment, the activity of an evil will was with the Jews. Three times the opportunity of a relenting voice was given; but, while the governor's indifference was as plain as the disappointed insolence of Herod, every time the cry of the people increased in ardor for the death of the Messiah. Pilate, therefore, released the guilty Barabbas, whom they desired, to appease the Jews, and delivered Jesus to their will.

Verses 26-31. It was a terrible time and full of violence. It mattered little whom they met, if they could only force them to help in their iniquity. Their hour was struck, and all fell into the same mass of rejection and insult of Christ, save that the Jews acted with more knowledge. The forms of privilege became sorrows and harbingers of terror; they must be laid low, for all was untrue now. The natural feelings, touched by affecting circumstances, as we see in the weeping daughters of Jerusalem, did not change this. They understood neither the cross of Christ nor the ruin which awaited themselves. One may be affected with compassion, as if one were superior to Christ, and fall under the judgment consequent on His rejection and death. No humiliation of Jesus put Him out of His place of perfect capability of dealing with all others from God. Alas! it was not only on Pilate and Herod, nor on the chief priests, that judgment was coming, but own the woman that lamented Him, unconscious of their own state, which was under condemnation. Neither natural conscience, nor natural religiousness, nor natural feelings will do: nothing short of the glory of God in Jesus. And if He, the living and true vine, who indeed bore fruit to God, was thus dealt with, what must be the lot of the fruitless and unprofitable, for such branches were they? where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Man rejects the green tree, and God rejects the dry. Life was there in the person of Jesus, and they would not have it, and are therefore given up: it cannot be had now but through a dead and risen Christ.

Verses 32-43. There is the setting aside of all they looked for here in present deliverance, for Christ must die. But if we are also to see how low man can go morally, we learn, at the same time, that Christ in His grace can go lower still. "Except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." Therefore, whenever you see an attempt (and it is the attempt of man's religion) to connect a living Christ, before death and resurrection, with living sinners, be sure there is error. It unites sin with the Lord from heaven, and it denies that its wages is death. Had Christ delivered Himself, as the rulers, with the people, said in derision, He would not have delivered us. He must pass through death, and take a higher place, even in resurrection, and there He takes us. Per se, the incarnation cannot bring life and redemption to those who are dead in trespasses and sins. We need to be set beyond all in resurrection-life in Christ.

Thus, then, in spite of the grace of Jesus in intercession, Jews and Gentiles joined in mockery of the crucified; yet God had prepared, even here, the consolation of His mercy for Jesus, in a poor sinner. But no sorrow, no shame, no suffering brings the heart too low to scorn Jesus; a gibbeted robber despising Him! There is an instinct, so to speak, in every unrenewed heart, against Jesus, which was not quelled even by that power of love in which He was going down into the deepest humiliation, to suffer the wrath due to sin. Say not that you are one whit better than this wretched man. "There is none righteous, no, not one; none that understandeth; none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become unprofitable." In two words, there is no difference. You are as bad, in God's sight, as the railing, impenitent thief. See now the fruit of grace in the other. Grace works in a man who was in as low a condition as he who, notwithstanding his own dying agony and disgrace, had pleasure in outraging the Lord of glory; indeed, both had done it, (Mark 15:32.) But what more blessed and certain than the salvation of this thief, now that he bows to the name of Jesus? He is going to Paradise, in companionship with the Lord whom he owned.

It is often idly said, that there was one saved in this way, that none might despair, and but one, that none might presume. The truth is, that this is the only way whereby any poor sinner can be saved. There is but one and the same salvation for all. There was evidently no time for him to do anything, had that been the way; but all is done for him. That very day his knees were to be broken: how could he get into Paradise? Christ wrought his deliverance through His own death, and his eye was opened in faith of what Christ was doing.

Nor was it only that Christ's work was wrought for him—the ground on which his soul rested for salvation. There was a mighty moral work wrought in him, through the revelation of Christ to his soul, by the Spirit who convinced him of his utter sinfulness. "Dost not thou fear God," is his rebuke to his railing fellow, "seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly." It was not all joy. Conscience had its place. There is a real sense of good and evil; for he has got in spirit into God's presence, and this, making him forget circumstances, elevates him into a preacher of righteousness. And if he owns the rightness of his own punishment in honest confession of sin, what a wonderful testimony he bears to Christ! "This man hath done nothing amiss." It was just as if he had known Christ all his life. He had a divine perception of His character; and so with the Christian now. Have you such jealousy about the spotlessness and glory of Christ, that you cannot help crying out when you hear Him slighted? He believed that He was the Lord, the Son of God, and so could answer with assurance for what He had been as a man. As completely a man as any other, the holy obedience of Christ was divine. "This man hath done nothing amiss." What a

response in the renewed heart to the delight of sinlessness! His eye glances, as it were, over the whole life of Christ; he could answer for Christ anywhere, because he has learned to know Himself. Then he says, turning to Jesus, "Lord, remember me, when thou comest in thy kingdom." As soon as he can get rid of what was sad, when he has done with his testimony to the other thief, his heart turns to Christ instinctively. How undistracted he was! Was he thinking of his pain? or of the people around the cross? As is always the case, where God's presence is realized, he was absorbed. In the extremity of helplessness, as to outward appearance, he hears the Shepherd's voice, and recognized Him as the Savior and King. He wants Christ to think of him. The judgment of men, was that Christ was a malefactor. The weeping women saw not who He was. But no degradation of circumstances could hide the glory of His person who hung by his side. He owned Jesus as the Lord and knows that His kingdom will certainly come. The other malefactor thought only, if he thought at all, of present deliverance; but this one saw the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. His mind was set, not on being free from bodily pain, but on the loving recognition of Christ in glory. He looks not to earth, nor nature, but to another kingdom, where death could not come. There was not a cloud, not a doubt, but the peaceful, settled assurance that the Lord would come in His kingdom.

And the Lord gave him more than his faith asked. There was the answer of present peace. It was not only the kingdom by and by, but "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, to-day, shalt thou be with me in Paradise." As if He said, You shall have the kingdom when it comes, but I am giving now soul-salvation; you are to be associated at once with me in a way far better and more than the kingdom, blessed and true as it is. For indeed the work was accomplished on the cross, which could transport a soul into paradise. If the Savior had taken the sinner's place, the sinner is by grace entitled to take the place of the Savior. The poor thief might know but little of Christ's work and its effects, but the Holy Spirit had fixed his heart on the person of Christ. The words of the Lord (ver. 43) imply the atonement, by virtue of which we are made fit to be His companions in the presence of God. The work of Christ is as perfect now for us, as then for him; it is as much accomplished for us as if we were already caught up into paradise. How distinct this is from anything like progress of the soul to fit it for heaven! And how wonderful that such a soul should be a comfort to the Savior! He had come into the condemnation; yea, and wrath was on Him to the uttermost. And now the converted thief was a bright witness of perfect grace and eternal salvation through His blood.

Vers. 44-49. The scene was closed which let in the light beyond through the portals of a heart now purged by faith, and the darkness proper to the hour took now its suited course—specially over Israel, it would seem; "and the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst." Thus the way into the holiest was made manifest by the act which had its place in this darkness, and God in the grace of Christ's sacrifice shone forth upon the world. Darkness of judgment as it was to one, the light broke through and access, was opened within the veil. All was finished, and the Lord with no hesitating voice but aloud cried "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." This was not Jewish blessing, (for the living, the living, they shall praise thee,) but it was much higher: it was sonship, death overcome, and the occasion merely of presenting the spirit, safe, happy, confident, notwithstanding death, into the Father's care and presence. This is an immense principle, and, short of resurrection, of the highest possible importance. Death in the hands of Jesus—what a fact! The centurion, in the course of duty, struck at least in natural conscience,

glorified God and owned a righteous man on the cross. The masses were troubled and went away, auguring no good. Those who knew Him, and the women from Galilee, were more nearly interested, but in fear stood afar off.

Verses 50-50. But the providence and operation of God, the righteous judge, took measures for the body of the Holy One. If the more prominent witnesses were set aside, others feeble in the faith are found active and faithful in the post of danger, confession, and attachment to the Lord. How often the difficulties which frighten those force these forward So was it with Joseph of Arimathea, for Jesus must be” with the rich in His death.” The women, too, in true but ignorant affection, make useless preparation, awaiting the just Jewish time for a Lord who had passed far beyond their faith. The resurrection was soon to usher in the dawn of a bright morrow; for the honor of the grave, like the intentions of the women from Galilee, was of a Jewish character, and all this was now closed in death.

## Notes on Luke 24

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What now occupies our evangelist is the Risen Man again with His disciples and the testimony to the world founded on the resurrection—this new truth and power above all the principles of natural life. The door of the cross is shut on all that man in the flesh is, and the new thing is introduced in this risen Christ. Resurrection is an entirely new condition; but even the Jew could not have the sure mercies of David without it. Man, lawless and under law, has had the sentence of death pronounced on him. He may pride himself on his natural powers, but he is without God. He has rejected the One who came to him, a man in perfect, divine grace, and in so doing has fully shown what he is. Therefore says the Lord, “Now is the judgment of this world.” An entirely new ground appears, and this is here brought out in Christ Himself. Our bodies are still the same, but the life, character, motive, means, end are altogether new in the Christian. “Old things are passed away, and all things are become new.” The women, pre-occupied with their own thoughts and affections, come with their spices to anoint the dead body of Jesus, while he was already living in the perfume of His work and offering before God, having effected all which placed man anew before God the Father, the last Adam in living acceptance. Then they were thrown into an unlooked-for difficulty at first, for they did not find the Lord's body. Neither did they know He was risen. They understood not that there was neither judgment nor sin remaining. There may be real and great love to Jesus without understanding this. But soon the question was put which involved the answer to all. “Why seek ye the living One among the dead?” These women, faithful if ignorant, were not forgotten of the Lord, and He whose ways are grace has preserved their memorial and their early seeking of the Lord, thence to bear the message to the apostles themselves. But to them they were as idle tales. Peter's heart, broken and contrite, was the more affected by what he heard, and ran to the sepulcher, and having seen the linen clothes laid aside there, went away wondering. Surely it was a marvelous secret, baffling and rising above all human thought! (Ver. 1-12.)

Luke's statements of circumstances are always general. In John we have more details, especially developing Mary Magdalene's devoted affection to His person, but showing also how little she as yet knew of the power of God in resurrection.

Verses 13-27. The touchingness of this interview with the Lord on the journey to Emmaus need not be spoken of. How the Lord draws out all their thoughts! But He is here altogether as a man, and presenting the truth they speak Jewishly. How naturally their minds rested always in the same circle! He was a prophet, and they hoped He might redeem Israel. The fact of the resurrection occupied their attention, but it had no link with the counsels of God. They were astonished and, like others before them, there they rested. Christ takes up quite other ground, though it was only in the way of intelligence and not yet the power of the Holy Ghost. “O fools,” says He, “and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have written.” These He expounds, and opens their understanding to them; for though viewed completely as man, He operates: divinely and spiritually, on their mind. “Ought not,” said He—was it not the counsel of God plainly revealed in His Word? What he presses is the mind of God in the Scriptures relative to the Christ. This was an immense step; it took them out of their egoism and the egoistical character of Judaism. their thought was of

the redemption of Israel by power. They had no idea of a new and heavenly life, though of course they had it. Even as to the Christ, death must come in if God were to be vindicated and man really blessed, and so Moses and all the prophets had taught. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" —not set up His kingdom down here, but "enter into his glory."

Verses 28-35. Then we have a most graphic account of the scene at Emmaus. "He made as though he would have gone further." Why should He, to their eye "a stranger," intrude? "But they constrained him, saying, "Abide with us: for it is toward evening and the day is far spent. And it came to pass as they sat at meat with him, He took bread, and blessed, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him: and he vanished out of their sight" This was not celebrating the Lord's Supper with them; yet was it taking up that part of it—the act of breaking the bread—which was the sign of His death. He was not now merely as the living bread that came down from heaven, but as He had said, "this is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world" —not which I will take, but give. He did take flesh, of course, in order to give it; but it was His death that became the life of the world. For Jew or Gentile there was no other way. The condition of man was such that he could be quickened only in A connection with the cross. All that was in man, as a child of Adam, was under sentence of death and judgment. Christ, by grace, entered into the place of man—came where I am, that I might be on equal terms with Him, as far as acceptance with God; His broken body shows me that I have got that which brings me to God. A dead sinner can find life and divine favor only in a dead Christ. So the Lord had taught in John 6. To eat His flesh and drink His blood must be in order to have life. It was not any longer a question of His bodily presence merely as incarnate. Redemption was absolutely necessary, and faith in it. Christ is to be fed upon, not alone as a living Messiah, nor only as One alive again for evermore in resurrection; but, besides that, as He who died, His body broken and blood shed in atonement. Thus it was the Lord was known to the disciples at Emmaus, though it was not the Lord's Supper. Their hearts had been opened by what encouraged them in connecting the truth of God with the facts of human unbelief and Christ's rejection, and thus turning the cause of their despair into joy and peace by the sight of the counsels of God in it. But His actual revelation was by the affecting circumstance of personal association in the breaking of bread. It was Himself who broke the bread. There could be no mistake. He was gone in a moment— "vanished out of their sight." But His object was gained. They had life through His death. And He was risen. The body was a spiritual body, and had flesh and bones, which a spirit has not. He had shown them not only the fact, but its necessity. Why does He not say "did," but "must rise from the dead?" Because all the sentence must be passed on the first Adam. All that I have now is in the last Adam: I am not only quickened, but quickened together with Christ, having all trespasses forgiven. Christ, by His death, put them away for all who believe; and for such, all that belonged to the first Adam is clean gone. This is power over the principle of sin, which as a fact is still within. And hence the apostle bids the believers reckon themselves dead to sin. In the power of the Holy Ghost, giving me the consciousness of new life in Christ, I am to mortify my members here below, because I have to apply the death of Christ to my old nature. The monkish principle tries to kill sin in order to get life, but the apostle shows that we must have life by faith in Christ in order to treat sin as a dead thing. (Rom. 6; 7; 8)

The holding of the disciples' eyes was of importance. To have recognized Jesus would have been, in their state, to have satisfied their thoughts. The Lord, on the other hand, engaging their hearts

by all God said of Him, furnished them with scriptural intelligence; and then in the act of intimate friendship, which recalled the great truth of His death, brought to mind His great deliverance. "We walk by faith, not by sight." Filled with the concentrating event which began a new world, they hastened back to Jerusalem, where the eleven and others were occupied. "The Lord," said the latter, "is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." Then the two told the tale of their wondrous journey, and still more wondrous recognition of Jesus in breaking of bread. The Lord was proving that there should be independent witnesses.

Verses 36-53. Thus their hearts were prepared. Yet in the fact of this new thing, "the beginning, the first-born from the dead," there was that to which earthly hearts could ill assort themselves. The Lord presents Himself as the very same man, all-through and in every way. In His intercourse with the two, it had been just the same; all was human, though what no man ever was, and what none but God could be, was shown in and through it. Here also His hands, His feet, His previous wounds are presented. He takes of fish and of an honey-comb, and eats before them. Two sentiment had overpowering possession of the disciples—joy to see Himself again, and astonishment. The Lord presents the truth of resurrection, not as a doctrine, but in living reality, thus restoring their souls and making them know His most familiarly, risen indeed, but yet a man properly and truly. "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures."

This showed the standing before God in justification of life and liberty. But another thing was wanted before men—power. This is not the question before God, where the Christian stands as Christ stands, "accepted in the beloved." But the testimony of the Christian here below, whether preaching or anything else, needs power to be given. This power was promised to the disciples, but even yet they must wait for it. We must not confound service of any kind with standing. The power of the Spirit is requisite to live before man—power over and above regeneration, and distinct from spiritual understanding. This last is needed to give us the apprehension of our standing in Christ; and when He opens our understandings to understand the Scriptures, it does not puff up. It is a revelation of Himself, and leads to communion with Him. Yet the other want still remains. Even this knowledge is not necessarily power. The testimony and purpose of God in the word has to be fulfilled. The great truth of a suffering, risen Christ reaches out to the Gentiles. In Matthew His association with the Jewish remnant is taken up. Consequently, He meets them in Galilee after, or before, His resurrection; and thence flows the commission to go and discipline the Gentiles. But all this is dropped in Luke. Jerusalem, Emmaus, and Bethany, above all, are prominent; for thence He ascends to heaven, where he has to do with poor sinners. The testimony was to begin at Jerusalem expressly: the riches of His grace must be shown first where there was the deepest guilt. The cross broke this link with the Jews as a Jewish Messiah, but opened the door of repentance and remission of sins, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. "And ye are witnesses." He came in the need of power. "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from ON high." This all-important index of Christ's exaltation could only be obtained for man by the reception of Jesus in heaven when redemption was affected. The Holy Ghost had ever acted in creation, in providence, in relation, in regeneration, and in every good thing, but He had never been given

before. It hung on the glory of Jesus: to that the Holy Ghost could become a servant in man; for it was the divine counsel and the perfection of love.

Meanwhile, before this endowment, they returned with great joy to the city which their Lord had left. Their hearts were filled with the influence of this great fact, that their Master was glorified, though it was still associated with Jewish thoughts. And these two elements reproduce themselves in the Acts, particularly in the earlier part.

## Mediation

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If a man had never any just conviction of sin, he does not feel the need of mediation. No one who has for himself felt what sin and grace are, can hesitate a moment as to the value of it. Let the reader consult Job 9 and he may see the working of a true yet vexed soul under God's hand. It is all well talking of awe, reverence, love, &c., as do religious or semi-religious people of this world; but the denial of the need of a mediator is the denial of a holy Judge, and of our sense of God being so. But it is important to have a clear apprehension of the nature and work of the mediator.

Our sense of the need of a mediator arises from the effect of our being brought into the presence of God; or what is morally the same thing, so true an estimate of what God is as makes us feel the impossibility of our standing before Him. In the passage referred to in Job, this is evidently seen, whatever temper he met it in. He could not answer God "one of a thousand." If he called himself "perfect," his own mouth would condemn him. If he could leave off his heaviness and comfort himself, God would not hold him innocent. If he should wash himself with snow-water, and make his hands never so clean, God would plunge him in the ditch. And he adds, "neither is there any daysman betwixt us, who should lay his hand upon us both." Now, I am not commenting here upon the spirit in which Job takes the matter up, for it was a very wrong one; I adduce it to show that the sense of the need of a mediator arises from the conviction of sin, and does not hinder it.

This doctrine is sometimes used in a way calculated to give a false idea of God—not precisely as to the effect of the presence of God upon the conscience, but as hiding divine love. The effect of that presence is to present God as simply a Judge, and Christ is then looked at as one in whose love we can confide. But scripture is not answerable for this. God is a Judge, but Christ is never presented as an intercessor with a judge. The spiritual doctrine of a mediator is quite different from this. It not only leaves the full effect of God as light upon the soul, but brings it down close to the moral eye; and does it in the way of love, that we should be able to walk in the light. Christ is God manifest in the flesh. But while He is the light itself, this manifestation is love. See how John puts this point: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." (1 John 1:1, 2, 5, 6.) Here we have no hindering the full discovery of God to the soul; it is that discovery. "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." "The life was the light of men." "That was the true light which lighteth [shineth upon] every man," And it did tell upon men's conscience, the presence of that living Word; and if sin was confessed, it attracted in grace; if sin was sought to be hidden, it vexed, irritated, and alarmed, humble and unassuming as was the garb in which grace, for love's sake towards men, had clothed the light. So the truth; it is indeed grace in testimony, but it reaches the conscience, and judges all men by the revelation of God himself.

What could have brought light and love, (and that is, morally speaking, God,) so near to man as the incarnation? It was in the way of reconciling, not imputing trespasses; but this was to engage man away from sin, if that had been possible, by coming in grace and goodness towards himself. Mediation is, in this respect, the revelation of God Himself close to us, bearing directly on the conscience and heart of man; and so is the word of the gospel now.

But there is yet more in Christianity, that we might be fully brought into the presence of God. Christ has suffered in our place, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God—not merely God to us down here. Looking at God, as righteousness, as having “purer eyes than to behold iniquity;” the just sense of sin would make us feel that we could not come into His presence, nor appear defiled before His holy majesty. There is no just sense of sin, no real effect of His presence on the conscience till this is felt—no proper jealousy of right and wrong till we estimate it thus, and bring God and ourselves together in thought, so as to produce it—ourselves who owe everything to Him, But we could not. He ought not in justice to allow such in His presence. Christ gives Himself for these sins; and putting them away, appears in the presence of God in the efficacy and in virtue of that work. I go into the presence of God with this full character maintained in holiness and love. He is more glorified in what has been done by Jesus about sin than if there had been none; and it is Jesus' glory in every way to have done it. I now appear in virtue (yea, being) this divine righteousness, in God's own presence, through infinite love and righteousness, which I thus know, and never should have known else; for it is not mere human righteousness. God is known as He is in glory, which Christ alone could meet in face, so to speak; and I am there in the full light of it upon me without fear, because in virtue of the redemption in which that glory has been morally displayed and satisfied, and that as to and about sin itself, now put away for me, and I appearing as made the righteousness of God in Him My being there is that righteousness, the fruit of the travail of Christ's soul; and what that is, He alone can tell who knows what wrath is to Him who dwelt in the unity of love—what sin is to one who was in the unity of the divine holiness. There I am in a righteousness adequate for this glory; and so I judge sin now; a righteousness, as wrought out in Christ, competent to take its seat at the right hand of the majesty on high; for, God being glorified in it, God's glory was its just reward, and this in the fullest sense connected with the person of Him who accomplished it. Now I find my place in God's presence, in virtue of this. I sit down in heavenly places—not where the personal accomplishment sets Him who accomplished it, as a just reward—but morally, as fully in the presence of God.

Yet, in fact, I am a poor erring creature, rising above sin in a heavenly way in mind, through the Spirit; but, alas! by virtue even of that which I see, seeing the wretched inadequacy of all my steps down here. There is always feebleness, often failure. Here mediation comes in again—not to obtain righteousness, but to maintain a feeble, failing creature in the enjoyment of the place where our being made righteousness in Him places us. It is the reconciling the state in which I actually am with the position in which that has set me. It is the only thing which can maintain a poor, feeble creature experimentally up to the height of that divine presence. To pretend to be there in the condition in which we actually are, would be mere madness, and prove we had never known it. We should, even as men, rather fall at His feet as dead. Yet if we are not there, we must lose the full power of that presence to judge evil and good by, to know love by, to estimate the glorious counsels of God by. But Christ appears in the presence of God for us. His blood is on the mercy-seat. He is there in virtue of this blood-shedding which places us there. I can abide there in

peace to learn it all.

Am I to ignore, then, my feebleness and failing? No, I judge what I am by what I see of this glory which is mine; and may feebleness and failure become the occasion of the exercise of grace, which does not lower God to the level of my failures, but which meets the wants they prove in the way of mercy and lifting me out of them. We have a high priest touched with the feeling of our infirmities, who was in all points tempted like as we are, without sin; so that we come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Hence, in this also, mediation maintains for us the full display of God to ourselves, and alone can do so, and in the way of faith and grace, so as to be morally elevating while judging all inconsistent with itself. Divine righteousness sets me in the presence of God's majesty according to God: constant mediation obtains all the grace I need in the actual state I am in, and maintains me, not hiding my actual worthlessness from myself, in the full enjoyment of divine favor, as known there; it restores me, if need be, and keeps up a just, holy, practical intercourse with that glory. He who has not this has none. Hence it is said, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, that never alters, and he is the propitiation for our sins."

The first part of Christ's mediation is the revelation of God to man here, so that He might be directly in His presence. The second part is, when righteousness has given man a place in God's presence in glory; and made him know it, and placed him in it, through redemption, maintaining the intercourse of a feeble, failing creature with God in love, in the place where righteousness has set him; that is, in the presence of God fully revealed, as Christ the righteous Son is there. It keeps us, on the one hand, in the sense of that glory unobscured, and on the other, in the true and sweet sense of a weakness which is the occasion of constant and unfailing mercy, which is working in it to bring us up to the actual enjoyment of such glory as that righteousness is entitled to. Such are God's wondrous, perfect, and gracious ways with us which alone reconcile divine perfection and human weakness, and find in the latter, and even in its sin, the occasion of the display of the former in its highest glory. Such are His ways in Jesus, Emmanuel, to whom—Lamb of God who takes away sin—belongs all glory forever and ever, the joy and crown of those who trust in Him, the everlasting delight of God the Father.

## **Mediation Consists**

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First, of God in the Suffering Christ Bringing Us to God by Faith; And,  
Secondly, of Sustaining the Reconciled One in Communion

## The Mind of Christ

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### 1 Cor. 2

The mind of Christ is what belongs to the saint as a new man. The spirit of God first quickened, and now he has the mind of Christ, to mind the things above, as quickened out of the system of this world. He has the intelligence of Christ, through the Holy Ghost and the word. It is the communicated mind of God as it has formed itself in his purposes of Christ

When taught of God, we shall find proportion in truth: it will find its place. Where this is not the case, persons will overstate or wrongly apply truth, and find it will not tell. Then, in place of judging themselves, they will judge the truth, and make no progress.

Error in judgment is connected with wrongness of affection. When the man in the parable said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused," it was as much as to say, I prefer oxen to the supper. If a person says, I cannot see, then his eye is not single: he cannot justify himself before God. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." Whenever we walk in conscience before God, we shall find our path simple: having the mind of Christ, things are as clear as day.

We have in Acts 12 an instance of the ability of applying scripture, with the mind of Christ, to the circumstances in which they were. "Paul and Barnabas waxed bold and said, it was necessary," &c. In this scripture we do not find positive particular command to Paul or Barnabas; but as having the mind of Christ, they could find. command there and say, "for so hath the Lord commanded us" The apostle found his place with Jesus (See Isa. 49:6)

## Our Relationships to Christ

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(Rev. 1:4-7; 22:16-21.)

I have taken these two passages which precede and come after all the prophetic part of the book, as giving us the relationships in which the saints stand to Christ, to whom the book is confided.

In these opening verses we get an address, and the answer of heart in the saints to that address; and then, when the book closes, the address of the Lord to His people as the Bride, and the answer. I desire to show the place in which the Spirit of God sent the saints, and the connection of it with their character, affections, and duties.

One abstract remark may be made:-our affections and our duties flow from the relationship in which we are set. It is clear that if we are creatures of God, our duties as such flow from the knowledge of that. So with our earthly duties and affections-they flow from our relationship one with another, whether as husband and wife, or father and child. It is a very simple remark, but of all importance, with regard to the saints' position. But then I must be in this relationship to have these affections, and I must know what the relationship is to which those duties belong. If I had no consciousness of being a child, and happened to meet my father, I should have no sense of the duties and affections belonging to me as a child. In order to have right affections, I must be in the relationship to which the affections belong, and I must know that I am in it too. The relationship must be known as mine, in order to possess the affections belonging to it. I cannot love Christ as a Savior, if I do not know whether He is a Savior or not to me; I cannot love God as a Father, if I am not sure whether or not I am a child. Now the importance of this is, that a full settled knowledge of salvation is the spring and foundation of our duties to God—not only the knowledge of the fact of salvation, but of what that salvation has brought me into. It has made me a child, and I am bound to walk and feel as a child. It is so if I take Christ as He presents Himself at the end of this book: immediately the Spirit and the bride say, Come. If I do not know that I belong to the bride of Christ, how can I, when He thus presents Himself to me, say to Him, Come? It is the relationship in which I am from which all must flow, and no duties and affections are rightly founded until we know ourselves to be in this relationship to God. There may be a craving after the thing, and there will be. If I am an orphan, I would give anything to have a father; but I cannot have the affections of a child, because I have not got a father to love me. Wherever the divine nature is, there is the spring of these thoughts and feelings of love to God, and of holiness; but I cannot have them in perfection for my soul, because I have not the constant enjoyment of my relationship. A law may be imposed upon a person, but it never produces any affection. There may be a law which claims certain feelings and affections from me, but that gives no consciousness of the relationship by which these affections are produced: consequently it gives me no power. This is the real character of the law. Instead of being founded on a relationship that is existing, it promises that by keeping it, I shall get life. If I keep the law without having real life, I am to get life by keeping it.

I find this principle laid down in scripture-duty called for in order to the obtaining of life; but never does it produce the thing. Law claims from man what he ought to be, but it does not, and cannot

place man in any relationship with God, in which he may enjoy the blessing that belongs to God. Now it is not so with Christ. He does bring us, by the salvation which He has wrought, into relationship with God; He gives us a known settled place before God; and then our affections and duties flow from the place we are in. They are not the means of obtaining the place, but that which belongs to the place we are in. If we are the bride of Christ, we ought to have the feelings and wishes of one that is so. Throughout, when you enter into these verses, that suggests itself to the heart. In whatever way Christ is spoken of, there is at once what calls forth a response from the hearts of the saints. Whatever may be said as to His titles or offices, or what He is, the effect of speaking of Him with whom we are in relationship, is to awaken feelings in our own hearts of what He is to us. For instance, if I were to speak to a child of its father, as one who had eminently distinguished himself as a hero, or a statesman, the child's feeling at once would be, That is my father. He would not say, That is a great conqueror. The child's feeling would be, That great man is my father. So would it be with a wife. If she were told that such a person had greatly distinguished himself in any place, and she knew it was her husband, she would say, That is my husband; because all this glory awoke, in the mind of the child or the wife, the consciousness of the relationship in which they stood to the one to whom they belonged. Now that is the case with the Church of God. You cannot speak of any glory of Christ or of God, that does not awaken in the heart of the saint the consciousness of what God and Christ are to itself. This is characteristic of the existence of such a relationship, and the affections that belong to it. You cannot speak of the person with whom others are in relationship, without awakening in their hearts the sense of what the person is to them.

The whole character of this book is one of judgment. It is not the Father communicating with the Church by means of the Holy Ghost which dwells in it. And when Christ is described, it is as One whose eyes are like a flame of fire, judging in the midst of the churches, or as One coming out of heaven on a white horse, a sharp sword going out of His mouth, that with it He should smite the nations. When it is God, He is sitting on a throne from whence lightnings and thunderings proceed, and sending out preliminary or final judgments on the earth.

Now we shall find here, by the feelings that are expressed, the way in which the saint, the child of God, feels when Christ is brought forward. We shall find that, even when He is presented in judgment—that is in an earthly character—the Church has immediately awakened in her heart the place and relationship in which she stands to the one thus presented, Jesus the Prince of the kings of the earth, is alluded to: at once the answer is, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.” If the “Root and offspring of David” is named, the Spirit and the bride say, Come. it is the characteristic of the soul that lives in the conscious blessedness and enjoyment of an existing relationship with God. However Christ is presented, it is her own relationship with Him that is at once awakened in the bride. What I see in the word is not merely God visiting us as sinners, as He has done, but that when He has visited us, He has brought us into blessed connection with Himself, and having brought us there, He calls us, as in that connection, to live in the delight and in the duties that belong to it.

We do not thoroughly understand how lost we are in our natural state, because we do not look simply to our place in Christ. It is in the measure that we understand that they who are in the flesh cannot please God, and that the flesh is not subject to God and cannot be remedied that we are cast over by faith into our place in Christ. The moment I come to know that my relationship with

God depends upon what He is for me, and what He has made me by grace in Himself, and not upon what I am to Him it is all simple. It may astonish many to say that it does not depend upon what they are to Him. They will say, Are not men judged according to their works? To be sure they are. But who among you will stand this judgment? It is not merely a truth; but what is your condition if it is a truth? We are lost. We can only say, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." There is an end of all flesh as such. If Christ came, He came to call sinners -to seek and save that which was lost. It was all a settled thing as to man in the flesh. You and I, looked at as moral responsible beings before God, have walked in such sort, that we could not stand in the judgment -no one, not even a Christian could. I am not talking of grace saving; but of man judged as a responsible being to God. If God deals with us on this ground, we could not, as Job says, answer Him one in a thousand.

That we know to be true. There is not a single person, if it were a question of the most careless person in the world, who does not know that he cannot stand in the judgment. If he were brought to-day into the presence of God, he would do what Adam did—go and hide himself if he could; he would not dare to stand and be judged of God. The saint knows, but the sinner knows it too. As a present thing, he has no desire to be with God. If it was offered to ever such a decent man of the world, to go to heaven to-day, he would not-nor to-morrow either. When then is he to go? When he cannot help it. If he must die, he would rather go to heaven, but there is not a man of the world but would stay out of heaven as long as possible. If God reveals Himself in judgment, man will fly from Him; and when He revealed Himself in grace, what did man do? Spat upon Him-crucified Him. The story is told. Conscience tells us the one thing, and the facts of Christianity tell us the other-man would not have God. That is what we all are, and without any difference. Some may have produced more bad fruit than others, but we are all alike lost; and therefore God deals with us, consequent upon the death of Christ, on the ground that we are lost. It is of immense importance to see this fully, in order that we may fully enjoy God's love. "For a good man some would dare to the." "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." That is, I learn this-that if I am bad, dreading judgment, and having no affections towards God if God has loved me, it is according to the perfectness of His own nature. This is how grace meets man's case. He is brought to this conviction that he is a poor lost sinner, with no desire after God-a lost sinner after having been tried in every possible way-tried without law, tried under law, and then tried by Christ, coming in grace to meet them in all their need. And what was the result? Man was lost, hopelessly lost. "We will not have this man to reign over us." We will have the world without being troubled with God.

Here I get God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself; I find perfect love cognizant of what the sinner is, knowing how it would be treated, yet coming down to save. When I look at Christ's coming to me, I get thus the knowledge, that God, in perfect love, and with the knowledge of what I am, has visited me to save me. He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Having found this, I have met with God, and I know Him. I find myself perfectly evil, my heart altogether evil, but I have seen Jesus, and He loves me perfectly: I have met Him in my sin, and I know Him. That is not relationship yet, but I know what He is. If I have gone to a person that I have considered my master, and have done everything against him, and if afterward I have met him and he has assured me of his love, I have my every doubt and anxiety taken away. I shall not then wait for the day of judgment to know what God is to me, for I have met Him in Christ when I was in my

sins. But then we could not go into heaven with our sins, and the next thing I find is, that Christ takes up this very place in which I was. Was I in death? He goes into it. Was I under condemnation? He goes under it. Was I in sin before God? He is made sin for me. I find in the cross the Lord Jesus coming and putting Himself in the very place where I was before a God of judgment. Thus, taking the sinner's place, He goes down into death. He is forsaken of God, and being made sin, He bears their burden upon the cross, and now He is risen again. The question of the dealing of God with sin has been gone through on the cross. But that blessed One having been made sin for me, the holiness of God has been gone through, and man has been proved a lost sinner. But Christ having taken his place, the whole history of my sin is closed; it has received its reward in the person of Christ. And He is risen, and there is another Adam, instead of the first Adam, in the presence of God. It is not merely God visiting the sinner in his sin, but One who had taken the judgment of my sin upon Himself already, is in the presence of God in righteousness. There I get the whole dealing of God to settle the question of sin. "Christ has appeared once in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." In order to be enabled to enjoy the love of God, that is what my conscience wants. If I receive that by faith, I can stand in the presence of God, with the knowledge that God loves me perfectly, and that, as a righteous God, He receives me in Christ.

If you take these two passages, you will find in one what God has done for us, and the place in which He has put us, and in the next, the relationship which flows from it, and the conduct consequent upon it.

In Rev. 1:4, there is not a word about God in His character of Savior, but in the character of Jehovah, as Almighty; and the seven Spirits that are before the throne show that perfection of the divine Spirit in which God judges. Therefore Christ comes last, and when I come to Him, I get the statement that He is the faithful witness on the earth; then there is His resurrection—He is the first-begotten of the dead, and lastly, He is the Prince of the kings of the earth. It passes over all that He is in heaven as the High Priest, and as my righteousness before God. But though Christ is only thus spoken of, in connection with the character of the whole book, yet what is the answer of the saints when Christ is spoken of? "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." It is what He is to them. Though Christ is spoken of suitably to the whole character of the book, yet the church knows Him as He is for itself. Even if He is spoken of as the Prince of the kings of the earth, I say, That is the One that loves me, that has saved me; I know Him as the One that is in heaven, consequent upon the work that He has done for me. I know what He is for myself. He has loved me and washed me from my sins in His own blood. He is the faithful witness, and the Prince of the kings of the earth; but what I know is, that He has loved me, and washed me from my sins in His own blood, and if I think of the place in which He has set me, He has made me a king and a priest to God and His Father. It is the character of Christ's love, that all which He takes from the Father in glory and blessing, -as man, He gives to us. If I talk of Him even as a Prince on the throne, He cannot do without me, He makes me a king too. A man of the world can be generous, but he does not bring another person into his own condition. That is what Christ does. "My peace," He says, "I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." I will give you the very same peace that I have myself. So too, "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them." And not only that, but He gives them His Father's love— "that the world may

know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.” He puts us into His own place. That is perfect love. He Himself comes, and He has washed us from our sin<sup>s</sup> in His own blood. If He is a king and a priest, He has made us kings and priests along with Him. It is only when I have the consciousness of being utterly lost, and look up to the love that God has shown in the gift of His Son, that I can understand it all.

If I look at the day of judgment, I say, It is all over, it is a settled thing with me, and if God deals with me in judgment, I am ruined. It is too late to talk about being better-I am lost. But now through Christ I am saved. I have got God that has come in, dealing with this lost person and giving His Son for him It is not merely quickening him; but besides that, when a soul is quickened and feels what sin is, and what righteousness is, and yet that he has not got it, God has given Christ as his salvation. You want deliverance out of a condition that you are in by nature, into another condition in Christ, and that is what God provides. The believer is not only born again, and sees that holiness must be, but he has found in Christ the very thing that he wants. The grace of God has brought salvation. This is another thing. I am not merely renewed, but I wanted an answer to the exercises of my soul, and that is what I have got in Christ. Would it be right for a child to be uncertain whether its father loves it or not? If it were so, I should say, That child has not right affections, We ought to be able to say, I know thoroughly well that the Father loves me—He has given His Son for me. It was a love which knew my case, and thought of it. And He has loved me and washed me from my sins in His own blood. He has made me as clean as the value of Christ's blood can make a person. I am put thus before God, and then made a king and priest to God. By and by every one shall be blessed under his own vine and his own fig-tree; but the place that the heart of the believer finds itself in now, is in Christ's own place, consequent upon the love wherewith he has been loved.

“Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him.” And what is the consequence? “And all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him “I can testify that every eye shall see Him and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. But am I to be wailing because He comes who has washed me from my sins in His own blood? No, I am rejoicing. My portion is one thing, my testimony another.

If we look at the last chapter, after all the prophetic details have been gone through, I am not only washed and made a king and a priest to God, but I am the bride. And here Christ sets Himself again before the Church; He always does so. In the previous part of the chapter, as a warning, He says, “Behold I come quickly.” And now the Lord, having closed the testimony He had to give to the world, says in verse 16, “I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches.” And then He gives Himself these three characters: — “I am the root and offspring of David.” He is the root of David, the spring of all the promises made to David; and He is the heir of all of them, because He was the promised seed of David. But then He gives Himself another character, and that is, “the bright and morning star.” Nothing is said about the Bridegroom here. He is the bright and morning star. What is that? It is not the day. It is what no one sees the moment the sun is up. Those who are on earth in the day of the Lord will not see that star. It is what is seen by those, who during the night are watching Then, when the Lord comes, the star is seen no longer.

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand.” That brings home our present condition urgently to the Church of God. From the moment that Adam fell, it was night, it was dark. It was still deeper night, as God went on dealing with man till Christ was rejected. And now the judgment comes. But it is just there the dawn begins. Man had departed from the light. The rulers of “the darkness of this world” is the expression. Before Christ came, it was night because the sun had not risen; and when Christ was in this world. He was rejected. There was no connecting man with Christ but by his death. He came down to man, He visited him in grace; but, “except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.” He was merciful, He might come down to others in the meeting of all their need, but He was alone except He died, and when Christ died, there was the closing of the practical judgment of all that man was, looked at as in the flesh. It was proved that no dealing of God could make the fig-tree bear figs, and God said, “Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever.” He had gone on digging and pruning, but no fruit was borne; the gardener was cast out, Christ was rejected. But “where sin abounded grace did much more abound,” and God comes in grace and sets a man at His own right hand. And now the night is far spent, the day is at hand. The very rejection of Christ, which proved fully and completely the entire darkness in which man was lying, set a new man, another man, according to God’s counsels and heart, in glory at the right hand of God, displays this blessed One before our faith, and says, Look there and you will find life. “Because I live, ye shall live also.” You will find righteousness—everything—there.

I now know that God has come in, not merely trying man as He did for four thousand years, but doing His own work; and He has wrought that work completely, and Christ has gone up as “the second man” that has taken His place in righteousness in the presence of God. I can say, That is my life. There is a victory over sin, there is a putting away of sin, there is an accomplishment of righteousness. There is one who has got His place there because of sin being put away, and because of accomplished righteousness; just as surely as the first Adam. was turned out of Paradise, the last Adam has come in. And now I can say that I can see the dawn. The Jew must wait till the High Priest comes out to know whether the offering is accepted or not. When Christ comes out again, they will look upon Him and mourn. But I do not wait for that, because the Holy Spirit has come out, and His presence gives me the blessed consciousness that Christ has been accepted before God, as my life and righteousness. My faith makes me know that I have it all in Christ. But when am I to get the fruit of this? I have got the Holy Ghost, but what is my relationship to Christ? The Holy Ghost come down gives me the knowledge of it. I have got the Spirit, and the knowledge of these two things—that Christ is my righteousness in the presence of God, and the Holy Spirit the seal of it.

But, more than that, Christ is the head, and we are the members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. And what is their character when He talks about them? It is as the bride. It is never said of Christ that He was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh when He was down here. But now that He is at the right hand of God, we are bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. Just as Eve was of Adam, we are of Christ—and more so—because the Spirit of Christ dwells in me and unites me to Christ. When the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in His wings, there will be judgment, treading down of the wicked, &c. But meanwhile, while Christ is hidden from the world, faith sees Him, and faith, seeing Him, has trusted and leaned on Him as its righteousness before God, and the Holy Ghost is given as the seal of that righteousness. Therefore He says, “Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us is God, who hath also sealed us, and given

us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” He is these two; the earnest of the glory, and the present certainty of the love. I do know the love now, the Holy Ghost giving me the consciousness of perfect love; but He is also the earnest of the inheritance.

That bright and morning star is before the day rises. We know Christ before we see Him We have not seen Him and yet have believed. “At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” We are associated with Him while He is not in the world. When the sun rises, I shall see Him in His glory, but we know Him behind the cloud. He is the Son that has revealed Himself to me—this One who is in the heavens, as He revealed Himself to Paul: therefore it is the gospel of the glory. I know Him as my righteousness, and as the Bridegroom to the bride. The morning star is that which will be accomplished, but which is the knowledge of Christ as known to the watching believer when He is not known to the world at all.

So, in Peter, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts.” The word of prophecy is a light shining in a dark place. The world is all dark, and prophecy comes in and tells me the end of a dark world, and of all that passes in it. It is going on down a full stream to destruction. I cannot go on with that—my affections cannot be engaged in it. But the night is far spent, and the day is at hand. We know Christ in heaven, we know Him as the morning star when the world does not see Him We know Him above, where the church first was put in relationship with Him It is said to the church of Thyatira, “He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron,” &c. “And,” He adds, “I will give him the morning star;” i.e., he shall be a king and shall rule; but, besides that, I will give him Myself. We shall have an inheritance, and this with Christ. But do you think, supposing a person were going to be married, and said to the bride, You will have a fine estate, would that be what would most occupy her mind? Certainly not. If her affections were true and right, it would be himself and not the inheritance that she would be occupied about. So it should be with us. All God's word will be accomplished. We shall have the inheritance, but we shall have Christ.

We get the right and morning star. It is in that character that Christ reveals Himself here. But what is awakened in the church's heart is the thought of her own proper relationship to Christ. He does not say, Now I am coming; it is she who says it. “I am the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.” It is the desire of her heart. When He is named in that character, she is longing for Him to come—not to be washed. The saints already had said, He has loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood. His first coming did that. He has done it all. And when, through grace, I am brought to look up to God, and trust Him as a poor sinner, I am brought into this place by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, because righteousness has gone up on high. The Holy Ghost comes down and seals me, because I am made the righteousness of God in Christ. And now it is not merely the thought and feeling, I wish I were the bride, but there is the consciousness of the relationship, and I say to the Bridegroom, Come. The Spirit says it because the Spirit is down upon the earth. I have got the living water and the Spirit, but I have not got the Bridegroom. The Holy Ghost, having come down, and dwelling in believers, produces the certainty of the value of what Christ did and was down here, and the longing desire to see Him. We shall reign with Christ; but to be with Himself is better. James and John said, Give us a good place in the kingdom. But what does Paul say? “That I may win Christ.” I have had Christ revealed in me,

and I want him. It is not the uncertainty of there being relationship, but the affections that belong to the relationship.

“The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” We get the whole circle of the Church's affections. When the Spirit of God is working in the saints, what will be the first affection? Christ. The Spirit and the bride turn to Him and say, Come. What is the next affection? It is the saints. Therefore it turns and bids him that heareth say, Come. If you have heard Christ, you come and join the cry. Even if you have not the consciousness of relationship, would you not be happier if you saw Him as He is? Therefore say, Come. The first affection is towards Christ Himself; but the bride would have every saint to join in these affections, and in the desire to have the Bridegroom. But does it stop with those who have heard the voice of the Lord Jesus? No. The first effect of the Spirit's turning our eye to Christ, is the desire that Christ should come; and, next, that the saint who hears his voice should have the same affection. And what next?

We turn round to those who may be athirst, bidding them come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. The saint who has the sense of the blessedness of having drunk of the living water which Christ gives, wants others to have it also. What is a thirsty man? It is a man that has got a want and no answer to it. “He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” I have an affection created in me by grace, but it is satisfied. I have got what my soul wants. I have got God in all His blessedness in love, and I have got Him nearer to me than human friend could be. I have known what it is to thirst, but now I am satisfied. I have got all that my soul longed after. But if there is a thirsty soul here, you will say, If I could only feel sure that I had got this living water! That shows that you have not drunk. You cannot enjoy Christ without knowing it. If the Spirit of God quickens a soul, it will have wants that are not satisfied, but if it has gone and drunk of Christ, it will be satisfied. The church has not yet got the Bridegroom, but it has the water of life; and therefore it can say to the world, I have got what you want: you come and try. If you are thirsty, and only drink of that water, you will never thirst again. I have got Christ in my-heart; and when you possess him in your soul, it give you the consciousness that you have got the very same happiness that there will be in heaven. You may know Christ better, and love Him better when you get there: there will not be the hindrances of the vile body; but it is not another God, another Christ, another Holy Ghost that you will have. All the things that will make me blessed in heaven, I have now. I may be inconsistent with Christ, groaning in this wretched body, because I have so little faith to see my place. I say, What a hut I am in! The reason I do not like the hut is because I know I have got a palace. I judge my present position because of the glory that is before me. But if you want to know what makes a Christian happy in life and death, it is that the Christ he has got now is the Christ that he will have in heaven. He has got his home there, where the One he loves and knows best is already.

But more than that, if we have this living water, and people do not even thirst, still I can say “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” I can tell them I was just as vile as they, and God came and called me in His grace, when I was going far astray from Him. So that now I can say to others, “Whosoever will, let Him take the water of life freely.” We have got this water, we have not got to buy it. We have this relationship to Christ, and the affections that flow from it, so that we turn to those that are athirst, bidding them welcome, yea, “Whosoever will, let him take,” &c And thus I get the whole circle of the church's affections, from Christ Himself, down to the poor sinner far from God, because I have the consciousness of the affections that are suited to Christ.

The Christian is in this world in virtue of his salvation in Christ, a witness of the love that has saved himself. And then we have to seek, remembering that the life we have is a dependent life, that this witness should be bright; “always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.”

Only remark these two things,—where we are brought in faith, with the Holy Ghost dwelling in us. I see that Christ has died to put away my sin: that is what I know, looking back. And, looking forward, I see that the same Holy Ghost who gives to my soul to possess a certain knowledge of the value of Christ's first coming, tells me that He is coming again “The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, &c looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us.” He puts us back and shows us Christ, and forward and says, That is your Bridegroom; He is gone to prepare a place for you, He will come again for you.

If I look back at Christ made sin for me, and if I look forward to His coming again to receive us unto Himself, shall I be afraid of judgment when He comes? He positively declares that He will come and receive me to Himself. Is that the way I shall stand before His judgment-seat? Yes? He will come and fetch me, and receive me to Himself. And why? Because at His first coming He had settled the whole question of my sin. The person before whom I appear in judgment is the One who has already put away my sin and who is my righteousness before God; and it is as made like to His glorified body that we appear before Him.

I would ask you, Are your souls standing in this relationship with God in Christ? Do you believe that God in mercy has thus visited you in perfect love, and that now the place you are set in is that blessed relationship itself as the bride of Christ, who is waiting till He comes to receive her to Himself? Only remember that if you desire the affections and the walk that belong to a Christian, you must have the consciousness of being in the relationship, or you cannot have the affections that belong to it. God has given us a salvation that brings us as saved persons into relationship with Christ. But in order to be consistent, I must know what I am to be consistent with. Do I expect you to be consistent with me as my servant, or as my child, if you are not standing in those relationships to me? If I am of the bride of Christ, let me seek to be consistent therewith. But we must first be consciously in the place of relationship, and then seek, though it be amid suffering, to be consistent with it.

The Lord give us, by His living grace, to be brought into the consciousness of the place in which He has set us.

Hereford.

## The Parable of the Cedar and the Two Eagles

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Ezek. 17

DISCIPLINE preserves us for future blessing, but it does not exalt us in this present world.

Connected with this thought, let us read this parable.

This cedar is Judah, or the house of David; the two eagles are the king of Babylon and the king of Egypt.

This cedar had incurred the discipline of the Lord, and the Lord used the king of Babylon, one of the eagles, as the rod of His hand, for correction. Under this rod, the house of David would be humbled, but preserved—for correction is for purifying, not for destruction. Discipline plants us in “a fruitful field,” and by “great waters;” but we grow there, for the present, only as “a willow tree,” as “a spreading vine of low stature,” as this parable has it; “base,” but kept and sheltered. (ver. 5, 6, 14.)

Jehoiachin, who was of this cedar, found this to be so. He humbled himself under this eagle, the king of Babylon, the Lord's rod for correction, and he was preserved, though “base,” for a season. For thirty six years he was hid in Babylon; but he was then exalted, proving that he had been planted in “a fruitful field,” though, for so long a season, he was but “a willow tree.” (See 2 Kings 24 xxv.)

But another eagle comes near this cedar; and this cedar, the house of David, in the person of Zedekiah, who succeeded Jehoiachin, solicits him, “bends her roots towards him, and shoots forth her branches towards him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation.” (See verse 7.)

Zedekiah seeks the king of Egypt, “that he might give him horses and much people,” (verse 15,) might flourish again under his shadow, refusing to be any longer “a willow tree.” But this was rebellion against the Lord's rod, and the Lord revisits it as rebellion against Himself; and He inquires, shall such a cedar prosper? and He answers, he shall not prosper. Zedekiah shall know not merely the discipline but the judgment of the Lord. (ver. 19, 20.) What a picture this is! what a moral may be read in it.

Happy is it when the soul bows to the hand of God, accepting the punishment of our sins. It is the place of blessing. Israel's blessing began there. When they stripped off their ornaments, and sought the Lord outside the camp, they were in the way to a blessing. (Ex. 33) And so, after they had failed in the kingdom, as they had failed in the -wilderness, their blessing lay in Babylon as before it lay outside the camp. They must accept the punishment of their sins and go there.

It is thus with us individually. We must be broken in order to be blest. Discipline will keep us for future exaltation, but leave us “base” in this world. It is a “fruitful field” to the soul. But these are terms we do not particularly like. We would rather “bend our roots” towards that which may help us in the world. But that way, which is our own way, will end, as will Zedekiah, in shame and ruin.

(See 2 Kings 25) Accepting the judgment of God, submitting under his mighty hand, will end, as with Jehoiachin, in blessing and exaltation.

Such is the parable of the cedar and the two eagles in Ezek. 17 But the close of that chapter, after the parable, must also be looked at. (See ver. 22, 24.)

The prophet here looks forward to the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, the cedar of this parable in his day, the heir of the house of David; and this passage presents Him as taking His place as humbled and broken with the nation of Israel or the throne of David, and from thence, according to God, receiving His exaltation and kingdom.

But though broken, this was neither in conscience nor in relationship. He could not have been humbled, or broken, or convicted in conscience, (as we are to be,) for He was stainless and spotless, with neither corruption within, nor blemish without. He could not have been broken in relationship, as the house of David was, because he was no more federally represented by that fallen house, than as Son of man He was federally represented or headed in Adam. But He was broken in circumstances—for the ends of the glory of God, and the blessing of His people, the Lord Jesus was, by His own will, broken in circumstances. The heir of the throne was a carpenter. The Lord of the earth and its fullness had not where to lay His head. He was “a tender twig,” a “low tree,” a “dry tree.” This is the Jesus of Isa. 53 of whom it is said, “He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, as a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form or comeliness, and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him.” But this “tender twig” shall, in due season, be planted, as this passage tells us, “upon an high mountain and eminent.” It shall “bring forth boughs and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowls of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell.”

And this is the millennial Jesus, as the other was the Nazarene Jesus. The “tender twig” of our prophet is the Nazarene Jesus, the “goodly cedar” with its boughs and fruit is the millennial Jesus. But it is the same Jesus who thus vindicates, and illustrates, and glorifies all the thoughts and principles, and truth of God. As the prophet closes this chapter, giving us the moral of the whole action; “And all the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the Lord have spoken and have done it.”

And surely this is very much the common moral of all God's dealings with us in this scene of proud revolt. And I may say again, as at the beginning, His discipline preserves us for a future blessing and exaltation, but it does not make us great in this present world.

“Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.” But in contrast with this, just for another moment look at the history of another famous tree that was once set in the soil of this world. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, whom we have seen in this parable as one of the two eagles, was also a celebrated tree. His branch spread in its day, as the branch of this millennial Jesus will do by and by in “the world to come.” (See Dan. 4) But Nebuchadnezzar had not previously been “a tender twig,” a “low tree,” a “dry tree.” Accordingly, he exalts himself and meets the judgment of God. His leaves are scattered, his fruit shaken off, his branches cut down. He is left as “a stump in the earth.” And then, being broken and humbled under God's mighty hand, God blesses and exalts him, in His own way, at the latter end—that we may again

learn God's way, to make us “tender twigs,” ere we become “goodly cedars.”

## Prayer

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Q. What is the difference in these two verses as to the answer to prayer'?

Does the 7th refer to a condition of habitual communion, and therefore asking according to God's mind t In the 16th verse, with what clause of it is the word THAT ("that whatsoever ye ask") connected? Is it, as it appears to be, with "that your fruit should remain," or are the three clauses commencing with "that" each dependent -upon the being "chosen and ordained" (" ordained you that whatsoever ye shall ask," &c.)? and Is there not a force and authority always connected with "in my name?"

T. T.

A. In speaking of abiding, it will be remarked there when final exclusion is spoken of it is never "ye" but "a man;" when "ye," it is responsibility and privilege and not exclusion. The union is viewed as ostensible and fruit-bearing on earth. It is not the church viewed as in heaven in its union with Christ. In that union as such we are perfect. In it there is no pruning nor planting a vine to bring forth fruit nor casting forth. The branches here spoken of may be so united; some are, no doubt: but it is not in this point of view they are looked at. The Lord speaks of Himself and of the branches of the vine already, when He and they were on earth. In church-union the Head is in heaven perfected there. - We have to look then for responsibility, fruit-bearing and privileges suited to that. The fifth verse speaks of one's abiding in Christ and Christ in him, but first of abiding in -Him because it is responsibility. Christ then abides in him practically, and he is fruitful. So Eph. 3:16, 17. The 5th verse addresses itself to the great, fundamental principle and way of blessing, the 7th to the connected means by which it is practically available. "If ye abide in me" remains always the ground—dependence, confidence, and intimacy, dependent connection with in thought and will, the being attached to Christ and dwelling in Him as one from whom we draw all; but in practical realization of this there are two means—the words of Christ and prayer. This verse tells us the measure and way of blessing through these assuming the fundamental ground of abiding in Him. If Christ's words abide in us—if the mind, and thoughts and will be always directed by and have their motive and spring in the words of Christ, then we are met in everything we ask. All that is needed to make good that will, we ask as we see it to be so needed. We dispose of divine action in that case for asking We are vessels of His will in dependence. His words forming our will and mind, whatever we ask is done. It is not merely that He meets us by His lower Himself, but He won! I have us have intimate confidence in exercise; and if we are dependent on him, know that every request is met. I can (being set in the way of His will by His holy and perfect words) dispose of circumstances in that path, get the strength needed, difficulties removed- -in a word what I will. This last is very striking; for while it is indeed as formed by His words, yet as so formed, having His mind, I am in that liberty of action which thinks of all that suits the case and gets it. We are called by this phrase to a place of wonderful free power in service, though the will in that freedom be formed by Christ's words: but we are active agents under God as to all agencies and circumstances. Hence this is for the purpose of bearing much fruit. So are we His disciples, for He

did.

From the 11th verse, (indeed 9, 10, form a preface to this) the disciples are looked at in another point of view—but as abiding in Christ as branches in the vine, but as individual persons whom He has loved, was laying down His life for as His friends, whom He had chosen and sent forth. They were to be left, and when He was gone, to love one another as He had loved them (that is when amongst them and in dying for them). He has now chosen them and appointed them that they should go forth and bring forth fruit, and their fruit abide, as indeed it does to this day. In this position of fruit-bearing and service as His chosen ones, they would ask of the father, being thus placed now where Christ had been in relationship with the Father whose name He had revealed and with whom He was now placing them in a direct relationship, and He would give it. This relationship with the Father, when He left them, is the groundwork of this part of the chapter. Hence He says not “my words,” but whatsoever I have heard of my Father—so what they ask of the Father. Hence also it has the character of gift to the children; not a work being done and circumstances disposed of. Verses 17-21 fully show that, in the mind of the Spirit, there is this taking of Christ's place in service by the disciples here below. Hence a putting them in direct relationship with the Father as He was, and so they would have his joy. But the first thing was before even they were thus left—their connection with Christ Himself as the branches in the vine — His mind guiding them, and then all done they asked for. Hence the person asked is not spoken of in 1-7. As abiding in Christ, and His words abiding in them, they disposed of all active agencies. It is this great fact which is before us. They might have asked Christ on earth; they might ask Him now, as having all power in heaven and earth, to act in the exercise of His Lordship, and as Son over His own house for the good of that house.

But in ver. 16 they have to do with the Father, and look to a Father to give. The “that whatsoever” depends on “I have chosen you and established you that,” be. But tire “that you should go.... that your fruit should remain,” is an integral and essential part of the ground on which the privilege is founded. I have chosen you for this and that and this, that whatever you ask, be. Having this place by my desire, such will be your relationship and privilege with the Father. The Father being now introduced, and they placed in relationship with Him, Christ being gone, their requests were necessarily in Christ's name, or they were nothing. During His life, they had never done this. “Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name” —Ask and ye shall receive that your joy may be full.” So here, ver. 11. (Comp. John 11:22.) The name of Christ was their whole title, and an effectual one.

## Presence of the Spirit in John 14 Compared With Chapters 15 and 16

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There are three things quite distinct from each other,—conscience, life, and power.

There may be conviction of conscience, as in Herod when he heard John preach; but he was not converted. A man may know he is doing wrong, but that does not give him power against it.—Life is another thing. It gives activity to the conscience. A new nature is there with its feelings, desires, affections, but without power. There will be less peace perhaps than before there was life, because there may have been false peace before. The state is, of course, better than that of the mere natural man; there will be no levity in that state. The other thing alluded to is the power of the Spirit of God. We must distinguish between gift for service, and the power which gives enjoyment. There will be peace. In order to our having the power, Christ has made peace through the blood of His cross. “There is, therefore, no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.” We want this power. It could not be conferred on man in the flesh. Divine righteousness must be there, or God could not put His seal on man. Can God put His seal on a person full of the sense of sin?—in conflict about his sin—say such a state as Peter's, when he said, “Depart from me, I am a sinful man, O Lord ?” There may be good desires and tenderness of conscience, but it will run into legality, because not resting in the favor of God. These experiences may be all very useful in their place, but they are not peace. We have peace made and divine righteousness wrought out. I can now look up to God without hiding my sin. The way I come at the sense of the immensity of sin is by the immensity of the grace that has met it.

The reality of the presence of the Holy Ghost who has come down, and dwells in us, is most important. The Holy Ghost is given as a seal. Christ said, “If I go away, I will send him unto you.” The Comforter brings to me the fullness of His grace, being the witness of accepted righteousness to our hearts. He convicts, or demonstrates, of righteousness; and that righteousness is mine. I stand in it. He convicts the world of sin, of unbelief; but the demonstration to me is of righteousness—righteousness wrought out for me, which God has accepted. Now He is perfectly free to bless. My thought now is (not, I am so full of sin that He cannot bless me; but) God has accepted the righteousness and I stand in that. We are of God. Christ is made unto us righteousness. We are born of God, and as such we need something to bring to Him.

It is all furnished in Christ. There is not only peace as to the past, but I have Christ's standing in the presence of God. We stand in Christ, the second man, and have the last Adam's place in virtue of redemption. So sure as I have the first Adam's place as turned out because a sinner, so I have the second man's place according to the counsels of God in Christ.

At the end of John 17 we have Christ's title of righteousness (ver. 22) and His personal title (ver. 24) spoken of. He is bound to bless. “I am glorified in them.” He could not bless sin, but now righteousness being perfected, all the purposes of His heart in love can flow out to us, because we are the righteous ones. Whatever the love of God—the righteousness of God—all that by which He stands in the presence of God, because of His work and person, we have, and are blessed in virtue of it.

The Spirit is the witness—the earnest—the Spirit of holiness—the Spirit of adoption—the Spirit of truth. All that God can give we are made possessors of by the Holy Ghost, and our “bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost.” How do I know Christ is in the Father and myself in Christ? The Holy Ghost has come down and as Christ said, in this chap. 14., “In that day,” referring to the present time, “ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” As many as are led by the Spirit are the sons of God. “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” He makes us the servants of Christ, and all is founded on the work of Christ, but realized by the presence of the Holy Ghost. “If I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you.” He tells them that all they had before, it was a good thing for them to lose, because we have got more by the Holy Ghost being given. Christ's humiliation did they understand?

That be far from thee, Lord.” Would a Christian say that now? They could not think what this could mean, that He should die and rise again.

Christ is the object, and the Father's love, too, is; but the Holy Ghost is the power by which I see Christ and realize the Father's love. Christ being gone, and there being nothing visible, my affections are more drawn out and exercised; and this is blessed. He does not say, Blessed are they that have seen, and believed, but, “Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.” Divine affection for Christ is much more drawn out by Christ being absent, and yet we long to see Him. That part is true too. While we are going through a world always so luring us to forget this blessed One, the Holy Ghost is in us to keep Him the object dear to our hearts.

There are three ways in which the Holy Ghost is spoken of in these three chapters. In ch. 15. Christ is (ver. 26) the One who sends; in chap. 14. the Father (ver. 16) sends; in chap. 16. He is come as a Person on earth. The difference between chaps. 14. and 15. it is important to notice. In Acts 2:33, where the Holy Ghost is given at Pentecost” there was power acting on them. “He hath shed forth this,” &c. That was not all, but very blessed. Christ was to baptize with the Holy Ghost—not water. And this was fulfilled. Power was given, and that was needed to go through a world of wickedness and unbelief. If you have only to be faithful in witnessing for the Lord one day, you want power, or you would be like Peter in the judgment hall, cursing and swearing. “Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to the Father.” (14:12.) He bestowed these gifts. When Christ is spoken of as giving the Holy Ghost, it is always for service, witnessing for Him; and when that is the subject, reward is spoken of, in other places, and the appearing and manifestation of Christ are connected with it.

Acts 2 God said to Christ, “Sit on my right hand till I make,” &c. The Holy Ghost acts in power till Christ comes in power. Everything will be displayed when He comes in His kingdom. Everything will then be set right; crowns given, &c. Christ is exalted on the right hand of God, and having received of the Father the Holy Ghost afresh, as Head of His body, has sent Him forth.

This is not the same as chap. 14. True, every word would fall dead; we should have no right word to speak, if the Holy Ghost did not give the thoughts, words, &c. That is all connected with service; but our proper portion we get in chap. 14. There is the very outstreaming of the Father's love. “I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.” He will not leave you as I must. I cannot stay with you. I am going to work the redemption. and going up on high, but He will come, not merely to make apostles and give power for service, but to remain with you.

It is He who now gives me the consciousness of God's loving me as He loves Jesus. I have more or less joy, but it never leaves me. I have "the love of God shed abroad in my heart." How do I know God is love? I have it in me. The proof is that He sent His Son the propitiation for our sins. That is what the conscience wants; but as to the enjoyment of it, I have it, because God dwells in me and I in God. "No man hath seen God at any time." If we "love one another," &c. It is proved in the word that God is love by what He has done, and you have it in your hearts. Christ said, "I have declared thy name unto the men which thou hast given me out of the world." "Show us the Father." I have the relationship; I have the Spirit of adoption, crying Abba, Father. I have the consciousness of being in the same relationship as Christ Himself is. "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me," &c. I have and know the blessedness of His person. No one could be in the Father who was not God. He was God: then "I in you." The reality of that I know by the Comforter dwelling in me. Then I have done with myself. When I think of my blessing, I think of Christ—a deliverance from self. That is our place in Christ; and conscious of it I am, because the same Spirit that was in Him is in me, as a believer. The Holy Ghost, while He is the Spirit of power, is, then, He who gives me the consciousness of my blessing. This is not merely-union with Christ, but Christ in us. "I in you" —all the blessedness in Him is in us. What is in me Christ is in me. "Because I live," He says, "ye shall live also." All that He has is mine. This has a threefold bearing on our hearts. There is the dwelling in the consciousness of God's love in my soul. Then I look back and feed on this humbled Christ. What love in Him! What divine perfectness! What a thing to feed upon! There are streams in the saints, but there was the thing itself. Divine love was moving through this world "I am the living bread come down from heaven." "Do this in remembrance of me." I remember because it is past, as to fact; not as to my affections, but as to the fact. "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." There is everything in Christ which can assimilate in the heart of man.

Then there is another thing. I am to be in the same glory with Him. What can I ask Him for more? He is God, and He must make us as happy as Himself. He says, "my peace I give unto you" —not something like it, but the thing itself,— "my peace." Thus meanwhile He fills one's heart with the joy we are to have by and by. In chapter 14. there is nothing about being heirs and joint-heirs—the place in glory, but all as children are to be where He is. "If I go away, I will come again that where I am, there ye may be also." Reward for service is not here spoken of when He comes, but to be received to Himself. If we have found delight in Him here, we are going to be with Him forever. "If it were not so, I would have told you." This world is not good enough for them, though He has manifested His grace here. He gives the assurance of His coming again to associate their hearts with the Father's love. If His love is not filling my heart, I shall go to some vanity in a shop to satisfy me. My heart will get into my business. If my spirit is wrapped up in the love of Christ, there will be rivers of water flowing out. There is no effort in showing forth the love of God, if my soul is dwelling in it. If I am weak and try to lift up this table, I make a great effort; if I am strong, it needs no exertion. So if there is power through love dwelling in us, there is no effort. If I am not in communion, it is for the Holy Ghost to speak to my conscience, instead of using me. If I get knowledge merely to communicate it, I shall be as dry as a mill-stone. When we enjoy Him for His own sake, it flows forth to others. So as to His coming again. The Holy Ghost is come, and, associating our hearts with Himself, takes us up victorious. As He has overcome the world, so have we. The victory is gained; and the way we enjoy the victory now is by the Holy Ghost taking of these things, and associating our hearts with Him on high. The Holy Ghost associates our hearts with the Christ to whom we are united. This makes the heart perfectly free. What a blessed

thing that there is this living power of the Holy Ghost for the saints; and in this poor, tried, oppressed world to be able to bring in streams of God's love! This can only be as the Holy Ghost is the witness in us, and as He associates us with the perfect love of God.

## Priestly Sympathy

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Priestly Sympathy—There is an analogy between Jesus and the Jewish priests as to the sympathy, but not as to the ground (Heb. 5). One who is perfectly free from sin, if there is love in the heart, is at full liberty to sympathize with the sorrows of others. On the other hand, it is true that there must be a nature capable of understanding what sorrow is. But scripture never says that Christ was subject to infirmities, much less that being in infirmities is necessary to sympathy with those who are in them, but rather being out of them, while possessing a nature that apprehends in itself the suffering it brings into. The mother sympathizes with the babe in the pain she does not feel. But it is important to remark that Christ is contrasted in His priestly sympathies with men who have infirmity. The law made such priests; but the word of the oath, the Son consecrated for evermore (Heb. 7:28). The high priest, taken from among men, had compassion, for that (while priest, note well) he was compassed with infirmity. That was mere man's way of sympathy; for he had to offer for his own sins. Instead of this, Christ, in the days of His flesh, when He was not a priest, cried to Him who was able to save Him from death—took the place of lowly, subject, sorrowful man—received the weight of it in His soul; and then, being made perfect, acts as priest. He is never said to have been infirm like us, but in all points tempted. He suffered, being tempted, and is able to succor those who are tempted.

When God visits Israel in Egypt, He says nothing about wandering in the wilderness: only that He will bring them out of Egypt and into Canaan. The circumstances of the wilderness are used by grace to make us know Christ better, but they are not necessary to God's plan—i.e., salvation and glory. Priesthood comes in to supply the need of a wilderness; it maintains the link between us and the heavenly places, redemption having set us so high, and we being actually so low. We have no need of priesthood to sit in heavenly places. Christ is there, and therefore we are there in Him. Being what we are, priesthood is requisite to sustain us in accordance with our heavenly position. Christ must fill all the distance between the throne and me as a poor failing saint.

Fighting is not the characteristic of the wilderness, but patience. It is in Canaan (i. e., the heavenly places now) that we get conflict.

## Psalm 22:21-31

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IN the first Adam all men failed, and came under condemnation. We have failed; I have failed; not only as belonging to a world of sin, but I am a sinner. If I am honest, as to my state, I shall own I am under condemnation. It is not enough to say all men are sinners, but I am a sinner. "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest, &c. All men in their reason own they are sinners; but this is another thing altogether. I must learn that I am a sinner, and that God and sin cannot go together. Man, by nature, is in darkness, and light and darkness have no connection with each other. Man in the flesh is lost, not only because he is a sinner, but because he is in a sinful condition; there is mercy for him, that is true but his position is ruin. He is not now in a state of probation-God did try him. He was in a state of probation until Christ came.

We must get back to our starting point, and then we shall see man in himself, lost, ruined, without hope, without help, until he looks at Christ, and then he is saved. Man is lost; that is his condition. Ruin is where he starts from, as involved by Adam in condemnation. The believing man is taken up out of this place, in virtue of the second Adam. This is the grace of the gospel, All now depends upon Christ. Man got out of Paradise, the place of earthly blessing, and he never can get back again. I cannot get there, but I have just the same place of dignity Christ has gained; not the paradise Adam lost, that was earthly; our place of blessing in Christ is heavenly: and what is before us is the ground and way of our blessing. We have Christ as the object of our faith, and we have Him as the effect in salvation. We are called upon to believe that Christ died upon the cross, and then God says you are saved-not you may be, or you shall be, but you are. "He that believeth hath, eternal life." We shall see how completely that work on the cross was done.

The first thing, when man fell, was the word that another should come—"the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." It is not a promise made to Adam, but a revelation in his hearing, that his faith could take hold of, that another should come. When Adam sinned, he was turned out of paradise, and all his posterity with him, and he never can take his place there again. Being in heaven is not blessedness in the garden of Eden. There is no going back to a state of innocence; that is impossible. If we have once done evil, we never can return to innocency. Christ came, the promised seed of the woman, which Adam was not. To Abraham God had promised that in his seed, which was Christ, all the families of the earth should be blessed. It was unconditional, a settled thing, irrespective of man's righteousness. It was God's own act, and according to His way. The promise rested not on man's responsibility. I will do it, says God. It was independent of man's righteousness; nor is it that God is indifferent about righteousness: the flood settles that. What God did after the promise was given, was to bring in the law, to raise the question of righteousness in man, and to make known his responsibility. It was not grace reigning through righteousness, but law claiming righteousness. Have you got this? the law says, have you done what God requires? The law says, you should love God with all your heart: have you done it? The natural conscience tells you that it is right to do so. The world also pushes you, and says you ought, but you are without power. The question of righteousness has been raised by the law, to prove that every motion of our nature is sin. The law says, Do, and you shall live; obey, and you shall have life; but

it does not give power, it leaves you without strength to meet its claims. "What shall we say then? is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin but by the law." What does this mean? Would God give a law that man could not keep? Why should He give it? This is the working of the natural reason. Why was the law given? That sin may abound. "I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Man finds out that he cannot keep the law, and he must get to this point. The apostle, as man, says, "the law is spiritual, but I am carnal: sold under sin." This is not exactly the right place. He must get further still: "That which I do I allow not; for what I would that do I not." And it is worse than even this: "what I hate, that I do." All must come to this place. We must find out that we are without strength, and cannot get help through the law; but we are slow to learn this lesson. God never meant to save by the law. The law was given between the promise and its fulfillment to test man, to show out what was in his heart. And this is the case often with us, after we have grace; the law comes and shows us our sin, but gives us no help; it only makes us cry, "O wretched man that I am." There is the end of all strivings. I am in a ditch, and I have to cry out, Who shall deliver me? It is too late to help myself, I cannot get up, where can I turn to? whom can I look to? Now I am come to the point—"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Now it is the question of the worth of another. It is no longer, What shall I do, but, What has been done by another? If the law could have given life, then Christ would not have died. There was no life in the law; that has been proved. The first thing Israel did, after the law was given, was to make a golden calf. Mali failed under the law; and then comes another thing; not a promise, but much more, the Yea and Amen of all the promises, Jesus Christ. To Abraham's seed was the promise made, but they could not inherit it by the law; had that been the case, it would have been no more of promise When Christ came, there was one sad thing more to be made known—that man's will was altogether wrong. Had it been only a question of power, Christ had power for anything; He could have broken the devil's power, He could bind the strong man, open the prison doors, and let the captives free, had that been all. But there was another awful truth to come out: "the carnal mind is enmity against God." "We will not have this man to reign over us." "He is despised and rejected of men." There we get the whole history of man. There man, as man, ends; there you, by nature, were. Without law, you were lawless; under law, you were rebellious; then God sent His Son saying, Surely you will reverence Him, but you deliberately killed the Lord of glory. Now try your own hearts. Has not this been your state? Is it now your state. You think you ought to be righteous, and that is true; but you are slow to learn the lesson that you are without power; that help must come through another.

There are two distinct aspects of Christ's sufferings; they are of a double character. The one was for righteousness, and brings judgment; the other for sin, and brings blessing. In this 22nd Psalm, He is suffering from God, for sin, and it ends with nothing but blessing. The heart of God is seen delighting in blessing. The first aspect of Christ's suffering is from man it is man against God manifest in the flesh. Christ suffered because He was righteous, and for righteousness' sake from the hands of men. He suffered for God. "For thy sake I have borne reproach. The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me." In all these sufferings, it is our privilege to suffer with Him. But, alas! how little fellowship we have with Christ in His sufferings! Every sorrow He passed through from the hands of men brings down judgment on them. We get the character of it in the 21st Psalm—"Thine hand shall find out thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee." "Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven," &c. Christ is now in an expectant state at God's right hand, waiting to take vengeance on those His enemies, who, with wicked hands, have

crucified Him. It is the effect of these sufferings from man that He gets the promise of having His enemies made His footstool. The 22nd Psalm is altogether another thing; not so much suffering from the hands of man, though there are bulls of Bashan, it is true, but it is a different kind of sufferings here. His cry now is, "why hast Thou forsaken me?" He repeats it: "O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent. Be not far from me, for trouble is near." In all His sufferings from the hands of man the face of God was upon Him, but now His face is turned away. Why did God forsake Him'? Was it for His righteousness, His holiness, His love? No. "He was made sin." When He suffered for righteousness' sake, He was representing God before MAN: but when he suffered for sin, He was representing MAN before God. He was forsaken of all Man fled; God hid His face; He was ALONE when He drank the cup of wrath, and those sufferings brought nothing but blessing. If man was to be delivered, Christ must take His place before God. He must stand in the sinner's stead, and there and then He cries, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Why was He forsaken? That I might be owned; that sinful man may be delivered; that sin may be put away. Nothing that He suffered from the hands of man made Him cry, "Save me from this hour;" but the effect of those sufferings was of a totally different character. Suffering for man brings grace, and peace, and blessing. Sin is put away, and forever gone. The believing man is delivered. We have died with Him; we have done with wrath. The power of Satan is broken. Christ took my place as a sinner Grace brought Him to it. I met God at the cross in Him. I must meet God. Have you done it? Can you meet Him in nature? If you own the truth, you know that you cannot. Christ had to go to the horns of the unicorn when He represented man.

Man's heart was at enmity with God, and Christ must go to the place of judgment that man might be delivered. "Save me from the lion's mouth," &c. (ver. 21). When He had been to the very transit of death, He could say, "Thou hast heard me." The whole work was done. He bore the wrath. Christ settled all that was against man. He drank the cup; He endured the cross; and when that transverse spear entered His side, out flowed grace, and peace, and blessing. The gospel testimony goes forth. Righteousness is satisfied. Justice cannot claim more. God's requirements are met and now He is righteous and just to forgive sin. Christ had sin on Him once, but He does NOT exist in that state any longer. He died for sin once. He is gone up to heaven, and He did not take sin with Him. God was bound in righteousness to take Him to heaven. Christ had a two-fold title to be there—one in His own right as Son of God, the other because as Son of man He had finished God's work. He is now "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." God's righteousness set Him there, and where He is there I am. My unchangeable righteousness is in heaven. I am immoveably there.

"I will declare thy name unto my brethren." (ver. 22). When Christ rose from the grave, He declared God's new name—the God that raiseth the dead. He first sees Mary Magdalene, and He said to her, "Go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father," he. He had never called them brethren" before. "Touch me not," Mary; I am going to set up the kingdom yet. I will do that by and by; I am come now to declare God's new name. He is the God of resurrection—my God and your God. I took your sins, and you have the same place I have. flow completely His work was done! It not only entitled Him to sit in God's presence, but He thereby associates His brethren with Himself. Where He is, you are; and what He has, you have. "In the midst of the congregation I will praise thee." After Christ had declared God's new name, He could only praise. He could not but praise. He will lead, and we shall follow. "My praise shall be of thee."

He will sing praises, and then He will sing with us. In the midst of Israel He will praise, and then in the great congregation. Christ associates His beloved Bride with Himself, in all His glory (save His Godhead). He adorns her with all the blessings His completed work had effected. He has united her to Himself, and He would not, we may say, be happy in heaven without her. Do you know the love God has for Christ? If you do, He has the very same love for YOU. Christ in communion with His Father, gives two reasons why He would have us in heaven: first, that we should behold His glory; and then, "that the world may know that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." Do you believe that? If you do not, it is positive unbelief.

God loves ME as He loves Christ. I dare to say that. He has glorified God by taking my place. It was a true transfer. He has suffered, and we are saved—not by our responsibilities, but by His work. He has taken us out of the ditch. We have done with judgment. Who is to judge us? Can Christ judge Himself? Will He judge those that are His, or condemn His own work? When He sits in judgment, we shall be seated on thrones around Him. When He takes up Israel, we shall reign with Him. "The meek shall eat and be satisfied," &c. (ver. 26). There is nothing but blessing for those that have found Christ. Have you found Him, or do you say you are seeking Him? Well, it is a blessed thing to see a man seeking. But Christ suffered for sin, and He must see of the travail of His soul. He says, they that seek the Lord shall praise Him; but there is no praising until you have found Him. "All the ends of the world shall remember," &c. (ver. 27-29). Christ is not content with having the Church with Him, and seeing Israel in a place of blessing; He must bring in the millennial glory, He will take up high and low—"all the kindreds of the nation," "all they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship," "all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him." All the redeemed will join in that song, "He HATH done this." It is all grace for us, the judgment Christ took. He could say, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished?" He could not declare God's new name until He had passed through death. Life, light, and love flow to us from His grave. He could not say, "My Father and your Father" before the resurrection. Do you know the risen Christ? This is the gospel. "If Christ be not raised, you are yet in your sins" Have your hearts found rest in a risen Savior? Can you claim a part in the praises of that great congregation? Christ came not only to put away sin, but to condemn sin in the flesh. Have you learned that lesson that the flesh is irreconcilably bad and cannot be mended? You may take it to the third heavens, and then it will be proud. Well, are you seeking Him? Christ is full of love. Come and praise Him

## Question and Answer: the Prayer of Faith

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Q. Is there any connection as to the promise in these verses "whatsoever," be., with the prayer of faith? (Mark 11:24.) T. T.

A. Mark 11:24 gives the principle on which we are to pray in all cases. The disciples should have asked God then; we, Christ in His lordship and power, or the Father now: all prayer should be with faith. Praying in the Holy Ghost is now connected, in our present state with Christ's words abiding in us, though there be the distinct element of the energy of the Holy Ghost in us, not merely the words of Christ forming our desires and mind. But, then, as a general principle, the Holy Ghost will, if our hearts be right, keep these words in our mind.

## The Approaching Rapture

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The editor quite agrees with H. B. that, without looking for signs of the approaching rapture of the saints to meet the Lord in the air, the earthly ground is being rapidly taken for the closing conflicts. Even the newspapers ring with men's projects, which, we know, will end in a revived empire of the west and a vast eastern power, (the beast and Gog,) both of which are destined to meet their judgment successively from the hand of the Lord, and that in the holy land. May our loins be girded about and our lights burning!

## The Red Heifer

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IN Num. 19 we learn the excessive jealousy of the Lord about sin, not in the sense of guilt but defilement. This He measures by His sanctuary. We have to do with it, and nothing unclean can be allowed. We are clean every whit, but the feet washing is needed. We belong to the sanctuary and yet are in the world, though not of it; we need to have a just estimate of both. If we but touch evil, a remedy is required. Still it is not the question of justification, but of communion. Sin hinders that—hinders my coming boldly into the holiest. How was this met? The blood of the unblemished heifer, representing Christ who knew no sin and could not be brought under its power, was sprinkled before the tabernacle seven times, i.e., before the place of communion, not of atonement. The sin-offering was burnt without the camp. But the blood of the red heifer was sprinkled seven times where we meet God in intercourse. This marks the full efficacy of Christ's blood when I meet God. The body was reduced to ashes, as Christ was judged and condemned for what I am apt to be careless; but God is not careless, and would make me sensible of sin. Christ had to suffer for it, and it is gone; but the sight of His suffering shows me the dreadfulness of it.

God has an eye that discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart; He would have us discern them too, and without this there can be no communion. But we do not get back into communion as quickly as we get out of it. Seven days elapse in the type before there was full restoration. The Spirit takes and applies the ashes (i.e., the remembrance of Christ's agony, and what occasioned it), and makes us feel practical horror of sin.

When I look at my sin with horror, even in the sense of the grace which has met it, it is a right feeling, but not communion: it is a holy judgment of sin in the presence of grace. Hence, there was a second sprinkling—not on the third day, but the seventh, and then there is communion with God. We see that perfect grace alone maintains the sense of perfect holiness. The result, in the end, is that we increase in the knowledge of God, both as to holiness and love. We must have been out of communion before we sinned, or we should not have yielded. How came I to fall? Because of the carelessness which left me out of God's presence, and exposed me to the evil without and within.

## Redemption of the Purchased Possession

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Eph. 1:14.

The earth is the subject of redemption as well as man. It is already purchased, and by and by, in due season, it shall be rescued or delivered. That is, it is the subject of the two-fold redemption known in scripture redemption by price, and redemption by power.

The blood of the cross has already reconciled or purchased it. As we read, “and having made peace by the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself, by him, I say, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven.” (Col. 1)

This gives the inheritance the title of “the purchased possession.”

But though purchased, it is not yet delivered. It is still under “the bondage of corruption.” (Rom. 8) It is redeemed by purchase, but not as yet by power. We therefore wait for the “redemption” of that which is already a “purchased possession.”

This bright and happy truth, this mystery found among the mysteries of God, has had its pledges and foreshadowings, as well as others.

The ordinance of the Jubilee seems to set forth this two-fold redemption-by price and by power. See Lev. 25 For that chapter teaches us that at any time during forty-nine years, the alienated possession of an Israelite might have been purchased by the kinsman of the heir, and thus redeemed or brought back to the family to which, under God, it had belonged; but if that were not done, it would return to the heir in the fiftieth year, or the Jubilee, without purchase.

These two ordinances, again I say, seem to set forth the mystery I am speaking of—redemption by money and redemption by power. The kinsman might redeem with money, the Jubilee would redeem without money, by virtue of its own title, by virtue of that force or authority imparted to it by Him who was the God of Israel and the Lord of the soil.

Again, Jeremiah the prophet was commanded to purchase the field of Hanameel his uncle's son. He did so, in the spirit and obedience of faith, though at that moment the Chaldean army was in the land, and was under commission from the Lord to tread it down, and waste it, or possess themselves of it. But when Jeremiah made inquiry respecting this strange thing, that he should be asked to lay out his money upon a piece of land thus devoted to the sword of an invader, the Lord tells him that a day of power was to come, and that in that land there should be redemption, and that the Lord's own people should possess it again, brought back out of the hand of every spoiler. This was the Lord's answer to His servant. And thus Jeremiah had reason to know that the purchase now made by money of the merchant, should be made good in a coming day of power (See Jer. 32)

And let me add one other notice of this distinguished case, the purchase of Hanameel's field, for it has interested me. “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” is the Lord's challenge of Jeremiah on this

occasion, as it is of Sarah in Gen. 18? Sarah did not know how she, whose body was then dead, could have a child, for she knew not the resurrection-strength of God. Jeremiah did not know how he, who was laying out his money on a piece of ground which was then as in the hand of the enemy, could get its value back again; for, like Sarah, he knew not the resurrection-strength of God.

That strength makes all simple. The victory of Christ, the resurrection of Jesus, gives us to our inheritance sure rights under the seal of a title-deed easy to be read.

## Lectures on Revelation 1: Part 1

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EVERY Christian of spiritual intelligence must have felt more or less fully the peculiar character of the book on the study of which we now enter. "The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him." It is evident that the Lord Jesus is viewed here, not in His place of intimacy as the only-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father, but in one of comparative distance. It is His revelation, but, moreover, the revelation which God gave Him Somewhat similar is that remarkable expression which has perplexed so many in the gospel of Mark (chap. 8:32), "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man: no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." He is the servant Son of God all through that gospel; and it is the perfection of a servant not to know what his lord doeth-to know, if we may so say, only what he is told. Here, Christ receives a revelation from God; for, however exalted, it is the position He took as man which comes out conspicuously in the Revelation. And what makes this the more striking is that, of all the inspired writers of the New Testament, none dwells with such fullness upon His supreme and divine glory as John in his gospel. In the Revelation, on the contrary, it is the very same John who brings out with the greatest detail His human glory.

In keeping with this, the Revelation is "to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass." How very different is the tone of John 15:15, "Henceforth I call you not servants," and also of John 16 speaking of the Spirit, "He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I that he shall take of mine and shall show it unto you." So we see through the gospel from first to last, that the design of the Spirit is to give the disciples the title and consciousness of their sonship with and through Jesus, the Son of God in the highest sense. Thus in chap. 1. 11, 12, "He came unto his own,-and his own [people] received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." And again, after His death and resurrection, the Lord says, chap. xx. 17, "Go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God." Of course they were servants also, and there is not a shade of incongruity. Still, the difference of the relationships is immense; and the Revelation clearly is addressed to the lower of these relations. The reason, I presume, is, partly because God is therein making known a certain course of earthly events with which the lower position is most in harmony (the higher one of sons being more suitable to communion with the Father and with His Son); and partly because God seems here to prepare the way for dealing with His people in the latter day, when their position as His servants will be more or less manifested, but not the enjoyment of nearness as sons-I allude to the interval after the removal of the Church.

The next words greatly confirm this; for the Lord "sent and signified [it] by His angel unto His servant John." That is, the prophetic communication is made, not directly, but through the intervention of an angel; and John is no longer spoken of as "the disciple whom Jesus loved, which also leaned upon his breast at supper," but as "his servant," "who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, [and] of all things that he saw." It has to be remarked here, that the last "and" ought to disappear, which makes no small difference in the sense. For "all

things that he saw” must not be regarded as a third and additional division, but rather as explaining or limiting the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. The visions of John constituted the word and testimony spoken of, and thus the true rendering is, “Who bare record of (or testified) the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ-whatsoever things he saw.” Compare chap. xxii. 8.

Very different, again, is the revelation of God here and the testimony which Jesus bears in this book, from what we find in John's gospel. The Word of God there is the Lord Jesus Himself, who in the beginning was with God and was God; the full and personal expression of God, and that not merely as the Creator of all things, but in perfect grace. “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, (the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” In the Revelation, on the contrary, even when He is spoken of as the Word of God, it is as the expression of divine judgment, because the whole book is eminently judicial. “He was clothed with a vesture clipped in blood; and his name is called the Word of God” (Rev. 19:13). So too, in the gospel, the testimony that Jesus renders is to the Father, as it is throughout the Father's joy to bear witness of the Son. Indeed, the Son Himself, towards the close of His ministry, sums up the pith and character of the testimony there in these few words, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9).

All this makes the distinctive features of the Revelation to stand out in broader contrast. For throughout the book the very name of the Father occurs but rarely, and even where it does, the object is in no way the revelation of His love as Father to His family. In Rev. 1:1; 3:21, and xiv. 6, He is spoken of as such in relation to Jesus only. The grand subject is, God manifested in His judgments here below, with a view to the manifestation of the Lord Jesus, “King of kings and Lord of lords.” Even when the churches are in question, it is given about them to another, not to themselves directly.

“Blessed [is] he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time [is] at hand.” What a serious mistake in the face of such words as these for Christians to think that this book or any part of it is unprofitable, and that it may be safely set aside either as too difficult to understand, or, if understood, as having no practical bearing upon the soul! It is remarkable indeed with what special care the Lord has commended it, not only here at the commencement, but at the close, where we read, “These sayings [are] faithful and true, and the Lord God of the spirits of the prophets sent his angel to show his servants the things which must shortly come to pass. Behold I come quickly; blessed [is] he which keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.” It would seem that the Lord's prescient eye anticipated in such warnings the neglect with which the Apocalypse would be treated by His servants, and that He was thus solemnly guarding them against it by commending the book emphatically to their study and use. It is a little remarkable, by the way, that a somewhat similar admonition occurs in the close of 1 Thessalonians, which was the first of Paul's epistles, and the one which above all others develops the grand truth of the coming of the Lord. In Rev. 1:3, the Lord takes pains to encourage every possible class of people who might come in contact with the book. Not only the individual who reads is pronounced blessed, but those who hear its words and keep (or observe) what is written therein. And certain I am that the Lord does not fail to encourage His saints who count on His assured faithfulness and blessing. He has never turned aside from using it for good, and especially in times of danger, spite of all contempt or perversion.

The objection to the study of prophecy arises from a root of unbelief, sometimes deeply hidden, which supposes all blessing to depend on the measure in which a subject bears immediately on one's self or one's circumstances. Thus when some cry out, That is not essential, I would ask, Essential to what? If they mean essential to salvation, we agree. But then on what a ground do such objectors stand! The anxiety to examine only what they deem indispensable to salvation shows that they have no consciousness of salvation themselves, and that this need of their souls is the only thing they are alive to. Now all hold that not prophecy but the gospel should be put before the unconverted. The coming of Christ in glory, which is the center of unfulfilled prophecy, ought to be terror to their hearts, instead of a mere question for interesting discussion. To the believer, indeed, His coming is "that blessed hope." We wait for the Son of God from heaven, and we await Him not only without anxiety but with joy, because we know Him to be "Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come." But for any man, who has not peace by faith in Him dead and risen, to occupy his mind either with this, the Church's hope, or with the events of which prophecy treats, is but a diversion of which the enemy can make fearful use, if it be not a proof of utter deadness of conscience as to his own condition before God,-though I am far from saying, that God may not make use of that truth to arouse it. On the other hand, prophecy is essential to our due appreciation of Christ's glory and of the glory that is to be revealed. To slight prophecy, therefore, is to despise unwittingly that glory and the grace which has made it known to us. It is the plainest evidence of the selfishness of our hearts, which wants every word of God to be directly about ourselves.

God takes for granted that His children love to hear whatever will exalt the Lord Jesus Christ. The result, too, is striking and serious: where Christ is the object of our hearts, all is peace; where our own happiness is the first thought, there is disappointment and uncertainty.

Another form in which this egotism meets us, and must be watched against, among those who do hear the words of this prophecy, is the assumption that its visions are about the Church-that the seals, trumpets, and vials, for instance, are of chief value and interest, because they concern ourselves (i. e. the Church) either in the past or in the future. But this is a fundamental mistake, as we may gather even from the words of the verse before us. The divine ground alleged for the importance of taking heed to this book lies not in the time being come, or our being in the circumstances described, but in their being near; "for the time is at hand." If it could profit the saints of God in the apostle's days, who were not personally concerned in the judgments, equally at least may it avail for us. The Lord grant that we may increasingly value the place in which He has set us, peacefully "knowing these things before."

Ver. 4-6. "John to the seven churches which are in Asia." Even the three verses already looked at give us a certain measure of insight into the peculiar features of this book, which are obviously distinct from the other parts of the New Testament. God reverts a great deal to the principles on which He had acted in Old Testament times. One can see that the positive edification of the Church is not the subject, nor the unfolding of God's special dealings in mercy. But we have judgment of evil, whether in the churches or in the world. In perfect harmony with this we have God introducing Himself to His people by a different style and title. "Grace unto you and peace from him which is, and which was, and which is to come." It is generally what answers in the New Testament to Jehovah in the Old. There is this peculiarity, that He is here revealed as first He that is, then He that was, and He that is to come. The "I am" takes precedence, but He was before, and

is the coming One. God of old revealed Himself to Israel as the unchangeable One, “the same yesterday, to-day and forever.” But now God speaks in the language of the Gentiles, and, by these words— “Him which is, and which was, and which is to come,” translates as it were that name of Jehovah, never before so communicated to them. He is going to return to His ancient people Israel; but before He does so, there must necessarily be a sweeping judgment upon the professing mass that calls itself by the name of the Church. But when God has set Christendom aside, He will bring in Israel again—no longer on the ground of law, but of grace. The law executed death on sinful man, but the grace of God executed it on the person of the Son of God. In Heb. 2:9 we have it said “that He, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man.” As God, in the death of the Lord Jesus, has given a stronger expression of His hatred of sin than in any other dealing, so in proportion, and as an answer to His death, does grace now flow out to the very worst. In that day Israel will know this for themselves.

The style in which the Holy Ghost is here introduced is as strikingly characteristic of the book as the way in which the Lord Jesus Himself was spoken of. “Grace [be] unto you and peace.... from the seven Spirits which are before his throne.” Of course, the same Holy Ghost, known as the “One Spirit” in other parts of God’s word, is here mentioned as “the seven Spirits which are before His throne.” He is spoken of as the “One Spirit,” where it is a question of the one body, the Church, as in Eph. 4:4. But here it is the “seven Spirits;” because, when God has finished His present work in the Church, He will infallibly cut off the faithless Gentile, and will no longer gather Jews and Gentiles into one body on the earth. On the contrary, Israel is to be put above the Gentiles. It will be a different state of things altogether; and the Holy Ghost, therefore, is regarded in His various fullness of operations (as He is in connection with Messiah in Isa. 11), and not in His heavenly unity. It is added, “which are before his throne,” because the main subject of this book is the government of God; first, providentially and preparatorily in the seals, trumpets, and vials; next, personally at Christ’s appearing till the kingdom be given up and God be all in all.

In general, when we have “grace be unto you and peace,” it is “from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” But in this place the order is different: first, it is “from him which is, which was, and which is to come,” i.e., from Jehovah; then, “from the seven Spirits,” &c.; and, lastly, “from Jesus Christ,” &c. I think this departure from the usual order is because Jesus is here spoken of, not so much as our Lord, neither in His divine glory as Son of God, but in special reference to the earth and His rightful claims over the world. He is “the faithful witness.” All other witnesses had been unfaithful. He alone had been the faithful witness for God on this earth. But, besides this, He was “the first-begotten of the dead” —the first person who had entered into resurrection-life in that wonderful way, so that corruption can never touch it. “Being raised from the dead, he dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.” Moreover, He is “the prince of the kings of the earth.” Yet all these things are connected with what He was, is, and will be as man. It is Jesus viewed in His earthly connections. His intermediate relation to the Church (as its Head, and as the great High-priest) disappears, as not falling in with the design.

But mark the beauty of what follows. The moment Jesus is presented to the Church, and is announced as “the faithful witness, the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth,” she can contain herself no longer. The saints interrupt, if we may so say, the message of John, and break forth into a song of praise— “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.” He satisfies the

affections by His love, He has cleared the conscience by His blood, and has put us in such glorious relationships as He stands in Himself to His God and Father.

There is a little alteration that should be made in this verse, which, to my mind, greatly adds to the sweetness of it. In the correct text it is "Unto him that loveth us," not "that loved us." It is quite true that "Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it." Eph. 5 shows us this;-equally true this He "loved me and gave himself for me," as in Gal. 2 But the first of Revelation shows us the present love of Jesus. It is not that He is always washing us from our sins: He has washed us with His own blood once for all, and does not require so to wash us again. There is, however, the practical cleansing day by day-the washing of water by the word; but this is not what is spoken of here, but in His blood a finished work, and one that lasts all through to His praise. But how blessed it is to know, while this is the very book that unfolds to us the ways and means by which God was about to put aside His unfaithful people, and to judge the evil of the world,-that in the midst of all this, we can look up in the full confidence of His present abiding love, and say—"Unto him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, to him be glory and dominion unto the ages of the ages. Amen."

Verse 7. After the salutation, "Grace be to you and peace," &c., we had an interruption. It was the voice of the heavenly saints breaking forth into a strain of praise. Now we have (ver. 7) those solemn but blessed words, "Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." This is not a part of the song, but a testimony quite distinct from it. And we often find these two things: that which forms the communion of a saint of God, and also that which is or should be his testimony.

The communion of each other is a happy thing; but it is the presentation of Christ and the knowledge of our portion in Him which calls out worship. Besides this, the believer is acquainted by God with what is coming upon the world. And this is a part of our testimony, but not the theme with which the heart should be most filled. With a person who merely dwells upon prophecy, you will never find much fellowship. It would be very wrong to despise prophecy, and he who does will be sure to fall into some snare or other. But if the Christian is always occupied with the details of prophecy, there never will be power for heavenly worship; nor does it necessarily deliver a man from the ways of the world. A person may be able to talk well enough about the Jews, about the judgments on the beast, &c., and yet may go on walking with the world. But when the heart is occupied with Christ, and these things come in as a sort of background, then we shall find that the Holy Spirit will show us "things to come." So, in 2 Peter 1:19, it is said, speaking of the word of prophecy, "Whereunto ye do dwell that ye take heed." It is important that I should see what is coming, and that I should not indulge myself in an easy path here below. To know that the Lord is coming to judge the habitable world, ought never to be a comfort to those who are swimming with its current. But there is something else that should be the delight of the soul. When does the day-light dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts? Peter does not here speak of the day coming on the world, but affirms that the word of prophecy is an admirable lamp until you get heavenly light, and the day-star arises in your heart-the hope of the coming of the Lord Jesus as the Church's proper portion. This is never presented in scripture as a bare prophetic event. Christ waited for and known as One who may come at any time to gather us together to Himself-such is the form taken by our blessed hope. It is the apostle Paul who specially brings out the hope of the

Church. John, too, looks at Christ as the Bridegroom-at what He is for the heart.

When the Lord comes to receive us, He is not said to come "with the clouds." When He ascended, a cloud received Him Even so will it be with us: we shall be caught up together in clouds to meet Him. But here He is manifested for judgment of the world, and especially of the Jews. "Behold, he cometh with the clouds." This is a revelation known and testified by the heavenly saints, but not their own joy in communion. "Even so, Amen."

In Colossians we have the association of the saints with Christ very fully brought out (Chaps. ii. iii.) He is my life, and I am one with Him. Thus, when I find Christ my Savior is dead to the world, in Him I become dead to the world also. I find not only my treasure there, but the very religion of the world judged, because Christ was cast out by the world's religion. When He comes with the clouds, every eye shall see Him But this will not be the case when He comes to fetch His Church. God is gathering the friends of Christ round the name of Christ now. The Church is a body that is called while Christ is not seen, and the Christian, having his portion in Him now, is hidden with Him. "Your life is hid with Christ in God."

In this verse, then, it is not the Lord coming to meet His own and gather them to Himself in the air; but "every eye shall see him... and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." When the Lord comes to take the Church, it will be far otherwise. God has joined us to the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven, according to all the efficacy of His death and resurrection. As far as the spirit is concerned, this is true now, and it will be true of the body itself when Christ comes. The resurrection of Christ calls me to live thoroughly to God, as the death of Christ makes me as truly dead in principle to the world as if I were already buried. In practice alas! we have to own sad falling short. Still, says the apostle, "your life is hid," &c. It is the life of Christ you have received. As long as Christ is hidden, you are hidden also. But the time is coming when this will no longer be the case. "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." When Christ comes to receive the Church, no eye will see Him but those for whom Christ comes. When the world sees Christ, it will be when He comes in glory, bringing His saints with Him-revealed from heaven with the angels of His power, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God (the Gentiles), and on them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Jews.) If the world were to see Christ coming alone in glory before the Church is caught up to Him, it would not be true that "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." The world can never see Christ coming to receive the saints, because then they must have seen Him without them and before them; whereas the same moment of His appearing is to be the epoch of our appearing with Him. And this does not merely rest upon a word: it is the doctrine of the whole passage. And the same truth is shown and confirmed by other proofs throughout the New Testament.

In Christ's death we are dead to the world; in His resurrection we are risen, and are therefore to have our hearts set upon heavenly things before we see them. And more than that. Christ is not always to be hidden: He is about to be manifested, and when He is, we, too, shall be manifested along with Him It is plain that Christ and the Church must have been together before they are manifested to the world, if they are to appear together. In Rev. 19:11 we have this taught beyond all doubt. "I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True," &c. "And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses,

clothed in fine linen, white and clean.” The horse is an emblem of power, the white horse of prosperous or victorious power. It is the Lord Jesus coming in judgment, which will be the time when He comes in the clouds of heaven. These armies that are seen following Him out of heaven, clothed in fine linen, are not angels. The text says that the fine linen (βυσσινον) is the righteousness of saints. And the remarkable thing is that, although angels are described in chap. xv. as being “clothed in pure and white linen,” a different word (λινον) is used. It is the heavenly saints who are described in chapter xix. as the armies of heaven, &c. They were in heaven, therefore, before the way was opened for Christ to come out in judgment; and they follow Him from heaven when He comes. I doubt not that angels are in His train also, as appears from other texts; but they do not seem spoken of here.

There are thus two important and different stages of the Lord's second coming. First of all, He will come to receive His people to Himself, and the Church ought always to be waiting for this. In the next place, He will come to judge the world, when He has already taken up the heavenly saints, and wickedness rises to its head apace. Then, suddenly, the heavens will open, and Christ the Lord Jesus will come and the Church with Him, appearing together in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Is it asked howl Israel was not told how they were to be delivered out of Egypt. The Lord was going to deliver them; but He did not explain it before it came to pass. And the Lord is going to bring the Church to heaven by His coming Besides this, He will judge the wickedness of the world, and then the Church will come with Him.

Verse 8. Here, it seems to me, that we have God, as such, rather than the Lord Jesus, uttering the titles of His various glory, as a sort of seal of the foregoing and an introductory basis for what follows, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God that is, and that was, and that is to come, the Almighty.” The first is evidently a name most suited to the book which so admirably closes the written communications of God. This, and all the rest of His characters here announced, would be deeply necessary for the saints to remember, whether for us before the trial, or for those who shall be called on to pass through it.

Verse 9 is not quite correctly given. “I, John, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation.” The word “also” is left out in the best copies. And what follows should be read thus: “your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience in Christ.” They all went together. He purposely speaks of himself, not as a member of the body of Christ, but as their brother and companion in tribulation (perhaps because, after the Church is taken away, there will still be saints on earth and our brethren). John puts himself along with them. The Holy Ghost loves us, whatever specialties of privilege may come in, as much as possible to take our place along with the saints of God at all times. The book of Revelation Was written for the Church, just when it was drifting into a state of ruin. In chap. vi. we have some of these companions in tribulation. But what they say proves that they do not belong to the Church. “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood...?” We find a proper Christian appeal to God in the case of Stephen- “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” The Christian is always called to suffer in the world. These Apocalyptic saints will understand that the Lord is about to judge, and they will ask Him to do so. It would be wrong now to ask this, for it is the day of grace still. Faith habitually takes its language from what God is doing, and God is dealing in grace and not in judgment now. We are called to retire from the way of the world, and our hearts should be connected with all that is glorious and heavenly, for this is the present object of Christ. The white robes given to these

sufferers, in chapter vi., are an evident mark of God's approbation. They were to rest till their brethren who should be killed as they were should be fulfilled. Judgment must then take its course.

"In the tribulation and kingdom and patience." It will be the kingdom of Christ in power when the tribulation and patience are all over. But now the circumstances of that kingdom involve tribulation. The kingdom of heaven, as presented in Daniel, &c., was not a mystery. It means the reign of heaven on (or over) the earth. Christ, instead of getting His rightful place as Messiah when He came, was rejected, and went up to heaven; and thus it is that the mysteries of the kingdom come in. Hence it is that there must now be suffering and endurance even in the kingdom of Christ. When Christ appears in glory, all this will be at an end. Then will come the kingdom and power. (See Rev. 12) It is the "kingdom and patience in Christ" now. That word "patience" is to be weighed well. We have communion with Jesus in this patient expectation; we wait for what He waits. A man that is born anew now is not in the kingdom and power, but in the kingdom and patience in Christ Jesus. Hence suffering here below naturally follows. So here the apostle John was thrown into the isle of Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus.

Thus, the ground on which John addresses the churches is not expressly as an apostle, but as their brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience in Christ Jesus. One remarkable trait which Christianity has brought out is, that God has opened to us another kingdom of an order differing from the earthly or Jewish one—a kingdom in which there is tribulation, as far as natural circumstances are concerned, and patient hope the corresponding and distinguishing grace. But the Church has slipped out of its place of suffering and endurance; it has sought and taken the place of power in the world—the place that had belonged only to the Jews of right, and to the Gentile empires in divine sovereignty because of Israel's sins. In the presence of failure and of evil it becomes no one to be high-minded; where there is real separation from evil, there will not be this. Wherever it is a question of ceasing to do evil, there is great need of looking to the Lord, lest one should say, "this is what I have done, and what others have not done." Say rather it is all of the Lord's grace. But those Christians who desire to stand aloof from the evil around them are in evident danger of giving themselves a little bit of credit for doing something that other people are not doing. In the presence of evil that we have left, the effects of which we have still to judge in ourselves, it is not a time to indulge in great thoughts of ourselves.

When God is executing His purposes towards the earth, His people will have fellowship with what He is doing, as in the land of Egypt, in the wilderness, and in Canaan. But when we look at Christianity, it is not a question of earthly purposes, but of Jesus crucified through weakness, and of power put forth to raise Him again from the dead. There will be again a most solemn dealing on God's part when Christ will judge not only the living but the dead. But for us the fire of God's wrath has fallen upon Christ; His judgment was upon the head of His beloved Son. And now God is imprinting on the hearts of His people heavenly glory. He is forming their character by these two great facts which meet in Christ; the one is the cross, and the other is the glory into which He ascended. What God has thus done in Christ is what He wants us to have communion with. As the Israelites had the law engraven on stones, so by the Spirit should Christ be written on our hearts and ways. The life of a creature may be lost, but what the believer has is the life of Christ; and can the life of Christ ever perish? Christ went through death in order that He might give a character of life that death could not touch. When the Lord God made man, He made him out of the dust of the field, but He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and therefore is it that the soul is immortal.

He got this life direct from the breath of the Lord God. Sin, however, may touch it, and the second death-eternal misery in the lake of fire for soul and body. But that which Christ breathed after He rose from the dead (John 20:22) was a life which death never could conquer, nor even assail more, over which nothing had a claim; and such is the life of every believer.

And yet there are those who fancy that the life of a believer may be lost I can only say that God does not deal with those who so think according to their thoughts of Him The life is as strong in the Arminian as in the Calvinist, because it is the life of Christ. When a man is conscious that he has failed and sinned against God, he is in great danger of thinking that his blessing is gone. But no; you have gone against the life, and against Him who is the source of it; but the life itself is there still, and cannot be touched; it is eternal. Again, where a person is occupied in looking at the spiritual life within him, he will never have comfort. The proof that I am a Christian is, that I have received the testimony of God's love to me in Jesus.

Ver. 10. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." The "Lord's day" is not at all the same thing as the "day of the Lord." The same expression (κυριακή) was used with regard to the Lord's supper, because it was not a common meal, but a holy and divinely instituted memorial of the Lord. So the Lord's day is not a common day, but one specially set apart, not as a command, but as the expression of the highest privilege, for the worship of the Lord. The sabbath was the last day which Jehovah claimed out of man's week; the Lord's day is the first day of God's week, and in a sense, we may say, of His eternity. The Christian begins with the Lord's day, that this may, as it were, give a character to all the days of the week. In spirit, the Christian is risen, and every day belongs to the Lord. Therefore is he to bring up the standard of each day that follows in the week to that blessed beginning, the Lord's day. To bring down the Lord's day to the level of another day only shows how gladly the heart drinks in anything that takes away somewhat from Christ. The man who only obeys Christ because he must do so has not got the spirit of obedience at all. We are sanctified not only to the blood of sprinkling, but to the obedience, of Jesus Christ-to the obedience of sons under grace, not to that of mere servants under law. The lawlessness that despises the Lord's day is hateful; but that is no reason why Christians should destroy its character, by confounding the Lord's day, the new creation-day, with the sabbath of nature or of the law.

On that day, then, bright visions of glory passed before the prophet's eye. First, John tells us what he saw on that occasion: this is what we have in the rest of the first chapter. (Verses 12-20.) It was the vision of the glory of Christ's person, in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. "The things which are" (ver. 1 9) we have in chapters ii. iii., which describe the condition of the churches at that time. The third division of the Revelation consists of "the things which shall be after these." The version "hereafter" is vague, for it might mean thousands of years after. "After these" expresses the sense of the phrase much better. It means what was about to happen immediately after "the things which are" now-i.e. after the Church-condition. These we have from chapter iv. to the end of the book. The "things which are" continue still (in the most important application of the book). And what next? "What is about to happen after these things," when the Church has ceased to subsist on earth.

Let us look a little at what the apostle saw. First of all, he hears behind him "a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, What thou seest write in a book (or roll), and send to the seven churches: unto

Ephesus," cite. (Ver. 11.) "And I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And being turned I saw seven golden candlesticks" (or lamp-stands).

These were evidently derived from the light of the tabernacle. Only in this case the lamp-stands were separate, so that the Lord could walk between them. They were golden, as in divine righteousness set here to give light. In the midst of the seven candlesticks he sees not exactly the Son of man, but "one like unto [the or a] Son of man." He is really God, but He is thus seen here. From John 5 we may learn the force of this, and why it is, in this instance, Son of man, and not Son of God. The Son of God is the one who quickens, because He is a divine person; He quickens in communion with the Father. Thus, giving life, He is called the Son of God; but as Son of man, He executes judgment, because God will have Him honored in the very nature in which man outraged Him. This at once shows us the bearing of what we have in the Revelation. It is as Son of man on the earth that Christ is here presented; and as such He is about to execute judgment upon the seven churches, as well as by and by upon the world.

The garment down to the foot," with which He was clothed, shows not activity of work, but rather dignified priestly judgment. The "gold" of the girdle was the symbol of divine righteousness, as linen is the symbol of what is displayed before men. "His head and his hairs were white as white wool, Is snow." So that, besides being the Son of man, and being seen in the garb arid place of priestly discrimination, there are the emblems too of divine glory, as appears by comparing this passage with Dan. 7 What is said of the Ancient of days by Daniel is applied to the Son of man by John-the Ancient of days being the eternal God. John sees here that the Son of man is Himself the Ancient of days. The same who wrote "The Word was with God, and the Word was God," and "the Word was made flesh," &c., sees also now in prophetic vision the combination of humanity with the emblems proper to Deity in the person of the Son of man. The head and hairs, being "white as white wool, as snow," show fullness of divine wisdom.

"His eyes like a flame of fire" set forth the penetration that marked Him in judgment. "His feet are like brass," &c. They could not contract any defilement, and are unbending in judicial strength among men. (Verses 12-15.) His voice expressed resistless power and majesty outside the control of men.

Such He is personally. Relative description follows in verse 16. "And he had in his right hand seven stars," the emblem of the angels, or representative rulers, of the seven churches. The word of judgment went out of His mouth; because in the Lord Jesus Christ to speak the word is at once to strike the blow. "He spake, and it was done." "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." Such He was officially. The churches' angels were represented as "stars" only, as being, of course, subordinate to the Lord.

## Lectures on Revelation 1: Part 2

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We have supreme authority in the Lord, which is universal. in its range, as the stars are His administrative lights in the churches, which He maintains by His power. He judges by His word those who have it or refuse it.

When John sees this wonderful vision of the Son of man, he falls at His feet as dead. But the Lord puts His right hand of sustaining power upon His servant who lay trembling, nay, as dead, before Him, and says, "Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I became dead, and, behold, I am alive unto the ages of ages." He is Jehovah yet man; but if He had not died, we should not have known Him in the blessed character and energy of life that He has proved now—life more abundantly. Christianity presents Christ as having passed through death, and as risen in triumph for God and His people. John is going to hear about judgments; but the knowledge that the right hand of Him who was alive for evermore had been upon him, and the words of His mouth would give him strength and courage for everything to come. And this is the spirit in which the book was written and should be read. "Behold, I am alive unto the ages of ages." and have the keys of hades and of death." The succession of these words in the common text is a mistake. Hades follows death, and does not go before it. (Rev. 6) See also chap. xx. where we have "death and hell" mentioned several times in their regular order. And so in the best authorities it is here. When the Lord says that He has the keys of death and of hades, He intimates that He is the absolute master of all that appertains to life, either for the body or the soul.

Accordingly, also, in verse 19, a little word ought to be put in which adds to the force and connection somewhat. "Write therefore what thou hast seen," &c. Because I am risen from the dead and am alive for evermore, and the sole ruler of death and hades, write therefore. - He who had bid John write (verses 11, 19) was the Son of man, with the characteristics of the Ancient of days; but He was also the living victorious Lord, the security against terror and death, the strengthener of His servants in presence of glory. "Write therefore what thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which are about to be after these." Human nature might well be confounded by the sight; but He who was revealed to John characterized Himself both as God and as the man who had passed through death and destroyed Satan's title and held the power for His own. And this was to be written, this revelation of Jesus as seen of John, as well as the existing church-state, and the things which should follow. (Verses 17-19.)

Verse 20 explains the mystery of the stars, and candlesticks, as already indicated. It is the connecting link between the vision of Christ and the judgment of the church, or house of God on earth (Rev. 2; 3), as long as its existence there is recognized as the object of His government. After that, it is the judgment of the world from God's throne in heaven, and Jews and Gentiles are variously dealt with, but churches never, in that part of the book. All this, and the reasons for it, will appear more distinctly as we proceed.

It is plain, from chap. 1. 4, 11, and from what follows, that seven actually existing churches of provincial Asia were primarily meant. But while it is true that there were special reasons for

addressing those particular churches, it does not, to my own mind, admit of a doubt that they were selected with the further and larger design of presenting successive pictures of the church in general, from the apostolic days to the close of its existence on earth. Hence it is that there were seven golden candlesticks; seven being the well-known symbol of spiritual completeness. There might have been other churches as well or better known, and one of these seven had been already addressed formally by the great apostle of the Gentiles. But Ephesus is again taken up, and six other churches are associated, so as to make up a mystical and perfect sketch of the more important moral features which then existed, and which, at the same time, would successively be developed in the after history of the professing body upon the earth.

Many things that might seem most important in the eyes of men and even of Christians are passed by, for the Lord sees not as man sees.

Another striking feature claims our notice and admiration. It might have seemed impossible to reconcile prophetic light, as to the successive phases the church might assume from the apostolic age as long as it is found here below, with the continual expectation of Christ. But divine wisdom solved the difficulty even here, as the same end is secured in the Gospels and Epistles. The Lord was pleased to address seven contemporaneous and actually existing assemblies; but, in dealing with existing facts, He knew how to select and shape His instruction, so as to suit the states which should follow, till He comes. What a comment on the Lord's answer to Peter's query, "Lord, what shall this man (John) do ? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me." In this part of the book time is excluded. It is the present, however protracted" the things which are."

But it will be found, I think, that He has here given prominence to those features, whether good or bad, which should reappear, and most aptly set forth what He foresaw to be of the deepest moment for him who might have an ear to hear till He comes again. And this extensive application seems to me strongly confirmed by that clause of the threefold division in chap. i. 19, which bears on these churches. They are characterized as "the things which are." No doubt they existed then, in the time of John; but if they continued to exist, and if seeds that were then sown germinated yet more in after days and thus imparted a graver significance to the words and warnings of our Lord, that subsisting state of the church on earth would still be tidily designed "the things which are." Thus, Ephesus is the first great sample of decline through a relaxation or abandonment of first love. But was not this the notorious fact in Christendom, as a whole, before the last apostle departed to be with the Lord? If in those days and yet more in the times which followed, there was a similar moral state, what more apt and natural than to treat the moral circumstances so as to convey the general lesson? Again, without questioning that the message to Smyrna fully applied at that time, it is easy to see that the great and repeated persecutions, which broke out upon Christians from the heathen, are admirably set forth by it. So again, the Balaam element would naturally come into great distinctness, when the world patronized instead of persecuting. Then, further, Jezebel is an immense advance in evil; and though there was, no doubt, that which furnished occasion for these references at the time when the Apocalypse was given, can it be denied that the outline was filled up in a most striking way, after the throne of the world established Christianity by its edicts, and when, at a later epoch still, the professing church formed a guilty union with virtual heathenism and enmity to the truth of God?

This glance, rapid as it is, over chap. ii., will show why I conceive that these churches are to be viewed as having a real, if indirect, prophetic bearing upon the subsequent states of the Church as they presented themselves to the Lord's all-searching judgment. On the other hand, it is clear that to have made this bearing so marked as to be apparent from the first; to have given a distinct chronological history, if one may so say, would have falsified the true posture of the Church in habitually waiting for the Lord from heaven. For the Lord has nowhere else so spoken to or about the Church, as to keep it necessarily waiting for ages upon the earth. The Lord knew that it would be so, of course, but He revealed nothing that would interfere with the full enjoyment of the blessed hope of the Lord's return as an immediate thing. And so it is here.

Some have taken advantage of this indistinctness to deny that these seven churches have the successive and protracted character which I have alluded to; but the evidence will appear more fully, as we look at each church severally. Another consideration which ought to weigh much is, that, after these two chapters, churches are nowhere referred to as existing longer on the earth. In the concluding remarks of the book, (chap. xxii. 16,) the Lord says that He has sent His angel to testify these things in the churches. But throughout the entire course of the visions and in all that is intimated of the condition of men here below, after Rev. 3 and onward, there is the most unaccountable silence as to the Church on earth, if the Church be really there. Nothing more simple, if that state of things be closed. And this quite agrees with chap. i, 19: "The things which are, and the things which shall come to pass after these." After the churches are done with and no longer seen as such upon the earth, the directly prophetic portion of the book begins to have its course.

Further, it seems that the introduction of a new state of things does not necessarily imply the disappearance of what had been before it. In a word, after the new condition appears, there may be still the coexistence of older ones, and each may run on its own sphere. This appears to be distinctly true of the last four. Thus much for the churches as a whole. Responsibility on earth is the question: not the privileges of the Church or the saints in Christ, but the obligation of the churches to represent Him, and His estimate of their state. The light-bearers are open to His scrutiny and judgment.

## Lectures on Revelation 2:1-7

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We will now look at the first of the seven churches more particularly (ver. 1-7). First, let us observe that John is told to write to the angel of the church there. The address is no longer to “the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.” Nor is it to the saints with the bishops and deacons, as the word was to the Philippian church. Why is this? The Lord's ways are always full of grace; but they are righteous withal, and the church was a fallen and falling thing, so that He could no longer address them in His familiar love as formerly, Thus there was departure of the most serious kind from Himself, and John is directed to address, not the church, but its angel or representative. The angels spoken of in these epistles were men, and Must not be confounded with the class of spiritual beings called angels. The apostle John is employed by the Lord to send a message to them, and it would be contrary to all the ways of God to use man as a messenger to angels in the ordinary meaning of the word. Angels often acted between God and man, but not men between Him and angels.

But, further, there is no sufficient ground to affirm that the angel here addressed, though a man, is in such an official place necessarily as a bishop or elder. He might have such a charge, or he might not. “The angel” always gives the thought of representation. In the Old Testament we have the angel of Jehovah, of the covenant, &c., and in Daniel we read of angels who were identified with Israel or other powers. In the New Testament we have the angels of the little children always beholding the face of their Father in heaven, which clearly means their representatives. So of Peter in Acts 12—they said it was his angel. We may gather then that the angel here, though a man, is, in some way or another, the ideal responsible representative of an assembly. Hence, it could be said, “I will take away thy candlestick.” It would be extremely objectionable to make this a defined official place, as it would introduce not merely a novelty, but one that clashes with all that is elsewhere taught in scripture as to the assembly. But it will not be doubted that in assemblies we find, as a fact, a particular person whom the Lord specially links with the assembly as characterizing it: he is morally identified with it, and receives from the Lord either praise or condemnation, according to the state of the assembly.

Here the angel is directly charged with the state of the assembly. The address being to him, and not to the assembly, put them, as it were, at farther distance from the Lord. What a tale this tells of the dreadful condition into which the Church had got! He could no longer address these assemblies immediately. He had spoken directly to the Corinthians even; for, guilty. as they were, they had not so loved Him, and then relaxed. But here the message is, “Thou hast left thy first love.” Yet, if He had not a faithful church, He had, at least, a faithful servant in John: and he it is who in the first instance is spoken to. And be it ever remembered that the church has never since recovered from that failure and place of comparative distance. The church, the house of God, is a complete ruin here below. And in ruin the first thing that becomes us is that we feel it.

This in no way touches eternal salvation; but the certainty of salvation is abused when employed to lessen what is due to God. In fact, there is never a real sense of sin before conversion; for if it

could be then, it would be accompanied with absolute despair. But after, we have not conversion only, but perfect peace, we can bear to look at our sin, and we can afford to judge it thoroughly. A holy angel does not know God as we ought to do—I do not say as we do, though that be true also. An angel enters into the wonders of God's power, “hearkening unto the voice of His word.” But the depths of God come out, marvelous to say, about our sin, and in His only-begotten, “seen of angels” indeed, but in living relationship with us.

Here the Lord presents Himself as the One “that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks,” (Ver. 1.) He speaks of Himself as having authority over all the representatives of the heavenly light and going about among the vessels of His testimony. The representative is addressed, the assembly is none the less responsible and dealt with accordingly. He is come to investigate, to judge,—not yet, of course, the ungodly world, but the assembly in Ephesus. What a difference between such a sight as this, and the view we have of Him and of the church too in Eph. 1. ii.! There He is seated at God's right hand in the heavenly places, and there too God has made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Here He is walking in the midst of the candlesticks. His hand is needed; for none but He could meet the difficulties. But is it not solemn that He is so presented to that very church, to which Paul had opened out the fullness of His heavenly grace, the fullness of their own blessing in Him? But here He is obliged, as it were, to walk and vindicate His authority, not among those who know Him not, but where His love had once been well known—alas! now forgotten and dishonored.

Observe the general character, as has been truly remarked, of this the first address throughout all its parts. Such is Christ's description; such is the sin; such the warning to the angel; and such the promise to the overcomer. His position is ecclesiastical generally, holding the seven stars and walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

“I know thy works; and thy labor, and thy patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men; and thou hast tried those that call themselves apostles and are not, and hast found them liars: and thou hast patience, and hast borne for my name's sake and art not wearied.” (Verses 2, 3.) Thus there were many things to praise. There was patience, and this is the first sign, if not the greatest, that Paul gives of his own apostleship. More than this: there is nothing more easy to break down than patience, after it has stood many a trial. But here, at Ephesus, there was endurance. (Compare verses 2, 3.) Again, where there is patience, there might be the tendency to pass over evil, or at least evil men. But it was not so here. They had borne for His name's sake, but they could not bear evil persons; and they had tried those that pretended to the highest place—to be apostles, and had found them liars. And thus they had gone on, and were not weary. How sweet of the Lord (in His sorrow and, if we may so say, His disappointed love) thus to begin with all that was good!

But though there was what He could praise, He had against them that they had left their first love. It is quite evident that this is nothing special, but the general spirit or principle of declension of the church at large. Indeed it is very broad: so the angels that left their first estate; so Adam; so Israel. Alas we must add now the assembly of God, blessed and loved beyond them all. They had let slip the consciousness of the Lord's love to them, and hence their own love to Him had waned. What produced love in them was their appreciation of the Lord's love.

Let me just remark that the word “somewhat,” in ver. 4, seems to weaken the sense? It might convey to feel His love, not to return it consequently, was no small failure, especially where that

love had once been enjoyed. But now it was faded, and what would not follow in time? “Remember, therefore, whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I am coming unto thee, and I will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent.” It is a much easier thing to be zealous in doing, than in repenting. But even this would not satisfy His heart, unless they got back to that first love which had produced their first works; otherwise the candlestick must be removed. The spring of grace is as gone.

I doubt, on grounds both external and internal, that “quickly” should be in ver. 5. For when He thus comes to judge the ways of His own people, can it be so said? Doubtless, when He comes, whether to fight with the Nicolaitanes, or to take us to Himself, it is quickly. (Rev. 2:16; 3:11; xxii 7, 12, 20.) But the Lord gives space for repentance, even if it were to Jezebel; and how much more to His beloved Ephesians?

The removal of the candlestick does not imply that the church might not go on apparently as before; but that it lost its place as a trustworthy witness for the Lord. Here again all is general: it would suit the Christian everywhere. Nothing makes up for distance between His people (or between the soul) and Christ. And such was the case, not merely with the assembly in Ephesus, but with the Church generally, I think we may say, even then. This, to my mind, confirms the successional aim of “the things which are.” Outward testimony might go on, but that is not what the Lord most values; though value it He does, as far as it is simple, genuine, and faithful. Still, He cannot but prize most of all hearts devoted to Himself, the fruit of His own personal, self-sacrificing, perfect love. He has a spouse upon earth, whom He desires to see with no object but Himself, kept pure for Him from the world and its ways. God has called us for this: not only for salvation, and for a witness to Himself in godliness, though this is most true and important, but beyond all for Christ—a bride for His Son! Surely this should be our first and last and constant and dearest thought; for we are affianced to Christ, and He at least has proved the fullness and faithfulness of His love to us. But what of ours?

The effect of thus looking at Christ is that the Church is kept in the dust, and yet always rejoicing in Him. For the sense of failure in ourselves and others would be oppressive, but that we are entitled to find our joy in One who has never failed, and who, notwithstanding, loves us who have given such a feeble and faltering witness for Him. Hence if we but go to Him so known, even in sorrowful confession, He will not let us part without blessing and strength. It is due to Him to own and feel our sin; but to be occupied merely with failure never gives power: Christ must have the glory. And assuredly He who has delivered us from the wrath to come, He who can save from hell, can keep or snatch from every ditch on earth. Only let the Christian confess his sin, cleaving to Jesus: this vindicates His name, who comes to his succor, and then the victory is sure.

But what a comfort and how reassuring to find that after His censure, the Lord again speaks of what He can commend! “But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes which I also hate.” (Ver. 6.) The essence of Nicolaitanism seems to have been the abuse of grace to the disregard of plain morality. The Ephesians saints had failed in cleaving with fresh fervor to that which is good, but they had fellowship with the Lord, rejecting false pretensions and abhorring what is evil. People often say, there is no such thing as a perfect church on earth. I would ask such what they mean by a perfect church. Will any Christian man tell me that we are not to aim at everything consistent with the holiness of God? I claim for the church just what must be allowed for

every individual Christian. As there may be too many faults in the individual, so there may be in the church. But then there is this blessedness, that, as there is One who dwells in the individual to guide and bless him, so the same Spirit dwells in the church, and Christ cleanses it with the washing of water by the word. With the assembly, as it is with the individual, who has both the Holy Ghost who is the power of good, and the flesh which lusts against Him. As, in a man, the soul may be said to pervade the whole body, animating it in every part; so it is with the Spirit in the church of God. When persons maintain that holiness may be tolerated because no man is free from sin, it is antinomianism; and I believe it to be the very principle of the Nicolaitanes. Each individual is bound to be ready to meet the Lord, having nothing left to be wound up when He comes. The Lord looks for the same thing from the assembly, because there is a divine power against evil in the church as in the saint.

Then comes the promise, with the word of admonition before it; and all is very general, like the danger and the threat. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God." (Ver. 7.)

As for the paradise of creation, man had been put there and tried by the simplest test of obedience in a single instance; but he fell. Now a new scene is opened. It is no longer the garden of Eden, but the paradise of God—"of My God," says the Lord Jesus—not of God only, in contrast with man, but of "My God," as Jesus knew Him. Into this redemption brings us. And therein is no tree of responsibility that could bring in sorrow and death. The tree of life alone is there, which the glorified saint shall enjoy in peace. The church in Ephesus had fallen, it is true, from first love: but is anything too hard or good for the Lord? Did any feel deeply and aright the wrong that was done to His grace? If there was but one who overcame (for overcoming it must be now, by faith, not mere preservation of original blessing, and overcoming inside the church too) to him was this promise given to comfort and cheer his soul. The Lord's grace is just as full now. May there be none here who have not ears to hear: if there are any who have, may they hear and overcome!

It is all well to "hear the church" in discipline, confiding in Him who is in the midst. But when the church leaves its first love, and claims all the more loudly to be heard, taking the place of Christ or of the Spirit, pretending to teach, what then? "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches." Individual responsibility comes distinctly out now in Christianity (as in Matt. 13, after the proclamation in chapter xii. of the judgment of Israel).

## Lectures on Revelation 2:8-11

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Ver. 8-11. In Ephesus we have seen departure from first standing. The next state is a different one. We have the church at Smyrna in trouble; the saints of God are suffering. They may have thought the fiery trial some strange thing that had happened to them. But, on the contrary, it is more true that the Lord is grieved with a Christian when He leaves him without trouble for righteousness or for His name's sake. The Lord had Himself known tribulation to the utmost; but in Him it was only the trial of the good that was within, and the bringing out of His perfection. And poor as we are, we too may know trial apart from our evil. The Lord has two objects in view when He lays His hand upon a Christian in the way of chastening. It may come either because there has been something wrong, or because he is in danger of it and this is little felt by him. When David was out of tribulation, he falls into a snare. When his circumstances were full of trouble, then it was that he (inspired, of course, by the Holy Ghost) poured out those sweet strains that we read with joy to this day. The desire to get out of trial is a perilous thing for the soul. The trial may be sent to show us what we really are, or, what is better, to prove what God is for us and to us: but it may be also sent to prevent us from falling into sin. The Lord, in His love, thus often averts the evil which He sees and we do not. I do not doubt that there is another and a deeper character of suffering, even fellowship with the sufferings of Christ, which must not be confounded with the Lord's faithful discipline, though, sometimes, I suppose, the two things may be in a measure combined. In a certain sense all saints suffer now with Him, though all may not be called to suffer for Him.

In Smyrna the Lord appears to have been meeting the declension from first love that had set in, and, in order to do this, He sent tribulation. It is no uncommon case—thanks to His name, for He is good and faithful. In what capacity does He speak to them? “These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive.” His title, first of all, is that of a divine person as against Satan. The Spirit claims for Jesus here, what Isaiah had before challenged for Jehovah. (Isa. 41:4.) And what was there that could not be claimed for Him? He “which was dead and is alive.” What a comfort for those who were in trial! Who is it that speaks to them in their tribulation? The One who had been in the deepest of sorrow and had gone through death itself. He who was the First and the Last, and who had formed all,—He was the One that had died and was alive again. And this is the very One that I have to flee to in my trial. You will see thereby what a connection there is between the quickening of the dead, and the comfort of those who are in trial. (Compare 2 Cor. 1-5) Jesus was God, but He was man also. He was the suffering man, and He was the triumphant man; and as such He was able to comfort them in their tribulation. What had He not gone through Himself?

“I know [thy works and] tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich,) and the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not, but [are] the synagogue of Satan.” (Ver. 9.) The word “Jews” here is used symbolically. It was a name given to the nation that was known as God's people, above all others, in olden time; and these symbols were taken from the Old Testament. It seems to mean persons who, taking the place of being children of God, went back to hereditary religion. On the one hand, there was this outward trouble, which the Lord allowed for their blessing, and, on the

other, there were those who were insisting on Jewish principles. (Phil. 3:2.) But the Lord says, "Fear not those things which thou shalt suffer." Do not mind what persons say, or things done against you. "Behold the devil shall cast [some] of you into prison, that ye may be tried." Thus, by God's grace, the enemy himself is used as an instrument for the good of God's people in the persecutions which he stirs up against them. There is nothing, on the other hand, whereby Satan more effectually draws aside than through a sort of quiet, easy-going, half and—half Christianity. God grant that His children may be preserved from having two faces or characters -that the Christian may never be worldly with worldly people, and then put on the ways and words of a saint with his brethren.

It is no new thing for the Lord thus to allow the efforts and enmity of Satan for the blessing of His saints. In the case of Job we see the same thing: indeed the Lord probed His servant there far more deeply. At each successive trial from Satan, Job retained his integrity, and blessed the Lord.; but the Lord showed Job himself-the very thing he needed for the full blessedness of turning away from self to the Lord. Then He showed him God, and Job's comfort at last was as deep as his self-abasement.

Job had no idea that he thought too much of himself; but this was just what God had to show him he did. He loved to recall the time when the fruits of godliness in him drew forth the respect and esteem of men. But God showed him how evil a thing it is to be occupied with the effects of grace in himself or on others. What the enemy of God and man could not do, Job's friends did. He could stand against the temptations of Satan, but he was provoked to folly by his friends coming to condole with him, and giving their misdirected opinions. When a person talks much about grace, not a little unjudged self is apt to be found there, we may be sure. Even Job had to be put in the furnace to find out that there was a great deal more besides grace in him. But though Satan might tempt without success, and his friends only provoke, when the Lord Himself comes in, then Job is soon thoroughly humbled. He sees himself in the light of the presence of God, and exclaims, "Mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." But the end of the Lord is as good at least as his beginning. He is ever pitiful, and of tender mercy. And it is when Job thinks nothing of himself that the true stream of grace flows out, and he prays for his friends. "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends."

The case of Smyrna follows that of Ephesus. As already hinted, I should apply the church of Smyrna to the time when the church was called to pass through the tribulation that followed the era of the apostles- the persecutions that were inflicted on the Christians by the Roman emperors. But it is good to remember that all is measured of the Lord. "Behold the devil shall cast [some] of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days." (Ver. 10.) The sufferings, death for Christ's sake, &c., of the Christians, were the few bright spots and manifestations of life in the second and beginning of the third centuries.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." (Ver. 10.) The distinction of God's servants in glory is an important doctrine. For while it is essential to maintain that the very same grace which pardoned the thief on the cross was needed to save Paul of Tarsus, yet it would be a grand mistake to suppose that the thief will have the same reward in glory. Nevertheless, we must not be afraid; when the Lord says to us, "I know thy works." For though the vessels that are to contain the blessing may not be equally large, the little cup will be as full as the big one; and full,

if I may so say, of the same materials of joy and blessing. In a glorified state there will be no such thing, of course, as a person being tried—no question of being faithful or unfaithful then. Before we get there, spiritual differences exist; and when we are there, the distinctions of Christ's kingdom will answer to the character and measure of service here below, though the sovereignty of God must be maintained also. (Matt. 19 xx.)

There was this suited word of comfort to the faithful in Smyrna— “He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.” (Ver. 11.) Do not fear the first death; it is only a servant to usher you into the presence of God. The second death will not touch you. The Lord is like that tree of old which was cast into the waters of Marah. He went into the bitterest waters of death, which have thus been changed into sweetness and refreshing for us.

## Lectures on Revelation 2:12-18

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Ver. 12-18. The Lord here announces Himself to the angel of the church in Pergamos as One who was armed with all-searching power by the word of God, the piercing word that judges. In the book of Revelation, the sharp sword is at the command of the Lord Jesus, as the instrument of judgment. What the sword does in the hand of man, the word of searching judgment does which the Lord applies in power; it decides all questions that have to do with Him. There is always a great and beautiful connection between the way or title in which He presents Himself and the state of the church which He is addressing. It was because the word was no longer that which had living energy to judge in the church, that the Lord Jesus takes care to show that it had never lost its power in His hands. As the first church shows us declension set in, even in the days of the apostle John, and Smyrna the time of persecution from the heathen, so here we have a totally different state of things. Pergamos is the scene of Satan's flattering power or seduction, which was just what he used after the violence of persecution had spent itself. It was a more dangerous device than the second; for when our hearts are set on anything that is wrong, there is nothing that more shows God against our ways than His giving us up to our own will. "Ephraim is joined unto idols: let him alone." In the case of Smyrna it was the contrary of this; it was the Lord intercepting the power of Satan through persecution from without, which was used of God to hinder the growing corruption within.

After that, the god of this world promised Christians every worldly advantage. The emperor himself offered to become a Christian, though he put off baptism till his death-bed. There was no plainer proof how completely the church has fallen and had departed from the Lord's name, than when it accepted the emperor's terms and the patronage of the world. Even those who were saved had entirely lost sight of what the church was, as not belonging to the world but of heaven. The Roman empire was essentially the world's power. The church had been called out to be the standing witness of these two things: first, of the world's ruin; and secondly, of God's love. But when we see the church shaking hands with the world, all is gone, and the church falls right down into the mind of this age. If the world gains in some respects, the church loses in everything; and no wonder, because it is at the cost of the will and glory of Christ.

Satan's "throne" is the sense: in presence of it, who does not see the propriety with which the Lord presents Himself, as armed with the sharp two-edged sword? It is the same word as is used for "seat," as well as "throne" in other parts of this very book; but here it is properly a "throne," because Satan is spoken of in respect of authority. It is obvious that all this exactly describes the state of things in Constantine's time. "Instead of being at the stake and suffering for Christ's sake, the church was now yoked with the world in a mere profession of Christianity; for as the world did not really rise to Christ, the church must sink to the world's level. No wonder the Lord says thereon, "Thou dwellest where Satan's throne is." Yet He allows all that He can, even where this miserable association was found—His assembly dwelling where Satan's throne was. They maintained still His name, and did not deny the faith which was given to the Saints; but that was all. They had just come out of the great persecution in which Antipas was slain. But now the

church at Pergamos, instead of suffering, was dwelling quietly in the world. Like Lot, they too had their righteous souls vexed with the ungodliness of those around.

The Lord, accordingly, brings forward the things of which He had to warn them. "Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam." (Ver. 14). What was the leading feature we see in the son of Beor? He was led by his covetousness to try and serve the bad king of Moab by cursing the people of God. When God gave him an answer, he goes to God a second time, because his heart wanted its own way. And it is solemn to learn that if God gives you up, you may get what you want. Balaam afterward falls into even worse evil. He was indeed a man whose heart was not with God. He said some true things, but his spirit was not in them. He always speaks as it were from without, as a miserable man, afar from the blessing which he saw. "I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh," &c. He goes on, step by step, until he lends himself to be the corrupter, through the world, even of God's chosen people. And so it was with the church. Even the philosophers began to take up Christian truth, and in the writings of the fathers we find pretty much what we have here. What fornication is in moral things, such was their illicit commerce with the world in the things of God. There were, I doubt not, witnesses who were made very little account of, save in heaven; but one of the men who had the largest and most lasting influence of all, Augustine, was a true saint of God, and, though that is not saying much, the greatest light of the western church. He had held the name of Christ and had not denied his faith. All agree that these epistles applied primarily to the churches to which John wrote: but many do not see that they also apply to different stages of the Church, and describe its various states successively.

The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes seems an evil from within, as that of Balaam was rather from without. Such it was in principle and doctrine now. We read of their deeds in Ephesus, but this went farther and deeper. It was a corruption of grace, a turning it to licentiousness. Sanctity is the greatest snare if it be not real, yea, if it flows not from the truth; yet nothing more terrible than that where grace is known or at least talked of, it should be abused. If we search our own hearts and ways, we shall find that it is the very thing we all tend to do. Grace has set us completely free through Him who died and rose again, and what claim has it not on our hearts? Do we not often treat God's grace to us in the very same way that our children in their most hardened mood treat us? They then take all as a matter of right. Though creation has been brought under subjection to vanity on account of Adam's sin, yet there is no moral evil connected with its lower forms. But in man's case it is not so. Knowing the evil, he yet goes on in it. And even when we have got the certainty of deliverance, if the joy of it have passed away in a measure, we begin to use the Lord's grace just to serve ourselves. This, carried out without conscience, is Nicolaitanism. God's grace was meant to bind us thoroughly to Himself. We might see a person fall into evil (and this, of course, is sorrowful indeed, in a Christian); but there is a great deal more of evil that others do not see. God gives us the opportunity of judging ourselves when no one else, perhaps, knows anything about it. If we do not judge it, then the end here below is that the judgment of the world comes, and we may be sure what a vast amount of evil must have gone on in secret, when God allows us to fall so that the very world judges our course as evil. But we must not be discouraged. It is just where the truth is most preached and held, that Satan will invariably try to bring in the worst of heresies, in order to bring shame upon the testimony of God. When a man slips from the highest pinnacle, of course he will have a more terrible fall; as also it will be much more manifest to the world than if he had merely upset on the plain.

The Lord does not say, "I will fight against thee with the sword of my mouth," but "against them." (Ver. 16.) The sword of judgment may, it is true, act in taking them away by death, as in the case of the Corinthian saints, who were judged of the Lord here below that they might not afterward be condemned with the world. Christian discipline does not mean putting away those who are not Christians from those who are; rather it contemplates the purging out of Christians who are walking wrongly, in order to maintain the honor and holiness of the Lord in their midst. Mercy is the great motive of discipline, next to the maintaining of Christ's character in the church. It is at the bottom of the Lord's ways with us, and surely it should be so for us with others.

The fact of the church's getting into the world isolated at once the faithful Christian. The church only became invisible through sin. It was not God's intention, it is not according to His heart, that it should ever be so, though I believe that all was permitted and ordered wisely. God did not make a light to be hid, but to be set on a candlestick. Such was the fact now: Catholicism reigned, if you take the protracted view, which soon paved the way for Popery. But if the word penetrated him who had an ear hear, it gave secret fellowship with Christ when the public position had become settledly false. Hence to a true-hearted saint, amid all this ruin and confusion, He says, "I will give to eat of the hidden manna." (Ver. 17.) The manna represents Christ Himself as He came down from heaven and took a place of abasement in the world. Those who were slipping away into the world are reminded of the place which Christ took down here. The "hidden manna" refers to the use which was made of the manna for the ark: a certain portion of it was taken into the holy place as a memorial before God. The faithful are to eat not of the manna only, but of the hidden manna.

It is not merely that we shall share in and enjoy with Christ all His glory as exalted on high and as displayed before the world.; but God will give us special communion with Christ as He was here below. The sweet thing in the glory will be that the blessed One, who has brought us into all the enjoyment and peace of heaven, is the same One we have known in all His path of sorrow and rejection in this world, with whom we have shared it ever so feebly here, feeding on Him as our portion even now. The white stone was a mark of entire acquittal. May we be thus looking forward to Christ; and may God give us to taste His own delight in His Son as He was here below, in His outcast position I May we have, besides, the white stone, the portion of the faithful in a state of things like that of Pergamos when the church and the world were enjoying themselves together! When in heaven such will enjoy the same food that sustains them here. Christ will still be your food even in the glory, and you will have the white stone, "and on the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth save he that receiveth it" (i.e. the expression of Christ's own secret satisfaction in the way in which you have suffered for Him and served Him below). Assuredly the heart will most prize what Christ will give between Himself and it alone—what none will know but ourselves and Himself. The Lord grant that we may have tokens of love for Him, although none should know them but Himself now. Even in glory the joy of His secret approval will not be lost but known more profoundly than ever.

## Lectures on Revelation 2:18-3:16: Thyatira

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Ver. 18-28. There is an important change that occurs in this chapter, beginning with the epistle to Thyatira. In the first three churches the warning word (“ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches “) comes before the promise; but all the four concluding churches have the promise before the call to hear. These at least will be found to be the representatives of states of the church which go down to the end.

Now there must be a reason for it—a wise and sufficient reason why the Holy Ghost should uniformly adopt one arrangement in the three earlier epistles, and as uniformly depart from this and adopt another arrangement in the four last. There is nothing haphazard in the word. As everything He has done in His dealings with man, as all that He has made even in creation, has its purpose impressed by Him, so much more is it with that word which develops His ways and displays His moral glory. And this is of vast practical moment to us. For, remember, the secret of strength is in a Spirit-taught knowledge of God and His ways in Christ. To enter into and enjoy the thoughts and feelings of God as manifested in what He does and says, in His own revelation of Himself, is that which wins and keeps, purifies and strengthens the heart of the believer. Israel did not understand His ways, and, therefore, never knowing His heart, they erred in their own; as it is said, “they do always err in their heart, for they have not known my ways.” Moses, on the other hand, did appreciate the heart of God, and accordingly of him it is written that “the Lord made known His ways unto Moses.”

In the first three churches, then, the call to hear is addressed formally to the whole assembly concerned; but in the last four the change of situation appears to mark greater reserve. The Lord no longer, as it were, expects any to hear but him who overcomes, and this class is thenceforth, in a manner, singled out from the rest. Evil had now set in over the professing body; so that the promise is not, and could no longer be, held out in the old indiscriminate way. From this distinction we gather a remnant begins to be more and more clearly indicated.

Something analogous to this appears elsewhere. Thus, in the seven parables of Matt. 13 the last three were unquestionably marked off from their predecessors, and were addressed to a higher degree of spirituality. The first four were uttered outside to the multitude, the last three to the disciples only within the house. Wherever we find in the Bible a series of parables, prophetic visions, or the like, grouped together as these are, there is commonly, not to say invariably, some such line drawn between those which commence with a general bearing, and those which become more special and narrow as we approach the goal. This is strikingly true of these Apocalyptic epistles, the last four of which sever the overcomer from the unfaithful surrounding mass. In short, the formation of a faithful remnant, who were at first, I suppose, only morally separate from the body which bore the Lord's name (now alas! untruly), becomes increasingly distinct. In the case of Thyatira the Spirit of God seems to make the principle plain and patent, as will appear presently.

The Lord Jesus introduces Himself here in His character of Son of God, followed by a description borrowed in the main from the vision which the apostle had seen in chap. i. “And unto the angel of

the church in Thyatira write, These things saith the Son of God that hath his eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet [are] like fine brass" (ver. 18).

If we trace what the scriptures say of the Lord Jesus viewed thus, two things more particularly are seen. As Son of God, He is the source and sovereign giver of life (John 5). The life which we by faith derive ("for he that believeth hath everlasting life") from the Lord Jesus Christ, is life in such power, that even the bodies of such as possess it in Him will rise from the graves to a life-resurrection; while others who have it not must rise to a judgment-resurrection (John 5:28, 29). In the resurrection of judgment none can be saved. No Christian will appear before the judgment-seat of Christ as a criminal to be tried. All Christians will appear before it (as must all men), but the result before the world will be, in spite of loss of reward in certain cases, their glorious manifestation as justified men. But if you or I had to appear to see whether we were righteous, and so could escape condemnation, could there be one ray of hope for us? Notwithstanding, there never can be, or at least there never ought to be, a doubt as to the absolute salvation of those who have life in and from the Son of God. The judgment-seat of Christ will clearly display them as justified persons; but we need not and should not wait for the judgment-seat to know that we are justified: we are dishonoring God's grace and His Son's work not to know it now, "whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us." Faith is entitled by divine warrant to a full justification, now and here below, according to the worth and acceptance of the Lord Jesus in God's sight.

And this leads me to the second of the things I had alluded to, as connected with the "Son of God." He gives liberty as well as life. "If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). These are the two great aspects of blessing which characterize Jesus as the Son of God. He imparts not only life, but liberty too. Not that they have always or necessarily gone together. For a man might have spiritual life and yet be in grievous bondage, as one observes too often. This is also what we read of in Rom. 7. A person who is converted has life, but may be withal the most miserable of men as regards his own experience. "Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" In chap. viii. we have the answer of grace. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free (or delivered me), from the law of sin and death." Liberty now goes with the life of the Son of God, for He is the risen Lord who died for me and discharged me from all the claims of law and of every other thing or one which might else arrest my blessing. The servant does not abide ever in the house, he might have notice to quit; but there is no such thing as the son's leaving the house. And it is thus, as sons, God puts us in His house, in the place of full and holy liberty.

What a searching but blessed title this was for the Lord Jesus to take, especially if He was not only providing for the then need of the assembly in Thyatira, but picturing besides that state of departure from truth, and even the depths of Satan, which characterized the middle ages! In Ephesus, when almost all the apostles had disappeared from the world, there was decay of first love; in Smyrna, persecution from the heathen powers; then in Pergamos, the allusion is plain to the era when Christianity gained the ascendant in the world, and when consequently the church consummated and sealed the loss of her sacred and heavenly separateness upon the earth. The power of the world never gained a greater victory than when it was externally vanquished by the cross; when, by merely professing Christ's name in baptism, all the Roman world was treated as born of God—in short, when apparently heathenism, but really Christianity, succumbed before the

rising sun of Christendom. In many respects it may have been a mercy for mankind, as it certainly was the greatest event in the government of the world since the flood; but who can estimate the loss for the saints, and the dishonor of their Lord, when the Christian body exchanged their place of suffering now in grace, hoping for glory with Christ at His coming, for present authority in, yea over, the world? In Thyatira we arrive at a period darker still- the natural consequence of those pleasures of sin for a season. When the empire professed the cross and arrayed it with gold, it was not only that God's children were favored and caressed, instead of having to wander in sheep-skins and goat-skins, or to hide in dens and caves of the earth, but inevitably their enemies were attracted, and the Balaam-state became developed, and man ran greedily after error for reward. But the Jezebel-state is worse even than that, and most significant of the bloody and idolatrous prophetess who sought to be universal mistress in the so-called dark ages, and dark indeed they were! Of this I believe the church in Thyatira to be the remarkable foreshadowing.

But the Lord loves to praise what He can, and it is in a dreary time that He is glad to be able to approve of the least good. Here in the growing darkness of the public state, there was growing devotedness among the real saints. "I know thy works, and love, and faith, and service, (for this is the true order,) and thy patience, and thy last works [to be] more than the first" (ver. 19). "And thy works" ought to be left out, and the clause following should be, "and thy last works," &c., on ample authority, which the sense, I think, fully confirms to a spiritual mind. "But I have against thee that thou sufferest the woman [or, thy wife] Jezebel that calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and deceiveth my servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols." Thus there was much energy and devoted service; but withal the greatest evil threatened them or even then was at work.

When Jezebel sat as a queen in Israel, all was ruin and confusion; but the Lord did not fail to raise up a suited witness for Himself. It was then that we find an Elijah and an Elisha, and even another where naturally one might least expect it—in the very house where evil was paramount. There was he who gave refuge and food to the persecuted prophets of the Lord. Just as in the New Testament we hear of saints chiefly to be saluted who were of Cesar's household, so of old there was an Obadiah, who feared the Lord greatly, over the house of Ahab "which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up." It was then too was found the remnant of 7000, who had not bowed the knee to Baal. I think the Lord would have said of that remnant what we have in the epistle to Thyatira- "thy last works more than the first." The wickedness of those who surrounded them made their faithfulness more precious to the Lord; and He praises them more, perhaps, we may add, than if they had lived in a day less trying; just as, on the other hand, He cannot but deal most sternly with evil, which is done in a day of special light and mercy, How many Ananiases and Sapphiras have there been since Pentecostal times, who have not been visited in the same open and unsparing way as when great grace was upon all! This is an encouragement to us who know ourselves to be exposed, not indeed to a storm of persecution, but to a season far more perilous. There never was a time when man thought better of himself; and this is so much the graver sin, inasmuch as the testimony of God's truth to the contrary has been widely spread abroad. I do not deny that it is a day of no small effort among Christians. But "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams;" and never has there been less subjection to the will of God than at this moment. There is much association, which sounds well,—much taking counsel together; but confederacy is one thing, endeavoring to

keep the unity of the Spirit is another and widely different thing. But the Lord says, "to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word." The matter of real weight is not getting Christians together, even if they were all Christians, but together in the Lord's way and for the Lord's glory as their object—the "one thing" they have to do. If but two or three are thus gathered unto His name, we have His own assurance that His power and blessing will be there, spite of all appearances to the contrary. Had we two or three thousand together, but not in immediate subjection to the Lord Jesus, we should have only shame and sorrow in the end, however it might look for awhile. If we are seeking to please men, so far we cannot be the servants of Christ.

It was, then, it seems to -me, when the Lord has before His eye the state of a church which might well prefigure the dark development of an after-day, (when the saints should be in great bondage, and that which was altogether alien in the midst persecuting them, and His own authority null in practice,) that He brings out His title of "Son of God," whose eyes were as a flame of fire and His feet like burnished brass. Peter of old had confessed Him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God; and thereon the Lord, immediately after pronouncing him blessed and emphatically naming him by the new name He had given, adds, "upon this rock I will build my church." Now, alas! the Lord anticipates that the professing church would lose its balance and set itself up virtually in His own place, giving out that she, the lady, "which calleth herself a prophetess," was to be heard in matters of faith, not He, the Lord. Here then we have the assertion of His personal glory and the attributes of His all-searching and unbending judgment of men—a serious but comforting thought for His own people, who might be in the midst of this sad confusion, and the perfect provision of His wisdom to deliver them from what was setting or set in. They would need and enjoy the immutable foundation, the Son of God, and the assurance that His church built on that rock could not fail, when public appearances were against it as against Himself in Israel. They were worse than nothing in the eyes of their persecutors; they were precious in Christ. It was a severer trial than from Jews or heathens; but the Son of God was no heedless spectator of all. So, too, His promise (26, 27) ought to guard them from seeking a present kingdom, a so called spiritual millennium without Christ, where they should be either free to enjoy the world or entitled to govern it as yet.

In the church at Thyatira there were faithful and loving souls, earnest too, especially in good works; but there was this plague spot also—the sufferance of "that woman Jezebel." Jezebel, as we are told here, was a false prophetess, who was teaching and deceiving Christ's servants to commit fornication and eat idol sacrifices. This was worse than the iniquity of him who loved the wages of unrighteousness, a step farther even in Balaam's line. "And I gave her space to repent and she is not willing to repent of her fornication. Behold, I cast her into a bed, and those that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her works And I will kill her children with death, and all the churches will know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts, and I will give to you, each one, according to your works," (verses 21-23).

What could be more shocking than the evil here foreshown! Jezebel, as all knew, was one who added violence to corruption, the counselor of blood, the active hater of all God's witnesses, the patroness in private and public of the idolatrous priests and prophets of Baal. And now, in Thyatira, there was that which intimated to the Lord's eye the dark and cruel idolatry which was to be formally taught and imposed by a pretended infallible authority within the bosom of the professing

church. Even now the actual germ could not be hid from Him whose eyes were as a flame of fire. Jezebel was there and "her children" too. It was a deep and lasting source of evil. But the judgment of her and of all that sprang from her was severe, however it might seem to linger. The Lord discerns different degrees of connection; but none should go unpunished, let Christendom decide as they might that evil must be allowed under His adored name Repentance was absolutely refused, though the Lord had given ample space for it. "Fornication" (for such is the figure used) was both taught and practiced. Long patience on His part is the sure sign, both that the object to be judged was in a thoroughly evil condition, (else He comes quickly in the jealous care of true love that counts on a true answer), and that when the judgment comes, it must be definitive and unsparing. "The woman," it has been long remarked, symbolizes the general state, as "the man" has the place of responsible activity.

The words "a few things," in verse 20, must disappear. It was not a little complaint, but one of unusual gravity and complication. The phrase crept in, I conceive, from verse 14, as there is otherwise resemblance enough to suggest such an assimilation to a copyist. But on a closer inspection the difference, as we have seen, is great, especially if we are to read "thy wife Jezebel." The sin of fornication or adultery here is symbolical of that wicked commerce with the world, which is in the same relation to the Christian or the Church, as intermarriage with a Canaanite would have been to an Israelite. To eat idol-sacrifices sets forth communion with what had a direct link with the power of Satan, for "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils, and not to God"; and it is an easy thing, little as men may think it or Christians may estimate aright its enormity, to have fellowship with devils.

Besides the leading corruptness and fountain-head of the mischief, we have two classes of persons mentioned who were guilty in a positive way. There were Christ's servants whom she deceived to illicit commerce with the world, and there were others who were the immediate offspring of Jezebel, "her children." With each one the Lord would deal according to his works. He was the righteous Judge, and man, as such, must be judged, and all, saints or sinners, must be manifested before His judgment-seat. Yet it is remarkable how the Lord avoids saying that the saints will be judged. "I will give," says He, "to you, each one according to your works;" and so in chap. xxii. 12, and many similar scriptures. On the one hand, we are positively told that the believer shall not come into judgment (for John 5:24 means "judgment," and not "condemnation," however certainly this is the result of it). On the other hand, we know from Rev. 20:12, 13, that the wicked are to stand before the throne, and to be judged, each one according to their works. Their resurrection is one of judgment, (and in effect, of condemnation,) contrasted with that of the righteous, which is a life-resurrection. Thus, it is certain that, if put on my trial for salvation or perdition, according as my works deserve, I must be lost, for I have sinned and have sin; yet is it equally sure that the Lord is not unrighteous to forget the work and labor of love, and so He will give to each one according to his, works. Christ Himself, Christ's love, is the only right motive for a Christian in anything; but there are rewards for those who have suffered for Christ and been cast out for righteousness' or for His name's sake.

The remnant comes out with great clearness in the next verse. "But unto you I say, the rest (or "remnant;" omitting the words "and unto," which have no right to be here) in Thyatira." (Ver. 24.) Here we have a faithful few, who are called "the rest," distinguished from the mass in Thyatira. The Lord had been speaking of His servants who had been seduced to dally with the evil of Jezebel,

and of her own children, for which last class there was to be no mercy from Him. Then another class is addressed, the remnant, or “you that remain.” The corrupt exterior body goes on, and there is a remnant that the Lord now had specially in view. He supposes them to be ignorant of what Christendom then counted knowledge and only says, “whosoever have not this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, (as they speak,) I put upon you no other burden, but that which ye have, hold fast till I come.” (Verses 24, 25.) These “depths of Satan” they had not known. They valued no knowledge which undermined the call to holiness. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and this beginning they feared to let slip; and they were right. It might be but negative; but they had kept clear of a great evil, and holding their little fast, they would surely have their reward when the Lord comes. There were those who suffered much for Christ, who witnessed for Him in these dark ages. Such were the Albigenses and Waldenses; and “you, the rest in Thyatira,” I take to refer to these persecuted companies, who held tenaciously what they had from God. They did not know much, but they were a remnant separated in conscience and suffering from the evil around them, from Jezebel. Their comfort lies in no promise of amendment in the Church, but in a hope outside all on earth, even the kingdom and coming of Christ in person. Meanwhile they are called to overcome and keep Christ's works unto the end.

There could not be a more admirable sketch in a few words than what we have here. And it is not a little remarkable that the book of the Revelation was much prized by these saints. Indeed, this has always been more or less the case in times of persecution—not that it is the best motive, for the book is valued most when the Lord leads His people, to wait for His return. But His tenderness to His sufferers in a dark day is most sweet; and what a promise!—“And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works until the end, I will give him authority over the nations,” &c. (Ver. 26, 27.) What the mediaeval church arrogantly and wickedly sought, the saints she persecuted or despised are yet to possess in the coming and kingdom of their Lord, and these hopes accordingly are here brought in as their suited objects. The guilty church was not more cruel towards the true saints than ambitious of power over the world. Things ecclesiastical had got to their grossest point. But it is good to wait for the Lord's way and time: He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. When the earthly power has been put aside and judged, those who have suffered with Christ shall reign with Him. But He adds more than authority over the nations, and ruling them with a rod of iron.. as Christ also received of His Father. “And I will give him the morning star.” (Ver. 28.) This is most blessed: not merely association with Christ in the day of His power, when the stronghold of men shall be broken to shivers, like the vessels of a potter, but “gathering together unto Him” before that day. The hope abides in all its fullness, and as fresh as at the first. Christ only could so speak and act.

The sun, when it rises, summons man to his busy toil, but the morning-star shines for those only who sleep not as do others—for those who watch as children of light and of the day. We shall be with Christ doubtless when the day of glory dawns upon the world; but the morning-star is before the day, and Christ not only says “I am.... the bright and morning star,” but “I will give....the morning-star.” He will come and receive His heavenly ones before they appear with Him in glory. May we be true to Him in the refusal of present ease, and honor, and power! May we follow Him, taking up our cross and denying ourselves daily! He will not forget us in His day, and He will give us, ere that comes, the Morningstar.

I would here add, in closing this sketch of Rev. 2, that Thyatira has a sort of transitional place, being linked with the three preceding churches as on church ground, whatever the corruption allowed which characterized its public state. On the other hand, it is connected with the three churches which follow on the ground of truth or testimony (not regularly ecclesiastical), both as being the first of those marked by the change of position in the call to hear, and as also expressly running down to the end. The others were transient phases. This begins the more permanent states in view of the Lord's advent. It may be noticed accordingly that the dealing after Thyatira, when threatened, falls on the angel: up to this it had been either on the candlestick, as in Ephesus, or on the evil-doers, as in Pergamos and Thyatira. Smyrna and Philadelphia have a special exemption, one in each of the two series. To the angel of the church in Sardis the word is, "I will come on thee as a thief;" when similar language was used in a former case, Christ said "I will fight against them" &c., "I will cast her" and "I will kill her children," &c. In the latter series it is a question of a separated witness in Christendom, where fidelity is everything, as with the disciples in the gospel. Judgment must fall on the whole, though not without distinguishing the true-hearted. In this new part (with a slight exception in Sardis, which is necessary and only proves the rule), the titles of Christ are distinct from those seen in the opening vision of chap. 1., and point to His future reign. This is seen with special emphasis in Laodicea, so that "the things that are" may vanish away thenceforth, as in fact they do.

## Lectures on Revelation 3:1-6: Sardis

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Ver. 1-6. I think that any discerning reader must perceive that we are entering upon an entirely new order of things in this chapter, or, at least, a sort of fresh start. What was described in the vision of Christ walking in the midst of the candlesticks is not here as in chap. ii., unless it be the “seven stars,” no longer, however, held in His right hand. It is quite true that what we have been looking at, in the former chapter, may still exist and be verified at the same time with new features as they are brought out here. Not only may there be points morally like what we have seen in Ephesus, Smyrna, or Pergamos, but a continuing public state like the evil depicted in the message to the angel of the assembly in Thyatira, which goes on to the end in a way that differs from its predecessors. We find in Sardis another condition, and one which answers to the general state of Protestantism after the Reformation. We have not so much open evil, like idolatry and the other horrors that have been described before; but now we have a more correct outward form and orthodox aspect of things. As the four churches in the second chapter follow on consecutively, and describe the state of things before the rise of Luther, &c., so Sardis describes what followed the Reformation, when the glow and fervor of truth and the first flush of blessing had passed away, and a cold formalism had set in.

The way in which the Lord presents Himself is wonderfully suitable. “These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars.” (ver. 1). This is a new point of view in which to see Christ. In chap. 1. “the seven Spirits” were distinct from His person and connected with the throne. The seven Spirits of God refer to the Holy Spirit of God, viewed in His various perfections and the ways in which He works; and this not so much in the church, as towards the world. In chap. v., when the churches are done with, the Lord Jesus is described symbolically as a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth—the Holy Ghost as acting with a view to the government of the earth. It is not the Holy Ghost in all the fullness of the blessing into which He brought the Church in its unity, or dwelling there. It is the expression of the Spirit in fullness of quality and power to snake good God's will on earth.

But whatever might be the condition of the church, the Lord Jesus was the One who had all the power of the Spirit of God, and He only is the One who has at the same time full spiritual authority. There were no two things more separated than these at the time of the Reformation. There was then a large body calling itself the church, which claimed the power of settling everything, as being the spouse of Christ; and then the claim of infallibility was strongly advanced, because, of course, those who assume irresponsible authority as Christ's vicar to settle the affairs of the church, to define doctrine, &c., ought to be infallible. This body had wrought for ages, gathering influence for itself; and at last the struggle came, and it was proved to be a mass of the greatest evil against God and His Son that had ever been congregated on the earth. There might have been time saints of God in it at the worst of times, and I think that some, such as Cyprian, had even helped to give it an undue and false place of authority. Then, again, St. Bernard sanctioned the persecutions of the Waldenses. But it is well to bear in mind that there cannot be a greater fallacy than to abide in

what is wrong merely because we find true saints of God there; for the great aim of Satan is to try and get good people to do bad things. When at last the crisis arrived, and men rose up in a considerable part of the world against this frightful evil, there was the separation of these two thoughts of ecclesiastical authority and spiritual power. Instead of its being a body that claimed both, everything ran into disorder, and men fell back on the power of the world, in order to gain freedom from the dominion of the pope.

Thus Protestantism was always wrong, ecclesiastically, from the very beginning, because it looked up to the civil ruler as the one in whose hand ecclesiastical authority was vested; so that if the church had been under popery the ruler of the world, the world now became, in Protestantism, the ruler of the church. It is not a question of church and state that politicians may discuss; but it is a great deal too narrow and low a question for a Christian. The great thing is to be in the path of Christ, giving honor to Him. "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." This describes the cold and formal ways of religion that were found after the Reformation among those that were not really Christians. The Lord Jesus shows what He disapproves of in Protestantism. Why not be thoroughly Christians? It was a poor thing to boast of not being as bad as Jezebel; it was death, if not abomination.

In Protestant lands, there has always been a measure of liberty of conscience. But the object of God is not merely to deliver either from gross evils, or from mere details, but that the soul should be right with God, and should allow the Lord to have His way and glory -liberty for the Lord to work by the Holy Ghost according to His will. When He is allowed His right place, there is the blessed fruit of it in love and holy liberty. It is not a human liberty derived from the power of the world that we want, (though God forbid that we should speak a word against the powers that be in their sphere,) but the liberty of the Holy Ghost. It is the sin of Christians to have put the powers that be in a false position. The Lord Jesus touches the root of the whole matter in the way in which He presents Himself to the church of Sardis. Whether it is spiritual power or the outward authority flowing from it, the Lord claims it all as belonging to Him. In Ephesus it was said that He held the seven stars in His right hand; but here are united the two things, inward spiritual power, and outward authority. He hath the Spirits of God and the stars. It is not said here that He holds the stars in His right hand, but that they are His, as well as the fullness of spiritual competency.

In the great mass of Protestant churches they gave up, as it were, the regulation of the stars into the hands of the powers that be. On the other hand, the persons who revolted from that fell into the sad evil of suffering the church to have the stars in its own keeping. There is not such a doctrine in the whole scripture as either the world or the church having this kind of authority in its own hands. The Lord Jesus has still all under Himself. He has not given it up. Therefore let the Church only own what He is, and He will act accordingly. When there is faith to look to Him in His place as Head of the Church, He will assuredly supply every need. If He listens to the simplest cry of His lambs, does He not enter into the deeper need of the church, which is always His most beloved object? He took His Headship of the church only in heavenly glory, and He went there not merely to be, but to act, as the Head. What is His function as Head of the Church? He exercises authority, having persons to act under Him here below. Thus the existence of rule and gift in the Church of God is the result; and these are not touched by the ruin of the Church. The Lord, anticipating the time when there would be a revolt from under the spurious authority of the body calling itself the church, and foreseeing all the confusion that would be the result, presents Himself as the One who

is superior to it all. Whatever may be the condition of things here, strength is in Christ: and we can never find strength in looking at the condition of the church, but at Christ.

When the apostles were here below, they were empowered to act for Christ in a very special way; but when they were taken away, the real source of the power in which they had acted, subordinately to Christ, was not dried up; the Lord Jesus has it all in His own keeping still. There was a name to live, but real death. He was speaking of their condition as a body, and not as individuals. "Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die: for I have not found thy works perfect [filled up] before my God." Here we have again a very striking feature of what took place in Protestantism. In the desire to escape from the abuse of works by the Romish system, it is evident that its practice lost its due place in the minds of Christians—its place for those who have been brought nigh to God, for God does look for a real separate and distinct path to be taken by His people; and He finds fault with Sardis because of their failure in this. The saints of God, even in Thyatira, were commended of God for their earnestness, in spite of all the evil. Their last works were more than the first. Protestantism has weakened the idea of obedience, under the plea of "no perfection," either in the church or in the individual. Thus there has been a lowering of the just criterion wherever Protestantism has prevailed: but our God looks for perfection as the standard His children should judge themselves by—I do not say attain. He has grace to meet failures; but it is quite another thing for persons to settle down in self-complacency, from not having the divine standard before their eyes. The Lord always goes back to this.

It is better, in seeking to have that standard before us, to fail in carrying it out, than to succeed ever so much, if we gave it up. For what does the Lord most value? The heart that wants to please Him. The child may come to its father and say, "See what a pretty thing I have been making;" but if the parent had told him to do something else, he would ask the child, "Is that what I desired you to do?" The Lord has His own will, which meets us in our first need as sinners awakened, and is the source of our very salvation. But it is far from the natural thought of the heart, which does not like subjection to another's will. It is but part of the lie of the enemy. The will of God was evidently that which accomplished our sanctification, through Him who said, "Lo, I come to do thy will." In Rom. 10 the apostle puts our part of the matter in contrast with Jewish feeling. They thought, if they accomplished as much of the law as they could, that God was merciful, and would make up the rest; but the apostle shows that subjection to the righteousness of God is salvation. God's will is the very spring and power of our blessing, not only in the matter of forgiveness, but all the way through. Take God's ways in the church. These were subjects that were particularly neglected at the Reformation. Individual truth, such as justification by faith, was brought out forcibly and over a large field. But this was made the great point and aim of everything, and the consequence was, that people never knew thoroughly they were justified. The moment I make my own blessing the one or chief thing I am looking for in the Bible, I shall never know anything aright; but when God's thoughts and objects become my aim, I shall know directly that I am saved and blessed indeed. I cannot look at the cross of Christ without seeing, at the same time, my utter ruin, and my complete deliverance in the resurrection. If a man hesitates whether he is so very bad as God declares, he has to wait before he enjoys the riches of His grace; but if I trust myself unhesitatingly in God's hands, there is not a blessing that does not flow out to me. We find ourselves to be as bad or worse than Israel, and then we are brought inside a circle of goodness and mercy superior to anything they ever possessed.

At the Reformation, all this was comparatively lost sight of; and in escaping from the fearful net of Popery, they fell into the sin of putting church power into the hand of the civil magistrate. Others, again, who avoided this evil, made what they considered a true church to be the depository of this power; whereas it is Christ Himself still working by the Holy Ghost, that maintains His own lordship, a truth which is taught, at large, in the epistles. Supposing a person labors as a pastor or a teacher, from what authority is he to act? There was, indeed, human appointment of those who had to do with local matters; yet wherever it was a question simply of ministry in the word, there was no appointment from the first. Even in the case of choosing a successor to the vacant seat of Judas, the apostles did not themselves elect, but threw it out of their own hands into those of the Lord. (Acts 1) And when the Lord afterward chose another apostle, we find "one Ananias," indeed, sent to baptize him, but there was no idea of that disciple, or any one else, making him an apostle. In what we have afterward (Acts 13) i.e. the case of hands being laid on the apostles Paul and Barnabas, it was not a bestowal of any orders or mission, for it was done by men inferior to themselves in point of spiritual gift and power, but was simply their brethren commending them to the Lord before they set out on a particular missionary tour to the Gentiles. We have a right to look for the Lord to maintain His authority in the church. In all ages, we find He was helping His blessed people, and doing His work by His servants. If a person wants to preach, he naturally thinks he must have the warrant of some authority; but if we seek an authority at all, we should have a competent one. Although there may be more respectability in the world, where these outward credentials, are looked for, the question rises, Has the Lord required authority to validate a person's preaching the gospel? The apostles did appoint elders and deacons; but these might be preachers and teacher, or they might not be: their being deacons was another thing altogether. Philip was a preacher of the gospel, but this depended upon his having a gift from the Christ as the head of the church, and not on his being one of "the seven." Men have slipped into habitual departure from God's principles; and this is called "order," because it is the most prevalent custom now in the professing church. And thus when we give up true principles, we get into wrong practice. The Lord attaches great importance to our owning Him as the One who has all power and authority in His own hands. The moment I own this, it so much the more binds my conscience. If I know a thing to be wrong, my conscience is held to it. I may not be able to see at once what is the right path to take; but to cease from what is evil is evidently the first step, and it is imperative.

The connection between the end of the second verse ("I have not found thy works perfect before God") and what follows ("Remember therefore, how thou hast received and heard," &c,) is to be remarked. He recalls them to what they had received from God Himself at the first. No such thought is allowed as that because things are not as they were then, therefore every church has a right to form its own laws. If it would be downright rebellion to say, because the Queen does not live in Ireland, that therefore the Irish people were at liberty to make what laws they pleased, it is as bad or worse if we think that, because things are changed, the apostles gone, and confusion come into the church, men are left free to desert the word of Christ and do their own wills: the Lord has left us His. The very word of God which tells me what I once was, but that I am washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God, this same portion enters into all questions of the assembly, and the working of the Holy Ghost in it by whom He will. (1 Cor.) There may be no tongues, or gifts of miracles, and healings; but is the Holy Ghost here? What He continues to do is according to the same principle and presence as at first, though in a very different measure of power, else we have no divine rule in these things.

Remark that the Lord's coming is spoken of just in the way it was threatened on the world (See 1 Thess. 5). "If, therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief," &c. (ver. 3.) He would come upon them when they were not aware—suddenly and unwelcome. Had they not got into the world? Let them then beware of the portion of the world. If you have taken the world's ease, you must needs dread the world's judgment. Such is not the way in which the Lord speaks of His coming to the Church. In reality and all the extent of the words, it will be upon the professing mass, and not upon real believers, that the Lord will come as a thief. "But thou hast few names in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall he clothed in white raiment." (Verses 4, 5.) The Lord brings in this suited comfort, that, as they had sought to act faithfully on earth, they should walk with Him in white. As they had walked in purity here below, they should appear in full justification of their ways before God above. But this is spoken of individually. The state of the Church as a whole was evidently low and worldly, and as such it should be judged. The moment a person ascertains that his association is contrary to the word, he should feel how grave that fact is, and consider what is due to the Lord. It might seem incredible, if one did not know the fact, that there have been and are men of God, guides of the flock, who not only abide in evil which they know, but seek to find a palliative in the circumstances of a righteous Asa or a godly Jehoshaphat, who nevertheless did not remove the high places. Alas! that the solemn revelations of God should be thus perverted so as to serve the ends of the enemy, and that a repeated warning should be tortured into a justification of sin. "The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thy eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness." It is not enough to correct thoughts, and rest there; but if the Lord has given a judgment, is it not in order that the walk may be correspondent? Satan contrives to make the path of the Lord appear dark and sad; as he clothes a worldly course with the semblance of humility, order, and the like. But the word makes all plain now, as power will by and by even to the world.

May we walk with the Lord now, and surely we shall walk with Him in white hereafter! Instead of a blotted name, ours He will confess before His Father and the holy angels.

## Lectures on Revelation 3:7-22: Philadelphia

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The tone of the epistle to Philadelphia must, I think, confirm the idea presented as to Sardis, that in this portion (Rev. 3) we have not so much the early church, or that of the middle ages, but what is found, or is developed, in modern times. Sardis is the beginning of this: a state of things not marked by flagrant evil, but by one sad and fatal characteristic -it is negative. Any fair persons, who have thought deeply on what is called Protestantism, must know that this is the sorrowful thing which we, who have been Protestants and thus share its shame, have to acknowledge. Men stand up too much, at least too self-complacently, for certain controversial points, which hide, in a great measure, their own wants and failures; they pride themselves on keeping apart from certain evils, such as the supremacy of the pope, the infallible authority of the church, the worship of the Virgin, saints, and angels, the doctrine of the mass, purgatory, &c. Supposing that there were all orthodoxy as to these, there might be a thousand evils of another character; and together with outward correctness, the heart be thoroughly away from the love and honor of the Lord. This is precisely what we saw in Sardis -a name to live, but yet dead. As in Israel, when the Lord was on earth, the old idolatry had passed away, the unclean spirit had left the house, and had not returned; so the swept and garnished condition of the house answers to that which follows the Reformation. But we must distinguish between that and the work which God gave the Reformers to do. Let none speak disparagingly of these men, whether Luther or others. But while God was working in that great movement, it would have been better and holier if they had left earthly governments to their own proper functions. No doubt, their patrons spared them persecutions and secured them honors, which, instead of helping God's work on, proved a great hindrance. And so, when the fervor of first zeal had passed away, the state of things corresponds with Sardis.

In Philadelphia, we have something totally different. The first thing that strikes us is not what the Lord does or has, but what the Lord is Himself. If there is anything that delivers from mere dogma, with all its chilling influences, it is, I apprehend, the person of the Lord appreciated in any special way. And this I see in the epistle to Philadelphia. The Lord here presents Himself personally more than in any other of these epistles. It is true He is said to have the key of David; but before anything appears about this, He says that He is the Holy One and the True. In the other epistles we do not find the Lord characterized in the same moral point of view. This is, in my opinion, what the Lord has been working in God's children during late years. The impulse given to evangelization by the spread of Bibles and missionary efforts has marked it outwardly; but inwardly the sense of ruin has been used of the Spirit to lead the saints to the word, and hence to a fuller appreciation of the person of Christ -the only object in which we can rest, through the Holy Ghost, as He was God the Father's when He walked on earth.

There is something very beautiful in the way in which the grace of the Lord operates, after the epistle to Sardis, which was in a dead worldly state Christ made Himself known; and He is the resurrection and the life. And what can give new life, put the church in its proper attitude, or bring a remnant to the walk and sentiments which become a time of ruin, but the Lord presenting Himself personally? This is characteristic of John's gospel; the person of Christ in His rights, not only

humbling Himself to death, but baptizing with the Holy Ghost, in the activity of gracious power which is suitable to His glory. The first portion of it brings His person before us; the second, the other Comforter, whom the absent Lord was to send down from heaven. It is beautiful thus to see the place that John's gospel has in the scriptures of God. It was written very late, the last of all the gospels, and suited to a day of declension. There is no question of Jerusalem or of the Jews, as the immediate object of God, even in the way of testimony. They are noticed as a people outside, whom God has nothing to do with for the time. Hence the Lord speaks of the passover as a "feast of the Jews," Sc. In Matthew, on the contrary, there is the recognition of Israel for the truth of God. The boar out of the wood may waste, and the beast devour, but it is Israel's land still; and Jerusalem is called the holy city, even in connection with Christ's death and resurrection. In John all that is at an end. Not only had Jerusalem and the Jews forfeited all claim upon God, having departed from Him as Jehovah, and the law and the prophets, but they had rejected Christ; yea, and when the Holy Ghost came, they rejected Him too, and would not listen to Him any more; so that there was no resource. God had manifested Himself in every possible way. No manifestation of God, where man was under law, could do any good. Individuals laid hold of God's grace all through, but the nation was under law. The gospel of John starts from this point, that all was darkness, and there the True Light shines though the darkness comprehends it not. In Him was life. This ever remains true, though He may deal judicially here.

But to return to these churches. There had been declension from first love, suffering from heathen power, Satan tempting through the power of the world, Jezebel seducing to idolatry, and, in short, every kind of evil commerce with the world, with persecution. But now we find a modern state—outward cleanness, but the heart given up to itself. (See 2 Tim. 3) Sardis gives us this picture: some walking purely, but there was no such thing as the heart thoroughly subjected to the Lord. But will He be content with this? The Lord must raise up a witness for Himself; and the only way whereby He makes a person an adequate witness for Himself is by presenting Himself to the affections. The moment we see the Lord Himself, there is strength to serve Him with gladness.

Here the Lord, disgusted with the state of Sardis, comes, as it were, saying, "I want to have the heart -I must have it." He removes the veil, brought in through the sin of the professing Church. When they see that blessed One, so to speak, a little nearer, there is a state that answers (but oh! how feebly) to His desires for their heart, and it will be made good without fail, when we shall see Him as He is.

"Thou hast a little strength." It is not the way of God to produce great strength at a time of general ruin. At the era of the return from the Babylonish captivity, the Lord wrought in great grace. There was no outward power; on the contrary, they were so apparently contemptible, that it was the taunt of their enemies, that a fox could jump over their wall. But we find the same sort of spirit as in Philadelphia. They build no fortification to keep out the Samaritans, (the Lord was a wall of fire round about them,) but the first thing they erect is an altar to Him. The Lord was the first object of their hearts. If He was their wall, they could afford to wait before building another. There was no such thing as the angel smiting the first-born, no miracle wrought on their behalf, not a word about plagues on their enemies; but "my Spirit remaineth among you, fear ye not." Whenever Israel were afraid of their adversaries, they had no strength but in looking to the Lord, they forgot enemies. When we lean on Him now, it strikes more terror into the hearts of those who are against Him than anything else. When the heart is true to the Lord, that tells upon the conscience of others. What

joy that the Lord's heart was towards them! It is this which produces proper feelings towards Him and towards one another. The very name of this Church is significant of the relationship which He had established; but it is also important to remember that it is a holy relationship we bear to one another. While it is certain that those who care for one another's heavenly interest will not be careless otherwise, still the Church is not a club, where men may be ready to help on each other, right or wrong. This would be Chartism or anything rather than the brotherhood of the Lord. The first words are the key to the whole. "He that is holy, he that is true (ver. 7)." Look at the first epistle of John. The expression is not often used about the Lord, but we find it there. In the second chapter of that epistle, speaking to the little ones of the family of God, it is written, "Ye have an unction from the HOLY One, and ye know all things." He that is holy, He that is true, has all for them. There might be weakness, but He has the key of David. In the genealogy of our Lord in Matthew, we find the expression, David "the king," not Solomon the king, or any other; because David is the person who first characterized royalty in Israel. He was the man according to God's own heart. And as for David walking in faith, no difficulties could stand in his way. True, the type was imperfect—no type is perfect, because it is not Christ, though it may be a witness of Him. We see the failure of the man; but where the power of God wrought in David what was bright, and blessed, and good, we have the germ, as it were, of that which we see fully in the Lord. The "key of David" represents administrative power, the means of access to whatever he possessed. Thus it is said, (Isa. 22) "the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open and none shall shut," &c. This was the consequence; he who had it had all things under his hand; and it was his business to take care of everything.

The Lord presents Himself as having the key of David. Therefore they ought not to look to the power of the world, nor to man; for if He had the key, it was the very thing they wanted. The energy of man might be at work all around, Jezebel, false prophets, &c.; but there was this Blessed One, the holy and true; and so much the more needed, because they were weak. They had so little strength that, perhaps, they could not even open the door, but He says that He had opened it for them; He had brought them into a large place where there was no such thing as bondage, or constraint. It is plain that the Lord is here market according to what He is personally and morally; not only as the great source of holiness and truth, but as the Holy One and the True. We find the latter also in the first epistle of John. "We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ;" but there he goes farther still, "this is the true God and eternal life" Thus, then, we have the Lord's person brought before them: it was what they coveted. They valued Christ. They wished to know more of Him; and He knew their heart. So it is said, "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." They were tried of a mere form of godliness; they knew it was as possible to be lost or to dishonor the Lord in orthodoxy as in the world. They turn to the Lord, and He presents Himself as the Holy One and the True; not as against them, but full of tenderness and grace, putting before them an open door, and giving them the certainty that no man could shut it.

"Thou hast a little strength, and has kept my word, and hast not denied my name (ver. 8)." Here we have three expressions concerning them. They are in a state not marked by outward note, or strength. Like Himself, they are unknown to the world, but they had kept His word; and more than this, they had not denied His name. Consider what it is to keep Christ's word. It is evident that there had been a departure from His word. It might have been circulated; but had it been cherished? Had it been loved and sought into, as for hid treasure? Was it for this thing that men

met together to pray and read—that they might understand it better? What a movement in advance for the Church, where the Lord's person becomes more than ever the object, and the word as His word! It is not mere evangelization, blessed as that is in its place, and in its effect on the world. But here it is the inner circle of the saints who love, serve, adore Christ for Himself.

In this epistle we also find the great value of the name of the Lord Jesus. In 1 Cor. 1 the address is not to the Corinthians alone, but “to all who in every place call upon” that name. In other words, the first epistle to the Corinthians is in no way, more than the second, of private application, but for all Christians everywhere. In fact, the generalizing address is not put so strongly in any other; and this, perhaps, because the Spirit of God foresaw that, more than any other, it would be set aside. In these days, when there is no extraordinary manifestation of power, men might say, It is not for us, it belongs to a day that is bygone. True, there is no use to talk of regulating tongues, if you have not got them. But we have the Holy Ghost, and, blessed be God! the Church will never know the day when it will be without the Holy Ghost. Look at its darkest hour—the middle ages, Romanism, &c. The Holy Ghost was always there, not, indeed, justifying evil, or putting His seal upon disobedience, but He was there for the certainty of faith, according to the Lord's word, “He shall abide with you forever.” The idea of looking for the Holy Ghost to be poured out again on us is utterly wrong. Such is the Jewish hope. For the church to make such a petition is, in effect, to deny that it is the Church. It may be well for us to throw ourselves down before the Lord, and own that we have acted as though we had it not. But let us bless God that we have the Spirit, not only dwelling in individuals, but binding us together for an habitation of God. The manifestation of this is broken, it is true, but the fact remains; just as we say of a man whose circumstances are bad, that he is a ruined man, while the man still exists. This gives us ground for humbling ourselves the more; that the Church had the Spirit and yet went wrong. Men might say, If we had a Pentecost now, and the Holy Ghost sent down again, we should go right; but the fact is, that when they had the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, they declined and fell. What God calls upon us to do is, not now to wait for fresh gifts of power, but to humble ourselves before Him, because we have gone, even as Christians, in the saddest opposition to His will. Alas! though the Holy Ghost dwelt there, one golden calf after another has been set up, till there is as much sin as was in Israel. This is what the Lord calls us to feel. The sympathies of the Philadelphian saints were with Him.

Clearly, then, what the Spirit presents is a despised but the word of Christ specially prized, and the Lord's name maintained: We have learned that the church is never bound to go on in sin. “Let him that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.” There may be moral iniquity and worldly lusts; and what is there so bad as church iniquity, except that which is against the person of Christ Himself? If a man goes on with things against the outward order of the church, it is evil, but not to be compared with sin against the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is always the worst, and the test of souls. The first of all duties is that the heart should be true to Christ. God looks for it.

Here, then, we see Christ bringing Himself out personally to the church, and this not with a general expression of love, but manifesting a special attachment of His heart to them. Hence it is said, “I have loved them.” The Lord loves all His people, but it is equally true that He has special affections. There may be a peculiar link between Him and saints at particular times of danger and trial. His grace removes the hindrances and makes it to be enjoyed in its strength. They know His place in glory, but that which touches their hearts is that He loves them in all that glory. His love the great basis and spring of their love.

“Thou hast a little strength.” I know you are weak; but you have “kept my word and not denied my name,” See here the personal link— “my word.” “my name.” The name of Christ, apprehended by the soul, is salvation. When the heart is brought down to submit to God's judgment of its sin, He Himself brings before that soul Christ's name; when it finds that it has no name in which to stand before God, He says, Here is a name, my Son's name. Faith supposes a man giving himself up as good for nothing, and saying, “God has been good to me, when I have been bad for Him.” God has laid down this name as a foundation-stone for the poor sinner. It looks weak; it is called a “stumbling-stone,” as it is to unbelief; but I ought to believe in it. If I merely look at the gospel, I am lost, because then I reason about it; but if I believe it, I am saved. What did Abraham do? He did not reason; he considered not his own body which was dead, but he gave glory to God. If he had felt strong, he might have given glory to himself. This is one practical aim that God works for, that we may know our own nothingness.

But is this the only use of Christ's name? No: He assembles round Himself. Jesus is the great object and attractive point to which the Holy Ghost gathers. Suppose it were the question of a person coming in, who holds what people call Calvinistic views, or Arminian, never having learned fully the ruin of man; you may say, “We don't like to be troubled.” But the test is, what does the Lord say? Has He no power to judge that question? Has He delegated it to our discretion? The Lord has named His name over that saint, and I am therefore to receive him. Another comes and says, “I hear you receive all Christians; but I do not believe that Christ was exempt from the fall, either in His nature or in His relation to God.” “No,” I reply, “you cannot use the name of Christian to dishonor Christ.” But wherever a man is found humbly confessing the name of the Lord (whether he be churchman or dissenter, that is not the point), we are bound to receive him. It is sorrowful that the Church should have these names of variance: they will all be at an end by and by. But we must not gainsay the name of the Lord now. The Lord's name is there, and that is a passport all over the Church. It is no question of joining us; indeed he is joined to us if joined to Christ. True, the Lord has His servants; but we do not acknowledge any one as a center in the church but Christ.

A further use of the name of the Lord is in discipline. What is the object of discipline? Not to keep up our character, but that His name should have its just place and honor, keeping it bright even where Satan's throne is. In the very camp of the enemy there is a name that cannot be put down. The Holy Ghost is there, not merely to give us comfort, but having delivered us from anxiety about our own sins, He leaves us free to care for Christ, and to serve Him. The question in the maintenance of discipline is, Is there departure from iniquity? The Lord never acknowledges anything as the church where iniquity is sanctioned. There is a difference between sin detected there, and the sanction of sin when detected. Any iniquity may break out: it did in the apostolic churches. The man was put away at Corinth because he was a Christian (as it is said, “that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus”). It might be thought, from the terrible nature of his sin, that he could not have been one. The Holy Ghost shows us thereby that if a Christian gets away from Christ, he is capable of anything except positively going against Christ Himself. From this I think the Holy Ghost would always keep; as in the case of Solomon's judgment, the false woman was determined at all events to have her half of the child, while the real mother would rather yield it than let its life be touched. But a Christian may fall into a cold state of feeling about Christ (unnatural as this may seem); and when in this state, so as not to have a just sense of the

name of the Lord, what good can be got out of him? It was not so with the Philadelphian saints. They did not deny His name; and the Lord uses the tenderest expressions of love towards them. All ecclesiastical pretension, it has been well said, was against them. They were not looked on by those who said they were Jews. But He says of them, "I will make them come and worship before thy feet," &c. (Ver. 9.) They were in the midst of a great deal of profession that was hollow. But the Lord promises to vindicate them by His own power. What comfort there is in not seeking to vindicate ourselves, but in going on with the Lord!

It is of the utmost importance to see that the name of the Lord will never oblige a man to choose between two evils; and this is, in my judgment, what God has been pressing of late. There is a path without evil. Not that the flesh of man may not bring in evil; but if a man persists in any sin, you say he is not walking as a Christian; he cannot be owned as a Christian, though we may pray for him. Again, take a company of Christians. Evil comes in. I cannot say, "these are not Christians." No, but bring in the authority of the Lord's name to put the evil away. He having absolute authority, it is ours to take the place of full subjection to Him. The Church belongs to God. If it were ours, we might make our own rules; but woe be to the man that meddles with the Church of God, bringing in his own regulations! This was, it would seem, what was felt by these Philadelphians. They valued the authority of the name of the Lord. They avowed that they were weak, but they knew that the power of Christ was strong enough to keep them. Why should they be afraid? When Christians own His name as a gathering center, it is not said that evil will not come in; but looking to the power of the Lord Jesus and His Spirit, we do not mean to sanction evil. Let us only leave the door open for the Lord to come in. There may be much to try our patience; but what we have to do is to wait on the Lord. This is what the Lord seeks—that we should have confidence in what He is and has, taking the place of weakness and dependence in prayer, however much we may be tried.

It is of great interest to note here the re-appearance of the Catholic system at this point. It had developed first in its fullness in the era of early heathen persecution, under the fathers so called (the Smyrna period -compare chap. ii. 9.) Now, it comes up again, the enemy's counterfeit, the real antagonist of the testimony of God in our own day. But the Lord will compel them yet to recognize where the truth is, and where the Lord's approving love rests especially. "Behold I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie." (ver. 9.) These claimed to be exclusively the covenant people; others (in particular those meant by the assembly in Philadelphia) they regarded as outside, unworthy of a name save of contempt. For this it is which tries the saint, not persecution from open external enemies as also in Smyrna. The boasters in tradition, antiquity, priesthood, order, and ordinances, shall yet be forced to acknowledge those they despised as the beloved of the Lord. Fidelity to Him, however feeble, is precious in His eyes.

In Pergamos they kept His word: here they did more. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will keep thee from the hour of temptation" (ver. 10). In these churches the Lord evidently looks forward to a state of things up to the very close. It is plain that, as the hour of temptation is still future, room is left for the application of this promise to the end. This is not His word only but of His patience. Christ is coming to receive His Church, and afterward to be the Judge of all the earth. But we are not looking for signs. God will graciously give signs to the Jews, but the church was never called to be guided in its thoughts by what it saw (like Thomas). "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." It was when the Lord was no longer seen that

the church was born into the world; and since then the church is waiting, but was never meant to depend on outward tokens. It was when He took His place above as Head, that His body, the church, was formed; for there could not be a body, except there were first a head. God would have the church waiting not for signs, but for Christ Himself. He will cause His voice to be heard, and the dead in Christ shall rise and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Christ is waiting for this patiently. As far as I have noticed, the Lord does not speak about His coming as if there were any haste connected with it. He waits patiently for it. He lingers in His love, that there may be a lengthening of mercy to the world, and that souls may be brought to Him. The Church knows that He is waiting, and is called to the same patience-to have fellowship with Him in His patience.

“I will keep thee from the hour of temptation (ver. 10).” This is not the portion of the Jews. To them, when the time of trial comes, God says, “Come, my people, enter into thy chambers” (Isa. 26). Ours is the place of Abraham. He had not to fly to a little Zoar, like Lot who was saved indeed out of the judgment, but not much to his honor. The Lord had a heavenly-minded saint, as well as an earthly minded one. Abraham was not in the sphere of that. temptation at all. So the Church will be kept from the coming hour. This is our confidence-not merely preserved in or through it, but “from” it. Take another figure-that of the deluge. Enoch had been preserved out of it altogether, while Noah was carried through the waters of the flood. Thus God gives us blessed witnesses from the beginning of this two-fold preservation, like Enoch and Abraham in spirit on the one hand, and on the other like Noah and Lot. These last were in the circumstances of the trial; and this will be the case with the converted remnant of Israel during the time of the dreadful judgments, The Christian's hope is to be with the Lord in heaven, and the church ought to be looking for it. And surely the cry is now going forth, “Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.” I ask you have you gone out? There were those who not only believed when they heard the cry, but went out. Have you left everything that is contrary to Him?- what you know-not what I know-to be contrary to Him? I ask whether you are ready to meet Him. If so, you need not be afraid. Be assured that anything your poor will wants to keep is not worth the pains. It is gain to go out from all to meet Him; it is joy to be in the path of His sorrow. Has that cry reached your heart? Do not be content with saying, “I have got oil in my vessel, and it does not matter where I am.” This is selfish and unholy. The Lord grant that such may not be your feeling! He has saved me that I may think of Him. He wishes me to go out to meet Him-to value the precious hope of His coming. Are you then keeping His word? You know. This is a question between your own conscience and the Lord. When you have kept what you do know, you will learn more, and find it the truest liberty ever to serve Him “I am coming quickly: hold that fast which thou Last, that no one take thy crown (ver. 11).” This is a precious word. The Lord speaks of coming like a thief (as e. g. to Sardis, which had taken the world as its mistress, and allowed the unpurged world to have the place of the Lord). Here He comes as one that has a crown to give. The Lord Himself coming to meet us is the jewel He has given us to keep. The Lord grant us to hold it fast, that it be not taken from us!

We are indeed weak now, but the Lord says, “If you are content to be weak now, I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God.” A pillar is the emblem of strength (that which supported the temple), contrasted with weakness It is a hard thing to be content to be weak. To flesh it is comfortable to feel the world's strength under one. But if willing to look what we are now, the Lord tells us what He will do for us then: “I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God (ver. 12).” As I have known My God, I will bring you into fellowship with Me. You were content to wait for My

coming, and none shall take your crown. For those who have thought of Christ now, Christ will provide all the joy He can give them then. The Lord grant that this may be our comfort while we wait for Him! We may for Christ be outside all that looks strong and orderly. In that day we shall go no more out but enjoy the most intimate association with Christ, be a pillar in the temple of His God, and have the name of His God and of the city of His God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and His new name inscribed on us.

Weak as these were, they took the place of weakness; and as they had thought of His word and of His name, the Lord says, When I have you in my temple, I will write upon you "my new name," and will make you a pillar "in the temple of my God." He does not say the throne, which would be the expression of power, but the temple, which is another thought from the throne. The temple is the place of worship, where God is exalted in the beauty of holiness. Just so, when it was a question of the worship of God, David wears an ephod. His own wife despised him (she was looking at him as the son-in-law of her father Saul, the king) because he did not come out in some robe suitable to royalty: but David had the thought of God before him, and in his eyes it was his greatest possible exaltation to wear the ephod, and so to draw near to the Lord.

So in Philadelphia, they were specially those who entered into worship, because they appreciated the person and character of the Son of God. It is this that draws out the heart. Thus when Jesus revealed Himself as the Son of God (John 9), the blind man worshipped Him. This is very little entered into, even by real children of God. A man might receive favor from God, and give thanks to God for it, but might know little of worship. This is a higher step and nearer to the Lord. It does not merely appreciate the favors that come down to us from God, but what the God is who gives them. Real worship is always this. The Father seeks worshippers, but it is to draw them back to the source from which the grace has flowed. Not that the word worship is used in the address to Philadelphia (except in ver. 9, where it is in quite a different sense, merely signifying that the men, who were now scorers, would have to humble themselves and give honor to those whom they had despised). Worship is the drawing near to God in the appreciation not only of what He does, but of Himself. There is this that always prepares the way for worship—the full and simple knowledge of our being brought near to God, of the work of Christ and its blessed results for us.

## Lectures on Revelation: 3:14-22: Laodicea

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Ver. 14-22. We have seen the strong contrast between the state of Sardis and the previous order of things. Gross corruption, open evil, persecution, hatred of the holiness and truth of God, false prophets had reigned in Thyatira, though there was a remnant found there, and a faithful remnant. If Thyatira represents the dark ages, when the Lord had His faithful saints hidden away in nooks and corners of the world, in Sardis we have a correct appearance of things—a name to live, and death almost universal; yet even in Sardis there were those who had not defiled their garments. If there is so marked a distinction between Sardis and Thyatira, there is an equally strong line of demarcation between Philadelphia and Laodicea.

“Unto the angel of the church in Laodicea,” not “of the Laodiceans.” (So as to Ephesus, it should be “the church in Ephesus.” Rev. 2:1.)

Let us look at the character that God gives of this church, and what He brings to light of its condition. If there are two churches that stand in more pointed contrast to one another, it is just these last two. The reason I think, is this; that when God works in any special way, when He puts forth His grace in some new form and light, it always, since the slipping aside of Christendom, draws in its train a peculiarly dark shadow. So, here, Philadelphia was a bright picture. They were weak, but they were to be quite peaceful; for the Lord had opened the door, and He would keep it open. Christ was all their confidence in contrast with the pretentious religionists who appear at the same time, claiming to be the people of God with no care for Christ. The church should have been by the Holy Spirit a real testimony to the new creation of which Christ is both the only source and the bright exemplar. But it had wholly failed and never so much as in this last phase. But when we come to look at Laodicea, what a difference we find! There is no such thing as the Lord waiting upon their need, having the key of David, and presenting Himself as the object of their affections—as the holy and true One, in His moral grandeur, which called out all the heart to worship Him. But now He speaks in another tone. “These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.” There was an end of proud profession at hand. He was the “Amen,” the only securer of divine promise, the solitary “faithful and true witness,” when all else had failed. This presentation of Himself supposes that those to whom He was writing were utterly faithless and had revived the old things which had been buried in the grave of Christ.

Job was not in the presence of God when he was thinking so much about himself. (“When the ear heard me and the eye saw me,” &c.) We may say he was in the presence of himself and not of God. It is always a poor sign if we see a man stop to look at himself, whether his good or his bad self. The Lord does not want us to be dwelling on the change in ourselves. This is not to forget the things that are behind (which does not mean, by the way, our sins, but our progress). If the Lord has given us to take a step forward, it is that we may get nearer to Himself, and increase in the knowledge of God. Along with this there will always be increase in the knowledge of ourselves, but never in the way of self-admiration. As belonging to Christ, He is the object that happily keeps us low. When Job was really brought at the close into the presence of God, he was in the dust. He did

not know what it was to be thoroughly worshipping God until he was brought there, when his eye saw Him. Before, he had been looking more at what God had produced in him, but now he saw himself to be nothing. After this we find him even praying for his friends, and we have burnt-offerings. This was the spirit of intercession, and worship too. It appears to me that such was the spirit into which the Philadelphian church had been brought. They understood worship, because they, in their measure, knew Him that was from the beginning. The Lord loves us to be strong in Christ, to be growing up into Him. In Laodicea there was no such thought—nothing like entering into the riches of the Lord's grace. There is nothing we ought to feel our lack in so much as in worship, just because we do value it. It is spiritual feeling, though feeble indeed, that makes us alive to our little power of worship. Be assured that the spirit of worship is our true power for service. Thus in John 10 the Lord says, "I am the door: by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture." It is no longer the Jewish sheepfold and the bondage of the law, but perfect liberty, going in for worship and out for service, everywhere finding food and blessing. How sweet to think that the time is coming when we shall go in never to come out again! It will be always service in immediate connection with the Lord Himself—enjoyment of the presence of God and of the Lamb—eternal worship. And let me again ask, for whom would this be a welcome and happy promise? For those who had valued and enjoyed worship here below; as in Psa. 84, "They shall be still praising thee." The place where the Lord dwelt was graven even in the hearts of those going there "in whose heart are the ways." They must get to the place where God was, and dwell there.

The Lord does not reveal Himself in the same personal and still less in an ecclesiastical way; but certain qualities and titles belonging to Him are taken up, which reach out from what He had been for God to that which links Him with the new scene in which He is about to be displayed as Head over all. This cannot fail. He was "the Amen," the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. They had failed in everything—they had been unfaithful witnesses, and He as good as says to them, "You have not met a single thought of My heart. I will now present Myself to you as all you should have been." He was also "the beginning of the creation of God." (Ver. 14.) Christendom is at its beginning a rejected witness. Christ is in relationship with the new creation.

"I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot," (Ver. 15.) This is latitudinarianism. It is not ignorance that makes a person latitudinarian, but the heart that remains indifferent to the truth, after the truth has been brought before it. Such an one does not want the truth, because he feels the sacrifice and the separation from the world, which must ensue if the truth be followed. We ought to bear, wherever there is unwilling simple-hearted ignorance; but indifference to truth is quite another thing, and hateful in the sight of the Lord.

Thus latitudinarianism is never the condition of souls that are simple-hearted but of those by whom the truth has been heard and who are not prepared for the cross. God's truth must put people's hearts to the test. It is not merely something I have to learn, but it proves me. If the sheep is in a healthy condition, it will hear the Shepherd's voice, and not even know the voice of strangers; but if the sheep departs after others, it becomes so confounded that it can scarce distinguish the Shepherd's voice. This arises in Laodicea, and, as it appears to me, from despising the testimony given in the former church. Laodicea is the fruit of the rejection of the testimony that formed Philadelphia. There He showed Himself, and to the heart that received Him He said, "As my name has been everything to you on the earth, so I will give to you My new name in time of glory. Every

affection that has been true and blessed, that I have wrought in your hearts, shall come out more brightly in the glory." To Laodicea He says, "Thou art neither cold nor hot." They must have had some stimulant to warm them as it was not absolute cold. They were dishonest. Laodicea, is just the last state of things, which the Lord could not allow to go on any longer—a time when persons have had a great deal of truth in a certain fashion, but their hearts not touched by it. If the heart had been in ever so little a measure true, however ignorant, it would have enjoyed what had come from the Lord. In 1 John the persons who are said to have an unction from the Holy One and to know all things, are not the "fathers" (who of course had been thus anointed also) but "the babes." The ability to judge what is not of Christ depends upon the heart being true to Him. Hence the youngest saint, if single-eyed, can discern with certainty, where the theologian is lost in endless genealogies.

Every spirit that lowers and denies Christ (the Christ of God) is of antichrist. There were, there are now many antichrists, and the place to look for them is where He has been named. If Christ had not been known, there could not have been an antichrist, which was the dark shadow that followed the truth. If we have the Lord at work in this gracious way, we have Satan working too. To be "lukewarm" was to be false, with the pretension of the truth; and the Lord says, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." There is not such a contemptuous expression used by Him anywhere else that I know. This is sensibly different from the dealing with Sardis, where the general judgment of Protestantism is given, judged like the world: the Lord comes as a thief. Is this the way that we measure things? We should have said probably that Jezebel was to be felt most about; but would it have struck us that to be lukewarm was the worst of all? But this was what drew forth all the Lord's indignation, and He only is wise.

"Because thou sayest I am rich and increased with goods," &c. (Ver. 16.) Here is a plain proof that they had heard a great deal about the truth. They thought themselves rich. Learning and intellectualism in religion they counted a prize. If these grow (at least in extent, even though not in depth), what ground for satisfaction? The spread of the outward knowledge of God is what hastens on the last crisis—God's final judgment and setting aside of all that bears His name falsely and self-complacently. They had sought man and the world, which promise much to the eye. But this is no righteous judgment; for nature thus allowed in the church is so much loss, to the utter exclusion of what is divine and heavenly—the real and bitter impoverishment unto all true riches. This the Lord proceeds next to lay before the angel.

Ver. 17. "And knowest not that thou art the wretched, and the miserable, and poor, and blind," &c. This was because they had rejected the testimony of God. His testimony always produces the sense of being nothing, but it never weakens confidence in Him. There may be tests,—the epistles of John are full of them; but there never is such a thing as the Spirit of God leading a person to doubt God's being for him. He may and surely will work in a person who is slipping aside from the Lord, to bring him back; He may make us feel our weakness; but it is not at all His way to produce a doubt in the soul; and it is ever a sign of the flesh being at work, "lusting against the Spirit," when we give way to distrust. The Spirit of God always, wherever He is, aims at making a man thoroughly humble himself, judging and renouncing the folly of the flesh. There is, and must be, reality, and earnestness, and truthfulness in the presence of God. "I am rich, and am become rich, and have need of nothing." But we have the Spirit of God pronouncing this to be carnal presumption, the heart knowing not its need, and refusing grace. There had been momentary

warmth, which made it so hateful to God. But this is just what men are doing who talk about the church of the future. The early times they call the infancy of the church; afterward the church became a great naughty child: and now they are looking for a church of the future, when man will be no longer a subject, but will act for himself—will act like a man. Alas! where will not these aspirations end? for God will be left out of the so-called church altogether, and His authority got rid of.

This is working now extensively. And are God's children lukewarm about? about God's truth being shut out? Remember what the Lord here says, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." It would be a gross mistake to suppose that there were no Christians among them. But it is not a question of individuals, but of the assembly, and as such the Lord said He would spue them out of His mouth. People cannot congregate in large masses without Laodiceanism as the result, if it be not also the spring. There is no such thing as great power of the Spirit of God gathering people together at the present time. The Lord be thanked if there are a few gathered out to His name! Let God's children remember that they must answer to the Lord Jesus Christ, whether they are represented by Laodicea or not; whether they are standing for Christ, or for what merely bears the name of Christ, as a veil over indifferentism.

Yet the Lord does not give them up. He says, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire," &c. (Ver. 18.) Gold is used as the symbol of what is intrinsic righteousness in God's nature, or divine righteousness; and white raiment, or linen, stands for the righteousness of saints, as we see from chap. xix. Divine righteousness had slipped from their thoughts. They were neither appreciating the righteousness of God, which a Christian is made in Christ, nor the practical righteousness displayed before men, which the Spirit leads in. So He counsels them to buy of Him the true gold, and white raiment, that there might be the holiness that became them before others. "Anoint thine eye with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." There was the secret—the lack of unction from the Holy One. They did not see anything properly, not even their need of divine righteousness.

As many as I love I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent." (Ver. 19.) Depend upon it that this is the Lord's voice for the present moment. Here, alas! it was what the Laodiceans needed. The Lord is dealing with His people: He constantly puts before them something to humble them in their thoughts of themselves: not telling them to do something or try something new, but calling them "to repent." He does not ask them to stretch their wings for some greater flight in the future, but to see where they are and to repent.

The call to repentance here, however, as in Sardis, differs greatly from that in the message to Ephesus and Pergamos, where all are thus urged, on penalty of the Lord's solemn chastening, whether general or special. Thyatira has here too an intermediate place: "I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not." Hence the threat of judgment follows, and the vast change ensues in all its extent.

It is a far higher thing to suffer for Christ and with Christ, than to be doing something. When the Apostle Paul asks, "What shall I do?" The Lord answers, "I shall show thee what great things thou must suffer," &c. This is what the Lord specially prizes—not our sufferings as men, but sufferings for Christ.

Here they were persons, as sunken as they were proud, called upon to be zealous and repent; to humble themselves before God on account of their condition. The Lord brings out a gracious word too, "Behold I stand at the door and knock." (Ver. 20.) Yet it is a solemn thing that the Lord should be there, thus taking the place of one outside. Nevertheless, He was ready to come in where He found a soul true to him. "If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him," &c. Need it be said that this is not an address to the world for them to be saved? In John 10 the Lord presents Himself in full grace, saying, "I am the door, by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved," &c. But here He speaks thus to the Church. What a solemn position! How utterly fallen now! What ought to be the enjoyed portion of all the Church, whether in approaching God or in display before men, or in the communion of Christ, proffered in pure grace to him who hearkens and humbles himself before the grace of the Lord. He was One that had no sympathy with their self-satisfaction. He stood outside, knocking at the door, if perchance there should be a heart within, not too much occupied with the things and the persons around, that would open to Him. To such He says, "I will come in to him and sup with him and he with me." But it is all individual. If we saw a complete departure, are we to say, "there is no hope?" Not at all; there is the Lord standing at the door and knocking. There may not be many to answer His call, but some will; and the promise is, "to him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

It is a mistake to suppose that this is comparatively a glorious promise: we are apt to think so, because we naturally value display. But God does not estimate power the most. His holy love, proving itself divine most of all when Christ humbled Himself, in coming down to man and dying for him—that is the standard of value, rather than power or glory. He could make a thousand worlds with far more ease than He gave His Son to suffer. I do not question the grace of such a word, spite of such evil; but our sharing the kingdom with Christ is not the most blessed thing we shall enjoy. And the promise here does not go farther. What we have and shall have in Christ Himself is much more precious. Yet is this a portion with Christ. In John 17:23, the Lord shows that the display of glory is for the vindication of Himself before the world. All this disclosed glory in the future will be the proof to the world, that they might know that the Father loves us as He loved His Son. But we are entitled to know it by the Holy Ghost now. We do not wait till then to know the love that has given us the glory—a deeper thing than the appearing to the world, or thrones in the kingdom. The personal affection of the Lord to His people is a better portion than anything displayed before men or angels.

Here the Lord closes the churches. He had got to the last phase. The wisdom of God has provided in these chapters not only His depth, but what requires conscience, rather than any great amount of intelligence to understand. What is needed is the eye fixed on Christ. Besides these epistles being a messenger to local churches in the name of John, we have seen in them a sketch of the whole history of the Church till the Lord comes. For properly speaking, not the Lord's addresses, but the churches themselves and their angels constitute "the things which are" (i.e., the actual state in John's day.) The addresses, while primarily connected with the facts then existing, go far beyond them, and reach out into a prolonged moral application, till there is no longer any recognized assembly, the last (though with mercy to individuals) having been summarily rejected as a public witness by the Lord. After that, we never hear of the churches any more upon the earth. On the contrary, the curtain drops, and we have a new scene altogether. The seer no longer

turns round to see who spoke behind him on earth, but hears the same voice above, whether he is now invited to ascend. The government of the world from the throne in heaven, its accompaniments and consequences, are the things which follow, when the Church's time-state is closed. After this we have individual saints both among the twelve tribes of Israel and out of all nations mentioned as such, but this only makes the contrast more striking Henceforward, if specified at all, they are named as Jews and Gentiles, because there was no longer anything of the nature of the assembly of God upon earth: for the very meaning and essence of the Church is, that there is neither Jew nor Gentile, because all are one in Christ.

In the detail of these seven epistles, there is also abundant practical instruction. It is true, that the Spirit addressed them to the churches; but "he that hath an ear" is expressly enjoined to give heed; and this, to the challenges of the Lord sent to them all. Such application, however, falls more fittingly within the domain of ordinary ministry in the word.

It may be well, now that we have gone over the ground of the Apocalyptic epistles, to notice the objections urged against the larger view of their meaning by Bp. Newton. "Many contend, and among them such learned men as More and Vitranga, that the seven epistles are prophetic of so many successive periods and states of the church, from the beginning to the conclusion of all. But it doth not appear that there are, or were to be, seven periods of the church, neither more nor less; and no two men can agree in assigning the same periods. There are, likewise, in these epistles, several innate characters which were peculiar to the church of that age, and cannot be so well applied to the church of any other age. Besides other arguments, there is also this plain reason; the last state of the church is described in this very book as the most glorious of all, but in the last state in these epistles, that of Laodicea, the church is represented as 'wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.'" (Newton's Works, Vol. I., p. M9, Ed. 1782.)

Now it is clear that "it doth not appear" is rather an assumption than a proof. Why does it not appear?

Another might urge the same objection, and perhaps with quite as much weight, against the seven seals, trumpets, and vials. God has been pleased to specify in each of these instances seven salient points, so to speak, as His complete account of each. "The main subjects of this book," the Bishop had just before remarked, "are comprised of sevens, seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials; as seven was also a mystical number throughout the Old Testament." If this answer satisfy as to the seven vials, why not as to the seven epistles? Doubtless, more spirituality may be required for right discernment in the latter than in the former case; because one series relates to external judgments in the world, whereas the other series takes cognizance of such remarkable spiritual conditions, good and bad, in the history of the Church, as it seemed good to the Lord to notice. Hence priori, one might be prepared for a greater divergence of judgment among Christians in their adaptation of Rev. 2; 3, than in their views of any other parts of the book. If there had been, therefore, a considerable measure of truth in what he says, the general principle would still remain undisturbed. But this is not the case. There is a striking agreement as regards the first three or four churches. This, of course, is not urged as in the least degree authoritative, but as a sufficient answer to the charge of hopeless discrepancy preferred by Bp. Newton. Retort would be easy on the discordant schemes of interpreting the seals, trumpets, and vials.

It is singular, however, that the Bishop bears testimony in the next page to the mystical meaning of the epistle to Smyrna. For the "tribulation ten days" is there explained of the greatest persecution that the primitive church ever endured, Diocletian's persecution, which lasted ten years, and grievously afflicted all the Eastern churches. Conscious that such an application, not in the promises attached, but in the body of the epistle, is fatal to his own exclusively literal application, the Bishop thereon allows that the "promissory or threatening part foretells something of their future condition," and asserts that "in this sense, and in no other, can these epistles be said to be prophetic" (p. 550).

But how stop here, once you own, as he does in the Smyranean epistle, a bearing beyond the bare single church in or near that age, once you extend its scope to all the East, and its date to the beginning of the fourth century? Indeed, that fierce persecution was not confined to the East; for all the empire, not excepting Spain and Britain, was stained with Christian blood. If the principle is true in one epistle, why not in all? And, in fact was not general declension within as clearly marked in Ephesus, as persecution from without in Smyrna? and does not Pergamos portray the corrupting influences of worldly exaltation, as palpably as Thyatira sets forth the proud unrelenting false prophetess of Popery?

No doubt, the unsatisfactory character attached by our Lord to Sardis must be painful and startling to those whose eye is filled with ordinary Protestantism and its decent orthodoxy. And, perhaps, yet more distasteful is the sight of another and a subsequent testimony, which sets those who bear it in weakness and scorn outside the religious world, with the coming of Christ their blessed and animating hope.

But it is plain that the picture of the last assembly, in its deplorable lukewarmness, and the Lord's peremptory rejection of it, was the great difficulty to Bp. N., because of its inconsistency with his theory of the last state of the Church, "described in this very book, as the most glorious of all." But this is a total mistake. The Revelation never describes the Church on earth after Laodicea. The glorious description, to which the Bishop refers, is probably in Rev. 19-21, where the entire Church is glorified above. In a word, this reason is plainly invalid. The bride of the Lamb is to reign, but this does not contradict the solemn testimony of the Laodicean epistle, that the last state of Christendom here below is to be, like that of Israel before it, "worse than the first." The general testimony of the New Testament entirely confirms the witness borne by this particular part, as appears from Luke 17:26-37 Thess. 2:1-12; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 2 Peter ii. iii.; 1 John 2:18; Jude 11-19.

## Lectures on Revelation 4

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WE are now come to the strictly prophetic part of the book of Revelation. The seven churches formed together what the Holy Ghost calls “the things which are.” And the Son of man was seen judging the house of God on earth, represented by the Asiatic churches. They existed in the time of the Apostle John; and in a mystic sort at least, they have an existence continuous and, to a certain extent, successive, as long as there is any testimony rendered by the professing body on the earth. If the literal application is past, the protracted representative bearing still goes on. In chap. 1:19 we were told that, besides “the things which thou hast seen” and “the things which are,” there was a third division— “the things which shall be hereafter.” The word “hereafter” is vague, -whereas the sense intended appears to be precise: it should be read “the things which shall be after these,” meaning what is to follow after the church has come to an end on the earth. Its present history closes here, though it will have a better existence in heaven, and it will reign over the earth, too, in the day of millennial glory. We then arrive at this wholly prophetic portion. Chaps. iv. and v. are a kind of preface to “the things which shall be after these.” Their great object is to show us, not events occurring upon the earth, but the attitude or aspect in which God appears, and the place of those who are nearest to Him, during the occurrence of these future events (i.e. the crisis of the present age). I must here dwell a little on the first of these chapters.

“After these things I looked, and, behold, a door open in heaven, and the first voice which I heard [was] as it were of a trumpet, talking with me,” &c. (Ver. 1). The “first voice” here does not mean the first of the voices that were about to speak, as some have strangely thought, but the voice that John had already heard in chap. 1.-the voice of Him who had been in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. It still addresses him like a trumpet, but now not from earth, but from heaven. There was a door there, and the voice spake from thence, so that this portion of the book supposes the earth done with for the moment, and the scene lies above. It is not merely that saints render testimony upon earth, but the voice speaks from heaven, showing the things that should follow the church-condition on earth, now concluded. “Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must happen after these things.” John is said to be immediately in the Spirit (ver. 2); i.e. by the Holy Ghost's power he was characterized, so as to enter into the new scenes he was now to behold.

“Behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat,” &c. God is not named as such in this account, save as “He that sat upon the throne.” John is about to show us what the aspect seemed of the One who sits upon the throne, while there is that in God which no man hath seen or can see. This is a representation, in a symbolical way, of the glory of God. He may assume any appearance that pleases Him, but as far as He permitted it to be displayed here, it was what could be compared to these precious stones. In chap. xxi. the bride, the New Jerusalem, comes down “out of heaven from God, having the glory of God; her light [was] like a stone most precious, as a jasper stone,” &c. It is quite evident that this cannot be the essential glory of God. It rather means, I think, that it was not a human but a divine glory. There is in God that which He can confer upon the creature, and there is that which is incommunicable. Here

divine glory is meant in contrast with creature glory—not that which would derogate from His majesty, but be a reflection of it. Her light was like a jasper stone; the wall also was of jasper (ver. 18), and the first foundation (ver. 19). The general appearance of the city was as it were of jasper. This a little answers, I think, to the view we have in chap. iv. of what John enjoyed of the sight of Him that sat upon the throne. In Rom. 5:2 it is said, not only that we have access to the grace of God in which we stand, but that we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. That glory of Him who sat on the throne, as far as it could be viewed by the creature, was presented under the figure of jasper and sardius (ver. 3); and when the church comes forth in the glory of God, her light will be jasper-like. That is, the-thought of God's glory, not man's, is the thing conveyed to the mind. Even in the “eternal day,” there will be no such thing as God abandoning or lowering the dignity of His own proper Godhead; for there will always be an infinite difference between God and the most exalted of His creatures. Still, there is a resemblance between the glory of God, as seen by man, and the church's glory by and by. And this answers exactly to the words of our Lord in the gospel of John (xvii. 22, 23): “The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”

But, besides the appearance of divine glory, there was a rainbow round about the throne. This evidently carries our thoughts back to the covenant that God made, not with His people Israel, but with the earth at large. The covenant with His people is noticed for the first time in chap. xi. of this book, where we have heaven opened and the ark of His testament seen in His temple. It is not the new covenant itself; for when this is brought out, there will be no earthquakes, and lightnings, and thunders, &c., but the day of peace and blessing for Israel. But at the time to which that vision refers, God will show that He has respect to His covenant. Here the rainbow is God's remembrance of His covenant with the earth. The ark spoken of in chap. xi. is God's remembrance of His covenant with His people. God is going to pour forth judgments upon the earth and upon those who had the responsibility of being His people. But He takes pains to show that, before a single judgment falls, there is mercy in store. Before He touches creation, there is the sign of His covenant with the earth; just as when He is forced to pour down plagues upon His people Israel, the ark of His covenant is seen. The rainbow was the witness that God had not forgotten His ancient word—He could not forget. The rainbow is the sign of mercy. It spans the heavens, and takes in earth, and sea, the whole compass of that blessed security of which God had hung out the token on high. But now we have the rainbow not merely over the world, but round about the throne in heaven. This is not its usual place, but it was a sweet sight for John to see in the midst of all that bright glory, God wishing to fill his heart with confidence. He had not merely the vision of what was coming on the earth, but in the circle of the divine manifestation and power above the rainbow is seen. God shows us His own glory, and, at the same time, the rainbow would tell us that God was true— that He was purposely putting man in mind of His pledge, given after the great judgment of old, and the rather as now He set it in this peculiar place, where a rainbow had never been seen before, in order to assure our hearts. But though peculiar, what could be more in character? For it is the throne of God, the Almighty, the Creator and Supreme Lord of all things.

Perhaps it is needless to remark that no such things will happen literally; but the vision was like a panorama, putting all before the eyes of the prophet— a most lively and admirable way of conveying what God meant to teach. When persons have got thoroughly founded in His grace, nothing is

more important than the study of this book. But it may be injurious to souls who have not been so established to get absorbed in the Revelation.

First, then, we have the throne of One who is the center and source of all the action, God's glory and majesty being set forth by the symbol of the jasper and sardine; and, next, there is the rainbow, the familiar emblem of God's faithfulness to creation. The rainbow was of a particular kind, "in appearance like an emerald" (ver. 3). We could scarcely have colors more opposed than those which represented the divine majesty, and the emerald so refreshing for the eye to look upon. The Holy Ghost gives us a vivid impression by these simple symbols. For this book was not written for great scholars; it was intended for suffering saints. Even by men of the world it has been noticed, that the Revelation was specially the book sought into by persecuted Christians, and it appears to me that, while those who make it a field for human research and speculation go wrong here and everywhere else, there is a general bright idea that would present itself to the mind of an unlettered believer, who looks up to God and desires the glory of His Son.

The first thought suggested to me by the chapter is, that the only true place from which to look at the things that were coming to pass after the churches is heaven. It is not upon and from the earth that we can rightly judge of these events. It must be from above we must learn and look. If we are earthly minded, we shall never understand them. If I am merely on the level of the scene upon which the judgments are passing, I shall endeavor to make the best of everything, and to put off the judgments: I am not entering in by the door opened in heaven. A heavenly standing must be taken as the ground, and the only ground, upon which these visions can be rightly estimated.

The next thing is God seen and His throne-His power ruling in providence. The throne is not in itself connected with priesthood, but with power, whence divine government proceeds. God would establish souls in the thought that He governs, even in the midst all the wickedness that was to be developed in the time of the beasts, or the final apostasy. The thing seen is the throne of One who did not need to be named, but who permits His glory to be seen, as far as it can be by the creature. From His throne above He is dealing with the world. Then we have His throne surrounded by the remembrancer of His covenant with creation. Next in the fourth verse, the prophet sees that, round about the central throne of God, there are other thrones. The reason why thrones here are preferable to "seats" is, that it is part of the essence of the vision to show that the persons seated there were persons of kingly dignity. The same word means a throne and a seat, and the choice is only determined by the connection in which it stands. We should not say of a person in humble life that he was sitting upon a throne, nor of the sovereign when in state that he was upon a seat. We can judge by the subject-matter.

Around the throne of God, then, in the scene of such glory as man, perhaps, never saw before, there are other thrones, with elders seated on them-persons who were endowed with wisdom from on high, who entered into the thoughts and counsels of God. They are clothed in white raiment, answering to their priestly, as their crowns do to their kingly, dignity. They are clearly saints, and they are seen in heaven, around the great central throne before the world's judgment begins. The number of these is twenty-four, corresponding with the twenty-four courses of priesthood in Israel. When the forerunner of the Lord was to be born, his father Zacharias was a priest of the course or order of Abia. In 1 Chron. xxiv. we must look to see what these divisions were, and we find the eighth was that of Abijah. The priesthood was divided into these courses in order that each in

succession might take up the work of the priesthood, every course having its own chief priest. The High Priest is not named here: we all know who He is; but we have the twenty-four elders answering to these twenty-four courses of priesthood, or rather to the chiefs who represented them. (Ver. 4.)

But a deeply interesting inquiry arises. If these crowned and enthroned elders represent the heavenly saints, as few will deny, when and to what condition does the vision apply? (i.) Does it speak of those who have departed to be with Christ? Or (ii.) does it foreshadow the manifested kingdom of Christ and His saints during the millennium? Now, I think it certain that both these questions must be answered in the negative, and that the time of this chapter iv, and therefore the interval during which the elders are thus engaged on high, is after the separate state is over, as far as they are concerned, and before the millennial reign begins.

For (i.) it is obvious that the symbol of the twenty-four elders implies the sum of the heads of the heavenly priesthood-not a part, however large, but the whole. There were just so many courses, and no more. In the vision they are complete; and in the reality, which it symbolizes, this can never be the case, while the saints are absent from the body and thus present with the Lord. During that state of things there will always be members of the Church on the earth. For, "we shall not all sleep." And when, at the Lord's return, the dead in Christ shall rise first, "we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." That is to say, the symbol understood and interpreted aright requires that all the members of Christ should be together and in the same condition; and as this will never be true of the separate spirits, it necessarily follows that the vision will be realized only when "we shall all be changed" and with the Lord.

But (ii.) it is clear, that, whatever may be anticipatively presented in the songs of the elders, or of others who catch up, as it were, the chorus of their strains, both the actions of the elders, and the entire heavenly scenery, in which they take so prominent a part from Rev. 4 to chap. xix., suppose that the reigning over the earth does not arrive as a literal fact till Christ and His saints have left heaven for the judgment of His enemies. But the full complement of the elders is made up a considerable time previously: none can deny they are in heaven before and during the seals, trumpets, and vials. The inference is plain. The saints represented by them must be, as a whole, in heaven before these judgments begin to be fulfilled. The millennium does not come till Rev. 20; the elders, shadowing the glorified saints, are with the Lord in their changed bodies long before. When He comes from heaven, to the destruction of the beast, they follow, and with Him they subsequently reign for a thousand years. Others, I doubt not, will be joined with them in that reign: these will not be glorified in their bodies till Rev. 20, having suffered, after the rapture of the church, under the beast, &c. But Rev. 4 intimates, that the rapture will then have taken place, and that the saints caught up are viewed as a royal priesthood, interested, as having the mind of Christ, in the trials, sufferings, testimony, and hopes of those who succeed themselves, as witnesses for God, during the hour of temptation which will then come upon all the world to try those that dwell on the earth. Even for the raptured saints on high it is not yet the time for the marriage of the Lamb; and therefore, as well as for other reasons, they are here regarded, not as the body or bride, but as kings and priests worshipping, and as yet waiting for their manifestation in glory when they shall judge the world.

There is a solemn connection with this in Ezekiel, where we have twenty-five men named; (Ezek. 8:16;) and to my own mind it appears, that they were the whole of the heads of the priesthood—the twenty-four chiefs and the high priest besides. But where were they now? Alas! they were the very, heads of idolatry and of wickedness perpetrated in the temple of Jehovah. They were there, not as those whose raiment told of the blood that cleanses, but the corrupters of God's holy standard and the defilers of Israel, leading them on to apostasy; so that if judgment is to be inflicted, it must begin with the house of God. There is a sort of contrast between the scene here described and that in Ezekiel. There we had the living creatures, first, the symbol of the executive judgments of God—of His judicial power putting down evil. The earthly result of the action of these living creatures, as seen in Ezekiel, might be the destruction of Jerusalem; but that was only what man saw.

The cherubim and the living creatures (ξ■α) are the same thing; they must be carefully distinguished from the beasts (θηρ■α) we read of afterward. The first mention of the cherubim is in the early part of the book (of Genesis chap. When sin entered the world, immediately we find them. They were the beings to whom the work of judgment was entrusted. "He placed in the garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword to keep the way of the tree of life." The emblem of their power was this flaming sword. Again, if we look at the second book of Moses, we find the cherubim there in a most blessed way. Where were they looking? Within. Had they been looking outwards, they would have seen sinners; had they looked under, i.e., into the ark, there they would have seen the law; but they were looking within, upon the mercy-seat, upon the blood that was sprinkled there. There was the blood that spoke of the perfect mercy of God which had met and triumphed over sin; and there was the power of God—both combined in preserving the glory of God, and both working for man instead of against him. If we look at them again in the time of Solomon, we find a remarkable difference. The position of the cherubim completely changes, and instead of looking within, they are looking out, because Solomon's day typifies the time of glory, when the true Man and Prince of Peace shall rule. And why should not they look out then? Sin will have been judged, and instead of the goodness of the Lord falling as it were in drops here and there, the Lord shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth, and the whole earth shall be filled with his glory—the just answer to the glory of David's Son. When mercy will have had its full way, and judgment has been executed, there will be nothing to hinder the cherubim from proclaiming the goodness of the Lord. But in Ezekiel a terrible crisis came. The mercy-seat had been despised, and Solomon's glory had faded away. Israel was sinning with a high hand, and now the very temple itself was the spot where the greatest dishonor was done to God, and there the cherubim again as good as say, "God can have nothing to do with this wicked people; judgment must have its course." Accordingly they leave Israel, though they bring judgment upon them. They are only seen again as giving the signal for judgment, and putting it in force by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

We have the same thing in Revelation, with this difference, that in Ezekiel the living creatures are seen more in connection with the earth, and this is the reason why they are said to have wheels as well as wings. In Revelation, the earthly people being dropped for a season, and a heavenly people called, they are simply seen with the wings suited for heaven, and not the wheels suited for earth. From this omission it is sweet to see that even if God is going to speak about judgment, the very form that the executive of God's judgment takes, tells us that a heavenly interruption has

come in, ere the world's history is resumed. It is of immense importance, if we are to view these things aright, to get a firm footing on the ground on which the apostle stood—to enter in, as it were, by the door opened in heaven.

But besides this, “Out of the throne proceeded lightnings, and voices, and thunders,” &c. (Ver. 5.) Evidently, this is not the throne that we draw near to; for ours is a throne of grace, and this is a throne of judgment. Its aspect described here has nothing in the world to do with grace. What proceeds from the throne is not a stream clear as crystal as in the case of the throne mentioned in chap. xxii., but “lightnings, and voices, and thunders,” &c., which are expressive of God's terrors. Even the symbolic likeness given here of God's Spirit is in keeping with it. “There were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.” The Holy Ghost does not take the symbol of lamps of fire when expressing God's grace to the church. No doubt, on the day of Pentecost we have the tongues of fire, a beautiful emblem of what God was then about to do; for it was divine force that gave those unlettered men to speak in every tongue. On the Lord Jesus He descended in the form of a dove; but this was quite a different thing from what we have in Revelation. Here it is the consuming power of the Spirit of God. Fire is the well known emblem of the searching holiness of God. The Holy Ghost in full perfection as light, and as a fire that consumes, is the representation that the Spirit gives of His own relation to this time. It is plain that this does not refer to the millennial kingdom, for then a stream clear as crystal is to proceed out of the throne of God; still less would such a symbol apply to His action in the body of Christ during the present time. Nor is God's throne now one from which proceed lightnings and thunders, &c. To what period, then, is the reference? To a short space between the two, when God has done His present church-work, and before the millennial glory begins. The present is the time when God is gathering out His heirs, joint-heirs with Christ, and forming the bride: and now there is a throne of grace, and we find grace and mercy in every time of need. Here, on the contrary, His judgments issue from the throne. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of judgment and burning here, just as much as the throne is judicial and the source of terrors for the earth. Thus, then, it is neither the peaceful era of the millennial glory, nor the present display of unbounded grace, but a time between the two. It is not conceivable for a person to have just light upon this book who does not see that the Revelation fills up the interval after the Lord has taken the church, and before He comes out of heaven and the church along with Him (Chap. xix.) I speak, of course, of the prophetic visions which fill the body of the book, and not of the three introductory chapters, nor of the close, when the Lord is about to appear. There the whole scene is changed; the heavens are opened to send forth the Lord Jesus, for the purpose of putting the last stroke of judgment to man's iniquity and Satan's power, and then we have the full flow of blessing far and wide. Here we have the time that precedes it—an interval of most solemn character for the world, when the heavenly saints shall have been caught up.

“And before the throne there was a sea of glass,” &c. (Ver. 6.) Not a sea of water, where persons could bathe, but a sea of glass. Now the Holy Ghost uses the washing of water by the word for the purpose of purging defilement. There was no longer need for this in those who were here. In chap. xv. there is another class mentioned as standing upon a sea of glass, showing that it is not then a question of the Spirit's power in dealing with what is contrary to God, but the victory is over. All question of the trial of the heavenly saints is over. The scene where the church had been in trial is now peacefully closed, in Rev. 4, and they are seated round God's own throne.

There, too, are the four living creatures, full of eyes before and behind, which are the symbol of discernment; for though it is judgment they have to execute, it is not, we need hardly say, unintelligent judgment. "The first living creature was like a lion, the second like a calf, the third had the face as of a man, and the fourth was like a flying eagle (ver. 7)." The various symbols are taken from the heads of God's creation here below, and represent different qualities of His judgments: the lion as the head of wild beasts, the ox or calf the head of cattle, man of intelligent beings, and the eagle of birds. The lion conveys the idea of strength or majestic power, the ox of patient endurance, the man of intelligence, and the eagle of rapidity. God shows us the strength, patience, intelligence, and rapidity with which His judgments should be executed. The four living creatures, having each of them six wings, denoted supernatural rapidity, and the eyes within intrinsic discernment (ver. 8). Some have supposed, chiefly from the nearness of the living creatures to the supreme throne, that they, rather than the elders, must set forth the church. But this is quite a misconception. The reason, as I think, why the living creatures are thus near, is because they are the judicial executive, and providential judgments will then be in progress. They characterize the action of the throne.

"And they have no rest day and night, saying, "Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." This is a remarkable word. It is not occupation with evil; but when God shows us the means, or agencies by which He executes judgment, we have one unceasing cry as regards Him" Holy, holy, holy."

One of the most important features of this scene for the soul is that the elders symbolize the heavenly saints in glory, the heads of the heavenly priesthood, found in their blessed employ above. But observe that, when they are seen there first, they are perfectly familiar with the scene: there is no hurry and no anxiety. They are peacefully seated on the thrones. There is no trembling, even in the presence of God. These thunders, and lightnings, and judgments, might proceed from His throne, but still they sit peacefully on their thrones—not a single movement is produced. And what is it that does move them? They were entirely undisturbed by terror: judgment does not shake them from the thrones; but when those living creatures shall give glory, and honor, and thanks to Him that sat on the throne, &c., the four-and-twenty elders shall fall down, &c. Directly honor is given by the executors of judgment to Him that sat upon the throne, the elders worship. What satisfaction in God—what certainty that sin was at an end—does this show! He may be going to judge, but He will not judge those who are made His righteousness in Christ. They are in sympathy with Him; and when the living creatures address God and ascribe glory, and honor, and thanks to Him, then it is that they rise from their thrones and are found prostrate before Him. More than that, they worship and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive the glory, and the honor, and the power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy will they were, and were created." They enter into His personal worthiness in a way that the living creatures do not, and with greater spiritual intelligence. They are elders; they understand here the creatorial and providential glory of God, just as in chap. v. we see that they enter into the worthiness and work of the Lamb. "For thou didst create all things," "are created and were created;" but for His will, or pleasure, they were sustained in existence, even as they were originated at first. (Verses 10, 11.) Thus, their praise embraces the two great thoughts in the chapter—the creation glory and the governmental glory of God. "They were" (i.e., they existed now in the care and the government of God), "and they were created" (i.e., to Him they owed their

origination).

It is not merely what we shall feel then that God reveals to us; but He desires us to enter now into what we shall have then. This glory is given us already. Assuredly we shall not have such a place then, if we have not got its title upon earth. It is ours now by faith, though then we shall have it in its fullness. What enables the elders to be so calm in the midst of judgment? That which God had done for them through the cross of Jesus. But God has done that now. In Christ was wrought as perfect a work upon earth as there could be in heaven. He will not do another or a better work there, though it may be enjoyed more above. But God has revealed this scene to His own that they may enter into it now intelligently, and may be worshippers according to its spirit, even upon earth, seeing the glory that will be theirs in heaven. Worship is a more serious thing than is supposed by many. Anything that does not suit the presence of God in heaven, is unfit for the presence of God upon earth. Even in outward things He looks for our hearts to be exercised. It is a bad sign when the children of God allow themselves in anything that is inconsistent with His presence. We are responsible that the worship of God should be conducted in a way worthy of Him—in solemnity, but in liberty. We should be careful that we do not distract others, but rather help one another to enjoy the Lord better.

The Lord grant that, walking in holy liberty, and remembering that it is not the order of the flesh or of forms that we have to keep up, we may be preserved from thinking that His order is less reverent than man's. May He vouchsafe us to seek what becomes the presence of Him whom we come together to exalt! He has given us the place of worshippers: may we worship Him in spirit and in truth! A better relation or employment God Himself could not give even in heaven.

## Lectures on Revelation 5

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We have had, in the preceding chapter, a sight of the greatest significance and interest: God unfolding the interior, so to speak, of heaven—its thoughts and its employment, before the fall of a single blow of judgment upon the earth comes before us. But the picture would have been incomplete, if the Holy Ghost had not added the scene which we have revealed to us in this chapter. For, if there was a divine manifestation, and the elders entered with spiritual intelligence into the worship of God, acknowledging His glory in creation and in providential government, yet they had no song there, much less did they sing “the new song.” Now it is the great object of the chapter before us to show this other and fuller way in which the elders are found prostrating themselves before the Lamb, and worshipping Him. The Holy Ghost takes particular pains to point out that God, as He discloses Himself, must be the object, spring, and foundation of all the adoration from the creature that follows. It is not an image conceived by the mind of man; that would be an idol. We must have a divine revelation to have divine truth and acceptable worship. The images of chap. iv. left God in a sort of mysterious grandeur and majesty. Accordingly, the worship of the elders did not go beyond recognizing that God had created and sustained all things. It was His glory in creation and in providence, and theirs was suited intelligent praise.

In this chapter we have a sweeter scene. And why? Because we have the Lamb. What blessing does He not bring! He has blotted out sin—has removed the sting of death—has brought us nigh to God, and has put a song in our mouth fit for the presence of God. In this blessed portion of the word we have, as the great subject of it, the bearing of redemption on the occupation or worship of heaven, and the connection of it with the counsels and ways of God on the earth. As long as it was only the creation—glory of God, we had no book at all. But now the prophet looks, and he sees in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back side, sealed up with seven seals. (Ver. 1.) In ancient times a book was a manuscript roll, written only in the inside in ordinary cases. But here there is a fullness of revelation. It flows over, as it were, and is inscribed on the back as well as within, and altogether is secured by seven seals.

But observe, that if God is seen with this book in His hand, it is only the Lamb who opens, and in connection with the Lamb that the contents of the book appear. How plain that there never can be any opening out of God's mind as regards things to come, without the knowledge of Christ and of His glory in respect of them! Every Christian knows that there is no such thing as being saved without Christ, but many do not perceive that there is no understanding of prophecy without Christ, nor any right knowledge of what the church is.

Thus it is that men make religious societies, and call them churches. But I do not hesitate to say that it is easier to make heaven and earth than to make the church of God. But man's presumption has risen to such a height that the highest and holiest things of God are made the work (not to say the sport) of human hands, because they have practically divorced the church from Christ. They treat the subject as optional and eternal, instead of owning that it is the especial field of the deepest and purest operations of the Spirit, the dearest object of the affections and the witness of

the chief glories of Christ. The ordering of the Church and the ways of God therein bring out the very depths and heights of divine wisdom and grace.

Again, one main difficulty now, as ever, is that those whom the Holy Ghost brings together round the name of the Lord are apt to carry with them a load of notions out of the country from whence they come—the long-cherished thoughts and habits which they have got to unlearn. They have also the same flesh as others—the same vanity, haste, conceit, &c. We must remember that what other people have done we are in no less danger of doing ourselves. If the church fell away so soon after God had brought out His new and blessed counsels of heavenly grace here below, it is much more easy now (when Christendom has forsaken and well-nigh forgotten its best privileges) to fall again into the same error and unfaithfulness. The great root of the mischief is the tendency to look at the church as ours, not Christ's. You never get the full truth about anything that concerns either God or ourselves apart from Christ. It remains always true that “the law was given by Moses,” (and he was a most honored servant of God,) but “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”

It is the same with prophetic interpretations. If I connect prophecy with myself or with my country, I may find the last French Revolution, or the potato disease, or the Asiatic cholera, or something of the kind, in the seventh vial. I may read the land “bordering with wings” of Great Britain and her ships; I may interpret the vessels of bulrushes (Isa. 18) of her iron steamers. Do you think this too absurd? Christian men have done so, and this because they connect things with themselves instead of with Christ. The moment, on the other hand, anything is viewed in relation to Christ, He is the light, and we get deliverance from these thoughts of men. For what is our country or our time? Neither one nor other is Christ. If I seek communion with Him, I shall at once be free from the desire to make something connected with myself the center of my system. If people look with an historical eye at the dark ages, or at the previous invasions of the barbarians, they think it all very interesting, and assume that God could not have left that out of His book—that He must have said something about a transition so important. Thus even the invention of gunpowder has been conceived to be anticipated in Rev. 9, the discovery of America in chap. x., and the political importance of Protestantism in chap. xi. In short, nothing too wild for men to think they have not found out in the Apocalypse. And these things are put forth even by godly men. Is not God warning us by all this? May we be preserved from the same snare which has led away persons naturally as sober (or as weak) as we are! He shows us that no amount of information, learning, or ingenuity—nay, that not even piety—will enable us to understand God, or His word. What then will? Christ only.

The Lamb is the key to the things of God, and not our own minds. There are many who think that, the church being the peculiar object of God's love, all prophecy must refer to it. Most erroneous idea! The reverse is true. In fact, it would be more true to say the church is never the subject about which prophecy occupies itself. Its proper province is to treat of earthly events, but the church has its place in heavenly glory. When we come really to discern this book, we find that judgment is the subject of it; and the express object of these two chapters is to show that before one of the judgments comes from the throne, the church is taken out of the scene, and is housed, we may say, in heavenly glory. The joint heirs being then with Christ, God prepares to introduce the First-born Heir into the world. Unless this is seen, the Revelation as a whole cannot be understood. A person might derive comfort from particular parts, but this is not comprehending the book. To understand the scope of the prophecy, I must make Christ the object, and not the church;

otherwise I am out of the line of vision in which the Spirit wrote it. Not the church, but Christ, is the center of God's kingdom. Astronomers used to think that the earth was the center round which the other heavenly bodies revolved, judging superficially by what presented itself to the senses. Christ is the true sun and center of God's system.

Here, then, we find God about to unveil what man's mind could not possibly discover. "A strong angel proclaims with a loud voice," &c. (Ver. 2.) Angels are those that "excel in strength" —not in intelligence. We cannot suppose that they possess the same kind of intelligence as those who are members of the body of Christ. The angels are never said, nor could they be said, to be sealed with the Holy Ghost. But He it is, witnessing to Christ, who is the power of intelligence in the feeblest child of God. If I want to know the true place of the church, the body, I must look at the place of Christ the Head; and if I desire to learn what God is going to do with the earth, I must examine God's account of Christ as Son of David and as Son of man. If I am (unwittingly, no doubt) putting the church in His stead, I shall get all wrong. It is most true that God loves His saints, and intends that they shall share with Christ the rule over all the earth. Man draws from this the conclusion that the church must go on and prosper here below; but when the divine revelations touching Christ are weighed more fully, I learn another truth,—that Christ is coming in the way of judgment. This, of course, supposes that the professing body has not fulfilled its mission; for if it had, who would there be in Christendom for God to pour out His judgment upon? "That servant who knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes."

Look at the truth God brings before us here. First, there is the book, that is to say, the revelation of the counsels of God as to the earth. Not a creature was found worthy to open the book, neither to look thereon. The prophet weeps because of this. (Ver. 3, 4.) It should be borne in mind that in this book the apostle John is not presented in his full place as an apostle of the church, but rather as a prophet. He was, it is true, a most honored member of the body of Christ; but the object of this book is not to show our nearness to God in that relationship: it is as a prophet of intermediate judgment and of final glory he is seen. He is not here viewed as having perfect communion with what was passing around him. But this is very much the characteristic of what is described of the Old Testament saints; as it is said in 1 Peter 1:6, "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired," &c. It may be also that the prophet John is here found in this position in the main, because the book of the Apocalypse was not merely intended for the church which was going to be in heaven, and was even seen in heaven; but the book was also meant for a body of witnesses to be found on earth after the church is removed, who will go through tremendous suffering in the last times. He is a representative man, but rather, as it seems, of those who are to enjoy the spirit of prophecy here below in Israel, after the removal of the church to heaven, than of those who, as sons, are entitled by grace to communion with their Father's heart.

The elders show us the true place that belongs to the heavenly saints; and accordingly when John was weeping much, one of the elders, who thoroughly understood the matter, says to him, "Weep not, behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book and the seven seals thereof." (Ver. 5.) There at once we find the Lord Jesus introduced. His person is brought out, but it is in connection with the earthly purposes of God. He is in relation with David here. David is the one whom the Lord elected king of Israel. (Psa. 78) He was emphatically David "the king" This title therefore expresses the purposes of God about Christ, as far as the earth is

concerned. Judah we know to be the tribe connected with the Christ or Messiah. This was the style and character in which the elder announced the only One who could open the book— “the Lion of the tribe of Judah.” Majesty and power among wild beasts upon earth are conveyed by the thought of the lion. Jacob compared Judah to a lion. One great chain runs through all scripture. The Holy Ghost that spake by Jacob on his death-bed, speaks now through John, and reveals that, rejected as He may be on earth, the Lion of the tribe of Judah is owned on high, the One in whom God's purposes all center. He was, too, “the root of David.” This implies more than being David's Son. He was David's Lord. He might come out of David, but He was David's root, the real though secret cause of all His titles and promises; just as John the Baptist said, that He who came after him really was before him. But there is another remarkable intimation. It is not merely said that He was worthy, but that “He hath prevailed.” That little word “prevailed” (conquered, overcame) is connected with the whole subject of the chapter. It is the victory of Jesus by His blood. The Lord Jesus had personal worthiness at any time to take the book, but if He had received and opened it on the ground of His own worthiness alone, what would that have availed for us? It must have been sealed to us still. Therefore the Lord not only proved that He had personal worthiness to open the book which contained these future counsels of God, but He prevailed, and by virtue of that prevailing we are entitled to listen and understand.

“And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing as it had been slain,” &c. (Ver. 6.) John had heard of a lion, but now that He came to look, it was a Lamb. When he expected to see the symbol of power, there stood before all the picture of most holy suffering and rejection. And this was the emblem of Christ as seen even on the throne in all the glory of heaven—a smitten One, guileless and unresisting, “a Lamb as it had been slain.” He is clothed with perfection of power; the seven horns, no doubt, mean as much. The seven eyes are the symbol of perfect intelligence—the fullness of the Spirit, here in respect of earth and its government. But the One who is seen with all the power and wisdom is the Lamb.

The basis, I believe, of all our blessing stands in that blessed truth. The Lord of glory has become a Lamb, and as such must be known, if we are to profit by the revelations that follow. The Lamb is what answers to the idea of redemption. Even with the Jews, when the lamb was offered up morning and evening, God was showing that, if a poor sinful people had anything to do with Him, and if He could go on with them, it was because of the lamb. Those who by faith understood looked forward, however obscurely, to a better Lamb. God's Son was to become God's Lamb. And now that He is sent away from the world, He is the rejected One, and though glorified in heaven, He still bears there the marks of the sufferer. He is seen in the midst of the throne a Lamb as it had been slain.

The sacrifice of the Lamb is not so much the subject of the Holy Ghost here, but His being the holy sufferer, accepted above. Only foundation for the sinner, He is also the pattern and the source of the hopes of His own, and for this reason, that if we suffer we shall also reign with Him. Here then, as everywhere, we find that the King of kings and Lord of lords was the greatest of sufferers. God brings these two thoughts into connection in chap. xvii.—the suffering and rejected Lamb, and the King of kings. Why? Because God would show us all glory resting on Christ, the earth rejected and despised One. The very thing that seemed to be the death-blow of all hopes for Israel opens the way for better thoughts and higher counsels of glory than ever. If we looked at the cross in itself, it might have appeared that all was at an end, and hope itself forever laid in the grave; for there was

the One who might have blessed them, and vanquished Satan, and terminated human misery and sin, Himself cast out and crucified! All seemed to be nipped in the bud, and prematurely closed in the death of Christ; and yet such was the very way God took that He might readily and eternally bless according to His own heart. What seemed for the time to be the victory of Satan was really the triumph of God forever over him and his works.

Observe, it is as the Lamb that the Lord Jesus takes His place in heaven. What is the practical effect of this on our souls? The more a man enters into it, the less does he look for a place of honor and esteem in the world. He knows well that, while Satan is god of this world, and Christ hid in God, truth must be despised here below; and consequently he is not surprised, if he sees prosperity crowning that which is evil. He will be prepared for all this, because it is just the history of Christ. The slain Lamb brings before us the whole moral course of the world. But one more thing let me ask, Does the slain Lamb bring before your soul your history? Do you know what it is to be cast out because of Christ? Not because you deserve to be rejected (though in another sense, that is true,) but because you desire to stand for the Lord Jesus at all cost?

But there is another side: Christ is glorified now not indeed as yet in the eyes of the world. But heaven is opened to our view, and we find that He who was most despised here is exalted in heaven, and we learn that God has gathered, round the Lamb that was slain, others into association with Him. I ask, has He gathered you? Has He given you the portion of the slain Lamb on the earth? If you are a Christian, you ought not to be happy without knowing something of this. A saint ought to be pained if he finds that, instead of realizing, he does not know what such language means. God desires that we should know it, not only about Christ, but as our own portion here on earth.

In the time of David, though he was God's anointed king, yet was he rejected, and another king had the power for the time. So now, though the power of the beast is not yet fully developed, yet the world gets ready for him to come and govern. David was cast out, despised, insulted—thought, or at least insinuated, to be some sort of a run-away from his master by Nabal; and certainly appearances looked very unpromising, surrounded as he was in the cave of Adullam by a band of the distressed, and indebted in Israel. There were many of those individuals, who, as far as nature was concerned, may have justly deserved to be thought lightly of. But what a change grace makes! David was the special person whom God's heart rested on, and they knew it, and gathered round the object of God's love. There was a dignity that now accrued to them because of their companionship with David. We can hardly be more miserable and weak than we are, but as that one person gave all the value to the inmates of the cave of Adullam, so it is from association with Christ that all our blessing flows. The priests of God were even drawn there by David. But a greater than David is come, and God has sent down the Holy Ghost that we may know that the despised One is now in glory. And the Lord grant that we may have more practical acquaintance with His place of rejection here below, and not want to escape or deny it! There is nothing the flesh dislikes so much as to be despised. It is comparatively easy to buckle up one's strength to meet persecution or determined opposition, but it is another thing to be content in being nothing at all. In us, worms as we are, this touches the will most; yet this is exactly what the Lord of glory, Jesus, condescended to be; and the enmity that despised Him, rose to its climax at the cross. In spite of all the pretended enlightenment and liberalism of the present day, the spirit of the world is not really changed. I would not trust for a single moment that which arises from mere indifference

toward God, or from glorifying the rights of man. Men count truth and error all as one, have no conscience toward God, and preach respect for each other. The spirit of the age that now looks and speaks so fair might at any moment rise up fiercely against God, and then we should learn the truth of our experience, that it is a slain Lamb whom we know and worship on high. We should discover the reality of it, and of fellowship with Him, and it would arouse many a saint of God from the slumber in which he is now (for even the wise virgins may sleep). "Awake! thou that sleepest" is said. to Christians. If you have been asleep among dead things and persons, the Lord grant that you may not remain in this condition but speedily may arise from these, "and Christ shall give you light!"

It is the slain Lamb that is evidently the great center of heavenly worship. Now that sin is come into the world, the creative glory of God is not enough, nor even His providential government. If He is to be glorified, save in pure judgment of His adversaries, if there are to be displays of merciful goodness in such a world as this, if there is to be a new song in heaven, there must be redemption, and this, not by power only, but by suffering and blood. Hence, as the central throne in the preceding chapter was filled by the Lord God, the Almighty, so here the central object on whom all blessing for the creature depends, to whom, equally with Him who sat on the throne, worship is offered, is the Lamb. All heaven honors Him as the Father is honored. He is the First-born, the Heir, not only by rights of creation and intrinsic personal glory, but by redemption the divinely appointed "Heir of all things." God destines the wide universe for His scepter. But how and on what plea would Christ take the inheritance? By power? Surely, all power was His. In the day of His humiliation, the devils were subject to the least of His servants through His name. So that He could say, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" —(the then energy of the seventy in casting out demons being to His spirit, I apprehend, the sign and earnest of complete victory in due time). "Behold I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy." Why not take the inheritance then and there? After the evidence of such triumphs over the usurper, why go down unto death, even the death of the cross? "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." Because God must be vindicated in His majesty, love, wisdom, and righteousness. Because Christ could not accept a defiled inheritance. (Compare Col. 1:20 and Heb. 9:21-23.) Because He would not reign alone, and in this He and His Father were of one mind. In His grace, He would have joint heirs, the sharers of His glory. Such a reconciliation was only possible through death, even if the offering were the body of His flesh, all spotless flesh as it was. Peace could not be made stably and divinely save through the blood of His cross. Therefore is it that He is here seen and sung as the Lamb. God means assuredly to bring the First-begotten into the habitable world; and the book in His right hand describes, I suppose, the process whereby the inheritance is to be put into His hands; but purchase by blood, blessed be His name, is the ground on which all is taken. When He receives the book, all is in motion. As in chap. iv., when the living creatures pay honor to God, the twenty-four elders fall down and worship, so here, when the Lamb takes the book out of the right hand of Him that sat on the throne, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders are prostrate before Him. Though it might be opened for the purpose of striking some blow, there was no apprehension, no trouble, no concern about themselves in particular; they fell down before the Lamb. It was not merely receiving something from God, but they would exalt God. Far from taking away anything from God, on the contrary, in the very presence of the throne and of Him that sat on it, the Lamb is the object of worship, the source of its purest and deepest strains. God is best

glorified when the Lamb has His meed of praise.

They had “each a harp and golden bowls full of odors, which are the prayers of saints.” In the tabernacle service of the wilderness silver trumpets were used for holy purposes by the priests. David first introduced the harp, separating the sons of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, for songs in the house of the Lord with cymbals, psalteries, and harps. These, like the priests, were divided into twenty-four classes; so that the allusion is obvious, with that measure of difference which is characteristic of the Apocalypse. Priestly and choral services are here blended in perfection. Does not this also serve to show that the elders only are here said to have harps, and basins of incense? In chap. xv. the four living creatures give the angels the seven golden bowls full of divine wrath. Thus, all is in keeping: the elders being the heads of royal priesthood, as the cherubim wait on the execution of God’s judgments, though both unite (ch. v.) in the fullest homage to the Lamb. But who are these “saints” that pray? The elders, or the church, were in heaven, and in full choir of praise. Whose prayers then are these? They come from saints who will suffer when the church is above. The elders are those heavenly saints who have been removed previously-, including perhaps the Old Testament saints. They are in the place of adoration and praise, whereas prayer implies need. If they have to do with prayers, it is the prayers of others, not their own. More than that, they sing a new song, that of the Lamb’s purchase by blood, saying, “Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain,” &c.

A very important change occurs in this verse, well known to every person tolerably acquainted with the original scriptures. Persons who have studied the most ancient manuscripts and other witnesses of this book, all agree that it is, “and hast made them unto our God kings (or a kingdom) and priests” (ver. 10). Who are those that are meant by “them” and are made kings and priests “to our God?” They do not speak of themselves.

Indeed, I am prepared to go farther, and am bound to state my impression that in the 9th verse the word “us” was put in by copyists who supposed that the elders were celebrating their own blessing. But the elders are so perfectly at rest about themselves, that they are occupied about others. I believe, accordingly, that the true sense is this: “Thou art worthy to take the book, (ix.), for thou wast slain, and hast bought to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made them unto our God kings and priests, and they shall reign over the earth.” They are speaking about the saints whose prayers they were offering. As they were occupied with their prayers, so here they were praising the Lord for His goodness to the saints still on earth. They intimate that in taking up above the heavenly saints, He had not done with His rich mercy; that, even in the midst of His judgments, He would have a purchased people, who were to share the glory of the kingdom, as a royal priesthood, instead of being swallowed up in the delusions of antichrist.

These anticipated companions are the same probably that we see in chap. vi. as “souls under the altar, slain for the word of God,” &c.; and in chap. xiv. “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth,” &c.; and in chap. xv. “Them that had gotten the victory over the beast,” &c. There are other allusions also in the body of the book to the righteous. Clearly they were saints of God upon the earth, in conflict or tribulation, after the elders (who, as we saw, represented the church or the heavenly saints) were translated to heaven. As to the saints who won the victory over the beast, “they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.”

Observe the mingled character of the scene. True, it was the song of the Lamb; but it was the song of Moses too: it was partly earthly and partly heavenly. Again, in chap. xx. 4, it is said, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them." These are the elders, already risen or changed, seated upon the thrones. "And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God" (i.e. the people whose souls he had seen in chap. vi.); and, again, those "which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads" (these last being the persons that had sung the song of victory in chap. xv.) These two classes that had suffered, after the rapture of the church, are at length united with the rest in glory, and all reign together with Christ.

It will be remarked how thoroughly the whole agrees with the song in chap. v. The elders are in heaven, in the enjoyment of God and the Lamb; but there are saints on earth who are praying, and the elders above are occupied about their prayers, and celebrate the worthiness and work of the Lamb in behalf of others, who should reign over the earth as well as themselves. Instead of that taking a single fraction away from us, it adds indirectly, if not in itself, to the place of glory in which the church is seen in heaven. They are so fully blest that they can heartily rejoice in the good of others. There are some who are apt to be restless if they are not always listening to the gospel for themselves—not because they value it more than others, but because they are not thoroughly established in grace. When our hearts are quite satisfied, we need not be anxiously picking and choosing in the Scriptures; we prefer the Lord to choose for us, and are thankful, because it may be something to His praise that we perhaps have not known before, or a weapon we may need in our next conflict with the enemy. Whatever exalts Christ and glorifies Him is that which we should delight in. Whatever detects the deceitfulness of our hearts is most salutary to us. When the elders are found thanking God, they take up His goodness to those who are suffering on the earth, and they bless the Lamb because He had been slain, and had bought these also to their God. It was delight to them to think of that work so rich in results for God—of those from every quarter who should share the kingdom over the earth.

The angels take up, not the thanksgiving about those bought, but the worthiness of the Lamb to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. Loudly do they proclaim His worthiness and title to dominion whom man despised and slew. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." (Ver. 11, 12.) They do not sing of His purchase, because they were not so bought; they have not to do with it, though they are sustained by the power of God; but those who have known their need as poor sinners can well sing the new song. The angels sing of His person and His power, but they do not take up the deep and joyous note of the blood-bought. If I look at the gift and person of Christ, I can see how God's character comes out, and His love is manifested. If I look at the great work of Christ, and what I have in and with Him as He is, I can see how the love of God with us is perfected. But where is anything in the glory of heaven that shines so much as the cross of Christ? We may follow Jesus on the earth, and see the holiness of God. We may glance above, and see how He delights in having us happy around Him. We may look again at Jesus in His path on earth, seeking out the lost, the miserable, and laying His hands on babes, even touching the leper. But whether we think of the holiness or the love of God, of His righteousness or His grace, it is in the cross where all is found and displayed to faith, as we can get it nowhere else.

“And every creature which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth,' and such as are on the sea, and all things in them, heard I saying, Blessing, &c., to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever.” (Ver. 13.) The chord is touched, the keynote sounded, and heard at last in heaven. If the Lamb takes the book, not a creature but responds in joy to the ear of the seer (as now the whole of the lower universe groans in sorrow because of Adam's sin.) Why should they not rejoice if God and the Lamb unite to deliver? Doubtless, it is but the opening out of the Lamb's title-deed; and much remains to be done in destroying the works of the devil, and those that destroy the earth. Still this is the sure signal, and before God every creature anticipates in sympathy.

All bow down before the Lamb. The myriads of angels join in acknowledgment of His death; but it is the place of the heavenly saints to enter into the sense of its efficacy, yea, and into the deep joy—God's joy—in the blessing of others, and not merely their own. The four living creatures set to it their seal, and say, “Amen;” but the elders fall down and worship. They did not merely yield their assent to all, but their hearts went along with it. Such was their place.

Such a subject as this may well leave one infinitely behind. We must be living very much in its depths in order to feel it aright, or to give it an adequate expression. But if I have directed attention to the blessedness of Christ as the slain Lamb, and shown that God makes Him to be the key for understanding His otherwise hidden purposes, I shall be thankful. Even to understand God's purposes about the earth, we must see the Lamb. It is only in communion with Him that we can enter into them. To appreciate what follows, we must be subject to God's thoughts of Christ—we must go back to what God begins with—we must see and hear the Lamb. The Lord grant that such may be our better portion! We shall be near that blessed One, in whose person and work shines all that is gracious and blessed in God, from whom we can learn in peace His most solemn judgment of man's rebellion and apostasy.

## Lectures on Revelation 6

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From the two preceding chapters the lessons are apparent, and I do not doubt, should be learned: 1st, God sits on the throne, whence proceed lightnings, voices, and thunders; 2nd, all things are given into the hands of the Lamb, who unfolds all; 3rd, the perfect security and the blessed employment of the heavenly saints, then removed from the scene of trial; and this long before the day of the Lord, when their blessing will be manifested fully to the world. The moment the soul and the body, or both, (the soul now, the soul and body united at the coming of Christ,) leave this world, there is for the saints, I believe, immediate enjoyment of the Lord. Is that a scriptural thought in a hymn that we sometimes sing, about "soaring to worlds unknown?" Does scripture intimate anything at all like a soul journeying on a voyage of discovery? On the contrary, is not the truth peaceful and immediate entrance into the presence of the Lord? When heaven is allowed to burst for a moment upon men on the earth, (as, for instance, at the birth and the transfiguration, and in the cases of Stephen, Paul, &c.) it appears that there is no such great distance between them. Of course, it is not a question of mere physical space. But there is a divine power which at once brings a person out of the present state of existence into the enjoyed presence of the Lord. So when He Himself was speaking to the poor dying thief, it was "to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise," —that very day. There is nothing to my mind like the poetical sentiment of soaring to worlds unknown.

But while it is perfectly true that the soul goes at once into the presence of the Lord, in the case of death, and it is equally true that "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," the saints will be caught up at the coming of Christ, yet we must remember that their manifestation will be a different thing. Now, we should not be able so plainly to gather from other scriptures the considerable interval between their gathering to the Lord and their manifestation to the world. These chapters of the Revelation make that clear. God has a very important purpose to fulfill during this interval. He has to put the earth into a condition to receive the Lord Jesus, and is going to put Him, the great Heir, into possession of the inheritance. But, further, He purposes to bring the joint-heirs along with Him. Accordingly the interval is filled up with the preparations for all this. To accomplish it, there must be judgments upon the world's wickedness; but parallel with these judgments, we have some signal acts of the mercy of God. When the great and terrible day of the Lord comes, there will be mercy no longer; "the door is shut." But during the intervening time, there will be mercy, except for those who have heard the gospel now, and have rejected it. I do not see the smallest ground to believe that there will be any hope for such. There will be an interval of some years, in which God will work in judgment and in mercy-judgments increasing in severity on these favored lands where the gospel has been preached; but I doubt any such thing as the grace that now is. The sad reverse will appear. God will give up to blind hardness those who have now refused His mercy. He will, as it were, retire from these countries to save outside them; and from those who have been talking so self-complacently about the light with which they are favored, God will then, if I read prophecy aright, turn to such as are now far away from the gospel. But it is a solemn thought that, where the light of Christendom is now most found, there will be the greatest darkness of apostasy. What

Scripture shows is, that that which now is the scene of God's mercy, where He is now at work, and His word is most circulated, is destined to fall back into the most frightful and fatal idolatry-into the union of infidelity along with it-into anti-christianism. Such a thing may be thought to be the gloomy dream of a feverish mind. But this is because men prefer to believe their own thoughts and fancies, and do not take the trouble of searching into God's word to see what is there, if they do not even make it a butt for their ridicule. Will it be believed that men pride themselves on their ignorance of a great part of scripture? Is it conceivable that it should be held as an axiom that prophecy was not given to show us what is coming, but only, when the events are past, to prove that God has foreknown them? But the Christian does not want this. Prophecy is given that the believer should know how God opens to us His secrets about what He is going to do on the earth. We have the word and the Spirit to make us understand it. But if Christians have not faith in the prophetic word, it cannot profit them; for, like all other scripture, that word must be mixed with faith in them that hear it.

One important thing, then, we have seen to be assumed-the removal of the heavenly saints from the earth. In chaps. iv. v., and throughout the body of the book, they are no longer found there. They are glorified in heaven, and yet it is not until chap. xix. that they are manifested, when they come out of heaven. Between these two points we have, evidently, a long series of events. We have seven seals, seven trumpets, seven vials, with various episodes of great interest and importance. These three different series of judgments are not executed by the Lord in person. It is manifest that they must occur after the Lord has come to receive His Church, but before He executes His grand personal judgment in chap. xix. For it is self-evident that, before the saints are taken to the Lord and so can come with Him, He must have come for them. How did the four and twenty elders get to heaven? It may be said, they might have been taken individually through death, i.e. their souls might be there. But there is no such thought in scripture, as the souls of the saints being seated on thrones, and having crowns on their heads. Neither do the souls of the saints form the complete headship of heavenly priests, as taught us by the four and twenty elders, in-allusion to the twenty-four orders of the priesthood, set up by king David. Now Christ is at that time about to take the place of king; and, just as before the kingdom of Solomon was established, David divided the priesthood into twenty-four courses, so we find that before the true Solomon, the Lord Jesus, comes out in all His glory, we have the antitypical courses as a whole again. The heavenly priesthood is seen complete. It might be asked, Why is it only the heads that are seen, and not the body of the priesthood? It appears probable, but I only offer it as a suggestion, that those that are taken up when the Lord comes will form the heads of the priesthood, and that those who suffer after and join them may be the subordinate body. Twenty-four is necessarily the complete sum of the courses (i.e. of the chiefs). Now, the souls in heaven can never be even that completed; because till Christ comes, there will always be a part of the Church remaining on the earth. (1 Thess. 4) I conceive, therefore, that by the full priestly number twenty-four, surrounding the throne, God intends to show that they are not that portion which consists of the souls in paradise; for it requires the addition of us who are alive and remain, in order to make up the church of the firstborn, or the then complete sum of the risen and changed saints. The heavenly saints up to that time are, necessarily, removed. How and when did this take place? There is no real difficulty about it, because they never can be removed as a complete body, and changed, till the Lord Jesus comes Himself; as He said, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself." And this evidently is not sending angels for them. We find angels sent to

gather in elect Jews, or Israel, from the four quarters of heaven (Matt. 24); but to gather in His Church He comes Himself. And this falls in with what we said else, where. The saints in Thessalonica were told to wait for God's Son from heaven (1 Thess. 1); and as to those who were gone, they were not to sorrow as those who had no hope. For the Lord Himself,-not merely by angelic or providential intervention, but the Lord Himself,-would descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. There might be angels, but there is not a word said about them here. When the Lord is revealed, executing vengeance, there will be angels; but here, at the descent of the Lord Himself, "the dead in Christ rise first," forming one portion of the heavenly saints. Then "we which are alive and remain" shall be caught up together with them. There and then, as it seems to me, we have the twenty-four elders, evidently the whole of the priestly heads. Those bodies of saints that are in their graves are raised first, then the surviving saints are changed, by the presence of the Lord. There is but the barest interval of a moment between these two momentous effects of the voice of the Son of God. And so shall we, caught up together, ever be with the Lord.

This most solemn and blessed event must occur therefore between chapters iii. and iv. of this book.

It is not described, because the object of the Revelation is not to show the Lord's coming in the way of grace, though there are of course allusions to it. There is an entire passing over of His coming to meet His heavenly saints in the prophetic visions of the Revelation, but a full description of His coming with them in chap. xix. This last is what is styled elsewhere the appearing or day of the Lord, when He punishes with everlasting destruction from His presence, and from the glory of His power. All this interval the heavenly saints are with the Lord above; all the members of the church are there, and in their bodies of glory. The first mention of them is in the fourth chapter, where we find not angels, but redeemed men-persons whose very vesture of white, and thrones, and crowns of gold, are all connected with redemption-persons who are evidently exercising their priesthood before God in chap. v. These are the elders. How did they get there? The Lord must have come, and have gathered them to Himself in the air, and so have accomplished His promise to them. "In my Father's house are many mansions," &c. "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, ye may be also." So now, in this future scene, having prepared the place, He has come for them, and taken them to the Father's house. But it is remarkable, as showing the character of this book, that, although we do see them in the presence of God, it is not called the house of the Father. On the contrary, it is a throne that is seen; and so, too, when He who sits thereon is named, it is not as the Father, but as the Lord God Almighty. When we speak of God as "the Father," it is to express the nearest place of affection into which God has brought us; and when we hear of God as "the Lord God Almighty," it is connected with the putting forth of Divine power and government. "God," as such, is the most general and abstract name and implies no relationship with another being. But to be called "the Father" necessarily implies the closest relationship of love, whether spoken, in the highest and intrinsic and eternal sense, of Jesus as the Son of the Father, or subordinately of those whom He has taken into the adoption of sons, loved with the same love. (John 17 and 1 John)

In Gen. 1 creation is the subject, and God is spoken of as the One who originates. In the next chapter of Genesis He is called the "Lord (or Jehovah) God," because He is there entering into relation with His creatures, and Adam is put in the place of, responsibility to God as the Lord God,

i.e., the God of creation in moral relationship. How perfect is every word of God! Infidels, instead of seeing the perfectness of God's word, have only reasoned from their own ignorance and impotence, and have endeavored to prove that these chapters must have been written by two different persons, because of the different titles given to God. But, instead of being the mistakes of men, it is the wisdom of God that we discover in these distinctions. When the relationship of authority occurs, and man is put under the test of obedience, the Lord God is used; but when in the New Testament He enters into relationship with sons, it is "the Father." He did not bring out the name of Father fully until THE SON came, who opened, so to speak, the sluice, that all God's grace might flow out. But between these two points of the trial of the creature in Eden, and the accomplishment of redemption, God brought out first the name of Almighty, and next that of Jehovah. Abraham was called to leave his own country and kindred, called to be a pilgrim, having none but God to look to, and so God most suitably reveals Himself to him as the Almighty. (Gen. 17:1.) Subsequently He makes Himself known to Israel by His name Jehovah. Here the Lord constantly brings out these names, but not that of Father, or at least not of our Father. Just as the scene is not the Father's house, but the throne, so the title taken by God is not that of Father. The center of this heavenly scene is the throne of God, and the saints are not alluded to as enjoying mansions with the Son in the Father's house, but are seen enthroned. God is no longer gathering the church on earth; the church is gone. When the church was the object of God's care on the earth, they, even here below, called Him Father; but when He is going to execute judgment on the earth, they, already raptured and in heaven, understand it and address Him accordingly.

The Lord's coming, then, to receive the church must have been before the facts which answer to the vision of the twenty-four enthroned elders. Some people may be slow to believe that the prophecy would pass over such an important event in silence. But it is forgotten that, whenever and wherever you put it, there is silence as to the act of the saints' rapture in the book of Revelation. The only question is, Where, according to our best light from Scripture, is it to be understood here? It must, in my judgment, be put before we find the heavenly saints as a complete body above, which is in chap. iv. The Lord will then have come and received the glorified saints, and given them their place in the presence of God, before any of the judgments come on the world. Terrible things in righteousness are going to be enacted, but the saints will be above them all. The seals, and vials, and trumpets, have no terrors for them. They call out not trembling, but only worship. Nay, these risen ones will be occupied, too, about their brethren who are still in the midst of trial; for we shall have brethren after the present work of God in forming the church is done with, brethren who will suffer on the earth after we are gone. Again, there will be godly persons when the King comes to sit on the throne of His glory, and all nations are gathered before Him, whom He will call "my brethren;" and the living Gentiles, or nations, will be treated then according to the way in which they have behaved to these messengers of the King. The sheep will have proved themselves to have faith in the King because they received His servants. The conduct of the goats will have shown the contrary. When all the preliminary warnings, given to those on the earth, are over; when the judgments that proceed from the throne in rapid succession have been proved to be in vain, and the rebellious hearts of men are only rising higher against God, the Lord says, as it were, "I will send them no more chastenings, I will wait no longer for a repentance which is refused, but I will come myself and sweep them away to destruction." Accordingly, this we have in chap. xix. And the interval, from chaps. iv. and v. to chap. xix., is filled by new dealings of God in providential judgments, by intermingled mercy to Jews and Gentiles,

and by glances at the heavenly saints in the presence of God. No doubt, the souls of dying saints go to God during the interval, but whatever may be the blessedness reserved for such (Rev. 14:13), the saints who are already changed remain there through the whole period. The heavenly saints, including those that are true Christians now, those that have been such before, and the Old Testament saints, may be caught up at any time to be with the Lord. I know no scriptural ground which entitles a believer to say, He will not come to-morrow. None can say, with divine authority, "There must be something yet to be done before -there must be a delay." No doubt, there may be more or less time to intervene, but scripture never puts the delay between us and Christ's coming, but before His day. As a servant with his hand upon the door, and on the stretch, as it were, for his master's arrival" so as to be able when he comes to open unto him immediately-such is the true attitude of the child of God now. So says our Lord Himself. He would have, if so we may speak, everything settled up. He looks for practical readiness at all times. Not as though we could do anything by way of preparation. Thanks be to God, He has made us meet through the grace of Christ. But there may be things in our ways and walk, in what we are doing, that will not stand the light of His presence. Whatever we do, we should seek to enter upon nothing that renders the thought of the Lord's coming unwelcome. We must beware of speculations or plans which suppose us to have a long time before us. The Lord desires us to be as travelers passing through a foreign land, and withal going out to meet Him who is speedily coming for us. The Lord may be a little longer than we think; but He is coming, and this, too, at an hour when men think not. His coming will immediately act on all the heavenly saints, raising the dead, changing the living, and removing both to Himself above. Then follow the scenes of Rev. 4 and v., which let us see the interest of the glorified saints in the righteous who suffer on the earth, after the others are gone to heaven. They cannot apply fully, either while only a part of the church is above and in the separate state; or when the millennial reign is arrived. They suppose an interval between these two things, when the Lord will have come and changed them into His risen likeness, and before they accompany Him from heaven in order to judge and reign.

Next, we come to the earthly course of "the things that must be after these." The seals are not judgments executed by the Lord, but of a providential nature. Some have thought that the first seal applied to Christ, because of the white horse. On the face of it, what more strange than to conceive Him so represented, seeing that He it is who, as the Lamb, opens the seals successively, and, when clearly alluded to under the contents of the sixth seal, still preserves the name of the Lamb! And yet stranger that He should now enter on a course of conquest, at the very time, if you take it historically, when all Asia has turned away from Paul, when Timothy has the sad and sure foreboding of evil men and seducers waxing worse and worse, when John himself had written, or was about to write, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." Nevertheless, most of the ancients and not a few moderns begin their comments with this false start. Some, again, refer it to the second advent; but this quite upsets the order of the seals, fixed by the Holy Ghost, and indeed the order of all the book.

It is true that in chap. xix. where the Lord comes judicially and in person, He is represented as riding upon a white horse. But there is all the difference possible between that vision of the white horse and the one here. This horse does not issue from heaven, as that in chap. xix. does. Next, there is not a word in chap. vi. about the rider, which necessarily means Christ; whereas in chap.

xix. He is called Faithful and True, and said to judge and make war in righteousness. Of whom could this be said save of One? His eyes were as a flame of fire. His written name none knew but Himself. The Word of God-King of kings, Lord of lords-can be the titles of none but Jesus. Not to speak of the blood-dipped vesture, the sword proceeding out of the mouth, the iron rod wherewith to rule, and the treading the wine-press of divine wrath, are descriptions in chap. xix. to which nothing answers in the riders of chap. vi. No armies followed here, clothed in fine linen, &c. And though the rider is said to have a crown given to him, the word is quite different from that employed in chap. xix., which signifies kingly diadems, the crown of royalty. The Romans were fond of a sort of chaplet, which did not to their mind, like the imperial diadem, convey the idea of absolute authority, and that is the crown mentioned in chap. vi.

Furthermore, there are two frequent figures or symbols used in scripture to express power; the one is the throne, and the other is the horse. Thus we have already seen the supreme throne above, and now we have the horse with the rider on earth. The same thing is seen in chaps. xix. and xx. There you have horses in the one chapter, and thrones in the other. The difference between these symbols is this:-When power is meant for putting down of rival or opposing authority on earth, "the horse" is taken, from its use in war, it is intended to subdue; but when the victory is won, and it is a question not of subjugation, but of governing and judging, "the throne" is used, as being the fit emblem of rule over those who have been thus subdued. When Christ is going to put down His enemies, He is seen in the vision of chap. xix. on the horse, used to represent the reality of His power to subdue; when the subsequent sway is meant, thrones appear in chap. xx. It would be quite weak, of course, for persons to confound this symbolic use with a material horse, or throne. The idea of the former is power to subdue, and of the latter is dominion after the victory has been gained. The throne may also be used, as it is afterward, for the solemn and eternal judgment of the dead-a throne of stainless holiness.

Of course we cannot apply the four horses and their riders to the great empires, three of which had long disappeared. Equally untenable at least is the notion that four successive religions are intended, especially when one hears it gravely laid down that Infidelity closes the list, which primitive Christianity opens, followed by Mahomedanism and Popery. It is hard to say whether such thoughts are most opposed to time or place, to congruity or context. Again, it is agreed that it is harsh in the extreme, and in almost every point of view, to understand the first seal of Christ the church in early gospel triumphs, and then the three subsequent ones of the Roman empire or emperors. But it is more important to notice that there is positive ground from the Apocalypse itself to deny the assumption that the horse means the Roman empire. I do not refer to passages like chapter ix. 17, where literal cavalry appear; but chap. xix. furnishes an example of its symbolic use. Does the Lord on the white horse mean His direction of the Roman empire? Or the white horses of the linen-clad hosts, do they imply imperial powers? Surely we must look for an interpretation more in keeping with its usage elsewhere. It means, in my judgment, a militant aggressive agency towards the earth, though it may be from heaven. Hence, as in Zech. 1, it may apply to the Lord, or to the various imperial powers which succeeded Babylon. And so the chariots, with the horses of various colors, in Zech. 6. But as distinguished from the horns (ch. 1:19), the former symbol rather refers to the providential instruments behind the scene, and connected especially with these empires, than to the rulers themselves or their realms. Plainly, therefore, there is no ground, from the book itself, or from Zechariah, to which the allusion is

obvious, to interpret the horse simply of the Roman empire. Nor is there better ground in profane history to maintain that the horse is the special sign of that people and power. And no wonder. For the Roman infantry was more characteristic of their military power than their cavalry. No doubt the horse abounds on their medals, but not more comparatively than among other warlike nations, particularly in the east, who so set forth their victories. It had formerly been one of the Roman standards of war, but for two centuries before Domitian all the varieties had given way to the eagle. Abstractly, then, the horse cannot be regarded as the necessary national badge of Rome, or emblem of the Roman empire. Whether it be referred to here, must depend on contextual considerations. And here it appears to me that the fourth seal rises up conclusively against such a view, the four seals being providential judgments, homogeneous in character, but differing in form. The Roman earth may be the sphere, but this has nothing to do with the symbolic force of the horse in the passage.

Without further discussion let me state my own view. We have a regular series of providential judgments. The first is the white horse, the symbol of triumphant and prosperous power. "He that sat on him had a bow." (Ver. 2.) The bow is the symbol of distant warfare. His course is evidently that of unchecked victory. The moment he appears, he conquers. The battle is won without a struggle, and apparently without the carnage of the second judgment, where the sword, the symbol of close hand-to-hand fighting, is used. But this first conqueror is some mighty one who sweeps over the earth, and gains victory after victory by the prestige of his name and reputation. There is no intimation of much slaughter here, but the second judgment is of a more appalling character. There went out a horse that was red, and the one who sits upon him is not the proud conqueror to whom people tamely submit, but one who, if he wins, waves his standard over heaps of slain. Accordingly, he has a blood-red horse-the symbol of power connected with frightful carnage. The result of the first seal (i.e. of the victorious career of the white-horse rider) may have been peace and comparatively bloodless changes; but all is sanguinary under the second seal. (Ver. 4.) The fiery-red horse, the peace taken from the earth, the mutual slaughter, the great sword, are tokens too plain to be misunderstood.

The third horse is black, i.e., the hue of mourning. It is a color chosen to show that there were to be peculiar sorrows, caused not now by bloodshed, but by scarcity, and perhaps, we may add, to man's feeling, a most capricious famine. Here we have the voice proclaiming, "A chenix of wheat for a denarius," &c. The penny in our country would give the idea of something insignificant in value, but in those times and lands, a chenix of wheat for a denarius was very costly, for not long before men could procure seven or eight chenixesa for the money: sometimes, it would seem, twice as much. A denarius was given for the daily wage, and was barely enough for a man's daily food; for the chenix of wheat appears to have been a minimum, being the allowance given to a slave. But while there should be this scarcity of the very staff of life, there was a command not to touch the luxuries of life, the oil and the wine. What the rich, then, require was not to be touched, but only what people want of the prime necessities of life. God is laying His hand upon the world.

Yet such events as these might happen in ordinary times. There might be some great conqueror, such as Julius Caesar or Napoleon, appearing on the stage at any time, or there might be famine, &c. And in the fourth seal we have God's four sore plagues let loose together, the sword, famine, death, and pestilence, and the wild beasts of the earth, but here limited to a fourth part. They are but preparatory chastisements as yet. "And behold, a pale horse, and his name that sat on him

was Death, and Hades followed with him" (Ver. 8.) In Ezek. 14 you will find that these four same things are mentioned together in connection with Israel. In these first judgments God does not proceed to any very extraordinary measures. A conqueror is no rare thing in the earth, a bloody and perhaps civil war not uncommon. These might be followed by a famine, and that naturally enough might breed pestilence, &c. Thus man would account for these things, and the wise are caught in their own craftiness. But we know before, through God's word, that there is a time of conquest coming-then of bloody warfare-next of dearth-and lastly of the outpouring of God's sore plagues. The heavenly saints must be set in rest and peace in the presence of God-the church must be safely sheltered before these judgments begin.

The next scene, under the fifth seal, is a remarkable one. The living creatures drop their cry of "Come," which was connected only with external judgments in providence. But now we have a series of events somewhat different. The fifth seal discloses that God has a people on earth still. Who are these that are suffering now? The prophet sees their souls under the altar, where they were as holocausts offered up. Though dead, they yet speak. They were slain because of the word of God, and because of their testimony. After that, man has no more than he can do. They call for retribution; for after the Lord has taken home His heavenly saints, He will begin to call earthly ones. They will not of course be born again by a different Spirit, but they will be called to a different route, and will not know God in the same full and near way wherein He reveals Himself to us now, and as we ought to know Him. These saints will have "the Spirit of prophecy." Such was the mode the Holy Ghost wrought in the Old Testament saints. The effect of the Spirit of prophecy was that they were waiting for Christ to come, for the accomplishment of promise and prophecy; and so these saints will wait for Christ to come in glory. All their hopes hang on Him, who is to be their Deliverer from circumstances of such excessive sorrow.

We should not be expecting Christ thus. We have rest in Him now. Though we are looking for Christ to come, we have present communion with Him in peace, and the title, whether slain or not, always to rejoice in Him. It is not the thing for Christians now to say in a trying time, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge, and avenge our blood?" &c. Stephen "cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Such also is the only right and suitable prayer for the saints of the heavenly calling. But here they are on different ground. They take up the position, and express the sentiments described in the Psalms. When people think that the Psalms are intended to convey our place and proper feelings as Christians, they find a great difficulty in understanding the language of vengeance and imprecation that is used in them. But when the Church "And a white robe was given unto every one of them." (Ver. 11.) That is, vindication has been accorded them, though they do not take their place on thrones till chap. xx. Disembodied spirits are never said to sit there. We do not read of spirits being glorified, but of bodies, and then they enter upon their destined glory. They will reign with Christ. Thus, after the Church is gone, there will be persons who witness for God here below, but taking up totally different language-the claim of retribution, and not long-suffering grace. It was a holy thing once to exterminate the Canaanites. It would not be a Christian thing now. How unbecoming for us, if God is showing mercy! But when He is judging, that conduct will be right and suitable which would not now be in season. If God sees that the earth is in such a state that it requires to be chastised and judged, it will be a holy thing to take part in it. But if I were to be judging bad people on the earth now, I should be doing what the Lord is not doing-nay, the very reverse of what engages Him. The Lord is now at work in

marvels of grace, and thus all who understand Him will be acting in the same spirit. The tremendous convulsion (ver. 12) of the sixth seal comes, apparently, in answer to the prayer of the saints who are concerned, and shows, that the powers of the persecuting world received an earnest of their doom, as truly as the slain ones, in the seal before, have their recognition in part before they inherit the kingdom. Their blood, we may say, cried to the Lord of Sabaoth. They lived unto God, and shall surely rise again; but they must wait. Another class of martyrs must yet be made up. "It was said to them that they should rest yet a little space, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should he killed even as they, should be completed." No account of the killing of these saints appears here: we must seek for this in other and subsequent parts of the book. The earlier sufferers meanwhile enjoy the result of righteousness, and are owned of God; but they are to await the filling up of a new and distinct band of martyred brethren, who are to suffer up to the close. Then retribution will come. Iniquity must reach its height and do its worst ere the hour of full divine judgment. Another and final outburst of persecution must precede. But mark here also no such hope is held out to a single individual, as the Lord's translating them without passing through death.

We have stated that the heavenly saints (i.e. the dead in Christ, and we who remain to the coming of the Lord) have already been taken from the earth, as chapter 4 had shown, the fifth chapter adding another thing, that while they are above, there are righteous persons on earth in whose prayers the risen saints are interested. That is to say, those above are found in the place of intercession; and there is nothing sweeter than that place-nothing in which we are practically brought nearer to Christ, save in our immediate relationship to Himself, The Church is destined to have that privilege in glory, as we have it now in grace for all men (1 Tim. 2)-the privilege of intercession for others still in trial on the earth. The Church will take the deepest concern in their sorrows, blessings, and hopes.

But who are these sufferers on earth? In chap. 6:9, as we have seen, there was a dreadful slaughter of the saints. They cried with a loud voice, and we are permitted, with and through John, to hear their cry. They were appealing to God as the Sovereign of everything. "How long, O Lord, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth'?" Evidently this is not a Christian cry I do not say it will not be a believing one, but suited to their circumstances and to the then dealings of God. People are so narrow that they think a person can never be a believer without being a Christian. It is quite true that now a believer is, of course, a Christian. Even the babes know the Father. "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father; he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also." But we ought always to gather our thoughts and our language from Scripture and not from our own imagination. Now, though Abraham and all the Old Testament saints were born of the Spirit, yet they were not Christians in a proper New Testament sense. For a Christian is not only one who has faith in Christ, but one to whose faith Christ dead and risen has been presented by God, and who has, consequently, the Holy Ghost uniting him to Christ in heaven. But this was not and could not be till Christ had come and finished the work of redemption. They had the new birth no doubt, for to be born again does not necessarily imply that the work of atonement has been previously accomplished; but still there is a difference of position into which the accomplished work, and the consequent presence of the Spirit during Christ's absence in heaven, has brought us.

From those under the altar, then, we do not hear Christian accents, but that which reminds us of the state and feelings revealed of old. From the time that the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world, and went up on high, as the rejected One, now glorified, -from that time the sufferings of Christ, as the righteous witness for God, and in perfect grace to man, become, so to speak, reproduced in His people. The Holy Ghost puts them in sympathy with Christ. What was in a measure true before was now the appointed portion for the saints. None but Christ could possibly know suffering from God for bearing sin. But part of the suffering even of the cross was, because Christ was put there through the wickedness of men: another and a far deeper part was, that He was put there by the grace of God for the vindication of His holiness, and the deliverance of the sinner. In the last He suffered for us; in the first we may and should suffer with Him. Hence, the apostle Paul did not hesitate to say, "That I may know him... and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." A Christian might share the sufferings of Christ in the sense of being cast out, even unto death. The apostle himself had it often literally before him in this way. (See 2 Cor. 1 iv.) He knew the fellowship of Christ's sufferings; Stephen knew the same.

Such is not this cry. Here the sufferers were under the deep feeling of the wrong that was done to them, and they called only for the judgment of God. How different the state of things when persons, instead of shrinking from prison and from judgment, thanked God, and went away full of joy, because they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus! Is this what we get here? No doubt, there is the world as unrighteous as ever; but there is something more blessed now, than appeals to God to deal with the world as the world has dealt with us. This was the state of things when men had to do with the law; as the principle of righteous retribution will appear again in the millennial day, when they will have the law written on their hearts. As far as the moral blessedness ( $\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\omega\mu\alpha$ ) of the law is concerned, God makes that good in His people now. But there is another principle which is being displayed now in every form; for God's grace is going out to the lost. Christ's death is the greatest manifestation of that grace, and the Holy Ghost works the spirit of grace into the heart of His people. But the cry under the fifth seal is that sin may be laid to the charge of their oppressors, and vengeance taken accordingly. This is righteousness, but not grace. Let us bear in mind, however, that God does not allow us to take up a righteous or a gracious cry just when we like. We are always wrong when, under suffering from the world, a gracious cry is not brought out by the blow. When we have to do with one another, as Christians, we are entitled, of course, to look for godly and righteous ways: indeed, it is part of the character of a Christian to feel what is wrong, as well as to value what is right. (Rom. 12) But there should always be power to rise above the evil, and to bring out Christ to meet it, whether it be in the way of discipline for those within, or of intercession for those that are without. God is dealing in perfect grace, and so should we, with the world.

Here, in the seals and sequel of the Revelation, it is another thing: God is judging in a preparatory way; and so, for His people, it is another kind of relationship, not that in which He has set us till the Lord receives us to Himself. Accordingly, it is the Jewish expectation of deliverance -through God's destruction of the adversaries, not the Christian's hope of removal out of the scene to heaven. Righteous vengeance is invoked on those that dwell on the earth. Not that vindictiveness is implied, but assuredly it is not practical grace. They look therefore for God to judge, instead of longing, as we should do, for Christ to come and take us to Himself. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come."

Remark, that the word used here for "Lord" is not the one that is generally employed; but the same term occurs in Luke 2:29, Acts 4:24, Jude 4. It means the Lord, as "sovereign master." It is also used in 2 Peter 2:1, "Even denying the Lord that bought them." We have not here the nearness in which we know Him as "our Lord," but the general authoritative relation in which the Lord is the Master of the whole world - of all men, whether bad or good. It is never said that those who know Christ by the Holy Ghost can deny the Lord who bought them.

However that may be, the appeal is answered by the throes of nature universally, presenting, in symbols, to the prophet's eye, what was coming "And I beheld when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth its untimely figs, when it is shaken by a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places." (Ver. 12-14.) The heavens are convulsed from one end to the other; the stars fall, &c., evidently, as it seems to me, in the vision only. "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the chieftains, and the rich, and the mighty, and every bondman and free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and they say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who is able to stand?" (Ver. 15-17.) Every class of men is in agitation through these impending judgments. It is not really the great day of the Lamb's wrath, yet people think that it is. They fear that the last day is already come.

An idea has prevailed with many that this seal represents the epiphany of the Lord in judgment at the end of the age. This has disposed them to understand the description as a literal account of the heavenly and earthly changes which accompany that great event. But there is no solid foundation for such thoughts. In the first place, the seventh seal is not yet opened, so that the end it cannot be, even if one adopted the system which supposes the trumpets to be a rehearsal from another point of view. Again, not a word occurs alluding to the presence of the Lord. There is a great earthquake; but the appearing of Jesus is incomparably more serious than any possible commotion in the world. The difference is manifest, if we compare these verses with chap. xix. 11-21 of this book, and with 1 Thess. 5; 2 Thess. 1; Luke 17:24-37, &c. Not to speak of the sixth trumpet, under the seventh vial (which must surely be owned as at least not earlier than the sixth seal) there is an earthquake, of which the Holy Ghost speaks in still stronger terms. Yet we know that this is before the day of the Lord; for all admit that the vials are poured out before He comes as a thief. And a fortiori why not the sixth seal? Had these convulsions been given under the seventh seal, there might have seemed more tenable ground: as it is, there is really none.

There is also this marked difference between our seal and the passages in Matt. 24, Mark and Luke 21, with which some would connect it, that in the latter the Son of man is expressly said to be seen coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, in the former, as has been remarked, there is not a trace of it. It is represented, under the seal, that all men in their terror say to the mountains and rocks (is this literal, after they had been moved out of their places?) "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne and the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who is able to stand?" But it is a revelation, not of that which God declares about the time or circumstances, but of men's alarm and its effect in their consciences. To take what John saw in the vision as so many physical realities, to be then verified

in the literal sun, moon, stars, and heaven, is, I think, an opinion adopted without due consideration. Would there, could there, be need for any to invoke the fall of the mountains and rocks, if the stars really fell unto the earth? Could men or the globe survive such a shock? Besides, it is plain that the description alludes, at any rate, to passages in the Old Testament, such as Isa. 13; 34; Ezek. 32:7, 8, and Joel 2 Now the last distinctly states that the signs therein predicted are before the great and terrible day of the Lord come, and the first had its accomplishment in the past fall of Babylon, though there be also types of a more solemn and universal catastrophe at the close.

All this is, to my mind, decisive that the sixth seal, according to its natural place in the prophecy, in no way means the great day of the Lord, but sets forth, first in figures and then in simple language, an overwhelming revolution which overthrows existing institutions and governmental order. The authorities, supreme, dependent, and subordinate, cease their functions. The shock is universal. They think the last reckoning is come. Not the Lord, but their affrighted conscience calls it the day of His wrath. But when that day does come (as in chap. xix.), they are bold as lions. The very frequency of divine judgment acts upon the hard hearts of men; and so, though the trumpets have yet to blow, and the judgments become more and more intense, yet when the Lord comes in person, instead of calling on the mountains to cover them, they are found fighting against Himself. When their consciences were not so hardened, they were alarmed; but when the great day arrives, they are in open rebellion against Christ. What a thing is the heart of man! and what an infinite mercy that the Lord has brought us, not in the thought of His wrath -though the Lord grant that this may be used to awaken some souls-but what a mercy to think that He has brought us into peace, and that He will have us in the full enjoyment of our heavenly blessings, even when all these judgments are passing beneath us! To be in the heavenly presence of Him who will then execute these judgments-this is to be our portion! The Lord grant that we may walk in His grace now, not dragged down into the spirit of the world, nor standing for our own rights! Alas! if sinful men begin to talk about rights, in the sight of God the only thing they have a right to is to be lost and judged. If He dealt with us on that ground, when—how—could we be saved? But He has forgiven us all our wrongs, and has given us the joy of standing for His rights. The Lord grant that we may be true to Him and to His cross!

## Lectures on Revelation 7

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The careful reader of the Revelation will have noticed that this chapter does not perform any part, properly speaking, of the course of events. That is to say, it is neither one of the seals, nor of the trumpets, nor of the vials. We have not finished the seals yet. In the sixth chapter we have had six seals, and there is a seventh that comes before us in chap. 8. What then is the meaning of chap. 7? It is an interval- a sort of parenthesis in these events-that occurs between the sixth and seventh seals. Under the sixth seal there is a frightful catastrophe among kings and subjects, high and low, calling to the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. To their minds, His day was come.

On the other hand, when He opens the seventh seal (chap. 8), there is silence in heaven about the space of half-an-hour: so that the whole of chap. vii. is no link in the regular chain of the history foreseen. Yet this apparent interruption of historic sequence is just as orderly as the formally numbered series of the judgments, because all that God does is perfect: every detail is fixed with the greatest care and nicety. What confirms this is that, when we come to the seven trumpets, the sixth trumpet is given in chap. ix. and the seventh does not appear till chap. 11:15; so that the whole of ch. 10. and the larger part of ch. 11. form a great parenthetical revelation of events, similar to what we have in the chapter before us. Indeed, to me, it is still more remarkable in the trumpets; for you will observe in chap. ix. 12 it is said, "One woe is past, and behold there come two woes," &c., and then we have the sixth angel sounding and the description of the Euphratean horsemen. But it is not till chap. xi. 14 that we have "the second woe is past," evidently referring to the Euphratean horsemen mentioned before in chap. ix. So that the whole scene of the mighty angel coming down from heaven, of the little book that was to be taken and eaten by the seer, of the temple and worshippers measured, of the court and city abandoned for forty-two, months, of the two witnesses, their testimony, death, resurrection, and ascension, &c.-all this forms part of the striking episode. Thus, as there is a parenthesis between the sixth and seventh seals, there is an exactly corresponding one between the sixth and seventh trumpets, and not only so, but we have something analogous in the vials. If you look at the sixth vial (chap. xvi. 12) you will find there is an interruption between it and the seventh. First, the water of the great river Euphrates is dried up, that the way of the kings from the East might be prepared. And then we have a totally different subject. "I saw three unclean spirits," &c.— "they are the spirits of devils;" and then, distinct again from this, "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth," &c. This is a brief but singular parenthesis, containing both the account of the evil and the Lord's coming in judgment on it. I only refer to it now for the purpose of showing that there is nothing but what is laid down with the most astonishing precision of purpose in God's word, and in this book, it may be added, conspicuously.

If you take up the Revelation, it may appear, at first sight, all a maze; but this is not so at all, and the impression arises from ignorant haste or from incapacity to discern. The fact is, that people bring certain feelings or wishes with them to the book, instead of waiting in the desire to know what God thinks and speaks to them in it. But we take the highest ground for the word of God, and maintain that the Holy Ghost is the only power for understanding any part of that word. Now,

whether for a man's soul, for his salvation and hopes, for his practical guidance, either individually or corporately, for his ways in the church or in the world, for his instruction as to the worship and the service of God, or even as to his relative duties on earth, whatever it be, there is divine light for every step of the way; and the only reason why we do not all see it, is because we have not the single eye which faith produces. It is faith that gets the blessing, and I believe that, as it is ever true that "according to thy faith so be it unto thee," it will also be blindness according to the measure of unbelief. The Lord always gives what faith counts on from Himself; unbelief inevitably finds the barrenness that it deserves.

To return. It had long been a difficulty to me how we could get the sealing of a body of elect Jews and the vision of an innumerable company of saved Gentiles, when their blessing only comes at a later part of the book. But the moment I learned that it was all a parenthesis, and that the actual time when the sealed remnant of Israel and the saved Gentiles come into public action and take their place upon the stage is another thing altogether, that difficulty was at an end. God for our comfort, while the judgments are going on, allows the curtain to part for a little moment, and we see that they are all safe under His eye and ready to be manifested in due time. But when they come publicly into view is another question. In chap. 14. there is a body spoken of, 144,000, of whom the Lamb is the center, and these stand with Him on mount Zion, having His name and His Father's name written on their foreheads. That body is evidently similar to, though not the same as, the 144,000 that we have here; and perhaps also we may compare, but not identify, the "nations" in Rev. 21:24-26 with the countless host of Gentiles here. Still more striking is the resemblance to the sheep of Matt. 25., because these are not merely the blessed Gentiles of the millennial day, but had stood the test during the interval of grievous trial which preceded it. And observe that the sheep in that passage are distinguished from the King's brethren who have a position yet nearer to Himself-Jewish saints, who, after the church is taken to heaven, will be entrusted with the gospel of the kingdom, which is to be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations before the end comes. Thus in Matt. 25:31-46, Israelitish brethren of the King, just before the close, test the Gentiles, who, at His appearing, are summoned before His throne and discriminated as blessed or cursed, their faith or unbelief being proved by the way they had carried themselves towards the messengers of the coming kingdom in the time of their sorrowful testimony. Millions of the nations will be born during the peaceful millennial reign, for whom the loosing of Satan at its close will be fatal.

In this chapter, then, we have simply two striking scenes, connected in sense if not as to epoch, outside the regular march of things. The Spirit of God, who laid down the historical order of the divine judgments, leaves that for moment and shows us that God has mercy in store even in the coming day of distress. Israel will be in frightful circumstances: "Jerusalem shall receive of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." As she had been strong in her hatred against the Lord, so will He reckon that His vengeance has been doubly poured forth upon the guilty city. We have had judgments, first beginning with comparatively ordinary events, such as a great conqueror going forth, bloodshed, scarcity, God's sore plague (death referring to the body and hades to the soul); then a remorseless outburst of persecution on God's people; next a universal and dreadful convulsion before the eyes of the seer, affecting heaven, earth, and sea, the greatest alarm and bewilderment among men, who think that the day of the Lamb's wrath is come. But that day was not come then. When it does arrive, the Lord will execute judgment in person on the dead and the

living. But now it is a panic which leads men to dread judgment-day. And the kings of the earth, and the nobles, and the chieftains, and the rich, and the mighty, and every one, bond and free, were in the utmost consternation.

But here we find that the Lord stops and draws us aside for a season to show us what His mercy is going to do. “[And] after this I saw four angels holding the four winds of the earth.” They are kept in check for the moment. “And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.” (Ver. 2, 3.) Some have conceived that the sealing angel is Christ, partly because it is assumed that the work done is communicating the Holy Spirit of promise, the seal of redemption. To me all this is more than doubtful. It is not till we reach the trumpet series that our Lord ever assumes the angelic form and title. Whether we look at the seals, or at the parenthesis between the two last, He is invariably, where the reference is certain, spoken of as the Lamb. Again, this angel rises up from the sun-rising. I can readily apply such a movement to angels subject to the Son of man, ascending and descending to do His pleasure. But when the Lord appears in angelic garb, He either ministers as High priest with the golden censer, or He comes down with unmistakable tokens and proclamation of His dominion and power. In the present scene nothing is said which unequivocally reveals His own glory. Much has been made of the phrase “till we have sealed,” as if it corresponded with the allusion to the persons in the Godhead, as in Gen. 1:26. I am surprised that the rest of the sentence was not observed to be incompatible with such a meaning. Would Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (which in that case would be the sense) say “till we have sealed the servants of our God ?” The idea seems to me unfounded. Nor even if our Lord exclusively could be imagined so to speak, does it seem to be consistent with His dignity. He teaches His disciples to say “our Father,” but does not say it with them. When He does associate them with Himself risen from the dead, it is even then “My Father and your Father, My God and your God” —never “our God.”

The meaning, then, is, that before the various judgments are poured out on creation, God will have appropriated a certain people for Himself. They are sealed with the seal of the living God—that is, a character is put upon them as set apart to God. Cain had a very different mark put upon him by Jehovah: that was to screen him from man's judgment. Here also protection may be involved. At any rate, they are sealed on their foreheads, which, of course, means no physical mark, but God's setting them apart for Himself, and, I suppose, publicly. Who are the sealed ones? A measured remnant from His ancient people.

Thus, the angels are seen restraining the judgments that are about to fall on all creation, and we have the seal of God upon a certain chosen number out of Israel. He will have an election from that people, but it will be a personal and individual election not a merely national one as of old. When David attempted to number the people, it was a presumptuous sin, but here it is the grace of God appropriating a complement of the tribes of Israel to Himself. The number 144,000 is a regular and complete number, though it is a mystical one, as I suppose, with a view to God's use of the favored nation here below. The number twelve always has a reference to what is perfect for God's accomplishment of His work, administered by man. This may be seen in the twelve tribes of Israel, twelve patriarchs, twelve apostles, and even the twelve gates, and twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem. It is a perfect number where human administration comes in. Hence, when

the nation of Israel is to be brought in again, it is the multiple of twelve that we have, and this expressed in thousands; the full result, as far as Israel is concerned, of the administration that God will commit to man.

An important question has been raised here, whether the tribes of Israel are to be interpreted literally or mystically. For the latter sense it is argued, that the very first vision of the seven candlesticks, borrowed from the Jewish sanctuary, and the allusions in the seven epistles that follow, but more particularly in chap. 3:12 compared with chap. 21:12, sustain the Christian meaning throughout the book. But does not such reasoning overlook the fact that the application of Jewish emblems to the churches, while they are expressly spoken of here below, and of others to the church, either glorified above or following Christ out of heaven in the day of the Lord, is totally distinct from the question whether certain symbols, taken from Israel, may not also apply to a different class of witnesses on earth between those two points? The real question is about the interval, when churches are no longer spoken of and before the bride appears with the Bridegroom in glory. To state the question aright is enough to show the inconclusiveness of the argument, as applied (not to Revelation nor in Rev. 21:12, where in the main we all agree, but) to the prophetic visions from chap. 6. onward.

Besides, it is allowed by the more intelligent of the historical school that, about the close of the age, the Jews will be converted and take the lead in the earthly song of praise on the occasion. This may be put too late in the book and founded on the feeble evidence of the occurrence of the Hebrew word "Hallelujah" in Rev. 19:3. Still the fact is admitted-an Apocalyptic prophecy of that which is to happen before the appearing of the Lord. What is more, a large part of the same school, represented by one of their most popular hooks, (Bp. Newton's Dissertations on the Prophecies, Works I., pp. 578, 579,) understand the tribes of Israel to be meant in their natural historical import, and apply the prophecy to the vast influx of converted Jews in the reign of Constantine. In fact, the earliest Christian writer who alludes to the chapter, Irenaeus, the pious Bishop of Lyons; unhesitatingly solves the omission of Dan so as to prove that he considered the actual tribes of Israel to be meant. So also speaks Victorinus, in one passage at least of the earliest extant commentary on the book. Others soon began to veer towards the allegorizing method, till at length the anti-Judaic theory became much the more general view.

But it may be well to notice briefly the reasons alleged by one of the ablest advocates of the mystical class-Vitringa. First, he argues that if the names were to be taken in the letter, so must the number. But does this follow? And if it were a necessity, what is to hinder? He who reserved 7,000 in Elijah's day may seal 144,000 of Israel at a future epoch. But I see no need for this. The people might be literal, the number symbolical, -without difficulty save to one fascinated by the love of excessive simplification. It is not denied that symbols exist, nor that they yield a determinate sense; but to look for a sort of pictorial consistency in all the parts is contrary to the facts everywhere. Moreover, what could be the meaning of a mystical Reuben, Gad, Asher, &c? Nobody that I know pretends to assign a distinctive signification, unless persons in the last degree fanciful. Yet if they are to be so taken, one might expect each to have a meaning, which is looked for in vain in those who plead strenuously for the general idea. Next, it is urged that by the sealed must be understood God's elect, who are to be preserved from an otherwise universal calamity; and who can assert these to be Jews only? But who affirms that none are elect save these? We shall see presently that the scope of the prophecy and the connection of the passage intimate the

contrary. The false assumption therefore is, not that the sealed thousands are out of the actual tribes of Israel only, but that there will be no other saints but these. Thirdly, the omission of Dan seems to be at least as great a difficulty on the mystical as on the literal hypothesis. In the blessing of Moses (Deut. xxxiii.) Simeon is left out. Is this list of the tribes, then, to be taken allegorically? Fourthly, the alleged parallel text, Rev. 14:1, by no means proves that the tribes are not literally of Israel. The 144,000 in chap. 14. are saints on earth, not long before the final catastrophe, and in contrast with those defiled by Babylon and enslaved by the Beast. But that they are the church, rather than a godly remnant of Israelites associated in the Spirit's mind with the suffering but now exalted Christ, is what writers of this stamp have never even fairly weighed, much less have they decided on good grounds one way or the other.

On the other hand, I conceive that the specification of the tribes is inconsistent with any sense but the literal. Then, again, the contradistinction is as plain and positive as words can make it, between the sealed numbers out of Israel and the innumerable multitude from all nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues. So that the mystical theory, when closely examined, cannot escape the charge of absurdity; for it identifies the sealed Israelites with the palm-bearing Gentiles, spite of the evident and express contrast on the face of the chapter. This results from trying to make out that the Gentile crowd consists of all the aggregated generations of the erect from the tribes. As to the sealed ones, not a hint appears of a succession: indeed, the command to suspend the action of the four winds, till after the sealing, implies the contrary. It was a precise limited hour, as it was a special class. But what clenches the matter is that the palm-bearing Gentiles (i.e. according to some, the Christian church in its heavenly completeness) are all described as coming out of the great tribulation a tribulation which even they view as following the days of Constantine. Thus, to my mind, all is strong and conclusive that the sealed here are literal Israelites-not only of Israel, but Israel, the Israel of God; as the mystical reading of the first part of the chapter, with the literal understanding of the rest, involves its advocates in consequences the more gross where it is most systematically pursued.

With regard to the tribes mentioned, there is a certain peculiarity, on which I can say little. There are the sons of the various wives of Jacob: first, the two sons of Leah, Judah, and Reuben; then of Zilpah, Leah's maid, Gad and Asher; then Naphtali, the son of the maid Bilhah, and instead of Dan, her other son, Manasseh, Joseph's firstborn, is substituted. Then there are the four sons of Leah, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, and Zebulun; and finally, the sons of Rachel, Joseph, and Benjamin. Clearly we have the sons arranged according to the different mothers, the offspring of the bond-women being intermingled with that of the free.

Dan, who had been the most conspicuous for idolatry, is left out, and instead of Ephraim, the younger son of Joseph, Joseph himself appears. We find here the called of Israel, but the tribes numbered and arranged in a singular manner. They are no longer merely taken up in a natural way, according to the order of birth, but God seems to intimate that He would make them a spiritual people also, stamped with His seal. They will then be Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile. Nor is Dan, at last, disinherited. Ezek. 48:1, 32.)

Nor this only; God is also going to save a multitude of Gentiles, and here there is no numbering. This is a most refreshing thought from its largeness. For though from them God is now gathering a people to His name, yet when we think of the multitudes that are immersed in darkness, the

myriads on myriads of men in heathen countries, a handful-yea, perhaps but one-among them, here and there, having the knowledge of God, it is an afflicting and humbling reflection. But is it not remarkable that when God is to show us the increasing wickedness of both Jew and Gentile, and when His judgments are about to fall, we find there is this multitude of Israel numbered with the greatest care, and God not forgetful of the poor Gentiles? They may not be put in the same high place as the Jews, but God will bless them wonderfully notwithstanding. But the prophet, who had just known the election of Israel sealed and had heard the number of them, has to turn to one of the elders in order to learn who the countless company are. They were to John a new unknown crowd among the blessed. If they were sealed on their foreheads, is it reasonable that they should just after seem so strange?

The multitude spoken of here is distinct from, if not in contrast with, the church; and it is thus that we know this clearly. The elders represent the heavenly saints as the heads of priesthood. Now, God might use two different symbols to mean the same body; as, for instance, the wise virgins and the good and faithful servants in Matt. 25 are successive representatives of the heavenly saints. But here we have the Gentile multitude and the elders given as distinct parties in the same scene. Again you have the elders doing one thing and the multitude doing another. Above all, note that the way in which God speaks of this multitude totally separates them both from the church of God and from the Old Testament saints. This cannot be so clearly seen in our authorized translation, but the right version in verse 14 is this: "These are they which come out of the great tribulation." I could understand, of course, that as a figure the whole of this dispensation might be called a time of tribulation, or even of great tribulation. But here it is not merely said, "These are they which came out of great tribulation," but "out of the great tribulation." It is not possible to make "the great tribulation" extend over all the time between the first and second comings of Christ. Even the vague Protestant interpreters make it specific, but apply it, as is natural in them, to the fierce persecutions of the Papacy— "the great predicted tribulation of the coming apostasy and Antichrist." The phrase means a special time of trouble, and we gather from elsewhere that it is yet to come; and it is exactly this time that the central part of the Revelation includes, and chiefly covers. In the epistle to Thyatira it was said, "Behold I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds." I have a strong suspicion that this great tribulation is to be fulfilled now. The scene of the church is closed, the great tribulation comes on apace, and those -Who had professed Christianity, but who had gone back into idolatry, would be cast into it with others. Thus, what God shows us here is a multitude of saved Gentiles: not the Jews, for we have had them just before; and not Christians, for these will then be in heaven. Those are a Gentile body, called after the church is taken up; they are to be in the great tribulation, but shall be preserved through it.

We shall find the great tribulation spoken of in several parts of the word of God. In Jeremiah it is named in connection with the Jews. (Jer. 30:6). "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it." There is to be a time of excessive anguish, which closes with the day of the Lord, and Jacob is to be saved out of it; so that there you have the Jew in trouble, and the Jew delivered out of it. But in Daniel it is still more explicit (Dan. 12). The angel speaks of Daniel's own people, the Jews. "At that time.... there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." This is

“the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.” It is, evidently, the plain counterpart of the words of Jer. 1 draw from this that there is to be a future time of “trouble” “such as was never was” —the immediate precursor of deliverance for Jacob's people as spoken of in these prophecies.

In Matt. 24 the Lord Himself refers to it: “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor over shall be.” Evidently there we have the same time, the Lord quoting, the very passage in Daniel. It is quite plain that He is speaking only of Jews, because they are supposed to be connected with the temple, and they are told to pray that their flight be not on the sabbath day, in which case they could not go beyond a sabbath day's journey, nor in winter. In either case, there would be a hindrance to their flight, whether on God's part, or in the circumstances of the season. We have the same thing referred to in Mark, but Luke seems to speak in a more general way.

What party s, then, are to be in the scene of the tribulation? First a Jewish one, spoken of in the prophets and the gospels, the object of God's care, who will deal tenderly with a remnant of Israel and deliver them out of their distresses. Then in Rev. 7:9, we hear of a Gentile multitude. But neither party is the church.

Never have we God dealing thus with the Jew and with the Gentile as such, and forming the church at the same time; for then God would have at least two, if not three, objects,—not various only, but opposite objects,—of special affection on the earth, at the same time, with quite different modes and aims of action. Suppose there were two persons, whom the Lord was bringing near to Himself. If He were dealing with the Jew, He would acknowledge an earthly temple, priesthood, and worship. The Lord acknowledged the Jews, as such, when He was on earth, and He will do so, in a still more blessed way, in the day that is coming. But as long as the Lord is occupied with forming the church, Jewish order ceases to have any claim. Thus, then, suppose that God were blessing the Jews as Jews, and, at the same time, forming the church on earth, if two persons were converted, the one might say, I must still have my priest and go to the temple; while another would exclaim, There is no priest but Christ, and the temple is in heaven. See the confusion that would spring from God's owning an earthly and a heavenly people at the same time here below. In this time of tribulation, when the Lord will recognize the Jew (i.e. the godly remnant) in a certain sense, the church will not be in the scene. The objects of deliverance will be elect Jews and elect Gentiles, each distinct from the other, and not the church of God, where both are united and all distinctions disappear. We have seen direct proof of the removal of the church in chaps. iv. v. Here there is indirect evidence, because we have Jews sealed and Gentiles saved, and the latter expressly distinguished from the elders or heavenly saints. The sealing of the Jews included the election from the whole twelve tribes of Israel, except where there was a special brand of evil, as in the case of Dan. But the moment we find the Jew, we have God looking also, though separately, at the nations; because, having once visited the Gentile with His mercy, He will never take it back. Thus, when here He speaks of mercy to a complement of Israel, there is also salvation to a multitude out of every nation and kindred and people and tongue.

We saw that if the guilty Christian professors went on in their sin with Jezebel, they would be given up, and would be left to go through great tribulation. Here we find the great tribulation come, and not only are Israelites sealed but a multitude of Gentiles are delivered out of it. The Old Testament

does not speak of Gentiles' being delivered thence, but Jews. Meantime, God has been sending salvation to the Gentiles. Hence, in the New Testament prophecy Gentile deliverance is as prominent as Jewish deliverance is in the Old Testament. God shows that, in the last days, He is going to save a vast throng of Gentiles. But will it be so in these countries where the light of the gospel has shone and has been despised? "They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thess. 2:10-12.) God will visit those who have not enjoyed this testimony, the external peoples who have not had Christ rightly presented to them. The church has completely failed in what God looks for from us. He called on the church to take up the cross and to follow Christ; but the church has, in practice, given up the cross and followed the world. All this has hardened the heathen, who find that the church does not bring forth the fruits that are suitable to the grace and truth which we profess to have found in Christ. But God, in His fullness of mercy, will go to those outside. Thus, I believe that these very countries which have set themselves up as the center from whence the light emanates will then be in antichristian idolatry, while those which have been in darkness will come out into light. It will only be the tale of Galilee of the nations again, when Jerusalem despised and lost the Son of God—alas how long.

Here we see the blessed result. There will be this innumerable multitude of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, who stand before the throne and before the Lamb. Theirs are the robes of righteousness, and their palms are the palms of victory; but they do not sing the new song. There is nothing like the high and exulting tone of chap. v., no intercession for others, nay, not a word of being made kings and priests to God. They cry with a loud voice, "Salvation unto our God who sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb." They are saved persons, but the ascription is limited to the title that He takes upon the throne and to the Lamb. God is not now sitting upon the throne that is described here: at least it is not thus He reveals Himself while the Church is on earth. He will by and by take His place there as One issuing judgments; and the great point seems to be, that, although it is a time of preparatory wrath and judicial action, yet God is showing signal mercy, even to Gentiles. In verse 13, we have the elders looking upon the scene. How could they be looking upon themselves? Yet this must be the case, if the elders and the innumerable multitude are both supposed to set forth the Church. We have two distinct parties. If the elders are the Church, the multitude is not; and if the multitude is, then the elders cannot be. I well understand a man having a picture taken of himself in one suit of clothing at one time and in a different suit at another. But we could not possibly have a portrait of a man taken at the same moment with two different sets of robes upon him, so as to display distinct characters, and fulfill opposite functions together.

In the Church of God which is being called now, there is neither Jew nor Gentile. The moment you find the distinction kept up between them, there cannot be the Church. Whenever you separate the Jew from the Gentile, you are off Church ground. Before the death and resurrection of Christ, God was not forming Jew and Gentile into one body. Thus, even when the Lord Jesus was upon earth, He forbade His disciples to go to the Gentiles, or so much as to enter the Samaritan cities. But when He, the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, was about to form the Church, He charged them to go everywhere and preach the gospel to every creature, instead of merely seeking out him that was worthy in Israel. Thus, a complete change was evinced in the ways of God, not as if He

knew not the end from the beginning, but with a view to fresh displays of His glory in His Son. So, too, when the present calling closes, His mercy will flow out in fresh channels, as we have seen.

I trust, then, it has been shown plainly that the subject of this chapter is not the Church, but Israel and the Gentiles blessed as such. Indeed, I do not hesitate to say, that, if any person supposed Rev. 7 treated of the Church, it would argue that he had no true idea of its nature and calling—that he had no conception of what the Holy Ghost connects with the body of Christ here below. The Church of God is essentially a heavenly body that entirely sets aside all distinction of Jew and Gentile. The scope, if not object, of this chapter shows that these distinctions reappear at the time that is referred to. We have first a company of Israel, then an innumerable crowd out of the Gentiles. Besides these, that class of the redeemed formed out of Jews and Gentiles, and long familiar to us in this book (namely, the crowned elders), are seen as a distinct body altogether.

Thus we have, in this chapter, “the Jew, the Gentile, and the church of God” — sealed Jews and saved Gentiles, for the earth, as I suppose, and the church with the Old Testament saints preserved for heavenly glory. While the elect of the twelve tribes are said to have great mercy shown them, and the Gentiles too, who might have been thought to be forgotten then (ver. 14-17), yet it is not the same exalted privilege that we shall enjoy. “They” (i.e., these spared Gentiles) “serve day and night in his temple.” But when the Holy Ghost is showing us our special place of blessing, the prophet says “I saw no temple therein.” In chap. 21., where he describes the bride or the heavenly Jerusalem, it is a state of things totally different from what we have here. Though it be the city, where you might above all expect to find a sanctuary, he says “I saw no temple therein.” Why is this? Because that city is the symbol of the bride, and when God brings out the blessedness and glory of the Church, He speaks of it as drawing near to Himself, so that there shall be none but Christ between Him and them, if we can call that between, where Christ Himself is the image of the invisible God, the One who reveals God to us and who is God. It excludes the idea of the temple. Here, on the contrary, we have the temple. One of their greatest privileges spoken of is that they serve Him day and night in His temple, and “He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.” There might seem to be a difficulty in this, but there really is a careful guard against the thought that might be drawn from the words, “dwell among them.” The true meaning is, God having His tabernacle over them, not among them. In chap. xxi. we find God dwelling among men. It is not the same phrase at all. Similar in English, it is totally different in the Greek. In chap. vii. the idea is that the presence of God overshadows the Gentiles, but there is no such thing intended as God's taking His place among them. They are blessed of God, overshadowed and protected as Israel of old under the cloud of His presence. Like them, too, in the future (Isa. 49), they shall not hunger nor thirst, neither shall the heat nor sun smite them; blessed expressions, but rather conveying an earthly position than a heavenly one. We have the Lamb Himself to feed us now. Even here He gives us to have in us wells of water springing up into everlasting life, and out of us flow rivers of living water.

I have been endeavoring to prove, then, that God's purposes are not limited by what He is doing now. Besides forming the heavenly body, the church, and conferring upon it the highest privileges even He can give, God is going to visit the Gentiles by and by. They will be remembered; and this will be done in the midst of the most appalling judgments which precede the great day. And God makes plain our own position amidst it all; for we see the elders distinct, and they have the mind of Christ. This last is the portion of the church even on earth, just as Joseph was, in his time, the

depository of God's wisdom. "Whether in prison or out of prison, he entered into the thoughts of God and was able to explain them to others. That is the place that God's goodness puts us in—alas! how little it is prized or acted on. It is one of the most precious privileges that belongs to the church of God, save the position in which God sets us as brought nigh in Christ to Himself. There ought to be the power of announcing the revealed thoughts of God by the Holy Ghost.

## Lectures on Revelation 8

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To me it is manifest that the seventh seal is followed by a short but solemn pause, which again is introductory to a new course of divine inflictions. "And when he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God; and to them were given seven trumpets." Now these judgments that come before us under the trumpets are of a somewhat different character from what we have seen in the seals. In the first place, the seals in general appear to have a larger extent, but the blows were not so severe. It is true we had in Rev. vi. 8 a certain limitation (viz. the fourth part), used with regard to the extent of the blow then to be struck. But in the other instances there was no such restraint; whereas, in most of the trumpets it is the third part, with some slight exceptions. The trumpets, then, may be less extensive in their range, but it will by and by appear that they are more intensely judicial than the seals.

Further, we find that the very name indicates a difference. The trumpet sets forth a loud and solemn call of God. It is God summoning men, for, if they have rejected His grace, they must hear, even if they forget, these sharp warnings of His judgment. The seals might not so readily have been regarded as divine interferences, unless God had beforehand told us that such they were, with their nature and their order. In themselves, and especially in the first four, they ushered in disastrous but not unprecedented occurrences. But when we come to the trumpets it is not so requisite to announce that they are heaven-sent judgments. Their sound or summons is quite plain and urgent. They appeal far more unmistakably to men.

But there is another remarkable difference and of a more spiritual nature. The Lamb disappears under these new scenes. The Lord Jesus is not spoken of in that point of view while these destructive judgments run their course. This supposes and marks a great change, and we have to enquire what God would have us to gather from it. If the Lord Jesus is introduced at all, it is in another guise or aspect, and not as the Lamb. It is not the Lamb that takes the golden censer, but an angel. I do not deny that Christ is referred to, but it is in His angelic connection, or at least in an angelic form. He is presented in a more distant way than ever the church or the Christian, as such, knows Him in. In Heb. 2 we find that the Holy Ghost reasons upon the fact of Christ's having taken the place of man. "For verily he took not on him [the nature of] angels," &c. In our version the expression is too strong and the italics a mistake. The meaning is that He did not take up the angels: they were not the object of God's calling nor of His redemption. Jesus took hold of the seed of Abraham, (as it is given correctly in the margin,) and because of this, "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." He did not undertake the cause of angels. He stands in no such relationship towards them. Still there is nothing, as it seems to me, to contradict the idea that the Lord Jesus may be and is intended in our chapter 8 as the officiating angel at the altar; for, indeed, He is the Head of everything, the head of all principality and power. Why, then, might He not be viewed here in exalted, angelic glory? The personage spoken of acts as the angel-priest. Undoubtedly it is not thus that He has to do with the heavenly saints and that He ministers before God for us. But then the Lord, at the point of time to

which we are come in the prophecy, has entirely done with His ministrations for the partakers of the heavenly calling, at least so far as provision for their failure is concerned ; but we learn His interest in another class of saints—in “all the saints” of course—who will be upon the earth when the church has been taken up to heaven.

There is less introduction here of the suffering saints of God than anywhere else. The judgments fall almost entirely upon the world, upon men in their circumstances and persons, and, finally, upon men in their responsible relationship to God. Outwardly, the saints would seem to be mixed up with them. This accounts for the absence of the Lamb; for wherever He appears as such in the book of Revelation, it is Christ in His character of the holy and earth-rejected sufferer. Accordingly, the Lamb is peculiarly brought out where there are sufferers mentioned. For that word remains always true, that “when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them.” He never puts them in a path of which He has not tasted the bitterest sorrow before them. Here He retires, as it were, and is only seen in comparatively distant, angelic glory.

Remark, also, how full of symbols the chapter is, and, from the first trumpet, of how external a kind. Everywhere mysteriousness prevails. It is not God opening out His heart of complacency in those He loves. Whenever this is the subject, He speaks as it were face to face. He is simple and explicit. Without leaving this book, take, for instance, chap. 14. There He is going to speak of persons who were, or were to be, exposed to all sorts of trials, because of association with Jesus; and the first thing that we see on the mount Sion is the Lamb, and the portion of the wicked follows in the most distinct manner. So, again in chap. 12 “they overcame him (the dragon-accuser) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto death.” But here we have God's dealings with the world, and the scantiest notice of His own people as a separate class; and as the world has no claim on God, whatever His mercy to it, as the world has no tie with Him and only despises His love, so God speaks but of His earthly judgments in forms more and more awful. He does not bring persons so distinctly forward as in other scenes; and thus, as I conceive, even the person of the Lord Jesus is therefore not set forth evidently. For here, as elsewhere, we find that there is the most surprising harmony governing all scripture, when once the key to it is seen.

First of all, there are the angels standing before God and they take their trumpets, the seventh seal being a sort of preparation, or a signal, for a renewed course and another class of judgment. But before this begins, we have an angel-priest. There are those to whom God is faithful, for His eyes are over the righteous and His ears open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. Though there may be but a passing glimpse at the saints, yet God would never have us to forget that even at this time there are objects of His care upon the earth. “And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given him much incense.” Wherever the altar occurs without qualification, it invariably means, I believe, the brazen altar—the first means or point of contact between God and men on earth. There the holocaust was burnt, and the other offerings of sweet savour; thence was the fire taken, in order to cause the incense to ascend from its appropriate altar in the holy place. And this, as it flows from or agrees with the rest of scripture, so it is in perfect accord with its uses in the Revelation (chap. 6:9; 11:1; 14:18; 16:7). Where the altar of incense is in question, it is characterized as “the golden altar” before the throne, or before God (chap. 8:3; 9:13). Both are referred to here. Had the same altar been intended in the beginning as in the end of verse 3, the full description would surely have been furnished at the first

mention rather than at the second. Nor is there more difficulty as to seeing the great altar in the heavenly vision here, than the sea or laver in chap. 4, for according to the Jewish type they were equally in the court. At this altar, then, which connected the fire with the offering and acceptance of Christ, the angel stood with the golden censer pertaining to the holy of holies. The very phrase conveys to my mind that it was not his usual place: he came and stood there. In the Auth. Version it is said of the incense "that he should offer it with the prayers," &c. But if we take the phrase as it is given in chap. 11, the sense becomes plainer and more just. There we read (ver. 3), "I will give power unto my two witnesses." Now it is exactly the same form of expression here, and means that He should give power to the prayers or render them efficacious. "And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints ascended up before God," &c. (ver. 4). What is the effect of the prayers and the incense? All would feel that the Holy Ghost does not lead persons to pray for what is contrary to the mind of God, though when a mistaken prayer is offered, He will listen in His long-suffering, and knows how to teach His children the foolishness of such requests. But none can say that the Holy Ghost ever suggested or sustained a prayer which was not according to God's purpose. Observe, also, that incense out of the angels hand accompanies these prayers of the saints, and they are offered up to God.

But the fifth verse records a new action, "And the angel took the censer and filled it with fire of the altar." Surely this is the brazen altar, where not the incense but the fire was burning. The result is, not the efficacy of Christ's work comes up before God in more and more sweetness (as we see in the case of the offerings put on the brazen altar in Leviticus), but that here the fire was cast into the earth, and immediately followed "thunderings, and lightnings, and voices, and an earthquake." So that thus you have evidently prayer of another character and with a different effect produced—nay, the very priest himself viewed in another manner, as compared with what is going on now. For us Jesus the Son of God has passed through the heavens, a High Priest who was in all points tempted like us, apart from sin. He died for our sins, He can sympathize with our infirmities, having suffered to the utmost both in temptation and atonement. Our God also is on a throne of grace, whence mercy and grace come forth to help in time of need. (Heb. 4) Again, our attitude towards those without is akin; and hence supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, are and ought to be made for all men. But here it is not mercy but judgment; for though there may be the incense and the prayers of saints, the immediate issue is that the symbols of God's judgments are seen passing through the earth. There is perfect congruity in all the scenes that are portrayed here. Although a priest, and an altar (both altars, as it seems to me), and saints, and incense, and the censer, and the fire are all found in due order, yet it is in communion with God chastising the earth. Hence, too, the place of comparative distance already noticed. If the Lord is brought out at all, it is as an angel, and not in His full dignity as the Son of God, consecrated for evermore. Of course, He is always the Son of God, but He has other dignities beside, and here the prophetic vision presents Him in a totally different title and glory.

Again, it is, I must say, an unintelligent inference, be it made by Historicalist or by Futurist, that "all the saints" is a phrase which necessarily involves the conclusion that the Church of God is meant. The question must be judged by the convictions we have as to the bearing of all this part of the book. And I have abundantly shown, that, ever since chap. 4 began, the church is viewed as already and wholly glorified in heaven. Hence the church is really out of the question here, and these are all the saints on earth subsequently, for whom deliverance is prepared. The angel offers

their prayers, and judgment on earth for their deliverance is the reply. The ordinary reasoning is therefore beside the mark. All the saints are of course the Lord's people—a converted class, Jewish or Gentile. That this is what Scripture calls Christians or the Church is another matter, which the objectors would do well to inquire into.

“And the seven angels that had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. And the first sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood,” &c. The general bearing of this is apparent. These things are not to be taken in their mere obvious or physical drift. Supposing one looks at such a thing literally as a mountain falling into the sea, (ver. 8,) would it ever turn the water into blood? Nothing of the sort. The fact is that these were pictures that passed before the eyes of the prophet. What the figures meant, we have to gather from the general tenor of the word, by the teaching of the Spirit. I presume that even the prophet himself had to learn their meaning from other Scriptures. For here we have John, not in the place of one before whom all was naked and open and at once understood, but rather simply as a Seer. He is not necessarily able, as a matter of course, to enter fully into all that is passing before him, but has need to mark, learn, and inwardly digest. We come in the Apocalypse to the ground of prophecy, and this is a different region from that in which the Holy Ghost opens out to us the things of Christ in the way of communion. Indeed, what is told us of the prophet John himself throughout the book shows that he did not always nor of necessity appreciate the meaning of that which he beheld in the Spirit. In other words, he saw a sort of panorama, and recorded the visions just as they appeared to himself; and we have to use the word of God by the Spirit to know what the symbols imply. We are not to suppose that the event itself will be a mere formal repetition of what the prefiguration was, but a reality answering to the foreseen shadow.

Thus, when the first blast is sounded, we have a violent tempest of hail and fire mingled with blood—the blood distinguishing it from all previous storms, as being beyond nature. This betokened or ushered in a furious, sanguinary and destructive outburst that would agitate and rage over its sphere. “And the third of the earth was burnt up, and the third of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.” (Verse 7.) This evidently does not refer to the literal earth, trees, or herbage. In Scripture, grass is the symbol commonly used to denote man in his weakness, his very glory being like the flower of grass. Human prosperity then would be set forth by green grass. Here we have a judgment of God upon it. Not a certain part only, however large, but the whole of it is destroyed. The trees represent such as are high and exalted among men. It is a very common symbol in the word of God to express those that are deeply rooted with a lofty bearing and extensive influence here below. (Look, for instance, at Ezek. 31:3; Dan. 4, &c.) Thus, then, a blow is struck at a defined part of the scene of God's moral dealings; and both the low universally, and the higher classes to a large extent, feel the ruinous effects.

The second blow supposes a great change; it falls on the sea and so refers not to that sphere which is under special and settled government, but to what is or will then be in a state of confusion and anarchy. The nations which are in this condition do not remain scatheless. “And the second angel sounded: and as it were a great mountain, burning with fire, was cast into the sea; and the third of the sea became blood; and the third of the creatures which were in the sea, that had life, died; and the third of the ships were destroyed.” If Jeremiah be consulted, you will see that I am not explaining these things arbitrarily or out of my own imagination. As this is not so common a judgment, I think we have God furnishing us with another example; for just where we should be

likely to make mistakes, there God comes in with light and instruction. The “mountain burning with fire,” represents a system of power, itself under the judgment of God and the occasion of judgment to others. In Jer. 51:25, it is said, “Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth; and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain.” There we have what answers, in some measure, to what we have here. Babylon, in Jeremiah, was to be “a burnt mountain,” hurled down from its place of eminence. Here the mountain is said to be “burning” Babylon was itself to be as a consumed or destroyed mountain. Here the mountain is the means of destroying others, as in the Jewish prophet: “O destroying mountain, (saith the Lord,) which destroyest all the earth.” A mountain is regularly the symbol of settled and exalted power; but here it is cast into the sea, because it is made the means of judgment to others, and not merely the object of judgment itself. The Lord Jesus Himself uses a part of the figure with regard to Israel. Seeing a fig-tree with nothing but leaves, He pronounced that no fruit should grow, nor man eat of it henceforward for ever. He had come and found no fruit upon it, only abundance of leaves. And presently the fig-tree withered away. Now almost every person who has read the word of God with care has viewed that fig-tree as the symbol of Israel, responsible to bear fruit unto God, but completely failing to do so. The fig tree was figurative of “that generation,” and, in connection with this, the Lord says to His disciples “ye shall not only do this . . . but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done.” And so it was done; for no sooner had the apostles' testimony gone out to Israel, and Israel had utterly rejected what the Holy Ghost preached to them therein, than judgment came upon them. It was not merely that they bore no fruit, but there was a positive judgment and an uprooting from where they were. The mountain was cast into the sea; the place and nation of Israel completely disappeared in the mass of the Gentiles. This was much more than their merely ceasing to produce fruit. Their polity was broken up and completely vanished, just as much as a mountain would be that was torn up from its base and cast into the sea. So here a great power, that seemed to be settled, is removed from its place, and that power is not so much shattered itself, as it is made the means of suffering to others. It is burning with fire, and the consequence is destruction to the third of living creatures and ships in the sea, the whole being a figure taken from what would be the effect of a volcano cast into the sea. It is thus that the Lord fills up the picture of destruction by a great consuming power that falls upon confused masses of people with human carnage and political anarchy, as the result. There may be some more precise meaning, but I am only presenting what little I see of the symbols, independent of their application to a particular time, place or people.

The third judgment in the series of the trumpets is of another kind. “The third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a torch, and it fell upon the third of the rivers, and upon the fountains of the waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third of the waters became wormwood; and many of the men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.” Now a star, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, though in another connection (chap. 1. 20), is the figure of one who holds a place of subordinate authority—one who may give light to others—subject himself to another, but still ruling. Here it is a degraded ruler, a dignitary fallen from his place of authority. Waters are the symbol of people unformed, fountains are the sources of their refreshment, and a river that which characterizes their course. A certain proportion is tainted by the fall of this star or ruler, which embitters whatever it touches, and many die because of the waters being made bitter. Here the infliction seems not so much of a political kind

as the previous judgment; it is rather the poisoning of all that ought to be the means of blessing to man and that concerns his ordinary life.

Under the fourth trumpet we have something higher. The waters were poisoned before; but now we find that the highest authorities were touched. It is not a star that falls from heaven, but the third of the sun, and the third of the moon, and the third of the stars are smitten; "that the third of them might be darkened, and the day should not shine for the third thereof, and the night likewise." I apprehend that this is a judgment of God on the supreme as well as the inferior authorities of the world within the given range, which are all, to a certain extent, extinguished, or at least eclipsed.

An important question now arises—the proper fulfilment of these trumpet judgments. It is evident, however, that the answer must depend on the still larger issue of the time and condition to which the prophetic vision, in general, apply. For this is no matter of detail, but of broad principle, and it is not for me to deny the immense practical consequences of the true application on the one hand, or of views which mislead on the other. Believing that the seven epistles had an immediate literal bearing upon the actual Asiatic assemblies of John's day, I for one cannot doubt that the seals prefigured the course of the Roman Empire from that epoch onward, and that they have thus had an application by no means immaterial, substantially as the ordinary historical system insists, down to the overthrow of paganism and the nominal supremacy of Christianity, with the natural result of vast accessions of souls from Israel in a measure but far more from the Gentiles in that sphere and day. According to this idea, the early trumpets appear to me almost of necessity to refer: first, to the Gothic invasions of Alaric, Rhadagaisus, &c.; secondly, to the depredations of Genseric and his Vandals; thirdly, to the "scourge of God," as Attila the Hun was pleased to entitle himself; and fourthly, to the memorable era signalled by the extinction of the Roman empire in the west.

But fully allowing these intimations to be contained within the scope of the visions thus far, it is to my own mind manifest that the seven epistles are stamped with the most comprehensive aims, and from strong internal marks imply the varying phases which the house of God, in its protracted existence here below, would assume, till the Lord removes the faithful to heaven, keeping them out of the hour of temptation which awaits the earthly-minded, and spewing out of His mouth the self-complacent mass of Christendom. In harmony with this continuous and successive view of the churches, which in one shape or another has commended itself to godly and discerning enquirers of different ages, the most simple interpretation of chaps. 4 and 5 is, that they suppose the rapture and glorification of the church of the firstborn to have taken place, and that chaps. 6 et seq. begin to receive their grand fulfilment subsequent to that event. It is easy for an ingenious mind to conjure up difficulties and to muster objections in formidable array: no part of Scripture, nor truth revealed in it, is exempt from exposure to attacks exactly similar. But nobody can deny that, going by the sacred text itself, this is the most natural way of taking chaps. 4, 5, or that the common theory leaves these admirable Scriptures without adequate adaptation to the then circumstances, whether we look at the scene as a whole or at the particular figures therein exhibited. Their occurrence here, on the ordinary view, is an enormous, unexplained and perhaps, it may be added, inexplicable difficulty; but with the rapture of the saints then an accomplished fact, as the key, they are a beautiful and needed preface to all that follows.

Nor this only. Rev. 6, and the chapters that succeed, raise the fundamental question, whether churches or Christians, in the proper sense of the terms, are any longer involved in the scenes they depict on earth, when their full, and not merely their inchoate, accomplishment is in progress. Why should writers on prophecy, without anything like reasonable show of evidence, assume the affirmative? Why not prove it, if they can? The more indispensable the point may be to the popular system, the less satisfactory to unbiassed persons it seems to find its advocates preserving a silence so absolute, not indeed as regards reiterating and reasoning from that assumption, but as to attempting a demonstration. Who can allege that the proposition is self-evident? Who does not know that there are many intelligent students of the prophetic word who believe that not the church but a godly Jewish remnant, with Gentiles converted but separate, are the parties contemplated and directly concerned in the struggles of the latter-day? Is it not worth discussing? What prophetic question more vital or more comprehensive? It would not be charitable to impute this singular reticence to a feeling of contempt for their brethren; neither would it be fair to insinuate that they are conscious of their own inability to give some appearance of Scriptural proof in favour of their sentiments. We deny that these prophecies, precious as they are for our profit, are fully, much less exclusively, about the Church: if any assert that such is the case, on them lies the burden of proving it. It is simply taken for granted. Would it not be better to gather up and present, as forcibly as may be, the evidence which strikes their own minds? We appeal to the very Scriptures in debate, some as clearly evincing a glorified condition of the Christian body in heaven, before the earthly judicial events transpire, others as clear that Jews and Gentiles, distinct from each other and not associated in one body like the church, are thenceafter seen on earth, and that they are the real objects in the crisis of the close. If we are right, a vast amount of the differences, among those who study the subject, would be decided without further contest. Why then waste time in the shallow fields of Germanising Praeterists or of Romanising Futurists? Why not grapple with the evidence produced by Christians who are, through God's mercy, at least as far removed from Babylon as the most zealous of Protestants can pretend to be? If this, as I am sure, is the sound and satisfactory interpretation, we are not compelled to bend the past into a reluctant and far-fetched accomplishment, nor are we at liberty to explain away the frequent and obvious indices of the future. It satisfies all just requirement that there be an unforced, general resemblance, sufficient to show the direct finger of God, yet not such as to exhaust the prediction but rather to leave room for a still closer, final application when the saints, body and soul, are above.

“And I beheld and heard an eagle flying through mid-heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe to the dwellers on the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels which are yet to sound (ver. 13).” It was an eagle, I believe, which John saw here, an angel in Rev. 14:6, to which our verse may have been assimilated, if the two words were not confounded by mere carelessness. The eagle's flight in mid-heaven was the dark and most suited harbinger of coming woe. Nor is there any real difficulty in its loud utterance; for the altar itself is, in the true text, made to speak in chap. 16:7.

We have had the preliminary judgments ushered in by the first four trumpets. They dealt, to a certain extent, with man's prosperity in high and low—first, in the settled ordered system, and next in a state of confusion; then the blow fell on the means of human enjoyment, turned into bitterness and destruction; and lastly, the whole fabric of political rule, supreme and subordinate, has to suffer a notable eclipse. Thus, it was a judgment of circumstances, rather than a personal

visitation. But we also see a closing intimation of still deeper inflictions, marked off in the most definite way from the series that preceded: "Woe, woe, woe, to those that dwell on the earth," &c. The unsealed do not escape in the first, the third of men are killed in the second. Under the last we come, in a general way, to the end of all.

"The dwellers on earth" may have a local significance, especially during the great final crisis. But it appears to me that a survey of the various occurrences of the phrase warrants the conclusion that a moral force is the chief and most prominent intention of the Spirit. Twice has it been seen in the Apocalypse before this, and it plays an increasingly grave part, as we draw near the close. First, it is found in the epistle to the angel of the church in Philadelphia, where the Lord promises to keep those who kept the word of His patience, from the hour of temptation, which is to come upon all the habitable world, to try them that dwell on the earth. (Rev. 3:10.) The reason, I suppose why the earthly-minded are brought out so distinctly there, is, because the church in question supposes an unusual apprehension of Christ, and this in a heavenly way, both as to present enjoyment of Him, and as to the hope of His return. Hence the contrast of the portion of those whose hearts were here below. They shall eat the bitter fruit of their choice when the great tribulation comes, as those whose affections are set on heavenly things will then actually be where they dwell now in spirit. Next, under the fifth seal, (Rev. 6:10,) the souls of the early Apocalyptic sufferers are represented as calling upon the Sovereign Lord to judge and avenge their blood on "them that dwell on the earth." These will then have broken out into relentless, deadly persecution against the witnesses, whom God will have on earth, when the seals are being fulfilled. Now, under the woe-trumpets, we find them to be the special objects. Further details we must defer till we come to the chapters that treat of them more particularly.

## Lectures on Revelation 9

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A PREFATORY remark I may be permitted to make is, that our chapter furnishes an incidental proof that the trumpets are not coincident with the seals. For the sealing was given in the large parenthesis (Rev. 7) which followed the sixth seal, whereas it is referred to, not after the sixth trumpet, but before it. This could not be if the two series of judgments ran parallel to each other. The natural, and I believe, true inference is, that the seals had finished their course before the trumpets begin, so that when the fifth trumpet sounds the first “woe,” the men of the earth fall under its predicted torment, those who were sealed being referred to as in the scene, but exempted from the scourge. How could there be a commission to hurt nothing but those men who have not the seal of God, if there had been no sealing yet? If the sealing had already taken place, parallelism there is not between the respective seals and trumpets, nor can they even harmonize in point of time. They are consecutive, and not concurrent, and the last seal, as we have seen, is the mere prelude of silence for the new series of divine plagues to commence. How could that be if they were to be accomplished side by side? For if the first six seals confessedly follow in regular order, the seventh must be the last in accomplishment, as well as in revelation; but the seventh, instead of shadowing some additional dealing in providence, like its predecessors, is only a brief pause in heaven ushering in another and more severe class of decreed judgments. And of these trumpets we must now enter upon the fifth and sixth, to which chap. ix. is devoted, (i.e. the first two woes).

“And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fallen from heaven unto the earth; and to him was given the key of the pit of the abyss. And he opened the pit of the abyss; and there arose a smoke out of the pit as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And out of the smoke came locusts unto the earth, and to them was given power as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, nor any tree, but the men who have not the seal of God upon their foreheads.” (Ver. 1-4).

The star fallen from heaven to earth is a dignitary in an apostate state; for a real personage is intended, as the next words show— “to him was given the key of the pit of the abyss.” The allusion seems evident to ha. xiv. 12, where the king of Babylon is taunted with “How art thou fallen, O Lucifer [i.e. day-star], son of the morning! Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.” Here it is not his doom, but the authority he was permitted to exercise over the abyss, which is the expression of the source of Satanic evil and misery. “He opened the pit of the abyss, and there arose a smoke out of it, as the smoke of a great furnace,” —the symbol of a delusion which darkens the mind of man “The sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.” The supreme power and all healthful social influence suffer pre-eminently from its blinding effects. Nor was this the sole result. “Out of the smoke came locusts,” the figure of the aggressive instruments of rapine, and these clothed with a singular power of torment, “as the scorpions of the earth have power.” The command given shows (I think, very plainly) the error of such as apply the locusts in a literal way. They were not to hurt the grass of the earth, &c. (that is, their natural food,

if real locusts were meant). Men were to be the objects of these symbolic depredators—men, save God's sealed ones. And yet it was the destiny of these marauders not to kill, but to torment men five months. (Ver. 5.) It is a limited preparatory chastisement, not judgment-day. "And their torment [was] as the torment of a scorpion when it striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death fleeth from them." (Ver. 6.) Nothing on earth can exceed the agony of conscience which will be inflicted on their victims. It is a yet stronger coloring of wretchedness, than that in which Jeremiah (chap. viii. 3) depicts the desolated and dispersed Jews in all the places whither they should be driven in the Lord's sore displeasure.

But there is a further description. "And the likenesses of the locusts [were like unto horses prepared for battle; and [there were on their heads as it were crowns of gold; and their faces [were] as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women and their teeth were as [the teeth] of lions. And they had breastplates as it were iron breastplates, and the sound of their wings [was] as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they have tails like unto scorpions, and stings; and their power [was] in their tails to hurt men five months. They have as king over them the angel of the abyss; his name in the Hebrew tongue [is] Abaddon; and in the Greek tongue he hath the name Apollyon." (Ver. 7-1 1.) They were not mere plunderers, but there was warlike energy; and they claimed for their victorious career the righteous sanction of God, whose image and glory they bore outwardly, whereas in truth they were thoroughly subject to man and Satan too. Ferocity is theirs, and hearts steeled against every emotion of pity in their swift career. But their worst power was the venom of falsehood which followed. It was the energy of false doctrine, represented by the scorpion sting in the tail. And we know from elsewhere, "the prophet that speaketh lies, he is the tail" Finally, the king is the angel of the abyss, the same, perhaps, as the fallen star, who had the key of the pit. If so, it is a dark Satanic destroyer, if not Satan. It is in this world that the devil is so exalted, its prince; he is ruler also of the power of the air and the god of this age. In the abyss he will be bound as a prisoner for a long season; in hell he will be tormented forever and ever, the most miserable object there, and in no wise ruling as king in either the one or the other. So poets dream; but not so saith the Scripture.

"And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels that are bound at the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, that were prepared for the hour and day and month and year, for to slay the third of men. And the number of the army of the horsemen [was] two myriads of myriads: I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and those that sat on them, having breast plates fiery and hyacinthine and brimstone-like; and the heads of the horses [were] as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three plagues was the third of men killed, by the fire, and the smoke, and the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt. And the rest of the men who were not killed by these plagues repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and wood: which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk. Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts." (Ver. 1 3-21.)

It is the voice of the Lord, no doubt, which is heard from the horns of the golden altar. But what a solemn sound is this—above all, issuing thence 2 For ordinarily that altar is the special witness of

His all-prevailing intercession. Thence the incense rose up before God. It was the horns of the brazen altar merely which received the blood of the sin-offering, when an individual sinned, whether a ruler, or one of the common people. But when the whole congregation were guilty, the priest was commanded to put some of the victim's blood upon the horns of the golden altar; for the communion of the people, as a whole, was interrupted, and needed to be restored. Here how different! The voice from the four horns of the golden altar orders the angel of the sixth trumpet to loose the four angels that were up to that time bound at (or by) the Euphrates. There they had been prepared for (not "an," but) the hour and day and month and year to slay the third of men. They were prepared, not during that time, much less when it was expired, but with a view to it: when that hour and day and month and year arrived, or rather, until the term was over, they were ready to accomplish their prescribed slaughter. They destroyed men by apostasy.

Still, if it be terrible to hear such a signal from the altar of incense, how comforting to think that all in the judgment is so minutely ordered and fore-ordained of the Lord! He it is who first gives the word, and gives it to the holy angel. The angel again looses the four bound at the Euphrates. The evil can only act when and as far as is allowed of the good, and the good, however they may excel in strength, only do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word. The notion that we are to identify the four here with the angels who restrained the winds in chap. vii. is strange, seeing that contrast is marked, not resemblance. Here they are not restraining but restrained, which is nowhere said of holy angels. There they stood at the four corners of the earth, as separate as they could be; here all are bound in the same spot.

As to the character of the second woe itself, it is not torment like the first, but destruction of life. Not that there is no element of false prophecy here, as also was there; "for the power of the horses," it is said, "is in their mouth and in their tails: for their tails were like serpents, and had heads; and with them they do hurt." That is, venomous error they did propagate and leave behind them, and this with more settled plan than in the locust-woe. The locusts, in the first woe, had scorpion-like tails and stings: the horses, in the second, had serpent-like tails, which had heads. But they had power in their mouth also. "And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and those that sat on them, having breastplates of fire and jacinth, and like brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceeded fire and smoke, and brimstone." It is the judicial power of Satan, as far as God permits that. Besides, it far surpasses in energy and aggressive destructive warfare the preceding woe. This was spiritual—evilly so, of course; the second is more destructive, though in its train follows the injury of the enemies' delusion and falsehood. It seems also more varied as far as leaders go: for the other had but one, this had four angelic agents at the head.

"And the rest of the men who were not killed by these plagues, repented not," &c. Humbling lesson, and most needful to remember! God has been sending judgment upon judgment, first on men's circumstances, and then on themselves, and in this last case torment, and finally, death itself. But it is in vain. Such is man, after all this, that he repents not of his evil, either religiously or morally. Satan's last effort remains.

The reader will perceive that I am merely anxious to present the leading feature of each woe, as far as I am enabled, so as, in some measure, to help souls to the understanding of the prophecy. This, he will remember, is a very distinct thing from the application of a prophecy. The question of

the persons, or places, or times alluded to, may be deeply interesting, but it is subordinate to the understanding of the book.

For my own part, I do not doubt that the common application of the locusts to the Saracens and of the Euphratean horsemen to the Turks is well founded. But we have seen repeatedly that the fulfillment of the Revelation cannot, properly, be before the heavenly saints are caught up, and the earthly people are once more the objects of God's dealings on the earth and in their own land, though by no means to the exclusion of divine testimony and its blessed effects among the Gentiles. According to this later and final accomplishment, the second woe would be fulfilled, I suppose, in the early ravages of the north-eastern (or Assyrian) armies, as the first might be Antichrist's delusive agency in the land of Palestine. I conceive that when the prophecy will be realized in all its precision, the scene where these mysterious locusts are to enact their bitter but transitory torment will be the land, where at that time the Jews will have largely gathered, but, as regards the mass, in unbelief. The unsealed naturally points to them and most probably to their land. For it will be noticed that there is no "third" under this trumpet to intimate the direction of the woe, nor anything that I observe save the exemption of the sealed. The rest of the Jews were still in judicial blindness, and are the implied objects of this judgment. If they are the preparatory movements of these two powers, each is as decidedly opposed to the other as both are to the Lord Jesus: they are to be successively judged and destroyed when He comes in power and glory. It is interesting to observe that the same chap. xiv. of Isaiah, which I referred to as an illustration of the star fallen from heaven (i.e., the chief personage under the first woe), treats also of the Assyrian enemy, which I judge to be the full meaning of those who figure under the second woe. "The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand; that I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" (Ver. 24-27.) The difference is that Isaiah gives us the end of their career for the deliverance of Israel, while the Apostle John shows us rather its beginning and course, as a scourge upon apostate Judaism and Christendom. It would be a mistake to limit Isaiah to the bygone history, or to take the past as more than a type of the future, however important in its day. For, in the history, the Assyrian fell first, and Babylon's doom was long after. In the prophecy it is the last representative of Babylon (i.e., the Beast of the crisis), who is destroyed first, and then he who answers to the great Assyrian leader of the nations shall come to his end, and none shall help him. So it is written in Isa. 10:12, "Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks," &c. Our chapter of the Revelation gives us some of the earlier policy of the Assyrian, if not of Antichrist, or of their respective parties.

According to the more vague and protracted historical application, which I conceive to have been comprehended in the divine purpose of these visions, it may be asked how this chapter is to be understood. I have already briefly shown how the earlier trumpets brought us down to the extinction of the Western Roman empire. Pursuing the same thread, the fifth trumpet has a distinct bearing upon the Saracenic infliction, as the sixth refers to the furious onset of the Turks. Hence

one is quite willing to allow the general reference of the fallen star to Mohammed, who was the instrument of Satan in opening on the world the delusion of the abyss, with all its darkening effects. Certainly the description suits, in many of its characteristic features, not the gradual growth and spread of the doctrinal and moral pravities of Christendom, but that host of marauders who, embracing with ardor the hell-inspired creed of the Arabian false prophet, sprang forth on their ambitious and fanatical career. Not that I can accept without serious drawback much that has been made of the local or national significance of the locusts and the scorpions, the horses and the lions, the faces of men, the hair of women, and the breastplates of iron. For instance, it is plain, that the nation, whose rapid devastation of Palestine is portrayed in Joel 2 (the prototype of the Apocalyptic locusts), has nothing to do with the Saracens or Arabia, but is rather the northern army, "the Assyrian," of which the Jewish prophets so often speak. Compare also Nah. 3:17, the reference of which confirms the same thing. An exactly similar argument applies to the use of "scorpions, as in Ezek. 2:6, where it is used figuratively as here, but with not the most distant glance at the robbers of the desert. As to the "horses" the very next vision of the Euphratean warriors refutes the notion of a geographical reference; for the Turks are a totally distinct race and emerged from a different quarter; and yet horses are just as prominent here, as in the prophecy of their precursors. Also, in the one we have the heads, in the other the teeth, of "lions." This, therefore, destroys anything like an exclusively distinct usage, not to speak of the manifold application which other scriptures indicate. The truth is that the Spirit is making up an apt and complete symbolic picture, and in no way ties Himself to the animals, &c., peculiar to the country.

To my mind the intention is moral, not geographical; and this kind of teaching detracts from the real force of Scripture, occupying the mind with that which may be partially true in a natural way, but not I believe the object of the Holy Ghost. Hence does it not seem almost trifling to extract from the faces of men, the hair of women, and crowns like gold, an allusion to beard or mustache, coupled with literal flowing hair surmounted by a turban? Taken as emblems of character, the dignity of the divine word is vindicated and felt. The locusts naturally point to countless swarms, devouring in specified limits, but more distinguished by the tormenting sting of false doctrine. The unsealed, the men of the earth; were the victims of the scourge, but the object was a conquering propagandism: not the extinction of prosperity, but rather the maintenance of it, at the expense of the truth, and this for a limited period. The resemblance to horses prepared for battle is the expression of their aggressive attitude, and the crowns like gold seem to intimate their vaunted confidence in a divinely-righteous mission of victory. Their faces as of men, but with the hair of women, may denote that, with all their claim to act authoritatively in the name of God, they were nevertheless subject to the merest human authority, and not to God after all. The iron breastplates, the lion-teeth, the sounding wings, I regard as the figure of the unflinching courage of fanaticism, their strongest armor, and the ferocious depredations that accompanied their wonderfully rapid warfare. The Hebrew name of their king confirms, in my opinion, the full reference to the special wasting of the Jews, as also a connection with the Eastern Empire may be implied in the Greek. I have thus rehearsed the spiritual significance of the first woe's emissaries, stating particularly what might be supposed to prefigure the past accomplishment, according to which the five months, of course, must be taken as months of years. But I protest against the arbitrariness of interpreting one part of the account literally and the other figuratively. Again, if we examine it closely, the utmost allowable is some such partial incipient accomplishment. For it is plain that the prophet of Mecca was more like a rising star than a fallen dignitary; insomuch that Mede, with the earlier

writers in general, applies it to Satan, as others to the Pope, &c. Again, the command not to kill is very hard to reconcile with the exterminating policy of the Saracenic incursions; and the term of 150 years has been doubled by some of great weight, because of a repeated mention, (but compare Rev. 20,) in order to eke out a more plausible solution. Even this improbable inference from the twofold statement of the five months labors under its own difficulties, as others have sufficiently shown.

As regards the second woe, the first difficulty which the protracted view has to encounter is the meaning of the four angels that were bound by the Euphrates. Most of the Protestant school apply them to four Mussulman powers, either successive or contemporaneous. But says Mr. Elliott (Hore A. I., pp. 461, 462) "the interpretations are found on examination to be, one and all, inadmissible. As the commissioning and loosening of the four angels in vision was but a single act, so the agencies symbolized must necessarily have been at one and the same time loosed or commissioned: by which consideration alone all such successions of destroying agencies seem excluded, as Vitranga, and after him, Woodhouse, have suggested in explanation. And as to cotemporary Turkman dynasties, whether we refer to the list given by Mede, and by Newton after him, or that by Faber and by Keith, from Mills and Gibbon, there is no quaternion of them that can be shown either to have combined together in the destruction of the Greek empire,—to have been all locally situated by the Euphrates,—to have had existence at the time asserted to be that of the commissioning of the four angels,—or to have continued in existence up to the time of the completion of the commission given, in the destruction of the Greek empire. In short, the manifest inconsistency with historic fact of every such attempted solution, has been hitherto, in the minds of the more thoughtful and learned prophetic students, like as it were a millstone about the neck of the whole Turkish theory of interpretation." This, at least, is a candid confession, especially when we consider that it is about a prophecy, which has been acquiesced in more generally than any other, perhaps, in the Apocalypse.

But what is the view suggested that is to leave the general application unencumbered? The resource of superhuman angelic intelligences directing the subordinate human energies, and this without reference to the number of earthly instruments employed. In fact, Mr. E. identifies these angels at the Euphrates with the angels parenthetically introduced in the sixth seal (chap. vii), and reasons from the assumption that the judgments of the preceding trumpets were the probable results of their actings. But this, it is clear, does not hang well together with the scheme which insists that the fallen star of the first woe was not an angelic being but Mohammed. Consistency would demand, one would think, that if the angel of the abyss in the preceding trumpet sets forth a man, these four must represent similar leaders. Certainly these are in contrast with the angels whose office it was rather to restrain the winds than to urge on their devastating blasts. All the accessory circumstances strengthen their distinction. Again, the use made of the fire and smoke and brimstone which issued out of the horses' mouths, as if they prefigured the Turkish artillery, of the breast plates of fire and jacinth and brimstone, as an allusion to the Ottoman warlike apparel of scarlet, blue and yellow, and of the serpent-like horsetails, having heads, as the emblem of Turkish pashas, seems to me both inconsistent with other parts of the Apocalypse, and (shall I say?) grotesque in itself. I deny not the application of the horsemen and horses to the past inroads of the Turks, as distinguished from their Saracen predecessors, devoting themselves to their destructive task in the Eastern Roman or Greek empire, with far more of system and with more

permanent results. In their fierce career, they breathed out, in no slight measure, along with the old diabolical delusion, an infernal spirit of judgment; and as were their weapons, such was their armor. It was this peculiarly Satanic power, not like the scorpion now, but the serpent, to which the Holy Ghost draws attention as the grand source of mischief. The moral false-prophet action is there, and this too invested with authority, for the tails had heads, and with them they do hurt. Throughout the permitted sphere the result was the utter extinction of Christian profession, while the rest alas! heeded not the warning. But these features, in my judgment, involve elements still more terrible than anything yet seen on earth; so that all confirms me in the conviction that we must look for another and final answer to the imagery, in the last scourge for the corrupt and idolatrous East.

## Lectures on Revelation 10

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SOME will remember a resemblance already pointed out between the two orders of seals and trumpets. When we come to the sixth in each series, there is an interruption of a most interesting kind. We saw that after the sixth seal there was such an episode, not of judgment but of mercy—God interfering on behalf of man, after the most signal convulsion among men and things on the earth; and not only so, but the powers of the heavens also shaken. Then we found God showing us that in the midst of judgment He remembers mercy. For there was the sealing of a full complement out of the twelve tribes of Israel, and besides clear and affecting proof was furnished that the poor Gentiles were not forgotten. Thus, when the prophet looks, he sees a countless multitude out of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues. These were evidently delivered by the great goodness of God, and come out of that terrible tribulation that is yet to be. Now in chap. ix. we have had the sixth trumpet; and, answering to what we have seen in the seals, there is an interruption between it and the seventh trumpet (which is only announced in chap xi. 15). There is a vision described of a very marked, and, considering the visions that accompanied all the trumpets, of an extraordinary character. A mighty angel comes down from heaven, who appears to be the Lord Himself. So we saw in a previous chapter the angel-priest at the golden altar, putting incense to the prayers of the saints which He offered up to God. And I suppose few would imagine that God could commit this service of the heavenly sanctuary to any mere created being. In the Old Testament Jehovah had occasionally assumed an angelic form; and, as this book brings us back to a great deal which is akin to the Jewish Scriptures, herein may be one reason why we have Christ thus taking the form of an angel. As before the trumpets were blown, the angel, who gave the signal for all, was seen in a priestly point of view, here he is in power, preparing the way of the kingdom. Accordingly there is every circumstance of majesty surrounding him “And I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud.” The cloud, as any one will recollect who is conversant with Scripture idea and phrase, was the well-known badge of Jehovah's presence. When the Lamb's blood was shed and Israel were being led out of the land of their bondage, God Himself went before them as the angel of the covenant, and the cloud was the visible form or token of it (Ex. 13:21; 23:20, 23; 40:36, 38; Num. 1). In the angel that we have here, there is much that seems to indicate the presence of the Lord Himself; laying claim to the possession of the world at large. You may remember one remarkable sample even in the New Testament, at the time when there was a little foreshadowing given of the coming kingdom. Now what was it that testified to the immediate presence of God? and what made Peter and John tremble, accustomed though they were to the company of Jesus and to the most marvelous effects of His power? “They feared as they entered into the cloud,” because the cloud was the known and peculiar mark of Jehovah's presence. Here, then, I think, it was no mere creature, but the Creator Himself who took the form of an angel. It may be too the Lord retreating, if one may so say, from all that would have linked Him manifestly and directly with His people, and this for a very solemn reason. His people during the trumpets are supposed to have, only not wholly, lost their distinctive separation and to be sunk down into the world, so that God, morally, could not own in a public way His connection with them. In Heb. 11 it is said of certain believers that God was not ashamed to be

called their God. Alas! there are saints of whom God would be ashamed to be called their God. It was not so with the early patriarchs, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: God was their God. But He never calls Himself the God of Lot. This is a serious matter for thought, and our hearts ought to watch against anything that could make Him ashamed to be called our God. It has been alluded to before, when we noticed that the Lord is never spoken of in this series as the Lamb, because the people of God will have got so much mixed up with unbelievers. When these judgments fall, the saints will be painfully merged in the world, so that much of the chastisement will come upon both. Remember also that the Lord tells us the slips of His people that we may be warned by them. How sad to use the prophecy of unfaithfulness in order to justify it, and to attribute the effects of our unbelief to the providence of God!

At the time of the trumpets, there is an ominous silence as to the people of God. There is just an allusion to their exemption from the torment of the apostates in chap. 9:4; but this is the only distinct reference till the parenthesis of chaps. 10 and 11. If you apply the seals and trumpets to the past history of the world, the meaning is so plain that most thoughtful Christians have agreed in the main. Constantine brought in Christianity by force of arms. The consequence of this was the great downfall of Paganism, with intimations of mercy by the way, and the seventh seal was followed by silence in heaven for about half an hour. No false expectation could be there. God knew that, so far from the world being made really better by that astonishing change, all would end in the frightful consequences of grace abused, corrupted, and despised. The vast body which had given up idolatry for the profession of Christianity would ripen for judgment: The immediate result here is the coming in of these trumpets. And what then? God was ashamed of Christendom; heaven was silent now, and yet we know joy is felt there over one sinner that repents. It was, externally at least, a swamp of forms; and where was the Rock of salvation? Alas! He is once more lightly esteemed. Connected with this, I think, the Lord Jesus is no longer spoken of as the Son of man, much less as the Lamb: if seen here, He is in angelic guise. And as before (in order to distinguish Him particularly from all others) He was engaged with the incense at the golden altar; so here we find, He was "clothed with a cloud" —the badge of Jehovah's glory; "and the rainbow [was] over his head," that is, the pledge of God's unchanging covenant with creation. "His face [was] as it were the sun." The sun is ever the symbol of supreme glory in rule, and the face of this angel is said to be like the sun. So it was on the holy mount (Matt. 17:2), and when John saw his Lord again at Patmos (Rev. 1:16). "His feet as pillars of fire" united, it would seem, the solidity of the "pillar" and the thorough, final judgment that is so constantly conveyed by "fire." He plants the left on the sea, meaning the unformed masses of the outside world, and the right on the earth, i.e., that part of the world which is favored with divine testimony and government. In other words, it is the Lord's universal claim over men, over the world. It is a public declaration of His right, not in respect of the church but of the earth: not yet His actual investiture as Son of man, but a dealing of providential character, which involves a recommencing of testimony preparatory to His speedy assumption of universal dominion. But a further step has to be taken now. It is not, as in chap. v., God seated upon His throne with the sealed book in His right hand, and then the Lamb opening the book as the One who had prevailed to do so. And how prevailed? Through death. It is not by creature-strength that the man of God conquers. The victories that will shine most and brightest are always those cast, so to speak, in the mold of the death of the Lord Jesus. In poor man's case it is life first and then death, because we are by nature dead in trespasses and sins; but in that of the Lord Jesus it is death first and then resurrection-life; and such is the pattern for the Christian's

faith to realize. Our whole life, as believers, should flow according to the same cross that has wrought our salvation; for the cross is God's power for us all the way through. (Gal. 6). It is God who has given us to suffer, and then comes power practically; but this is, perhaps always, after there has been more or less a realization of weakness and suffering. (2 Cor. 12-13:4.) A man cannot win Christian victories until he is bare and low before God. He must be broken down in one way or another. And blessed it is if we are broken down in the presence of Christ; for if it be not there, we must be broken down, if one may say so, in our own presence, and haply too in that of others. In chap. v., however, Christ opens the book that was unintelligible to all the mind of man, and He shows us from the seals certain judgments of God, so little removed from ordinary events in providence that we should scarce have known them to be judgments, save by that divine unveiling. But the Lamb unfolds all, and we find that God is at work to introduce the kingdom of the First-begotten, to put the Heir in actual possession of the inheritance.

In the chapter before us there is a difference. It is not a sealed book that we have, but an open one: and it is also emphatically a little book. There is nothing mysterious about the matter. We come here to a notable change in the Revelation. Instead of its being, as hitherto, events that were the secret effects of God's unseen hand, there is a manifestation of His power and purpose with regard to His people. All becomes quite-plain. We have no longer symbolical locusts, having a king (cf. Prov. 30:27), or strange and strangely numerous horses and horsemen, &c. It is now God's open, brief, and decisive actings. This I apprehend to be the difference between the two books. The first was in the hand of God and sealed, so that none could open it, save the blessed One who suffered all for the glory of God. Here it is an open book, which the prophet takes from the angel's hand; and immediately we have no longer the more secret or enigmatical appearances of earlier visions, but the temple, the holy city, the Gentiles treading it under foot—all an obvious manifestation that God is acting on the Jews. We have before had the sealing a certain number out of the tribes of Israel, scattered, as I suppose, throughout the whole world. But here (chap. xi.) we come to a smaller scale, where God's dealings are concentrated on Jerusalem, the sanctuary, altar, worshippers, two witnesses, &c., and where they are also brought out so plainly that there need be no mistake as to what God means thereby. The Beast as such also appears here in undisguised and tremendous opposition against God and His servants. And evidently the Lord Jesus is showing that the time approaches when He must take all into His own hands. This, then, is an open book, because all it contains is perfectly plain; and it is a very little book, because but a short time and a narrow compass are contemplated in it.

“And he cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth, and when he had cried, the seven thunders uttered their own voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered [them], I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying, Seal the things which the seven thunders uttered and write them not.” (Ver. 3, 4.) “Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey I will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing?... shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it? Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.

The lion hath roared, who will not fear? The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?” (Amos 3) I cannot but regard this passage of the Jewish prophet as in various elements illustrative of the vision we are examining. Again, thunder, in the Old Testament, was constantly the expression of God's authority in the way of judgment. We are summoned to hear this awful

announcement of God's judgments. John was about to write, but a voice from heaven forbids it. He was not to communicate the details of what God was going to do now. But the angel "lifted up his right hand to heaven and swore by him that liveth. forever and ever, who created heaven.... that there should be no more space [or delay], but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he should sound, the mystery of God also should be finished, as he announced to his servants the prophets." (Ver. 5-7.)

I apprehend that people often gather a vague, if not wrong notion from those words, "there shall be time no longer." Many imagine that it means—there was then to be an end of time, and eternity was to begin. But this is not at all the sense, and the case shows the importance of seeking light from God. The meaning is, that God would no longer allow time to run on before He interfered with the course of this world. It is not that eternity was at once to begin, but that there should be no longer any lapse of time before His last summons to the world and the introduction of a new dispensation, in which He will deal in an open manner with men on the earth. Since the rejection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, men— "His citizens" —have sent a message after Him, saying (at least in their hearts), "We will not have this man to reign over us." Such has been the voice of the world ever since He went into the far country. The real desire of man is to be rid of Christ; and, in general, he thinks he is. And no wonder he dislikes to hear of His return in power and glory; for the Scriptures declare expressly that Christ is to judge man, and man does not like to stand before his judge. Hence he puts off as long as possible the thought of Christ's coming to judge sin and sinners. The Lord intimates here that there is to be, ere long, a close put to the present delay. All the time that Christ is away at the right hand of God, there is a suspense of judgment. But God feels deeply for His people's suffering, as they must during the interval of Christ's rejection; and now He is not going to allow such a state of things to continue any longer, for there are the evident signs and tokens of the Lord's coming to deal with His enemies.

The mighty angel swears that there should be no further delay (not before eternity but) before the day of the Lord. The space or day spoken of here is man's day, and, when this ends, the day of the Lord begins, which latter in Scripture is never confounded with eternity, because that day has an end, whereas, of course, eternity never can terminate. Viewed from every side, the real force then is "that there should be no longer delay." And remark the words in the following verse— "But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he should soon sound, the mystery of God should be finished," &c. These words at once contradict the thought that eternity was to follow immediately. On the contrary, after this the whole of the millennium comes in; after it a little season, and then eternity. Souls are sometimes hindered from entering into the truth of God by one little word, and so, I believe, it has been with this passage. Often when a slight obscurity is cleared up, heaps of difficulties disappear.

God will put a stop to the present delay: "the mystery of God" will then be finished. This I take to mean the secret of His allowing Satan to have his own way, and man too (that is to say, the wonder of evil prospering and of good being trodden under foot) God checks, no doubt, the evil in a measure, partly through human government and partly through His own providential dealings. And indeed it is an immense mercy that there are such restraints upon the evil of this world. For what would it be without them, when, even in the midst of God's providential checks, wickedness is often so triumphant, and godliness thrown to the ground? Still there is an influence for evil that no government can root out, and good that is belied and so has comparatively little influence, That

is what seems so mysterious a thing to us, when we know God and how He hates evil. But it is soon coming to an end. God is about to touch all that is contrary to Himself, to bring in all that has been promised from of old, and to give credit for all that has been done according to Himself. And He is going to do this by His Son. The One whom man despised and rejected is the very person whom God will send to reduce all into holy order and beauty out of the existing mass of confusion.

The “mystery of God” must not be confounded with the mystery of His will in Eph. 1:9. This last is what has been always near to His heart, for it involves the glory not of the church only but of Christ. It is “according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself.” There was no one that suggested it. It was His own will. And what is the mystery of His will? “That in the dispensation of the fullness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him.” All these things that Satan has scattered now will be reunited in one under Christ. Mercy and truth will then meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other. This is true even now for the believer, as far as his own reconciliation to God is concerned. Satan may challenge:—How can you have it in the presence of so much evil within? This is one thing that cuts right into the conscience of the man that doubts God, and even of the one that believes God, if he is looking at himself. When I am looking at myself, these doubts may well arise, but not if I am looking at Christ. He alone is entitled to give me rest before God. It is Christ alone who can dissipate the waves and the winds. Satan has set man against God in every way, even against goodness coming down from Him; but God is not going to allow evil to pass a certain limit. Though Satan's opposition is allowed to frustrate God's plans for the present, yet every one of the ways in which He has been at work in the earth from the first is destined to triumph and to triumph together in the end. (Hos. 2:21, 23.) There was a man set up in Adam; there was government put into the hands of Noah; there was God's calling given to Abraham; there was the long and patient test of the law; finally, there was the mission of His Son and of His Spirit. All these things, so to speak, have been streams from God flowing through this earth. They have been refused or corrupted by man from the first, and through the enemy's power men will abuse these very dealings of God to bring in the most daring and deadly conspiracy that the world has ever seen—Satan and man combined against God, who will allow all this evil to come out and will then put an end to it by judgment. This is the finishing of the mystery.

But that which is called “the mystery of His will” is not the subject of prophecy. Christ will be the Head of all blessing and He will gather all things in united blessing under His own headship—all that Satan had contrived to spoil. What God made originally was merely in a condition of innocence; but what the Lord Jesus will accomplish in the end, the reconciliation of all things, will be beyond Satan's power to touch. All will be gathered together in one, even in Christ, their chief. And another thing it is well to state. In this mystery of God's will we are not merely to be blest under Christ, but, in order to get the full character of the blessing, we are blest with Him. And this is what we have here in Ephesians: not that we will be a sort of inheritance for Christ, but we are joint-heirs with Him. In that great mystery of, God in Christ, there are two thoughts—Christ's universal headship, and the Church's union to Him. There is no such thing as our being united under Christ's power; but all things that ever have been made are to be united under His headship; and wonderful thought! the Church is to share all that glory along with Him. It is not what belongs to Christ as a divine person, but what He takes as the reward of redemption. But this very work gives Him a title to bestow it on whom God will. The Church is united as the body and bride of Him

who is the Lord of all. She is the Eve of the second Adam. In Eph. 5, Paul takes up more particularly the latter part of the subject. Christ is to present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. The great mystery, brought out there, is the nearness, the love, the intimacy of bridal relationship between Christ and the church.

In the epistle to the Colossians you have the same thing referred to (chap. 2:2): "To the acknowledgment of the mystery of God [and of the Father, and of Christ"]. These last words are inserted without authority, and when persons try to mend Scripture, they only damage it. There is a certain great mystery spoken of in Col. 1 (ver. 26). The meaning of the word mystery is a secret. It may not be a secret now, but it means a thing that was a secret. Where there is anything that people cannot understand, they are apt to say "It is a mystery." But in Scripture it means a truth that God kept hid, but that is so no longer—something they did not know as men or Jews, but that Christ was to teach them as Christians. Here's another statement about it (ch. 1:27): "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is, Christ in you, the hope of glory." If we take the prediction of Christ in the Old Testament, it is a mistake to call this a mystery—enough was quite plain. What the Jewish prophets proclaimed was a Messiah coming who would reign over them, and who would unite salvation with being "the great King." What they did not understand, though revealed, was His humiliation and death. They stumbled over Him, But "the mystery" is a term never applied to Christ's death and resurrection. This was not a secret at all, but, on the contrary, is very plainly predicted in Isa. 53, Psa. 16; 22; 69; 106, and many other passages. But it was a mystery that, when Christ was rejected by His people, and during the time of His exaltation in heaven, God would make Him to be the Head of a heavenly body, chosen by His grace out of all—Jews or Gentiles. This was not treated of in the Old Testament. There were certain things that we can now show to be types of it, but they never would have yielded the least light upon it, if the mystery had not been brought out. There was no such thing then, nor even any such predicted, as Jew and Gentile being blessed together in one body; and this is the reason why it is called "the mystery hidden from ages and from generations." It was a secret hid in God that the prophets did not touch upon.

When the Jews have their Messiah, it will not be as the hope of glory, but as the One who Himself brings in the glory. When the time comes for the blessing they are looking for, there will be no doubt about it, for all will be manifested, whether for friends or foes; neither will it be a hope, but the actual accomplishment of glory in their midst. But now there is an extraordinary state of things that God is effecting among the Gentiles while the Jews are cast off. The Gentiles have Christ now, not as bringing in glory visibly on the earth, as it will be among the Jews by and by, but they have Him in them, the hope of glory by and by, and in heaven.

The term "mystery of God" may be used in our chapter, because it was specially during the time of God's non-intervention with the world, that He had been working out this wonderful secret of Christ and the church. Now this was done with. Still the mystery of evils being permitted to prosper goes on for a time longer—that passiveness of God, whereby He does not hinder evil from having the upper hand, and good from being trampled down. It should soon close, as He declared the glad tidings to His servants the prophets. The voice speaks again and says, "Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel," &c. (ver. 8). Accordingly John takes the book, and finds it, when he has eaten, in his mouth sweet as honey; but when he ponders its contents, and digests its results, how bitter within! So it is and will be. When we see how God will accomplish all, it must

be pain to think what is reserved for man, as indeed it is to know how perseveringly he rebels against God, and forsakes his own mercies.

The Lord grant that what has been of God for the clearing of our standing from earthly principles, and awakening a just feeling of the exceeding dignity of the place in which God has put us, may be impressed upon our hearts! None are in so responsible a place as those who are occupied with heavenly things And let us not suppose that position, or even truth, will of itself keep a soul: nothing but the Spirit of God can; and He never will, where there is not dependence and self-judgment. He is come to glorify Christ. The Lord grant that we may watch and pray! For while the truth is calculated to separate from the world, yet where it is abused and degenerates into that knowledge which puffs up, one is prepared for the worst results.

It remains to add a few words as usual on the past measure of accomplishment which this parenthetical vision has received. I am not disposed to question its general application to that wonderful divine intervention, the Reformation. The Eastern empire had for some time succumbed to the furious onset of the Turks; the West was not a whit less steeped and impenitent than before in abominable idolatry and imposture, when that sudden light from on high shone upon astonished Europe. Not that the grace of Christ was deeply realized, or reflected in the Reformation. The testimony of its leading spirit, Luther, expressed himself in a way more akin to the lightnings and thunders of Sinai, and savored too often of earth rather than of heaven. In fact, it is this comparative earthliness of character, which enables the historicalists to find so many apparent coincidences between that great work and the vision before us. It is just because Luther so much approximated, not to Paul's line of ministry, but to the prophetic testimony of Jesus which is yet to be borne by the latter-day witnesses, that there seems so much in common between the tenor of his life and tendency of his labors, and the predictions of what they are to teach and do and suffer by and by. The idea of comparing it with the original sending out of the gospel and formation of the church at Pentecost is, I cannot but feel, a very gross misconception.

Besides, is it true that there is not a particular in the vision to which the Reformation does not exactly answer? Does the blaze of the Sun of Righteousness intimate the republication of His gospel? I do not doubt that the full meaning of the vision involves a public testimony to the coming of "the day;" but for this reason the gospel is excluded, as any spiritual person may see who dispassionately weighs Mal. 4. For the essence of the gospel is that therein God justifies the ungodly and saves the lost; whereas it is "unto you [the godly remnant of the Jews] that the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing on his wings; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts. Remember ye the law of Moses my servant." There may be a measure of resemblance between this and the aims and course (though not the issue) of the more warlike Reformers; but in that very proportion, it is the reverse of the gospel, or of the practical conduct which flows from and is suitable to it.

Again the cloud recalls the deliverance of Israel, as the rainbow does the covenant with the earth, when government was instituted; the pillars of fire represent judicial firmness, and the loud lion-like voice is the terror-striking assertion of His rights, preceded by the significant claim laid to the whole world, and followed by the complete utterance of God's power. These with the little open book (i.e., it would appear, known prophecy relative to the city and temple) are all of them features entirely

agreeing with the approaching resumption of the Lord's relations with Jerusalem and the Jews, and the world in general, but not one of them, as it seems to me, in its full import like the gospel of God's grace. Heaven and the church are entirely unseen: it is a question of an earthly people, and hence of kings and nations; it is the recommencement, not of evangelizing, much less of edifying the body of Christ, but of the prophetic testimony here below. The decree is declared. Jehovah's anointed King is about to take Zion, His hill of holiness, nay, the nations for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. He is no longer to ask the Father for the heavenly sons, but for the world itself—no longer to set apart by the truth for association with Himself above, but to reduce people with a rod of iron, and to dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. "Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth." Such is the obvious connection of the scene before us. In view of this, it is a preliminary interference. Had the Reformers understood the high calling of the saints, or the nature, character and consequences of our union with Christ in heavenly places, there would have been a contrast, not an analogy. In truth, it was (I repeat) the effect of their lack of spiritual intelligence as Christians, and their approximation to godly Jews, which imprinted on their movement whatever assimilation there is to the scene we are reviewing.

Further, the attempt to make it the complete answer involves at least the ordinary amount of strain, and, I might almost add, of the absurd. For, in his haste to apply the principle of allusive reference, as it has been called, the author of the *Horae Apoc.* does not even glance at the connection of the seven thunders with Christ. It was too good an opportunity to lose for an allusion to the thunders of the Vatican. But here, strange to say, and in opposition, as it appears to me, to the very principle invoked, Mr. E. wrests these thunders from Him who is the primary figure in the vision, and applies them exclusively to the Pope! The reasoning that is offered in support of the proposition, so monstrous to any mind not under the overwhelming bias of a system, appears to me wholly groundless, though not unworthy of Mark E.'s well-known ingenuity. 1. The vocality of the thunders is not altogether unprecedented in this book (chap. vi. 1), and, besides, the trumpets are said to have the same (chap. 8:13). Compare also Rev. 16:7 for the altar. The supposed parallel in John 12:28 is certainly not in favor of papal oracles. 2. The reflective pronoun no doubt implies that the voices were their own, the sounds proper to the thunders spoken of; but that they were in opposition to the angel's crying as with lion's roar is the most unnatural of inferences. Whatever may be thought of the theory of an allusion to Leo X., even so the analogy of every other vision is in favor of the thought that the direct reference is the full expression of divine power, as God's seal upon the angel's assertion of title. 3. It seems to me almost awful to lay it down that the proposition, "write them not," implies that the voices were "not the true sayings of God, but instead thereof false and an imposture." (H. A. Vol. II. p. 105.) The real reason is very simple. The general fact, that "the voice of Jehovah" echoes the claims of Christ to the possession of the world is given; the details are not to be written. The apostle Paul was caught up into paradise and heard secrets (■ρρητα ρ■ματα) which it is not allowed for man to utter. The prophet John was about to write what the thunders divulged, but the voice from heaven commands the things to be sealed, not written—a mode of dealing most extraordinary, if the utterances are supposed to be the false decrees of Rome, but well harmonizing with the conclusion that other things were yet to be revealed, before the power of God was enforced and the earthly rights of Christ are made good by judgment. 4. Hence, I utterly reject, as a mere corollary of the last error, the idea of reference here to the seven hills of Rome. Hitherto the septenary usage of the Revelation has been entirely

independent of that local sign, which occurs only in chap. 17 where the context proves that Rome is in question. Here, for the same reason of the context, the Roman hills are an intrusion, while the idea of completeness is the natural sense. 5. This, also, accounts for the prefixed article, as in the case of the seven angels (chap. viii.), who, I presume, have no special connection with that city. As to the opinion that there is nothing but the Papal bulls to which the seven Apocalyptic thunders have been made to answer, it is natural in the quarter whence it flows; but when the writer adds "or can be," he passes, I humbly think, beyond the bounds of wisdom or modesty. None of us is the measure of divine knowledge nor of what the Lord may bestow. Further, I for one confess my inability to discern, even with the special pleading of the Hore, the peculiar suitability of the angel's oath to the prevalent convictions of the Reforming fathers or their Protestant children. Savonarola and others before him seem to have been rather more full of the nearness of Christ's kingdom, than Luther and his coadjutors. What the great German expected was rather the destruction of the Pope's kingdom by the word alone, and this founded on his construction of Daniel quite as much as the Apostle Paul (i.e. it seems to me, in contrast with the open book and the angel's most solemn announcement). Nor did Melancthon improve on Luther, when he assigned Dan. 7 to Mohammedanism and Dan. 8 to the Papacy. Neither can I admit that prophesying, as addressed to John, and predicated of the two witnesses, or indeed ever, is the mere function of expounding the Scriptures and exhorting from them, as fulfilled in every faithful gospel-minister. The notion, too, that in the words, "Go take the little book," and "thou must prophesy again," we are to read (not now of course, an allusive reference, but) a sort of prefiguration of the deacon's ordination to preach the gospel or Christian ministry, and of the taking in hand the New Testament to translate it into the vernacular tongue; and yet more, that the Apostle John's being made representative of the faithful ministers of the Reformation at this epoch intimates that they were all in the line of evangelical succession, is to me more like playing with feelings than a grave exposition of this chapter. It is the attempt to apply the details to the past, which betrays the unsatisfactoriness of the exclusive Protestant scheme: a bearing on it, definite enough to show that such a work as the Reformation was not overlooked of God, in the protracted application of the book, I have already admitted. The full literal carrying out of every word awaits the end of the age.

## Lectures on Revelation 11:1-18

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FROM the moment that God begins to deal with the earth in an open manner, Israel naturally comes forward and also the Gentiles as connected with them (Deut. xxxii. 8, 9). We have had the twelve tribes scattered abroad and a measured number sealed; but the land of Judea and Jerusalem is the great foreground of the picture that we see here. "Rise," it is said to the prophet, "and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein." The altar, I think, clearly refers to the brazen altar, for the golden altar was included in the temple. "They that worship therein," are persons who are characterized by nearness to God. The altar was the expression of true approach to God, and they have drawn near Him. It was the place of the burnt-offering, which marked the acceptance of the person. Now this shows us that here we have God owning a certain number of people on the earth, as capable of drawing near to Him. "Measure the temple," &c. meant, I suppose, that God appropriated thus far Himself (ver. 1).

"And the court which is without the temple leave out and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles; and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months" (ver 2). The Jew is owned to a certain extent by God; and consequently their city is spoken of as the holy city, and the Gentiles as those who were defiling and treading it under foot. But it is important, before we go any farther, to inquire whether there is any reference, in other Scriptures, to this same period, spoken of here as forty and two months. It will not be doubted that there is in Daniel-the book which most nearly answers in the Old Testament to the Apocalypse in the New. We find there a period mentioned of three years and a half, called in mystical language "a time, times and a half." Let us turn to Dan. 7. There we find the Gentile powers represented as wild beasts, having in part some resemblances in nature. There was a winged lion; and a bear; and the leopard was presented as a four-winged witness to the swiftness of conquest men would see in the power represented by that beast. And every one knows there never was an empire in antiquity like the Grecian under Alexander for spreading itself by rapid conquest; and not only this, but it had its roots deep, so that even to this day the remains of the Grecian empire are seen; and these, not exhumed as it were, but in living effects. The fourth beast was of a composite character, unlike anything that had been before. Upon its head were ten horns, and after them, in their midst, another little horn was seen by the prophet to emerge. This last takes the place of three others, and becomes the great object with which the Spirit of God is occupied, not of course because of anything good connected with it, but because of its deadly hostility to God and His people. Daniel looks at him more particularly in his political, and the Revelation in his politico-religious character. It is with, fourth Gentile empire, the Roman beast, and in relation to the Jews, that the period is given.

It does seem no slight hallucination of mind to divert these Scriptures from Judea, and to transport Rome into them. But the cause is apparent. Men had been so occupied with the controversies between Protestantism and Popery, that they naturally looked through the Scriptures to-find something about the pope; and finding there was one person more wicked than any other (the antichrist), they came to the conclusion that the antichrist and the pope were the same thing. Now, it is true that they both do similar things to a certain extent; but when you look into the Scriptures,

antichrist finds his place in Judea, and in connection with the Jewish people, in a way the pope has never done. I do not say the pope may not do so: but it is impossible yet to apply, fully and exclusively, what is said about the antichrist to the pope as such. There is a future system of lawlessness, and a future person at its head, who will rise up against Christ in His Jewish rights and glory, uniting political power with religious pretension, and this in the city of the great king. There are many antichrists, it is true, and the pope may truthfully be regarded as one of them; but not as the antichrist who is to come. That is reserved for the time immediately preceding Christ's appearing from heaven. He will personally affect and oppose the Lord Jesus, and will by Him personally be put down. People ought to be prepared for this; but they, on the contrary, imagine that popery is the last antichrist; and that it is getting so decrepit as to be well-nigh sinking into its grave. But the Bible is clear that the most hateful development of lawlessness is yet to come; and that when it arrives, it will carry away, not Popish countries only, but Protestant ones, and the Jews themselves, in its fatal delusions.

In Dan. 7 the little horn is said to speak great words against the Most High, "and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws; and they shall be given into his hands, until a time, and times, and the dividing of time." Now it appears to me perfectly certain that the "times and laws" in question here are those the prophet Daniel was familiar with. The "times" had to do with Israel's festivals, and the "laws" with the Jewish polity or ritual. The saints of the Most High were those whom the prophet knew and was interested in; just as in chap. xii. "the children of thy people" (i.e., Daniel's people) are intended. This shows that a special enemy of God's people in Judea who will arise in that day is here spoken of. He meddles with the Jews when they have begun to be owned in a measure by God. This iniquitous power wears out the saints of the high places and thinks to change times and laws; and they shall be given into his hand. Not that the saints should be so given, for God never relinquishes them to the enemy: He may permit saints to be worried for a while, but He never gives them up. It is the times and laws that are thus given for a season, because the nation is not owned thoroughly till the Messiah comes. As yet it is only a partial recognition of their worship. These are then to be abandoned to Him "for a time, and times, and the dividing of time." You have this same period referred to in the forty-two months, which is exactly the same length of time, taking "a time" as meaning a year.

In Daniel, chapter ix., you have another note of time, the famous seventy weeks (ver. 26). "And after threescore and two (or rather, after the threescore, in addition to the previous seven) weeks shall Messiah be cut off and (margin) shall have nothing" (i.e., after sixty-nine of the seventy weeks Messiah is cut off). Then an interruption follows on account of this; all the weeks do not expire. There remains one, the last, to be fulfilled, which is kept separate, like a link wrenched off from the preceding chain. You will observe that, after the death of Messiah the Prince, another prince is alluded to as yet to come; and he is evidently an antagonistic prince, a prince of the Roman people. The grave mistake is made by many, that this prince was Titus, who came and took the city of Jerusalem; but it is not so. The verse does not state that the prince should destroy, &c.; but "the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and sanctuary;" and so they did. The Romans came under that general. But when we are told of "the people of the prince that shall come," it is a plain intimation to my mind that there was a certain great ruler to follow—a prince connected with the Roman empire. His people were to come first, which they did under Titus; afterward the prince comes himself, which I believe to be still future. For mark well, that the past

destruction of the city and sanctuary is not included in the course of the seventy weeks at all. It is after the sixty-ninth, and before the seventieth begins. There was a chain, so to speak, of sixty-nine weeks of years up to the death of Christ; then it was broken. There was an important link, the seventieth week, remaining. What becomes of it? The last verse takes it up, and is clear enough that this seventieth week has to do (not with Christ but) with His enemy who is to have a manifest connection with the Roman people, and also with the Jews. Observe that, in the 26th verse, after the three-score and two weeks in addition to the seven, when the Messiah is cut off, there is no mention of the weeks. In what comes after, we have no date, till we enter upon verse 27; showing that what intervenes is not counted as a part of the continuous line of the weeks. "The end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end thereof desolations are determined." The city and sanctuary were destroyed long since, but the desolations are "unto the end;" and they still go on.

Till lately, of all people of the earth a Jew had the greatest difficulty to get into the land. There is a change coming over the spirit of the nations towards Israel, I admit. Some of the Gentiles seem to forget that the Jew is under a peculiar judgment of God. This is no excuse for dealing harshly, of course, but it is a grave reason why men should not meddle with them politically. For the Jew to be so mixed up with the Gentiles is a sort of apostasy, and for the Gentile it is to despise God's judgment and eventually to incur it. It will be found that God cannot be with such an union. When the Gentiles have given up every thought of Divine election of the Jew, I believe that the hand of God will confound their schemes and that He will interfere to bring out His people distinctly and separately from all others, first for judgment and then for blessing. When all seems to be quiet and prospering, God will spoil what man thinks he is doing, for He has not finally cast off Israel. The Jew may have given up God and have amalgamated with the Gentile; but God will never forget that He chose the fathers and made promises as to the children. True, the Jews undertook to be His people and miserably failed in fulfilling their obligations; but God will not fail to accomplish His purpose. When the Gentile mariners had got Jonah in their ship, God was determined to have him out. If they did not cast him forth into the sea, God would break their ship to get His prophet out so as to be with Himself and His work. So it will be in the day that speedily approaches.

From Isa. 18 we find that there is to be a partial restoration of Israel by Gentile power, chiefly through the influence of a certain maritime power, "that sendeth ambassadors by the sea," &c. They may bring some of the Jews back to their own land, but the Jews will still be rebellious and unbelieving. All seems to flourish, but suddenly there comes a blight from God; and more than this: He allows the ancient enmity to break out among the Gentiles against the Jews. "The fowls," as it is said, "shall summer upon them; and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them" (i.e., every kind of unrelenting hatred is shown them). They are the dead body; and where the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together. The Gentiles who seemed to be so kind will again stand aloof from them, and once more unite for the purpose of crushing them. And what will be the end? The Gentiles having relapsed into their old hatred against Israel, God will espouse the cause of His people. He refrains while man is meddling; but when an immense host comes up against them, in that very day "shall the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto." God, as I understand the prophet to say, will bring a present to Himself of His long-scattered and persecuted Israel.

This will show how naturally in the Revelation we have a reorganization of the Jewish polity and worship, after the Church has been caught up to heaven and before the appearing of Christ. We see a little remnant, in the midst of the mass which were to be given over to the Gentiles. For forty-two months, the holy city is to be trodden under foot. The Lord allows a certain period to go on as far as the many were concerned, but He measures the temple, and the altar, and them that worship therein for Himself. This remnant might be killed, but He values them. When some of the Jews are thus in their own land, but Israel as a whole is not yet thoroughly brought in by God, the predicted Roman prince will come, who will “confirm a (not the) covenant with (the) many for one week.” I am aware that some apply this to Christ. But the Lord never made a covenant for a week or for seven years. It is impossible rightly to refer the words to any covenant the Lord ever made, much less to a covenant made since His death. “The everlasting covenant” is obviously the contrast, and not the accomplishment, of this covenant made for a week. Many apply it thus; but those who so interpret Dan. 9:27 have forgotten that Christ had been looked at as “cut off” in the previous verse.

“In the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice the oblation to cease; and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate,” &c. Here we have subsequent events of a totally different nature. How and when, it will be asked, are we to suppose this arrest of sacrifice and oblation? Who and whence is the personage who causes them to cease Messiah, the Prince, and “the prince that shall come” —are they the same person or different individuals? The history ends as to the Messiah with verse 26. “The people” of that coming prince were the enemies of Israel, subject to an opposed power, and not Messiah's people.

In verse 27 the prince, whose coming was announced in verse 26, is himself come; and he it is who confirms a covenant with “the many,” or mass of the Jews, for one week; but in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations, &c. The language may be somewhat obscure, but at least it is quite plain, that there is to be a certain prince after the death of Christ. -a Roman prince-whose people first come for a desolation long accomplished, and at length he comes. After that he appears upon the stage, the last week of Daniel begins. This interruption between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks may seem strange, and people may ask, How can there be such a gap? But it is not without precedent. The same thing in principle occurs in Luke 4, when the Lord was reading in Isaiah. The portion read was the description of His own ministry in Isa. 61:1, 2, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me..... He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” “And he closed the book.” He did not finish the sentence. Why? Because, if one may reverentially answer, the prophecy went on with “the day of vengeance of our God.” Proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord was what Christ did at His first coming, but it was not then the day of the Lord's vengeance; so that the whole of Christianity and the calling of the Church came in between the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance. When Christ came in humiliation and love, it was the acceptable year of the Lord, and therefore He closed the book; but the day of vengeance is deferred till the Lord comes again in glory.

So here in Daniel, the sixty-nine weeks run on till Messiah is cut off, and then we have an evident gap. The destruction of Jerusalem is not included in the course of the sixty-nine weeks and as evidently does not take place in the seventieth week. For if you interpret the last week as commencing from the death of the Messiah, this would only give seven years, whereas Jerusalem

was not taken till forty years after the death of Christ. The seventieth week had nothing to say to that siege, and, in point of fact, the wars and desolations were given before we arrive at the seventieth week, which is not named till the last verse.

In the last or 27th verse a covenant is made. Did Titus, did any Roman prince, make a covenant with the Jews for one week? And, further, it is said, "In the midst of the week, he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease." This shows that there is to be a renewal of religious service by the Jews at Jerusalem, in the latter day. Sacrifice and oblation will have been restored; and this prince, in spite of the covenant made with them, puts an end to all. And what then? Abominations, which means idolatry, are publicly set up and protected. They are to be brought into the sanctuary itself, which was not the case at the past destruction of Jerusalem. Then there was much appalling wickedness- every other kind of crime and madness, but no idolatry. Here, on the contrary, there is supposed to be the open support of idolatry in the temple. This does not answer to the capture by Titus, nor to the death of the Lord Jesus Christ; for at that time the unclean spirit of idolatry had departed out of the nation, which from the time of the Babylonish captivity, excepting the defilement of Antiochus, had kept clear of such abominations, and in that sense was "empty, swept, and garnished." But we know, that unclean spirit is to return in greater force than ever (Matt. 12:45). Christendom and Judaism will each contribute to the last form of evil-antichristianism You may remember that the Pharisees charged the Lord, when He was upon earth, with doing His miracles by Satanic power, and the meaning of the parable then given to them is really the history of Israel itself. The old unclean spirit had gone away. The people or their leaders were full of zeal for their ordinances. But what does the Lord say 4 That the old and long-departed unclean spirit was to return. And when it does, it will bring with it seven other spirits worse than itself. The Jews are to fall into idolatry, in union with antichristianism, and their last state will be worse than the first. Compare also Isa. 65; 66

But let us now go back to the Revelation. There is this state of things in Israel-a measure of recognition on God's part, and worship going on, though the outward profession is given over to Gentile oppression. And remark, that the Lord says, "I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand, two hundred, and three-score days, clothed in sackcloth" (ver. 3). The Lord mentions them as so many days here, rather than as forty-two months, it would seem, to mark His value for their testimony. He makes, so to speak, as much of it as He can. He does not sum it together, as when speaking of the beast (chap. xiii. 5). Lovingly, He speaks of the time as days, as though He were counting them all out. "They shall testify a thousand, two hundred, and three-score days, clothed in sackcloth" —a testimony borne in sorrow. It is not Christianity, nor is it the state of things that will subsist after Messiah has appeared in glory. But it is the time of transition after the church has been taken away, and before it comes out of heaven with the Lord Jesus Christ-the time when man has brought in God's people to their land, and the mass of them are thoroughly unfit to be in relation with God. There is a little remnant of believing ones, there is worship, and besides a prophetic testimony, but evidently Jewish in its character. In Zechariah, though there are two olive-trees mentioned, there is only one candlestick; here there are two, because they are the two witnesses, who prophesy of the coming earthly glory, but who do not bring it in personally. That is to say, it is not the regular order of God, but a proof that His eye is upon His people for good, before full blessing comes.

“And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.” (Ver. 5.) This shows that it was not proper Christian testimony, nor the corresponding practical fruits. It was the very thing the Son would not do when He was upon earth, (save, of course, in the figurative sense of Luke 12:49,) and that He rebuked James and John for desiring. (Luke 9:54, 55.) Here, on the contrary, fire proceeds out of their mouth, and devours their enemies—a perfectly right thing when God is about to take the place of Judge on earth. But the Lord does not take that place now. He is saving sinners, and otherwise displaying full grace; and as long as He so acts, He does not desire His people to be the depositaries of earthly power. Thus, the miracles of His servants, during this time of the display of His grace, have not been of a destroying nature. The Lord might deal with a person now, because of some sin, as with the Corinthian saints: I do not see why He should not at any time. But it would be foreign to Christianity and contrary to all that it breathes, if a saint, because another was evilly opposed to him, wished his death or injury. Christianity shows that the victory grace gives us is to show love and kindness to one's enemy. It may be heaping coals of fire upon his head; but that is the Lord's way—overcoming evil with good. Yet it is the Lord who here sanctions this destructive power which accompanies the testimony of His Jewish witnesses; for He says, “I will give power to my two witnesses And if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.” It is what He means them to do—what evidently is to be done according to the thought of God. It indicates another condition, and not the Christian called to suffer unresistingly. It is the close of the age when Christianity will have done its work, and the Lord will again begin to act on the Jews.

Besides, their ministry and miracles have the same character as that which is attached to those of Moses and Elias. Thus they “have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues,” as in the time of Moses; and “they have power to shut heaven that it rain not in the days of their prophecy,” as in the time of Elias. (Ver. 6.) And in fact what will be found in these times answers much to what you have in Moses and Elijah. There was idolatry in Israel then, and a remarkable testimony of Elijah against it. God Himself chastised His people—the heavens were as brass towards them. So will it be found again. The person who then sways the destinies of Israel will be an apostate who admits and enforces idolatry. Again, Israel will be found in subjection to Gentile authority, as they were in the days of Moses; yet there will be a little remnant set apart for God. But although these two witnesses are guarded for a certain time by miracles, yet the moment the days are over they have no power, so to speak. The beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit makes war with them, and they are killed like others.

“And their dead bodies [shall be] on the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.” (Ver. 8.) It is perfectly plain that this is Jerusalem. Many think it is Rome, because, as has been said before, Protestants are absorbed in, and biassed by, their controversies with Popery. God attaches the greatest possible interest to His people Israel, when His rights as to the earth are in question. But why is there not more said about Popery in the Scriptures? Because God never acknowledges His church as an earthly people. The politics, pursuits, interests of this world are well enough for those who have nothing but an earthly portion and want no earthly intruder. But to strive with the potsherds of the earth is beneath those of heavenly birth.

We have now come down in this chapter to Jerusalem, the center of God's dealings and testimony, and of the opposition from the abyss. Their great antagonist is plainly mentioned here, for the first time in the Revelation, as "the Beast," just as if you had known all about him before. It is a remarkable power, not merely arising, as in chap. xiii., out of the sea, but here, as in chap. xvii., said to ascend "out of the bottomless pit." This empire does not arise out of the earth, the symbol of a state of settled government, as the second beast in chap. xiii. I I, nor only out of the sea, which sets forth an unsettled revolutionary condition. There is the extraordinary and awful feature added in this passage, that it rises out of the abyss. Satan has to do with its last state. It has been a darling project of men from time to time to form a vast universal empire. Charlemagne tried it, but he failed. He never got the old Roman earth under his hand. And some can remember another who had the same thing near his heart, but he too failed and died a miserable exile. But the time hastens when that very scheme will be realized. In other empires there has always been the providence of God overruling. There was God above them, God calling on His people to show allegiance to the powers that be, no matter how they were formed. The Christian was not to meddle with them, but to acknowledge them and to pay tribute. But there is an empire about to be formed, that will be as thoroughly under the immediate power of Satan, as all past empires have been under the providence of God; and God will withdraw that care and check that He has hitherto kept over the kingdoms of the world, and will allow all to ripen to a head under Satan. Justly, therefore, is this empire said to arise out of the bottomless pit.

This corresponds with what we have in Daniel. The person that would specially meddle with the Jews (chap. vii. 25; ix. 27) is the Roman beast, the leader of that very empire, which, in its last state, God does not own. When Jesus was born, the fourth or Roman empire was there, and God took advantage of its decrees to bring the heir of David to Bethlehem. It was "the beast" that was there. In Rev. 17 it is written, "the beast that was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit." (Ver. 8.) But observe a notable feature that Daniel does not furnish, and that John does. He gives three successive stages of the Roman empire. It was existing in John's time; then it was to cease; and last of all it should arise out of the bottomless pit, special Satanic influence being connected with its final state. The beast "that is not" describes exactly its present condition of non-existence. The Goths and Vandals came down upon it, and the old Roman empire came to ruin. Since then, men have never been able to re-organize it, because God has another thought. He has laid it down in His word that it is to be re-organized, not by man, but by Satan's power. Its sources will be from beneath. How remarkable is all this! We have had the decline and fall of the Roman empire, but there is one thing that no historian could trace-that prophecy alone could and does give-viz., the restoration, of the Roman empire. May we see it, not as being on earth, but as looking upon it from heaven I believe that those who reject the gospel now, will, if then alive, be carried away by the dreadful delusions of that day. They will receive the mark of the beast in their right hand or in their foreheads; they will worship his image and it is written by God that those who do shall be tormented in everlasting fire. The world may fancy, from all the increase of grandeur and prosperity and luxury which will be brought in then or previously, that the millennium is come; but it will be Satan's millennium. That is the fate reserved for these countries; for it is part of the righteous judgment of God, that where the gospel has been preached, and the world has trifled with it, even allowing idolatry for political purposes, He will withdraw the light and send them strong delusion. And then Satan will bring out the man of sin. There is immense practical importance in all this. People may ask, "What is the good of this to us, as Christians, if we are to be taken away

before?" Such a way of speaking slights what God has been pleased to reveal to us. When God spoke beforehand about the destruction of Sodom, did Abraham say, What has that to do with me? God would have our hearts to be drawn out in praise and thanksgiving for His grace and His love to our own souls, but He tells us also the sad doom which awaits the world, and awakens the spirit of intercession for unfaithful saints, who may be mixed up with it.

I would just remark, as to the two witnesses, that there is no necessity to take them as two persons: they might be two hundred. They are viewed as two witnesses (whether literally so or not), because it is a divine principle that "out of the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established." God was giving a sufficient testimony. These maintained Christ's title to the earth, that He was "the Lord of the earth;" and this excited enmity. "The beast" might not so much have cared if they had said "the Lord of heaven;" but they claimed the earth, not for themselves, but for Him, and men will not bear it. Unbelief likes present enjoyment, and anything which interferes with this and makes conscience uneasy is hateful and unwelcome. And so, when the testimony is finished, and the witnesses are overthrown, not only the beast but two great parties of mankind are affected by their fall. "And some of the peoples, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations, see their dead bodies three days and an half, and do not suffer their dead bodies to be put into a grave; and they that dwell on the earth rejoice over them... and shall send," &c. (Ver. 9, 10.) It is not the first or the only time that we have this distinction drawn between "peoples, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations," and "those that dwell on the earth." The latter does not mean men in earth merely; it carries a moral force with it and means those who are essentially earthly-minded, who do not in heart and ways rise above the earth. The dead bodies of the witnesses are on the street of the great city; and they of the people, and kindred, and nations see them there three days and an half, and do not suffer them to be put in graves. This was bad enough-being the malice of man against those who Witnessed for God. But "they that dwell on the earth" go much farther. For in their case, there is positive rejoicing and making merry, and sending gifts one to another. And why was all this? Because it is said, "these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth."

This is not a mere imaginary distinction, nor only founded upon one passage. If you look elsewhere, you will find the same thing. Thus in chap. xiv. 6, "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people," there is the converse of what we have here. We first find the mass of the Gentile people, who show out their evil against the two witnesses by not allowing their dead bodies to be buried. But the special rejoicing is on the part of the dwellers on the earth, or the earthly-minded. But in chap. xiv. we find God sends a solemn message, the everlasting gospel. And with whom does He begin? With the worst—"them that dwell on the earth," καθήμενους, literally "that sit," which seems stronger than τς κατοικοὺς τῆς γῆς, and then the message is extended to men generally. And on examination you will find this thoroughly confirmed by other passages. In other words, to "dwell on the earth" is not a mere vague description of men, but it expresses a moral condition.

But to return-God interferes. "And after three days and an half, the (or a) spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in the cloud; and their enemies beheld them." (Ver. 11, 12.) It is -not merely in a cloud (as in the

authorized version), but in the cloud. I suppose it was the cloud seen in the beginning of chap. x., which encircled the mighty angel. The cloud, the known especial emblem of Jehovah's presence, was that which received the witnesses and proved that their Lord, the Lord of heaven as well as earth, was for them. They ascended up to heaven in the very face of their enemies. "And in the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted and gave glory to the God of heaven." One word I would say, before going farther, on a remarkable distinction that occurs in this same verse. The witnesses testified for the Lord of the earth; but the people that were affrighted, when they saw how the cause of His martyred servants was vindicated, gave glory to the God of heaven. It will be then an easier thing for men to acknowledge God above in a vague sort of way, than to own Him as the Lord of the earth, concerning Himself about what men do here below. The former might be merely to regard Him as One seen in the distance; though, in a higher sense, I may know Him as One that comes down to give me a portion with Himself above. Thus God in heaven is either exceedingly near to His people, or far off to those who are merely acted upon by transient terror. The worldly man can well allow the thought of God afar from Himself; and this is just what we have here. They were alarmed by what was near. But there was no reception of the testimony, no conversion. They should have bowed to the Lord of the earth. They gave glory to the God of heaven. But it is too late. There was slain in the earthquake "seven thousand names of men," as the margin gives it literally.

First of all, we have seen the priestly remnant occupied in the worship of God—His holy remnant in the midst of the Jews in the latter day. After this, we have the witnesses, who did not bring out on God's part what He is manifesting now, but asserted His rights with regard to the future, as prophecy naturally implies. Another remark I may here make. In the Revelation an expression occurs that has often been misunderstood. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The meaning is not that all prophecy refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, (which in a certain sense may be true,) but that the witness of Jesus such as this book contains what Jesus testifies in the Revelation, is the spirit of prophecy. It is the Holy Spirit as He is shown us throughout the book; not bringing into present communion with the Lord Jesus in heaven, but communicating what He is to do by and by. They, the witnesses, asserted the title of Christ to the earth. Whatever men might say, the Lord was the one to whom it belonged, and He would soon come and make good their record.)

There is a third thing that the end of the chapter contains. Besides a priestly place, and then a prophetic testimony, there comes the kingdom. The trumpet sounds. And now it is not, as in the case of the witnesses, a proclamation fenced by miraculous power; that has come to a close—their own blood has sealed their work. But if it looked as if the Beast had played an easy part in their death, God points to another thing:— "The seventh angel sounded, and there were loud voices in heaven," &c. There is the announcement of a kingdom, heard not upon earth, but in heaven, and, therefore, as soon as it is made, those that had the mind of Christ, "the twenty-four elders who sit before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces and worshipped God." A little word I would desire to say upon this verse 15. As it stands now, it has a very weakened turn given to it: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." The true force is: "The world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ is come." This gives, in my opinion, a very different and a weightier meaning to the verse. It is the world-kingdom; and why? Because this book has

shown us from the very beginning that there was another order of kingdom altogether. In chapter 1. John spoke of himself as a “brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience in Christ.” Thus the kingdom of Christ is there, and yet characterized, or\_ at least accompanied, by tribulation and patience! But the angel heralds in the kingdom of the-Lord and of His Christ, as to this world. Previously it had been one only known to faith and calling for patience—a thing, consequently, that the world would not believe. Talk to them of a kingdom where people suffer, and where Christ allows them to suffer, instead of maintaining His rights! And this is exactly what God's children have been called to go through, from that day to this.

But allow me to say that this shows the extreme error of many good people who think it quite right to use earthly power in seeking to establish the cause of Christ. For, not to speak of Romanism but to look at Puritanism, they completely forgot that the kingdom of Christ now is the kingdom of patience, and not of power. They judged because theirs was the right as they believed, therefore they ought not to suffer—whereas the very thing that God insists on is, that because the world is wrong, and they right, therefore His children must suffer. Hence Peter testifies, “If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.” There, evidently, you have the great moral consequence of Christ's kingdom in practical things: a Christian is not buffeted because he is wrong, but because he does well. There is such a thing, even among God's people, as the being buffeted because they have gone astray. What was the trial of Lots And what that of Abraham? It was to prove that the latter was faithful; but Lot's was because he was unfaithful. Not that Abraham was always true to God; but unfaithfulness with him was the exception, whereas I am afraid it was too often the case with poor Lot. No doubt, Lot was more happy in his outward circumstances. He was in the gate of the city, as we are told—sitting where he ought not, though where the flesh would like to be. We are not to suppose that he was drawn into the ungodliness of the community wherein he dwelt. No doubt, he could expostulate very well, as to the evil they were doing; but, evidently, he was in the place of dishonor, as far as God was concerned, though not in the commission of open sin, if we only think of moral conduct. He was delivered, through God's mercy, but ignominiously. His sons-in-law remained behind; his wife was made a lasting monument of her folly and sin. Abraham knew another kind of sorrow, the sorrow of a man that knew God, and that had come out at His word. We do find failure in Abraham, as for instance in Gen. 12 and xx. But though there were slips, still, looking at his spirit and walk as a whole, Abraham was a most blessed man of God, and a sample of faith to all, as God Himself puts him before us in Heb. 11 and elsewhere. He knew trial, because he was true to God and to his calling. Lot knew it, because he was grasping after some present thing, a place in the world. And what was the issue? A blow comes upon the world, and Lot was carried away by it; and all that he had set his affections upon, was swept away, and only restored to him through Abraham's timely succor, to be lost forever when the judgment of Sodom came. At the close a dark spot of shame fastens upon that man, and he had bitterly to learn that for the believer a worldly path is one of frequent pain and disappointment, which if persevered in, ensures present sorrow, and leaves behind it alike seeds of misery and fruits of shame. We must have one or other kind of suffering, if we are children of God at all; either the suffering that comes upon the world, if we are unfaithful to God, or the sufferings of Christ because we confess him Thus the seventh angel gives the signal that the mysterious form of the kingdom is at an end. Heavenly voices proclaim that this world's kingdom is become that of the Lord and His Christ. Instead of merely having a kingdom open to faith, and that none but believers value—a kingdom whose earthly portion is tribulation and waiting

for the Lord, the only place that hope can take now—instead of this we have an entire change. God will no longer allow the world to be the camp, and parade, and sport of Satan; and when the seventh trumpet sounds, it is announced that this world's kingdom of the Lord is come. If it be objected that the Lord Himself, in John 18, declares that His kingdom is not of this world, I reply that this is beside the mark. This world is never the source of His kingdom, but is it not destined to be its sphere? It was not His kingdom then, but that does not prove that it is not to be His kingdom at some future time, when He will fight and His servants too, though in a new way. Here you have the positive Word of God that the world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ is come. The sovereignty of the universe is transferred to the Lord Jesus: "And he shall reign forever and ever." Of course the phrase, "forever and ever," must be taken in connection with the whole subject. When eternity is spoken of, it must be taken in its full and unlimited extent; but here it can only mean "forever" in the sense of as long as the world lasts. And I feel, though it is not the brightest thought which our souls can enjoy in connection with the future, yet that the Lord Jesus is to take the throne of the world, is a very great rest to the heart in all the present confusion. It lifts one out of the spirit of the present; because, if I know that this is not the place of the Church, but that I am now in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, I shall not be wanting honor or power in this world. We are to have a much better place in heaven, and the saints who will be on earth when the Lord appears and we are with Him in glory, will be in the place of subjects. But what is the place of those who are in the kingdom and patience in Christ Jesus? We shall not be subjects merely of Christ when He thus comes, but kings, reigning with Him. Even now those who are rejected for Christ, are rejected kings. They do not merely sing, "He loveth us," but hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father," &c.

The Lord will have a kingdom suited to the earth; but the Jews are not destined to be kings They will have on earth a very honored place; but even when the nation is converted to Him, they will never have the nearness that belongs to every soul, Jew or Gentile, who believes in Christ now. Our portion may seem to unbelief to be a most trying one, and trying it is now. But the Lord Jesus has trodden the path before, and known suffering such as none other could. He has gone through it all, and when He comes and takes the kingdom, He will assign His sufferers their place. They will be like the near companions of David when he came to the throne, there was David in the cave of Adullam, and David hunted about upon the mountains by Saul; but it was David's faith, as a means, that had kindled the flame in their hearts. They caught the tone of David's soul; and, though they had a time of sorrow, and there were many foolish men like Nabal, who could taunt him with being some runaway servant, yet while David was rather quick to feel and too ready to gird his sword to his thigh, he takes a word from even a weaker vessel, and retreats into the better place of grace—the place of doing well, suffering for it and -taking it patiently. And soon came the throne. What then? The poor ones that had known his path of suffering and had shared his sorrows in the day of his rejection were now to share his honors. Where was Jonathan in that day? It is true that his heart clung to David, but his faith was not equal to the trial. And what was the consequence? He fell on the mountains of Gilboa with his miserable father; and he whose heart would willingly have given the first place to David, and who had already stripped himself for David's sake, now falls with the world with which he had outwardly remained to the last. Thus whatever may be our affection for Christ, if I remain in a false worldly position, it will never be to my honor in the day of Christ, when they that suffer shall reign with Him. May we wait for that kingdom with hearts exercised by the truth!

You will find that there are many persons who hear reluctantly about the kingdom of Christ, professing always to like something touching more on the immediate need of the soul. But does not God know what we want? What we most need is not to trust ourselves, but the living God. Always giving the first and last place to the cross of Christ, may we not forget that His kingdom is coming. Though the cross is the only resting-place for the sinner, the kingdom is what cheers and encourages the saint in his path of faith and patience. There were those that followed David in his sufferings—separated, wherever they went, from all around. They were gathered from all conditions, and out of all parts: but it was being round David and sharing God's thoughts and purposes about him, which sustained them. Though God has anointed the Lord Jesus Christ for it, still, He has not yet taken the kingdom in the sense of the world-kingdom that I have been speaking of. Having been rejected and crucified, He is gone above and we wait for Him, suffering meanwhile. But the day fast comes when it will no longer be tribulation and patience, but power and glory. All will be brought under subjection to Christ, and He will reign forever and ever.

When this is heard in heaven, the twenty-four elders rise from their thrones. (Ver. 16.) How sweet is this! Before, when glory was ascribed to God, or the Lamb appeared, they rose and cast themselves down before Him. They were ready for everything that exalted the Godhead. If it be as the Creator, (chap. iv.,) they prostrate themselves before Him that sat on the throne; or if they hear of the slain Lamb who is about to unveil the secrets of futurity, (chap. v.,) they fall down before Him and proclaim Him worthy.

So here now the last trumpet sounds, "the world kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ" is announced, and forthwith the twenty-four elders are on their faces, giving God thanks, because He had taken to Him His great power and had reigned. It is true that it must be through much sorrow for guilty men. For the sword of judgment has to clear the way, that the scepter of righteousness may have free course. "The nations were angry, and Thy wrath is come," &c. But they knew well that, though man must come down with a crash, he will be exalted in the only true and enduring way in the kingdom of our Lord and of His Anointed. And so they give thanks to the Lord God Almighty, "that art, and wast, [and art to come.]" (Ver. 17.) I beg leave to omit the last clause, "and art to come" -not as a conjecture, (for conjecture on Scripture is presumption,) but because of what the best witnesses for the word of God really maintain. The clause, "and art to come," was put in to make it square with other passages which contain a similar phrase.

In the first chapter, you may remember that the salutation was, "Grace unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come." All these three clauses are from God. They assert that He is Jehovah, the One that is, and was, and is to come; they are almost a translation into the Greek of the name Jehovah—One who is always the same. The same thing is repeated, chap. 1:8: only there it is not John's salutation to the churches, but the direct word of God Himself: "I am Alpha and Omega, saith the Lord God, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty" —evidently pointing to the unchanging continuity of His being. In chap. iv., there is a little departure from the order given in the previous passages, and quite rightly: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come;" not "which is, and was," &c., but here, "which was and is." It may seem a slight change, but it is not without meaning. The emphasis in chap. 1. is thrown upon the words, "which is," because God is presenting Himself as the ever existing One. "Which was," seems put first in chap. iv., because the living creatures, (who had been the instruments of God's judgments in past dispensations, as they will be in the future,) look back

upon the past, and therefore do not lay stress upon “which is,” but begin with what God had been all through the past. They had been seen first at the garden of Eden; next, they formed a sort of representation of the judicial power of God, in the tabernacle and in the temple; and then, finally, they were active when Jerusalem was swept away, and judgment came upon Israel. Now, here, these living creatures, which had been the witnesses of God's ways all through, begin with what God was, the perfection of His being, as, if one may so say, it had been historically unfolding. In chap. xi. there is the omission of the words, “and art to come,” because the arrival of the world-kingdom of the Lord is here celebrated, so that there was no need to add anything. Before He came in His kingdom, it was appropriate; but it would be hardly suitable here. As I find that the best authorities reject the words, it is surely legitimate to try to show how the better reading harmonizes with the truth of God in the passage itself.

The general meaning of the next verse (18) is plain “The nations were wroth, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged,” &c., all which was to be executed afterward. It is a sort of comprehensive view of what would take place from the beginning of the kingdom, when the various corruptions should be judged, and during the millennium up to “the end,” when all judgment should be closed. The three great thoughts, then, of this chapter, as we have seen, are priestly worship; next, a prophetic testimony; and, finally, the kingdom announced in heaven as come. The Lord grant that our hearts, brought into the enjoyment of such privileges, may be with Christ, not merely because of the blessing, but for His own sake! Christ is better than all the blessings that come even from Him; and we shall never rightly enjoy what He gives, except in proportion as we enjoy Himself.

That the greater part of the chapter refers to the antipapal witnesses, crowned by the Reformation, though urged with confidence and with no lack of ingenuity, I cannot but regard as a total failure, involving in some places a sense not only different from, but the reverse of the express language of the prophecy. Thus, the giving of a reed like a rod to John is supposed to denote the royal authorization of the Reformer whom the prophet here impersonated. This is said to be fulfilled after the death of Frederick, the Elector of Saxony, when his brother and successor, John, assumed to himself supremacy in ecclesiastical matters, and exercised it resolutely by forming new ecclesiastical constitutions, modeled on the principles of Luther, the example being followed elsewhere—in Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and afterward England. How singular that men of God should be so prepossessed with Protestantism, and so enamored even of its blots, as to turn the word of God into a sanction of the very things in which the Reformers departed from Scripture as widely, perhaps, as they did from Rome! I am aware that the application of the rod in this passage to the intervention of civil authority is, at least, as old as Brightman; but this ought to have given time for considering and rejecting so unworthy a notion. Nothing can be simpler, it seems to me, than the truth intended. In prospect of the approaching divine government of the earth, Israel and their land become, as ever, the central object. The Lord, therefore, takes special cognizance of them, marking what He owns and what He leaves out. The outside multitude are disowned; account is taken only of those who worshipped within—a distinction far indeed from being true of Protestants in contrast with Papists. The reed was the instrument of measurement, not of gold (as for the heavenly Jerusalem), but “like a rod.” There appears to be an allusion to Zech. 2 (and Ezek. 40 with just such differences as there are in verse 4 to Zech. 4 There it is a measuring line (σχοινιον γεωμετρικον), and the entire city is to be measured. Here is but a special part,

measured by that which was not longer than a staff, which the Lord reserved as His portion during the crisis, the rest being profaned by the Gentiles for forty-two months. It is very far from being the due re-establishment of Jerusalem, -but it is the little pledge of all that is to follow. A similar remark applies here as before. Precisely so far as the Reformers slipped into Jewish ideas and order, instead of falling back upon the true and heavenly peculiarities of the Church of God, there may be an appearance of definite fulfillment. Had they walked in separation from the world, the author of *Flora Apoc.* must have lost a large proportion of his apparent identifications.

In the two witnesses, which is the next subject of importance, this comes out very clearly. Their earlier history is supposed to be retrospectively given, along with what remained to be fulfilled. As to their personality, we are agreed: they are not things or books, but persons who testify. But the testimony of Jesus, it is well to note, means not merely for Him, but the spirit of prophecy proper to this book. The gospel is not the subject. Further, the two olive trees and the two candlesticks have nothing to do with the churches (or a elm). That theme is completely closed, as we have seen repeatedly; and we are here avowedly in presence of the proclamation of Christ's title to land and sea. Hence, as it is added, these stand "before the Lord of the earth." In a word, the connection is not with the church-state, which then will have been long past, but with the order predicted in *Zech. 4*, which undoubtedly refers to the millennial provision for the light of God in the midst of Israel.

Doubtless, there are points of distinction; for our chapter belongs in its full meaning, to the interval after the rapture of the saints and before the thousand years. There is one candlestick, all of gold, in *Zechariah*, with its bowl, its seven lamps; fits seven pipes, and an olive-tree on either side; perfect unity and perfect development. Whatever may have been the then historical accomplishment in *Zerubbabel* and *Joshua*, the two anointed ones of the Jewish prophet point, in their fullness, to the kingly and priestly offices of Christ, the grand means of dispensing and maintaining divine light in "the world to come." Here it is only a testimony to these things; and therefore, as the least sufficient testimony according to the law, there were two witnesses. The oil here is associated, not with joy, but with mourning; and the witnesses are clothed, not with the garment of praise, but with the sackcloth of affliction. Avenging power is theirs, like that of *Moses* and *Elijah*. How vain to bend all this to the witnessing Christians, Western or Eastern, earlier or later! Their calling practically was to resist not evil, to love their enemies, to bless those who cursed them, to do good to such as hated them, to pray for their persecutors; and this, as the Lord expressly illustrated it, after the pattern of their heavenly Father, who, instead of shutting heaven that it rain not, contrariwise sends it in indiscriminate mercy on just and unjust.

Of course, on the historical view (which, in a general way, I allow), the days of their prophecy are years, and the-judgments must be taken figuratively. But how, if it be pretended that this is all fulfilled? Had the Paulicians and the Waldenses (supposing them to be true witnesses untainted by heresy) authority to withhold the dew of; grace All their days, or to smite with plagues as often as they would? To curse the earth with a spiritual drought is still more tremendous than if it were in a physical sense, even though their power embraced heaven, earth, the waters, and their enemies. I perceive, however, that an effort is made to escape the difficulty of the devouring fire that issues from them, by referring to the final fiery judgment on the adversaries (*H. A. II. pp. 208, 394*); but what can be lamer than such shifts? Present judicial power, continuous or occasional, against all opposers is the true and full meaning: like *Elijah's* in the midst of an apostate people,

and like Moses' in the midst of a people oppressed and enslaved by the Gentiles. But as their testimony is prophetic and not the gospel, so it is armed with judgment instead of breathing grace. Righteous vengeance guards the claims of the Lord of the earth. Heaven is the source, center, and home of grace. It is in the vaguest conceivable way that a delineation like this can be made to suit proper Christian witnesses; and it is chiefly the mixture of Jewish feeling and conduct, found alas! too often and especially in dark times, which lends a color to such applications. I hardly like to notice the fancied coincidence of the black goatskin of the Vaudois and the sackcloth, or of the motto of the Counts of Lucerna (" lux lucet in tenebris") and the candlestick.

But now comes another obvious and grave objection to the scheme of the Horae Apoc. The natural mean-jug of verse 7 of course is, that when their 1260 days of testimony have expired, the Beast kills the witnesses. But this does not fit in with past facts. Criticism is therefore summoned to substitute an ambiguous word, so as to convey that after their death many of the days may yet remain to run out. Difficulties are pressed, but they are not insuperable. For the witnesses have an exceptional place, and therefore might be miraculously maintained for their allotted period, while saints generally were suffering and slain. And the Beast's 42 months might coincide with the 1260 days of the witnesses consistently with the brief interval of 3.5 days' exposure and their rise and ascent to heaven, the earthquake, &c. For what act against God or His people is attributed to him afterward? I know of none. So that it might still be true that their testimony and his "practicing" close together, while a short space might intervene before the execution of God's judgment on the Beast in the height of his triumph. In other words, the 42 months do not define the epoch of the Beast's destruction, but of his being permitted "to work." Daniel entirely strengthens this conclusion; for we find, in chap. xii., an interval of some length after the 32 years, before full blessing comes.

It is extraordinary that a learned person should cite Gal. 5:16 and Heb. 9:6, as parallel with Rev. 11:7. For it is plain, that from the absence of the article, the first passage goes no farther than fulfilling flesh's lust. That is, it could not mean the termination of the whole career of lust. The anarthrous usage here is, in fact, the Strong and needed assurance that walking in the Spirit is the divine safeguard against fulfilling anything of the sort. In our text, it is a definite testimony, of which the length had been carefully specified; and whether you translate it finished or completed, the full time is, it seems to me, necessarily involved. The passage in Heb. 9, every scholar must know, has no bearing on the case, because the tense implies a continued or habitually repeated action; while the tense in Rev. 10 implies an action complete or concluded. Indeed, it is plain that to the interpreters in general this word has proved an insuperable difficulty. Hence the rendering of Mede, "when they shall be, about finishing," and so Bp. Newton. Equally offensive to mere grammar is that of Daubuz, "whilst they shall perform their testimony;" or the earlier view of Mr. Elliot, "when the witnesses shall have been fulfilling." The truth is that, interpreted with simplicity, according to the regular meaning of the word and in harmony with the context, the witnesses are divinely protected the 1260 days of their testimony. Then, their mission having been completed, and not before, God permits that the Beast should fight, overcome, and slay them. But this, applied strictly on the year-day scale, completely destroys Mr. E.'s interpretation in particular, if not the Protestant school generally, save that some of them refer a part, as being yet unfulfilled, to the future.

Manifestly the previous dislocation of the prophecy leads to the next error, that “the great street of the city,” or “the street of the great city,” (verse 8), refers to Rome and not Jerusalem. Now, I am not disposed to deny that, on the prolonged view, such an application is left room for, especially considering the peculiar way in which the city is here alluded to. But this is the utmost which can be fairly granted, and it not at all excludes the closing fulfillment in the actual city wherein the Lord of the witnesses was crucified. The context seems to me quite decisive that Jerusalem is intended; for nobody doubts that, whether literally or figuratively understood, the holy city of the opening verses (the center of the testimony, though in the face of profaning Gentiles) is not Rome but Jerusalem. It is agreed that the Beast is Roman, but this in no way strengthens the theory that Rome is the city here intended. His Making war upon the witnesses is, on the contrary, much more naturally applicable to a locality not under his own immediate jurisdiction. No doubt Babylon is the symbolic designation of Rome in chap. xvii, where Rome is confessedly the great city, and so, of course, in chaps. xiv. xvi. But Babylon has not been named as yet, and there is no reason why Jerusalem also should not be so styled; especially as the figurative terms, Sodom and Egypt, conjoined, are nowhere else connected with Rome, and the fact which winds up the description (“where also their Lord was crucified”), points to Jerusalem. If it were said ἐκλήθη historically (or κέκληται, the present result of the past,) there might have been more difficulty; for, though Scripture had already likened Jerusalem of old to Sodom, it had not to Egypt. But the reference is to the moral features of Jerusalem, as it is to be in the days of the witnesses, and so καλεῖται is strictly correct. And certainly, if Nineveh had the title as well as the Chaldean Babylon in the O. T., it is hard to see why, in the Apocalypse, Jerusalem might not have it as well as Rome, supposing that the context looks that way. Thus, the question to what city our chapter refers must be judged by the conclusion to which we come, as to all this part of the Revelation, and as to chaps. x. and xi. in particular. The grand point is that the things which come to pass after “the things that are,” do not belong (save in the general moral bearing already and so often acknowledged) to the present order of things, but to the transitional epoch when God is about to bring the First-born into the inhabited earth. Therefore He will then be busied with the provisional government of the world, and hence specially with the Jews, who are the prominent object and direct instrument of His earthly rule. Accordingly, the witnesses, as we have remarked before, are said to stand before the Lord of “the earth,” for that is in question, not His ways with the church.

Hence, whatever may be thought of the coincidence in mystic reckoning between the not very truthful speech at the Fifth Lateran Council, (“Jam nemo reclamavit, nullus obsistit,”) which in the skilful hands of Mr. E. is made to denote the extinction of the witnesses, and Luther's posting up his theses at Wittemberg three and a half years afterward, which denotes their resurrection, I cannot but regard the interpretation as forced and unnatural. The only unbiased way of taking the account is that the 1260 days were fulfilled when the prophets were slain. What more absurd than to imply that, in spite of their death, they are still safe and sound for centuries afterward, and that the sackcloth testimony on earth can co-exist with their ascent to heaven, understand heaven as one may? But once the Protestant scheme is made the exclusive fulfillment, can one be surprised that the marvelous explanations given to the earlier part of the chapter are only surpassed by increasing wonders in the latter portion? Certainly, few councils had less claim to be considered made up of delegates from the peoples, and kindred, and tongues, and nations, than that almost exclusively Italian assembly. Dean Waddington, who did not write for the purpose of illustrating Rev. 11, records that the Bohemian heresy “was again rising into formidable attention” at this very

time. Who can think that the breath of the orator slew them? If they refused to answer the summons to Rome, John Huss had done the same before them, and Luther did so after them. It may have been want of courage; but Prague, Augsburg, and Worms were not the same thing as such a council held in Rome. I need not dwell on the enactment refusing Christian burial to heretics, the Pope's extraordinary donation of—not the golden rose only, but—the sovereignty of half the Eastern world to the King of Portugal, the grant of a plenary papal indulgence, the singing of the Te Deum, or the splendor of the dinners and fetes given on the triumphant close of the Council.

But the deductions from verses 12, 13, must not be passed over. The call to the witnesses is made a summons from the highest authorities to ascend “the heaven of political elevation and dignity,” and was fulfilled first by the pacification of Nuremberg (1532), and yet more by the Peace of Passau twenty years after. The cloud is conceived to imply that these political triumphs were the terminating result of Christ's special intervention, and to identify the cause of the witnesses with the Reformation. The effects of this mighty revolution in the overthrow of the tenth part of the city, and the slaying of seven chiliads, are set forth as the fall of papal dominion in England, and in the seven Dutch United Provinces. And the ascending Protestants gave glory to the God of heaven, as on Mary's death, Elizabeth's ascension, the destruction of the Armada, and the reign of William III. Thus, commercial and maritime and colonial power crowning Protestant England and Holland, it began to appear why the Covenant angel planted his right foot on the sea, his left only on the mainland. Insular, missionary England was to be the principal instrument of asserting Christ's claims to universal dominion and gospel truth against papal usurpation and lies. Could one ask for more palpable evidence of the absurd and mischievous effects of a wrong system? To refute such trifling with the word of God appears to me hardly called for. And what can we say to the delusion that the loud voices in heaven, under the seventh trumpet (ver 15), proceeded from “the religious world of the great Protestant powers?” Or that its general indications coincide with the more prominent characteristics and concomitants of the past French Revolution? (Vol. III., 299-332.) We must impute these extravagancies to the necessity of the case; for the text requires that the last woe should follow quickly after that of the Turks (ver. 14). Hence the desire to make out something in the seventeenth century, besides the great Reformation of the sixteenth, so as to fill up the great gap that follows. It is the more strange, as Mr. F. had already (Vol. ii., p. 276) made the seventh trumpet to include not the events alone, that are preparatory to Christ's reign, but the millennium itself, and even all other revealed events beyond it.

Ver. 19. I think that the opening of the temple in heaven marks a new portion of the book, and that it is therefore connected, not so much with what went before, as with what follows; for it is clear that the verses before (15-18) gave the sounding of the last trumpet, and the announcement of the consequences of God's taking to Him His great power and reigning—not the mere sway of man, but the power of God put forth in an altogether new way. There was a sample of His power, but not in connection with Christ, at the time when He fought the battles of His people and put down the Canaanites. But then it was exercised within failing, guilty Israel, without their Messiah; and consequently that power was often obliged to be put forth against themselves and not against their enemies only, because God can never have alliance with sin. But now, under the last trumpet, the kingdom of the Lord God and of His Christ was come, and this is what the earth looks for, and the Lord Himself too, for He is waiting “till His enemies be made His footstool.” Then the

whole scene here below will be chanced. He will come and execute wrath as terrible as His patience has been divine; and the effect will be that, “when His judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” There will be the presence of the Lord Jesus and the absence of Satan; there will be, not only the execution of wrath on the living, but finally also the judgment of the dead. And these things seem to be brought together under the same trumpet. All is anticipated from the beginning of the kingdom to the end of it—all the main displays of divine glory in the government of both quick and dead. And there, evidently, the subject closes; for the opening of the temple of God in heaven (ver. 19) ushers in another and wholly different vision, which has not directly to do with God in His kingdom, but here, first of all, it is a new theme that comes before us.

## Lectures on Revelation: 12

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UNDER the seventh trumpet the elders anticipated the effects of the throne's being actually established over the earth. But now the temple is again seen, so that we go back here, for we have God's purposes in connection with the Lord Jesus from the very beginning-the man-child who was to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, being clearly, as I think, Christ Himself. It is God reverting to his purpose in Christ, born as the heir of the world-not in relation to the calling of the church, but as the man of might, destined to govern all, and with no feeble hand. It appears to me that this accounts for another remarkable feature of the vision. Christ's death and resurrection are not alluded to, but His birth and His rapture (not His death) are given in a summary manner. We have the woman in pain to be delivered; and the man-child is born; and then we have Him taken away to the throne of God above. Of course this is not given as history. The Lord Jesus had been born and had died long ago: if it had been history, His all-important death would not, could not, have been passed over.

Here it is plain that the Holy Ghost connects the birth of Christ and His rapture to the throne of God in heaven with Israel and the purposes of God about them. The birth of Christ is of special importance to Israel. The genealogy of the Messiah is therefore carefully given in Matt. 1; and in chap. ii. we find all Jerusalem was troubled at His birth. This was the working of the dragon. °Herod was a sort of expression of the dragon's power, who would gladly have devoured the child, as soon as it was born, through that evil king as his instrument. The child was delivered; but in the history, instead of being taken up to the throne of God, He was carried down into Egypt. So that our chapter cannot be regarded as historical, in the early part at least; and even where historical facts are alluded to, they are not arranged in order of fact at all, but simply linked with God's thoughts about Israel. The church, as such, is passed over. It may be involved mystically in the person and destiny of the man-child, but there is no gradual unfolding of the thoughts of God as to His having a heavenly bride for His Son. Nothing is said about a bride for the man-child. We have the mother but not the Lamb's wife here. Israel was the mother of Christ. It was of them, as concerning the flesh that the Christ was born. This is the great point which the Apostle Paul urges on the Jews in Rom. 9, because the Jews thought he made light of their privileges, and was against them, in consequence of the strong way in which he brought out God's mercy to the Gentiles. But it was not so at all. • He demonstrates, in fact, that they overlooked their highest distinction. To them were given the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises. They had the fathers too, and last of all, to them was given a Son, the man-child, whom they knew not -the Christ; for of them, as to the flesh, He came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Far from lessening the just glory of Israel, the Apostle had a much more exalted view of it than themselves.

As in Rom. 9 \_Paul does not go on to speak of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, so it is here. Accordingly, you find these two thoughts connected in Rev. 12 The man-child is brought forth, but leaves the scene where the dragon was opposed to Him, and takes His place upon the throne of God, which none but a divine person was entitled to do. By and by He will sit on His own

throne, but that will be when He governs the earth in a direct and public way; for God will never give up the right and title of the Lord Jesus to the earth as well as to the heavens. He has acquired a title by redemption, besides His essential one as Creator. But then He is going to do much better than to rule all nations with a rod of iron, or even bless His earthly people. His heart is to be shown. He must have a free course and a due object for all His love. Christ wants to have those that deserve nothing but judgment as the sharers of His glory above. What is done by Christ and for Christ, whilst He is upon the throne of God, is not alluded to here. Israel is in question. These few thoughts may be helpful to understand the proper place and bearing of this new vision.

The temple of God, then, is opened in heaven, and there was seen in it the ark of His covenant, the pledge of His faithfulness to His people. For, as we have observed in the last chapter, there was a certain measured remnant that drew near to God in the way of worship, and to these witnesses were given a testimony to the Lord's rights over the earth, as finally there was the announcement of the kingdom. Now, we have another train of idea. There was the throne, and a rainbow round about it in Rev. 4. Here there is the temple, and the ark of God's covenant seen in it. This may prepare the way for the difference between the two subjects. There it was God's power over creation. Providential judgments were about to fall upon the earth, and the rainbow was to show, before a judgment was experienced, that even then God would remember mercy. The rainbow round the throne in chap. 4, and round the head of the mighty angel in chap. 10 before the sounding of this last trumpet, guaranteed that God was working, not for the destruction but for the deliverance of the earth. But now we come to a further point; for blessed as the throne is, it does not bring us into such depths of God's character, as do the associations of the temple and the ark. Displays of divine power are not so much what draw out our hearts in worship, as when we draw near to the dwelling-place and home of God Himself; for, though there is no one thing we have so truly to be ashamed of as our poor and inadequate answer to His holiness, yet it is just there God has met us in His grace.

Now, He is going to show us not merely creation and mankind smitten, but Satan's connection with the final apostasy of this age. There had been a figurative allusion to his influence in chap. ix. 2, where smoke issues out of the abyss or bottomless pit; then, in chap. xi. 7, the beast ascends out of that pit; but here the evil source is thoroughly disclosed. And is it not precious to find that, before God discovers to us the tide of full evil, and shows us not merely the development and the instruments among men, but the great hidden spring of it all, and the person of him who puts himself at its head, and who is yet to work out this tremendous conspiracy against God—to find that, before all this, the temple of God in heaven was opened, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His covenant? For the heart under such circumstances wants not the manifestation of God's power merely, but to know that His holiness is secured, and that, in virtue of it, His people stand. Accordingly we find that when the temple is opened above, it is not a rainbow that is seen, but God's connection with His people is set forth in the ark which now appears; for the ark was always nearest to God, and what faith therefore most slave to. Israel showed themselves to be dead to all right and godly feeling, when they were willing to expose it even in the hope of deliverance from the Philistines. The dying grief of Eli, and the airing transports of David, alike show what the ark was in the eyes of the truehearted. Here it is the ark of God's covenant in heaven; not merely that of Israel which might be taken away. Even the wise king did not adequately value the ark of old. And this shows the superiority of David; for faith is always, if I may

so say, wiser than wisdom. If we had the largest human intelligence, and even the highest natural wisdom that God can confer, it never rises up to the height of simple faith. Solomon appears before the the great altar. It was a magnificent thing. He was an august king, and brought suited offerings. But David showed his faith in this, that it was not the altar merely which he prized, but the ark most of all. The ark was a hidden thing; not even the high priest could see it, save wrapped in clouds of incense. One had to walk by faith, and not by sight in order to appreciate the ark of God. Therefore David could not rest until the ark had its settled place in Israel; and he never had deeper joy than when the ark came back to Jerusalem. It is true that the ark brought judgment upon all who despised it, and even David's heart was afraid for a time, and the ark rested in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. But David regained the spring of confidence in God, which generally so marked his career; for we find him afterward rejoicing when the ark was welcomed back more than ever he did in all his victories put together.

Here, it is not the ark of man's covenant at all, but of God's covenant; the temple of God in heaven is opened, not on earth yet (i.e. it is only the purpose of God about it); and, associated with this, the ark of His covenant is seen, the sure pledge of mercy, and sign of His faithfulness to His people. But still the circumstances were such as called for judgment; and accordingly "there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail," all which were the tokens of God's judgment. The day of peace and glory was yet to come. Thus you get these two things united: first, the pledges of God's interest in, and triumph for, His people; and then the signs of His judgment upon the evil that must be set aside before the time of full blessing.

"And there appeared a great sign in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." (Ver. 1.) I think it probable there may be an allusion here to the well-known dream that Joseph had of the sun, moon, and stars, explained by himself as alluding to his parents and brethren. Here the symbols are more general, and naturally refer—the sun to supreme glory, the moon to that which is derived, and the stars to inferior or subordinate authority. All this is seen in connection with Israel; for God intends, as far as this world is concerned, all power and glory to circle round, Israel. As for the church, she will have all in perfection with Christ, and in Christ; but as far as the earth is concerned, Israel will be the center. The woman is the symbol of God's purpose as bound up with Israel.

In the next verse, we have another thing; it is the man by the woman. And so we find that "being with child, she crieth, travailing in birth, and pained to bring forth," and a little after we read (ver. 5) that "she brought forth a man-child who is to rule all the nations," &c. Thus, we see it was not the woman who was of such importance for her own sake, though clothed with all these symbols of glorious power; but the reason is, because from her comes the man-child. And we shall find this thought is not at all foreign to scripture. Take, for instance, the Psalms, where the same thing is alluded to in a mystical way. Thus in Psa. 87 the word is that the Lord is exalted; His foundation is in the holy mountains. He is challenging the world to compare their best with what He can produce. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion," &c. He chose Zion out of all the cities of Israel, because God's sovereign choice must be carried out, even among His people. "I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me." Rahab was the figurative name for Egypt, and Egypt and Babylon were the most famous nations in the Psalmist's time. Philistia, with Tere and Ethiopia, were, no doubt, powers of inferior order, but extremely celebrated for their trade, commerce, skill, &c. Of them it shall be said, "This man was born there." And of Zion, "This and

that man was born in her, and the Highest Himself shall establish her. The Lord shall count," &c. I believe there is a dim allusion to the birth of the Christ, where God and His people glory, so to speak, (whatever other man may have been,) that this man was born there. The reference is, I think, to the Lord Jesus chiefly, if not alone. Let others boast of their great men, but "the Lord shall count when he writeth up the people, that THIS man was born there." When He writeth up the people, of whom does He think? Why, of Christ; of the One that was born of the woman, born of Israel, and now caught up to heaven. When we are on the look-out for Christ, passages will be found to bear upon Him, more or less distinctly, all through scripture; for He who wrote the Scriptures had Christ ever in view. It is not the death of Christ we hear in this Psalm., because this would have brought the sin of the Jews prominently before them. But it is His birth, which was or should have been unmingled joy. And, therefore, when Jesus was born, the heavenly hosts broke forth in praises, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will in men." There was no trouble among them, whatever might be the feelings of Herod and all Jerusalem. Their great joy was what Christ would be for God and men, and especially for the city of David: in other words, just the suited feelings of those heavenly ones, that were not occupied with themselves, permitted to see the counsels of God as to His people.

There is another scripture or two I would briefly refer to, where we may get help as to the meaning of this woman and her child, not merely as to the fact of the birth, but in its connection with prophecy. Mic. 5 furnishes a passage that both acquires and gives light when compared with Rev. 12 "Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops; he hath laid siege against us; they shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek." The last words set forth, what we have not in the Revelation, the rejection of Christ and the dishonor done to Him by His own people. Then the Holy Ghost interrupts the course of the chapter by a parenthesis, for such is the whole of verse 1 "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting." It is Christ, after the flesh, who is God over all, blessed forever. There you have the two points of the glory of Christ: His glory as a man, as Messiah; and withal, the One whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Then having shown who this was, (the man to be smitten but a divine person, which had made the sin of smiting Him unpardonable, -if it had not been for infinite mercy,) He takes up again what we had in the first verse. "They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek... Therefore will He give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth; then the remnant of His brethren shall return unto the children of Israel." Mark the term of their being given up by God— "until the time that she which travaileth," &c. This shows that we are not to take the allusion to the birth of the man-child as a mere literal reference to Christ's birth into the world, but rather in conjunction with the accomplishment of the purposes of God respecting Israel. Christ was horn (Mic. 5:2): then comes His rejection, and, as it were measuring His rejection on earth and His exaltation in heaven, the calling of the church. But the prophecy here passes by all that has to do with the church and takes up Christ's birth figuratively, connecting it with the unfolding of the divine purposes, which is itself symbolized by a birth. The Judge of Israel is smitten with a rod upon the cheek, and therefore Israel is given up until the time when, to use the language of Jeremiah, Jacob's trouble is come, but he shall be saved out of it. Here it is put figuratively, as Zion travailing till the birth of this great purpose of God touching Israel. "Then the remnant of His brethren shall return unto the children of Israel." All the time the church is being called, the remnant of the Jews (" those who should be

saved”) are taken out of Israel, cease to look for Jewish hopes as their portion, and are absorbed into the church. But when God's earthly purpose begins to take effect in the latter day, the remnant of that time will form part of Israel and will resume their ancient Jewish place. The natural branches shall be grafted into their own olive-tree.

Another scripture speaks of Zion's bringing forth; but it is of a very different kind. In the last chapter of Isaiah the allusion is to a birth, but there it is said to be in one day. “A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense to his enemies. Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man-child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. Shall I bring to the birth and not cause to bring forth, saith the Lord, shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb, saith thy God? Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her,” etc. It is evidently not the time spoken of in Rev. 12 So that it is plain that there are three chief critical points connected with Israel's history. First, there is the birth of the Messiah; secondly, the passage in Micah, the ripening and effect of God's counsels regarding Israel, which is to be connected with Rev. 12 where God brings out His purpose concerning Israel, before the beast and antichrist are shown fully; and, thirdly, this passage in Isa. 66 which is a sort of contrast with the others, the circumstances mentioned being the express reverse of those that accompany natural birth and of the figure used in our chapter. The three passages may be put together thus:-first, Mic. 5 shows us the birth of Christ and Israel given up till the result of God's counsels as to them shall appear by and by; next, Rev. 12 unfolds the time of sorrow just before the last tribulation, when Satan, losing his old seats, attempts new plans in order to frustrate God's design to bless and magnify Israel; and then, lastly, Isa. 66 is the time when all sorrow is past, and when before Zion travailed, she brought forth-Israel's full and sudden blessing after the Lord has appeared. All previous sorrow flees away by reason of the joy that fills the city of Zion, or is only remembered to enhance it.

But now, going back to our chapter, we find Mat, besides the woman and the man-child, there is another sign; a great antagonist of God appears-not the beast, but a much more serious power—“a great dragon.” And there is this remarkable circumstance—the same description which is applied to the beast is used of the dragon. How comes this? That Satan is the great red dragon there can be no doubt: this very chapter tells us so in verse 9; and yet he is described with the various characteristics that we find in the Roman empire (chap. xiii. 1), “having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns.” I believe the reason is, that Satan is viewed in connection with earthly power. Just as the woman was seen invested with symbols of power from above which God has given her, so here Satan is clothed with the fullness of earthly authority. He has seven heads, the symbol of deliberative power, that which rules and guides, and ten horns, the symbol of kings or kingly dignities. He is the prince of the world, who surrounds himself with all power connected with the earth. The Roman empire is the grand representative of the power of Satan.

But when we look at that empire in chap. 13., we see this difference. The crowns were upon the heads of the dragon, but upon the horns of the beast. That is, in the Roman empire we have the exercise of the power represented as a matter of fact, but in Satan's case merely as a matter of principle or the root of the thing. Satan is the great moving spring, though unseen. It is a question

of source and character, not of history.

First, then, we have had the thought and plan of God in respect to Israel and Christ. And it is plain that it is the destiny of the man-child, not as yet the exercise of His dominion over all the nations; for if it were the latter, the woman would not have to flee to the wilderness, nor would the dragon be permitted to make war on her and the rest of her seed. To apply this historically is to entirely miss the teaching of God, who is here showing out His purpose and no more as yet. Then the dragon appears, the one that God looks at as the ruler of this world, the prince of the power of the air, clothed with the same symbols of earthly power as we find later on in the Roman empire, save that in this last the crowns are upon the horns, or those actually swaying the power. (Rev. 13) "And his tail draweth the third of the stars of heaven." (Ver. 4.) This seems to be his malignant power in the way of false teaching and prophesying. In Isa. 9 we are told that "the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail." The tail of the dragon does not set forth his earthly power, but his influence, through false teaching, in misleading souls, and specially those that were in the place of rule and authority— "the stars of heaven." "And the dragon stood before the woman that was about to bring forth, that when she brought forth he might devour her child." How wonderfully all scripture hangs together! For if you begin with the very first portion of scripture that speaks of the serpent, the woman and that subtle foe are seen face to face; and more than this, God appears on the scene where Satan had apparently gained a great triumph, and then it is that He gives the blessed revelation that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." Here, at the close of scripture, the same parties reappear, but with marked differences. In the garden of Eden it was the serpent's success, but here the certain triumph of God; there it was the devil's craft, but here it is God's power, long displayed in patience, but all-glorious in the end. God permits the dragon to stand before the woman, ready to devour her child as soon as it was born. The dragon shows out his spite and wickedness to the last degree and in the next chapter his plans. Meanwhile, God turns even the suffering into more positive blessing for the faithful. The very certainty that He could crush the dragon gives Him patience to wait, and He wants His people to be like Himself.

I would just observe that we must not take the chapter as if it were all consecutive. Verse 7 begins a new division. And a proof that all does not follow in immediate order is this: the casting out of the dragon from heaven unto the earth precedes the woman's flight into the wilderness, and is, in point of fact, the reason of it (see ver. 13), though only stated afterward. The truth is, that the first six verses give us the complete picture. In the divine purpose, there is the woman clothed with the heavenly orbs, setting forth the power which God alone can confer. But there is another side of the picture. When the manchild is brought forth, the mother is seen in weakness, and is obliged to fly for her life into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared of God. God thinks so much of the time she spends there, that He does not call it "a time, times, and a half," but counts up, so to speak, every day she is there, "that they should feed her there a thousand, two hundred, and three-score days." Then comes a new scene in verse 7. It is no longer what takes place on earth, but in heaven, as it is to many a new thing, and startling. A war is intimated on high. How is that? A war in heaven/ It is an easy thing to imagine the enemy of souls upon the earth, and a war with him there. But the war begins elsewhere. "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven."

If the Bible is implicitly believed, its intimation is distinct that Satan has power to draw near, and to accuse the saints before God. People may be staggered, and say, it cannot be; but it is better to be guided by the word of God than by the notions of men. The book of Job shows it; 1 Kings 22 also, and perhaps Zech. 3 You may say that these are visions; but we take the epistle to the Ephesians, and there we are told by the Apostle Paul that our conflict is not like that of Israel, who fought with the Canaanites. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world (or the world-rulers of this darkness), against spiritual [powers] of wickedness in heavenly places." Some use this verse in order to justify Christian persons resisting the powers of this world, in plain contradiction of Rom. 13 and other passages. But the principalities and powers in high places, in Eph. 6:12, do not mean men at all. They are evil spirits, in contrast with men. The conflict of Israel was with living men on earth, while that of Christians is with wicked spirits in heavenly places. Of course, Satan cannot draw near into the immediate presence of God, into that light wherein God dwells, which none can approach unto; but he can draw near enough to accuse God's people before God Himself. The heavenly places here mean the heavens in general, and not merely what is called the third or highest heaven. As far as the lower heavens extend, Satan has access; there can be no doubt that he is prince of the power of the air.

Israel had to fight in order to acquire possession of their inheritance. The land was given to them in title, and before Moses was taken away from this life, the Lord Himself took him to the mountain-top, and showed him all the land of Gilead unto Dan, calling the districts by the names of the tribes of Israel, as if they had been already there. But in order to enjoy their possessions, they had to fight for them; and so have we now. There is no such thing as enjoying the heavenly portion of the church without conflict with the enemy, and that is the reason why so many do not enjoy it. If the Christian does not enter into his full heavenly portion here below, it is because he is occupied either with himself or with the world, or some other idol of the enemy, and then he cannot enjoy it. The great object of Satan is to hinder our enjoying, tasting, and living on our heavenly blessings in Christ; and in the same proportion that the world or the flesh is allowed, and so the door is left open to Satan to darken our eyes, we cannot see the goodly land. There must be victory over Satan before we can enter in. The adversary has not merely power through men's lusts below, but specially in connection with the heavenly places-power of hindering Christians from appreciating their portion there. But there is an end coming to that, though not without a struggle. God will put a stop to all Satan's means of access to heaven.

There is a text, often found obscure, that I cannot but connect with this. In Heb. 9 where the various applications of the death of Christ are spoken of, there is the following allusion to the heavenly places: "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." One reason, I suppose, is because Satan was allowed so long to have access there, as an accuser. God would long since have shown His own sense of the defilement produced there by the foe, if it were not for the death of Christ. But as He bears with the rebellion of the world, so does He also with another rebellion, the audacity of Satan, who ventures to intrude himself even into His own presence, to carry the accusations of His people before Him. But let us not forget that if there be one who loves to accuse, there is another to intercede, the Advocate, who never slumbers nor sleeps. There may be the devil against the saints, but there is Christ for them, who ever lives to

make intercession. By and by God will not allow Satan any longer to taint the air of heaven. He is forcibly cast down thence, and has only power to deal with mankind in an earthly way. "Woe to the earth and to the sea! for the devil is come down to you," (ver. 12) &c.-that is, to those nations who are in a settled or in an unsettled condition. Satan is henceforth entirely prevented from usurping his higher place, as prince of the power of the air. The heavens will then be cleared of him and his angels, never to regain their place above. He may come out on the earth again for a little season, after he has been bound, but he will never more appear in heaven as the accuser of the brethren before God. The momentous difference in the ways of God with His people is very marked here. All through the present time the accuser has a place in heaven, but at the predicted epoch he is cast out, and his place is not found any more there. Now, you will observe that this naturally, not to say necessarily, supposes the removal of the church to heaven before the change takes place; and for this reason, that if we suppose the church to be still on earth, when the devil and his angels are cast out of heaven, it would no longer be true of us that we wrestle with wicked spirits in heavenly places. Such will not be the condition of the saints, either during the millennium or in the great tribulation that precedes it.

Three years and a half roll on their course, after Satan is cast down to the earth, during which the woman and her seed, i.e. Israel, are the objects of his persecution. "And the great dragon was cast [out,] the old serpent that is called the devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast unto the earth, and his angels were cast with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast [out] that accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life unto death." (Ver. 9-11.) "The blood of the Lamb," — that was what kept their conscience good, and gave them confidence before God. Their conscience was purged by the blood of Christ, and, besides that, they had their testimony for God. He gave them the blood of the Lamb as well as the word of their testimony and they overcame by both. The one strengthened them before God, and the other before men. "Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them." There, you see, are the dwellers in heaven, and they are to rejoice because Satan is cast down from heaven. The Church is there at the time of which this speaks; the saints are already taken away from the earth. "And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman who brought forth the man-child. And to the woman were given two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent (Ver. 13, 14).

Now, it is plain that this brings us back to verse 6. The important link given us in ver. 7-13 was needed, and after that we have consecutive order. We are brought down to the fact of the dragon's persecuting the woman and her child, and the woman's flight into the desert; and then the Spirit of God goes back to show us the deeper reasons, and higher source of all. Satan will have to leave his place in heaven, and now in a rage, "knowing that he has but a short time," he comes down to the earth to do his worst. He hates the woman, well knowing her seed is to crush him; so that all his long-cherished enmity is concentrated upon the woman and her seed. This is what leads the woman to flee into the wilderness. The enmity of Satan, not merely because she has brought forth a child destined to rule all nations with a rod of iron, but because Satan is cast down to earth. Satan was once innocent, but he departed from the place of a creature, admiring himself, and

setting himself up against God. Now when Satan is cast down from heaven, he shows out all his evil feeling against God, by persecuting the woman and her seed.

“To the woman were given two wings of the great eagle,” &c. Observe the difference here (analogous to Rev. 11), “where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time.” In a former verse there is a making the time, as it were, as long as possible, because, as I conceive, God's care for her was then the grand point. She had a place prepared for her of God, and when His care and preparation are in question, He lengthens out the time as much as possible; but where it is a question of the devil's power, He foreshortens it. It is the same period, I believe, only put in a different way.

The serpent, so spoken of because of his subtle enmity, now adopts a new device. He “cast out of his mouth water as a flood, after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman,” &c. (Ver. 15, 16.) This sets forth some providential means used of God to deliver His earthly people and people and purpose from the instruments of the enemy, then put into a state of great commotion. These last are represented by the waters issuing as a river from the dragon's mouth (people that are under an immediate influence of the devil); while, evidently, the earth helping the woman means the more settled parts of the world, used providentially to resist the efforts of Satan to overwhelm the Jews. “The earth” in this book may have morally a guilty character; but God can create a diversion where He sees fit, and so bring to naught that which is calculated to overwhelm His people.

“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the remnant of her seed, that keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus.” (Ver. 17.) It might be a difficulty to some that a Jewish remnant should have the testimony of Jesus. But if you have followed me in former chapters, it will not be insuperable; because “the testimony of Jesus,” in the book of Revelation, is always of Jesus coming back again as the Heir of the world, and not of His relations in full heavenly grace that we know now. The Jewish remnant will not enjoy the same communion with the Lord Jesus that the church actually possesses; but they will stand in faith, and they will have the testimony which Jesus is rendering in the Apocalypse. In chap. i. we read, “The revelation of Jesus. Christ which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass,” &c. It is, we have often seen, a certain revelation which God gave to Jesus, connected with events that were shortly to come to pass. This, in the next verse, is called “the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.” So in Rev. 19:10, “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy,” which shows clearly that it is a prophetic knowledge of Jesus. Thus the testimony rendered in this book, though equally divine, differs from the blessed way in which God unfolds Christ now to the church which is His body. The remnant will have such a knowledge as the saints in the Old Testament times possessed—greater probably in amount, but similar, it seems to me, in kind. They will be waiting for Jesus to come. They will say, with penitent hearts, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah.” They will plead, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood?” I do not deny that they may have the New Testament before their eyes; but there will be no power to apply the New Testament facts to their own souls, as far, at least, as present peace and communion are concerned. What a proof that not merely the word is required, but the Holy Ghost to open it out, for the rest and enjoyment of the soul!

Some of us, even as Christians, have had no light as to certain truths, until, in the grace of God, He was pleased to remove the film from our eyes. And God does this ordinarily by specific means; for it is not His way to enable persons to take up the Bible and understand it, independently of His provision for the perfecting of the saints. God teaches His children, but in general it is through those He has given for the good of the church, and, though never tied down to that order, He does not set aside the wise and gracious arrangement that He has formed and will perpetuate as long as the church endures. Nourishment is ministered by joints and bands, and thus all the body, knit together, increases with the increase of God. What would enable us to do without one another is a thing that God never gives or sanctions. Supposing a person were cast upon a desert island, God would bless him in his solitary reading of the word with prayer; but where there are other means and opportunities, such as assembling ourselves together for instruction, for reading the Scriptures, for public preaching, exhortation, &c., to neglect or despise them is the will of man and not the guidance of the Spirit of God.

These saints, like those of old, will fear Jehovah, and obey the voice of His servant, but without must walk in darkness, and have no light, till the Lord returns in glory. Our place is identified with that of Christ Himself, risen and glorified. Compare Isa. 1:8, 9, with Rom. 8:33, 34, for the latter, and Isa. 1:10, 11, for the former. Christians may not always act according to the light, but they walk in the light, as He is in the light. "He that followeth me," says our Lord, "shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." The remnant of that day will trust in the name of Jehovah, and stay upon their God; but it will be after another sort. Thomas in John 20, as compared with the other disciples, may illustrate this.

And now let us briefly notice the historical theory, as stated by one of the latest and ablest of its advocates. The woman is, of course, the Christian church, which is actually said to be not merely united as one, but morally bright and beautiful in the days of Constantine ascendant, for the first time, in the political heaven; with the sunshine of the highest (Constantine) of the three imperial dignities, and the light of the second (Licinius); and with the chief bishops as a starry coronal, the heads, now imperially recognized, of the δωδεκαφυλον of the Christian Israel (Horae Apoc. 3. pp. 17-18). Three pages after, the civil authorities are viewed as the moon, perhaps because of Licinius' apostasy and subsequent death. And the great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns is the old Roman paganism, concentrated for the time in Maximin's prohibiting the Christian assemblies, and even killing their bishops in his third of the empire. A gain, Constantine reappears as the man-child,—a baptized (?) emperor, the son of Christ's faithful church, elevated over the whole empire to an avowedly Christian throne, that might be called the throne of God like Solomon's. And the ruling with iron rod means the discountenance of pagans increasing almost to oppression, till at length, under Theodosius, all toleration ended, and their worship was interdicted under the severest penalties. But Mr. E., apparently not quite satisfied with this exposition, offers us the alternative of Mr. Biley, who thinks that the question here was one of fundamental orthodoxy, rather than of political eminence, and that the birth and exaltation of the manchild refer to the solemn public profession of Christ's divinity, and its dogmatic establishment in the general Council of Nice.

Where is one to begin, where end, in unraveling this tangled web! Almost the only thing consistent is the melancholy result (God forbid that I should say intention) of degrading the living word of God. If something like the real point of the chapter is glanced at, it is to discard it summarily. Thus,

it was too plain to be quite overlooked, that Christ is destined to rule all nations with a rod of iron (Psalm and that this is made part of the promises to the Christians who overcome. (Rev. 2) But all such reference Mr. E. considers excluded by the context. For, argues he, the woman is shown immediately after to be persecuted by the dragon, and then to spend 1260 days in the wilderness. But how does this set aside the other -the figure of Christ, take it personally or mystically, as the destined governor of all the nations? On this view, what can be clearer? The woman is Israel, first seen in heaven in the glorious purpose of God, and hence arrayed with that supreme power which is to rule the day, with the moon—which, from the context, may here be a symbol of legal ordinances—under her feet, and with the perfection of administrative authority as her crown of glory. It is not a question of historical fact but of divine counsels. Accordingly, in spite of such a view on God's part, the woman is seen the object of Satan's enmity in the Roman empire, who, foiled in his wishes against the raptured Man of might, directs his efforts against the woman, or Israel, fled into the wilderness, desolate but preserved of God for her destined time of sorrow. I do not deny here, more than elsewhere, a vague analogy to the imperial overthrow of the power of the enemy in idolatry. All I insist on is, that the past accomplishment in no wise meets all the features of the case, and that the system which sees nothing else really makes God Himself the author of that judaizing of the church, which, kept in check by apostolic power, soon became doctrinally rampant in the writings of the early fathers, and from the time of Constantine was the established mold in which the Christian profession was cast. Hence, historically, the date does not at all answer. Mr. E. seems to be shy of defining the 1260 years of the woman's place in the wilderness. He considers the time soon after Constantine, when the true orthodox church became insulated, invisible in respect of its public worship, and more and more straitened for spiritual sustenance: the latter a most unusual effect of persecution; the former an unaccountable result, if the eldest son of the true church had the chief power in the empire, and the old paganism of Rome showed itself—not in a thousand years and more of persecution, but—in the mere transient efforts of Maximin and Licinius first, and of Julian somewhat later.

And if heathenism and Arianism are strangely put together to make out the war of the dragon and his angels in heaven, what can serious Christians think of the notion that Eusebius' extravagant flattery of Constantine, and the unwarranted joy and expectations of the dominant party of that day, are the exact echo of the prefigurative voice heard saying, "Now hath come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ?" Certainly I do not wonder that the eye which can see in Zech. 3, compared with Ezra 4, a reference to the accusation of the Jews before the Persian king's court by their Samaritan foes, should read the fulfillment of "Rejoice, heavens, and ye that dwell in them," in the imperial edict which proclaimed liberty to those who had been enslaved or condemned to the mines. (Horae Apoc. 3. pp. 29-32.) Of similar character is the criticism, borrowed from Daubuz, that the use of the uncommon plural form heavens, instead of heaven, indicates the then union of elevation in heart to the spiritual heaven, and elevation in dignity to the heaven of worldly rank.

Then, again, when we turn from the parenthetic heavenly war, and its consequences (verses 7-12) to the dragon's doings on earth, we are told that the two wings of the great eagle were fulfilled in Theodosius the Great, whose lot it was to unite the Eastern and Western divisions of the empire under his own sway, and use all his power as a protector and nursing father to the orthodox church. Under those wings Augustine's ministry is said not only to have furnished present food, but

nourishment for its long sojourn in the wilderness. How the dragon, or old Roman pagan power, should now have the seven heads and ten horns, from Constantine to Theodosius, does not appear. It is, to the historicalist, an obviously insuperable difficulty, as to which I see not a word of explanation, even in the most voluminous commentary that defends the view. And supposing e.g. that Theodosius could be the sun, the male child, and the great eagle's wings all at once, it is hard to connect the dragon with the governing power of the Roman empire in that day. Does "the pagan remnant" answer to the persecuting dragon, as our chapter describes him? I do not wonder also that it is found convenient to combine all possible ideas of the flood from the serpent's mouth, and to make that a mixture of foreign invaders and heresies, of physical force and doctrinal error, employed to overwhelm the true church, so as to pass off a hazy application to the hordes of Goths, Vandals, &c., who inundated the empire after the death of Theodosius. But "the earth helped the woman," i.e. according to Mr. E., the Roman population, superstitious and earthly as they are confessed to have been, did service to Christ's church; and, in their bloody wars, the barbarians were so thinned, that their incorporation with the conquered followed, and their religion passed through Arianism into orthodoxy. The flood was thus swallowed up! If some very few stood forth as witnesses, like Vigilantius, &c., against such the dragon proceeded to plot, and so procure their destruction. To state the scheme is, in my judgment, a sufficient refutation.

On the other hand, the fulfillment in the crisis is sufficiently intelligible, whatever measure of partial resemblance there may have been in past events. The seventh trumpet has brought us down in a general way to the very end. From Rev. 11:19 we begin an entirely new subject, of which that verse is as it were the preface. The ark of His covenant is seen in His temple above: it is not yet the actual bringing of the house of Israel and the house of Judah under the efficacy of the new covenant, but it is its pledge. The sources of all, whether on God's part or the enemy's, are disclosed; and hence, as there confessedly is retrogression, so I think there is nothing harsh in the supposition that the birth and rapture to heaven of Israel's Messiah may be shown, the special object of Satan's hatred, and the occasion of his intensest and ever-increasing hatred to the Jews and to God's, counsels about them. I can also understand that the rapture of the man-child may include that of the church—like a binary star, the two-foldness of which appears on adequate inspection. It is thus in the Old Testament that we find the church involved, so to speak, in Christ. The first great act of our Lord's kingdom will be, I believe, the dejection of Satan and the wicked spirits, from the heavenly places (cf. Eph. 5:12, and Rev. 12:7-12). On earth the question of Israel, God's chosen people, is raised at once; and whether as dragon or serpent, all his resources are put in requisition against God's purpose in that people (yet in abeyance), and against the godly remnant who have the testimony (prophetically, I conceive) of Jesus, as the man of God's right hand, the Son of man whom He made strong for Himself. The development of his plans we shall find in the chapter which follows.

## Lectures on Revelation 13:1-10

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We have seen that chapter 12. goes back as well as forward and connects the purpose of God which is to be brought out in the latter day with the Messiah and even with His birth. Thus, while the Lord Jesus Christ is, to my mind, clearly referred to as the manchild, yet it is not His birth merely or historically, but His birth as it is linked with this future plan of God, which the book reveals here. The moment Christ is thus referred to, (that is, Christ evidently viewed as the Head, not of the Church, but of Israel, ruling "all nations with a rod of iron," and taking the government of the world into His own hands,) Satan appears in personal opposition. It is no other than might be looked for—for God Himself had said in the garden of Eden, that He would put enmity between the serpent and the woman, between his seed and her Seed. This was revealed at the beginning, and here we have it fulfilled at the very close. Without telling us the least about His humiliation, the man-child was caught up to God and to His throne. This it is clear that it is not a bare statement of the Lord's life, but such facts are referred to—the two great cardinal ones of His birth and of His rapture to the presence and throne of God—in order to furnish connecting links with what God has to do by-and-by with Israel. All the intermediate workings of God in the Church are left entirely out, except as we may suppose the Church to be involved in the destiny of the man-child, who is now hid with God, but is yet to reign. Just as what is said about Christ in the Old Testament is applied to the Church or the Christian in the New Testament; but still, most true and blessed as that is, it is an indirect use. Here, then, we have the Messiah in relation to the future purpose of God as regards Israel.

Then follows the vision of a war in heaven. Not the Lord Jesus Christ, but angelic power is seen used of God to put down the rebel angels, Satan and his host. And, from that moment Satan loses his power above (that is to say, the most important part of it, the most serious in itself, the most dishonoring to God, the most dangerous to the people of God)—his power in heavenly places, which is referred to in Eph. 6. and other passages. Accordingly, when Satan loses that place, there is joy in heaven, and a voice proclaims that "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ." But yet, as far as the earth was concerned, the kingdom was not actually come: only Satan had lost his place in heaven. So we find, a little answering to this, that our Lord alludes to Satan's fall from heaven in the gospel; and I notice it because some have there supposed that Satan had been expelled from the heavens long ago. It is in Luke 10, when the disciples return to the Lord, full of joy because the devils even were subject to them. The Lord answers that He "beheld Satan, as lightning, fall from heaven." Now a person might set the words in the evangelist against the fall of Satan that is described in the Apocalypse as still future. But, evidently, this would be a misuse of Scripture. We may always rest assured that the Bible agrees with itself. It is ignorance and unbelief to set one part of God's word against another. To an unbiased mind, I think, it is certain that the fall of Satan in the prophecy is described as a prospective event, which is to take place three years and a half (however that may be taken) before the destruction of the beast and the binding of Satan himself. Consequently it is a fall that, in the Apostle John's time at least, was yet future. The immediate effect was to be a

dreadful persecution against the woman and her seed. Again, I have endeavored to set forth a variety of considerations from which it is clear to me that before this event the church must have been taken to heaven. Such, the reader will remember, has been the uniform deduction I have drawn all through our former chapters 4-6 so that the fall of Satan, intimated here, must be an event subsequent to the removal of the glorified saints to heaven. What then does the Lord Jesus Christ mean when He says, "I beheld Satan, as lightning, fall from heaven?" When He sees and hears the effects of the disciples' service in His name, then the vision of Satan's catastrophe passes before His eyes, and the full consequences of His power are hailed in the then earnest of it. He looks on to the final crisis and the downfall of the Evil One, when the disciples announced so notable a sample of "the powers of the world to come." It was the first great blow struck by men at Satan's power; and therefore He anticipates the end from the beginning, and, so to speak, in a sort of musing, contemplative vision, He beheld the adversary fallen from the highest scene of his usurpation.

Nor is this an uncommon thing in Scripture. In another gospel, when the Greeks come up to the feast, desiring to see Jesus, what does He say? "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified." He was going to the cross and to death; yet He declares that the hour was come that He should be glorified. How was this? If you take it in a mere literal way, it seems to me that the force of the passage is lost. Jesus sees in the Greeks that were before Him a sample of the ingathering of the Gentiles; and the Lord perfectly well knew that the only thing that would draw the Gentiles must be His own cross and His glory in heaven. So that He looks through all the intervening scene that was before Him, for He had to accomplish redemption and to ascend on high. But from this little sample, He connects all with His glorification, and speaks of it as of a present fact.

Again, when Judas goes out and the Lord Jesus Christ repeats similar words, it is, I presume, on the same principle. (John 13:31.)

Is not Rev. 5:13 analogous? A remarkable movement was seen in the vision affecting the universe, when the sealed book was taken in hand by the Lamb. It is not merely that we had the living creatures prostrate, and the elders taking up the new song, and the myriads of angels with their loud voice of praise; but there is a chorus in which the whole creation joined. "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are on the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing and honor and glory and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." It was like striking a key-note that would never cease to vibrate, till the remotest bounds of creation would be filled with the glory of God and the Lamb. But the time of full blessing was here anticipated; it was, in fact, the Lamb's receiving the book of the inheritance which called forth these overflowings of worship and joy. After this followed the opening of the seals, which was but the prelude of the latter-day judgments; and these would go on increasing in severity till Christ Himself comes executing wrath. (Rev. 19) Not till then would the glory appear, and these anticipations be realized. (Chaps. 21-22.) From the first event, however, that was a link in the chain, the end is welcomed. This is the mind of Christ.

And so it is in Luke 10, the Lord does not there refer to Satan's fall as a fact actually accomplished then; but He looks on, through what was true at that time, to his future and more complete humiliation, which we see here. And even this fall of Satan is by no means the last exertion of the power of God against the enemy. For until then Satan had scarcely been touched, save to faith. It

is true that in the cross of Christ he had been judged in principle (John 12:31); but, as a literal fact, he was not yet shaken from his throne of the world. Doubtless, in the cross, the great work of God in virtue of which he is to be cast out from heaven was accomplished, so that it only remains a question of time and of the will of God. And first of all, he loses the heavenly part of the power which he has usurped. Then he comes down to the earth in a rage, knowing that he has but a short time. This brings us to chap. 13; for there we get the detail of the doings of Satan here below, i.e., upon the sea and the earth (the sea, as we have before seen, symbolizing what was not under regular government, and the earth that part of the world which enjoys a state of order). The two together make up the world as a whole, or a given sphere of it, under whatever condition.

The prophet, it is said, was set or stood upon the sand of the sea. In a later chapter (chap. 17.) he is carried in the Spirit into the wilderness; and afterward (chap. 21) to a great and high mountain. Here, as everywhere, all is in keeping with the scene. "I stood upon the sand of the sea." The reason is manifest. John is about to see a great beast emerging out of the sea, and accordingly he takes in the vision a suited place. "And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea." You must remember that all these visions were like a great panorama that passed before the eye of the prophet. What the meaning of the symbols used is, we have to find out by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. The sea sets forth the unformed mass of the people under a troubled state of the world-people in great agitation, like the restless waves of the deep. It is that which represents a revolutionary condition among men. And it is out of that mass of anarchy and confusion that an imperial power rises. This power is called "the Beast." The same thing appears in Dan. 7; but with this difference. The Jewish prophet sees successively four beasts emerge from the sea; not one merely, as we have in the beginning of Rev. 13 There was the first beast like a lion, the second like a bear, the third like a leopard, and a fourth beast of a peculiar kind. And then, before the explanation is given, one in the form of a son of man comes with the clouds of heaven, in contrast with the powers that came up from a tumultuous sea. It was a, kingdom heavenly in its source, and a king who was to use the power of God which is to be established over the earth in the person of the Lord as Son of man, instead of being left in God's sovereignty to those successive and ferocious beasts. The rising of the beasts out of the sea, upon which the four winds of heaven strove, portrays, probably, the vast commotion of peoples that preceded the formation of the four great empires. And it is an interesting fact, that the foundations of those states which afterward became possessed of the imperial power, were all laid about the same time. They emerged from obscurity and political chaos pretty nearly together. God, in His sovereignty, gave power to each in succession. First, there was the Babylonian, then the Medo-Persian, then the Greek or Macedonian, and, lastly, the Roman.

In this case John sees but one beast rise. The sea sets forth a troubled state of nations, and the fourth and last beast mentioned by Daniel, is seen by the prophet coming out of it. The first three beasts had had their day, and they were gone. The fourth or Roman empire had followed, and was then in being and power. It was the authority of the Roman Beast, which had, at this very time, cast John into Patmos. It seems to be its final rise, previous to its destruction which John sees here, but what was to take place between its first appearance as an empire and this reappearance, is not yet described. There can be no doubt, from the description given, that it is the Roman empire. It is said to have "seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns;" the same things that we saw in Satan, (chap. 12:3,) where he was regarded as the possessor of the

power of the world, and specially that of Rome. We all may remember how he said to the Lord Jesus, when showing Him all the kingdoms of the world, "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them; for this is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it." Now here he gives it to the Roman Beast. Satan was, of course, an usurper; but still he was the prince of the world in fact, and as such he has seven heads and ten horns. But as Satan, he does not present himself openly before men. He must have some representative or agent. He must disguise himself, and work through another, and take a human form and instrumentality; even as God was pleased to do the same to accomplish His blessed purposes of grace. And so does Satan-awful counterpart in malice of God's goodness in Christ! The agent described, through whom he works, is the Roman empire in its last phase. He took advantage of men's lusts for power, because that which is the object of ambition in the world is power. And here you have a vast imperial power, which was at first owned of God. As far as rising out of the sea was concerned, God could still have owned it; but when it is said to arise out of the bottomless pit, the source is in no way providential, but expressly of the enemy. But besides these seven heads and ten horns, there were upon the latter ten crowns. Let me just say that I have no doubt the ten horns ought to be mentioned before the heads: "having ten horns and seven heads, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads names of blasphemy." (Ver. 1.) Not that one would attach undue importance to the order, save that we ought always to be right; but the two clauses of the verse agree in putting the horns first, perhaps because the beast is regarded here as having these powers in actual exercise, whereas Satan had them virtually only. Blasphemy, not mere heathenism, characterizes his heads.

"And the beast which I saw was like a leopard." This was the general resemblance of its body, and it refers to the Macedonian empire, so notoriously marked by its swiftness of conquest. "His feet were as the feet of a bear," which refers to the Persian and implies great tenacity of grasp; "and his mouth as the mouth of a lion," -ing its voraciousness, as in Nebuchadnezzar's career and kingdom. Thus the Roman empire, in its last stage at least, would unite in itself the several characteristics of the former empires. And indeed such was the ordinary policy of the Romans. They did not interfere with what they found in the various nations they conquered. They endeavored to incorporate into their own system whatever had helped on the power of those nations. They did not force their own customs upon others, but cultivated whatever they found advantageous; and turned it to their own use. So this Beast, as we see here, was made up of the diverse qualities of power that had given weight to its imperial predecessors.

But there is one remarkable difference from all of them, and even from its own original condition. "The dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority." (Ver. 2.) This notable distinction is subsequent to Satan's fall from heaven. He wants to have a medium for acting universally upon men, in the center of the world's civilization and activity, for the short time that he is allowed to do as he pleases on earth. Accordingly, to the Roman Beast which had imperial authority providentially from God he gives his own peculiar dragon power. This is a thing that has never yet been seen on the earth in the full sense of the word-this union of the imperial authority with the positive impartation of Satanic energy. But the prophet sees more than this, connected with the Beast's investiture by the dragon. "And I saw one of his heads, as it were, slain to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and the whole earth wondered after the beast." (Ver. 3.) I am inclined to think that the wounded head was the imperial form of government. "(Comp. chap. 17:10). The heads that were, as we have seen," connected with the dragon (chap. 12:3) as well as

with the Beast, represent the different forms of power which had existed successively. Of these one was to be lost, as it were wounded to death, but at this time was to be revived again through Satanic agency. All the world is surprised, and no wonder. They will be seized with extreme astonishment at the revival of the Roman empire, with more than its ancient splendor.

And now, if we look at Daniel, we find a remarkable fact introduced there, connected with its divided state at the close, and of course also with its previous divisions after it had ceased to exist as an empire. The image in Dan. 2 has got feet, "part of iron and part of clay." There is weakness consequently. That metal represents the original Roman element in its strength, while the clay was a foreign ingredient, which brought in weakness when it sought to coalesce with the iron. "And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men; but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay." (Ver. 43.) This exactly accounts for the state of things found in Western Europe. The history of this part of the world was completely changed by the inroads of the barbarians about the fifth century after Christ. There was a time when one vast consolidated power had universal and undisputed sway-the iron power of Rome. But at the epoch named swarms of barbarians, near about the same time and from the north and east, came down upon the empire and assailed it at almost every point. It fell. But mighty as these barbarians were in overthrowing, they could only establish little separate kingdoms; and since then no hand has been able to gather up the broken fragments and put them firmly together again. It has not been for want of the disposition to do so; for, on the contrary, all sorts of expedients have been tried-sometimes the sword, sometimes policy, sometimes intermarriage-but in vain. And thus it has remained under the providence of God. There has been no unity, so that the prevailing and favorite expression of modern policy has been and is "the balance of power." It means really keeping a respectful distance among the scattered members of what was once a united body. Mutual jealousies and the spirit of independence in each have ever effectually hindered re-union. The ordinary aim has been, by the formation of parties among the powers, to check and prevent the preponderance of any one.

But though that wound seemed to be unto death, it was healed notwithstanding. "I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed." That is, at the period of which the vision speaks, the Roman power is to be consolidated afresh: not as formerly, with God's good hand over it and controlling all, whatever might have been the ways of individual emperors; but all is abandoned to the will of the Beast as the immediate instrument of Satan. Satan can no longer accuse the saints before God, but now he is at work on the earth to produce open blasphemy against God. And this is first done by means of political influence. There is the Roman empire reorganized, the imperial power revived, and a head over it that gathers everything under his own control, so that at the world wonders after the Beast to whom the dragon had given his power, and throne, and great authority. In the next verse we have not merely this; but "they worshipped the beast saying, Who is like the Beast? and who is able to make war with him?" (Ver. 4).

What a fickle thing is man! No doubt just before there had been a state of anarchy and confusion, and thence the beast arose and becomes an object of wonder and worship to men weary of all their previous turmoil, and strife, and insecurity. Something like it was seen in a neighboring country. Men were convulsed by a revolution which tore up all the landmarks and filled their minds with anxiety and restlessness. And what came out of that? A strong hand takes the reins, a military

despotism, a quasi-imperial power. And what was enacted on a small scale, because in one country only, will prevail in all the western powers of Europe. So that instead of men having things to themselves, some vigorous chief will take the rule; but it will not be the hand of man merely, but the dragon's power. God will permit him to have his own way; and so, for a short time,, he is allowed to do his very worst. Then, beside distinct governments and rulers, each over his own country, there will be an imperial unity under one great head, who will wield their power and preside over all. Thus will be accomplished those desires of men that have hitherto proved but idle dreams, or, at most, abortive efforts.

There is a passage, I would briefly notice, in an early epistle which refers to what has hindered, and hinders still, the development of this and other allied wickedness. It is in 2 Thess. 2:6, 7, "And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only one who now letteth [there is one] until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that lawless one be revealed," &c. There is a restraint that God puts upon the lawlessness of the world; and I conceive the Holy Ghost who acts here below is the One spoken of here as "he who now letteth" or hindereth. Still, after the church has been taken away, God will carry on a testimony, though of another sort, and Satan will be kept in check for a season at least. This restraint will be maintained by the operation of the Holy Ghost in a providential way. When this dealing of God ceases, the Holy Ghost will no longer "let," as the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth; that is, the power which the Holy Ghost exerts over the world, and not merely in the church, will no longer be put forth, as now, to keep Satan under. "He who now letteth" will "be taken out of the way." People do not know how much they owe to this restraint of Satan from doing his worst. But the time will come when God will cease to hinder; and then Satan will for a season carry all before him on the earth. He raises up a person as head, and men are charmed with the grandeur of his energy, exercised as it will be without conscience towards God-charmed with the comparative ease that will result from having one person supreme over all. In short, they will have in many ways what is suited to meet the idolatry and pride of the heart. For men are, like children, constantly disappointed with their own schemes and even successes. Besides, having refused the love of the truth, they will readily fall into whatever snare Satan may put before them. So that, after a previous storm of revolutions, they will gladly fall down and worship the Beast and the dragon that gave him his power. But, further, the Beast's worship in the day that is coming will be of a different character from common idolatry. They will not merely be adorers of him, along with gods many and lords many, as the heathen of old. There will be an utter denial of any god above the one who is adored as such on earth. This miserable being whom Satan fills will be the object of their worship; and the dragon shares it.

"And there was given unto him a mouth, speaking great things and blasphemy: and power was given unto him to practice (or continue) forty-two months." (Ver. 5.) Nobody doubts, I suppose, that this is connected with Dan. 7. The same kind of language is heard, applying to and for the same time. If we examine that chapter, some of the thoughts I have uttered will be found to be confirmed. It is said (Dan. 7:7) that the fourth beast differs from all its predecessors. "It had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up another little horn." (Ver. 8.) There is nothing of this in the Revelation. The little horn, i.e. as such, is not mentioned there. But this is not all. Before him "were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots." He takes possession of the territory of three of the horns, so that but seven remain out of the ten. "In this horn were eyes like

the eyes of man,” —the symbol of intelligence, “and a mouth speaking great things” (the utterance of pride, and blasphemy against God). (Compare ver. 25.) This is what brings on judgment from God- not, of course, the white-throne judgment of the dead, but the judgment of the quick, and of the habitable world. And so it is written in the 11th verse: “I beheld, then, because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake; I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame.” Now observe that there is this difference between Daniel's prophecy and John's-what Daniel says about the little horn John says about the beast. (Compare Rev. 13:5, 6, with Dan. 7:8, 25.) The reason is this. John gives us the character or principle, and Daniel the detail of historical facts. The fact was to be, that in the Roman empire there should arise ten kings, three of whom disappear before the force or fraud of another king, the little horn-a power obscure in its first origin, but acquiring actual possession of three kingdoms, and then becoming the real director of all the rest. In the Revelation (where of course it is assumed that what had been disclosed in Daniel is already known), the Holy Ghost does not go back to the historical details, but speaks as if the emperor and the empire were one.

I am bound to acknowledge “the powers that be;” but when Satan has given the Beast his authority, it is another thing altogether: we owe no allegiance to Satan. In point of fact, he is the one who leads on the Beast into all his own depths and heights of sin. For the beast “opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.” (Ver. 6.) The Roman empire is the chariot, so to speak, in which this furious rider is driving.

But let us look further at Dan. 7 “I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them. (ver. 21.) And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hands until a time, and times, and the dividing of times.” It is the same period of forty-two months that we have here in Rev. 13: “a time,” which means a year; “and times,” two years; “and-the dividing of time,” half a year. I have no question that it is the person referred to in Daniel, under the name of the little horn, who here appears under that of the Beast. There he is the “horn,” because Daniel gives us the gradual succession of the history, and adds the special Jewish part, the gift of times and laws into his hand; here, because he is viewed as having all the power and authority of the imperial system, he is called “the Beast.” He opens his mouth “in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, and them that tabernacle in heaven.” For this was the great object of Satan, who uses the Beast as his mouth-piece. It was from heaven he had been cast out, and God in heaven, and those whom He calls into relationship with Himself there, are peculiarly odious to Satan and to this self-exalting Beast. “They that dwell in heaven” are unbearable to them. There is no one thing that stirs the world even now so much as this. It does not always dislike godliness where connected with things on the earth: it can appreciate love in a measure, for men can selfishly profit by it. But the moment there is a godliness that cares not for the things of the earth-not merely that refuses the evil things, for they could understand that-but a godly person who rejects them when men are doing their best, i.e., seeking to be religious and to honor God in their own way, nothing so excites men's hatred even now; much more so when that day comes. For then Satan has lost all power and place in heaven, and has only the earth to work in, and the thought of blessedness above is hateful to him. He endeavors to make men think that the Beast is God, and takes advantage, I suppose, of the prophecies in Scripture to make them

believe that the predicted good time is arrived, that God is come back to the world, that men have nothing to do but to enjoy. all the blessings of the earth and of the day spoken of when God was to scatter His enemies. Satan seeks that men should antedate this under himself and without God. He will know what is at hand and his own torment when that day arrives. He will endeavor to turn to account the very promises of God, for cheating the world into the belief that these times of chiefest evil are the days of heaven on the earth. This is the time described here, when conscience towards God will be completely null and void, and what was true of Pharaoh on a small scale will be verified of entire Christendom. It will be given up to judicial hardening and then destroyed. It is just what the Spirit shows us in 2 Thess. 2:11, 12, when God, grieved with this world because of their rejection of the truth, will allow man and Satan to do their worst together. "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." And I most fully believe not only that God will do so righteously, but that the righteousness of it will be apprehended by any soul who is subject to His word.

Here, then, we have the means by which Satan accomplished his purposes. He has given his vast power to the Beast, and now he makes him an object of worship. "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints and to overcome them: and authority was given him over every tribe, and people, and tongue, and nation. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him of whom the name is not written in the book of life of the slain Lamb, from the foundation of the world." (Ver. 7-8.) Here is the same distinction that I have alluded to before. "All that dwell on the earth" are a worse class than the tribes, peoples, tongues, and nations, meaning those that have abandoned heaven and heavenly hopes, and are fully committed to the latter-day delusions. In the case of "every tribe, and people, and tongue, and nation," authority was given to the beast over them; but as to "those that dwell on the earth," they are completely subject to him and to his malignant influence. "All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him." That is not said about the others, but these are completely given up. When it says, "Whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," the idea is not that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world, though people commonly draw from it the inference, as in 1 Peter 1:19, 20, of the purpose of God. But the true meaning of the verse, I apprehend, is that their names were not written, from the foundation of the world, in the book of the slain Lamb. And, comparing this with Rev. 17:8, we find that the Spirit has left out a portion, which makes all clear by removing any doubt of the true connection. "And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world." The Holy Spirit has left out "of the Lamb that was slain," and puts together the writing in the book of life, with "from the foundation of the world." The language of Peter, &c., (1 Peter 1:20,) where he speaks of the Lord Jesus as an unblemished, spotless lamb, "who verily was ordained before the foundation of the world," has quite another bearing.

Then comes a solemn word of warning, on which I need not dwell at length. "If any man hath an ear, let him hear." If any man leadeth into captivity, into captivity he goeth: if any killeth with the sword, he must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." (Ver. 9, 10.) That is a general maxim, true of any one; true even for the Beast. If he has been leading others into captivity, he is to go into that or worse himself if he has killed with the sword, he must also be killed. But it is specially intended for the guidance of the saints, who might naturally infer,

from the wickedness of the beast and his league with the dragon, that they were at liberty to resist him And there is, I believe, the reason why this is said, lest the saint should be tempted to forget his place or God's supremacy and sure judgment. Their place was not to take the sword in their own defense. If they did so, what would be the result? Even then, whatever their character, whatever the Beast's, God would hold to His principles.

They must expect what they sought to inflict. It is the law of God's retributive government. The Apostle Paul, in Eph. 6, does not scruple to use the voice of the law as to the honor due to a parent. "Honor thy father and mother... that it may be well with thee, and thou: mayest live long on the earth." Of course he does not mean that a Christian should look forward to living on the earth as a reward for honoring parents. It was a principle laid down of old by God, and the Apostle, referring to the earthly promise, merely shows that even under the law there was a special blessing attached to it. It was the first commandment with promise. So here the Spirit of God gives a general principle, true at all times, applicable alike to foes and friends. "If any man," &c.- it does not matter who. It is a false position for the Christian to assume the place of power in the world. What makes it the more striking is that the saints spoken of here are Jewish, who of all others might think it very right to resist with their might. If the Beast blasphemed and persecuted grievously, they might say, "Surely we are entitled to stand up in defense of our religion and our lives." "No," says the Lord; "if any man have an ear, let him hear.... he that killeth with the sword, must be killed by the sword." If He lets him have his way for a season, what is our calling? "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints" —faith as regards God, and patience as regards the enemy: Thus God will so much the more appear on behalf of His sufferers. And if the place of faith and patience belongs to those Jewish saints who have a comparatively earthly position, how much more to us who have nothing but a heavenly one? (compare. Matt. 26:52.)

Our great business, next to enjoying Christ and delighting in His love, should be to cultivate what is according to His will: so that we should not give a false witness of what He is and has done for us. We are not of the world; and the moment we fall back upon the resources of nature, upon our own personal power, influence, or authority, we have deserted Christian ground. In family relationships, to act according to our place of authority is a perfectly right thing. Nor will the blessing of God be with those who do not maintain the relative place that God has set them in; as of a father or child, a husband or wife, &c. The affections, most important as they are, are not everything. God is to be respected in the order that He establishes and sanctions. These are things which are not touched by our heavenly place; on the contrary, this gives us an opportunity of showing we have got in Christ a fresh power for every legitimate relation. But to take our part as having an interest in this world is quite another thing, and not the place of the Christian; but rather to pass lightly over it, as those that know their portion with God in heaven. Christ is coming to judge the world, which God regards as guilty of the blood of His Son, and only ripening for judgment. This truth habitually before our souls would preserve us from much that dishonors the Lord in us as Christians.

May all we learn be used to our blessing in separating us from what is to end so dismally! The outward effects of conduct are not enough. The church is regarded as having the mind of Christ, and we are responsible to God to keep out of the secret snares and springs by which Satan is bringing about this evil. For we have to do with his working in a still more subtle way than his acts in the world. May we not forget what God is to us, for the present claims of His glory! We have the most blessed opportunity of being faithful to Christ now. It is vain to look wistfully at others, and to

imagine what we could do if in their circumstances. God is equal to all the difficulty of our own position and time, and would give us the needed strength if we waited on Him. The only reason why we are apt to magnify the strangeness, &c., of circumstances, is because our eye is not single to Christ. When we see Him in everything, the danger, difficulty, and temptation are all at an end.

Ver. 11-18. The rise of the second Beast is strongly distinguished from that of the one already noticed. First, there was the Beast out of the sea; now we read, "And I beheld another Beast coming up out of the earth." The earth we have seen, all through the Revelation, to be the symbol of that which politically is established and in order—the proper scene of the testimony and ways of God and of settled human government. Its privileges may be abused; it may lapse into a state of frightful moral darkness; for it is just where there is any blessing from above that there is the danger of corruption and apostasy. The sea, on the contrary, is a loose, disorganized aspect of the world. Chronologically, too, this might intimate that the rise of the second Beast is subsequent to that of the first. When the seven-headed monster rises, all is in a state of agitation; but when and where the second Beast comes up, things are consolidated after a fashion. The land now is spoken of—no longer the water, the sport of every wind. But the personage described as "coming up out of the earth" is not a mere individual. It is a political, oppressing power that acts without conscience toward God—a beast. It may be, and I doubt not this is, one particular individual that exercises the power, as with the first Beast. But "Beast," as a symbol, does not mean an individual as such, but an imperial power, sometimes with revolving satellites subject to itself.

Next, this Beast was evidently of an extraordinary kind, for it is characterized by an imitation of Christ. It has "two horns like a Lamb." The Lord, we must have observed, through the Revelation, is often spoken of as the "Lamb." While seated upon the throne of God, while described as Himself the great Sufferer, actively sympathizing with the suffering people of God, He is seen as a "Lamb. But when the saints slip out of and abandon their proper lot of earthly rejection, the Lord ceases to be thus symbolized. He seems ashamed of them and retreats to a distance, and is seen as an angel and not any longer as a Lamb. The extraordinary thing we see here is that this Beast assumes to be like Christ. He has two horns like a lamb. He makes a sort of pretension to be like Christ in official power. While the horn is used as a symbol of a king, it may also mean simply power. It was so used when speaking of David, "the horn of his anointed," &c.; but still more is this meaning of it apparent if we look at the Lord Jesus, who is seen in this book as having seven horns and seven eyes. Clearly the seven horns there cannot be seven kings; so that the horns, according to the context, either might mean kings, or they might be simply power. In the former beast we are told they signify kings; but per se they need not, and here they seem not to mean more than power. It is not the perfection of power, as seen in the Lamb, but only pretension to it; there were two horns. The Spirit of God has been pleased to show us in chap. xvii. of this book, that the ten horns of the first beast are ten kings (chap. 17:12).

So far, then, all is plain about this second beast. It is a corporate power that grows up when all was formed and orderly, and consequently arising after the appearance of the first beast. More than that. He arrogates to himself the power of Christ (he has two horns like a lamb); but his speech betrays him—he speaks as a dragon. Out of the abundance of the heart, we know, the mouth speaks. Whatever he may appear to be outwardly, when he does give utterance to the real sentiments of his heart, it is the voice of the dragon. To the former Beast the dragon gave his power and authority. But here there is more inward resemblance to the dragon. Of this the

draconic voice is the expression. It is the great active power of evil in the latter day; and this is one difference between these Beasts. The first Beast is the one for show: it catches the profane world through the display of power and glory. The second Beast is much the more energetic of the two. It is the one that most takes the place of Christ—is a false Christ, or rather is Antichrist—i.e., the very expression of Satan in his direct opposition to Christ. When Satan was seen (chap. 12) waiting to devour the man-child as soon as it was born, he is not as the serpent, but as the dragon. And here, in order to the ripening of his last designs, this Beast speaks as a dragon.

But it may be interesting to look at some of the scriptures that apply to the second Beasts, for there is often a good deal of confusion about it; and it is not to be wondered at, for these two Beasts are so closely bound together in the last days, that it is a difficult matter to determine which of them is the Antichrist. The word “Antichrist” is only found in the epistles of John. And there we must look, if we would see what is implied in that name. In 1 John the Holy Ghost writes as to this to the babes of God's family. For it is not at all a true principle that the young in Christ are only to know Him for the salvation of their own souls. The reason, I suppose, for thus writing to them was, because they were in special danger from the snares and deceits of the enemy; and the Lord, while He preserves, does not want us to be kept blindfold. Christian guidance is not unintelligent. It is not the blind leading the blind, nor even the seeing leading the blind, but it is the seeing leading the seeing. God does give help and instruction; but the Holy Ghost takes particular pains to show that He appeals not to the saints' ignorance, but to their knowledge of the truth. “Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that the Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.” There we learn with certainty what was working from and in the time of the Apostle John, what has been increasing ever since, and bearing a terrible harvest up to the present time, though the fruit of it, the Antichrist, may not yet be fully ripe. “Even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time.” That was the proof—not good, as men think, but the deep evil of antichrist spreading. “They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” What a solemn thing!

The persons displaying the spirit of antichrist were individuals that had once professed the name of Christ. In fact, there could not be an antichrist unless there had been some previous profession of Christ. There must necessarily be some truth; for Satan cannot invent. He can imitate; he can corrupt God's truth, and use it for his own purposes, and put it in new and evil forms, so as to give the appearance of truth to what is positive error— “for no lie is of the truth.” Thus the great Antichrist is to come: but even then were there many antichrists. These persons, painful to say, had once been in the family of God. There they had been, outwardly in the place of children, but not of course in reality. Then “they went out from us, but they were not of us.” Next, he says, “Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?” But he goes farther. To deny that Jesus is the Christ is the first feature. But there are greater abominations. “He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.” There are two states spoken of here. First, there is the denial that Jesus is the Messiah, the last degree of that infidelity which every unbelieving Jew shows, who rejects Christ from that day to this. But the terrible thing is, that it is found in those who had once taken their place in confessing Jesus to be the Christ. Of him who will finally be the leader in giving it up and renouncing, it is said, “he is a liar.” But more than that. He is not only a liar, but an antichrist

“that denieth the Father and the Son.” Jesus was the Messiah, and much more: the Father was displayed in Him. If I look at the Messiah as such, I do not necessarily and fully see the Father there. In Him is the truth of the kingdom of God; in Him the display of His power and faithfulness to His people. But there is something far more blessed than the kingdom; for when I have the thought of the Father, I rise, not merely into the region of divine power, but into that of the highest, holiest, most intimate affections. It is evident that what we know in the presence of God now, is an infinitely nearer thing than the glory that He will give or display by and by. This will tell others what His feelings are toward us, proving the love we are brought into now. We do not wait for the kingdom to know this; but by the Holy Ghost we draw near to God now, in the most blessed way in which He here reveals Himself. Of course, when we are in heaven, we shall have a more unalloyed knowledge of His love, an enjoyment never interrupted by the workings of a carnal mind or by worldly influences. Every hindrance will be removed—all idols will vanish—for every present thing, which becomes an object to the mind, instead of Christ, is really an idol. We shall be out of and above all this, when we are taken to be with the Lord. But the love of the Father is just as true and perfect now, and we, by the Holy Ghost, are privileged to enjoy it. We shall enter more fully into the love then, but the love itself is the same now.

It is the rejection, then, not merely of the Messiahship of the Lord Jesus, but of His divine glory as the Son, that brings in Antichrist. All the love of the Father has come out in Christ, witnessed by the Holy Ghost. That involves, not merely the Jewish revelation, but the Christian; and it supposes too that Messiah has not merely come and been rejected, but has brought out all His divine and heavenly glory. For His being the Son of the Father has nothing to do with the earth. His eternal Sonship is evidently a truth that is entirely beyond His Messianic right hand position. It would have been equally true, if there had been no earth or providential dealings. It was His eternal relation and glory: and therefore, when the Holy Ghost wants to bring us into our full place of blessedness, it is the Father that He brings out. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings.” Where? Here? Not at all. “In heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.” So that the seat of our blessing is entirely outside and above the whole scene of the lower creation. And if a man utterly rejects and despises that, renouncing His glory whom he had once owned, what is he? An antichrist. What he does on a small scale, the Antichrist will do on a larger one.

I refer to the epistles of John, because there we have the Antichrist mentioned, not as a Beast, as in the Revelation, but as the end and chief of those who had once been in the family of God outwardly, had gone out from it, abandoning and denying the blessed truth about the Father, and the Son, which they seemed to have received. “He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son.” On the other hand, we read, “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.” God always makes the utmost account of His Son. If you deny the Son, everything is gone; whereas “he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.” When I possess the Son of God and my heart finds satisfaction in Him, I know the Father. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father also.”

Then, after exhorting them to let that abide in them which they had heard from the beginning, that so they might continue in the Son and in the Father, John closes the matter thus: “These things have I written unto you concerning them which seduce you.” It was an evil that was at work from the very beginning -and what mercy is there even in this? As the evil did exist, and must be

manifested at some time or another, God allowed it to break out then, so as to put His own revealed sentence upon it. We should never have dared to have said such strong things of those whom we had even known as friends or as brethren so called. Call them liars! How shocking and uncharitable! men would say. But the moment that any men set themselves against (or rather deny) the full revelation of the Son of God, the Holy Ghost knows no quarter; and I believe that we ought not. If the heart is prepared for this, you will find another thing that goes along with it. Wherever unbroken self-love, sensitiveness, and tenacity reign about what touches ourselves, there is but little care for the Lord Jesus. You cannot have two master affections. When the heart is single to Christ, He lifts us above personal feelings; but where the heart's care is for ourselves, there will not be found much devotedness to Him, nor jealousy for His name.

In 1 John the Apostle refers to the spirit of the evil. "Every spirit that confesseth not Jesus Christ come in the flesh, is not of God: and this is that [spirit] of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world." Why does the Holy Ghost introduce it here? There are many false prophets, as had been said in the first verse, gone out into the world: and so I believe there are now. But it is a most difficult thing to realize it at the time in "which we live. We can see it in times that are past; but the great difficulty is the discerning of what is at work now. We are in the very same circumstances that the saints were in then. For as surely as the Holy Ghost continues to work so surely will the subtle power of Satan be there to oppose. "Every spirit that confesseth not, &c... This is that [spirit] of antichrist whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world." It is not the Antichrist fully developed yet, but the spirit of it working in the church, just as much as the Holy Ghost was working there. The earliest sphere is not in the profane world: it must begin with those who had once borne the name of Christ. Satan could not forge such a rebellion against God, but among those who professed to believe the truth and love of Christ. There is a notice of this in the second epistle of John, where it is said that "many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not Jesus Christ come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." It is no longer a question of justification by faith simply, or of the law, but a more serious thing still. It is Satan, not only attacking the work of Christ and seeking to get persons to add something and so to take away from its glory, but depreciating and denying the person of the Son. Important as the work of Christ is to us, the person of Christ is the center and substance of all truth and glory. In presence of such a theme, I desire not to discuss but to worship. The reason why persons care more for the work of Christ is because they rightly feel they cannot be saved without it; but once we have got peace of conscience, Christ's person becomes the most precious object of our hearts. He is God's delight; and what is most precious to Him, we shall find to be the most blessed, and full of blessing, for us. It is not merely he that denies Jesus Christ come in the flesh, but he that does not confess Jesus Christ coming in the flesh: this is a deceiver and an antichrist. The Holy Ghost becomes, if we may so say, bolder in His statements. Does He lower the standard, because Satan apparently gains ground, and becomes more and more audacious against Christ? And are we to say, "We must not be so particular now, because there is so much evil;" and "there is no hope, because the church is in ruins?" On the contrary, the Spirit, making provision for the latest time, uses stronger language than ever. He says (ver. 10), "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." We are to have nothing to say to him.

Not only was He not greeting us to be received into the church, the house of the living God, but not even into a Christian's house. He must have no sanction nor footing among the saints; for the Christian's house ought to be a fortress for the name of the Lord, a reflection of what the Lord loves and produces where He is owned and honored. No matter if it be only to the lady that he is writing—one who is not called to teach or to rule. But when it is a question of Christ, it is in vain to talk about her being a woman, as an excuse for laxity. She wants Christ; she owes all to Christ; and, if she is a woman, is she not bound to make Christ the first question, the object of her soul? Therefore, if any person touches Christ, no matter who or what she may be, her allegiance to Christ calls for promptness and decision. That at once becomes the governing motive to faith, and the one grand responsibility of her soul. Whether it be persons who have the spirit of antichrist, or the great Antichrist himself that is coming, antagonism to Christ is there; and this decides all to a true heart.

In the Revelation, Antichrist is described, not merely as a deceiver, but as a “Beast,” as an earthly power which has a subject kingdom—an imperial system in fact, rather than a purely spiritual malignant influence, as in the epistles of John. If we look a little at some of the Jewish prophets, we shall find more about him. I refer more particularly to Dan. 11. Towards the close (ver. 36) we read these words “The king shall do according to his will.... and he shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods.” Who can deny you have a self-exalting personage in the land of Judea? This is very plain; for lower down it is said that “in his estate shall he honor the god of forces: a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold and silver, and with precious stones and pleasant things. Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, &c..... And he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain.” Now, I think that wherever the Holy Ghost speaks of a land in this way, as the land, it refers to the land of Israel. He speaks of it as the Lord's own land. This is confirmed a verse or two afterward. (Ver. 41.) “He (the king of the north) shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown.” Thus a great northern antagonist is to come against the king (ver. 40) “like a whirlwind, with chariots and with horsemen,” &c. Most evidently, then, the glorious land spoken of here is the very country which “the king” had been distributing to his favorites. In short, he is a king in the land of Judea, and it is expressly said, that the period, policy, and conflicts described are “at the time of the end.” Then “shall the king of the south push at him (the king in Judea), and the king of the north shall,” &c.

If this be so, several points are cleared in these verses. First of all, a king, who does according to his own will, establishes himself in the land of Palestine. But while you may find the moral features that link him with the “Antichrist” of John, he is viewed here as an earthly power, and is thus connected with one of the Beasts of the Revelation. But more than that, he is to exalt and magnify himself above every god. This was a novel feature. The Roman emperors had honor paid to them, in life and after death, as divine; yet never above every god. But “the king” shall magnify himself supremely; and this in a land that was specially Jehovah's above all others, and amongst a people whom God had called out to be a witness against all idolatry; and yet this man claims a new and most audacious worship, as the Most High in God's land and temple (cf. 2 Thess. 2). For bad as Israel had been of old, enflaming themselves “with idols under every green tree,” here we have the sight, hitherto unknown, of a man setting himself up as the supreme God. And yet he has an object of worship himself: for man must have an object which enslaves him, unless he be truly

exalted, as alone he can be in bowing down before the true God. In reality he is most elevated when most subject to God. For man, unlike God, cannot suffice in and for himself without another. He must either raise his eyes to the true God or degrade them on a false one. Even the very person who will try to get all beneath him, as supreme object of worship, will himself have something that he is subject to. And so we find (ver. 37) that, while he does not regard the God of his fathers (which confirms his being a Jew), nor the desire of women (which, probably, refers to the Messiah), nor regard any god, for he shall magnify himself above all, yet the Spirit of God shows us this apparent self-contradiction. (Ver. 38.) "In his estate shall he honor the god of forces." All others are to honor him, but he has got this false god whom he honors himself "with gold and silver, and precious stones and pleasant things. Thus shall he do with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory," &c. "And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him, and the king of the north shall come against him He shall enter also into the glorious land," &c.

Now here plainly we have Palestine. The kings of the south and north are so called with reference to the land of Judea. The king of the north, described as coming against him with this large force, is the Assyrian, (so familial in the prophets), while the king of the south is the then sovereign of Egypt. These two powers come up against "the king," who, I apprehend, is the Antichrist of Scripture. The Holy Ghost does not here describe his rise. There was no need to say who he was, but he is brought in quite abruptly. For if verse 35 be examined, you will find that it speaks of some who had understanding, referring to what took place in the time of Maccabees, when there was a celebrated and most wicked prince, Antiochus Epiphanes, that persecuted the Jews, many of whom then came out in a remarkable way. There might have been a good deal of nature and the spirit of the world in their feelings and actions; nevertheless they resisted all efforts to turn them away from Jehovah to idols. Some of them fell, and this was, as the prophet says, in order to try others, and "to purge and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed." There comes in the space where the Spirit of God drops the past history. He first gives us the struggle between Antiochus and his adversaries, followed by the exploits and the sufferings of those who had understanding in Israel. The history of Israel is then in abeyance, and we are at once carried on to "the time of the end." Between these two points there is a suspension of their history.

What is the next thing? "And the king shall do according to his will." We are not here told anything about his origin or progress; we hear nothing whence he comes; we have only that peculiar phrase, "the king," as if this would be intimation enough who was intended. Nor is it the only place in Scripture where "the king" is spoken of. Look at the close of Isa. 30 and you will find "the king" introduced there in no less singular a manner. The reason, I believe, is this; that the Jews, while they were looking for Christ, were also looking for Antichrist, a great prince who should trample down the godly among them in their final tribulation. It was plain in prophecy and so understood by them. In this chapter 30, the Spirit of God describes two enemies of Israel. First in verse 31 it is said, "For through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be broken down which smote with a rod." This is the king of the north that figures in Daniel, typified in the early prophet perhaps by Sennacherib, who was the Assyrian of that day, but of course only a foreshadow of the great northern enemy at the close. Then, again, it is said, "And in every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which the Lord shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps; and in battles of

shaking will he fight with it." Thus, although there will be such sorrow and trial, there -will be joy too: "it shall be with tabrets and harps." "For Tophet is ordained of old: for the king also it is prepared." This I believe to be the force of it—"for the king also." Thus, if the statement made be correct, you have at the closing scene, the judgment of God on these two great enemies of Israel—the Assyrian, and "the king" who is introduced here without a word of preparation. If we turn, further, to Isa. 57, the same thing appears. I refer to it the more, as perhaps some might argue that in chap. 30. "the Assyrian" and "the king" are identical. But in chap. 57. it would be impossible to maintain this. The prophet has just been describing the appalling moral evil of the last days among the Jews. Then suddenly he says, (ver. 9,) "Thou wentest to the king with ointment," &c. It is plain from this, that "the king" is some special antagonist of God, not attacking the Jews from without like the Assyrian, but setting himself up within as king over the people of God. It was not necessary to define what king, because it was a familiar idea to Israel, so that the Holy Ghost could introduce him without a word of preface. They knew there was the terrible king to come—the last great enemy of God and the Jews in the land. The Assyrian is an enemy of God and of Israel too, but not in the land; for he fights against "the king" who is reigning there. The last willful king is the object of attack to the last mighty Assyrian. Outrageously wicked as both are to be, they do not at all agree in their wickedness. They stand in each other's way. There never can be lasting peace between them, and this is exactly what the eleventh chapter of Daniel shows us. The 41st verse is not at all a description of "the king." He seems to be lost to view, and there follows the account of the proud "king" of Assyria. The Holy Ghost presses on to the end of the Assyrian's career, leaving that of "the king. "

Looking now at the New Testament, we shall find some new features about this king. In 2 Thess. 2 we have the fullest account of him that the epistles of the Apostle Paul afford. In verse 3 it is said, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for [that day shall not come,] except there come the falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." There is first, the falling away, that is, the special apostasy. The man of sin is another and subsequent thing. The apostasy prepares the way for the revelation of the man of sin. The French revolution e.g. answers to the apostasy rather than Romanism, which confesses truths, but all of them put out of their right place. There will be a further and more terrible development of the apostasy, though this illustrates it. But there is to be more than that—the man of sin. Who is he? The Lord Jesus Christ was the man of righteousness. This is the antagonist—the man of sin— "the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped." Just the same sort of moral features that we see in Daniel about "the king," we have in this man of sin. "So that he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." There we have another point. He is evidently one reigning at Jerusalem, He sits "in the temple of God," which, I see no reason to doubt, means the literal and well-known temple there. At the same time, if anybody likes to apply the principle of this scripture to such as may pervert the place of the church and make it an engine and sphere for exalting himself in now, I have nothing to object. I dare say that it may legitimately be so applied at least in part; but I think that it looks on to a person who arrogates to himself the honor that is due only to God. "Remember ye not," the Apostle says, "that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity cloth already work," &c.

Just as the Apostle John says, "Even now are there many antichrists;" so here the mystery of iniquity was already working, only there was a person that hindered. "He who now letteth [will let] until he be taken out of the way." I do not the least doubt that the hindering thing is the power of the Spirit of God not merely dwelling in the church, but acting in the way of control in the world, as the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. If it were simply the Holy Ghost dwelling in the church, the moment the church was taken away., the man of sin would be revealed. But it appears that the lawless one will not arrive at his full stature and manifestation immediately on the rapture of the saints. There will be an interval and a testimony which God will give. When this testimony disappears or is put down by violence, the man of sin comes out full-blown. This seems to be the hour when the Holy Ghost ceases to restrain. He lets men show out then just what they are; and all their wickedness comes forth. The Holy Ghost thus no longer controlling the earth, Satan will be allowed to mature his worst plans for a very brief moment.

This, I think, is the time, and such its character, when the hinderer or hindrance will be taken out of the way. The early Christians used for many years to pray for the continuance of the Roman empire, because they thought it was the letting thing; that gone, they expected the lawless one to be revealed forthwith. And as its diabolical form is assuredly to arise after a previous existence and extinction, there was a certain measure of truth in their thought. But the Roman empire has long been extinct, and yet the man of sin, in his full development, has not yet been revealed. The reappearance of the empire, not its extinction, is the critical epoch; and that will depend on the Holy Ghost's ceasing to restrain. When it does take place, all the evil of man and of Satan comes out without measure or disguise. "He who now letteth [will let], until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that lawless one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the shining forth of his presence."

Rev. 19. describes this destruction. In that chapter, (ver. 20,) after a previous description of the coming of the Lord in judgment, it is said, "The beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him.... These both were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone." They are, without doubt, the same systems or persons already characterized as the Beasts from the sea and the earth in Rev. 13 Now, it is plain that one or other of these two Beasts is Antichrist. The question still remains, which of them is that man of sin? Is it the great power of the world, the Beast that rises out of the sea? Or is it the other energetic Beast that rises out of the earth imitating Christ in royal and prophetic power? Disposed to think it is the latter, I can frankly allow that I see difficulties, and believe it is not a thing to be dogmatized upon. Indeed these Beasts are so closely linked together in their actions and objects, and also in their final doom, that we cannot be surprised if many find it hard to decide, or if intelligent minds come to different conclusions. But the more that I weigh what is said in the Apostle Paul about the man of sin, and in the Apostle John's epistles about the antichrist, my mind looks out for the Beast that has most appearance of rivaling and opposing Christ. This I find emphatically in the Beast that rises out of the earth.

Let us now consider a little what the chapter further gives us, bringing the light that we have gathered from other parts of the Scripture to bear upon our inquiry. After the description of the Beast in verse 11, we read of the exercise of his power (ver. 12). "He exerciseth all the authority of the first Beast before him" (i. e. in his presence). He is the energetic power, the one that cares much more for real influence and energy than for outward show, which was what the first Beast

most valued. "He caused the earth and those that dwell therein to worship the first Beast, whose deadly wound was healed." Observe again here that those that dwell on the earth are abandoned to his delusive power.

Some, seeing that the second Beast works to procure worship for the first beast, have conceived that 2 Thess. 2 negatives the idea that the second Beast is the same as the man of sin; because there he is represented as allowing no other object of worship than himself. But it is manifest that there are three persons who are closely connected together in this scene—the dragon, the world-power or first Beast, and the politico-religious or second Beast. It appears from Rev. 13:4, that the dragon is worshipped as well as the first Beast; so that whether we suppose the first Beast, or the second, to be the Antichrist and man of sin, the difficulty would remain nearly the same. In either case, the worship is shared by another. In point of fact, they are the Anti-Trinity, and find their bond in the unseen power of Satan.

The second Beast is very important. He is the really active power in the Holy Land. The Beast out of the sea has his dominion over the west, with large influence beyond it; but Palestine or Jerusalem is not his sphere, save that he destroys the witnesses and falls there. It is the second Beast that is the great power known to the Holy Land. "He doeth great signs, so that he maketh even fire come down from heaven unto the earth in the sight of men" (ver. 13). What imparts such deep and painful interest to the miracle is this: it was the special sign whereby Elijah confounded the false prophets of Baal. When the whole question lay between God and Baal, what was the turning-point that decided the claims of Jehovah against the false god? It was this very thing—fire coming down from heaven. It had been a familiar token in Israel, and one that they might justly connect with the direct approval and power of God. For He had caused fire to come down from heaven at various times, as a signal proof of His approbation. Fire came out from before the Lord when the priests were consecrated; the same thing, too when the temple was built and hallowed by Solomon. (2 Chron. 7) "Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house." It was the crowning evidence of Jehovah's presence connected with Israel—of His presence filling the scene and accepting their sacrifices.

Here, then, is this frightful imitator and antagonist of the Lord Jesus, who sets himself up to be the God of Israel as well as the Christ. The true Messiah was the God of Israel, and here we find His majesty and claims and power emulated; the Antichrist too must cause fire to come down from heaven. I do not say fire really from heaven, but the appearance of it; in the sight of men it was fire coming from heaven. As Satan could imitate, so here was this wicked power, whose presence was after the working of Satan, doing apparently what Elijah had done. The same proof that Elijah had given for Jehovah against Baal, is the one that he offers here in his own name. It is an awful scene, and still more so if compared with the passage in 2 Thess. 2:9. For, sad to say, the very same words that are used in speaking of the miracles of Christ, in Acts 2:22, are applied here by the Holy Ghost to the man of sin. "Jesus of Nazareth," said Peter, "a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs." So in 2 Thess. the lawless man is one "whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders." The peculiar signs of Christ, that men should know the truth, are imitated by this impostor. He performs for falsehood similar things, and men are completely taken in and deceived.

What prepares the way for such an end is the dissatisfaction that men will feel with Christendom as it is. I acknowledge that they justly speak evil against the state into which Christianity has got. When it loses its heavenly separateness, and is mingled with worldly principles, confusion is the result. They forget that Satan is the god of this world. Hence he has blinded them entirely as to what the church of God is, and what is due to the name of His Son here below. Christ is plainly left out of the question, and even the truthfulness is wanting, which would be required by men in the commonest things of this life. It is not that one would desire to say a word against others; but God forbid that one should not judge, with all heart and conscience, a thing that is even beneath common honesty in the things of this life. When the church, or the individual Christian, ceases to judge, or if it condemn in heart, allows in practice, in the holiest things, that which a natural man does not in human and social relations; so that even the very world can see that what clothes itself with the name of Christ is all wrong—when such a time as this arrives, can God longer refrain? Judgment is coming apace; and what a mercy it is that God has given us something sweet as our hope and happiness, and not the perpetual dark foreboding of most certain judgment! Our portion is outside the sphere of the world. Judgment there must be before the world can be fully blest. If a person were merely to dwell on evil and its judgment, do you think it would give power to act for good? It is not the showing up of what is wrong, but bringing grace and truth to act upon our souls that gives power; otherwise, it might only be getting out of one form of evil to fall into another. The only real security is the getting near to Christ: we help other souls just so far as we put them in contact with Him.

We have seen, then, that this great enemy of God will be permitted to do wonders in imitation of the power of Christ, and in support of his claim to be Jehovah. It is not surprising that he deceives those that dwell on the earth. And what rapidly prepares the way, and ripens men for all, is, that they are now listening to Satan, who has been dissolving confidence in the miracles of Christ, and the scriptures which re: late them. Thus, when men not only review, but see, the horrors of what has taken place in Christendom under their eyes, and when they are left without the love of the truth in their hearts, they will be at the mercy of Satan. Then, when men's desires are gratified without conscience, and God Himself, in righteous retribution, sends strong delusion that they should believe the lie, (saying to them, so to speak, "You have refused the truth that you might be saved: now, then, have all you like,")—then this personage comes forward, and these wonders are done that affect to be signs from heaven. Is it amazing that they fall down and worship the Beast and his image?

(To be continued.)

## Lectures on Revelation 13:11-18 and Revelation 14

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It is Satan, of course, who is behind the scenes; but his slave, the second Beast, “deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the Beast: saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the Beast which had the wound by a word and did live. And he had power to give life (or breath) &c., that the image of the Beast should both speak and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the Beast should be killed.” (Verses 14, 15).

Observe, by the way, a further proof that this second Beast is after the final rise of the first Beast; for he causes an image to be made “to the Beast which had the wound by a sword and did live.” “And he caused all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their forehead. And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, the name of the Beast, or the number of his name.” (Verses 16,17). That mark was a seal of subjection or slavery to the Beast.

“Here is wisdom. Let Him that hath understanding count the number of the Beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number [is] 666 (ver. 18).” I do not pretend to solve any such question as this. It would be easy to repeat what others have thought. Some of the early Christians, especially the pious Bishop of Lyons, Irenaeus, supposed that it was “the Latin man.” Others have found various names, in accordance with their polemics and prejudices. Romanists discovered in it the enigma of Luther; Protestants, the name of more than one Pope. Mahomet in ancient, and Napoleon in modern times, have been imagined. But are such notions better than conundrum? It is not the way of the Spirit to occupy God's people with reckoning letters or numbers after this vague fashion. May we not be satisfied that this is one of the points of detail left for “the wise” of the latter day, and that when the time comes, the clue will be given, and all the light that may be required? For there is in the ways of God a sort of economy, at least when we come to matters of detail and application. Just as He does not give a saint the strength to bear him through a special trial, till it is at the doors, so the Lord may only vouchsafe the needed instruction about this number when the man himself appears.

The application of the prophecy to a particular person will be the point then. It seems premature and useless to discuss such a question till the parties are on the stage. The wise shall understand then, and all will be as clear as day to them, but not to the wicked.

(See Dan. 12) The general truth, however, is plain. There is this second “Beast,” the active, energetic power that opposes Christ; but when the day of reckoning comes, and the judgment of the Lord is upon him, he will be no longer spoken of as a Beast, but as the “false prophet” that wrought miracles. (Rev. 19:20.) Supposing the second beast to be Antichrist, I am inclined to think that there is a spurious imitation of Christ in his causing the first Beast to be worshipped. The Lord Jesus spake and wrought for the purpose of exalting God the Father, while the Father Himself makes Christ the special object. “Let all the angels of God worship him,” (the Son,) and, again, “that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father.” So it is with this Beast. He will

help to exalt the great world-power, but withal he equally, and yet more in spiritual things, exalts himself. He has horns like a lamb. That is, he pretends to the power of Christ. But he speaks as a dragon (i.e., the expression of his mind is Satanic.) Being a Beast, it is intimated that he is invested with temporal authority; while he is also expressly designated a false prophet. Thus, it is a personal antagonist of what Christ was and will be, rather than of what He is. Popery—Anti-Christendom, if you will—is a travesty of Christ's priesthood, and will perish with all that partakes its sin in the gainsaying of Korah. But here (when Christ, having closed His heavenly work, is about to assume His earthly royal dignity), is one who opposes and exalts himself in the city of the great king. For it is the Holy Land that is the central seat of his power and deceits. He is, I think, the person that the Lord Jesus referred to in contrast with Himself, in a passage just quoted in part, where He sums up all in a few little words (John 5:43); "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." The Jews would not have Him who came from the Father. His sent One and servant, though His equal in honor and power, had so come and been refused. But there was one whom they are to receive, one who will flatter and exalt man in sin; for he will own no authority higher than his own, and this is the echo of man's will. Him I believe to be the personage we have here—one who, as to actual territorial dominion and external splendor, may have a superior, but who, in point of spiritual energy and weight, is pre-eminent.

Having already given so fully that which seems to me the true view of the very important chapter which has just occupied us, I need not say much of counter expositions, many grounds of which have been already set aside by anticipation. Mr. Elliott is perhaps more than usually confident in his hypothesis that the Beast from the sea represents the character and history of the Roman Popes and Papal Christendom, and the two horned Beast the Papal clergy, with the image of the Beast as the Papal councils. It is impossible to call this, at least, the Protestant interpretation. For even Luther made the first Beast to be the Latin secular, the second the spiritual, power; while Bullinger viewed the former as the Pagan Roman empire, as did Foxe. Brightman, no doubt, was even more zealous than Mr. E., for he makes both Beasts to set forth the Popes. But what is of more consequence, the learned Joseph Mede, and, as far as I can collect, Dr. Cressener, Jurieu and Daubuz certainly, rejected these notions, regarding the first Beast as the Roman secular empire, and the second as the ecclesiastical Beast, though with characteristic points of difference. So, in the main, Sir I. Newton. If we inquire of their successors nearer our own day, the case is no better by Mr. E.'s own account." The explanation of this first Beast as the secular Emperor and Empire of Western Christendom, and of the second Beast as the Pope and Pontifical Empire, so as most of our modern English expositors have taken it (e.g. Faber, Cuninghame, Bickersteth, &c.) I conceive, to have been one of the most plain, as well as most fatal, of Protestant expository errors." (Vol. III. p. 100, note 1.) Surely, then, if so plain and fatal, Mr. E.'s elaborate array of evidence, and acute correction of the Potestant expository error, have been successful with every fair mind Alas! no. Perhaps the chief independent exposition, since the *Horae Apoc.*, is the *Rationale Apocalypticum* of Mr. Alfred Jenour (2 vols. 8vo, 1852); and there I read that "the wild Beast from the sea" must symbolize an empire about to rise after the ancient Heathen empire had been destroyed, and which would be, as it were, that empire revived. It must represent too, I think, obviously a secular empire, not a spiritual or ecclesiastical dominion There is nothing to indicate that it partakes in any degree of a spiritual or ecclesiastical character. And I cannot, therefore, but express my astonishment that so many commentators should have acquiesced in the

interpretation which makes this sea born wild beast the Papacy. There is not a single feature in the description of the beast itself that can with propriety be so applied. It is, as I have said, a secular not a spiritual power we have here delineated." (Vol. 2. p. 75.)

On the one hand, then, I agree with Mr. Elliott that it is impossible fairly to interpret the Beast from the sea of the empire founded by Clovis and completed by Charlemagne. Neither the seven heads nor the ten horns, neither the dragon-character, nor, in any sense, the duration, can bear a reasonable application to it. On the other hand, I am compelled to agree with the earliest down to the latest, and including some of the very ablest of Protestants, that not the Papacy is meant but the secular Roman Empire. The conclusion is irresistible. Allowing an inconclusive accomplishment in the Papacy and its clerical supports, I steadily adhere to the conviction that the future alone can exhibit the fulfillment of all the features predicted, without constraint and in all their strength.

It is not true that the Papacy has the command of the Western powers which is here supposed, still less practices for 1260 years with such unlimited dominion.

It is not true that the Pope has authority given him over every kindred and people and tongue and nation, even if you confound this with (instead of distinguishing it from) the dwellers in the Roman world. It is not true that the Pope is the object of all the world's wonder, nor that the confession is extorted, "Who is able to make war with him?" Nor do all, save the elect, in Western Christendom worship him. Need I show how palpably inapplicable is the second Beast to those wolves in sheep's clothing, the Papal clergy? Do they exercise the enormous power, all the power, of the first Beast? And in what fair sense do they perform great miracles or signs, so as to make fire come down from heaven in men's sight? Is it possible that any person, save blinded by system, could be content with such an accomplishment as the wicked and idolatrous figment of the mass, or the lightnings of the Vatican?

The Lord grant that we may deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and this, not only for wrath but for conscience sake! Yea, may we be separated to Christ in a spirit of heavenly grace! How base to think we can take care when the time comes? Baser still, if possible, to plead that the church of God will be previously taken out of the way to heaven—that because all will be right then, we can afford to do wrong now! Remember, that meanwhile, as the Apostle said, are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time. Now, if you are allowing the spirit of the world, or are trifling with any of the influences of antichrist at the present moment, what would you do if exposed to all the fearful persecutions on the one hand, and to all the temptations on the other, of the day when the man of sin will be revealed? God's grace might strengthen me to face all danger, and to refuse every blandishment, rather than abjure the true and worship the false God and Christ. But is it not most solemn and humbling if I join (no matter what the motive) in any fellowship with known evil?

And here is the great, moral, present value of prophecy. I see the frightful fall at the end, and can trace the stream that runs down to it. Perhaps the way is long and winding, and the river does not seem so perilous; but look a little lower down, where the word of God lifts up the misty veil which shrouds the future, and behold the fatal speed with which all who float there are engulfed to their utter destruction! There are many currents connected with the world, and I may not see, in their sources and first floorings, the full extent of the evil which is the inevitable result. In prophecy God

graciously shows me the end from the beginning; so that, if I heed it not, I am dishonoring the warning of His love, who would have me “knowing these things before.” Let us also beware not merely of one evil, but of its every form: especially let us not meddle with it, wherever it assumes a Christ like form in association with the world. Here we have the end of the open, blasphemous power, as well as of the more active and subtle spiritual evil of the crisis. Men will be caught in one or other of these snares—the bold infidelity or the religious gravity of the last days. However they may differ in appearance, they are found in the strictest, saddest, most fatal union at the close. The Lord grant that our hearts may be kept looking to Christ and waiting for Him from heaven! There is no full comfort or blessing, except so far as the eye is single to Him

(Continued from page 224.)

## Lectures on Revelation 14

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This chapter is the concluding one of the episode that separates the trumpets from the vials. We heard the events under the last trumpet announced; but the details and the means of their actual accomplishment were not revealed to us. There were songs in heaven celebrating its results; but the immediate effect of the last trumpet on earth was only spoken of in a general way; and this, going down to the end of all, including even the final judgment of the dead.

Then the Holy Ghost, as we have seen, in chapters xii, xiii., turns aside to show us the source, character, and leading instruments of the last outbreak of evil, on which the vials were to be poured out, after which the Lord is to act in personal vengeance. We are come, let us suppose, in some comprehensive history, to an account of a battle which decides the fate of the world at any time. The author stops to describe the previous state of the parties and the causes that led to the crisis.

Exactly so with what we have here: the earnest of retribution, as it were, is given us under the vials. Thus, chaps. 12 and 13, not to speak of chap. 14, show us what it was that led to such a dreadful outpouring of God's wrath. So that, though they may appear to be an interruption, it was necessary for impressing on us adequately the horribleness of the evil the Lord was dealing with. We saw in chap. xii. that Satan was the mighty and subtle spring behind the scene, hating and opposing Christ and His people from the very beginning. Then there was the war in heaven between Michael and the dragon, with their respective angels; and finally, the conduct of Satan, when cast down unto the earth, was traced and explained. Again, chap. 13. shows us that, just as God revealed Himself to man, not only in tables of stone, but in the person of His Son, in order that men might see divine grace so as no tables of stone could display it, (but rather the reverse,) and that they might hear it in their own familiar tones; so Satan finds a policy suited to his ends, in taking up men on earth and making them the instruments and expression of his will. Accordingly he acts by the two Beasts which represent two great systems or their leaders that will be at work during the short season of our adversary's great wrath on earth. The violence of the world and pride and blasphemy are set forth by the Beast that rises out of the sea. The Beast from the earth is as much suited to ensnare men who desire a religion which excludes God. and panders to man and the world, as the other intimidated them by its power or enticed them by its appeals to their ambition and love of outward show.

But then the question arises, If Satan is so busy himself and his instruments, what is God doing? Is He inactive—indifferent He could not be—all this time? Chap. 14, seems to me the answer to that question. The perversion of everything God has given to man, and of all Satan can devise, will come to a fearful issue then in a few short months and years. Dreadful as it all is, and though God will have seemingly given up the world, just to see what Satan and men together will make of it, yet none the less, God even then and there will be at work. And, first, it is not now the heavens, nor the earth, nor the sea: none of these is the ground or scene of what is brought before us in the early verses of this chapter. There is a new spot introduced—one not mentioned before, yet a

most important one and full of significance. “And I looked, and, lo! the Lamb stood on the mount Zion.” Now, let us just pause for a moment and inquire what are the ideas that the Holy Ghost conveys by, or connects with, the hill of Zion. The Apocalypse everywhere supposes an acquaintance with the other parts of the word of God, from Genesis even to the close of the New Testament. It would be difficult to find any part of Scripture that is not required in order to come to a full understanding of this wonderful prophecy.

Let us take the present allusion to Zion as an instance. If I do not know what God teaches elsewhere by mount Zion, how shall I understand what is meant by this opening vision of Rev. 14? The first occasion where Zion comes into view is in the history of David, when he became king over all Israel. (2 Sam. 5) And what was the state of the people then? Israel had previously chosen a king after their own heart; one that reflected them, that could go at their head and fight their battles. “We will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations.” Saul was their choice, David the elect of God. Not that David did not need the mercy and forgiveness of God (for indeed after God's favor to him, he fell, grievously). Beyond question, however, David entered into and responded to the thoughts of God in a most remarkable way. He sinned, it is true, but who felt and owned his sin more thoroughly? Who more than he vindicated God against himself? Neither, on the other hand, did God make light of his sin because He delighted in David. The deed was secret, but it was published upon the housetop. He had dealt treacherously with his faithful servant and had defiled his servant's house. And what a tale of sorrow did his own house show for many a long year afterward (2 Sam. 12)! It was then under David, when Israel had been in confusion, when the priests had corrupted them and the king had wrought no deliverance, when all were in rebellion against God and constantly exposed to the razzias and tyranny of their Philistine neighbors. All was in ruin; the sanctuary, in what a state was it! The very tabernacle and the ark of God were severed. Thus, in all respects, sacred and political, great and small, public and private, the picture was most dismal. And it was then that God began to work energetically by His Spirit in the people. Justly were they suffering under the law which they had undertaken at Sinai. True, there was mercy and faithfulness, too, in the midst of all, on God's part: but still evil was fast increasing, and in Israel there was no hope and no resource. And what then? God calls David out step by step, and Zion acquires a most marked place in his history. It was there David's city was built, the seat of his royalty. It may not be thought much of now in the world, but in one sense all the blessing of this world as such is suspended over that little spot; and never will there be rest or glory for the earth until the city (which was a stay in the downward progress of Israel, and was meant to be a resting-place for faith), shall by and by be taken up by God. In the Psalms and the Prophets it constantly reappears, the Spirit of Christ ever leading on the hearts of the saints to anticipate the full result which the early type promised, as it were, in the germ.

In Heb. 12 the Holy Ghost refers to it, though perhaps in a different way. Still, the great thought is the intervention of God's grace. The passage contrasts the position of Israel with that of the Christian; and, after having described the vision of Sinai, with its blackness, and darkness, and tempest—all most terrible, even to the mediator, it proceeds:— “But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,” &c. Now there we see just the same great and precious principle. Israel had come to Sinai, and that was the mountain that characterized their whole course from beginning to end. And what was the result of it? As it began with darkness and distance, so it ended with misery and death. As they were and Sinai was, they

could not but shrink back from God; for there God was in His majesty of judgment—not in the love that comes down and puts itself under the burden, in order to take it away. That could not be at Sinai; for there it was a just God in the presence of sinners only; and therefore He could but overawe and fill all with terror and the forebodings of judgment. Bounds must be set round the mountain. If even an unconscious beast touched it, death was the penalty; and this was Sinai. “But ye are come,” says the Spirit, “unto mount Zion,” the mountain of God's intervention in grace, as Sinai was of man's responsibility; and with Sinai, what could be the effect for the sinner? Only to press his conscience with the terror of death. The Israelite was as good as a dead man, when he stood there, being already a sinner; and death would be as surely executed, after he left the burning mount. The Apostle shows the Christian ground of grace, the exact opposite of man trembling before a God who righteously demanded what the flesh could not do. Now, it is God who has come down, it is God who has accomplished His work of love. When Zion first appeared by name, it was when Israel—people, priests, king—had utterly failed. Then God entered unsought, established the king of His own choice in Zion, and raised him and his son to such a pitch of glory as never was or will be in Israel again, till the true David comes and plants His royal glory on Zion, never more to be moved.

The principle involved in Zion, then, is God's activity for His people in the way of grace, when all was lost under the law. This gives the mountain of Zion its true force in Rev. 14 It is the gracious interference of God on behalf of those who sit with the holy sufferer—the Lamb. God acts for His Son, securing His glory on earth and gathering round Him in heart a remnant, not merely sealed as the servants of God (like a similar band out of the twelve tribes of Israel in chap. 7), but brought into association with the Lamb in Zion, i.e., with God's royal purposes in grace. These seem to me sufferers of Judah, who pass through the unequalled tribulation; which it is not said that the other remnant do. This is what is meant by their standing with the Lamb on the mount Zion. There the Apostle John saw them. Of course I do not mean that in fact they will be on Zion, or that they will necessarily understand what this symbol sets forth. The question is, what God was conveying to John's mind or to any who desire to understand the sayings of this book. It was, I believe, God's special interference on behalf of His people in the last days. He will associate with the Lord Jesus Christ as the suffering Messiah, a full, numbered, godly remnant, who will be brought into fellowship with Him. There stand in the vision the hundred and forty-four thousand, having the Lamb's name and His Father's name written on their foreheads. It is not said that they know God as their Father. The Revelation never contemplates us in the position of children, much less does it so present the Jewish remnant. Thus, even when speaking of the church, we are said to be made kings and priests unto God and His Father, rather than ours. And this is the more remarkable in John, because no other evangelist takes so much pains to show the relationship of children in which God has put us before Himself now. Thus, in John 20, directly the Lord is risen from the dead, the message to His disciples is “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” Nothing of this appears here; because the Revelation is not so much intended to open our nearness of relationship to God, as our Father, but rather His judgment and glory, though with mercy for a remnant. I speak of the prophetic and earthly portion—not, of course, of that which gives us a glimpse of things above. Thus, the name of the Lamb and the name of His Father (for so it ought to be read) written on their foreheads is in contrast with the name of the Beast in chap. xiii. The Beast's name or mark was put on the right hand or forehead of his followers. The Lamb's name and His Father's these hundred

and forty-four thousand have on their foreheads—not in their hearts only, if we may so speak; they were evidently and openly the Lamb's.

“And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of loud thunder: and the voice which I heard [was] as it were of harpers, harping with their harps. And they sing [as it were] a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders; and none could learn that song but the hundred forty [and] four thousand that were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were redeemed from among men, first fruits to God and to the Lamb” (ver. 2-4). Thus they are characterized, besides learning the new song of heaven, negatively by their holy separateness from all the various kinds of idolatry which will then prevail on earth, and positively by their faithful allegiance to the Lamb, whatever the fiery trial. Instead of becoming the slaves of the Beast, they were redeemed for the earth's first fruits to God and the Lamb. They are a very peculiar class, a sort of link between heaven and the earth from which they were redeemed. They were untainted by the corrupt influences of that evil day, and especially are they free from the idolatries that will be one of its most grievous marks. I do not mean idolatry in a vague or virtual sense (as we are warned against covetousness, which is such morally,) but positive, literal idolatry. Many may think it absurd to talk about the worship of idols reappearing in lands neither popish nor pagan, but this would only show how little man's heart is known and the power of Satan. The word of God is perfectly explicit that the last days will be characterized by the grossest spirit of idolatry, and this in the most enlightened parts of Christendom, yea, in Jerusalem itself, which will then put forth once more the highest pretensions. It is an apostasy that the heart of man is quite capable of, and to which Christendom will be given up by God, as a just retribution for refusing the love of the truth that they might be saved. “And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.” He will give them up to their own natural lusts; and the heart prefers any and everything to God.

The saints associated, to the prophet's eye, with the Lamb on Zion, are said not to be defiled with women; i.e., they were preserved from the corruptions that surrounded them. They walked in virgin purity. Neither do they wonder after the Beast. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. “They were redeemed from among men, first fruits to God and to the Lamb.” They were first fruits: the harvest would follow in due course. (See ver. 14, 16.) “And in their mouth was found no guile, (or rather no lie, φεῖς) for they are without fault.” It is added in our common Bible, “before the throne of God” (ver. 5); but these last words ought not to be there. The best authorities leave them out; and a slight consideration will show how wrongly inserted they seem to be. “They are without fault,” or blameless, it is true; but “blameless” here refers, I think, to their practical conduct. If compared with men from whom they were redeemed, such they were. In their presence they were without fault. But suppose God puts them before His throne to search into what they have been here, measured by His holiness—this is another thing. There I need forgiveness: there I need to stand, not in my own blamelessness, but made the righteousness of God in Christ. If I stand as an individual, viewed not in Christ, but according to my actual ways, shall I say that I am blameless here? It may make this a little clearer, if we remember 1 John, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;” we do not know the truth about ourselves, and we have no fellowship with Christ in discerning the evil that is there. But “if we say that we have not sinned,” we make God a liar, which is far worse than deceiving ourselves.

We make Him a liar and His word is not in us, for He has declared the contrary over and over. But in chap. iii. of the same epistle, what a change! "He that committeth sin is of the devil;" and "whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, and he cannot sin because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil." How can we reconcile these two things? How account for the immense difference of the language in chaps. 1 and 3:7 Most simply. In chap. 1 the Holy Ghost is leading the Christian to view himself in the light of God's presence: he is before the Father and the Son. He stands before God, if I may so say—not exactly before the throne—but before the Father and the Son. And what will a man say when he stands there? Will he say, I have no sin; I have not sinned? None there will say it. Whoever says so here proves that the truth is not in him—that the word has never searched him. But when God compares His child with the world, i.e., with those who do not know Himself, He says, "he doth not commit sin," and "he cannot sin." Look at Numbers also. There you perceive Israel in a state of great disorder and failure, every form of unbelief and unfaithfulness in their journeying. But the moment an enemy comes forward, and comes to curse the people of God—that same Israel which had tempted and provoked Him ten times and more, what does he say then? Why, that He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither has He seen perverseness in Israel! "The Lord His God is with him and the shout of a king is among them." In the very persons with whom He had found fault so often, when speaking to themselves, He can see none now. Let Satan and the world take in hand to damage His people, and all His heart is in movement on their behalf.

As this verse stands now in the common text, with the words "before the throne of God" added to it, we could only understand it as being true in Christ; but here the sense requires, if I mistake not, that it be practical conduct. God looks at them as undefiled and truthful, because they have been kept by grace from all the idols of Babylon and the delusive power of the Beast; and thus they are blameless. I only notice this to show that many of these little changes add to the great sum of Christian truth. Every blot or error which creeps into the word of God will be found to impair its accuracy and its perfect beauty.

The second thing that we note in the chapter is an angel flying in the midst of heaven, having everlasting glad tidings to preach unto them that dwell [or, literally, that sit] on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. I am aware that some have applied this to the great spread of evangelical missions to the heathen in these last days. But is it the way to understand prophecy—ever striving to find some present accomplishment of it? We must look at it as a whole. If no such thing be admitted now as a new group of suffering Jews, connected with Christ in the hope of the kingdom in Israel, it is in vain to look for the angel with the everlasting gospel in the missionary efforts of the last half century. Nor would the message itself in any way suit the present purposes of God. The ground on which the angel appeals to them is, that the hour of God's judgment is come. Is this the case now? Evidently not. It is the day of grace, which is the contrast of the hour of judgment. It is still true that "now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." As yet the door is open; so that it would not be true to say "the hour of his judgment is come." But when the time for the accomplishment of this arrives, it will be of course, the word, of the Lord for men. For then the closing judgments are about to be executed, and the outpouring of God's wrath is just at hand. Now you cannot reconcile all this with the day of blessing and grace, as if they could both run on together. And yet there are those who say we are in the midst of the vials! But that (where it is understood not partially, but in full and finally) indicates the

almost total eclipse which befalls the truth in the minds of men, when they can suppose that the day of God's grace and the hour of His judgment are the same thing, or can be at the same time.

And when we proceed a little closely to examine the message itself, we find that it has altogether another sound from the glad tidings which God is proclaiming now. Does it call souls everywhere to repent, because God has raised up a man from the dead by whom He will judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31.)? Thus Paul preached in his day; and thus it is right to preach now a Christ dead, risen, and coming again to judge the world. It speaks of the hour of divine judgment, but there is not a word about a risen man—nothing about a Savior or His redemption. “Fear God and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters (ver. 7).” Now I ask, is this the kind of message that would suit to go about the country with? Telling persons to worship God that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and fountains of waters? Everlastingly true as it is, is it the special message now? God forbid that the creation-glory of God should be denied! It is exceedingly important; but its proper application is when God has finished the work, now in hand, of saving and calling out the church (Christ's body) for heavenly glory. When Satan has accomplished his great purpose of making men not only reject the true God when He came as man, but worship a man as God on earth, what will not be the urgent need and value of that message then? It will be the contradiction given to everything the Beast and the dragon conspire to bring in. When all this iniquitous false worship is going on, it will require positive faith in the one living and true God not to give way and fall under the power of the delusion. For Satan will have made it to be at the peril of a man's life and subsistence not to yield.

And so here is this message sent: “Fear God and give glory to him.” All the world had sunk in idolatry, worshipping the Beast and falling down before him. Satan could not prevail on the Son of God to fall down and worship him; but he will have the Beast as his tool, and all the world is drawn after him. “Worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea and the fountains of waters.” These are the claims of God to supreme worship at the time when “the earth” will be completely carried away by the anti-christian delusion.

But persons may ask, “Why is it called everlasting glad tidings or gospel?” Perhaps because it is always true. It has been so from the beginning, and up to the close it must be unchanged. “Fear God and give glory to him.” The peculiar ground on which it is put here (for the hour of his judgment is come) could not always apply. But still the word, “Fear God.... worship him that made heaven and earth,” (that is, the glory of God proved or witnessed in creation,) is of course always a standing, fundamental truth. But it will be emphatically regarded and brought out when Satan has gained over the world to deny the true God, and to worship a creature instead of the Creator.

This 7th verse is pretty plain, but I add one word more with regard to the term “gospel.” It is used in Scripture with much more latitude than men are now accustomed to. The glad tidings to Israel in the wilderness held out that they should inherit the land of promise. It was glad, tidings to Abraham that in him should all nations be blessed. (Gal. 3:8.) The glad tidings in the time of John the Baptist, and preached by him, meant in substance that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. So also the Lord Himself preached and His disciples during His ministry on earth. But the people would not have Him; and the consequence was that, though the kingdom was set up, it was so in a way that differed emphatically from what the people expected who looked for it. It was set up in the

person of the rejected King in heaven, till the King comes again, when it will be established manifestly over the earth. Thus, you have different messages, different glad tidings, according to the various subjects or hopes that God was presenting at different times. But the everlasting gospel necessarily was before Abraham, or any other of these special glad tidings. It has always been, and must be, that God is the only worthy object of worship. "There is none good but one—God." And when the blessed day does dawn—when the King comes in His glory—when the kingdom prepared before the foundation of the world will be enjoyed—when God will have His blessed ones around Him from the north and south, from the east and from the west (not only the risen ones, but also those in their natural bodies who will be spared and be blessed on the earth, at the same time that the risen saints will enjoy heavenly glory under the headship of the only One who can concentrate all in blessing), what will be the due and needed message preciously? Why this: "Fear God and give glory to him." Evidently then it is called, with perfect reason, "the everlasting gospel." You will observe that it is sent "to them that dwell on the earth" as well as "to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people," thus keeping up the distinction that we have noticed before. They will both hear the testimony; but if those "who dwell on the earth" will not receive it, through the mercy of God the nations, kindreds, tongues, and people will in part receive it. Compare Psa. 96 and Matt. 24:14 with the results in chap. 25:31-46.

After this comes another message—the fall of Babylon. I do not mean to dwell on it just now, as we shall find a great deal about that city in other chapters of this book; for Babylon was so important as to require a special notice to itself. But as it was evidently the active source of corruption, intoxicating men and drawing them away from the living God, so now He sends this, the death-knell of Babylon. The object here, probably, was to give its place in the order of God's dealings at the close of the dispensation, its relation to what went before and to what follows after. (Ver. 8.)

In the next place, we have the solemn warning to those who worshipped the Beast and received his mark, the sure and everlasting torment of all who were thus carried away by him. There are many who apply these prophecies about Babylon and the Beast in an exclusive way to Rome; but while the seven-hilled city has many of the principles of Babylon and the Beast, yet it is impossible to find their complete and united fulfillment in Popery as it now is or has been. Besides, the Beast and Babylon are not the same thing for the Beast destroys Babylon. And will Rome destroy itself? Certainly, the elements of Babylon are to be found there; but if the matter be looked at more closely, all cannot be found in Rome. For my own part, I believe that Rome, more than any other system, already is, in a very true moral sense), Babylon, and that it will yet contain and manifest all the elements of that vile corruptress. But for this very reason it cannot be the Beast; for the Beast it is which destroys Babylon, and after that the Beast, falling into its own worst and open rebellion against God, perishes. The worst state of the Beast is after Babylon has been destroyed; for then it exalts itself to heaven, only to be cast down to hell; but we shall have the fall of both fully by and by. "Here is the patience of the saints." (Ver. 9-12.)

The fifth division is the word touching the saints that die in the Lord. "And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow with them." (Ver. 13.) It does not mean those who die throughout the present dispensation. When Christian people die now, it is blessed; but here the Spirit speaks of a future class, all of whom will die. You must take these

things connected together as a whole—not a little bit that suits present circumstances, leaving out the rest which does not. What is the real meaning of the verse? What is God's mind? It is the saints who die in that day. Many will be killed: the blood of the saints will flow. The everlasting glad tidings had been, announced; the hour of judgment was come, as the angel proclaimed; so that it might seem a dreadful thing for persons to be killed, just when God is going to introduce His kingdom. But, on the contrary, the voice says, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth." Do not be alarmed by it. They will only get a better kind of glory. What will be the portion of those that die in the Lord then? They will reign with Christ and His heavenly saints Chap. xx. proves that those who die under the persecutions of the Beast will be raised again to join the heavenly saints that will have been taken away before, "Blessed are the dead," &c., cannot in strictness apply to the church, because all belonging to the church will not die. Some will be alive and remaining to the coming of the Lord, who are to be changed without passing through death; whereas these are persons who all die, as a class. It refers exclusively to those who die in the Lord at that time; and shows that, instead of losing their place in the kingdom of Christ, they will gain an advanced position of blessing. Their company, also, is complete, and their full blessedness just coming without further waiting - blessed from henceforth. (Ver. 13.)

The spirit of it may be applied now; but the intention of the Holy Ghost seems to have been the comfort of persons who will die before the Beast is judged and the heavenly glory appears. It might be thought that they had lost something. But no. The voice from heaven says, "Write, Blessed from henceforth the dead that die in the Lord: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." The Holy Ghost adds His "Yea" of sweet sympathy, true to the saints in joy and in sorrow, groaning with their infirmities, and rejoicing with their speedy triumph and reward.

Then follow the two closing scenes of this chapter. The first is the vision of one like the Son of man sitting on a white cloud, "having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle." It is a vision grounded upon the idea of a harvest: that is, it is a separating judgment. (Ver. 14-16.) There is that which must be cast away, and that which will be gathered in. Perhaps with this we may compare what is said in the gospels— "one shall be taken and the other left; so shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." (Luke 17) In the next judgment, we have a different character of dealing. It is the vintage of the earth, not its harvest. There is no good, and therefore no separation here. In the harvest there was; but when you come to the vintage, a more serious state is found. It is not the genuine vine, but the "vine of the earth." The Lord Jesus Christ is the only true vine: and if we are fruit-bearing branches, it must be by abiding in Him. But here it is "the vine of the earth." And what does the Lord do with this vine of the earth and its clusters? There is nothing but unmixed judgment—no mercy whatever to mitigate it. The fruit is gathered and cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God. Then follows the image of unsparing judgment. "The winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse-bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs." It is an awful figure of carnage—blood flowing in a deep stream for about 200 miles. This is not to be taken in a mere literal way; but the great idea which God presents is that of a judgment where there is nothing but wrath, to the very uttermost, upon the apostates. Who ever heard of such a thing in any history of human events? It is entirely beyond all that man could execute. When the reality comes, it will be still more terrible than the figure, which passed as a prophetic picture before the eye of the

prophet. (Ver. 17-20.) The bloodshed might be of religious apostates from all parts of Christendom; but it appears to be especially Jewish, as the scene is the land. The winepress was trodden without the city—i.e., as I suppose, Jerusalem. Compare Joel 3.

In Isa. 63 we have the Lord treading the winepress, but it appears to be a more distant scene. There He is coming from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah. Here it is “without the city,” and vengeance on those who had been religiously guilty in connection with it. They had heard of mercy, but it had been despised; and now the judgment is come, and for them there is nothing else. The mercy had been only abused; and what is there that God so feels and judges?

In this chapter, then, we have the full outline of the dealings of God in the latter-day crisis. There are seven divisions of it. First, there is the full remnant of godly Jews associated with the Lamb on Mount Zion, in sympathy with His sufferings and waiting for the kingdom. Secondly, a testimony to the Gentile nation scattered all over the world as well as to those seated on the prophetic earth. Thirdly, the fall of Babylon. Fourthly, the fearful doom, both in this world and in the next, of such as should worship the beast and his image, or receive the mark of his name. Fifthly, the blessedness from that time of those that die in the Lord. Sixthly, the discriminating process of the harvest. And, seventhly, the awful infliction of vengeance on religious apostasy—the first, at least, of these two last acts of judgment being executed by the Son of man, which necessarily supposes the very close of the age: the wrath, not of God only, but of the Lamb.

Thus the seven-fold series appears in this sketch of the final ways of God, whether of mercy or of judgment. It is thoroughly in accordance with the Revelation. We have had seven seals, seven trumpets, as there are also seven vials. Here, too, though not formally numbered, we have the seven dealings of God that make up a complete account; but the details, as they are given afterward, may come before us another time. Although it is not about us, yet what a mercy it is to feel that we do not always require to think about ourselves when reading the Bible! Many suppose it a very spiritual thing to be always asking, What is there for me? But we ought to desire all the blessing that God can give us, and not merely a little Zoar. “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it, saith the Lord.” If I desire to have my cup running over, and thus to be strengthened in serving Him, I shall want to know all that God can tell me about Christ. And is it not something, and good for me, to know that Christ is to have His complete remnant, not merely when glory comes, but, before it comes, associated in their measure with Him in suffering—like David when he came to Mount Zion? Then who were they that shared his honors? Those who had been the companions of his rejection. So here with these 144,000. They will not have the same heavenly glory that is reserved for the church of the first-born; for either we have the very best blessings now, or none. All Christians stand now in the most glorious privileges which it is possible for children of God to enjoy. Whatever its pretensions, it is a time when Christ is thoroughly rejected by the world. God desires that I should find treasure enough in Christ to despise the world—to put its tribes under my feet. The hard thing is to take the place of the rejection of Christ, and to be happy in keeping it.

And now that we have viewed this chapter as the closing scene of the earth, the end of the age, more particularly God's working therein with reference to the evil of that day, it may be well to glance briefly at the historical application. None could learn the new song, it is allowed, but the 144,000—none but those converted and illuminated by the Spirit of God, a company elected out of the Protestant nations (as, before, out of the Christianized nations under Constantine); and yet,

with singular inconsistency, the voice of the waters and great thunders implied “the uniting of both nations and princes in the song.” (H. Apoc. Vol. III., pp. 288, 289.) Were the Protestant nations ever the election of grace? Mr. Jenour, not unreasonably dissatisfied with the mere repetition of a similar class in Rev. 7 and xiv., tries to vary the tune, and suggests that those in the former chapter are a Jewish elect remnant, these in our chapter a Gentile one. Now, I would press one question upon those inclined to either of the views mentioned: how could a Christian election (either under Constantine or at the Reformation, whether an election out of Jews or Gentiles), be styled first fruits to God and to the Lamb? If the church, strictly so called, will be then completed, nothing is more intelligible; but on the scheme which regards the testimony and the body formed thereby as the same continuously, a reasonable explanation does not appear. If it be a special gathering out of Judah, associated with a suffering Messiah, and anticipating the kingdom, what clearer! Hence, there is no need for interpolating the declension of the eighteenth century into the prophecy, no room for such additions to the words of this book as that “the voice of the 144,000 waxed fainter and feebler, and the tokens of their presence more obscure in all the continental Protestant countries and churches” (the light of England burning brighter)!

Of the second division—the angel with everlasting glad tidings—enough has been said already to show why one cannot allow anything save a general reference either to the era of the Reformers, or to that of recent missionary societies. And I take this opportunity of stating my conviction that the Reformation (blessed as it was in breaking the dominion of Popery, in spreading the Bible and Bible-reading far and wide, and in asserting, strongly, if not clearly, justification by faith), did not bring out the light of God even as to regeneration, and maintained substantially the same clerical system as before. That is, reformed doctrine and polity fail utterly, as a confession of the truth of the Holy Ghost's operations, whether in quickening souls or yet more in His sovereign action in the Christian assembly. Justification, as then understood, did not necessarily suppose perception of God's mind as to the operations of the Spirit. It is to me clear and certain that the reformed national bodies have never been free from fundamental error on these subjects, which are of capital moment both to individuals and to the church.

One might have expected that, if the proclamation of Babylon's fall (ver. 8) had been fulfilled, those who so think would have tried to make out some show of facts to account for its appearance here, after the epoch of evangelic missions. It may be alleged that it is something yet future. But such does not appear to be Mr. E.'s opinion, because he joins on the message of this angel, with hardly a shred of comment, to that of the angel evangelist; and he distinctly dwells on the third flying angel as yet unfulfilled. May we not then press the query: What has just taken place at all adequately answering to the second angel's mission?

As to the third flying angel, Mr. E. thinks its prefiguration requires, among other things, a sufficiently general agreement among Christ's faithful Protestant servants, as to what is meant both by the Beast and the Beast's Image to give weight to the judgment denounced against their worshippers. That is, if I understand him, ought there to be a general acquiescence in the system of the *Horae Apocalypticae*, an abandonment of all reference to the secular Roman empire, and an adoption of the discovery that the Beast's image means the general councils of Papal Christendom, especially of Trent. I am assured that the impression on the mind of most intelligent Christians is growingly opposed to such theories, and that the absoluteness of the warning as to any individual who worships the Beast, &c., cannot (save by a violence which convinces no

dispassionate person), be said to be fulfilled in Popery, abominable as the system is. In the crisis of Antichrist it will be literally true. Compare 2 Thess. 2:10-12.

The harvest and the vintage call for no especial remark, as there is no question of their futurity, and Christ is admitted to be viewed therein as the initiator and completer of these final judgments. Why they should not indicate the time of His great predicted second advent does not clearly appear (H. A., Vol. iv., p. 11): in reality, there is no ground to doubt it, as far as I see. The fact of a distinct subsequent vision of the conflict with the Beast does not hinder this. They may all well be various parts or acts of judgment when He comes in the clouds of heaven.

## Lectures on Revelation 15

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WE are now come to a new division of the book. The last three chapters (12-14) formed a most important portion to themselves; they gave the whole history of the closing dealings of God, and of the last plans of Satan, as far as the present dispensation is concerned. And not only that; but before either Satan's ways or God's dealings were brought out, the hidden source of both was entered into. We saw in chap. xii. the victorious man-child born, and the dragon and his angels cast down from heaven. Thus, we have the two great parties in the scene with their chiefs opposed face to face. Whatever might have been the instruments of Satan's power here below, seen in chap. 13, and whatever the ways of God in His grace or in His judgments in chap. xiv., all flowed down from that man-child, the object of Satan's fear and hatred. Then we come to a new subject. There was a great wonder or sign spoken of in chap. xii. 1. Here it is said, "And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God." We are resuming once more the course of historical events. Under the last trumpet you may remember the word was, "the nations were wroth, and thy wrath is come." Now I think it must naturally strike any one, that here God's wrath is come, and the nations not merely angry but blaspheming to the last degree. So far each fresh stroke of God instead of humbling man, only drew out this intensity of enmity against the Lord. The seventh trumpet brought us up to the close in a general way; and here we have some of the details, but not all. There were two parties described under the vials that we have more particularly afterward. Chap. 17 refers to Babylon and the Beast in their mutual relations. In chap. 18 we have the destruction of Babylon, and in chap. 19 the judgment of the Beast.

There is another remark also I must make. Chap. 14. gives us these events all together. We had there what may be called the religious actings of God-His dealing with man on the earth, as accountable for the use or abuse of revealed light and responsible to own and worship God alone. These vials take up rather the outward civil history or secular condition of man, though the same thing may, in certain cases, have both a religious bearing and a secular one. For instance, look at Babylon: she is evidently the great corrupt and corrupting thing in religion; but this does not hinder Babylon from meddling largely in the things of the world. And, in fact, this is one of the evils which form Babylon-the bringing in of the things of the world even in spiritual questions, and thus producing confusion, hateful to God and most seductive to men. Hence we get Babylon in chap. xiv. as well as in chap. 16. Chapter 14, gives us a summary of God's dealings at the end of the age in respect of religious matters, whether bright or dark: grace, testimony, and judgment. It thus helps us a good deal as to putting the closing events in the order in which they come to pass. For instance, the fall of Babylon is the third link brought before us in the chain of chap. xiv. First, there is the complete remnant of godly suffering Jews-a holy remnant, associated by grace with the Lamb, i.e., on Zion. Then, there is the testimony of everlasting glad tidings to the earth and all nations. And, thirdly, there is the fall of Babylon. On the other hand, in the vials, the fall of Babylon is the last of the seven. From this we gather, that the judgments set forth by the preceding six vials must be before the fall of Babylon. That is, the first six vials may be successively accomplished

while the Jewish remnant is being formed, and the everlasting gospel is going out to the Gentiles. The last vial involves the fall of Babylon, which answers to and is the third link in the chain of events given us in chap. 14. This is of importance, in order to hinder confusion. The warning as to the worship of the beast, the pronounced blessedness of those who died in the Lord, the harvest, and the vintage of the earth, are events clearly all subsequent to Babylon's fall.

Having had, then, the general and orderly view of God's ways both in mercy and judgment, now we learn in chap. 16 a part of these ways, the details of some of which are connected with chap. xiv. 8, and perhaps simultaneous with what precedes that verse. It must not be supposed, therefore, that the vials take place after chap. 14; the earlier ones might be poured out while the remnant there spoken of is being formed, and the testimony going on. Or they might occur rapidly after these, and before the fall of Babylon, but, certainly, the last vial includes the fall of Babylon; and its fall is, as clearly, before the very solemn events which follow that announcement in the latter part of chap. 14.

But, now, let us look a little at the scene introductory to the vials. "I saw, as it were, a sea of glass mingled with fire." This is a type borrowed, though with changes, from the temple: The tabernacle had the laver, the temple its molten sea—a larger vessel, but of a similar nature, in which the priests used to wash their feet and hands when they went in to do the service of the Lord. In this case it is a sea of glass, and therefore not used for purification. It was not a sea of water, but was solid. Its being of glass indicates a state of firm and settled purity. It was not that which was used to cleanse, but the image of purity that nothing can defile. These saints are no longer in the circumstances where they have need of cleansing through the washing of water by the word. That was over. Now it was "a sea of glass mingled with fire;" showing plainly through what circumstances those connected with that sea had passed. They had experienced fiery tribulation, they had glorified God in the fires. This plainly does not refer to the church. "In the world ye shall have tribulation:" that is true of us. But this refers to a special tribulation — "the tribulation" of which Scripture frequently speaks. "I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image," (clearly, then, they are contemporaries of the Beast), "and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God." Thus, what is referred to here is not washing in the sea, but standing on it. Their earthly circumstances characterize them; but the scene of conflict is now past. The Spirit of God anticipates all which marks those who had been troubled by the beast, but who are viewed as victorious over him. They were, persons that had been cleansed already; they had done with the present scene, and were now out of it all.

They were standing on the sea of glass. Not only this, but they had "harps of God." That is, they are occupied with divine joy and praise—the contrast of all they had passed through.

I would just observe, though it be a slight circumstance, that there is a little clause here which should be left out. It is said in verse 2, "them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name." But the clause "and over his mark" has no business here whatever. The same thing occurs in chap. xiii. 17: "that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" Now the truth is that the little word "or" inserted there before the clause "the name of the beast" ought to disappear. The difference in the sense is that "the mark" might be either the name of the beast or

the number of his name; not some third thing distinct from these two, as the ordinary text might suggest. There were two ways in which the beast marked his followers; one was by his name, and the other by the number of his name but there would be no sense in saying, "the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name." The number was his mark, though not the only one; there was the name besides -the one, I suppose, being closer and more appropriate than the other. Here, then, were those (chap. xv.) who had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over the number of his name. Even in the English Bible, the word "and over the number" is printed in italics, and only adds to the confusion with the words, "over his mark." I refer to it to show that, wherever there is even such a little word as "or" introduced by man into the Scripture, the sense is impaired. In the language which the Spirit uses, it is but a letter that makes the difference: but you cannot even put a letter into the word of God, without so far injuring its beauty and perfectness. Through the mercy of God, His children may get little harm through such blemishes; but it is in part, because they do not think enough about it. If they were to work a system out of them, they might fall into some serious mistake in not a few cases. But happily (this is the way God mercifully shields them) they do not really receive the false doctrine; they do not know what it means, and therefore leave it. But evidently God does not intend that persons should merely escape error because they do not understand it. It is the mercy of God thus to preserve His people from evil; but it is His overruling hand rather than the intelligent guidance of the Spirit. The Book of Revelation has suffered more than any other from the carelessness of man; and as we are looking into its contents, and it is so desirable for God's children to have clear thoughts about His word, I thought it better to notice it, however small a matter it may appear. I remember having myself been perplexed to make out the difference between the mark of the beast and its name and its number. But having examined the question more closely, I found that there was really nothing to decide about. A little fox had slipped in and spoiled the vine. In short, the mark was not something different from the name or its number, but was the general term for both-the name expressing probably a more intimate and entire subjection to the beast than the number of his name.

Those who had won the victory over the beast were not his creatures or slaves; far from it-they were the servants of God. Here they were seen standing in conscious victory, outside all the scene of their conflicts, having the harps of God. And they sing—it is intelligent praise. "They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb" There is a double character in their praise, quite different from the song of the elders. It is very blessed, but not the same thing. The strain of the elders was far deeper. These saints are not here spoken of as priests of God, much less the heads of heavenly priesthood; nor have they the emblems of royal dignity. They sing the song of Moses. They were true saints, but with an undoubtedly Jewish character. They sing the song of the Lamb too. If they did not know the Savior, they would not be saints at all. But withal they sing the song of Moses. They will not stand exactly in the Christian position that we now enjoy. They will be in circumstances of trial, when the church has passed out of the scene into heaven. But still the Lord will have a company of saints then who will suffer for Him even unto death; for the beast has power to slay-and it may be thus, that, by their own blood, as well as by the blood of the Lamb, they gain the victory over him Here they are seen at rest, like Israel of old, on the triumphant side of the Red sea, to which there seems an allusion; as the plagues of the next chapter clearly refer to those that fell upon the land of Egypt. "They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord

God, the Almighty! just and true are thy ways, thou King of the nations (ver. 3).” Now if we look at Psa. 103:7, we find that the Holy Ghost brings into prominence these two things—the ways of Jehovah and His acts. “He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.” The distinction is between the deep hidden ways of the Lord which Moses knew, and the public acts which were conspicuous before all Israel. Here these saints take up, not His ways first, but His displayed works. “Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty.” And then they rise to celebrate His ways. “Just and true are thy ways, thou King of the nations” —I must say so, for King of saints is a thing unknown in any part of the Bible. But King of nations, given in the margin, is most true. It is a reference to Jer. 10: “Thou art great, (ver. 6,) and thy name is great in might. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?”

Just to show the general truth, I would observe that, while Christ is King, yea King of kings and Lord of lords, and while it is our joy to acknowledge it (for Christians, indeed, are the only persons now who rightly know the Lord Jesus Christ to be King), yet it is remarkable how the Holy Ghost avoids calling Him King in relation to the church. I am aware that well-known hymns may speak of Him as “Our Prophet, Priest, and King” Scripture often calls Him King, but never in that relation to us. Of course, the object of God's word is not to weaken our subjection to Christ. Whatever weakens that comes not from the Spirit, but from Satan. But is it not plain, that the relation of a king and people is not so close and binding, neither is it so full and all-embracing in its authority, nor does it involve such elements of affection as the relationship of Bridegroom, or of the Head? And this is the way in which Scripture views the church. There is the deepest and most constant subjection, but it is that of members to their Head, of the bride to the Bridegroom. Thus is the church subject to Christ. It is true that we are translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, but in what capacity? He has made us kings in it. So we are represented as singing, in the first chapter of this very prophecy, “Unto him that loveth us and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.”

While it is perfectly certain, then, that we are in the kingdom, yet are we there not as subjects, though assuredly subject. We joyfully own Christ as our Lord, whose grace has made us kings with Him, and not as a mere people at a distance under Him. This in no way lessens our responsibility to obey Him, any more than it takes from His glory. It puts us in the place of showing obedience on a firmer ground and from higher motives; it is not the weakness of flesh under law, but the heart purified by faith and strengthened by grace. He fills us with a sense of the glory, of which we are joint-heirs with Himself. He raises us in hope to the throne; but the effect is that, even in heaven, we shall fall down and cast our crowns before Him. He loves that our obedience should take, as it were, the form of worship. So we see how the Lord preserves these two things intact. On the one hand, He delights that we should look up and know that the Lord Jesus is ever immeasurably above us; but then, on the other hand, Christ has set us now in earnest of the Spirit, as by and by in possession, on thrones, that He may show that it is not merely as servants, nor as a people that we are subject, but as those whom His perfect and divine love has associated with Himself; for we are one with Him He will put us on thrones around Him—on His own throne; but even then subjection to Christ can never disappear. Never will it be anything else, whether in the kingdom or in the eternal state. Wherever you look, never can the church so far forget what she owes her Lord and Bridegroom as to wish it otherwise. It were to abuse His grace, to take from His glory; and the church must and ought to resent that. If the elders, at the sight only of His taking the

book, fall down before the Lamb and worship, much more should the thought of any indignity offered to Him call forth the strongest feelings of indignation and horror. The church may be and is loved of Christ: but in anywise to take equal ground with Him were to display that spirit of antichrist, "whereof we have heard that it shall come, and even now already is it in the world."

"Just and true are thy ways, thou King of nations." If I apprehend aright, the reason why "nations" are" introduced here is that these vials were about to be poured out very particularly upon the Gentiles. Under the trumpets, and in chaps. xii.-xiv., we had the Jews, or at least the Jewish remnant, in an especial way the object of covenant mercy. The very phrase (chap. xi.), "the ark of his covenant," connects itself with that nation, for the covenant was made with them. Therefore we saw, too, that the woman in the next chapter (chap. xii.) represented Israel. Then we had the remnant of godly Jews (chap. xiv.) But now these saints are celebrating the righteous ways of God with the Gentiles, or nations. He is King of nations—not merely of the Jews. Jewish relationships appear in both, but they are distinct visions, opened each by a very different sign.

"Who shall not fear thee O Lord, and glorify thy name for thou only art holy, for all nations shall come and worship before thee, for thy judgments were made manifest" The word used for "holy" here, is an unusual one. It is the same that is used where Scripture speaks of the mercies of David, and its Hebrew counterpart is frequently found in the Psalm For there are two words in both languages to express holiness. There is the common word for "holy," which, for instance, occurs in Rev. 4 "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." It always implies separation from evil—absolute separation. The holiness spoken of here implies mercy, which is exceedingly sweet. We are about to hear of the vials, and the first thought would be, "how dreadful!" God's wrath is going to be fulfilled. But who and what is the God whose wrath is about to be consummated? He whose holiness is full of mercy. "Thou only art holy." It is the holiness of mercy. "For all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments were made manifest." They look through the judgments, and they see the end always is that "the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy." So that, though this storm of judgment may be about to fall, they look to the end from the beginning, and they celebrate accordingly the holiness of the One who in judgment remembers mercy. No doubt there must be wrath, and God must complete it, because the first outpouring of it will only make men more hardened. But let it be observed, it is not a question of Christ; there is no such thing as the wrath of the Lamb here, not even in men's minds; it is the wrath of God. In chap. xiv. He who reaps the harvest is the Son of Man. But here God acts according to His own part, before Christ comes from heaven to execute wrath. This indicates that the vials end before the final judgments of chap. xiv. commence, because the close of the chapter shows us the Son of Man coming Himself to execute judgment.

And therefore they can say, as they look up, "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee: for thy judgments are made manifest." (Ver. 4.) Another important truth; for, as we are told in Isa. 26, as long as God is showing mercy, what does man? He takes advantage of it and refuses to learn righteousness. But the time comes when the Lord will lift up His arm in judgment; and what then? "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." So here, "All nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments were made manifest." Such would be the ultimate result.

The prophet, again, looks, “and the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.” (Ver. 5.) Mark the difference. In ver. 19 of chap. xi. (which introduces the scenes of chaps. xii.-xiv. before the vials) the temple was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant seen, but no ark appears now. There it was the fit pledge of the security of God's faithfulness—of His unchanging purposes towards His people Israel. But here His enemies are in question, rather than His people; and there is nothing but the tabernacle of the testimony, which is inaugurated, as it were, in judgments on the men of the earth. It is opened for wrath as yet, not for gospel triumphs. It is God's testimony judicially to the condition of man. Man is guilty: what then could result? “The seven angels came out of the temple.” And terrible to say, they come out of that in which no ark was now seen. And what would be, what is, the effect Nothing but wrath—the more awful because it flows from the sanctuary. They “came out of the temple, having the seven plagues.” This was all that God could do for man now. “Clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. And one of the four living creatures” —the great presiding executors of the providential judgments of God— “gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials.” The word means bowels, or cups, and is taken from the vessels used for pouring out drink-offerings, &c., before the Lord. It is not drink-offerings now, but wrath coming down from God— “seven golden vials full of the wrath of God who liveth forever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no one was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.” Thus, neither present worship of God nor intercession was any longer possible. It was vain for any one to attempt entering there: the smoke of the fire of God's righteous anger filled the temple, the smoke proving the fire that was there. Thus there was no possibility for any one, not even for a priest, to enter. None could draw near now: wrath, the smoke of judgment, filled it. Just as at Sinai, where smoke is represented as going up from the mountain as the smoke of a furnace; and, as in Psa. 18, “There went up a smoke out of his nostrils and fire out of his mouth devoured.” So, now, there is the image of God's offended majesty against sin. There was nothing He looked upon here below that called for mercy on their behalf. The time was past for intercession. Accordingly the judgments rolled forth, and the wrath of God is finished. (Ver. 6-8.)

## Lectures on Revelation 16

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Now I must say a little on the details of God's judgments in chap. xvi. It is a painful subject and humbling, when we think that this is the declared end of man's vaunted progress. I will endeavor, then, briefly to glance at these seven plagues. "And I heard a loud voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God unto the earth." (Ver. 1.) Wrath is no longer restricted to the third or fourth part, but the whole scene is given up to judgment. There is not only an increase of severity, but the whole of that which had once the light of God, and had far and wide enjoyed outward privileges, is in complete apostasy, and given up to His wrath.

"And the first went away and poured out his vial unto the earth; and there came a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the Beast, and them which worshipped his image. And the second poured out his vial unto the sea," &c.

The first four vials resembled the trumpets in this, that they both fall on the earth and sea, on the rivers and fountains of water, and finally on the sun. There may be certain differences; for in the trumpet it was the third part only of the sun that was smitten. Here it is simply said, "the sun." Still it was the same sort of sphere. Further, I think the objects of these plagues, the earth, sea, &c., are not to be taken in a merely literal way. The language is symbolical. Not that there would be, to my own mind, the slightest difficulty in believing that God could do these things in a literal way, if this were His will. He has done so before now. He has turned the waters of Egypt into blood, filled a kingdom with darkness, and inflicted plagues similar to what we have here: so that there is no difficulty in conceiving such a thing again. But the only question, is, whether this is what we are to gather from the chapter before us. I think it is not; and that God here alludes to plagues that were once literal in the land of Egypt, but that are now referred to symbolically, representing certain judgments of God. First, the ordered and settled parts of the world are smitten, as with an ulcerous distemper, where men were branded with subjection to the apostate civil power and his idolatry. Next, there is a judgment on the sea; that is, on the out side regions, where profession of life quite died out. The third, I conceive, represents by rivers people formed into a separate condition or nationality, like waters flowing in a distinct channel, under special local influence; and by the fountains rather the springs of a nation's prosperity. All the active principles assume the form of death. The third judgment comes down to smaller details than the former ones. The fourth is on the public supreme authority.

In verses 5-7 we have a word or two, which, when corrected or rightly read, adds to the full force and clearness of the passage: "Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast," &c. I noted (on chap. xi.) that the words, "and shalt be," were of no force at all here, and that another word is the best attested— "the Holy One." It is the very same word that occurs in the fourth verse of chap. xvi.—the less usual one for "holy." Before these vials are poured out, God is celebrated in His merciful holiness. "Thou art righteous." This was plain, for God was pouring out His wrath upon men in their iniquity, just because He was righteous. But more than this— "Which art and wast, the

Holy One." Before the vials are poured out and now again, while they are in course of pouring out, that remains true. The angel of the waters attests His graciousness, even while He was judging thus, which might have seemed to contradict it. He, too, from below, answers to the song above. If the saints, at rest on the sea of glass, celebrate Him as merciful in holiness, the angel confirms it.

"For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou gavest them blood to drink; they are worthy." (Ver. 6.) There was righteous retribution -they were worthy in an awful sense. "And I heard," not another out of the altar, but "I heard the altar say." (Ver. 7.) It may seem extraordinary to speak of "the altar saying," and no doubt the other words were put in because people thought it so strange. But there is nothing really contrary to prophetic usage if it be taken in a symbolical way. No person would intentionally foist a difficulty into Scripture: but it is too common to try and remove that which is not understood out of the word, thus to make it plain according to ordinary modes of thought. Besides, you have what might prepare the way for it elsewhere. In chap. 9:13, it is said, "I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God." Here (chap. xvi.) the figure goes farther: the voice is said to be that of the altar itself. To me it confirms what we have had various occasions to remark-the fact and impropriety of men's meddling with Scripture. "I heard the altar say" has great force for this reason. In an earlier part of the book, the souls of those that were "slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held," were seen under the altar. Now here, that altar which had witnessed their blood is said to cry out to God and to own that His judgments are true and righteous. In the first book of the Bible, the earth is spoken of as crying out to God about the blood of Abel: much more should not the altar cry about the blood of God's martyred saints? To my own mind it is uncommonly pertinent. If it had been merely an angel, this would have been a comparatively distant link; for an angel, though ministering for them who shall be heirs of salvation, does not enter so directly into their sufferings, and can scarcely be said to have immediate sympathy with them. But God not only had seen the bones of His slaughtered saints scattered upon the cold mountains, as poets sing, but regards His saints as so many burnt-offering arising up before Him, whose blood, or rather the altar which witnessed it, calls for indignation and wrath. The Lord may seem to slumber for a season, but when He awakes, as one out of sleep, He will surely avenge their blood on them that dwell on the earth. And now it is at hand. Great Babylon had not yet come into remembrance, though, from the beginning, the special corruptress of the truth, and drunken with the blood of the saints. But meanwhile the altar could not hold its peace, and the Lord listens and hears. For the God who heeds the groans of the creature will surely answer the altar's cry about His slain ones.

"And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire." (Ver. 8.) It is a judgment on the sun, the figure of supreme government; so that what ought to have been the means of light and comfort-that greater light which rules the day-now becomes the means of scorching men with fire. The effect of its tyranny is intolerable. "And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which had authority over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory." (Ver. 9.)

"And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the throne of the beast," &c. (Ver. 10.) We are now entering upon a somewhat different class of judgments; for the last three vials differ from the first four, just as the last three trumpets had a different character from the rest. And so with the seals also. It is evident that the fifth, sixth, and seventh vials are apart from the preceding four. The judgment falls upon the throne of the beast and upon his kingdom-not upon the beast Himself, who

is apparently untouched by these vials. He is reserved, for the judgment of the Lord Jesus Himself at His coming, and will be destroyed by His appearing. Here the stroke is merely upon the seat of his authority; and just, as of old, king Pharaoh was hardened, so here men blasphemed the God of heaven, and repented not of their deeds (ver. 11). When God manifests Himself as the God of the earth, this will not be possible.

“And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates, and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings” —not exactly of the east, but— “that are from the east might be prepared” (ver. 12). The Euphrates was the great eastern boundary of the Roman empire: it was the regular line to which they carried their conquests. So that the drying up of the Euphrates would seem to mean that this side of the empire would be left open as a way for the eastern powers to come and mingle with those of the west, or to assault them. One effect of this vial, then, would be the removal of the eastern barrier, and thus the way of the kings from the east is prepared, probably for the great closing conflicts.

But there is more than this. “I saw out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs.” (Ver. 13.) It is just before the end. These murmuring spirits issued out of the month of the three powers which we have seen in chap. xiii.: out of the dragon, the open enemy of Christ; out of the beast, the revived Roman Empire; and out of the false prophet, the ecclesiastical beast that had lamb-like horns, imitating Christ's power, but now spoken of only in his deceptive religious character. “For they are the spirits of demons, working signs, who go forth unto the kings of the whole habitable world, to gather them unto the battle of [that] great day of God the Almighty.” This confirms what I have just stated about the Euphrates. It is a general collision of the kings of all the habitable world. Not only the western powers are arrayed for the war, but the eastern also. It is the great day.

But now comes an important parenthesis. -As was shown under the sixth seal and the sixth trumpet, so here we find an interruption also. “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame” (ver. 15). It is the Lord coming, but then He is coming in judgment to surprise the earth; and this is the reason why the figure is used. The thief comes unexpected and unwelcome: still more unpalatable will be the Lord's coming to the earth. But there will be saints to whom it will be welcome, to whom His appearing will bring deliverance by the judgment of their enemies. And they are enjoined to watch closely the daily life. “Behold, I come as a thief.” Not so the Lord presents Himself to us, save as telling us how He will appear to the world or the professing mass cast into it. When speaking to us He says, “Behold I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” Need one say how much more blessed is this word.? The idea of coming as a thief involves surprise. To us He will come as a gracious One, who loves that we should have the rest of our affections and our glory in and with Himself: this is our own proper portion and hope. Here it is not rapture to heaven, but Jewish deliverance by judgment.

Then, after closing the parenthesis, it is said, “And he gathered them together into a place, called in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon.” It might seem strange that it should be said, “He gathered;” for in the 14th verse the evil spirits, or spirits of demons, were those that went forth to gather the kings together. The reason is this. In the language that the Holy Ghost employed, the word is capable of meaning either he or they gathered. There are certain cases where, in that language, it

is doubtful whether “they” or “he” be meant; and this is one. The word “demons” is of such a nature, that the verb which has it for its subject might be either singular or plural. Here the subject is not expressed, so that it is quite optional as far as this is concerned: all depends upon the sense of the context. If it be “He gathered,” the reference of course is to God Almighty, who might be said to do it through the intervention of these unclean spirits. If it be “they gathered,” it would simply mean that the spirits of demons had accomplished the purpose for which they were sent forth. In verse 14, they proceeded to gather the kings; and in verse 16, the kings are gathered together.

The place of gathering that is mentioned here, called in Hebrew Armageddon, is, I think, an allusion to Judg. 5 “The kings came and fought; then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo.” It was not that Megiddo was a place of any great size or note: God looks to the principle at issue. Israel was in a low state. There was a prophetess that the Lord used to inspire them with courage: and when encouraged by her, a great victory they won over their enemies. The same place is referred to in 2 Chron. 35:22, when Josiah received his death-wound in battle with the king of Egypt. But I doubt that this is the incident referred to by the Spirit of God here. For Megiddo in the day of the Judges was a memento of joy and triumph to Israel. In the time of Josiah it was a place of gloom: all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. It was “the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon” (Zech. 12:11), which led, historically, to the writing of the book of Lamentations. For this reason I think that Armageddon (i.e., the mountain of Megiddo) here refers, not to the sorrow for Josiah in 2 Chronicles, but to the gathering and defeat of the Gentile kings in Judges. For here it is the Lord beating down the nations. He had been acknowledged as king of the nations in Rev. 15; and, therefore, to make this an allusion to a time when the godly Jewish monarch was slain by a Gentile would be little appropriate. But to derive it from the day when Israel had been led on to victory even by a woman well fits into the scene that is here described, when the kings of the whole world will be gathered only for a more terrible destruction.

A few words must suffice for the last vial. “The seventh angel poured out his vial upon the air; and there came forth a loud voice from the temple [of heaven], from the throne, saying, it is done” (ver. 17). This is a more penetrating judgment, and one more affecting men and their very life-breath than any we have yet seen. It is on the air, necessary to the existence of men. Symbolically it represents a judgment on something that is as essential to the life and comfort of men as that which we breathe. All is over as regards God’s wrath here poured out.

“And there were lightnings and voices and thunders; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not seen since a man was on the earth, so mighty an earthquake and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell,” &c. There was a vast and unexampled convulsion of civil associations—breaking up, not only what is called here “the great city” (which means all that was established within the Roman Empire), but more than that, the cities of the nations fell; that is, it was the ruin of all that the nations, outside Rome, had built up politically. And furthermore, Babylon the great—that counterfeit of the bride, and hitherto successful system of religious evil, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth; Babylon the great—came up in remembrance before God to receive from Him the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. The latter term Babylon the great refers rather to moral character or idolatry.

“And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men great hail, about the weight of a talent, out of heaven, and men blasphemed God,” &c. (Ver. 20, 21). It is not necessary that I should speak particularly of the explanation offered by the leading historicalists. The hailstorm Mr. E. used to apply to some fearful infliction of France, the most northerly of the Papal kingdoms, much as he had surmised in the minor judgments, as he would say, of the seventh trumpet. And so it yet stands in the text of *Horae Apoc.*, vol. 4., p. 23. But in a note he observes that many expositors prefer to explain it of the Russian power. “And in revising my work, and comparing this prophecy with one in Ezek. 38-39., which seems to point to Russia’s taking part in the great pre-millennial conflict as will be noticed in the end of my next chapter, I cannot but incline to the same view. I observe that the great hail is here predicted as falling after, not before, the great city’s tri-partition.” Having already expressed my opinion on the similar case of Rev. 11:19, and shown the error of connecting this verse with the seventh trumpet, which is the assumption of these writers, I need only remark that the reference to Ezekiel is peculiarly unhappy, because the scene there is Palestine, not the Papal empire or the west; and that the issue is not the infliction of a plague on others, and God blasphemed in consequence, but the utter discomfiture of the Prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, with his vast company, and God sanctified thereby. “And I will plead against him with pestilence, and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hail-stones, fire and brimstone.” Thus, it is God who plagues the invading Russian with great hail-stones, not they who so fall on others. “Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself (not then men blaspheming God because of the plague of the hail); and I will be known in the eyes of many nations—and they shall know that I am the Lord.” Indeed, the reader has simply to examine the context of the Jewish prophet in order to be satisfied of the absurdity of connecting that scene with the hail-storm of the seventh vial. For the Jews, nay Israel as a whole, are supposed to be at that time restored and united in their own land, when Gog invades it through lust of conquest. There is no ground to think that such is the case under the vials. Neither does Mr. E. so judge, if I understand his remarks on the first occurrence of “Hallelujah” in Rev. 19, which he views as an indication of the conversion of the Jews, after the final catastrophe of Babylon, when the outpouring of the vials is completed and has marked the time for it.

Before God establishes His purposes in power, you see a moral accomplishment working either in His people or in the world. Thus, if God is to bring about a separation of His people by judgment, which we had in chap. 15., I doubt not that His people are even now being separated graciously by the Spirit of God. If, on the other hand, there is to be a delusion over men’s hearts, so that even the judgments of God will only aggravate the evil to all appearance, something analogous is at work in our day. Is it not a fearful sign that Christians, in the face of such words as these, can look for any real amelioration of things as they are? Here we have the true closing scene disclosed by God after all the efforts and boasts of men. The most-favored part of the earth, its civilized and moral center, is to be full of apostasy, and the wrath of God must be finished there. This must be ere the Lord Jesus Christ will come in glory to set up His kingdom: for He it is in person who shall deal with the Beast. Under the vials it is God chastising in wrath. But what is the effect? Men blaspheme God. Instead of repenting, they become worse and worse at every step.

It is a terrible thing to see this evil morally spreading over the world; but the Lord is also separating, by faith and affection, to Himself. May we hold fast grace! We shall need it. It is the

only place, not merely of privilege, but of security. What should we think of the man who would merely go as far as he thinks he must not to be lost—who wants to be saved, but withal to be allowed to sin as much as, in his opinion, he may, so as to escape at last? But as the Lord is separating by personal affection to Himself, where there is faith, so, on the other hand, the opposite of it we find where faith is lacking. God gives up men to delusion, and all that He does in the way of judgment only hardens them. Preparatorily this is going on now: men are yielding to and choosing their own delusions. The full pure truth is distasteful and dreaded. So that, in spite of God's Spirit working to present truth with all simplicity to His people, men are obstinately comforting themselves with the dream that things, after all, are not so bad; that if there are things to be regretted, the remedy is at hand. For now there are so many ways of helping on the poor—such delightful minglings of the rich with them—such promising unions which invite all men to come together and join, spite of their little differences, for the great object of social advancement, the improvement of Christendom, and the regeneration of the world. But all this is founded on the miserable delusion which ignores and denies that God's wrath is to be filled up and poured out upon Christendom. It is impossible that Christians who realize that such judgments are near, could lend themselves to schemes which assume the very reverse. Suppose a person going to execution—what would be thought of a Christian man who, knowing this, would occupy the criminal's time with chemical experiments, or a lecture on mechanics? Much less would one who feels the solemn truth that the world lies, hinder such a sentence as God's word declares. Christ alone is the power of God to set things right. When He comes, and not before, the tide of evil will be stemmed, and Satan bound: but not even divine judgments, apart from Christ, can avail.

May we be in earnest, always seeking to connect Christ with our testimony! That is the great practical purport of all for the present moment. Sometimes we may hinder blessing by presenting the truth, but not in Christ, if I may so say. The heart must be sadly perverted, if it refuses Him. The Lord grant that we may keep these two things before our souls - . thorough separation from all that is of the world, and this place of victory held with joy, our hearts taking up the song of which the Lamb is the subject, as He alone gives us the power to sing it. May we ever think of the world as a judged scene, conscious of the terrible wrath it cannot escape! This will not make us distrustful of the power of Christ to deliver individuals, but it will preserve us from any insensibility as to either the world's evil, or the divine judgment which awaits it.

## Lectures on Revelation 17-18

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THE Spirit of God has shown us the destruction of Babylon under the last vial. We are now to learn in the chapter before us what was her special evil, what there was so hateful to God in Babylon; not only what her own conduct was, but what there was in her connection with others, that God could endure it all no longer—why it was that He singled her out above others for His vengeance. And this is not a thing that we can put aside from us, as perhaps some others may be in the Apocalypse, as comparatively foreign or distant. For though there may be, and, I doubt not, will be, a further development of Babylon, yet God looks at it as a moral whole; as a system of corruption that has been at work, and that is still at work. When judgment can delay no longer, it may have taken a peculiarly aggravated form; but the evil exists and is active. Babylon is not so much the snare of a profane man, as it is that of one who, having a certain idea of religion, seeks to reconcile it with the world. It is then that the corrupting influence becomes a source of chief danger to the soul.

Now we shall find that, first of all, the chapter gives us the vision which the Apostle John is taken to see; and next we have a certain explanation of that vision. The angel's word commences more particularly in this way at the seventh verse, while the first six verses are occupied with recounting the vision. One other remark I would make before proceeding farther. This chapter does not carry us forward as a matter of history. It is rather the Holy Ghost looking back upon the character, conduct, and relationships of that Babylon which had been already shown as the object of the judgment of God. This is worthy of note, because, if not seen, there is inevitable confusion in our thoughts of the book. In chap. xiv. we had the fall of Babylon in connection with the evil workings of Satan, and with the dealings of God in goodness or power, including the Son of man's judgment at the close. Now, it is of no little moment to have the precise niche where this intervention of God is to be looked for, and that we had in the next place. For we have seen in the providential judgments of God—by which I mean those which are executed by angels, and not by Christ directly—Babylon reserved for the last stroke of His wrath under the seventh vial. It is God acting—God still employing angels. The Lord Jesus is thus far quiescent, if I may so say; not acting yet in vengeance personally upon the earth.

In Rev. 17 the Holy Ghost stops to enter into the details of the moral cause of Babylon's terrible fall. "There came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore, that sitteth on [the] many waters" (ver. 1). It is described as a harlot here; not only as a woman, but as a corrupt and licentious one. And I suppose that no dispassionate person would doubt that this term is used in special reference to religious corruption. A little lower down, in the third verse, Babylon is said to be sitting on the beast; here she sits by the many waters. There is a slight difference in the Greek. Sitting by the many waters does not mean that she was literally or locally thereupon, but beside them. Thus, you may say, for instance, that London is seated on the Thames. Now, no one of common understanding would suppose the meaning to be that London was actually situated and built over the bed of the river, but that the Thames is the stream which characterizes London. So

here, in the same way, you have the whore described as seated on (i.e. beside) the many waters. These are explained in verse 15 "The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues." The figure implies the wide-spread influence which this abandoned woman exercises. But there is more than that. In the second verse it is said, "with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication." This is something more than her seat by the mass of waters. It is immediate intercourse of an evil kind carried on with the kings of the earth-her power in drawing away and seducing the affections from Christ, who is the only worthy object of all love and worship. In the sphere where God's light had been displayed, the chiefs or leaders are led away by the corruptress, and the people are entirely ruined as to all discernment of the mind of God.

Nothing, then, can be plainer than the general bearing of these few verses. We have the vast influence of Babylon set forth by the figure of a woman seated beside many waters; next we have the great leaders of Christendom, the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication with her; and then the inhabitants of the earth stupefied with the wine of her fornication. There are different degrees of guilt, but all were the result of connection more or less intimate with Babylon. "So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness" (ver. 3). In spite of all her pride and worldly glory, to the saint of God the wilderness is the only place where the Spirit leads him to behold her. Had John gone in his own spirit (so to speak), it might have carried him to look at Babylon, not in the wilderness, but rather in the mirage of some garden of the Lord. But he was carried away by the Spirit of the Lord into the wilderness, and there he sees the harlot sitting upon a scarlet-colored Beast; a closer thing, and of more ominous import, as we noticed, than her description at the end of verse 1. This shows us the actual position of the woman. She has supremacy over the Roman empire. For there can be no legitimate question that the beast here brought before us is that same Roman empire, of which we have heard such terrible doings, and so portentous a doom, in previous chapters. It is the beast that is full of the names of blasphemy, as his heads were so viewed in chap. xiii. 1. Babylon is a whore or corrupting system; but blasphemy is what belongs to the beast. It is a more open and audacious evil. The woman's way is more seductive, and one that lays hold of the affections. But blasphemy is the expression of a power that fears neither God nor man. As for the woman, though seated on the beast, glad to be exalted through him, and willing to use him for her own purposes, yet is she distinctively the religious system of the world. She is "arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls:" the obvious figures of all that the world counts great and glorious and beautiful here below. But she has also "a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication" (ver. 4). In spite of all her glittering, gaudy splendor, how the Holy Ghost brings out together with it, what is most nauseous! He has no words too strong to express His sense of what He see is in the cup. It is "full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication." By "abominations" in Scripture regularly is meant idolatry. This is the gravest distinguishing feature in Babylon. As the Beast was full of names of blasphemy, so was the harlot's cup full of abominations. But besides the idols, there was this corrupting influence, here called the uncleanness of her fornication. They are two distinct things. There might be the depraving influence without the idols; but in Babylon both are actively at work.

In the Apocalyptic churches it was observed that in Pergamos appears the doctrine of Balaam, who taught, among other things, to commit fornication. When we came to Thyatira, there we saw Jezebel, who imposed idolatry by force. Here in Babylon, both are united. The evils that crept into Christendom in those earlier days, discerned in Pergamos and Thyatira, both appear concentrated and undisguised in the cup of this wicked woman. They were budding then; now they are full-blown in all their hatefulness before the prophet. They may be tricked out in all the meretricious tinsel of this world; but nothing could change or hide their real character before God.

“And upon her forehead a name written Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth” (ver. 5). There was great pretension to truth—a masterpiece of the enemy in counterfeiting the revealed ways of God. The mystery of Christ and the church had been revealed; now there is the mystery of this anti-church; not the mystery of faith and godliness, but of lawlessness—Babylon the great, seated on the Beast, the awful contrast of the church which is subject unto Christ. Here she rules the Beast. The holy city, Jerusalem, comes down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God,—not “that great city,” but the holy city, which is the true way in which God characterizes the bride, the Lamb's wife, the glorified church. This religious system, on the contrary, sprang from the earth,—not to say more than that,—enticed into its defiling embrace the kings of the earth, and extended its malignant influence far and wide. Such was Babylon, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth. Whatever evil thing was used by Satan for the purpose of ensnaring the affections from Christ, whatever idolatrous object took His place, she is the mother of them all. Babylon is the great parent of all the worldly systems, and of the idolatries used by the enemy to draw away souls entirely from the Lord.

But there is another thing mentioned in the vision still more extraordinary to the prophet's mind. He could not doubt the religious character of this woman, Babylon the great; he sees her, at the same time, drunken with the blood of the saints. He could well understand a religious system becoming corrupt. Jerusalem itself had alas! become as Sodom and Gomorrah, first for guilt, and afterward well-nigh for judgment. But that the woman should be drunken with the blood of the saints was what filled even John's mind with great astonishment. Bad as passion is, it is not the worst thing that the heart of man is capable of. The deceivableness of false religion is that in which Satan displays his direct power. For the very thing which God has given for light and blessing, to win the heart and to bring into fellowship with Himself, is abused by the enemy to make a man a worse man than ever—twofold more the child of hell than before.

But astonished as John must have been of old to hear such a sentence upon beloved but guilty Jerusalem, here he has to wonder still more when he learns that the woman who had assumed the place of the church should not only end in the same blood-guiltiness, but should be drunken with the blood of the very martyrs of Christ Himself. This was what filled his mind with amazement indeed. (Ver. 6.)

And we now come to the explanation which the angel furnishes of the vision. It is of deep importance; for you will find that when God interprets, He not merely opens to us that which needed solution, but He gives us truth more abundantly. “And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and the ten horns” (ver. 7). This is, in fact, the main subject of the chapter; it is a description of the woman more particularly, and of her connections with the Beast,

the Roman empire. For manifestly and beyond denial, the woman and the beast are two distinct things. For if the beast be the Roman empire, as those will have seen who have followed me through this book, the woman cannot be. She may be seated upon the beast, but for that very reason, she is not the same thing. And not only the woman is distinct from the beast, but, as we find afterward, the beast turns against the woman and takes his part in destroying her.

Therefore it is quite evident, that it is impossible to suppose the woman and the beast to be the same thing. In the end they are so violently opposed, that the one becomes the destruction of the other, So that the woman must necessarily be some power distinct from the empire. We shall find more reasons that confirm their distinction.

“The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and is to ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition; and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was and is not and shall be present” (ver. 8). I have no hesitation in saying that so runs the last clause of the verse. This would not be questioned by those who are sufficiently acquainted with the subject to form an opinion. Persons may differ in the explanation of the verse; but there can be no doubt that such is the true reading. The common text here is almost contradictory of itself, and affords no just sense.

Now let us consider a little what is taught by this verse. The beast is the Roman empire, as we have before seen. But we learn here that that empire was to cease to be. The countries and peoples that composed it would remain; but its imperial unity would cease to exist. The fractional parts would be there, each nation having its own independent government, but there would be no corporate bond. Such is their condition in our day, as it has been for more than a thousand years. “The beast which thou sawest was and is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit.” The angel characterizes this empire as no other empire ever has been or could be. It was first found in its strength, then to cease, and afterward to rise again. But there is an exceedingly grave feature that attaches to the reappearance of the empire; it is to have a diabolical character. And as it comes from Satan, so must it end with Satan: it shall “go into perdition.”

These things could not be said in the same sense or strictness of any other empire. None that has appeared yet upon earth, but what has had its rise, its splendor for a little while in full power, and then its extinction, sudden or gradual, never to rise again. I am not aware of any example to the contrary. Most peculiar is the lot of that empire which was so prominent in the Apostle John's mind. It existed in the time of John: under it indeed he was personally suffering. But it was to terminate its career; and then, after a condition of non-existence, “to rise out of the bottomless pit.” “They that dwell on the earth shall wonder. when they behold the beast that was and is not, and shall be present” When this beast reappears in its last Satanic phase, men would be carried away by their excessive admiration of it.

“Here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth” (ver. 9). This is a material point, though simple. It is a local mark, intended to indicate to the wise mind, where this woman has her seat. There ought not to be the least doubt, that it is a reference to Rome. The word “Babylon” had been used, it is true, in speaking of it, as Sodom and Egypt were figuratively applied to Jerusalem in chap. xi.; but the Chaldean capital had nothing to do with the city of Rev. 17 That had long passed away as an imperial city; whereas, in verse 18, it is said of this Babylon that “it reigneth over the kings of the earth.” More than this, the

literal Babylon in Chaldea was built upon the plain of Shinar. Here the woman was seated on seven mountains; and all the world is aware that such is the well known characteristic of Rome. In prose or in poetry, if any city were described as being seated upon seven hills, every one would say, That must be Rome.

But we have an additional explanation in the following verse. "There (or they) are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come: and when he cometh, he must continue a short space" (ver. 10). Here the Holy Ghost, without entering into detail, refers to the various forms of government which had succeeded each other in this famous city, Rome. There were seven heads or kings; not contemporary: for five, as it is said, were fallen; one is, and the other is not yet come. This implies succession. Five different modes of government had already passed away. "One is," namely, the imperial form then subsisting, when the apostle lived the line of Caesars. Another of the seven was not yet come, but when it did, it must continue a short space.

"And the beast that was and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition" (ver. 11). There is this peculiar character attributed to the beast here, that in one sense he would be of the seven, and in another he would form an eighth or extraordinary beast. It would, in certain respects, be a new form of power altogether, while, in others, it would be but a revival of what had gone before. The reason is, that the beast, at first, might be like any other empire. It might owe its rise providentially to human revolutions; for men, when they have tried democracy, are apt to grow weary and disappointed, and then some vigorous arm takes advantage of the reaction, and a despotic power is the not unnatural result. I have no doubt this will be the history of the west. The eighth head, though an individual ruler, is spoken of as the beast or empire, because he is morally the empire, directing, as supreme, all its authority. He is of the seven, for there will be a continuance or taking up of some such form of power as before. But he will be the eighth, because there will be something so peculiar as to deserve a name to itself. That new feature may refer, perhaps, to the diabolical power that stamps the beast in his last or quasi-resurrection state.

"And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and authority to the beast." It is not that we are to suppose "one hour" to mean mystically, or literally, such a brief division of time, as it has been the vain attempt of so many persons to try and make out. But the meaning is that these are kings who receive power as kings for one and the same time with the beast. Abstractedly, ever so many years might be meant, or only a short period. It is not a question of what an "hour" means. These ten horns should not merely have their period of power, but they receive it for one and the same time with the beast. This is most important to the due understanding of this verse. It overthrows all the prophetic systems which have attempted to make out that this chapter has been exhausted in the past or present. The common view of the chapter may have a certain measure of truth; because, as I fully believe, the book of Revelation was intended to be partially accomplished all through the dispensation: but the complete fulfillment is only at the close. The barbarian hordes came down from the north and east of Europe and Asia, about the fifth century, and overspread the Roman empire, bursting over Europe from all points, and attacking it within and on every side, so that the empire, already too extended, and crumbling under its own weight, found it impossible to hold up against these vigorous and repeated assaults from so many quarters. By degrees, the Goths and Vandals, &c.,

settled themselves in the various parts of that which was once united. They were the enemies that destroyed the empire.

But this is not what is shown us in the chapter. It tells us that these kings receive power for one hour with the beast. Supposing that these barbarian kingdoms had been exactly ten in number, even this does not answer to what we have here; because we are told that these ten kings receive power for one and the same time with the beast. They only received their power when the beast was dead, when the Roman empire had fallen. They destroyed the beak, first, and then erected themselves into independent kingdoms.

Nothing can get rid of the sure and simple fact that these powers were not kingdoms in the empire while the empire lasted. They had not power with the beast, much less did they give their power and strength to the beast. For nothing is more certain than that when they became kingdoms, it was at the expense of the empire. When it was gone, they took up the broken fragments, and converted them into separate kingdoms, France, Spain, &c.-but the empire as such was fallen. The beast that is described here acquires power as an empire at the same time that these kings receive their power as kings. In other words, they are contemporary powers, the beast and the horns, and not that which we find in history at all. This prophecy shows us that the empire is only formed as such again at the same time that these ten kingdoms have their final power. They are co-existing, and have their dominion together-each of these several kingdoms working to a common end under the beast.

Thus, in the facts of the past, first of all there was an united unbroken power, when the Roman empire governed the western world, and did not admit of different independent kingdoms within its own limits. There was no such thing than as the kings of Spain, France, Italy, &c. It was an all-absorbing power, and would never have allowed such separate kingdoms to cluster round the imperial city. But the peculiarity of the future revived empire, is that it will admit of distinct kings. Two things will be united which never were before. First, there has been the empire without kings-at least, so it was in the West, which is the question here. Then there were kings without the empire. The new feature will be this: neither the beast without the kings, nor the kings without the beast; but both the beast and the kingdoms going on together. This is what never has existed before.

Hence the chapter gives us a view of the Roman empire as it will be resuscitated by the power of Satan, and shows that then it is destined to have the peculiar stamp of the enemy upon it. God Himself allows him to have his way for a short space, and to perpetrate all his wickedness before the end. Just as Judas was filled with Satan when he was about to betray the Lord for the price of a slave. He was under the influence of Satan before; but it is said then that Satan entered into him. He or his highpriest was the son of perdition: and this is the very name that is given to the future power that will rise up against the Lord from heaven. This empire is to rise up out of the bottomless pit, and to be clothed with a diabolical character and energy; and when it comes up, there are to be ten kingdoms or kings, exercising regal power for the same period with the Beast.

The next verse (13) shows us the policy common to them. "These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast." They are not jealous of the beast; their great object is to exalt him and to aggrandize his power. And what is the issue? what the use they make of their combined power? "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them (for

he is Lord of lords and King of kings), and they that are with him, called and chosen and faithful” (ver. 14). So it is evident from this, that the heavenly saints are already gone to the Lord. It is not that the Lord receives them now; they are with Him in the conflict, and before the conflict begins. And this is confirmed by chap. xix. 14. “And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, clean and white.” Whence did they follow Him? Is it not from heaven? Christ is coming to attack the great adversary upon the earth whom Satan employs. But it is heaven that opens, and thence not only Christ comes, but “they that are with him, called and chosen and faithful.”

This is not a description of angels: for though angels may be said to be “chosen” or “elect,” they are never said to be “called.” “Called” is a title only used of men, and supposes the working of grace. Angels are not, and, I think, could not be, “called;” for if an angel were in a position of evil, he could not be delivered out of it; and if he were in a holy position, he would not need “calling.” Calling always presumes a condition out of which the called are brought. The believer is brought from a place of sin and misery into one of salvation and blessing. This is true of man alone. He is the only creature of God that is called, through God’s grace, out of a state of ruin into the blessedness and glory of redemption. And as in chap. xvii. 14 there is this expression which shows us positively that saints and not angels are spoken of, so in chap. xix. 14 we are told that the armies, which follow the Lamb out of heaven, are “clothed in fine linen, white and clean.” Now it is said in the same chapter (ver. 8) that fine linen is the righteousness of saints. People may ask, are not angels said to be clothed in linen? Yes, they are; but it is not the same term that is used (e. g. in Rev. 15:6). The Spirit of God employs a different expression to describe it, never confounding the two things. The plain inference then is that the glorified saints are in heaven, with the Lord, before this conflict begins—not that they then meet the Lord in the air. When the Lord comes, we do meet Him in the air. Then it is that He will take us to heaven. But when He comes in order to judge and make war, we come with Him from, heaven. How long a time may have expired while we are in heaven, and before we appear with the Lord, we do not know; but the coming of the Lord for the saints is an event that takes place some time before He comes with them. When He comes with the saints, it is for the purpose of judging the beast, and his adherents. The church will come with Him then, and the Old Testament saints too, for they will have been caught up to the Lord at the same time that we are, I doubt not. “These shall make war with the Lamb” —but the victory is sure,— “and the Lamb shall overcome them, and they that are with Him, called, and chosen, and faithful.”

“And he said unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations and tongues. And the ten horns which thou sawest, and the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh and burn her with fire” (ver. 15, 16). This is another verse of great value for understanding the chapter. The common text thus says, “the ten horns which thou sawest upon” the beast;” but it ought to be read, “the ten horns which thou sawest and the beast.” The importance of the change is this (and there is the best authority for it), that when people read, “the ten horns upon the beast,” they might have imagined that, the Roman empire being gone, then these ten horns took its place. This would very well have suited the past history. But, as we have seen before, that the ten horns receive their kingdom for the same time with the beast, so here the Spirit of God says, “the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast.” Thus any person who weighs this with verse 12 would perceive how

mistaken the usual thought is. "The ten horns which thou sawest, and the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate," &c. J

That Daubuz, (1720,) should have labored under a mistake, as to the comparative claims of the two readings, one can conceive; that Vitringa, spite of his historical lore and general ability in expounding, should have ignored the best witnesses then known, is not perhaps very wonderful. But it is passing strange that in the face of the unanimity of critical editors, presenting every shade of religious prejudice and prepossession, such as Bengel, Griesbach, Lachmann, Matthaei, Scholz, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Voter, &c., who had no preconceived notions to blind their judgment, Mr. E. should persist in an opinion so unfounded. It is not a small matter to slight the evidence of the three uncials, forty cursives (some of the highest character), of the Acthiopic, Arabic of the polyglotts, Syriac, &c. If Wilkins is to be depended on, the Coptic, it seems, should be added. As to the Vulgate Mr. E. is misinformed. The common printed text, no doubt, has "in bestir;" but the very ancient and best copies (including the Amiatine in the Laurentian Library of Florence, Fuld. Demidov. Tol. &c.) read "et bestiam." Whatever may be the inconsistency of Popish apologists, I cannot admire Protestant special pleading which contends for a reading that is utterly indefensible. In this instance, at least, it is plain which of the two is most open to the charge of blunting the edge of the prophetic sword. Rome is Babylon; but the ten horns AND the beast (hardly the Pope!) are yet to unite in destroying her. It is not the first intimacy or alliance which has closed in hatred and violence. The false prophet continues with the beast to the end; but this neither proves nor disproves that Babylon is the Romish church. Why may there not be a new form of religious wickedness in the Holy Land, even when Rome, city and church, shall have disappeared?

A little sample of this, not of course executed by the beast or by the kings, but by the will of the people, appears in the French revolution of the last century. There you had an infuriate people rising up against the woman (the ecclesiastical power that had ruled the earth being completely given up to the rage of the multitude, and men enriching themselves at her expense). But we must never meet one wrong by being guilty of another. The Christian way to deal with evil is ever by grace lifting us above it. Events that have been seen on a small scale will be then realized on a larger one. Good men—men worthy of honor and in other respects wise—have not only desired to get rid of Babylon, but have been too apt to sanction any means with that aim. I say not that saints are not to rejoice in her fall; but that they ought not to mix themselves up with the instruments of it, nor to cherish unfounded hopes of blessing then and thence.

Rome will always be the central city of this corrupt system. "The woman which thou sawest is the great city that hath sway over the kings of the earth" (ver. 18). There will, no doubt, be a further development of it before the close; for she who sits as queen has given proof even in our own days, that she can invent new doctrines, and boast new miracles, developing wickedness without conscience and with feeble protest, nay, in the midst of all but universal acclamations. And it will be true, I conceive, of Rome, as in all other cases, that before the judgment comes, her cup will be full. It was so with the iniquity of the Amorites, when God judged them. But God will employ the powers of the earth to deal with Babylon. No doubt the kings will think well of themselves for getting rid of such a scandal; but then the means used may be as bad as that evil itself. And what will be the issue? The millennium? Quite the contrary—they will make war with the Lamb. They will not only have got rid of Babylon, but will combine against Christ in the most direct and deadly way.

When this day comes, man, instead of being any the better for having turned against Babylon, will give all his power to the beast: and, bad as Babylon is, the beast is more openly wicked. Nothing is more hateful to God under the sun than religion, where it is used as a cover for corruption; and this is Babylon. But as for the beast and the false prophet, they will deny, God altogether. As we read in the Psalms, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Babylon is not that willful rebellious spirit. Therefore, after having destroyed Babylon and eaten her flesh and burnt her with fire, after having enriched themselves at her expense, and having destroyed her, we find that those avenging powers will go to fight with the Lamb; they will set themselves in open opposition to the One of God's choice, the holy and heavenly Sufferer.

"For God hath put in their hearts to do his mind, and to do one mind, and give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God shall be finished (ver. 17)." How remarkable it is to observe that thus it is man accomplishing the words of God, when his only thought is that he, in hatred to God, is blotting out the most corrupt sham from the face of the earth! No doubt Babylon will have deserved it; but the kings, without knowing how, are but doing servile work for Him whose authority they disown. In vain they will have had all God's dealings under the law before their eyes; they will have had the whole Christian revelation of grace and holiness, founded on and shown in the cross of Jesus, only to despise it; they will have heard and rejected the latter-day testimony, the gospel of the kingdom, which will be given by other (and I believe by Jewish) witnesses, after the church has been taken to heaven. Anything pretending to be a new testimony, while the church is on earth, must be false. But when the church is gone, God will take up His people Israel again, and will give a testimony, not so much meeting souls so as to put them in connection with Christ in heaven, which He is doing now, but sending out, far and wide through the habitable world, as a witness to all nations, the glad tidings that God's King is coming to set up His kingdom; "and then shall the end come."

It is fellowship with Christ as the suffering One which gives us deliverance from the spirit of the beast, the spirit of proud independence. How shall we overcome with the Lamb? We must be with Him, and this is what gives the victory now. Our strength, in whatever comes before us, is to ask, How does the Lord feel touching it? Supposing I am invited to go to some great sight, to join in some movement that may be very attractive naturally, the question is, Does the Lord sympathize with it? Is he there? And if this applies to all other questions, still more does it decide in what concerns the holiest things, as, for instance, worship. What does the Lord sanction and sympathize with? What is most according to His heart and mind? What really, and intelligently, and obediently gives Him honor? Such is the sole key for faith in this world; it unlocks many a difficulty, and through the opened door there is a plain path for our feet.

The Lord grant that none of us may put aside those solemn truths! To neglect His warning is the very thing that tends, so far, to bring about the state of things of which we have been speaking. That which carries away in this direction now is slighting the words of God; though we shall, in the end, be fulfilling them to our own shame. We shall be proving how little we have known of real heart-subjection to God—how little we had appreciated the grace in which we stand, and how little rejoiced in the hope of His glory. We shall manifest that we have not counted it an honor to bow, and to give up what we may like, or what others might like for us, where it was really a question of God's will. For to us this should decide all; because "we are sanctified unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (i.e. to the same character of obedience which marked the

Lord Jesus here below). It is not Christian to obey Christ merely because we must. Christ never obeyed thus. If a man only does a thing because, if he does it not, he knows he will be punished, it shows plainly that his heart is not in it—he does not want to obey. Christian obedience is the desire of doing a thing because it is the will of God, and the Holy Ghost gives us power through presenting Christ to our affections. Remember that to this we are sanctified. Cleansed by the blood of sprinkling, instead of its being a menace of death, as in Ex. 24, we are sanctified unto the obedience of Jesus Christ. We are not under the law, but under grace, and led of the Spirit of God. May we enjoy the power of His Spirit, and the fullness of His salvation! Bear in mind, however, that we are thus saved, not for ourselves, but to obey after the same pattern and measure of obedience as that of Jesus.

## Lectures on Revelation 18

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I THINK that the case of Babylon illustrates strikingly how a judgment which is said to be God's may, at the same time, be executed by men. In chap. 17 we saw that God will make use of the ten horns or kings, into whose dominions the Roman earth, at the close of this dispensation, will be divided, and will give especial prominence to what is called "the beast" (i.e., the power that gives a bond to those otherwise broken parts). The great imperial chief, and the various separate but no longer independent powers, his vassals, will be the instruments that God will employ for inflicting His judgment upon Babylon.

Now in chapter 18 not a word of this occurs; and the difference is so obvious and great at first sight, that some have laid it down with decision that the judgment in chapter xvii, is previous to that in chapter 18.; that the destruction of Babylon in the former is merely a human one; that her doom in the latter is subsequent and directly from God. But I would not dogmatize as to this explanation, conceiving, on the contrary, that, in the same judgment, you may have God's and man's side of the matter, God dealing providentially, and men as His hand in striking the blow. If there be a real distinction, the "fall" precedes the final destruction; a total degradation of her state ensues upon the assault of the civil powers, followed by an urgent call to God's people to come out; and then her utter everlasting destruction on the part of God.

If we look at Babylon in the Old Testament, justly did the prophets speak of its destruction as the day of the Lord upon it. "This is the work of the Lord of Hosts in the land of the Chaldeans." (Jer. 1.) At the same time it is quite certain that the medium through which God brought about the ruin of Babylon was the celebrated Cyrus, the leader of the Medo-Persian army. In the same way, in Rev. 17, we see the actual human instruments, The influence of Babylon extended much beyond, but the ten horns of the Roman earth were those powers that radiated as it were from her very center. And therefore it may be that God mentions in that chapter that these powers which seemed to be so linked with Babylon as her abject slaves (the imperial power itself having been but a beast of burden to her) are to turn round at a certain time appointed by God, and to wreak their vengeance, scorn, and hatred upon her. They have human objects, no doubt, but they are accomplishing this work of God's righteous retribution. God will have it put into their hearts to agree and give their kingdom to the beast, until His words be consummated.

But in chap. 18 human instruments disappear, and when this other angel comes down from heaven, he says not a word of those that God had employed as the means of the fall of Babylon; they are left out, and the Lord God it is that judges her. God could just as easily have destroyed Babylon without the ten kings as with them. They were in no way necessary. But it is a part of His government of the earth, if she had reigned over kings and committed fornication with them before, to employ the ten horns to humble her at the end. They might be bad men with bad objects. It is therefore necessary to show the saints distinctly that God is against Babylon. Let us now consider a little this new point of view, in which we have only two parties presented in the scene. There is Babylon upon earth, and there is God in heaven; and the Lord God is against the proud queenly

city that had been the constant enemy of God and of His people—that had been the instrument of Satan to entice and draw away her victims into an evil alliance and into idolatry. Such is the way Babylon is looked at here. And yet this Babylon is the one that arrogated to herself the place and function of making God known. For the great city is no longer a heathen power: not like Babylon of old, a stranger outside, and used of God as a means of inflicting chastisement on His people Israel.

I conceive that the Babylon of Revelation is most clearly a reference to Old Testament Babylon, but applied to New Testament subjects. In the Old Testament, the great thought of God was His people and land: and there was also a city on which His eye rested with special affection. For not only He loved the people but was interested in what He gave the people. But that has entirely passed away since the rejected Christ was crucified. From that moment till now there has been no one place more holy than another. That which had been the holy city was now the very field that became stained with the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. But God's eye saw that in process of time the great city of the earth would profess Christ's name, and would take advantage of His own revelation, and out of the corrupted and fallen state of Christianity would make a system of its own—borrowing all that it could take from Judaism, and, mingling it with its own Gentile evil, so as thus to work out a system most hateful to God, and seducing to man.

I have no doubt, therefore, that in this chapter it is Rome that is the peculiar object of God's judgment. Not that Rome is all that is meant by Babylon, but that Rome is the center of it; because it is, of all others, the most guilty in God's sight. Not Rome in the pagan form; not merely Rome in our own days, bad as it is, and becoming increasingly wicked. But I think that the Babylon of the Apocalypse is not merely that system which is now opposed to Christianity, but Babylon when it will have opposed the last testimony that God will send—this testimony of the Son of Man's kingdom that is about to be set up over His beloved people. For God never gives up His purpose. It is part of the character of God never to repent of His gifts and calling. Where it is not a purpose of mercy, but a threat, God may and loves to bend. That He does so we know from the case of Nineveh (though the blow was then struck and will be again at some future time). He will allow men to say that He has changed his mind when it is a question of delaying a punishment for sin; but wherever, on the other side, it is God's purpose to bless a people, He never gives up that. This is worthy of God. He is full of mercy. He will allow His prophecy against Nineveh sent through His servant Jonah to appear to be set aside; He does not mind what men say about that. He is quite willing for them to think that He has in mercy changed His mind, and that the sentence of destruction has been set aside, where there has been humbling and repentance before God. But the blessed thing we find is this, that, though man's failure, the church's failure, and the like may seem to have jeopardized the blessed purpose that God has in store for His people, and for his own glory, all that is of God comes out only the brighter another day.

Let us look at Babylon in its past history, and consider how that name was suited to express the special evil that was to grow up out of the corruption of Christianity. In Gen. 10 we have the first mention of Babel. And there we have it connected with a willful man, who had first shown his cunning with regard to brute beasts, and who soon began to turn against his-fellows all the craft and experience he had acquired in a lower sphere. Nimrod is the first person with whom you have Babel associated. It is man concentrating power in himself. But in the next chapter (Gen. 11) we have another idea. It is not only one man exalting himself and others subjected to him by fraud or

force, but a grand effort of men gathering themselves together to build something permanent and strong and high—a tower that would reach toward heaven, and gain them a name upon earth. Here, then, we have the two thoughts that are always more or less connected with Babylon. It may take the form of an individual who exalts himself, or of men combining for some notable enterprise; or it may be a mixture of both principles.

Now this you have further and still more plainly developed, when you come down to the history of the Jewish nation. God called them out as a people, and gave them special privileges and blessings. They fell into idolatry, the sin which sprang from Babylon as its great and primitive source; and Babylon becomes the chief means of judgment for the people of God, and the scene of Judah's captivity. There again you have Nebuchadnezzar, the golden head of the image, answering to Nimrod, and the great city that he built, which answers to the tower of Babel—the two ideas being united, as indeed they soon became at first, for Babel was the beginning of Nimrod's kingdom. The natural heart covets present exaltation for man on the earth, and this too clothed with a religious sanction, but with an idolatrous intent.

Now the Holy Ghost in the New Testament takes up the term “Babylon” and applies it to the corruption that was to issue in professing Christendom. When God saves souls, He does not allow them to choose their own path in the world; still less can He own their choosing their own path in the church. He who understands his place as belonging to God has his will broken. He is privileged to treat his nature as a dead and evil thing; not on the ground of a slave working for something and because he must, but in the liberty of a son of God—of one who has been blessed by God, and who has the interests of his Father at heart. But it is not his Father's will that, at the present time, he should meddle with the world, or have a place in it. In fact, in God's mind, the world is not good enough for the Christian, because it is practically under the power of the enemy. There is a time coming when the world will be put under the children of God, when they will judge the world. But this can never be until Satan is set aside, and Christ publicly exalted over the earth as well as in heaven. Meanwhile, the saints have to wait in faith and patience. And this is the argument which the Apostle urges in 1 Cor. 6 why brethren in Christ should have nothing to do with the world's judgments now. It was beneath their dignity as children of God to carry their differences there; it was vain to try to reform the world. Such a thought never entered the Apostle's mind. For faith, while it delights in the deliverance of poor sinners, looks at the world with God, as already judged, and only waiting for the execution of the sentence at Christ's coming.

But while the Apostle exhorts to subjection to the powers that be, he never says, You brethren, that have posts of honor in the earth, you are to continue there. This would have been to defeat the object of God, whose children are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. For God is not now undertaking to govern the world, save in His secret providence of course. When the kingdom of this world as a fact becomes His, He begins by judging the corrupters of the earth, and more particularly every iniquity done under the name of Christ. This is not what God does now: He is rather testing the souls of His people in a place of temptation, where everything is contrary to His name. If they are faithful, they will suffer persecution; if unfaithful, they may be made much of by the world. They may have its ease and honor, but they assuredly will be used by Satan to keep all quiet; for nothing gives such a sanction to evil as a good man who joins the world and gives it countenance. Remember Lot. He was in the gate of Sodom, the place where justice was administered. His position there was as dishonoring to God as it was miserable to himself. He bad

to be forced out of it at last; but even before he was taken out of Sodom, the well-watered plains had lost their value in his eyes. Remember also Lot's wife.

## Lectures on Revelation 18-19

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His righteous soul was vexed with their unlawful deeds, he himself was the object of their taunts. "This one fellow," said they, "came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge." They saw the incongruity of his position, as worldly men generally are quick to perceive the failures of the believer. Alas it is easy to understand how a man may be godly in the main, and yet found in circumstances where a Christian ought not to be, and that so far he is not a true witness for God. Whether I look at the individual Christian or at the church, I see that God's object is to have a testimony to His own glory in the world; to have those who are for Him, not in the way of putting down the world, much less of seeking to get the honor and riches of the world; but willing, for Christ's sake, to abandon what they liked best, because they look not at the things which are seen, but at the unseen and eternal. This is grace's triumph, and so far as it is true of us, we are real witnesses for God. On the other hand, if we are seeking to gain or retain the world along with Christ, the principle of Babylon is begun.

No doubt, Rev. 17, 18 go much farther than this, and show that a vast religiously corrupting system is meant. This is made very plain by comparing chap. 17:1, 2, 3, with chap. xxi. 9, 10, 11. In chap. xvii. 1, it is said, "There came one of the seven angels,.... and talked with me, saying, Come hither; I will shew thee the judgment (i.e. sentence) of the great whore, that sitteth by the many waters." But again, in chap. xxi. 9, we have another scene. "There came unto me one of the seven angels, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." Now it is evident that the Holy Ghost uses the same kind of introduction for these two women, for the purpose, I think, of our connecting them together. The same guide, one of the seven-vial angels, takes John, and shows him in the wilderness this earthly and corrupt woman; after wards, in the closing scene, he takes him to an exceedingly high mountain, and shows him a heavenly one. As the heavenly woman is the symbol of the heavenly church, so is Babylon of a corrupt religious body. It is that which takes the place of the church, and of being the witness for God upon earth, while it carries on every wicked commerce with those who are exalted here below. There is first, as usual, the carnal and earthly, then the spiritual and heavenly. After the false system of men and Satan disappears, the true is displayed in the glory of God.

Now, though we may look for a future development of Babylon, as opposing God's final testimony of the kingdom to all nations before the end come, yet I think that, even at the present moment, there need be no difficulty in judging where the features of Babylon are found most fully. It is a religious system that governs a number of kings; not an establishment that is at the mercy of the secular government. This is sin, but it is not the wickedness spoken of here. Babylon is an incomparably darker, deeper, and more wide-spread system of religious corruption—arrogating to itself the name of the church of God exclusively, setting itself above kings, intriguing with them, but at the same time maintaining its supremacy above them all; stupefying the masses with the poison of her exciting falsehoods: arrayed in all the meretricious splendor of the world; the fountain-head of the worst idolatry under the sun; and, finally, manifesting a spirit of blood-thirsty persecution against the true saints and witnesses of Jesus, under the awful pretense of His will and authority.

There is one that does claim this place—one that takes it as given by God—one whose seat and center are found in the very heart of what was once the Roman empire—a religious system that affects universal dominion, and that, in order to accomplish it, either wins by every enticing art, or extinguishes all opposition in the blood of heretics so-called, her victims “By thy sorceries were all nations deceived...And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain, upon the earth.” (Verses 23, 24.) For any unprejudiced person who reads this description of Babylon calmly, and asks himself, What is that professing Christian body so abounding in idols, so authoritative over the kings of the earth, so indulgent to the wicked, and so cruel to the righteous? it is impossible not to see the answer.

As to the Greek and Oriental churches, as to the English, Scotch, and other reformed national establishments, they are, more or less, notoriously subservient to the government which has to do with each of them. This may be, and I believe is, evil. But there are two ways in which a religious system may act contrary to Christ: either by a guilty subjection to the world, or by a still more guilty supremacy over it—in short, by being the world's slave or the world's mistress. At the present time there is only one religious system which pretends to have kings as its feet; and this is the church of Rome, which, therefore, answers to Babylon. It is a great mistake to suppose that we have done with it, or that its day is over. Rome may yet have a short-lived triumph. Its emissaries are actively abroad all over the world, and the foundations of Protestantism are being undermined every where. Those who are looking for Christianity, as things are, to overthrow all its adversaries on earth, are, in my opinion, in great danger of being deceived, through the unscriptural hope of getting a church as great or greater in good than that of Rome is in evil. For there will come a fearful struggle yet, and Rome, as I conceive, will acquire universal influence, and will put down every contrary voice, except the feeble whisper of the few witnesses spoken of here, who either die by her or come out of her. God will hear them, but as far as all open or public testimony for Him is concerned, it will be swamped by Babylon. And as to putting Babylon down, it is not by the gospel, or by the force of truth that it will be done, but by the will and wrath of men. Wherever Romanism gains the day, infidelity is the necessary consequence; and, therefore, Babylon always prepares the way for the last effort of the beast against the Lamb. But before the close, the beast gets thoroughly the upper hand, and Babylon becomes food for him and the ten horns.

Is this what is introduced to us here? Man is left out; the ten horns are not once alluded to in chap. xviii., though the kings of the earth are. The difference is this. “In the kings of the earth,” I apprehend, are embraced all those rulers of Christendom with whom she had been on terms of bad intimacy, or who had had evil connection with her. The ten horns are the chiefs of the final divided state of the empire and the active instruments of her devastation, as we were told in chap. xvii. The kings of the earth are her mourners, not her burners. Here in chap. xviii. her hour is come, and it is the Lord God that has judged her.

You will observe the voice from heaven here: “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (ver. 4). The receiving of her plagues is not the divine motive for separation. Men would be anxious enough about that. But the great thing that God looks for from His people is this—that they should not be partakers of her sins. I would put it to every Christian, how far is he in sympathy with God's mind, touching Babylon and its sins? How far does he feel the evil of it, and judge it?

Babylon does not seek heaven, but the earth—not the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow; but to sit as a queen and to see no sorrow. Babylon is content with worldly exaltation. If you steer clear of this, Babylon has no attractions for you; and the present danger of every soul from Babylon is the gradual caring for and allowance, in Christians, of what man values on the earth. Of late years there has been no little change in the thoughts of Christians as to the present enjoyment of prosperity and pleasure in this world. But there is amazing danger in it. For what is the great thought of it all? Man rising, progressing, exalting himself—man showing what he can do, and how improve; and this is sought to be connected with the name and sanction of Christ! Alas! it is Babylon the great. (Ver. 9-19.) In her we see the end of the heart's desire, along with Christ, to enjoy all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. I do not wonder at an unconverted man seeking to make the world pleasant: Cain did it, and there is such a thing now as going in the way of Cain. These are the people that handle all sorts of musical instruments, and the artificers in brass and iron. It is true that these things sprang up in a very early hour of the world, but still the Spirit of God does not tell us for nothing that they were in the family of Cain, not in the family of Seth.

Every child of man stands responsible to God, whether converted or not, to own his outcast state as a sinner: he has no right to drown his conscience in the pleasures and glory of the world. But bad as this may be, the thing that God most hates, and that He will judge in an awful and public manner, even in this world, is the tacking on the name of Christ to the indulgence of worldly lusts. Is it not the desire, even of many Christians, to have the grandeur and riches of the world at their back? I do not doubt that they heartily wish to have people converted, but they would like them to bring their earthly influence along with them. This is the spirit of Babylon. What the Lord looks for from us is doing the will of God, suffering for it, and taking it patiently. Any of these things which the heart covets will be found to involve the will of man. There is not a single position of distinction or of glory in the world, but what requires a man to give up a good conscience towards God. In other words, you cannot be a member of the world, and act faithfully as a member of Christ. If you value and wish to follow the world, you will make all sorts of excuses, and argue for a compromise; but this only shows how far the leaven of Babylon has affected your soul.

God gathers souls round Jesus—that is, Jesus rejected, and gone up to heaven. Therefore the Church is based on these two fundamental truths. She has got the cross, and she is united to Christ in heavenly glory by the Holy Ghost sent down. And the cross and heavenly glory will not mingle with the world. This is the very thing that puts my heart to the test. If Christ is my object, I shall not want the world; I shall be looking up, it may be feebly, but still looking up to heaven; and there will be the one object that God uses to strengthen me by, giving me willingness to suffer in the consciousness of having Christ in the glory. Whenever the church craves after something else, as the esteem and honor of the world, or even social improvement, she denies her proper glory.

Popery mistook the true character of the church, followed the Jewish system, and thought that people ought to bring their gold and silver and precious stones and goodly things to honor the Lord with. (See verses 12-14.) But God was wiser than men, and shows that all this pretense of honoring God is a mere sham, and that what people really want is to honor themselves. They are seeking what attracts and makes them an object of attraction, whilst they cover up their real object under the plea of the name of Christ. This is what God will judge, and what infects the whole of Christendom increasingly before judgment comes. You may ask me how that can be possible,

when there are so many societies growing up, and such an active energy, religious and moral, dealing with the various forms of public evil throughout the world. I am not telling you what I see, but what God's word shows—the all but universal prevalence, before the close, of a corrupt system, which plainly has its center in Rome, though taking a larger compass, so as to embrace every religious institution which, however opposed it may seem to popery now, does not link a soul with heaven. There is no safety for any person who is building on the earth. The heavenly saints will be taken away before the judgment falls upon Babylon. They are not referred to in that word, “Come out of her, my people.” This is spoken of God's earthly people by and by. But at the same time, its principle fully applies. For the essence of Babylon is the union of the world with the name of Christ. “Wherefore come out from among, them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.”

The Lord will not hold any man guiltless who has a conscience of what is due to Christ and does not follow it. To such I would say, this is what you will prove: you will go on for a time and be troubled with the truth, for it will condemn you; but, ere long, you will find that all taste for it is lost if you will tire of it and even turn against it, and then will become morally ripe for Babylon when it bids seriously for you. If I am guilty of the spirit of Babylon, this is what God looks at, as far as I am concerned. The person who travels in her path, cannot but be a partaker of her sin. And who so oppose the truth, as those that corrupt it? Who so hate, as those that are condemned of themselves?

There is a great work, not only of dissolving and breaking up what is old, but of uniting and amalgamating for various purposes, going on now; and as this was found in Babylon at the very beginning (Gen. 11) so, in the long run, it will be found to serve the purpose of that great city before the Lord God has forever judged her.

There will be, I believe from various Scriptures, an astonishing mixture of professing Christianity with Judaism: and the latter, as judged by the new and full revelation of Christ in the New Testament, is no better than heathenism. (Gal. 4) We know how tender the Spirit was in bearing with the weakness, the scruples, the attachment to old religious habits in such of the Christians as had been Jews (Rom. 14); but it was a very different thing when teachers sought to impose Jewish ordinances on the Gentile converts. The same Spirit treated a ritual borrowed by Gentiles from Jews as the same thing in principle as old and open pagan idolatry. “But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, of the world, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.” Popery is the most salient and hateful exhibition of this amalgam now; but greater abominations shall appear. Sacramentalism and Rationalism, in these and other Protestant lands, are each provoking the other to excesses previously unexampled. When, too, was ever known such public indifference, which desires leisure for commerce abroad and social development at home? The result will appear in the last stages of Babylon and the beast.

In the scene before us we have had the lament of kings, merchants, and all who had to do with the unholy traffic of Babylon. Heaven, and especially the “saints” (for so it should be read) and the apostles and the prophets, are called to rejoice at God's judgment, “God hath avenged you,” or literally judged your judgment “on her.” In the mighty angel's solemn act and word, which closes the chapter (ver. 21, &c.), not only are set forth the violence of her ruin and its totality, but the

reason of it as regards the nations—deceiving them all by her sorceries. The last verse adds another and awful cause—Babylon's inheritance of Jerusalem” in blood-guiltiness. “And in her was found the bleed of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.”

The Lord grant that, instead of merely looking without and occupying ourselves with condemning others, we may take good care that our own souls are preserved from the contaminations of Babylon. May our affections be kept true to Himself—the only real guard against the seductions of the enemy! We are espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ. “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”

(Continued from page 269.)

## Lectures on Revelation 19

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We are now approaching a brighter and happier portion of the book. The providential judgments of God, whether more secret like the seals, more loudly summoning men to repent like the trumpets, or more positive and distinct wrath like the vials, have had their full course. And now, when Babylon who had set herself up to represent God in His grace and truth arrogated to herself, exclusively, the name of the church, the spouse of Christ—when she was set aside forever, there was a burden gone—a heavy burden that had long grieved the heavens and corrupted the earth.

There was freedom, so to speak, now for God to make good the precious things which He had in His heart for poor beguiled men; and that too, as it ought to be, through, and to the praise of the Lamb. Hence you have two things connected together at the beginning of this chapter. The first is the call to rejoice. “The great whore” had presented an obstinate barrier to blessing; not simply because she was evil, but because her profession had been all that was holy and true, while in effect she it was who, above all, had been active in corrupting grace and truth as far as possible; she had utterly and systematically denied Christ in effect, though parading every where the outward symbol of His cross. In vain for her had God's character shone out in Christ; in vain had God pronounced on man and the world, in vain begun a new creation whose Head took His place in heavenly glory. She associated Christ with the flesh and the earth, and there sought and laid up her treasures. In vain had God brought light and incorruptibility to light by the gospel. She plunged men into deeper uncertainty and more positive error than ever, teaching them that every gift of God, and even salvation may be bought with money; cheating souls to sleep by the hope that all would go on well, and that the Lord was not yet coming in judgment. Thus had she shut up, as far as could be, the streams of blessing from the world. But now, the true and righteous judgment of God had smitten her, and there is rejoicing in heaven.

In ch. 18 there was universal earthly sorrow. The kings of the earth who had committed fornication with her lamented. The merchants that had been enriched by her were wailing. Indeed, there was no class free from her snares, and now all that had had to do with her were full of sorrow over Babylon. But heaven was called to rejoice, and here we have the answer: “I heard, as it were, a loud voice of much people in heaven,” not exactly, I heard, a great voice of much people, but “as it were a loud voice,” &c. The words “as it were” have been dropped, but I believe they ought to be inserted; just as a little lower down, in the 6th verse, it is said, “I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters,” &c. “And her smoke rose up forever and ever.” As far as Babylon was concerned, this was her sad amen, if I may so say, to the joy of heaven.

But we are not left with a vague rumor of praise and gladness, not knowing from whom\_ exactly it comes. There appear the twenty-four elders, who had understanding of the mind of Christ, and the four living creatures, that had been from the beginning associated with the providential judgments of God, or at least a certain part of them. These “fell down and worshipped God that sat upon the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia” (ver. 4). It is not Christ, who has taken His place upon His own throne yet, but they worship “God that sat on the throne,” &c. “And a voice came out of the throne,”

for all must speak now, "saying, Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude and as it were the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice and give honor to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come and his wife hath made herself ready," (ver. 5-7).

This is the second part. Not only is the harlot's day over, but the consummation of the bride's blessing is come. It is important to observe that this is not the moment when the Lord comes to receive the heavenly church. It is a scene in heaven, not the Lord Jesus meeting His saints in the air. A few verses lower down we do get heaven opened, and Christ comes out of it, and the saints follow Him. Nothing, therefore, can be more simple or certain than the inference that the saints were already there. They must have been in heaven before, in order to follow Christ thence when He comes to judge. Now, I ask, how did they get there? They are not said to be now taken up to the Father's house. We have the old familiar parties in heaven. But we have a new fact: the bride is married in heaven—the one for whom Christ reserves the brightest grace and glory—she gets ready; and now is announced, not merely the song of triumph, because of the judgment of evil, but the marriage of the Lamb "Let us be glad and rejoice." It is grace that flows out to others. "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen clean and white." As for the other woman, she had, somehow, fine linen too, with her pearls and her other adornments. (Chap. 18:12.) But it was never said of Babylon that it was granted her. We do not hear how she got it. But to the Lamb's wife, to her it was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen. The fine linen is the righteousnesses of saints. (Ver. 8.) God does not forget the work of faith or labor of love.

"And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb." There is evidently a peculiar solemnity in winding up this account. We are called upon to pause and listen and weigh. "These are the true sayings of God." To the suffering one, the one that had shared the Lamb's path of sorrow upon earth, to her was now given the fullest joy above. But the marriage-scene of the Lamb is only intimated, and not described here. The purpose of the Revelation is not to show us the Father's house, nor its inner scenes. God is never even called our Father in this book, because it opens out, not the intimacy of His love to us, but rather the righteous ways of God—the establishment of the kingdom and the end, when He is all in all. True, there must be the stern unsparing judgment of all this evil, and this we have had. But when God's part comes, and the full blessedness of the Church, there is but an announcement of it—the bride has made herself ready. It is left there, comparatively hidden. We are told of the invitations to it, as it is said in verse 9, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

And now I would just ask you to pause before going farther. Is it too much to suppose that the bride, the Lamb's wife, is a different symbol, i.e., represents a class of saints different from these blessed ones who are invited to her marriage? Who is it that God means by these two distinct symbols. As to the bride, the Lamb's wife, few would have the least difficulty. Almost every one sees in her the church—the one that is constantly presented in the New Testament Scripture as the heavenly bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. One turns to Eph. 5, where this relationship is brought out, and the development in her behalf of the fullness of Christ's affections. Observe, by the way, that there it is not merely a question of a future epoch, because the Holy Ghost shows that this is a relationship established now. "Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it." It is true, from the very first moment when God began to form the church on earth by the presence of the Holy Ghost

sent down from heaven.

The church is always regarded as a real and subsisting body, because, wherever the Holy Ghost is, there is the church. The Holy Ghost was sent down, and it is His personal presence that forms the church. That is the reason why those saints who depart to be with Christ are not directly spoken of as the church. Of course, individually, they are members of the church, but the scriptures which speak of the church contemplate its existence as the body of Christ on earth. Ordinarily, men talk of the church visible and invisible, militant and triumphant, and think that if Christians depart to be with Christ, there more particularly, and in the truest season, is the church. Yet the word of God never so speaks, but predicates the church of such as are called even here below, and are baptized by one Spirit into one body. No doubt, when all are gathered together, as a fact, in heaven, it will be the church, and is so spoken of in Eph. 5:27, and perhaps a few more texts. But in general in scripture, where the church is spoken of, it means the actual assembly of God on the earth at any given time. The Holy Ghost was there; and wherever the Holy Ghost dwells, He knits and joins the body into one. This is a weighty truth, and involves the most important consequences.

For I repeat, we are put into this relationship with Christ at the present moment. It is not that we have the hope merely of being made the bride of Christ by and by: we are espoused to Christ now. We shall have the marriage or the actual consummation by and by, when all the members are brought in. But the great and blessed and practical thing for our souls is, that we are brought into this position of union now. It is not only that the affection on which the marriage is grounded is true now; but more than this, the Holy Ghost is on earth uniting the saints to Christ in heaven, and making them as truly one with Him now as they ever will be. When Christ comes, there will be the removal of all hindrances-the putting aside of what Satan employs to make us forget our relationship to Christ, and the change of our vile body according to the body of His glory. But it is important to remember that our oneness with Christ as His body depends on the presence of the Holy Ghost, who has knit us up with Christ in heaven. We are one with Him now.

Here then, the Holy Ghost seems to show that there are others to be there, not as the bride, but as guests, so to speak. These are the called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. You may remember John the Baptist speaking of himself as the friend of the Bridegroom. I presume that those who are here said to be invited to the marriage-supper of the Lamb answer somewhat to the friends of the Bridegroom. They are not angels, for the word "called unto the marriage" would not be said of angels. These last are never characterized as "called," because the elect angels have always abode in their first estate. The calling of God comes to those who are in a low place to deliver them out of it. We have all, I suppose, been in the habit of assuming that if a man is a saint of God, he necessarily belongs to the church, and that there is only one common blessing for all saints of all times. Here you find the contrary laid down plainly, and upon the face of scripture. You have here a marriage-supper, and one singled out for especial joy, called the bride, the Lamb's wife (composed, it may be, of myriads of people, but here recognized in unity of blessing, being united under one term that of "the Bride," to show that they have the same portion of love and blessedness). But this is not true of all saints, for there are others who are not in this position; they are present as guests at the marriage-supper of the Lamb, not as His bride.

“And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.” What strikes me is the remarkable way in which that solemn appeal comes in, anticipating, it seems, that man would depart from it. John was going to worship the angel! the other extreme.

We had a similar caution in the beginning of the book. The Holy Ghost there says, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein.” He knew well that many would treat the book lightly and, not understanding, would count it dry and unprofitable. Alas! for such as say, “There is nothing for my soul there!” There is no book in the Bible where the Holy Ghost so encourages you, at the very threshold, to hear what God says therein, as the Book of the Revelation. And what makes it the more striking is, that the same kind of admonition occurs at the end, when we have been brought to the close of all the dealings of God, in the last chapter. “And he said unto me, These things are faithful and true.... Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book:” not merely that keepeth the sayings of some particular and choice parts of it, but of the book as a whole. There is the broadest statement: “Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.” Thus the Holy Ghost seems to have taken especial pains to warn us against the unbelief of our hearts, as well as against our idolatry. (Ver. 10.)

In the particular case (verse 9) it would seem that we have a guard against the indiscriminate notions which have generally prevailed, even among Christians.

“Write, blessed are they which are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb. And he saith, unto me, these are the true sayings of God.” Besides the Bride, there are other blessed persons, who will be there. Now, If I look at Heb. 12 I find that, in the roll of blessing, there are other classes besides the church of the first-born ones. “But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly.” For I must say, that such is the true meaning and connection of the verse. “The general assembly” does not belong to “the church of the first-born,” but to “the innumerable company” in verse 22. It may help to make it plain to any reader if it be borne in mind that the word “and” is always the connecting link, which introduces every fresh clause. And this is allowed by those who have no pretensions to what is called dispensational light—that is, by men who simply give their opinion on the genuine structure of the sentence. This being admitted, observe what you get here next: “Ye are come.... to the church of the first-born ones, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.” I am aware that there are persons who say that all this means the same thing; that the heavenly Jerusalem, and Mount Zion, &c., and the spirits of just men made perfect, are substantially no other than the church of the first-born. But just look at the passage again, and tell me if such a thought is allowable for a moment. God Himself is spoken of here, and Jesus the Mediator, and myriads of angels. Does any man mean to say, that these are all the same thing? And yet this might as well be said, if the other objects in the scene are not expressly distinct.

Let us look at the real meaning of these verses. “Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” When Mount Zion was referred to, a Jew would naturally think of the earthly city around that celebrated mountain. But the Holy Ghost says, this is not your portion. You are come to the heavenly Jerusalem; not to the city of dying David, but to the city of the living God. Then we have “an innumerable company of angels;” and this is called “the

general assembly.”

Here, then, we have different objects of millennial glory to which the saints were already said to be come in spirit. There is the Mount Zion. There is the heavenly city, the image of the glory that is coming by and by—the city for which Abraham and the other patriarchs waited. Next, we have the angelic host: and, then, the church of the first-born, not merely the local scene of heavenly glory, but the complete assembly of the heirs who are written in heaven, in contrast with the earthly first-born, Israel. Next, we rise up to God, the Judge of all. The Spirit has led us up from the Mount Zion. And now we are brought down from God in His judicial character to the spirits of just men made perfect. It is a very remarkable position in which these are put. We probably, if we had had to do with it, might have set them first; but the object was to correct the Jewish tendencies of those he was addressing, and to give prominence to what was heavenly. Then, having the heavenly seat of glory, and the church in their due place, we get God Himself as the Judge of all, and, following this, those saints who had known God as so acting on the earth. Hence they are called here the spirits of just men made perfect. They are, I think, clearly, the Old Testament saints. (Compare chap. xi. 39, 40.) For they, and not the church, are a class that could be most aptly described as the spirits of just men made perfect. They were in the separate condition then, and are so still. This will never be true of the church as a whole. When the moment comes for the church to leave the world and meet the Lord, there will be a part of the church upon the earth, not in the condition of spirits at all: there will be those that are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord. Of the church, it is said, “We shall not all sleep.” So that this description never can apply to the church of God as such.

We have had the church already separate and distinct from the spirits of just men made perfect. It is not more certain that these are saints, than that they are not the church. Carry the light of this back to Rev. 19. We read there of the church having made herself ready, and are not surprised to read also, as a distinct symbol in the same circle, “Blessed are they that are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb (ver. 9).” Let me not be misunderstood. I do not assert that the guests in our chapter are the Old Testament saints. It may be so; but I wish not to go beyond the light that God has given me. Possibly the marriage-supper may extend (though I doubt it) through the millennium, and this would greatly affect the character of those invited. Still, Heb. 12 shows us a class of persons, that will be blessed in the risen state, yet distinct from the church. And here, in Rev. 19 is a scene in heaven, and the bride, the Lamb's wife, is there; and, besides that, we hear, “Blessed are they that are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.” They are blessed, and invited here. Once they were sinners, but they have been drawn out of that place by the grace of God. Are they present, as guests, at the nuptials of the Lamb?

But now we have another scene. It is no longer what is going on above, but heaven is open: “And behold, a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness doth he judge and make war.” It is not a door opened in heaven, nor the prophet caught up there, as we had seen in chap. iv. Nor is it anything that had been done then or there. But now heaven is open, and the symbol of the power appears which comes to subdue the earth, not without the signs of victory. The horse is always the symbol of power connected with the earth; and it has the color of prosperity. It is a white horse. None, I trust, would be so foolish as to imagine that, when this blessed scene really comes, it will be a question of horses literally. It is the symbol that passed before the eye of the prophet, employed to show certain realities that will take place by and by.

Heaven is seen opened for the purpose of victory over the earth. And the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is plainly referred to as the rider: He is the one who directs the power—"He that sitteth on him [called] faithful and true, and in righteousness doth he judge and make war," (ver. 11). This is the subject of the chapter. In the next chapter it is not a white horse that is seen, but a throne, which is the symbol of another character altogether. The throne is for rule, not conquest the horse is for conquest, not a reign. The Lord Jesus is here seen putting forth His power to put down His enemies; as in chap. 20 we have the picture of His reign. "His eyes were as a flame of fire." That is, there is divine discernment in judging. "And on his head were many diadems" — or royal crowns. "And he had a name written, that no man knew but he himself," (ver. 12). It is not merely in a certain conferred glory that He comes forth, but in the exercise of His own divine power. It is quite true that He has a name given to Him, as we see in Phil. 2 "Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." But here it seems not to be that name of Lord which we all confess, but one "which no man knew but he himself." He has a glory that is essentially His own, distinct from that which was His reward and incapable of being shared with others; a glory which He has in His own right as a divine person. The name of the Lord here appears to express this, what He really is in His own nature. So, speaking of His person, it is said in Matt. 11, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father." And it is remarkable how this is stated, in order to guard against the workings of our minds. Wherever there is a question of His Son, God is ever jealous about it. When speaking about the Father it is added, "and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him;" but it is not said that the Father reveals the Son to any one. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father" —and there we stop. May we not say that thus God guards against the familiarity with which man would venture to analyze the person of Christ? There is nothing so offensive to God as this irreverence. The humanity and the humiliation of the Lord Jesus Christ are brought out plainly in Scripture. But there is no person in the Trinity whose divine glory is more strongly maintained than the Son's—perhaps none so much. It is remarkable that while the same sort of expression is used about God as such in Rom. 1:25, and about the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in 2 Cor. 11:31, as about Christ in Rom. 9 yet there is a further expression about the Lord Jesus that is not used about the Father. God the Father is said to be blessed for evermore, and Christ "God over all blessed for evermore." The Holy Spirit knew that man was prepared to outrage the person and envy the glory of the Son, and foresaw that, even where they professed to know Him, He would be crucified afresh and put to open shame. Therefore it is that there is no one thing the Holy Ghost more insists upon, than the glory of the Lord Jesus, as indeed He is the constant object of the enemy's attacks. It is the true key to almost every question of doctrinal difficulty one meets among the children of God. Whenever we get our souls firmly fixed on God's thought of glorifying Him, all the power of Satan will be used to hinder in vain. When Christ's person and will are fully seen, difficulty, whatever it may be, is at an end. And so with our practical dilemmas also: the moment we catch the connection with Christ, the difficulty is clean gone. Satan would hinder our having anything to do with Christ about it. He shuts out the glory and the word of Christ from our eyes; and when that is the case, we are ready to fall into any snare: for the same blinding power that destroys a worldly man, darkens and hinders the Christian.

But to return. We next hear that the Lord "was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood," (ver. 13). It is not now suffering, but avenging. He is coming to execute righteousness and takes His well-known title in revealing God to us. "The Word of God" had been peculiarly the name when the subject was the manifestation of grace and truth, which He used for bringing us round Himself, and putting

us in His own position. Here He is the Word of God as manifesting divine judgment. I do not think the Holy Ghost refers to that name in the verse before. It appears to me that the name written which no man knew but He Himself is purposely left in obscurity, that we may not forget the perfect, divine and essential glory of the Son of God.

Now we learn that the Lord for judgment did not come alone. When He came out of the opened heaven, there were armies that followed. "And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean," (ver. 14). And observe, that the words, "which were," though they are written in italics, are rightly inserted. The sense would be substantially the same whether you read it with those words or not; and therefore the English translators, seeing that it ought to be understood, but not knowing that it was really a part of the text, inserted the phrase in italics; but it ought to be adopted. "The armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." I have no doubt that angels will be in the train of Christ, for in some other parts of scripture angels are mentioned as coming with Him, and not saints, (as for instance in 2 Thess. 1:7.) In this passage saints are mentioned and not angels. Such is the way of the Lord. He does not state things as man does. He has always a moral object in view, and therefore just brings out that part of the truth which bears on the particular subject in hand. Thus, in Matt. 25, where the Son of man is seen seated upon the throne of His glory, all the holy angels are mentioned as being with Him. And why? Because the angels have a special connection with Him as the Head of human glory. (See Matt. 13:4.; xvi. 27; Luke 9:20) If the Queen of England were setting out upon some great political occasion, she would be accompanied by ministers of state. But if she were going to visit her army, those officials need not be there; but she would require the presence of the great military authorities. If this is so among the things of men, much more is there a suitable order in the things of God. The Lord is called the Son of man in reference to His glory as connected with the earth: and when He takes the world under His government, He has got His angels whom He employs as the messengers of His power. But He is not called here "Son of man," but "the Word of God," and angels are not mentioned in connection with that name. As the Word of God, Christ makes Him known. Here He expresses God in the way of judgment. He had shown Him in the way of grace; as we have in the gospel of John. Thus the Lord Jesus is the expression of all God's ways, whether in perfect grace or perfect judgment.

Here, then, the armies that followed Him out of heaven are saints. This very chapter decides the question it seems to me; because in the eight verse, the fine linen with which they are clothed, (and it is the same word that is used,) is said to be the righteousnesses of saints. Others might be there, but could not well be mentioned where the Lord is described as the Word of God. Whereas, the mention of the hosts of heavenly saints is very important; and for this reason: the chapter gives us the deeper connection of the saints with Christ. You have the Bride of Christ, the marriage of the Lamb, and the consummation of the Church's joy in heaven. As far as the world is concerned, no stranger intermeddles with that joy.

But now God is going to put down all the wickedness of man and of Satan on earth. Hence the Word of God comes from heaven; and those that had been the companions of His rejection are now the companions of His judgment. As it is said in chap. xvii. 14: "The Lamb shall overcome them and they that are with him, called, and chosen, and faithful." There was the announcement that, when the battle came, He would not be alone, but that the saints would be with Him—called

by grace, elect, and faithful ones; and accordingly here they are. “The armies which were in heaven followed Him, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.” They may not be all who will follow, but it is of importance to see that these are saints. The description proceeds: “Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he may smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God,” (ver. 15). This is a simple description of the various judgments that the Lord will execute when He comes. First, there is the word of power set forth by the sharp sword going out of His mouth. If any must be destroyed, it is enough for the Lord Jesus Christ to speak. “He spake and it was done.” The judgment was executed. But besides, “He shall rule them with a rod of iron.” This is the judgment which is referred to in chap. ii., where there is a promise to those of Thyatira who overcome, that they shall have fellowship with Christ in this judgment of the nations. “And he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God.” This is the unsparing judgment that we have seen before in chap. xiv. It is vengeance on religious wickedness, which is always reserved for the severest stroke that God can inflict. “And he hath upon his vesture and upon his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords” (ver. 16)—the same title that we have seen in chap. xvii. 14.

But while there was an invitation to the marriage supper of the Lamb, there is another and very different supper, the great supper of God. Here it is not the blessed whom God's grace invites. An angel speaks obedient to His word, and the instrument of His power, standing in the sun—the symbol of supreme authority. For it is not now a thing done in a corner. There are no terms of forbearance: all must be thoroughly open. Nor is it now a partial but a complete and final judgment. “And he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the great supper of God (for so it should be read); that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men both free and bond, both small and great” (ver. 17, 18). It is the same sort of contrast, I think, that we may have seen in Rev. 14, where we had the first-fruits at the beginning of the chapter, and afterward the harvest before the chapter closes. Here you have the supper of the Lamb above; and the great supper of God, that He will make for those that prey on the remains of the dead.

“And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken and with him the false prophet, that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image.” (Ver. 19, 20.) You will observe that one is here called the false prophet. He has apparently lost his world-power, and is therefore not presented now as the second beast rising from the earth with lamb-like horns, (i.e. the imitator of Christ's power); He is the false prophet simply. Whatever dominion he had is now merged, and he is seen in his ecclesiastical character, as a teacher of lies—in the capacity of foe to God's truth. Babylon was gone, but there was still this wicked ecclesiastical power who had wrought with the beast, and both now meet with the same tremendous judgment at the hand of God. “These both were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.”

There had been two men singled out from all others for special mercy and glory. One was in the early antediluvian world, when it was fast coming to its close. “He walked with God, and was not, for God took him.” And when the world had grown older in sin, and God's separated people had far

departed from Him, God did interpose again, and would show that there are no times, however evil, when His servants may not walk with Him Thus, when Israel was altogether debased in sin, and God had put His servant in the midst of that wicked and corrupt and apostate people, Israel; then and there it was that Elijah gave his testimony, and he, too, without dying, was chosen of God to be taken up to heaven.

And here, in most miserable contrast, we find two singled out from all others,—two men as remarkable for Satan, as Enoch and Elijah had been for God. And these men, the heads of their respective powers of wickedness (the open blaspheming power of the beast; and the more intriguing, corrupting energy of the false prophet, who had specially set himself against the Lord Jesus Christ), are found together. If God had interposed to show signal mercy, in bringing alive to heaven, so now God interposes to send alive down to hell. They had been leaders in evil; they had worn down the saints and overcome them before men. Now their day comes— “And the beast was taken and with him the false prophet, that wrought miracles before him.” “These both were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone!”

The Lord judges their followers too, but not with so terrible a doom. They remain to be judged another day—they must stand and appear before God. Meanwhile they “are slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.” But as for the twain, God required, as it were, nothing more: they were the worst leaders of the world's lawlessness, and therefore judgment takes its course summarily and forever. I know of no judgment so tremendous in scriptures as that these men, untried, should be cast into hell before Satan himself! Yet the goats or Gentile rebels in Matt. 25 approach it.

And solemn thought! the time is fast approaching. It is difficult to realize that such will soon be the doom of the rulers of these western lands. They will be found gathered for battle near Jerusalem. For, as Christendom began with Jerusalem, so the last and terrible end of Christendom will be there. As the Roman empire will reappear, so there will be found a chief of its political power sustaining and sustained by the religious chief of the east. Such is the crisis which, as God shows plainly in His word, awaits the world. And I have the firm conviction, without pretending to fix the time, that the train is being laid even now. Thus we see the remarkable prominence which, in our day, is given to the east, and its growing connection with the west. These are facts before our eyes; but it is well known to many readers that these same things have been affirmed years before any of these facts had taken place. They were stated with the same confidence, and to some of those who read these pages. Thus, what is going on in the world comes in as a remarkable confirmation of prophecy. It is not the circumstances which enable us to judge aright; but taking the word of God alone, we may have a full persuasion in our souls. For whether we see the events or not, no man ever believed the word of God and was ashamed. “The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision.”

The Lord grant that we may remember that there will be a power of deceit in the world that will carry men away! Men may fancy that they will discern and reject the beast and the false prophet. This only shows that they have very little idea of the influence and working of Satan. His most dangerous power lies now, not in that which looks outwardly bad, but in what seems quiet and fair. Thus is it still, as it was when Christ was here. The man possessed with a legion of demons received deliverance and blessing. But what did the Gadarenes do? They besought the Lord to

depart out of their coasts.

Let me ask you, do you not prefer something to Christ? You may not show active enmity to His name You may hear the gospel: but have you received it? if not, you are rejecting it. God does not allow one to say, there is something to be done first. He has done everything. Therefore, it comes to be a question of positive rejection—bidding Christ depart. The Lord grant that such may not be your present guilt and eternal misery!

## Lectures on Revelation 20: Part 1

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The first three verses of this chapter are closely connected with the one that goes before. For there we see the judgment of the beast and the false prophet, and of their adherents. Here we have what God saw fit to inflict for the present upon the real unseen leader of all the mischief—the devil. But there is this difference, that it is not Christ who deals with Satan. It was the shining forth of His coming that destroyed the beast and the false prophet. They were taken and were both cast alive into the lake of fire. And so we learn in chap. 20:10, when Satan's turn came for being cast there also; it is into that lake where the beast and the false prophet already were, and where they shall be tormented forever and ever. But it was not yet the time for the last and most terrible judgment of Satan. God's trial of the world was not quite over, and therefore, perhaps, God did not interfere by Christ in person, but through an angel. Before Christ inflicts the last crushing blow upon Satan, an angel is employed to limit his power and liberty for a certain period. This is what we have here. Satan is restrained for a thousand years. Many persons have raised difficulties as to this chapter, as indeed in all the rest of the book, on the ground of the figurative language. But no objection could be less reasonable; for figurative or symbolic language is used in Scripture from the first book to the last. So that if you neglect one part of God's word on this ground, you are in danger of slighting all. It is the commonest thing possible. Take the language of God Himself in Eden, the words which the Holy Ghost used for the comfort and salvation of souls from the day that man was fallen by sin. Even there, we find that God used highly metaphorical language. But if a soul was needy, and through grace desired to understand God, there was always a sure way. God waited patiently and taught and led on His children. No doubt there was room for growth; but then there was room for unbelief too, and the evil heart could readily find difficulties to stumble over. But faith always finds out the way to understand God. Not but that there are things hard to such as we are; yet faith pursues its narrow path through obstacles and dangers, because God has said, "they shall be all taught of God." Nevertheless, the language in which God was pleased to pronounce judgment on the enemy and to intimate a Redeemer, was so figurative that an unbelieving Jew like Josephus could pervert it and apply it merely to the natural dislike that men have to serpents and their desire to get rid of them wherever found! Of course such a notion sprang from not understanding the mind of God, and the Jewish historian was ignorant of Scripture and of the power of God.

And remember that I do not use the word "ignorant," here to describe the lack of human learning, any more than Scripture does, when it says of certain persons that "they are unlearned and unstable." They might be as wise as Plato and prudent as Aristotle, but they were not learned in God's will and in the knowledge of His mind. This is the learning that we should value and cultivate—a thing that never can be gleaned in the schools of this world. On the contrary, if a man prosecutes human learning as a means of understanding the things of God, he is sure to go astray, because this per se is never from the Holy Ghost. Doubtless, he who has got human learning may make use of it for God. But the great point is, that the man of God must make learning and everything that is of man to be his servant; whereas, the mind of man, as such,

makes learning his master and becomes its slave. Hence the danger of all such things proving positive hindrances, even to the Christian, save so far as he is led by the Spirit of God. The only possible way of understanding God's word is by subjection to the Holy Ghost; and the test is Christ, because the object of the Spirit is to exalt Him Therefore it is that you never can separate growth in the things of God from the moral state of the soul. It is true that a man who has learned a great deal of truth may slip into a bad state of soul: but, in general, sound knowledge of the things of God and a wise, gracious application of the truth flow from communion with God.

I have made these few remarks not doubting that many of my readers know them to be true from their own experience; but some perhaps may learn from them why they make small progress in the things of God. The true way is to seek the glory of Christ. Where a man is bent upon this, he must learn, no doubt; but all is open and clear before him, because he is in the current of the Holy Ghost, whose office is to take of the things of Jesus and to show them unto us. "When He is come,.... He shall glorify me: for He shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you:" for Christ, not man, is the aim and end of the Spirit.

They, then, as to the earliest book of the Bible, Genesis, all will acknowledge it to be a perfect model of perspicuity. It is the most simple book, containing profound truth, that ever was written. In this book where God was putting us in His nursery school, yet what do we find? Not seldom bold and figurative language. Hence, if I am to give up the Scriptures because of figures, I must give them up from Genesis to Revelation.

The revelation of the woman's Seed that was to bruise the serpent's head was the very word on which salvation hung; the blessed truth that faith laid hold of at all times. Take a case. Abel's faith, that expressed itself in the offering which he brought, was grounded upon this word. He believed that the Lord Jesus was coming, (though he did not yet know that name,) who would be bruised in order to destroy the serpent—One who would suffer, whose heel would be bruised, though eventually He would crush the bruiser.

This shows that faith is a very distinct thing from the ability to explain the figures of a passage, the general sense and certainty of which may yet be clearly seen. So much so, that even now, if you were to take a Christian and ask him to explain all the particulars of that verse—what was meant by the Seed of the woman and that of the serpent, the enmity between them and the bruising of the head and of the heel, though he might be perfectly certain that it speaks of Christ and might understand the general meaning of all, yet he would find a great deal of difficulty in explaining what each thing meant. But there lies the blessedness of God's word, that people are not saved by having clear thoughts on the obscure; but God knows how to direct every soul that is saved to the right object. Their hearts rest upon a Christ who has suffered for them and completely destroyed the destroyer. They may not be able to bring out their thoughts clearly to others; but the faith of the taught knows the truth perhaps as well as the teacher, though the latter alone can develop it with convincing plainness. This shows that even where God employs these figures, the general thought is sufficiently plain. To expound them by words might be an insuperable difficulty to the soul that has no question of the general sense.

Here an angel comes down out of heaven. This angel, in the prophetic vision, has the key of the abyss and a great chain hanging on his hand (ver. 1). He is seen laying hold of "the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan," the well known enemy of God and man; and then

follows the use of the key and the chain, the key for shutting him up and the chain for binding him fast. Obviously these are figures, but they are familiar to the simplest mind. There is no one, however ignorant about some things, who need misunderstand what is meant. The Spirit of God takes advantage of the commonest things of every-day life to describe an act of judgment that is about to be accomplished in His providence by and by. God intends to restrain Satan, and will not suffer his going about to deceive the world as he does now; but it will be only for a season (ver. 2, 3). He is not thrown into the lake of fire at once, but is a prisoner in the bottomless pit, which is the expression of the place, under the control of Satan ordinarily, that will then be made the place of his confinement. (Compare chaps. ix., xi., and xvii.)

It is certain from God's word that Satan is not yet shut up—on the contrary, that he goes about now, seeking to deceive and to destroy souls. The New Testament always supposes this. It is perfectly clear that Satan is an enemy still at large—that he is active in his rebellion against God, in the falsehood that he spreads among men, and in the death and ruin that he causes everywhere. But this is to close, when, for a certain limited time, the earth will be freed from his deceits. This is all that I need to draw from the passage. I am not going to discuss whether the thousand years are to be taken literally or mystically, for this is a question of detail and degree only. But beyond a doubt the period has a beginning and has an end; nor can it have begun yet, because Satan is not bound. The New Testament epistles suppose that Satan still carries on his devices, binders the work of God, has to be resisted, and is going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. So that there must be a vast change when the time comes for his restraint. And God will have to cast His people upon other parts of His word, which would not apply to the past or the present. The saints then will be in many respects in a totally different state. In that day Christ will be reigning over the earth, having it under His direct control; and assuredly the change will be incalculably great. Satan, too, will be bound, and God's people then will not require the same discipline through the word of God as those do now who have to encounter the assaults of Satan and his accusations. God will deal with them according to the condition in which they will be placed, and for which His word provides.

Allow me to repeat that it is chiefly the influence of prejudice, with which persons approach the book of the Revelation, that makes it appear so difficult. People say that so many good men have made mistakes in interpreting it, that there is no sure way for the simple to take it up profitably. But this is to the dishonor of God; for He has given the book to be understood by His people at large, peculiarly commending it to His servants. Special promises of blessing He attaches to such as read, hear, and keep it, foreseeing the delusion abroad with regard to its obscurity. But why is it the devil's object to hinder people from reading this book? Why is it that, in what are called Christian churches, every other part of the Bible is read, while the book of Revelation is scarcely looked at? Even the Apocrypha is read by some, while of the “true sayings of God” only a few fragments here and there are used for public services.

The reason is because there is no book in the Bible that Satan fears more, and justly too. It announces, first, his sure humiliation by angelic power, and then his destruction afterward. Other books show his partial temporary successes; this dwells on his overthrow, and therefore must he dread it. Again, if you have here the account of God's putting down Satan, you have also, very fully brought out, the awful height of power to which he rises before the end. For the divine principle is never to judge evil until it has rejected all the patience of God, abused His goodness, and become

thoroughly unbearable. Had Christians felt that Satan's object was to conceal his own wiles, and power, and ruin, by leading them to neglect this book, they might have been more on their guard. But that is the last thing he wants people to suspect; for then they at once get upon the ground where the Spirit of God can lead them on; whereas, if they assume that the book is so dark as to be practically unintelligible, they are, so far, exposed to his delusion, though God is faithful who will not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able.

In the next verse we get another thing, the portion of the blessed. What will Christ be doing, and what they who are with Him, now that the victory is won? "And I saw thrones; and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them." (Ver. 4.) The heads, civil and ecclesiastical, of the evil in the world, had been summarily judged; the hidden source of all was next set aside "till the thousand years should be finished "But now the Lord Jesus has taken the kingdom of the world. Still the object here is not so much to show us Christ's reign, because that was a familiar truth, found throughout all Scripture, and one that was well known to the Old Testament saints. And so habitually were they waiting for the Messiah, and so prevalent was the expectation of His kingdom, even in the mass of unconverted Israel, that Satan took advantage of it to make men refuse the grace of Christ coming in humiliation. Here His reigning is of course implied, as the central pivot of the blessing; but His people, or at least His sufferers, are specified with the utmost clearness.

This, then, may be one reason why prominence is here given to those who reign with Christ. God felt deeply for His saints. They were under keen trial and temptation. He takes pains to show that, if they had suffered, they were also to reign with Him. And therefore, as it seems to me, it is not there said, I saw a great throne, but I saw thrones." As the Lord Jesus Christ Himself had said to the disciples, "in my Father's house are many mansions." He does not speak of one peculiar mansion there for Himself, but He says, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." Was it not in the same spirit that the prophet here had the vision of these thrones? And they were not vacant. "I saw thrones and they sat on them, and judgment was given unto them." They were now to exercise judgment.

Evidently this is an accomplishment of the word in 1 Cor. 6 The apostle there, addressing the saints at Corinth, says, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" And here they are judging the world. But more than that. The Lord had said to the twelve apostles, "Ye shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Many persons think that this will only be fulfilled in heaven. But there can be no such state of things there. The twelve tribes are not above. They are only known as such upon earth. Here below they will be found as an object of government; and so the prophets speak. What will there be for saints to judge in heaven? When the glorified are there, where will be the men to judge above? All will be blessed there. These will have passed out of the scene of judgment.

It is plain therefore that this scene is one that cannot apply to heaven: and that it supposes the earth as a sphere of judgment. Those in question reign over the earth. I say, "over the earth," for there is no reason to believe that this world will be the home of the risen saints of God. They may visit it from time to time, as we know the Lord Himself will; but their proper dwelling-place will not be the earth. Even now our blessing is in heavenly places in Christ; much more evidently will it be, when we are glorified. The blessing is heavenly in its source, character, and sphere. But while we shall thus have blessing in heavenly places, the earth will be the lower and subject province—full

of interest and glory to God, but a comparatively outside domain. Just as a man who owns an estate, may have a grand family seat in it; but this does not hinder his having property outside, which he must leave his house in order to see. And so it will be hereafter. The glory above will be the rest and center of the heavenly saints; but besides that, they will judge the earth. Accordingly it is written. here, "I saw thrones and they sat on them and judgment was given unto them." They were the destined assessors of the Lord in judging or government.

But that was not all. "And [I saw] the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God." Mark the words, "the souls of them," &c. There are many who, in the main, agreeing that this vision represents a judgment exercised by heavenly saints over men upon earth, understand the "souls" spoken of here to mean persons, according to a common usage of Scripture. But I do not believe that this is the true explanation. Why not take the word "souls" here as meaning those who were in the separate state? Thus, the Apostle John saw in the vision, first, thrones with persons seated upon them; secondly, a certain number of disembodied people, the souls of them that had been beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God; and, besides, thirdly, a class of those "the which had not worshipped the Beast, nor yet his image, and had not received his mark upon their forehead, or in their hand." Had he meant persons in their ordinary state, he might have said, I saw the souls that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, &c.; but not "I saw the souls of them that were beheaded." Just as it was said of Jacob, "All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt.... all the souls were three-score and six." It is not said there "all the souls of them," or "of the people that came," he. (Compare Rev. 6:9.)

Here, then, John beheld in the vision some that were already risen from the dead and seated upon thrones. "I saw thrones, and they that sat upon them." The reference seems purposely general, and implies "the armies" previously described (chap. xix. 14). Those who followed the Lord from heaven to war are now His companions in His government of the earth. Next, he saw a company "that had been beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God." These were not yet raised from the dead but were still in the condition of separate spirits. And there was a third class—persons who had not worshipped the Beast, nor submitted to his pretensions in any form or degree. The two last were distinct but connected classes of people, who, when first seen, were in the separate state. "And they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years." That is, they were reunited to their bodies; for this of course is what is meant by "they lived." It might have been thought that they had missed their blessing, or at least the privilege of reigning with Christ during the thousand years. There were thrones, and persons in their risen bodies who already occupied them. What then was to become of those who, after the removal of the former to heaven, were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, and who were not till long after raised from the dead? What was to be the portion not only of these, but of the last class that at a still later day refused to worship the beast or receive his mark? "They lived." They are now seen, just before the reign, united to their bodies; and, together with those that had been previously raised and already seen enthroned, they reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Thus we have a bright and interesting light thrown by and on the Revelation. For there are passages in it which this verse helps to clear up; while they, on the other hand, throw light back on a verse which is not intelligible unless these distinctions are seen.

Let us consider, yet a little more, the different classes here spoken of. "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them." Evidently these first objects are introduced most abruptly. We are not told where they came from, nor who they were—probably because the Holy Ghost takes for granted that we know enough about them through the previous statements of the book. Just before they had come out of the opened heaven. (Chap. xix.) When the rider on the white horse, the Lord Jesus, came out as a man of war, the armies that were there followed Him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure. I have already tried to prove that these were the saints who had been already taken up to heaven, and ever and anon shown to be there from the commencement of chap. iv: They were seen then and repeatedly afterward under the symbol of the twenty-four crowned elders. It will hardly be disputed that these elders represent the heavenly saints. I do not pretend to decide whether it is the church exclusively or not. Very likely both the church and the Old Testament saints are included; but one thing at least is—very clear, that heavenly saints are meant. They follow Christ out of heaven when He comes to make war with the Beast, &c.; and now, when Christ takes His throne, when He is not merely seen on a white horse going forth to conquer and subdue, but He takes the throne to reign triumphantly, they too are seen on thrones along with Him. "I saw thrones and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them."

Every believer knows that in some sense Christ is to sit on His throne and to judge: but some might think that it was too high a place for Christians to be on thrones with Him; while others, who have etherealized into mist the direct meaning of the mass of Scriptures that treat of the hopes of the saints and the prospects of the world, imagine that they will be merely in the vague distance of heaven, enjoying everlasting happiness with Christ, but having nothing whatever to do with the earth. For my own part, I do not believe that governing the world is by any means the highest part of the saint's glory; but it will be an important element of Christ's glory, and therefore surely not beneath the church. None can overlook or deny this without loss to their soul. When rightly held, it has no little practical influence. For if I am to judge the world then, God would not have me meddling with the world now. This was the very argument that the Apostle Paul used when blaming the Corinthian believers, because they went before the judgment-seat of men. It is beneath the Christian calling. Of course, I do not mean by this in any way to slight the powers that be. A Christian ought to be ready any day and in all things to show them respect. He can afford to be the humblest man in the world because he is the highest one. He has got a better exaltation that will shine most when this world has come to nothing. What a wonderful thing that we are anointed kings now, before the actual glory dawns, like David, who was consecrated king long before, as a fact, he was exalted to the kingdom! The holy, royal oil was upon him, even when he was hunted about by king Saul upon the mountains. So, in a yet higher sense, we too are anointed by the Holy Ghost, and this not only that we may be able to enter into the things of God, but as made kings and priests to God. Hence God looks for us not only to offer spiritual worship to Him now, but under all circumstances to preserve the sense of our dignity as His kings. (Compare 1 Peter 2:5, 9). The world may mock and call us fanatics, but the world has done worse to God Himself. Alas! evil communications corrupt good manners, and Christians have fallen from the truth that is according to godliness as to this.

They have sought to have the world and Christ too. People may object that at best it is a hope so purely future as to have no present bearing. But the Spirit of God addresses us as possessing this treasure now, as having, in principle, all that Christ is going to display in us in His kingdom by and

by. Hence we are responsible to God to walk in the faith of it now. It was so in the highest way in the Lord Jesus Christ. He knew that He was a king; and when Satan came and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, offering to give them to Him if He fell down and worshipped him, the Lord utterly rejected all. But Satan, as it were, repeated the offer to the church, and she at length accepted it. In seeking the glory of the world, she has sought honor where Satan is the prince. Can any man read his Bible and not own the truth of this? What did the Lord Jesus do when men wanted to make Him a king? He departed from them. When He stood before Pilate, He admitted that He was a king, but said, "My kingdom is not of this world.... Now is my kingdom not from hence." By and by it will be. "The kingdom of the world shall become our Lord's and His Christ's." And when it passes into His hands, the reign of Christians will begin. His people will share the kingdom along with Him. Hence faith waits for this: and meanwhile we are put to the test now, "as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

To some it will appear presumption to claim such a privilege now. But not so. It is faith, and its fruit is growing separation from the world. The principle is the thing of value. For if a man only strive for the simplest thing in this world that is an object to him,—for some present (even if it be a petty) distinction, there is the trace of the enemy's work. God looks for holy separateness from the world in all His saints: they are not of the world even as Christ is not of it. Let it only be in proportion to a man's spirituality and intelligence. Thus, when a Christian begins his path of faith, God does not say to him all at once, You must cut off this and renounce that; He leaves room for the exercise of grace and progress in truth. In the day that salvation came to the house of Zacchaeus, the Lord said not a word of his odious position in the world, as a Jewish tax-gatherer. Nor are we told, in the case of Cornelius, that he must forthwith give up his place as a centurion of the Italian band; because the whole blessedness of God's ways would be destroyed by laying down and enforcing rules in that fashion. The church is not governed by a code of formalities. She is led on by the power of the Spirit of God according to His word. Just as with a child; when of tender years he speaks as a child, understands as a child, and thinks as a child. One could not wish babes to assume the ways of adults. So is it with spiritual children. The Lord does not look for such to be occupied with the things of men and fathers in Christ. He leaves room for growth in grace. Now, if a man is in a bad state, he takes advantage of grace, and asks, Is there any harm in this? Is there any command for that? Sometimes a soul only refrains from evil doings, in the thought that if he persists, he is in danger of being lost. But what God values is simple-hearted obedience; the doing God's will because it is His will, because it is a delight to do His will, because it glorifies Him He saves as by His grace, and saves us so as not to see a single fault in us. And now He says, If I have saved you and put you in such sureness and perfection of blessing before me, the thing that I look for is your heart, its confidence in my love and wisdom, your worship and your obedience.

But God also gives us the knowledge of the coming kingdom that we are to share with Christ our Lord. It is well to remember that the Spirit of God does not bring about the kingdom. Not He, but the Lord Jesus only is the king. Thus, Christ's presence is essential to the kingdom, at least in the full manifested sense. It would be a kingdom without a king, if Christ were not personally there; and therefore it is said, "They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Christ Himself was present, and He is the center of all glory, and blessing, and joy. In chap. xix. we had Christ and them coming out of heaven in judgment, and thereon in chap. xx. the kingdom is established in peace over the earth.

This may answer the first question, as to who they are whom John first saw sitting on the thrones, and of course in risen bodies. They are heavenly saints, including (if not exclusively) the church. The next question is, Who are those whose souls were seen not at first united to their bodies? The answer is plain. If Rev. 4 v. show us glorified saints under the symbol of the twenty-four elders, and corresponding with those first mentioned in our verse, chap. vi. lets us into another scene. It tells us that there will be saints called to suffer after that, whose souls John then saw under the altar. They had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held, and they call upon God to judge and avenge their blood on them that dwell on the earth. Who are these saints that appeal to God's vengeance? It is not the church there, one can answer with the utmost positiveness. It could not be, indeed; for the church had been already removed to heaven. But, besides, is the church ever said, in Scripture, to call upon God to judge and avenge the blood of saints shed on the earth? It would falsify the very design of God in the church, and in the individual Christian too. We are the epistle of Christ, called expressly to show out His glory in Christ, and His grace towards the world ever since the cross. And as God has allowed men to put to death His own Son, and, so far from judging the guilt, has only made it an occasion for showing more grace still, so the church is called to suffer, and, if need be, even to death for His name's sake, without such a thought or wish as calling for vengeance.

Take a plain and signal example of this in Stephen. He was most grievously trodden down: they cast him out of the city and stoned him. But he kneels down and cries, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." It was with a loud voice, too, for it was not a thing that his heart did not feel earnestly; and the Holy Ghost desired that those who were round him should know his heart's desire about them, guilty as they were of his blood. Was this calling upon God to avenge his blood? The very contrary; and so all through. Look at the Apostles Peter and John, who, when they were beaten, depart from the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus. Look again at the first epistle of Peter; and what do you find there? This is the principle: "If when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called."

On the other hand, the world could not go on for a day on such a ground as this • it must go to pieces, if evil were not to be punished, and those who did well and suffered wrongfully were merely to give thanks. But such exhortations were not intended for the world. And there is the mistake so often made. Men forget that the church was called to be a witness of heaven—was meant to express the mind and grace of Christ, while walking upon the earth. This is our "one thing" —our business here below. Of course, this need not hinder the providing things honest in the sight of all men. It is right for the Christian to do this, but let him weigh well how he does it. Our behavior in the most ordinary employment should be a testimony to this—that we are not of the world; that we look not for honor and credit in the world, but to glorify Christ in heaven; that instead of seeking to help on the plans of men, and to be an ornament in the world, our mission is to make Him known to it, and to do His will during the little while we are here.

But to return. We have seen that though the enthroned elders are in heaven (Rev. 4 v.), there are afterward saints on earth, new witnesses who are called to suffer unto death for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus: but who, when they die, cry for God to avenge their blood on their enemies. Nor is that wrong in them; though it would be foreign to us, because it is not the will of God concerning us. But when God has formed the Church, and, after it has been taken to heaven,

has raised up fresh witnesses for Himself on earth, He will begin to deal with the world judicially Himself. And therefore when these holy sufferers cry to God against their adversaries, they will have communion with Him; and this is what faith always seeks—communion with God in what He is actually doing or about to do. God does not thus interfere to judge the world now, and therefore His saints should not ask Him, as these do, to judge and avenge. God now endures in perfect patience the wickedness of the world; and therefore a Christian should rather ask God to turn His long suffering into salvation for souls. But when Rev. 6 is being fulfilled, God will pour down judgment upon judgment; and the witnesses for God in that day will ask God to judge, and rightly. They take up the language of the Psalms, in general so misunderstood and misapplied now, but then most appropriate and prophetically provided of God.

This shows, then, that there is to be a very different state of things after the church has been taken away. God begins then to act in the way of judgment, and those whose hearts are converted, and desiring His glory, will be in great darkness compared with the church. Still, their godly testimony will be intolerable to the powers of the world, who will spill their blood like water. The sufferers will cry to God for judgment, and He will hear them. Look at verses 9, 10, 11, of chap. vi.: “And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.” Observe how this agrees with the two classes mentioned in chap. xx. 4: “I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God.” For mark the answer. They cry, “How long, O Lord, holy and true,” &c. “And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little while, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.” When the earlier sufferers, after the removal of the church, had been called out and slain, they were told of another and subsequent class who should be killed as they before the full judgment.

This is exactly what we find in our chapter xx. First, there are those who sit on the thrones, invested with royal judgment; next, there are those who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God; and, thirdly, their brethren who, as it was said in chap. vi., had yet to be completed. These, when the beast brought out his idolatry, &c., and it was a question of being killed or of worshipping him, refused: they were faithful unto death. Well, here they are. “I saw.... and those who had not worshipped the beast, nor his image, and had not received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands.” This the Revelation gives us the full answer, as to these three classes. The twenty-four elders correspond with those who sit on the thrones; the second class are the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, &c., we had in chap. vi.; and then the latter part of the book shows “their brethren that should be killed as they themselves were,” and for whom they were told to wait. In Rev. 13:7, it is said that it was given to the beast to make war with the saints, and to overcome them. And more than that. The latter half of the chapter supplies another part of the description, and shows us how these saints came to be characterized in Rev. 20 as those who had not worshipped the beast nor his image, neither had received his mark on their forehead, or in their hand. In ver. 14 the second beast is said (chap. to deceive “them that dwell on the earth, on account of those miracles which he had power to do in the presence of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword and did live. And he had power to give breath to the image-of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause that as many as

would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.” Now this most clearly pertains to the last or third class. Those referred to in chap. xiv. 12, 13, are probably the same. But, again, see chap. 15: 2: “I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the Beast, and over his image, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.” Thus the Revelation answers fully the question, Who are these saints? It shows us, first, the risen saints, who had been taken up to heaven, and who come out with Christ. This is one reason why they are seen separate from the two other classes. They are viewed on the thrones at once, because they are already changed into the likeness of Christ's glorious body. But the others are merely seen, up to this moment, as souls, and of course not glorified. We hear of glorified bodies, but never of glorified souls in Scripture. The soul of the believer goes to be with Christ after death, but it has to be reunited with the body, before it can be spoken of as in a glorified condition. The only perfect state is, when we shall bear the image of the heavenly; when we shall be raised or changed into His likeness.

If we look at 1 Cor. 15. we shall see that quite plainly. It is said there, “ The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed.... and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible, must,” not merely put off corruption, but “put on incorruption,” “and this mortal” must not merely slip off this mortal coil, as men say, but “put on immortality.” “So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality” —evidently the glorified state— “then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” Death is not swallowed up in victory when a Christian dies, and goes to be with Christ; but when He comes, and the dead are raised, and the living changed. What was done individually in the case of Enoch and Elijah, will be done on a grand scale at His coming. All the living saints then will be changed, and will go to be with the Lord, without passing through death. These, risen or changed, are they who, having been taken up to heaven will come thence with Christ, and here seen on thrones.

But what, next, is the history of those saints on earth, who are called after the previous saints have been removed to meet the Lord? The Revelation shows us their sufferings for righteousness' sake, and their death. What becomes of them afterward? The church had been already raised and glorified and these sufferers are slain before the reign of Christ commences. Are these, then, who have suffered, not to reign? Are they to forfeit their blessings, because they have resisted unto blood, striving against sin? That could never be. “I saw the souls of them that were beheaded,.... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” They, too, are raised from the dead; they join the others already glorified, and all reign together with Christ in “the kingdom.”

I apprehend, but I only give it as an opinion, that their resurrection takes place at or about this time. The beast and the false prophet have been put down; Satan has been cast into the abyss, and the millennial reign of Christ and His risen saints is now about to commence. The Lord waits, as it were, for the very last moment. He wants not a soul of His holy sufferers to be left out of this their special reward. The beast had persecuted up to the last, and God delays till that moment, that every one who has suffered with Christ be included in the privilege of being glorified together.

If the account of the resurrection had been given, when the previously-risen saints were translated to heaven (i.e. before Rev. 4), there might have been doubt and anxiety as to the fate of those who suffer after the church was taken up. One can understand why this notice of resurrection is put here. It was the special object of God to comfort those who subsequently had to suffer and die for Christ, and to show that they would not be forgotten by Him. They are now raised to join the saints already risen; "and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." God puts off their resurrection till just before Christ's reign, and then those that had meanwhile suffered for Him are raised up.

## Lectures on Revelation 20: Part 2

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“But the rest of the dead lived not till the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. “The rest of the dead:” —who were they? The beginning of verse 4 includes, as I conceive, not only the church, but the Old Testament saints; that is, all the heavenly saints taken up to be with Christ, when He will have come to receive them unto Himself in the air. Next, we had the first band of sufferers before the beast came to the height of his power; and, then, the last band that suffer because they will refuse to worship him. These were the three classes of saints now alike living and reigning with Christ. “The rest of the dead” must then be wicked dead, because the first resurrection included all the righteous dead.

It answers, in fact, to what our Lord called “the resurrection of the just” (Luke 14:14), save that it is more detailed, if not more comprehensive. So, then, there is a special resurrection that belongs to the just, and this without a word about the unjust. There is a resurrection of the unjust; and when the Apostle Paul spoke in Acts 24 before Felix, he testified to his belief in the resurrection both of just and unjust. But when the Lord Jesus was raising the consciences of his disciples to what was good and of value before God, He set forth the resurrection of the just alone.

But this is not all. There were men trying to bring the doctrine of the resurrection into ridicule. We find, on another occasion, that certain of the Sadducees came to Him, putting a difficulty, because of a woman supposed to be married to seven brethren. In the case reasoned on, these seven successively died, and last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection then, they ask, whose wife should she be of the seven? The Lord at once points out that the difficulty was founded on ignorance of scripture or of the power of God. In the resurrection they shall neither marry, nor be giving in marriage, but shall be like the angels (that is, like them in that respect, not in all things, for they will judge angels; but like them in so far as this, that there will be no distinction of sex- neither marrying nor given in marriage). “Neither can they die any more.” But He adds, “They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world [or rather “dispensation “], and the resurrection from the dead,” &c. This would be an extraordinary expression, if all were raised at the same time. “They that shall be counted worthy to obtain that age” for the last word does not refer to the material world, but to a special dispensation or age, which the unworthy do not obtain Weigh the force of the phrase. The resurrection of the saints is in an age peculiar to themselves. “They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that age (the other dead are only raised after it), and the resurrection from the dead.” The resurrection of Christ was not merely a resurrection of the dead but out of the dead. He left them undisturbed in their tombs. There were certain saints who rose with Him, or rather came out of their graves after His resurrection; but the great mass of the dead were so far unaffected by Christ’s resurrection. And so is it with the saints in principle. Theirs is to be a resurrection from among the dead. The rest of the dead must rise at another time: but they who shall be accounted worthy shall obtain that age, and the resurrection from the dead. They shall not die any more. Could God show more strongly, than by this language, a distinct and prior resurrection of the saints of God?

Hear also the language of Paul in Phil. 3:11. "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from the dead." In common Bibles, no doubt, it is "the resurrection of the dead;" but I have no hesitation in saying that this is a complete mistake. The true and only meaning of the verse, according to the best authorities, is, "If by any means I might attain to the resurrection out of (or from among) the dead." It may seem to some but a slight change; but if we want to know the mind of God, it makes a weighty difference; because, if it is "resurrection from the dead," it implies that while the rest of the dead remain in their graves, there is a resurrection not common to all mankind, bad and good, but belonging only to those that are dear to God. The Apostle considered this resurrection to be so bright and blessed, that he says, in effect, I care not what the sufferings and trouble may be, let the road be what it may-if I am but there; this is what I wait for and desire at all cost. For when he said, "If by any means I might attain," not a shade of doubt is implied as to his having part in the first resurrection; but rather that he so valued the prize as to mind not what the path of suffering might be, that led to the goal.

Now let us carry the light of this back to the Revelation. The reference in "the rest of the dead" is to the wicked dead. A resurrection was shown of all the departed saints up to the display of the kingdom. "But the rest of the dead lived not again, until the thousand years were finished" (ver. 5). There is no difficulty, really, in the passage; but men have their own thoughts and opinions, and cannot make scripture square with them, whereas all is as plain as God could make it. "This is the first resurrection Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection" (ver. 6.) How beautifully this answers to what the Lord had said to the Sadducees, "They that are accounted worthy to obtain that age, and the resurrection from the dead!" So, again, the Apostle Paul: "If by any means I might attain to the resurrection from the dead."

"On such the second death hath no power." Mark, once more, the force of the Lord's words in the gospel: "Neither can they die any more." As for the persons left to be raised after the thousand years are over, they are to die another and most woeful death-the second death. By it all those who had not part in the first resurrection are to die. Theirs shall be the second death-meaning that extinction of all hopes of blessing when all else is blessed in heaven and earth, and they perpetually abide under the wrath of God. They are cast into the lake of fire. As for those who have part in the first resurrection, "they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years;" and afterward shall they reign in life by Him forever and ever.

The last three verses that we looked at form a kind of parenthesis in the chapter, something like what we saw in chap. 12. There the war in heaven and the consequent casting down of Satan came in, and then the history which had been alluded to before (ver. 6) was resumed in ver. 13. Here is something similar, for the seventh verse continues the history that had been already begun just at the close of the third verse. We find there Satan bound for a thousand years, and consequently his power of seducing the nations into rebellion against God intercepted for a time. After these things, we were told, he must be loosed for a little season. The seventh verse anticipates his loosing and its effects. "When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together unto the war: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea," (ver. 8). Evidently, therefore, verses 4-6 form a parenthesis—important, no doubt, but still a parenthesis, and not a part of the regular history found here. One reason why it is given here may be to show that, during this same period when Satan is bound, there is the blessed side—not

only the evil one restrained, but Christ and His saints reigning over the earth. It is never said that we shall reign on the earth.

In Rev. 5:10 I have already shown that the common version of that verse, which conveys this, is somewhat inaccurate, and that the true thought of the Spirit of God is, not the place where the saints of God then dwell, but the sphere of their reign. "They shall reign over the earth." The importance of the change is not so much as an isolated fact, but because it is connected with the whole scheme of truth; and it is a part of this scheme that the heavenly saints are never to be mingled with people on the earth. The promise of the first place of earthly blessing belongs to Israel, and therefore it would make the utmost confusion, if the heavenly, glorified saints were jumbled with men in their natural bodies in this world. In fact, one of the strongest objections that many Christians urge to the reign of Christ over the earth is founded on the notion that premillennialism supposes the glorified saints to be mixed up with the people then alive here below. But this is a great mistake.

The church will have its own proper glory; but withal, there will be two orders or spheres of blessing, and one of a higher character than the other. All things in heaven will be gathered under the headship of Christ, but, beside this, all things on earth will be at the same time under the same government. Such is the peculiarity of the millennium. There will be the heavenly portion above, and the earthly one below, connected together, but not confounded. This is distinctly taught in Eph. 1:10, where the apostle says that the mystery of God's will has been made known "according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself for the administration of the fullness of times, to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him." I am aware there are many who suppose that it speaks of the gospel dispensation now going on. But this is unfounded. The church is not a gathering of all nations, but, on the contrary, an elect body out of them all. It never was and never will be a gathering of all nations, peoples, and kindreds, and tongues, into one. Besides, the verse speaks of a gathering of all things. There is a gathering together of the children of God; for Christ died that He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. But here it is a question not of persons, but things. When the glorious administration takes place, of which the Apostle speaks, all things are to be put under Christ's headship. He has all under His headship now, in title, but not as an actual displayed fact.

Daniel does not say that all was to be put under the Son of man, nor does the Holy Ghost reveal that secret of God's will in the Old Testament. There was the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven. But the New Testament shows us more; it teaches us that, at the very same time when all things on earth will be put under His government, all things in heaven will be put under Him too. Nor this merely in a providential way as now, but directly and personally. The Lord, of course is above Satan, the god and prince of the world that now is. He does act providentially now; and, beside that, He has the full personal title to exercise all glory, heavenly and earthly. But the time when He enforces the title, and takes all things under His hand, is future. If He had taken it now in an immediate way, all wickedness would be put down. None could sin without judgment; neither would there be such a thing as righteousness suffering, or iniquity exalted. All this is a proof that, in the full actual sense, the Lord Jesus Christ is not yet reigning, however true it may be to faith. Look, for instance, at Psa. 97 "The Lord reigneth." People quote this, as if applied when the Holy Ghost wrote, or now at any rate. But the next words refute this; because, when the Lord

does reign, as here meant, the earth will rejoice, &c. Whereas, it is plain from Rom. 8, not to speak of every day's experience, that the earth is groaning in misery, and that the whole creation travails in pain until now, which is the very reverse of rejoicing, But when the Psalms meet their full accomplishment, all creation will be delivered and will rejoice under the reign of Jehovah. Faith can say that the Lord reigns now: but He is not yet exerting royal power over the earth.

When Christ comes in His Kingdom every opponent will have to be put down, and consequently there must be judgment. The beast and the false prophet were set aside, as we see in chap. xix., and then comes the reign. And although every one is not to be converted, no open sin will be permitted. It may be a "feigned obedience" that is rendered by a large part of the people upon the earth, but still, in some sort, it will be obedience even from "the sons of the stranger." That is the true thought of the millennial reign. It means a time, not when there will be no evil, but when evil will be suppressed by the presence of the Lord; when the heavenly glory will be in immediate connection with the delivered and gladsome earth; when the earthly people will be restored to their own land, converted, and owning that blessed One whom their fathers crucified; for in Zech. 12-14 we see the very circumstances, at least as to the earth, that I allude to. In the last chapter the Lord is "king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord and his name one." This is precisely the millennium. All nations are seen coming up to own the Lord: if any refuse, they are to be chastised. The Spirit of God particularly notices the punishment, viz., the withdrawal of rain from such nations as should not come up to keep the feast of tabernacles. In Egypt, where such a want would not be felt, the land having other sources of fertility, there should be another punishment, "the plague wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen," &c. Plainly, then, the prophecy shows us the earthly glory under the reign of the Lord.

But Eph. 1 points us not merely to the heavenly glory, but to the union under Christ of the heavenlies and the earthlies—of all things both which are in the heavens and which are on the earth. It is not that all are to be reduced to the same level, but that all must be gathered in one united system, as having one head over all, even Christ. But the church is not included in any of these things. We are not confounded with either; on the contrary, we are spoken of as those who have obtained an inheritance in Christ over all. The church is not to be a glorious people only, over which Christ is to reign. We are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ—not merely heirs under Christ, but with Him—according to the blessed type given at the very beginning of man's history, where, while Adam had the glory of being head over this lower world, his wife shares the dominion in virtue of her union with him. The church is the spiritual Eve of the Lord Jesus, the bride of the last Adam. This may somewhat explain the force of the words in Eph. 1:10, 23, and it shows us the importance of the day we are looking at in Rev. 20. For "the thousand years" answer to this very period, when the administration will be in the hands of the Lord Jesus, the exalted and manifested Head over all things, and the church will share all along with Him.

There is another remark that I would make. It is the New Testament alone that gives us the statement of the period of the reign. It is there that we find its duration of a thousand years defined. Almost all prophecy refers to it, but here its bounds are assigned, and its relation to the eternal state which succeeds.

In one sense Christ will reign, and the saints also, forever and ever. So it is laid down doctrinally, apart from time, as in Rom. 5:17, where it is said, "they shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."

This does not refer to the millennial reign particularly, which is only a part of the reigning in life by Christ Jesus. Our life in Christ, being an everlasting one, involves, to my mind, that, in a certain real and important sense, there will be a reigning blessedly and gloriously with Christ forever and ever. But, on the other hand, where we hear of a kingdom given to Christ, which He surrenders before the end to God even the Father, this special reign for a limited time has also a bearing on the heavenly saints. Of course the proper divine glory of Christ is distinct from these glories and can be communicated to none. But God spoke of a special reward—the reward of suffering for Christ. “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.” “If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” All this bears on the millennial reign. Christ will be then publicly exalted in the world—in the very place where He was despised and rejected. And the saints will be publicly exalted with Christ in the place of their shame and sorrow, where they have followed Christ with feeble and faltering steps, but where they clave to the name of Jesus, in spite of loss and reproach. But besides these special rewards, there is the glory, blessedness, and joy which will never pass away.

The millennium will be a time when many saints are to be brought to the knowledge of the Lord. It will be the great harvest of blessing u—the time celebrated with such rapture in the Psalms and Prophets, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea. This does not imply necessarily that every person who knows the glory of Jehovah will know His grace, and be converted. Nevertheless, many will be brought to the Lord. But there will also be a true and real knowledge of God given at that very time. For the Holy Ghost will be poured out from on high in a special manner, of which the day of Pentecost was, in comparison, only like the former rain, while that will be as the latter rain. It was the foreshadowing of future fullness of blessing—greater at least in extent—which will be realized in the millennium.

Now the saints of “that day” will never suffer as a privilege,—never know what it is to follow Christ in reproach, and to be cast out with Him. Consequently they will not reign in the kingdom. All saints from the beginning, and up to the millennium, will have suffered with Christ more or less. But the church having pre-eminently known the fellowship of His sufferings, will, have special glory. And those saints who will be brought in after the millennium has commenced, and who have never known His sufferings, will not so share the kingdom. Those before it will be brought into the scene of glory, and changed, because corruption never can inherit incorruption. Therefore, when they are brought in where God makes all things new, there can be no question of their bearing the likeness of Christ, because they are part of the family of the last Adam, and as being in connection with Christ, and having His life, that life will have all its way as to both body and soul: they will be changed into His likeness. It is true that we have no positive statement as to the millennial saints, when this change will take place. But we may gather, I think, from general principles, that it will be in the interval after the millennium is over, and before the new heavens and new earth appear with their blessed inhabitants. But this silence of scripture has left room for some to be beguiled into the strange notion that the millennial saints will remain in their natural bodies, marrying and giving in marriage, throughout all eternity! Such a notion as this has no warrant whatever in the word of God. It resulted from always interpreting the expression “forever and ever,” as if it must mean eternity necessarily and in ever case. In some places it does, but in others it does not.

Supposing that God is speaking of an earthly state of things, and uses the expression, “reigning forever and ever,” as in Dan. 7 and Luke 1, it cannot be understood absolutely. The words must be

limited by the subject-matter of which God is speaking. Thus, in human things, if a man buys a house “forever,” it does not mean throughout eternity, but as long as the world goes on in its present form and way; his right holds good while the earth subsists as left in the hands of man. So God uses the phrase, “forever and ever,” when speaking of earthly things and people. Only the case is far stronger than in ordinary human transactions: for a revolution may despise and destroy every such deed of conveyance. But the kingdom of Christ, before which all opposing authority must bow and become null, is that which secures Israel, &c., in all the promises of God. Thus, “reigning over the house of Jacob” cannot but be modified by this—as long as the house of Jacob exists as such. But when the expression is in connection with the new heavens and earth, in the full sense, Israel is no longer found nationally earthly: such distinctions disappear, when men are raised from the dead or changed. When eternal life or eternal punishment is spoken of, we must take the expression in the largest sense, because these things have nothing to do with the earth; they belong to the resurrection-state. If applied to earthly things, it must be taken in a limited sense, but when applied to things outside this world, it must be taken absolutely in all its extent. Now in Dan. 7:27, “the kingdom under the whole heaven,” which is given to the people of the saints of the Most High, is said to be an everlasting kingdom. This, I apprehend, is the same period that is called here the thousand years.

The Holy Ghost, in the New Testament, gives us the winding up of all the ways of God, and shows us that what may have appeared to the Old Testament saints to be an absolutely everlasting condition, is limited and qualified by further revelations, which make known to us two stages, as it were, instead of one. Thus, the earthly kingdom, spoken of in Daniel, is to be “everlasting” in this sense, that it will never pass out of the dominion of Christ—never be taken out of His hands and given to another (as previous empires had been taken from their respective rulers), but it will remain, as long as God has an earthly kingdom at all, in His hands, and in the hands of the saints of the Most High. When the earthly state ceases, and that kingdom is given up, Christ reigns everlastingly, though in another way. For in the eternal state it will evidently not be a question of all people, nations, and languages serving Him.

This chapter passes cursorily over the millennial state, as far as men on the earth are concerned. If persons wish to look at the earthly part of the thousand years, they must search into the Old Testament. There it is spoken of constantly as “that day” —when the Gentiles will be brought in and blessed—when God's name will be exalted—when there will be a suspension of all warfare and strife. It is the day when the wilderness shall rejoice and blossom, like the garden of Eden, and when the ransomed of the Lord shall come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads—and all sorrow and sighing shall flee away. These words are descriptions that the Holy Ghost gives of this blessed period in the kingdom. Many have been disposed to take the prophetic accounts of the millennium figuratively: but they must allow that these figures may be much more fully accomplished than they suppose. In other words, I take the glowing accounts given of the millennium in the Old Testament prophecies as emblems of real and abundant blessing on earth. These figures may have a sort of spiritual meaning too. But, allowing this, we do not take away the simple and natural meaning of the phrase. For instance, scripture speaks of the wolf and the lamb, and other animals that now devour one another, living together in union and peace. They may be applied as figures to describe what will be morally true of men—though I do not myself believe that this is the real intent.

(Continued from Page 297)

(To be continued.)

## Lectures on Revelation 20: Part 3

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For why should not God bring back the creatures that He has made, and about which He takes a far greater interest than men suppose, to a state at least as good as that in which they were created? Why should not God root out all the evil consequence that sin has brought in, physically as well as morally? Because the sin of Adam had effects far beyond his own race: all that was put under his dominion got into ruin and disorder. And this is not a mere imaginative notion of ruin, nor a fanciful exposition of Old Testament prophecy. It is the doctrine plainly and positively laid down in Rom. 8. It is written there, that “the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him that had subjected the same.” There you have the fall of him that was over the creature. He fell; and creation, being under the headship of Adam, fell along with him. It was he who made it subject to vanity; misery and death came in through him. For there is no reason to suppose that death would have reigned with regard to the brute creation of the Adamic world, any more than with regard to man, if sin had not entered. I am aware that the wise men of this world often speak of fossil remains which show the death of animals before man was created. Into such disquisitions I do not enter, but would only say that there was not the same state of things under Adam. Supposing, now, the facts and inferences of geologists to be sound—whatever living creatures may have been made and destroyed in the earth, before Adam was created, scripture is entirely silent about; and so I desire to be in expounding it. They are questions of no moral importance, and, therefore, a Christian need not meddle with them. I add that these theories, if true, do not contradict scripture in the slightest degree. For there is not a trace of man connected with that state of things which preceded Adam; and scripture passes over it, hastening to what is immediately connected with him. When the human race begins upon the earth, the moral dealings of God are gradually developed. But man quickly fell, and then creation was degraded through its fallen head. Death, as far as regards the Adamic world, entered through the disobedience of Adam—death, directly as to men, and as a consequence, its ravages spread throughout all the lower living creation.

When the Second Adam, exalted above the heavens, shall come again, He, will not merely have such a dominion as the first Adam had, when all things in heaven and earth shall be put under His glorious sway. There is not a single spot nor creature of God's universe but what will feel the effects of His glorious power, whereby He is able to subdue even all things unto Himself. Thus, if once man fell bringing in sin and death and misery, and if all the attempts of the race to remedy the mischief, outward and inward, have been but expedients and no real cure, the Lord Jesus will be the good and, sovereign and almighty Healer of every evil and sorrow of creation. And God will have such joy—His own joy—in relieving all the wretchedness that sin had brought about according to His estimate of the worth of His Son. And if all, up to this time, will have been but the filling up of man's cup of woe, how blessed will be the time when God reverses the history, and when His own Son, no longer rejected and despised, shall fill the throne of His earthly and heavenly glory! When all wickedness shall be put down, and righteousness forever exalted, not by bare power and glory, but by the One who in grace had borne all the sorrow first, and suffered the

consequences of all the wickedness, according to the full holiness of God, upon the cross! And how sweet to think that God will there show that there is not an evil, nor a degradation, nor a pang for which He has not some suited and glorious answer in and through His Son! For He will then put forth all His might to glorify His own Son in the presence of all flesh, even of those who sent the message after Him, "We will not have this man to reign over us." But when the Blessed One returns, having received the kingdom, and will reign as the risen exalted Son of man, all creation will feel the gladdening effects of the Savior's headship and rule.

The Lord will exalt Israel on earth and make them, who have been so peculiarly His bitter enemies, to lead the song of praise with their once rejected Messiah, now in the midst of the congregation. Then it is that they will take up Psa. 100, the psalm of thanksgiving, and will invite all lands to come and praise the Lord; yea, to enter His courts with praise. What a contrast to all that has gone on, or is going on still! How different from the hatred which the Jews have ever shown against the mere sound of grace going out to the Gentiles! For when Paul tells them how the Lord had said to him, as he prayed in the temple at Jerusalem, "Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles," they heard him to that word; but it was more than their proud hearts could brook, and so they lifted up their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth: it is not fit that he should live." But how will grace have changed and enlarged the narrow hearts of Israel, when they will themselves go forth with the invitations of mercy to the Gentiles, who had insulted them in all their weary wanderings over the face of the earth, and who had trodden down Jerusalem during their appointed times!

The Jews, like Cain, have the mark of the Lord on them, that they shall not be utterly extinguished, in spite of their blood-guiltiness. But the Lord will give them repentance in the latter day, and thenceforward they will be the suited and blessed heralds of His grace to the uttermost parts of the earth.

This time of blessedness under the Messiah is what is found so often and so fully in the Old Testament scriptures. The Gospels, too, open with similar expectations on the part of the Jewish saints. But further light begins to dawn, as the rejection of Christ becomes more decided, till at length, redemption being accomplished, the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven, and He brought out the full mind of God. Then it was that the distinction between the kingdom and the eternal state was made plain. (1 Cor. 15:24-28.) It was shown that the earthly reign of Christ, which in the Old Testament might have appeared unlimited, will, in reality, come to a close when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power.

There are many who think that the millennial state of things is to be gradually brought in by the preaching of the gospel, and other agencies that are now in operation. No doubt they look for God to bless them in a still greater degree; for no Christian, perhaps, would say that present appearances warrant such expectations. But they think that if, instead of the few, there were many servants of God, and that if it pleased God to bless the word to the conversion of multitudes everywhere; and if a spirit of greater love and union and devotedness prevailed among those that love the name of Christ, generally, there and then would be the reign of Christ on the earth.

Now, I would ask, How do we know that there is to be a millennium at all? You answer, From the word of God. But, how is the millennium to be brought about? Humility would answer, We must learn this, too, from the word of God. We all acknowledge that the earth is to be filled with the

knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.-How is this to be effected? It is remarkable that, in the very scripture (Isa. 11:9) where these words occur, the Holy Ghost intimates that judgment must precede this time of blessing. (See ver. 4.) In that passage the universal spread of the knowledge of the Lord is made to follow His smiting the earth with the rod of His mouth, and His slaying the wicked with the breath of His lips-the very scripture that the Apostle Paul applies in 2 Thess. 2:8, to the destruction of Antichrist, the man of sin. The Lord shall consume him with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy him with the brightness or manifestation of His coming.

It is perfectly true, then, and agreed, that there is to be a millennial time of blessing on the earth; and the answer to the question, how it is to be introduced, is this: the same scripture which reveals that blessed change tells us that it is to be brought in by the Lord's coming and smiting the wicked one (in other words, by judgment, and not by the preaching of the gospel.) The gospel is of all importance for calling souls from earth to heaven; but it is not the means of dealing with the whole world, and filling it with blessing. It is the means of gathering the church out of the world to Christ. When judgment has had its full course, then the Lord will send out His servants. The Lord will give the word, and great will be the company of those that publish it. "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." The present dispensation is one of gathering out in separation from the world. The gospel ought to be preached to all, but not with the vain hope that all are ever to believe it. Thus the Lord, in Mark 16, while bidding His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, takes pain to add, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." He prepares them for an individual and partial reception of it. Thus they would not be cast down, if they found but a few here and there who received the word of life. It might be but a Dionysius, the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them. And what were they to the crowds who listened to the Apostle on Mars' hill? It was a matter of joy and thankfulness to hear of any who believed to eternal life, for it is thus that God preserves His servants from being cast down. It is well to know that all are not going to receive the gospel, but that God is accomplishing His own purposes. Therefore, when the Lord blesses the word and awakens the conscience of a poor sinner here and there, it is a cause of rejoicing.

But we know that as a whole, evil will increase, and "evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." How can that be, if the millennial blessing is to be the result of the present or suchlike efforts of Christians in the gospel? But the Lord, is to smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and to slay the wicked with the breath of His lips, which is said to be like a stream of brimstone (Isa. 30:33).

Is that like the gospel? It is the exact opposite-a figure of destructive judgment. The gospel delivers from Tophet, but the judgment of the Lord casts into it irrevocably. Clearly, then, it is a judgment from the hand of God Himself, and not one which man, much less the church, will execute. It is not the business of the church to cast into Tophet. No power but God's can consign to hell.

But there is another thing that characterizes the millennium-the binding of Satan in the abyss. Can the church bind Satan? Will any one tell me that Satan can be absolutely hindered from deceiving the world by men? But there can be no universal blessing for the world till he is bound; and every Christian must acknowledge that God alone can either bind or crush Satan. He may employ an

angel, or associate the saints with Himself, as it is said in Rom. 16:20, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." The church is united to Christ, and then will be actually with Him, who, as the woman's Seed, is to bruise the serpent's head; but the power is in Christ, and not in the church. He will put down all adversaries when that day of judgment comes; as it is said, "He will smite the nations, and rule them with a rod of iron." (Rev. 19) And we shall do the same in virtue of our association with Christ. (Rev. 2) In the reign of peace (Rev. 20:4, 6) we shall still be associated with Him. It is by the church in its heavenly condition, not while we are on the earth, that Satan will be thus bruised.

But it is perfectly clear, on the other hand, that the millennium is not exclusively the reign of the glorified saints; the earth, as such, with its inhabitants, will be brought into deliverance and blessing. This we saw in Eph. 1:10, where the true key to its character appears—the union of heavenly and earthly glory under one and the same Head, in whom also we, the body, have obtained an inheritance. There will be Jews and Gentiles, blessed as such in their natural bodies on the earth, the subjects of the kingdom; while the glorified saints will be the instruments of blessing to the earth.

Now the earth is made miserable, and men hardly know how far they are gone in rebellion through sin. This is not all; for there is an unseen enemy, a dark and untiring adversary of God and man, who has his hosts of wicked angels subject to himself (Rev. 12), and use them as the instruments of his seduction. At 11 this will pass away; and those very scenes which are now filled by wicked spirits, the heavenly places (not of course the place where God dwells in His unapproachable glory, but the lower heavens that are connected with the earth) will be a part of the dominion of the church in glory, and the heavenly saints will be as much used to be the means of joy and blessing to the world, as the wicked spirits are now the chief agents of all its misery. They may for a little season emerge from their prison, after the millennium to lead the distant nations of the earth into a last conspiracy against the Lord; but they will never regain their former access to the heavenly places, where their influence was the more subtle and dangerous.

Then will dawn the day of the greatest glory for the world. Of course I am not speaking of the cross; for there is no exaltation Christ will ever have given Him that can be compared with the real, deep glory of His death. It has, as it were, put it into the power of God to show mercy, according to His own heart; and, therefore, there is not a single joy of the millennium but what will flow from the cross, of Jesus. Nay, it has eternal consequences, and not for the millennium only. But the age to come, or millennium, while very important, and a time of wonderful blessing, will be imperfect. And for this reason. There will be men still in their natural bodies upon the earth, many of whom will be unconverted. Accordingly, this very chapter shows us that, after the termination of the thousand years, "Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together unto the war; the number of whom is as the sand of the sea." (Ver. 7, 8.) We do not read this in the Old Testament; for as it does not intimate the close of the reign, so neither does it show us the epoch when Satan will be let loose. The terms in which the judgment upon the evil one is spoken of there might be construed into a single stroke, which made an end of the matter.

From Isa. 24 we learn that the scene of the punishment of the high ones is to be on high, as the kings of the earth will be punished on the earth. It is evident that by the host of the high ones the

Spirit of God does not refer to exalted men on the earth, (for they are in contrast with the kings of the earth,) but to the powers of evil in the heavenly places. (Compare Eph. 6:12.) This is exactly what we find, though with fuller detail, in Rev. 12; 19:20 The kings of the earth meet with their punishment on the earth, while Satan and his minions suffer, the host of the high ones, on high. Satan is cast out to the earth, and his angels are cast out with him Their place is found no more in heaven. The particulars are not given till the Revelation. That day will see the judgment of all foes above or below. For that this is the millennial day requires no proof.

Next in Isa. 25:6 it is said, "And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things, full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." It is a time of blessedness never known before. Nor is it confined to a certain number gathered out as now, but "in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast," &c. "This mountain" is said of the land of Palestine, because it will be to the whole earth the spot where the Lord will be exalted. Of course, this is to be understood morally, not physically. Remark what we have in the next verse. "And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people." The Lord will destroy the darkness that is over the face of all nations now, "and the veil that is spread over all nations." But this era will be also characterized by the resurrection. "He will swallow up death in victory," evidently referring to the first resurrection spoken of in the Revelation. Then only is the victory complete. (Compare 1 Cor. 15). "And the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it." It is the time of blessing for the Jewish people, "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us." Here, beyond a doubt, it is persons upon earth that need to be saved. The church is saved already, and we do not wait for "that day". to come that our God should save us. They will be saved in the day of glory; we are saved in the day of grace. "This is the Lord: we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill." There we have one of the neighboring enemies of Israel trodden down; for it is to be a day of judgment as well as blessing.

In ch. 26. it is written, "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah. We have a strong city," &c. In the latter part of it, which I would refer to because of its importance, Israel says, "We have been with child, we have been in pain.... we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth," &c. "Thy dead men shall live," (the words "together with" having no kind of business there,) "my dead body shall they arise." "Thy dead men," that is, the Jewish people, who are regarded, in a figure, as being dead; just as in Ezekiel, where they are represented as not only dead but in their graves. But as the Lord causes His wind to pass over those dry bones, and they live; so here, "Thy dead men shall live, my dead body shall they arise." Not merely thy dead body, but Mine. I own them-they belong to Me. Jehovah appropriates them as His, dead though they may have been. They are to be so no longer; they shall arise. "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee." This is not like the church. The heavenly saints do not enter into their chambers on earth, but are taken away to be in the Father's house in heaven. But here is a question of the Jewish people. They are comforted, and are told to arise out of their degradation, "for thy dew is as the dew of herbs." "Come, my people hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." The indignation that God had so long against His

people will be turned now into indignation against their enemies. The Assyrian, used heretofore as God's rod for chastening Israel, must now meet with his own final doom. "For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." And yet this is manifestly the time when He introduces the millennium, not after it is over. The Lord comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth. Is the like the gospel, where instead of proclaiming the remission of their sins He comes to punish them 1 Not at all. Further, "In that day the Lord, with his sore, and great and strong sword, shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent: and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea." Doubtless there is a general reference to the wicked one, Satan, the ancient serpent. Only here he is not seen as one that had a place on high, but defeated and rejected here below. He is not spoken of with the same minuteness as in the Revelation, which gives us the full light of God upon the subject and the details.

Moreover, we find that at the end of the millennium God will show that the day of glory (the thousand years, which from the part of the day of the Lord, when Satan is bound, and the Lord Jesus reigns manifestly) will no more convert souls of itself, than the day of grace and the publishing of the gospel to the ends of the earth. For if the day of grace requires the immediate power of God to save an individual soul, of course the same power will be requisite here below in the day of glory. Whilst the Lord is there, evil will be kept down; there will no leader of man in his evil. But the moment Satan is allowed to come out of his place, and again exercises his power, we have plain proof that the heart of man is unchanged. He goes out to the four corners of the earth to deceive the nations, and gathers them together for destruction.

These nations are called by a symbolic name, which is a sort of allusion to the enemies of Israel spoken of in Ezek. 38 xxxix. But they are not the same, and must be carefully distinguished. For in Ezekiel Gog is literally an individual person—the prince of the vast northeastern territories and peoples, known in our time as the empire of Russia. Gog is to be the then leader of that country, which is called in scripture "the land of Magog." Indeed this is the positive meaning of the words rendered in our Bibles "chief prince." It ought to be "prince of Rosh." But when the Scriptures were translated into Latin, (which had a great influence upon succeeding versions,) the Russian empire did not exist and could not be known by that name. For the north of Europe and Asia was then merely inhabited by hordes of wandering barbarians, called Sarmatians, Scythians, &c. So when the corrector of the old Latin, Jerome, came to the Hebrew "Rosh," he thought it must be taken not as the name of a people, but as a common noun, meaning "head" or "chief," just as the Franks, besides giving their name to a neighboring country which they conquered, also meant "free men." Hence, probably, in our version "Rosh" was translated chief, which the Hebrew word might equally well bear, if a proper name were not required by the context; for "prince of chief, Meshech and Tubal" makes no good sense. Therefore, I suppose, the translators, not knowing what better to make of it, put the clause down vaguely as "chief prince of Meshech. and Tubal." However, it is well known that learned persons who had no light, or a very partial one, on prophecy -scholars who examined the subject a hundred years ago, concluded that Russia was meant. But what is much more important, the Greek version, or Septuagint, which was made two centuries before Christ, left it as ρ■■■, They did not know what place or race was meant; but seeing that Meshech and Tubal were given as proper names, they understood the preceding word similarly. Thus, Gog is really to be "the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal," which will all be found in the Russian

empire. Ezekiel then shows that, when God restores Israel and plants them in their own land, Russia is to be the last great enemy that comes up to attack them, and meets with its own demolition from the hands of God on the mountains of Israel. His prophecy, I think, does not bear on recent events, save as these may lead on to it; much less is it to be confounded with the gathering of Gog and Magog described in verses 8, 9. It cannot mean the same as these; for the Jewish prophet speaks of a vast confederacy before the millennial, or at least at the very beginning of it; while in the Revelation it is after the thousand years are past.

Gog and Magog here are symbolical expressions, founded, it is true, upon the prophet of the Chebar, but entirely distinct. The word by Ezekiel has its accomplishment when Israel is restored. (See chaps. xxxvi. xxxvii.) Gog comes up when they are dwelling in their unwall'd villages, and thinks to make them an easy prey: but the Lord interferes. Gog is put down and Israel live and flourish quietly in their land. Here they are symbols borrowed from Old Testament circumstances, but applied to a time long subsequent. The last enemy which Israel had to encounter before the millennium was the literal Gog the last rebellion after it derives its name from that well-remembered effort of the outside nations. Countless swarms from the four quarters of the earth, under the guidance of Satan, will repeat (never to be repeated again) what the Russian chief will have done before them. They will go up on the breadth of the earth, and compass the camp of the saints about and the beloved city. Of course the earthly people and city are meant; for Israel will then be a body of saints, a holy people, and Jerusalem will be the beloved city,—not in mere name, but then, in truth, the city of the great King. These nations come up and surround them, and God will, if I may so say, be compelled to destroy them forever. “Fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.” (Ver. 9.) Fire is always the figure of God's judgment. Thus do they perish. Their leader is not touched by, this judgment: a worse fate is reserved for him “And the devil that deceiveth them was east into the lake of fire and brimstone, where also [are] the beast, and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.” His followers are destroyed by a divine judgment upon earth, but the devil, who had led them by his deceits, is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.

But there is another scene that follows—the most solemn for man where all indeed is solemn. “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sitteth on it, from whose face fled the earth and the heaven; and there was found no place for them,” (ver. 11). Mark it well. There are many persons who suppose this to be the time of the coming of Christ, and who consequently put the millennium before His coming. But this will not bear the light of Scripture. Without going to proofs outside the chapter, I would just take another ground, which is short and simple, and, to my mind, perfectly conclusive of the question. When the Lord Jesus comes, He comes to the earth from heaven. This is the universal belief, as far as I know, of all persons who have any defined thoughts about the matter. But such is not the case here, For the Lord sits on a great white throne, and instead of His coming from heaven to earth, both earth and heaven are all gone. It cannot be His coming to the earth, for there is no earth to come to. The entire system of earth and heaven, as they now are, will have vanished out of the scene—not annihilated but destroyed; for there is a great difference between those two thoughts. However, the earth is no longer found filling its own place; it has disappeared. The great white throne is not therefore on the earth at all; for, from the face of Him that sat on it, the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. Lest it should be thought that their fleeing away was a mere figure of speech, it is added that “there was

found no place for them.” And it is said in 2 Peter 3, they shall be dissolved and their elements melt with fervent heat. Observe, then, that when Christ is seen seated on the great white throne, the earth and the heaven are fled away. What are we to draw from it? Either the Lord Jesus Christ must have come before this, or He will never come to the earth at all; for it would not be the same thing to suppose that He merely comes to the new earth, after all judgment—even of the wicked dead—is over. Now we know that “the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son” — “ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.” The general faith of Christians is that He will come back to this earth. His feet shall stand in a day yet future on the Mount of Olives which is before Jerusalem on the east, and which thenceforward is to be, not destroyed, but divided in the midst as a witness of it. These circumstances cannot apply to what the Apostle John calls the new heaven and new earth, but before the last physical change. When the great white throne is found, the earth is gone, and therefore the coming of Christ to the earth must have been before that final scene of judgment. In point of fact, too, we have had the -coming of Christ already described in chap. 19. and His reign in the early part of chap. xx. This gives distinctness to the character of the great white throne. Nothing can be more simple, if you take it in the order in which God arranges it. But man is ever perverse; and so he blots out the coming of Christ from chap. xix. where it is given, and imagines it in chap. xx. 11, where it is not and cannot be.

Observe, also, that the judgment of the great white throne is not a general judgment, any more than the resurrection spoken of here is a general resurrection. In fact, the mixed idea is mere imagination. I hold that every soul of man (i.e., of those that have died) must be in one or other resurrection. But Scripture shows us that the resurrection of the just is a totally different thing and at a different time from the resurrection of the unjust: they have nothing in common, save that in both cases soul and body must be reunited forever. There is no Scripture for an indiscriminate rising of all. A few passages are used to make out a show of proof. The Lord says in John 5:28: “The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.” But this does not show that they will rise at the same time. The hour is coming in which both these classes shall rise; but, instead of saying that they are all to rise in one common or indiscriminate resurrection, He takes pains to state that they that have done good are to come forth from their graves for a life resurrection, and they that have done evil for a judgment-resurrection. There are two resurrections, then, not a common one. The very passage that men cite to prove a general resurrection teaches, in fact, the reverse. The Apostle John's gospel shows their distinctness in character; his Revelation shows their distinctness in time.

Persons may say, “the hour is coming” implies that all are to be raised much about the same time. But the word “hour” is often used in Scripture (and indeed everywhere else) in a large sense. It might comprehend a thousand years or more; so that if one resurrection took place at the beginning of the millennium and the other at the end of it, it might still be the same “hour.” “The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear it shall live.” (John 5:25). This refers to what has been going on ever since Christ was on earth up to this very moment. “The hour” there takes in nearly two thousand years; and surely it is not too much to infer that “the hour” in verse 28 might embrace, if necessary, a period equally long. Scripture decides it. The same John who shows us the rise of all the flesh from the grave,

divided into two contrasted resurrections of men characterized by opposite moral qualities, shows us with no less plainness and certainty the interval between these resurrections. The chapter that we are now examining in the Revelation is the answer to the question, and proves that there will be an interval of at least a thousand years between the two.

But this is not all. There is a deep fundamental difference in the nature of the resurrections, as well as a distinction of time. In the gospel of John, the first is said to be a resurrection of life, the second is one of judgment. In the former are the righteous; all who are judged in the latter are the evil. Our translators call it the resurrection of "damnation" though the real meaning of the word is "judgment." It is the same word that is used in a verse or two before. (Ver. 21, 27). "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." And it is necessary to bear this in mind, that Christ, while as the Son of God He gives life, as Son of man comes to execute judgment in His kingdom. He gives life to the believer, and executes judgment on the unbeliever. So there are two resurrections answering to these titles. There is the resurrection of life or the resurrection of the believer. It is the application to his body of that power of life which he has already in his soul. But those who have refused Christ, what will they have? The resurrection of judgment. They have despised Christ now; they cannot escape the resurrection of judgment then.

Looking then at Rev. 20, is not this what we have here? First there was the resurrection of life, of "those that have done good." "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." What was said about them? They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. It is a life-resurrection. But look at the others, the wicked—"they that have done evil." "The rest of the dead lived not again till the thousand years were finished." What have you here? "The rest of the dead lived not again till," &c. So they do rise. "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before the throne." None but dead are there, and how differently do they appear before the throne! "And the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works," (ver. 12). Now I fully believe that the saints of God will have all their works examined: what they have done in the body will come out. We shall have praise or censure according to our faithfulness or unfaithfulness, when the Lord Jesus takes His place on the judgment-seat, and we stand before Him and are manifested there. It is the Apostle Paul that tells us this. (Rom. 14; 2 Cor. 5). But the object of the Holy Ghost, by the Apostle John, is to contrast the two resurrections. Therefore not a word is said, in the account of the first resurrection, about our appearing before Him, that each may receive the things done in the body, whether good or bad; but we are represented as judging others. Such is the way in which the life-resurrection is described. "I saw thrones and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them." They do, of course, give an account of themselves to the Lord, and receive accordingly; but the Holy Ghost has His own wise reasons for omitting all allusion to it here. It is a resurrection of life in the Gospel, and of life in Revelation. But when you come to the rest of the dead that have not done good, when they are raised and stand before the throne, it is the very opposite of a life-resurrection. They have only done evil; and when the book of life is opened, no name is to be found there; for this is not a resurrection of life, but of judgment. They are to be judged according to their works, written in these other books; but their works are calling aloud for judgment. Their works being only and always evil, they are judged according to them; and what is the result? There might be a difference among them in some respects: there were

great and small. But they were all alike in this—they were not found written in the book of life; and whosoever was not found written there, “was cast into the lake of fire.” Not a word is said or hinted, that were written there. This is a resurrection of those who have no part in that book, and they are cast into the lake of fire. It is, as if God were saying, The books of their works call for judgment: is there nothing to be said in defense of these wretched men? The book of life is accordingly opened; but they are not found there: the last hope is gone, and if “any one was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.” (Ver. 15). It is the resurrection of judgment. There is no life, no mercy there. Those that had their part in the life-resurrection had been raised long before, and never come into judgment at all; for it is said (John 5:24), “He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment (the same word as in verses 22, 27, 29), but is passed from death unto life “

Nothing then can be more certain than that this is a separate resurrection, distinct in character, and long severed in time. The resurrection of life had taken place long ago, and now comes the resurrection of judgment. “And the sea gave up the dead which were in it,” The depths which man could but imperfectly explore cannot hide for a moment longer. Nay, the unseen world, over which he has no control, is also forced to give up its miserable inmates. “Death and Hades delivered up the dead that were in them, and they were judged each according to their works,” (ver. 13). And their works condemn them. Not a word is said about them in the book of life, and they are cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. They are raised from their first death to be cast forever into that place of torment, whence there is no escape.

The other scripture of most weight, often used for the purpose of proving a general resurrection, is the one in Daniel. What do we find there? It is written in chap. xii. 1: “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people (meaning Daniel's people, the Jews); and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time.” Evidently, this is not the millennium. “And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.” This is not the time when the church is delivered; for we have been delivered long ago through the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. But since the cross of Christ, the Jewish people have only been in misery: that cross was their guilt. They cried “His blood be on us and on our children.” The time of their greatest suffering is to be immediately before the hour of their deliverance. (Jer. 30:7) Our deliverance, as theirs, is through the sufferings of Another; but what we suffer is after our deliverance. For the Jews it is a different destiny. They have a tremendous tribulation to go through yet; and it is to be the worst they have ever had. But immediately after this their final deliverance comes— “At that time thy people shall be delivered,” &c. They will not only be delivered as a people, but they will be saved and converted individually, according to God's purpose— “every one that shall be found written in the book.” “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

This is commonly applied to the resurrection; but I am persuaded that it does not apply to the rising of the body. It is a figure which is taken from it indeed, and which supposes that great truth to be known. But it is the same kind of expression, and applied to a similar subject and end, that I have referred to, in Isa. 26:19, where Israel was described as “my dead body,” and was called on, as one dwelling in the dust, to awake and sing. So here it is said, “Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting

contempt.” This does not suit any scheme of interpretation, if it be applied to a literal bodily resurrection of good and bad at the same moment. You will observe that this is before the millennium. It is evidently before the time of deliverance and blessing. There is a time of trouble, immediately after which Daniel's people are delivered, and those who might have been forgotten (sleeping, as it were, among the Gentiles), reappear, but not all for the same end -some to shame, and some to everlasting life. (Compare, also, Isa. 66:20, 24.) This does not answer the purpose of those who quote the text. For their idea is, that there is the millennium first, and then the resurrection of good and bad. This resurrection, literal or figurative, is before the millennium, and after it is a time of greater trouble than Israel ever knew.

My conviction, therefore, is that Dan. 12 refers to the Jews. First, in ver. 1, those who are to be delivered are spoken of in connection with the land of Palestine. Then, it is shown that many of them who have been sleeping in the dust of earth, will come out of their degradation, will awake, some to everlasting life, &c. Some of those Jews, that are to come forward out of their hiding-places all over the earth, would prove to be rebels, and be treated accordingly; while others will learn that the Lord has wrought with them for His name's sake. We may compare this with Ezek. 37, where the dry bones set forth the house of Israel. No doubt can be left on any serious mind as to that passage; for the Lord Himself has interpreted it as the figure of the future resurrection of Israel. “Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves.” And, if in Daniel it is said that some are to have everlasting life, Ezekiel says that the Lord will put His Spirit in them. It is a spiritual as well as a national restoration. So the passage in Daniel refers to a figurative resurrection of Israel, when some will awake out of their moral death.

We may now come back to Rev. 20 with the increased conviction that the doctrine of one general resurrection is a total mistake, and that God's word teaches a resurrection of the just, and another of the unjust. This which is spoken of at the close of our chapter, is solely of the wicked dead; it is a resurrection of judgment. I appeal to you, whether you could rest the salvation of your souls on your works? I admit that our works will be examined, and that we shall receive accordingly; but this is not the same thing as being judged according to our works. In the one case the person is accepted, but his works are reviewed for praise or blame; in the other, the person is judged according to works that are not mingled but altogether bad. For a natural or unconverted man has no life towards God; therefore he can have nothing but evil works to be judged for. Not so with the believer. No doubt there are works sometimes mingled, sometimes even worse in him; but he has a standing beyond all that, painful as it is. He has the new nature that God has given and will not take away. His works will be examined, and they have a most important bearing on the position that the Lord will assign him in His kingdom. To be saved or lost is never a question of reward, but of the grace and power of Christ. When you talk of reward, it is a debt due for work done; but when of salvation, it is never spoken of in Scripture as a reward of works. It is the work of Christ—the fruit of another's work and suffering, which God has given to us in sovereign love.

And when we stand before Christ, it will not be to take our trial for condemnation or acquittal: this would be to deny our justification and the value of His own work. All our ways will be manifested in God's light, and the Lord will bring us triumphantly through; but He will not pass over a single thing that has been done against Him And as a Christian now can, before God, examine his ways, pass judgment upon them, and thank God for His faithful discipline, so it will be in a still brighter and

more blessed and perfect way before the judgment seat of Christ. It will then be no question of being saved only, but of vindicating the Lord's glory and goodness. This is not a thing that we ought to dread: it is what we shall have to be thankful for through all eternity. For self-judgment even now is the best thing, next to the joy of worshipping God and serving Him faithfully through grace. We shall not have a word to say in defense of ourselves, but the Lord will have much to say for us. He will bring out all that we have done, and we shall receive according to it. For evil we shall suffer loss, for good we shall get reward.

But what a difference is here! The dead that stand before the throne; they have no life—nothing but dead works. They had not Christ, and what do their works deserve? They are cast into the lake of fire. Death and Hades are now no longer needed; they are personified as the enemies of God and man, and as such are, in the vision, (ver. 14,) cast into the lake of fire also.

(Continued from page 314.)

## Lectures on Revelation 21: Part 1

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It would have been a happier division of these chapters, if chapter 21:1-8 had made a part of the same series of events which was given in chap. 20., following it in unbroken succession. There is a very decided termination of the chain, at the close of the 8th verse of this chapter. Thence to the end, and taking in the first five verses of chap. 22., we have another connected portion. The first eight verses refer to a totally different time from what follows. From chap. 21:9, we have to go back again to the millennium; whereas the previous verses of the chapter are the fullest account that the word of God furnishes of the new heavens and new earth in the proper sense of the words. This is subsequent to the thousand years' reign, to the great white throne, and of course to the complete dissolution of the heavens and earth that now are, which were found when that throne was set up. Then, when this account of the eternal state is closed, the Spirit of God supplies a very important appendix, if I may be allowed the expression, on the state of things during the millennium, which was not given when that epoch was noticed in the historical sequence of Rev. 19; 20; 21:1-8.

But, perhaps, it may be asked by some objectors, What is the authority for dividing the chapters thus? Why not take the whole of chap. xxi. (as it was probably understood by those who made the division), as one and the same time? Why not suppose that the account of the New Jerusalem in verse 10 refers to the same date as the mention of it in verse 2? The answer is simple. In the eternal state God has to do with men. All time-distinctions are at an end. There is no such thing then as kings and nations. Accordingly, this we do find in the first eight verses. Take, for example, the third verse: "And I heard a loud voice out of heaven [or the throne], saying, Behold the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, their God." Whereas, if we look at the latter part of the chapter, we have again to do with nations and earthly kings. "And the nations shall walk by means of its light; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory," &c. When eternity begins, God has done dealing with things according to the order of the world-kings, and nations, and the like provisions of a temporal nature. All this implies government, as government supposes that there is evil which requires suppression. Consequently, in the latter part of our chapter, it is not the eternal condition which we have, but a previous state, the early verses (1-5) of chap. 22. being the continuation of this description. There a tree is described, "and the leaves of the tree [are] for healing of the nations." That is, at the time of which the verse speaks, not only are there nations, but they are not removed from the need of healing, and God supplies what they want. This must convince any unprejudiced mind that the Spirit of God, in chap. 22., does not refer to what follows the last judgment, when all that is connected with the world is entirely closed, but that He goes back to a previous state when God is still governing. It will be observed also, that in the portion relative to the millennium (i.e. from ver. 9 of chap. 21.) we have dispensational names, such as the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb; not so in chap. 21:1-8, which discloses eternity, where God shall be all in all.

But it may help souls still further to remark, that it is the manner of God, in this book, to take a retrospect. I say this to show that I am not at all arguing for something without precedent, in the

order in which, as I conceive, these events are arranged. Take, for instance, chap. 14. There we had seen a regular seven-fold series of events, in the course of which the fall of Babylon occupies the third place. After that comes the judgment on the worshippers of the beast; next, the Holy Ghost pronounces the blessedness of those that die in the Lord; then, the Lord's coming in judgment, presented in two ways, as reaping the harvest, and as trampling the winepress (the harvest, a judgment of discrimination, and the vintage one of pure vengeance). Babylon there has got its place assigned very clearly. But long after this in the prophecy, when the Spirit of God has given us the seven vials of God's wrath, we have Babylon again. The fall of Babylon is under the seventh vial. And this is important: for the Holy Ghost then proceeds to describe the character and conduct of Babylon, that required such a fearful visitation from the hand of God. In this case the Holy Ghost has carried us down in chap. xiv. to events subsequent to Babylon's fall, and even to the Lord's coming in judgment; and then He returns to show us details about Babylon and her connection with the beast, and the kings of the earth, in chapters 17 - 18.

Now it appears to me that this exactly answers to the order of the events in chap. 21. There is a striking analogy in the way in which Babylon and the heavenly Jerusalem are introduced, and though, of course, there is the strongest and most marked contrast between the two objects themselves, still there is enough to make it manifest that the Holy Ghost had them together in His mind, as it seems to me. Thus, in Rev. 17:1, it is said, "there came one of the seven angels that had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the judgment of the great harlot that sits by the many waters." Such is the announcement, where the vision goes back to describe Babylon and her doom. Just so are we introduced to the counterpart of this vision in chap. 21., which looks back at the bride, the Lamb's wife. "And there came one of the seven angels that had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." As Babylon had had its place defined in the historic line of events, and then, that line being completed, the Holy Ghost stopped to disclose, retrospectively and at full, those moral ways which had forced God, so to speak, to judge her; so exactly the Lamb's wife, the New Jerusalem, had been seen in both capacities, in the final sketch of the history up to the very end. And now the Holy Ghost goes back to describe the same New Jerusalem, with reference to the millennial reign, and the kings and nations then to be on earth. We have seen the bride, the Lamb's wife, that had made herself ready, in chap. 19:7. We have had, in chap. 21. 2, the New Jerusalem spoken of as coming down from God out of heaven, still fresh in bridal beauty, after more than a thousand years have passed away. But now, in 21:9, the very important fact comes out, that the bride, the Lamb's wife, is the holy city Jerusalem. "There came unto me one of the seven angels and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me [not that great city, but] the holy city Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." John was called to see the bride, and looking, he saw the heavenly Jerusalem. Thus, if we had the bride in relation to the Lamb, in chap. 19., and as the holy city, New Jerusalem, in relation to the eternal state, verse 9 and the following verses of this chapter show us that, during the interval between the marriage of the Lamb, and the new heaven and earth in the eternal state, she has a very blessed place in the eyes of God and man. It is the church's millennial display.

These few prefatory remarks may clear the way, and prove that I am not assuming more than can be demonstrated in taking the first eight verses as the proper sequel of the series of events found in chap. 19, 20., and the rest of this chapter from verse 9, as a retrogressive description of the millennial state. There are, evidently, the strongest reasons for it, and indeed, any other interpretation, is, I conceive, out of the question, if the context be duly weighed. It is impossible for an unbiased and instructed person, who carefully considers the circumstances here described, to suppose that what follows the 9th verse can synchronize with the section which immediately precedes. They are, as already remarked, two irreconcilable states of things.

What is it that the Holy Ghost shows the Apostle after the old heaven and earth had disappeared and 4 last judgment? "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and the sea was no more." These words are not to be taken in a mere preparatory and moral sense. The prophet Isaiah had spoken in that way. In Isa. 65 a new heavens and a new earth were announced: but how differently! There the language must be taken in a very qualified sense indeed. "For, behold (ver. 17), I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people; and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old, but the sinner being an hundred years old, shall be accursed." Clearly this is a very bright change, but it is an earthly condition. There are infants and old men here; and, though the description is purposely contrasted with anything the world has yet seen, still it is a time-state of blessedness, and not eternity. The Apostle John shows us, in the Revelation, the new heaven and the new earth, not in a relative sense but in the most absolute. In the Old Testament they are limited, because connected with Israel upon the earth. So it is said of the Lord, "He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end." This is an Old Testament hope, though said in the New, and it means, of course, that He shall reign over the house of Jacob as long as it exists as such upon the earth. When the earth disappears and Israel is no longer seen as a nation, they will be blessed, no doubt, in another and better way; but there will be no reign of Christ over them as an earthly people here below; so that this kingdom, while it has no end as long as the earth subsists, must necessarily be limited by the earth's continuance. It is thus that I understand the new heavens and the new earth spoken of in Isaiah. The New Testament uses the phrase fully and absolutely, as an unending state; but in the Old Testament it is tied down to the earthly relations of which. the Holy Ghost was then speaking.

What makes it still clearer is, that the next verse (Isa. 65:21) goes on to say, "And they shall build houses and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build and another inhabit mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord," &c. Now all this is most cheering. So again, "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord." Glowing and beautiful as this picture is of what the Lord can accomplish, it is in connection with the earth and an earthly people. It is not the eternal state, but an exceedingly glorious day, when death will be the exception and life the rule. I say that death will be thus rare, at least in the Holy Land, because of that verse, "The child shall die an

hundred years old, but the sinner being an hundred years old, shall be accursed." The meaning is, that if a person dies at a hundred years old, he will still be comparatively a child; and that even when death occurs at that age, it is only as the result of an express curse of God. Thus will it be during the millennium.

And this seems to answer a question often asked: What will become of all the righteous people during that wonderful reign? If the first resurrection is then past, and in the second resurrection none but the wicked dead are raised, what can be the destiny of the righteous who live during the millennium? The truth is, there is no Scripture-proof that such die during the thousand years. What is said supposes the contrary. Therefore, if they die not during the millennium, there are no righteous to be raised at the end of it. The resurrection at the end remains, consequently, for the wicked dead solely. The righteous will be raised before the millennium, the wicked after it. The just who live during the reign of Christ are not called to die at all, as far as Scripture informs us. We may be sure that these millennial saints will be changed into the likeness of Christ, they will be transplanted into the new heavens and earth. We are not called upon to conjecture how this will be. It is sufficient for us to know that (though they are not described as dying during the millennium, and therefore do not need to be raised) yet, when the new earth appears, men are found upon it, quite distinct from the New Jerusalem, (i.e., the symbol of the glorified heavenly saints). I believe that verse 3 warrants this statement. "Behold, the tabernacle of God (or the city that descends) is with men," &c.

Another proof that Isaiah does not speak of the eternal state described here is this. When the new heavens and earth are seen by the New Testament prophet, the old are said to be passed away, and the sea no longer exists. Not so in Isaiah's prophecy. There it was rather the spirit or pledge of the new that came into the old; a shadow of what was to be, and not the very image or accomplishment of the thing. They are said prophetically to be "new," because of the great joy and blessing that God will give to His people Israel and their land. In the Revelation "there was no more sea." In the Old Testament, on the contrary, "the abundance of the sea (it is said) shall be converted unto thee.... Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships Tarshish first" (Isa. 60) There can be no just doubt that this chapter speaks of the same time as chap. 65. "For thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." This and other passages prove that there is still to be sea at the time spoken of by Isaiah: the isles and ships necessarily suppose it; and "the isles afar off" are introduced between the two statements of the new heavens and new earth in Isa. 65 and 66.

Here, in Revelation, not merely the present dispensation, but the present heaven and earth have passed away, and give place to "all things made new." Doubtless the new heaven and earth will be made out of the old. Just as the resurrection-body will be formed out of the present body of humiliation by the power of God, so are the present earth and heavens destined to a kindred transformation. After the dissolution, they will reappear in the form of the new heavens and earth. "No more sea" would be impossible without a miracle, as long as life in its present condition has to be maintained. The sea, as my reader knows, is absolutely necessary to animated nature as it is. Man could not exist without it; and so with regard to every animal and even vegetable upon the face of the earth, not to speak of the vast world of waters. But when time is done—when there is no longer the natural life that is sustained by God—when the millennium shall have yielded the brightest witness to this as well as to every other fruit of His wisdom and goodness and power—a

new state of things altogether will ensue, and this perfect and everlasting. There will be new heavens and a new earth; for the first heavens and first earth are passed away, and there is no more sea.

But that is not all. Into this dwelling-place and scene of order that God will have made, so remarkably distinguished from all that has been before, and even from that which accompanies the reign of? His own Messiah, John sees the “holy city, New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice out of heaven, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, their God,” (ver. 2, 3). I apprehend that the New Jerusalem is the tabernacle of God. It is where He abides in a very special sense. And this tabernacle of God descends out of heaven to be with men. The heavenly saints compose the tabernacle of God; while those that are found upon the new earth are simply described as “men.” They are no longer Jews and Gentiles then, as in the millennium; this will have all passed away, with “the first or former things.” Every distinction which had to do with time is at an end. When a saint is risen or changed, he is no longer a Jew or a Greek; he is a man, though bearing the image of the heavenly. So here God has to do with men, and “he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people; and God himself shall be with them, their God.” Instead of regarding it from a distance, God will not merely come to visit the scene that His hand has made for man, as of old in the garden of Eden; but He will dwell eternally in their midst. “And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; and no sorrow, nor crying, nor pain shall any more be; for the first things are passed away,” (ver. 4.) -Unquestionably the figures that are used to describe this state of things are derived from Isaiah—figures which the Spirit of God had applied primarily to millennial blessedness. Isaiah predicts a glorious but earthly condition, which God will make true of the just during the millennium. Blessedness will then be the rule, sorrow the exception. Similar terms, but with striking differences, the Holy Ghost now takes up and applies in a far deeper and really unqualified sense.

And if we look for a moment at 2 Peter 3, we shall find, I think, a link between Isaiah and Revelation. It is written in 2 Peter 3:10, “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. The earth, also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.... The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.” Now it appears to me plain, that this is what takes place at the epoch of the great white throne. For the moment the Lord is on that throne, the earth and heaven flee from before his face, and there is found no place for them. It is a part of “the day of the Lord;” which day comprehends the whole time from the Lord's interference to judge the world, taking His great power and reigning, until He delivers up the kingdom, after the millennium and the subsequent judgments are over. “ Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

Now this is the state of things described, with fuller details of time, &c., by the Apostle John. The new heaven and earth are what we find in the beginning of chap. 21. These are the new heavens and earth, “wherein dwelleth righteousness.” Righteousness is at home there, because there God

dwells, and this can only be because righteousness is the pervading feature. It is plain that the Holy Spirit in Peter refers to the passage of Isaiah, as it is said, "We according to his promise." But still He gives it a larger and deeper meaning. And the Apostle John, the last of the New Testament writers, takes up the same thought, and puts each detail in its place. He shows us that while the millennium may be a partial fulfillment of it, the full force of the expression will not come out till the millennium is over; and then, when all is according to divine thought and purpose, God will rest, and men—not Israel only, but redeemed and glorified men—shall be His people, and He their God.

One other Scripture I must refer to, in order to connect the various passages which bear on the eternal state. In 1 Cor. 15:23 we read that every one is to be raised in his own order: "Christ the firstfruits (who is raised already); afterward they that are Christ's, at His coming. Then cometh the end, when He delivers up [which is the true reading] the kingdom to God, even the Father, when He shall put down all rule and all authority and power." This is the task of Christ during the millennium: He will abolish all opposing rule, subjecting to Himself every adversary and all things unto the glory of God the Father, for such is the ultimate object of His exaltation, as we see from Phil. 2 "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." This exactly harmonizes with Rev. 20; 21, where we find, first, the reign of Christ, then death destroyed, and after that the new heaven and earth, which is the time when Christ is said in 1 Cor. 15:24 to deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father. Not that Christ will cease to reign divinely: but the special human reign of Christ will terminate—that is, His reigning for a given period over an earthly people, and the world at large, which the heavenly saints, in glory, will share along with Him. This will end. All the righteous will at last be in a risen or changed condition, all the wicked dead cast into the lake of fire, and the kingdom closes. Its surrender to God the Father in no way touches the personal glory of the Lord Jesus. The kingdom that Christ has during the millennium is not what He has as God, but as the risen man—as the One who was humbled, but has been exalted. This He delivers up to God even the Father, (Himself also as man taking the place of subjection in glory, as of old He did in grace on the earth,) that God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—may be all in all—God, as such, having the place of supremacy throughout eternity. But although the human and mediatorial kingdom of Christ will terminate, not so the divine kingdom; and therefore we, being made partakers of the divine nature, are said to reign forever and ever. (Rev. 22). So, in Rom. 5, it is said, "We shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." Of course, partaking of the divine nature does not touch the incommunicable glory of the Godhead. But it remains true, that we have an eternal life, and that its endless character flows from the fact that it is given to us by One who, though truly man, is a divine person, by Him who is the living One and was dead, and, behold, is alive for evermore. "We shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" —a reign which is not limited in time any more than sphere.

You will observe that it is God who is prominent through this portion, exactly answering to what we saw in 1 Cor. 15:28. "And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he saith [to me,] Write; for these words are true and faithful." (Ver. 5). He speaks that sits on the throne. We do not get the Lamb mentioned. It is the glory of God in the fullest possible sense that we have here. "And he said to me, they are done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end." No doubt Christ is the Alpha and the Omega too, as we find in chap. 22. 13 but it is not the Lord as such that acts and speaks here, but God. "I will give him that is athirst of the

fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be a God to him and he shall be a son to me.” (Ver. 6, 7). Nothing can be plainer than that it is God as such who is speaking all through. “But for the cowardly, and unbelievers, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all the false, their part [shall be] in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” (Ver. 8). A most awful word of warning, and especially as used here! For mark the force of it. It is then God shall be in all—God who is love. But He is not merely love, which is a false and infidel thought; He is light, as well as love. It as much appertains to God to be holy as to be gracious; and it is the very same portion of the word which teaches us both truths. And here is the final proof of it. In love He comes down to be with His people. They may be men, but they are no longer in weakness and sorrow, for God Himself has wiped away every tear from their eyes. But He is light, and therefore in presence of all things new, where righteousness dwells in peace, when there is no evil or sin, but separation from it forever by the power of God; even then the portion of the wicked is in the lake burning with fire and brimstone. Note well that this is the eternal state. Remember that in the eternal state there is the doom, the never-ending doom, of those who have rejected Christ and taken their stand on their own miserable self. Here is the award from God Himself. Their part is the second death, where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched, as the Lord Jesus so touchingly expresses it. No declaration more solemn than that of Rev. 21:8, not only because of its character, but because of its place. When God will have rest in the new heavens and earth—when He will come down to abide among men, because there will no longer be any evil to check His dwelling with them—then it is that the awful scene presents itself of evil and its hopeless unending torment. This is what God teaches us in His picture of the eternal world. There is not only the bright side, but none the less the lake of fire, which has its course; nor does a word intimate that its horrors will ever come to an end.

But now the Holy Ghost, having brought us to “the end” in the most absolute sense, leads us back again. We have seen the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, when this eternal condition begins. But what is its relation to the millennial earth? If we had only the previous revelations, we could not have answered this clearly. The bride, the Lamb's wife, has had her joy consummated in heaven; then as the New Jerusalem after the millennium, she has taken her place as regards the new heavens and earth; but what is her relation to those here below during the millennium? This is now made plain. “There came one of the seven angels that had, &c.... and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Its luster [was] like a stone most precious, as a jasper stone crystal-clear.” It appears to me that this account of the city's bright luster like a jasper has a very close connection with what had just before been said of it, as having “the glory of God.” For when God Himself was seen on the throne in chap. 4., He was in appearance like a jasper and a sardis. Here the New Jerusalem has God's glory, and its luster is jasper-like. But this is not all. “It had a wall great and high,” and after this we are told in the 18th verse, that “the building of its wall was of jasper.” Hence it is plain that this is peculiarly the stone which is used to describe the glory of God, as far as it can be seen by a creature—not that glory of God which the creature cannot see. For God has a glory which no man can approach unto. But He is pleased also to display His glory suitably to the capacity of a creature; and the precious stone used to set this forth is, in the book of Revelation, the jasper.

Besides this, we are told it had “twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names inscribed, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel.” The number “twelve” is particularly mentioned throughout the account of the New Jerusalem. It was just before said that the city had the glory of God, in the hope of which we rejoice (Rom. 5:2). Here we find that this hope, for which we wait and in which we rejoice, is enjoyed, But God is pleased to remember that He is dealing with people on the earth, and the New Jerusalem has a very special relation to men during the millennium, Accordingly, there are twelve gates with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written upon them. At the gates stand twelve angels, showing their subordination. In this day of glory the angel is happy to be a porter at the gate of the heavenly city—happy, if he do not enter, to have his work and mission outside. “Unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak” (Heb. 2) “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world Know ye not that we shall judge angels!” (1 Cor. 6) “And the wall of the city hath twelve foundations, and on them the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb” (ver. 14). Eph. 2:20 gives us, I think, the force of the symbol. “Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints.... and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.” No doubt the whole building is growing up into an holy temple in the Lord. But we are built upon “the foundation of the apostles and prophets,” both of the New Testament. If Old Testament prophets had been meant, they would, naturally, to avoid mistake, have been set before apostles; but the expression, as it stands, seems purposely framed to guard against such a misconception. The prophets of the Old Testament were the filling up of the law, besides testifying future things, judgments, the new covenant, &c. The law and the prophets, as it is said, were until John (see also Matt. 5:17). Their authority never can be destroyed. But when Messiah was rejected by Israel, and redemption was accomplished on the cross, there was a new foundation laid for a new work of God, entirely distinct from what the law, or the prophets, or even John the Baptist, contemplated. It is the foundation of the [New Testament] apostles and prophets, and it is upon this that the New Jerusalem is built. Now God has brought out His full mind as a foundation of truth.

## Lectures on Revelation 21: Part 2

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Certain things were yet reserved in Old Testament times. Look at Deuteronomy (chap. xxix 29). "The secret things," says Moses there, "belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children forever, that we may do all the works of this law." Revealed things here have to do with the law and its consequences, for the purpose of enforcing obedience. But the secret things, which then belonged to God, are themselves now revealed-the resources of grace, when all was ruin under the law. And this is what the Apostle Paul lays such stress on, while he tells us how that, by revelation, God made known to him the mystery or secret, "whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ; which, in other ages, was not made known unto the sons of men as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." And so Col. 1:26. The Holy Ghost had brought out what had been a secret thing in the days of old. The mystery is revealed. This full revelation of truth appears to be called the foundation of the apostles and prophets on which the Church is built. Therefore it is said, in 1 Tim. 3:13, that the Church is "the pillar and ground of the truth." The truth has come out, and God has, as it were, no secrets now. All that He chose to reveal, all that would be of service to the creature, and to the glory of His own Son, God has brought out; so that, in this sense and in every other, it may be said, that "the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth" So then, upon this broad and deep foundation-where not merely the dealings of God with individuals, or a people connected with His promises or His government are shown out; but where all that can be known of God by the creature has been revealed in His Son- upon this foundation the Church is built. And this is now made manifest to His saints, which was hidden but is now revealed. "The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." They were the instruments of this revelation.

"And he that talked with me had a golden reed as a measure, that he might measure the city, and the gates thereof; and the wall thereof. And the city lieth quadrangular, and the length is as great as the breadth.... The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal." (Ver. 15, 17.) It was the image of the perfection of a city "whose builder and maker is God." I do not mean that this description is to be taken as if it were of a literal city. I conceive that it is a purely symbolical picture as to certain relations of the bride, the Lamb's wife. The Scripture itself most positively says that it is (not the dwelling-place of the redeemed, but) the bride herself described as a city. Just as the apostate church, the vast idolatrous ecclesiastical system so often spoken of in this book, was symbolized as the great city, Babylon; so here the glorified Church is characterized as the bride, the Lamb's wife, in contrast with the great harlot, and as the holy city descending out of heaven from God, in contrast with the great city which rules over the rulers of the earth. When we read, then, of the city forming a quadrangle, of equal length, breadth, and height, it is simply to be understood as figurative of its perfectness. At the same time these symbols must not be run into one another. For immediately after it is said, "he measured the wall thereof; of an hundred and forty-four cubits,-a man's measure, that is, of an angel." (Ver. 17.) Now the city's height was previously given as equal to the length and breadth, i.e., twelve thousand furlongs. This of course

is enormously greater than 144 cubits, which is expressly made to refer to the height of the wall. First, we have the general idea of a city which is every way square, a cube, in fact; then, when we come to the details of the wall, a height is given, which shows that we are not to look for mere literal consistency as if it were a portrait. The number twelve keeps up the idea of a perfection in reference to man.

“And the building of its wall was of jasper; and the city [was] pure gold, like clear glass.” (Ver. 18.) We have already found the meaning of these two figures, the gold and the glass, in an earlier part of the book. The Lord counseled the Laodicean church in its fallen state to buy of Him “gold tried in the fire.” It is invariably the figure of divine righteousness-of righteousness that can stand the searching fire of God's judgment. Human righteousness could not bear it, and so is never represented by gold, but rather by white linen. God could cleanse this and leave it without spot or stain. But fire would be destruction to it; whereas, with regard to the gold, it would only bring out its perfection. Accordingly this city is of pure gold, “like clear glass.” Holiness, now fixed and without flaw, also marks the city. With regard to our need of holiness, the means of it are represented under the figure of water, because it is a question of cleansing from defilement in a practical way. In the Revelation this is not the case; for from the fourth chapter the saints who are put in connection with holiness are risen saints, and consequently are beyond the means of cleansing. They are therefore represented, as also in the case of that body of saints mentioned in chap, xv., as on a sea of glass, because it is purity that now is in a fixed unalterable condition. Their state is no longer that which might need to be cleansed. It is holiness that repels everything defiling. So here the city is of pure gold, like unto clear glass. In Rev. 15 it is remarkable that the sea of glass is said to be mingled with fire, which was not the case in Rev. 4; and this because the saints, spoken of here, had not only gone through this complete purging, and were now in a state of unalterable purity, but they had gone through the last terrible tribulation, of which the fire there is a figure. From this tribulation the raptured saints of Rev. 4 had been exempt. Thus, then, we have the city of pure gold, like clear glass; that is, divine righteousness has its full way now, and holiness that nothing can touch.

“And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones: the first foundation jasper, &c. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one severally of the gates was out of one pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, as transparent glass.” (Ver. 19-21.) Without pretending to give the spiritual meaning of the various precious stones, we may learn thence that in every variety of beauty will God array His people in that day of glory. There will be different rays of His glory reflected through them, set forth by these different precious stones. In God's own case it is not so. His essential glory is not described after this fashion. It is full concentrated light. It is not what is broken up into a variety of hues, if we may so say, as in the case of the glory He confers on the church. God is light, and He dwells in light which no man can approach unto. The rainbow of many colors was the sign by which God showed His covenant with creation and His various ways with poor man. But when it is the luster of the saints in heavenly glory, and the way in which God will display the beauty of His people,—for He does see beauty in them,—these precious stones are the emblems employed.

“And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one severally of the gates was of one pearl.” Such they appeared to men outside: something quite beyond nature. It is a description that alludes to the earthly Jerusalem; but in the latter city, what is really found existing in nature will be brought to

adorn it. Here the beauty of the church is set forth by a supernatural imagery: each one of the gates was made out of one pearl. They are symbols which set forth the perfect and divine beauty that God will put upon His people. This is already true of them in Christ, but actually and personally will they thus shine in that day. Each gate being of one pearl would show, I suppose, the special likeness of Christ and fellowship with Christ, which God will grant to His people—to the church. In Matt. 13 we have, as I conceive, the Lord Jesus as a merchantman in quest of goodly pearls; who, when He had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that He had and bought it. It is the beauty of the church, as viewed in God's mind, which, if one may say it, fascinated the Lord Jesus, so that He parted with all His earthly glory to get that pearl: a strong expression indeed, but not too strong to convey His appreciation of the church. But we know that, if the Lord saw any beauty in the church, it was all derived from Himself. He saw the church as she was in the mind and purpose of God, and sells all, that He might purchase this pearl of great price, which after all is but the reflection of His own beauty. So here, the spotless pearl, the perfection of moral beauty, that had been so precious in the eyes of Christ, is the figure of what, even at the entrance, will appear in the eyes of men and angels.

“And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God, the Almighty, is its temple, and the Lamb.” (Ver. 22.) This is very important. For perhaps some one may say, What has all this to do with the saint now? I answer, The world must wait for the day of glory to see the beauty of the church. And we, like the world, are so often unbelieving, that we are apt to see only the dark painful circumstances of the church, if we escape the delusive dream of an improving Christendom. Which of us carries habitually constantly, in our hearts the delight of the Lord Jesus in opening out what the church is going to be—nay, what it is in His eye and to His heart? Our unbelief as to this is one main secret source of our murmuring and rebellious spirit. I do not say that we ought not to feel the failure of God's church, as things are on earth: God forbid such a thought! But we might feel it More lovingly and more keenly too, had we a deeper sense of its nearness to Christ and the glory it is soon to shine in. A good deal of what we feel, when evil is seen in the children of God, is because self is touched, We are all inclined to deal hardly enough with a person's vanity, pride, or things of the kind. Why? Is it not too frequently because it wounds us? We have possibly not had the share of respect and importance to which we fancied ourselves entitled, and we are readily sore about it. But this is not according to Christ. Not that we should be insensible to the ways of the flesh and the world, but we should feel all with Christ and not for ourselves. What can enable us? Nothing but the heart filled with Christ and the exceedingly blessed place in which He puts us. We are called to exhibit the Lord Jesus now. It is not merely that we are to be members of His flesh, and of His bones, but that so we are now; and therefore love and desire for God's glory would lead us to seek ways answering to this in the Church and before men. What God will show to the whole universe by and by, He would have us to look for in His people now.

When that day comes, there will be no hindrances; but the action of the Holy Ghost is to make good in us what will be perfectly manifest then, and what is true in principle now. If there is a spot upon another who is to shine along with Christ then, this stirs up our affections that the evil may be removed in God's way and for His glory. And this it is which so increases our sense of shame, that such blots should be upon ourselves. It is evident to me that the Holy Ghost reveals the description of the divine glory that is to be in the church, in order to act with great practical power on our souls now, the word being mixed with faith in them that hear it. The real reason why it so

little profits us is that we are such unbelieving believers. We are believers; but is it not humiliating that we can pass over such precious fruits of Christ's love, such bright visions of assured glory, as if we did not need them now, or as if they were not the faithful and true words of God? We shall be in glory by and by and know as we are known; but it is revealed to those who are not in it yet, that their souls may be full of the joy of it now, and that the effects of it may be manifest even to the world that despises them. The Holy Spirit is the earnest of the inheritance, as well as the seal of redemption.

But this is true not of the beauty only in which the church is to shine then: there is another thing, which ought to have a mighty influence upon us now. There is an immediate relation to God in the way of worship: and what then? The symbol here used is of a city, and therefore we are not described as priests. If we were spoken of as persons, we should be described as brought near to God, that is, as priests; and so we are in chap. xx. 6. But here it is a city—and a city in which there is no temple: not because there was no special seat of the presence of God there, but because His presence filled it all and equally. The access to God is immediate. But this also is a truth applicable now. (Heb. 10) Here below there is no temple, nor priests now between us and God. Undoubtedly we have above the great and faithful High Priest—a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man. But there will be below, during the future kingdom, for those on earth that need Him, when “He shall sit as a Priest upon his throne.” Thus, to the Christian, there is neither temple nor priest on earth now. We stand, as to our faith, in the immediate presence of God, with His perfect favor shining on us. If persons do not feel this, it is because they do not believe it. We must always believe a thing on God's word first; and the more simply we believe, the more shall we enjoy the comfort, strength, and fruits of the truth.

“And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God, the Almighty, is the temple, and the Lamb. And the city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon; that they should shine on it.” No earthly nor even heavenly lights of the old creation are wanted there. “For the glory of God lightened it, and the light [literally, lamp] thereof is the Lamb” (Ver. 23.) How wonderfully all this description falls in with a few words in John 17, to which I must refer before going farther.

In His astonishing prayer (if we can call that a, prayer, which is more like the Son unbosoming Himself to the Father) the Lord says, “The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them.” It was divine, but not His Godhead glory, for this never can be given, belonging to God, and none else. The Lord Jesus had Godhead glory, but not given to Him, because He had it essentially; He had it in His own right, as being God, from all eternity. But what the Father gave to Him as man, He gave to His disciples: “that they may be one even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one: and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.” Now this exactly corresponds with what we have in the Revelation, for the holy city is seen there, descending out of heaven, from God: and the Lamb is in it, and the Lord God makes Himself known, so to speak, specially in Him; for the Lamb is not merely the light, but the vessel of it, or light-bearer. We may consider the light diffused, as it is said, “the glory of God had lightened it;” but if we want to see the light concentrated, where are we to look? The Lamb is that light. Thus does God make Himself to shine through all the glorious city: the Lamb is the great concentrating object, diffusing light over the whole scene. This, then, is the order of it—“I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one: and that the world may know,” &c. The Lamb makes God known to them, as they make Him known to all others. This is what appears

in the Revelation. "The nations shall walk by means of its light," not in the light of the Lamb immediately, but by means of the light of the heavenly city: precisely what we find in John 17 ("that they may be made perfect in one, that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and has loved them as thou hast loved me"). There is, I apprehend, what answers to the nations walking by means of the light of the city. Through these nations the church had passed in the days of her pilgrimage, and been despised because of her fellowship with Christ. (1 John 1) For, as He had been there and unknown, "therefore the world knoweth us not." But now, when the bright day shines, when Jesus, long absent and rejected, the blessed and exalted man, the Lord from heaven, comes in His glory, Himself the faithful witness and accomplishment of the glory of God, as indeed He is the brightness of it, He will not be seen apart from His bride.

"We shall appear with Him in glory;" and the nations shall walk by means of the light of the glorified whom they had so long cast out. Even their kings bring their glory to it. It is necessary to state this, lest persons should imagine that there was a communication of a direct kind between the inhabitants of the earth and the heavenly city. But though the city was seen to come down from heaven, it is not here said to come down to the earth, so as to be with men, as it does when the new heaven and earth are come. Here its glory is over the earth; accordingly the kings and the nations bring their glory and honor unto it, in the way of homage, I suppose, to Him who dwells there. "And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there." No danger threatens the city; on the contrary, "They shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations to it." Of course, it is in the same sense as in verse 24. "And there shall in nowise enter into it anything unclean, or one that works abomination and a lie: but those that are written in the Lamb's book of life." Thus, the fullest scope is given to the holiness of God, and the impure and abominable and false excluded from His presence, as indeed they are morally and altogether unfit for it; but withal His sovereignty is maintained intact. None enter there, except those enrolled in the book of life of the Lamb.

It has been already remarked that the first five verses of chap. xxii. are necessary to complete the vision: but I think it better to reserve them for my next lecture, when the conclusion of the book will also be shown in due order.

(Continued from page 342.)

## Lectures on Revelation 22: Part 1

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It is one of the interesting features of this book, that it can only be properly understood when taken in connection with all the rest of the word of God. And, singular to say too, God has linked together, in a very remarkable manner, the last book of the Scripture and the very first. For example, here we fall upon images which the Holy Ghost uses to describe the blessedness of the heavenly city in its relation to the earth during the millennium; and whence are these images derived? I must go to the beginning of the Book of God, to Genesis—nay, to the very beginning of Genesis itself. There I find a tree of life, rivers, &c., to which evidently the Holy Ghost refers in the passage before us.

Now this seems to me to be a striking indication of God's object, so dovetailing His whole word together, that, in order to acquire the full meaning of any part, I must take it in connection with the whole. And this is all the more important, inasmuch as that same word of God shows us different states and dispensations in total contrast with one another. There was the time of innocence; there was the time when nothing but sin reigned, as far as man was concerned—evil without a check, until the judgment of God came in the flood and destroyed all, save the few in the ark. Then was given the law, and then the gospel, each having a wholly different object. And now we await the great closing scene of this age, when all that God has wrought on the earth, all that revelation has brought out of His mind, but corrupted by man, will have been manifested in its results. In order to understand what the Holy Ghost tells me about these results, I must begin at the very beginning. Now, looking at Genesis, we find that, though there is a sort of analogy in the time of innocence when God was dealing with the creature (responsible of course to maintain his place of innocence), yet there is a most blessed contrast in the future, which brings out still more conspicuously the depths of grace which God will show in this holy city.

Let us look then a little at the differences. In Genesis we find that there were four rivers; and of these rivers, although we know little or nothing of the two first, at any rate it is clear that the two last, the Euphrates and Hiddekel or Tigris, were connected with some of the most painful passages in the history of God's earthly people at a later day. On these rivers were built the two most famous cities of antiquity; the Tigris, on which Nineveh stood, and the Euphrates on which Babylon was built. I speak now, of course, of a time long subsequent to Adam, or even the deluge. And though the flood may have effaced, as it doubtless did, many other features of the antediluvian earth, still we find these two rivers again. As for Paradise, it was gone, but these rivers were to play an important part in the history of man, and especially of that which acquires a moment more than its own, from being mingled with the vicissitudes and the chastenings of God's people Israel. These two rivers were identified with the powers that were to be the ruin of Israel and Judah respectively. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, which carried the great mass of the ten tribes of Israel into captivity. Babylon was the power afterward used of God for the captivity of that which seemed to stand firm for God, no less than for David's house, but which ere long fell into greater unfaithfulness than backsliding Israel. Thus these rivers, which had been at first connected with Paradise, became afterward the representatives of the powers of men that were

used to scourge the guilty people of God.

Then, again, there were two trees in the garden of Eden: one of the knowledge of good and evil, and the other of life. Now whatever might have been the blessing vouchsafed to man in the tree of life, it was wholly useless to him, because the other tree put him to a test which man could not stand. He broke down; he listened to the voice of his wife who had herself listened to the serpent, and he became rebellious. The consequence was that the tree of life was no longer available for his use: had it been so, it would only have perpetuated a life of sin and misery. So that, while there was judgment in the act of God that placed the cherubim with the flaming sword to shut out man from the tree of life, mercy was mingled with it. God had reserved for man a better thing—the tree of grace, if we may so say. Thus, when we come to the closing account, we have neither the various rivers of Eden nor a tree to test man on God's part. There is but one river and one tree. All that was connected with man's weakness and sin, and the chastening of God's people is gone. The relics of shame and the discipline of sorrow are needed no longer. The paradise of man had failed, Israel had failed, the church had failed. Now it is the paradise, the people, and the city of God, who is showing Himself and His glory there; and therefore all that was merely for the testing or the discipline of man completely disappears and now shine out God's love, his heavenly grace, His faithfulness to Israel, His sovereign mercy to the Gentiles, His righteous and beneficent rule. The Lord and Savior had come in; He had by Himself borne the effects of what God's people deserved, and had made it possible for Him righteously to show them nothing but love—giving them life and atonement and cleansing through Himself, His Son.

“He showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb In the midst of the street of it, and of the river on this side and on that side, [was] the tree of life, bearing twelve [manner of] fruits, each month yielding its fruits; and the leaves of the tree [are] for healing of the nations.” (Ver. 1, 2.) Now here it is evident that we have pure grace reigning through righteousness, as far as the tree and the river are concerned. There is nothing liable to be corrupted by the power of Satan. Neither is there anything like the cherubim, jealous in keeping away man, alas! sinful. Quite the contrary. This tree of life brings forth fruit every month. Of course it is a figure. There will be no mere literal tree or river; but as the river of life's water symbolizes the abundant life and blessing which will flow through the city, (i.e., the Bride, the Lamb's wife), so here follows the benignant provision for healing the nations. There is a reserve as to the twelve fruits, which may set forth a far higher and more various supply for the constant refreshment of the heavenly saints; but the leaves are expressly said to be for the healing of the nations.

This is the more remarkable, for it must be familiar to us that, even in the coming day of glory, the earthly Jerusalem, though in some respects figures are borrowed thence, furnishes in others a very different picture in the prophets. Take, for instance, the description in Isa. 60. It had been said in chap. 59. that the Redeemer should come to Zion, and then in chap. lx. we have the description of the city. “Therefore thy gates shall be open continually: they shall not be shut day nor night,” &c. But what is the principle of the earthly Jerusalem's relation to the nations? “The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.” It is unsparing righteousness and judgment which govern. God compels honor to be paid to His people who had been despised and trampled down among the nations. For we know how a Jew, even now in Christendom, is looked on with contempt and scorn: and if from their wealth, or other causes they get into favor with the world, it is considered a wonderful piece of liberality. Men give

themselves a good deal of credit for it, and in general act thus on most mistaken ground, either skeptical or pseudo-Christian. They have been so habituated to despise them that these concessions are only wrung out, and often through such false principles as the rights of men, &c. Of course I am merely referring to facts well known in the history of the world; as Christians, we have nothing to do with such questions, though we may judge them. For a Christian is set here for one purpose only—to witness for Christ rejected by the world, but exalted in heaven, to act in accordance with the grace and glory of a Christ who is now at the right hand of God. When this is lost sight of, he is salt without savor. A person may be philanthropic and essay to do much good in the world; but God has a higher object for us than any plans of ours.

And this brief digression flows out of our present theme. For whether it be the church before glory, or when glory comes, as here, the only becoming thing for us is the manifestation of grace. It is the character of grace that always gives the truth of God about the church; it is the manifestation of Himself, as He has displayed Himself and still does in Christ. This the apostle brings out in Eph. 5, where it is said, “Be ye therefore followers [imitators] of God.” And how? “As dear children, and walk in love.” In what way? In the chapter before he had spoken of Christ as the offering through which God could forgive sin (ver. 32), and therefore we ought to forgive one another, “even as God in Christ hath forgiven you.” But in chapter v. he goes much farther. “Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.” There is the full character of grace at once, which gives him who knows and walks in it the power of Christ in going forth among men. If I see my brother here or there, his mind filled with erroneous thoughts and hopes, and himself without conscience or with feeble qualms doing things contrary to the Lord, how would God stir my affections towards him? I must always act out of the grace in which God deals towards the saint, and I must lift up his soul, if I can, to know what God feels towards him and His will about him. If he perceives the grace in which God has acted, he will be prepared to learn what he owes to Him. Thus the apostle always speaks. Look again at the Ephesians. What had the Apostle Paul been doing from the beginning of the epistle to chap. 5? He had shown the perfect love of God towards them, and the place of oneness with Christ in which He has set them: and now he, as it were, says, Walk you in the love Christ has shown towards you.

We find the same thing here. It is not now the thunders, and lightnings, and voices out of God's presence. All this has completely disappeared. In Rev. 4 such were the sights and sounds which emanated from the throne. They were suited then, and necessary to uphold and express the holiness of Him who sat there. They were the witness of His feeling, when, the church being removed to heaven, man was left to exalt himself, only checked by providential judgments. Here there is nothing of the sort. The throne of God and of the Lamb is seen; and what issues from it? A river of water of life, bright as crystal. And why is this? Because the throne here is set in connection with the heavenly city, and this city being the symbol of the glorified saints, the church's habitual character, even in glory, is grace. Not only was it a river of life, not of death, but the leaves of the tree were for the healing (not destruction) of the nations.

Jerusalem here below is the city of earthly righteousness—the place where God will have brought the Jews through exceeding trouble. They must undergo a terrible tribulation first—the time of Jacob's trouble, but he will be delivered out of it. It will be a righteously measured chastening, because of their sins. They will pass through all that sorrow which God Himself is judicially to

inflict; but the indignation is to cease, and this with the destruction of those who were its instruments. "For yet a very little while and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger in their destruction." God will take up the cause of His people, and the calling of Israel in the millennium will savor of that righteousness which has marked the dealings of God towards them publicly, whatever may have been the hidden spring of grace. All the nations shall go up to Jerusalem when the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains. And "out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." The law is the rule of righteousness; grace is another thing altogether. It is not a rule of righteousness, with death the inevitable penalty. It is true that grace reigns through righteousness, but then it is the righteousness of God, not of man; and this, under His gracious culture, fills the saint with the fruit of righteousness, which is through Jesus Christ to His own glory and praise.

Here we have then a scene of perfect grace. Nothing could exceed the blessing in relation to man. The number twelve is always used in reference to the dealings of God with man by means of human administration. Seven is the number of perfection in relation to the things of God, or rather to the spiritual side, whether good or evil—twelve in relation to the human side. Thus, when God chose the patriarchs, there were twelve: they had a reference, I suppose, not only to the tribes which sprang from them, but to the rest of mankind generally. And again, when the apostles were called, there were twelve, answering to the twelve tribes of Israel. The moment we have the apostle who was specially entrusted with the great work of putting the church on its firm and heavenly foundations, irrespective of earthly arrangement, the number twelve is broken, and apostles independent of the twelve appear. (Acts 14:4, 14; Eph. 4) This may explain a little further what I meant by saying that the twelve gates, twelve foundations, &c., which we saw in chap. 21., set forth the aspect of this city towards man. It is viewed in its public governmental character. So in the tree too. By its bearing twelve manner of fruits, and yielding its fruits every month is shown the aspect of it towards man. Accordingly we are told next that "the leaves of the tree were for healing of the nations."

Another thing is clear, that this scene refers not to the eternal, but to the millennial state. For in eternity nations will not exist as such; neither will any need healing then. Carefully bear this in mind, however, that if we look at the heavenly city itself, it is eternal. It will make little difference to the city whether seen in the millennium, or in the eternal state that succeeds.

(To be continued.)

## Lectures on Revelation 22: Part 2

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There were two descents of the city in chap. 21.—one at the beginning of the millennium, and the other at the commencement of the eternal state. The second verse of that chapter gives us its descent when the eternal state is come, and the tenth verse its descent for the millennium. The reason, I think, is, that at the end of the millennium the old heaven and earth pass away; and naturally the city would disappear from the scene of the convulsion. Then, when the new earth dawns on our view, the heavenly city again comes down, and takes its place permanently in the new heavens and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. This is necessary to remark; because, while at the end of the thousand years all will be changed, still the heavenly city will abide forever. “Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” There will be certain offices which the glorified church will cease to discharge towards the earth after the millennium is over; but its intrinsic blessedness remains the same. Consequently, it is said here, “There shall be no more curse.” Thenceforth this is as true evermore for the heavenly city, as it can be for the new heaven and earth afterward.

“And the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it: and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face, and his name [shall be] on their foreheads. And there shall be no night there, [or more,] and they shall have no need of lamp and light [of the sun]” —the one representing the light of man's making, and the other of God's; but all that suited this world is past for the city. “For the Lord God shall shed light upon them: and they shall reign to the ages of the ages” (Ver. 3-5). The expression “to the ages of the ages,” I apprehend, must be taken in the strongest sense here. It does not refer only to what is called “the kingdom” —though of course the reigning begins then. in 1 Cor. 15:24 it is a kingdom which Christ delivers up at a definite point called, “the end.” “The end” implies that the thousand years and the judgment of the dead have taken place; for this judgment is part of Christ's “kingdom” —its great closing act, we may say. All this forms a part of the kingdom; and when it is over, and death, the last enemy, has been destroyed, then the Lord Jesus delivers up the kingdom to God.

The object of the kingdom is to reduce every enemy to subjection; and, this being accomplished, that special human kingdom terminates. But if there will then be a great change as regards the earthly saints in their natural bodies below, not so with those who are in the heavenly places, already glorified. They will reign forever and ever: it will be true throughout all eternity. These words seem here to be used without restriction. All the account, from the 9th verse of chap. xxi. to verse 5, inclusively, of chap. xxii, presents the relation of the heavenly city to the earth during the millennium. But there are certain features in it which are true everlastingly. One of these characteristics, besides its unchangeable intrinsic glory, is, that the service of the saints will be forever and ever. So as to the reigning. The mode of the reign, as of the service, may be changed after the earthly kingdom is closed; but, in themselves, they will, beyond doubt, endure forever and ever.

Now we are come to the closing comments of the prophet, and the conversation that takes place between him and the angel in reference to the prophecy, as well as the final message from the Lord Jesus Himself. Strictly speaking, the fifth verse ends the prophecy. But just as we have a prefatory charge at the beginning of the book, so here we have a sort of formal conclusion.

You will observe that the coming of the Lord Jesus is referred to no less than three times, and that each has a different connection in these farewell words of the Lord. The first time is in the 7th verse, evidently in dependence on verse 6. "And he said unto me, These words are faithful and true: and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show to his servants the things which must come to pass shortly. And, behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book." (Ver. 6, 7.) The Lord Jesus here links His coming with the blessing of the man who attends to the words of the prophecy. In strict connection with this, the Holy Ghost solemnly commends the prophecy which was now brought to a close. The Lord Jesus, no doubt, foresaw the measure of slight which would be put upon this book, and the efforts of men to put it aside.

I do not like to refer to particular religious societies; but allow me to say a word about one which is a reformed body and well known. And yet, extraordinary to see in that which is arranged for the express purpose of giving the entire word of God to the people in daily portions, how is it that the book of Revelation is given? Why, it is only used, a little bit at a time, on one or two special occasions, and at other seasons not at all, while even part of the Apocrypha is read! It appears to me that the Lord was here guarding His people against all such disrespect, open or more subtle, to the book of the Revelation. Nor is it merely where these lessons are fixed, that there is a slight put upon it: let not others, differently situated, suppose themselves to be guiltless. Take those who have no formal division of the Scriptures day by day: do you find this book honored by them as the Lord enjoins? It is certain that in general, though God's children have not agreed to dishonor it, yet, as a practical fact, this book has been pushed aside, save for controversial, historical, or imaginative purposes. There is hardly an attempt to expound it simply and practically. Few servants, indeed, deal it out in due season, so as to make it a part of the household bread of the family of God. Even when interpretations of it are ventured on, are they not in general most crude—the far-fetched notions of an antiquarian, or degrading comparisons with an infidel historian or a daily newspaper?

What a solemn thing it is to depart from God's word! The Lord Jesus puts the book before His people as a light shining in a dark place—not at all as a mere exercise for men of learning in a speculative mood. It was meant for all the children of God, for their souls' profit, and to help their communion with God. He wanted them to know not only His grace, but the judgments that were coming upon the world. He desired them to understand that the book, which shows the world's course and doom, equally indicates their deliverance out of the judgment. For the Revelation makes it plain, that, before there is a word of the judgment, the church is seen in the presence of God: from the beginning of chap. iv. we see her above. How plain it is that the words of the prophecy are all of the greatest importance to God's people! He desires they should be happy in the fellowship He gives them with Himself before these things come to pass. "Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book." And why has it been comparatively so valueless as to its practical bearing?

Because the prophecy has been severed from the promise. The word of grace, "Behold, I come quickly," has not been distinguished from "the sayings of the prophecy of this book." And hence the church's portion has been confounded with the judgments of the world. The Revelation supposes that God's children are waiting for the coming of Christ, which ought indeed to be their bright hope from day to day. Where this is not the case, I believe that it is morally impossible to enter into or enjoy its disclosures. "Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book." The Lord is coming quickly. But if we are not looking for Him with hearts at rest through His grace, we are sure to pervert His sayings instead of turning them to profit.

When John heard and saw these things, he fell down to worship before the feet of the angel that showed them. He had done so previously. (Chap. xix. 10) Possibly, the grandeur of the vision may have led him to suppose that it was Christ Himself taking that form. But he is immediately corrected. The angel says to him, "I am thy fellow-servant," or rather, "the fellowservant" of thee and of thy brethren, the prophets." As it stands in our Bible, the statement is somewhat ambiguous. It might seem, as it stands, to convey that the angel was one of his brethren the prophets. Of course, this is not the meaning; but, instead of being the due object of such homage, the angel was the fellow-servant of John, and of John's brethren the prophets. "See thou do it not, for I am the fellow-servant of thee and of thy brethren, the prophets, and of those that keep the sayings of this book: worship God."

But he adds more, and a very important thought it is, practically, for God's children. You may remember in the last chapter of Daniel, it is written thus (ver. 4), "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Now mark in what a wonderful place God has put His Church, as we gather from comparing Rev. 22

He was sending His word to the most favored man that could be found among all the favored prophets of the Old Testament— "a man greatly beloved." But, although there had been given him so plain and distinct a prophecy of Christ's coming and death, other words were added, as to which it was said, "but thou, O Daniel, shut up thy words, and seal the book even to the time of the end." Here the same Spirit addresses John, saying to him, "Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand."

(Ver. 10.) How comes this to pass? The whole calling of the church is at the time of the end. From the day that the church began its actual existence here below, it was the time of the end; and all through her history, still it is the time of the end. Of course, I do not mean that it is distinctively the time of the end for the Jews, who must wait for the development of all on the platform of literal facts; but therein lies the peculiarity of the church's calling. She is above times and seasons, though she knows them; she has nothing to do with dates, or signs, or outward events, any more than with the world, of whose history they are the natural and necessary accompaniment. The church is lifted up above such a scene; she is heavenly. Such is the place where we are put by the grace of God, entirely outside all the computations which refer to the government of this world.

As for the Jew, of whom Daniel was the type, he must wait till the time of the end is historically come, till the knowledge is given by God to those who have understanding then. Until that time all is sealed up for Israel. This is not the case with the church represented by John. To him it is said, "Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book," &c.

But here is the error made by many excellent persons. Sir Isaac Newton, a man of the highest reputation in human science, applied the shutting up and sealing of the book in Daniel to the church. The consequence was that he gave it up as a thing that could not be understood till the time of the end. Had he compared the passage in Daniel with the closing words of the Revelation to John, he would have learned that the very words that were hidden from the Jewish prophet are expressly opened to the Christian. If Daniel was to seal, John is expressly told not to seal. And why? Because Christ had come and is gone into heaven and is on the right hand of God, ready to judge quick and dead; He was rejected, and from that moment, it is morally the time of the end. And so the New Testament writers speak. The Apostle John says, "Little children, it is the last time;" Peter writes, "The end of all things is at hand;" James, "The Judge standeth before the door." So wrote the Apostle Paul:—"Now all these things happened unto them as ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" [or ends of the ages are met]. And so Heb. 9:26. Thus you have, substantially, the same great truth from the epistles of Paul, of Peter, and of James, down to the Revelation.

This it is, I conceive, that is supposed, when John is told not to shut up the words of the prophecy of this book. It is to be used and understood now, in virtue of the knowledge of Christ and with the Holy Ghost given by Christ as an unction whereby we know all things. To us the time is always at hand. The words of this book are not sealed to us; so that it is unbelief, if, instead of taking the book as it were to Christ who is the light to reveal this as all else, we submit it to the world and its wisdom which can but darken. This, I doubt not, is the root and reason of the mistakes and difficulties so prevalent with regard to the interpretation of the book. In order to understand this and every other part of Scripture, I must see what God is doing for the glory of His Son. As a Christian I am encouraged to read the prophecy: its sayings are not sealed to those who have the mind of Christ. If I were a Jew, I should have to wait till the time of the end arrive in the full prophetic sense, i.e., the end of the age. Then the wise among the Jews shall understand; they are the godly intelligent remnant. With such a remnant, in principle (called it is true, into better hopes), the church began.

But some may say, There were certain things in Daniel which were to be sealed, and others which were not: why may not these last (not the first) have been the things John was there told not to seal? I reply that the Revelation supposes all the truth we find in Daniel and a great deal more. It could not be understood, if Daniel were not; while there are many truths added in the Revelation which were not given to Daniel. Such a plea is therefore unveiling. The fact is that Daniel speaks in the most general terms, and is told to shut up the words and seal the book—not merely certain parts of it. The Revelation goes over the same ground as Daniel with respect to the last empire, giving many things of a still wider scope and far more profoundly—things which grew out of the Christian apostasy, in addition to the previous ruin of Israel and the future wickedness both of them and the Gentiles. Therefore, if there was any book in the New Testament which one might naturally expect to be sealed up, it is the Revelation; for, as it is the last, so is it the most difficult, abstruse, and comprehensive of all the books of the Bible. Therefore, when the Holy Ghost says, "Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book;" I conceive that we have implied a clear intimation of the peculiar privileges of the Christian. It supposes him to stand in the full light of God; and thus what may have been hidden before is now fully revealed, seeing that Christ has come and made us members of His body, and given us the Holy Ghost who searches all things,

yea, the deep things of God. This, to my mind, is the ground on which it is said, "Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book."

It is important in another Way not always seen. The events signified by the prophetic visions of the Revelation never enable one to understand the book itself. If they were to take place to-day, this would not of itself give intelligence as to the Revelation. The sole key to prophecy is the Holy Ghost, who is the only One that can make known its relation to Christ; and, without seeing this relation, we never understand it. Take one of the clearest and most defined of prophecies—that of the seventy weeks in Daniel. Persons generally allow that it has been accomplished. But ask of them its real meaning; and they will show how little it is understood. They have a vague idea that it is accomplished, and little more. It is not therefore the events themselves which explain the word: we need the teaching of the Spirit, which is as necessary to interpret prophecy as any other part of the Scriptures. Events may be the accomplishments of particular prophecy and a witness of its truth to those who doubt; but they never of themselves afford the just interpretation of the prophecy. They undoubtedly corroborate it when accomplished, and may be useful to stop the mouth of a gainsayer. But (as it has been long ago remarked by another) you must understand the prophecy itself, before you can apply it to the events; and when you do understand it, you have what God desired to give your faith, independently of the events. In fact, to refute such a notion we have only to weigh what is said here, as everywhere else in it: "Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand." The value to us, to the church, is beforehand, whatever may be the use for those who shall be in the scene when the events arrive.

But now listen to a most solemn truth. When the time is actually come, of which the prophecy treats, what is the condition of men? It is fixed, forever fixed for all—hopelessly for some. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him work righteousness still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." (Ver. 11.) That is, it is not the time when there can be moral change; not a time when there can be the conversion of sinners—when a man who is under the power of Satan can be delivered from it and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. All this is at an end. Then he that is unjust must remain unjust, and he that is filthy remains filthy still. Men are solemnly settled in the condition in which they are found. The day of grace is over, the day of judgment will be come, and the door will then be shut.

"Behold, I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me, to give each as his work is." (Ver. 12.) Evidently this confirms what has been remarked. When that day comes, it is the judgment of the living. It is the Lord's coming, not here spoken of as an encouragement to him who hears and keeps the words of the prophecy of the book, but rather in the way of discriminating judgment. "I [am] the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." (Ver 13.) That is, the Lord Jesus, beside what is peculiar to Himself, takes the same title here that God Himself did in chap. xxi. 6. As God was the sum and substance of all revelation, being and action, so was Christ. "No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." "Blessed [are] they that do his commandments [or wash their robes], that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. Without [are] the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the whoremongers, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one loving and practicing a lie." (Ver. 14, 15.)

But next we have another thing. It is not the Lord's coming now, as an encouragement to those who should keep the sayings of the prophecy of this book; nor yet His coming as dealing with every man, His advent in the way of judgment and His reward with Him to give each individual as his work is. We have seen the holy and the righteous having their portion, and the filthy and unrighteous their judgment. But the Lord has His own proper and full relation to the church. Consequently, His voice is now heard with marked emphasis here. "I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David." (Ver. 16.) That is, He refers to His divine and His human character. But, beside this, He has a special relationship to us— "the bright [and] the morning star."

When the Lord comes in His glory to the world, it is as the sun of righteousness with healing in His wings for those that have been broken, and scattered, and peeled,—a people terrible from their beginning hitherto. But then He appears in terror to tread down those that have despised Him under His feet. Not so does He present Himself to us. It is not for us the image of the sun, when man should sleep no longer. When the sun of righteousness calls man up, not then to work as he works now, it summons him that he may bow to Him whom he had long slighted, and in due time hear his doom pronounced by the Lord of glory whom he can despise no longer. Thus will he appear to the world, and "all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble. And the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch."

But for those who watch during the night of man's day before the Lord appears in His glory, for those who watch with bridal affections, not sleeping as do others—how does He speak to such? How is He made known to them? "I am the bright, the morning star." Blessed star of morn before the day comes! We watch not for the day, but for Him during the night, and He will give us the morning star, the harbinger of the dawn. A blessed place it is—the place of our love and hope: it will never be disappointed of its joy; and the Lord Jesus Christ will surely come, as the bright and morning star to us. He cheers us while we wait, and will quickly come for us Himself. We may have to tarry somewhat: at least it may seem long to us. For those who waste their time in slumber, it will be alas! too short; but for those that wait for Him and yearn to see Him the hope might seem to be long deferred. Instead of growing weary and sick, may our hearts, on the contrary, be filled with the joy and constancy of assurance that the Lord is coming soon! He is the bright and morning star.

But more: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." What a blessed thought for us that the Holy Ghost Himself is the One who takes up the word and says, "Come!" He groans with us, entering into our sorrows, now that He came down. He is not the less divine, I need not say; but withal He has condescended to identify Himself, as it were, with our hearts, and be the sharer of our feelings. But it is not groans that we have now; not such is the mind of the Spirit, when He thinks of the Lord Jesus coming for us. There is the calm and peaceful earnestness of desire. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." It is most strengthening to know that it is the voice of the Holy Ghost Himself which says to the Lord Jesus "Come." It would not have been nearly so precious had the bride alone said "Come." But it is "the Spirit and the bride." She had done many things wrong—had made many mistakes in thought and feeling and ways. But now it is the Spirit, the Holy Ghost Himself, who says Come. He it is who leads the heart to desire the coming of Jesus; He is the energy of the church in bidding Jesus welcome. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." it is in

looking up to Jesus that the church or the Christian says Come; not looking down to the poor sinner and telling him to come. The Holy Ghost leads and inspires the heart of the bride thus to cry, not only in sympathy of sorrow, but in communion with the joy with which she looks up in the hope of the Bridegroom's return.

And not only so, but "let him that heareth say, Come." If I have only heard the voice of Jesus, I am entitled to say Come. Perhaps there are some who say, O that I could be happy in asking the Lord to come! How can I say Come, when I am so unworthy? The Lord warrants you to say Come. It is not merely the bride filled with the Holy Ghost that says Come—entering into her full privileges; but "let him that heareth say, Come." Have you heard His voice, and tasted that He is gracious? Do you not know that He is the good Shepherd? I might be the very feeblest and weakest one, shrinking through ignorance from the Lord's coming at once; yet here I have the Holy Ghost inviting me to take up the very same word that the Spirit and the bride utter. "Let him that heareth say, Come." Most evident it is, also, that this going out of the first affections of the heart towards Christ and His coming does not harden the heart towards the poor world, nor make us indifferent to the conversion of the lost; but the very contrary. Whatever estimate men may form of their own efforts, my conviction is that the people who most desire the conversion of sinners are, *cæteris paribus*, those who most desire the coming of the Lord Jesus. I do not believe that the men that want to put Him off are those that pray and labor most for the conversion of souls. What is it leads such to desire it? They labor for it because they see souls perishing everlastingly, and they justly feel that all are miserable without Christ. But they have these feelings only in common with all their brethren. We all believe that men will be cast into hell if they do not receive the gospel, and it grieves us to see them rejecting the Savior; we have these feelings as well as they. But we have another spring which they have not. It is indeed the Lord's way, and this is better than theirs. He understands what is good for poor sinners and poor saints, incomparably better than His servants do. Now He shows here that it is the same Spirit who looks up to Jesus and says Come, who also can turn us round to lost sinners with the invitation, "Let him that is athirst come." It is there we have the other side. It is not here the Spirit directing the church in looking up to the Lord and saying Come; but the heart is now directed to the world and saying, "Let him that is athirst come; whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Ver. 17.)

The sinner is not told to say Come. Observe the great and plain difference in the latter part of the verse. In the first two clauses they say Come; but in the latter part they do not bid Jesus come, but are invited to come themselves: "Let him that is athirst come," &c.

Thus God shows that the first thought of my heart should be towards Jesus. If true to Him, I shall desire His coming. The Spirit prompts and sanctions this desire. And what is the effect on my feelings towards the world? It will give me a heavenly reason for desiring the conversion of sinners. I shall have the same moral motives, and the same affections, which act on His servants who put off the coming of the Lord. And I shall have, besides, all the impetus which the hope of Christ's speedy coming can give me, and the sense of the danger of those to whom His coming can be nothing but certain judgment, even in this world. The more a Christian looks for Christ's coming at any moment, the more ardent must be his desire, and the more earnest his importuning, that souls should come and take of the water of life.

In this verse 17, then, God unfolds our two-fold relation. He shows me my relation to Christ, which ought to be the first thought of my heart—not merely that my soul should be at peace if He came, but filled with the earnestness of affection that desires His coming. And He shows me that, when I am right there, T shall turn round with quickened zeal in the sense of the grace of Christ, and shall say to every one that is athirst Come. More than this: if I see a soul that may not perhaps thirst deeply, but who is willing to come, I shall not tell him to wait till he is very thirsty. I shall bid him come at once, and welcome; for the word is, “he that will, let him take the water of life freely.” If there is only the desire of the heart, it comes from God, and no one rightly says, You must wait till you have gone through this or that experience. If a man has not got so far in realizing his state, I am not to keep him away. The water of life is for whosoever will. He is directed to come and drink of it freely. What fullness of grace marks the way in which the Lord brings our place before us!

“I testify to every one that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add to these things, God shall add to him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any one shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, that are written in this book.” (Ver. 18, 19.) You will observe that the tree and the city mentioned here answer to what we found in verse 14. Those that do His commandments (or rather, according to the critical text, “those that wash their robes”) are blessed, and have a title to the tree of life and entrance by the gates into the city. But as for such as take away from the words of this book, God shall take away their portion from both the tree and the city which are described in this book. They shall have no access thereto.

The Lord had intimated if any man would take away from the words of the prophecy of this book and thus would dishonor Him, He would assuredly know and feel and resent it. But He could not close with such words as these. He has reserved, as it were, the best wine to the last. He had already spoken of His coming in the way of judgment, as well as of His coming for the church in full grace; but how could He leave us with a note of sorrow? He must bring back our hearts to gladness and joy at the thought of His coming again; and so He says, “He that testifieth these things saith, Surely, I come quickly. Amen.” Immediately John, as representing the church, answers, “Come, Lord Jesus.” It is the ready reply of his heart to the Lord.

And if it is our privilege to look to Christ, and hear His voice; if we have known some little of the joy of being even now in union with Himself, made members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones; if we are waiting as those conscious of our bridal relationship to Christ, and assured that we shall have the bride's portion in presence of the Lamb for evermore, the Lord grant that this may be the answer of our hearts and lips— “Amen, come, Lord Jesus.” May it not be waiting for a something for ourselves, nor for the church, much less for the world! It is a blinding delusion to look for better days while Jesus is away. There are good days in store, even for this poor world—days of heaven upon the earth; but the Lord must come before them—and He must have us for Himself, first of all. The Lord will never have a time of real abiding joy for the world, as a whole, till He has had the church with Himself. For, as we see in Rom. 8, “the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.” The manifestation spoken of there will be in glory. The Apostle Paul had been speaking before of the glory which shall be revealed in us, when our bodies shall be changed and made like the glorious body of Christ. We are not like the Son of God now, as regards our bodies. Too well we know that we bear the image of the earthly still: but we shall bear the image of the heavenly. And then, when God sees us

shining in the likeness of His own Son, He will have no reason to be ashamed of us. He will not present us before the universe, till our bodies are as worthy of Him as is the new life that He has given to our souls. When the sons of God are manifested, then creation will cease to groan, and the earth and heavens, filled with blessedness, will declare both the glory and the goodness of God. "The floods will clap their hands, and the hills be joyful together before the Lord." Then it will be found that the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory that the Lord has set before us will issue in praises of joy and gladness, which will reach the most distant parts of earth and the utmost bounds of creation.

May the Lord grant that we may say, "Amen, come, Lord Jesus," that we may say it for ourselves, as for all the church, and in a sense for all creation too, the blessing of which depends on our being manifested along with Christ! Meanwhile, the grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints!

(Continued.)

## The Righteousness of God: Part 1

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BEFORE entering on the solemn and interesting question of our righteousness, the righteousness of God, I will shortly notice what is objected, and dispose of it, so as to be able then to treat the subject unhindered for edification, and not controversy. The principle, however, in question it is well to state; it is, I fully admit, a most grave and important one. Not that beloved and truly godly souls have not been, as I judge, cloudy upon what was really of great moment to their true and godly liberty in Christ, which is the power of a Christian walk—not that they have not been violent, as men generally are, in the sustainment of that in which they are wrong. But this does not destroy the importance of being clear. Still, I freely and fully, yea, joyfully, acknowledge, as choice and devoted servants of Christ, whom I respect, and whose devotedness I look up to, persons who have held on this subject doctrines which I believe to be a mistake. I have thus no animosity as regards this point. The point, however, is important, and what saints have held, by infirmity of judgment, may become a very great hindrance to the progress of souls, and a weapon in the hands of the enemy: witness the Judaism of the early Church at Jerusalem, and the opposition raised to Paul on the very same ground. The principles, indeed, which were then in question are the same which now partially agitate the church of God, and largely hinder its blessing and testimony, and obscure its faith.

The question is this: Is the righteousness of God legal righteousness? I may state the question in the words of a sermon, which in its main purport and object I can with my whole heart desire a blessing upon, so that I shall avoid an apparent attack upon others, and any supposition of evil will towards him from whom I quote. The statement, too, has the advantage (not always found) of stating that side of the question with peremptory decision. I read in Mr. Molyneux's sermon, (preached July 18, 1858, at the special services at Exeter Hall), in pp. 17, 18, what follows: "Do you know this, my dear brethren, that no man can enter into the kingdom of heaven unless he is garbed in a perfect robe of righteousness." So far, save that the kingdom of heaven is used for heaven, which to the practiced mind—practiced I mean in divine truth from Scripture—betrays the existence of the system to which these statements belong, all is well. Now follows the definition of the general statement: "In plain words, do you know this, that over the gate of heaven is written up, Do this and live? Do you know that if a man is cleansed from his sin in the blood of Christ, and sanctified by the Spirit of God, he cannot then go to heaven? He wants something more still; he must have a perfect obedience. Heaven is suspended on a perfect obedience, not a negative one. God said to Adam, 'Do this and live.' He failed. You must present a perfect obedience when you come to God. Have you got it? It is the active righteousness of Christ; it is not His sufferings, that blots out sin; it is not His Spirit, that sanctifies the heart; but it is His perfect righteousness. Listen, 'By his obedience shall my righteous servant justify many' Listen, 'He brings in everlasting righteousness.' Again, it is put upon us; it is the wedding garment. Friend, how earnest thou in hither, not having the wedding garment? That is the righteousness of Christ." The writer continues on the same point, but this may suffice. "Transgressions are pardoned by blood, the person justified, that is, the fruit of Christ's righteousness imputed, the soul sanctified, that is the work of

the Holy Ghost dwelling in you.” The reader must not think that the singular misquotation of Isa. 53 is an error of mine. It is a singular fruit of the bias of the author's mind, the result of his doctrine. It is singular that the only direct passage that he quotes, for the point he is seeking to prove, is a misquotation. The two others are the point to be explained, and no proof of the author's explanation of the doctrine.

Now I believe and bless God for the truth that Christ is our righteousness and that by His obedience we are made righteous. It is the settled peace of my soul, as I trust it is of the author's. The important point here is the contrast between the death and sufferings of Christ, as winning our forgiveness, and His obedience as our justifying righteousness; what is sometimes called His active and passive obedience. This doctrine, however, is not fully seen until another point is noticed—the legal character of this righteousness. Mr. Molyneux states it in principle as clearly as possible. It is written on the gate of heaven, “Do this and live.” That is positively and characteristically as the Apostle teaches us, legal righteousness. “To Adam it was so said.” To enter into heaven legal righteousness is absolutely required. This alone gives a title.

I affirm that the doctrine of Scripture is wholly different, and that this doctrine (wholly unintentionally I admit, so that I do not impute the consequence to those who hold it,) denies the extent of sin and the true character of redemption. Law is perfect in its place. The angels accomplish it in its highest character; he who loves does too, as the Apostle teaches us. I say this by way of preface, that there may be no mistake. But that a holy nature does with delight what is in the law, is a different thing from the way a sinner obtains righteousness and eternal life. Doing with delight, when in possession of life, is a different thing from doing in order to obtain life. Now what I say is, the law was never given that we might obtain righteousness or life by it; nor ever could have been. It was introduced by the by to convince of sin. A sinless being, who had life, did not want a law of righteousness to obtain it; a sinful creature with a law of righteousness could only be condemned. “Do this and live,” is not written on the gate of heaven. It was written on Sinai, which is not the gate of heaven. It is the gate of death and condemnation. It was not said to Adam, Do this and live. He lost life he had, by disobedience. The Apostle, on the whole matter, contradicts the statement explicitly. “Moses,” he says, “describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth these things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise.... that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” The righteousness of faith is contrasted with that of law which says, Do this and live. It does not accept its principle and find a means of meeting its requirements by another, but brings in righteousness on another principle. It speaks on another wise. The great evil of the whole scheme is, that it is a righteousness demanded of man as born of Adam, though another may furnish it. The thing furnished is man's righteousness. If Christ has done it for me, still it is what I ought to have done. It is meeting the demand on me—Do this and live. If it is to be a satisfying the demand of righteousness on me, it is the doing what is demanded which makes out the righteousness. If “Do this and live” is written on the gate of heaven, it is doing this that is the righteousness, and doing nothing else and nothing more. It may have been, if such be the truth, very gracious of the Lord to have done it for me, but that was what was to be done. Righteousness wrought out by meeting the demand of a superior, can only be in doing exactly what is demanded. What is else than this has not the character of righteousness. And if we take the law as the perfect rule of what the creature

ought to be, as indeed it was, then there can be nothing more; or else the rule is not a perfect one, and the righteousness not a righteousness according to the law, nor a meeting what I ought to do. It is not the obedience required of me. Besides, the whole principle is a mistake; for the law, when spiritually apprehended, reaches the disposition and condition of the heart. It does not only say, Do, but Be. But then life is there. If I say love and do not lust (the two aspects of the law), righteousness is taken out of the sphere of doing. Doing becomes evidence of a state and nature. But is the motto of heaven a denial of the spirituality of the law? And so far from "Do this and live" being on the gates of heaven, I know of no scripture which shows that a doer of the law was entitled to heaven, or which promises heaven to a doer of the law, as having thereby such title.

And now, mark the effect of the discovery of the spirituality of the law. It becomes not a claim to do, but a criterion of the state of a man. Its very nature and effect is changed: by it is the knowledge of sin. A command for qualities in a man, love and no lusts, ceases to be a command to do, and is condemnation and death, and nothing else. The whole ground and principle of my standing is changed. "I through law am dead to law." That is not looking to another to fulfill it for me, because I have failed. What I find in scripture is this, that man, the Adam race, has been, as such, tried and tested. Failing when innocent, he has been tried without law, and was lawless; under law, and was a law-breaker; I may add, tried by the presentation of divine goodness in Christ, and he hated it. The more we go into detail, the more we shall find that exhibited, as in priesthood in Aaron's sons; in obedient royalty in David's, in supreme power in Nebuchadnezzar. But the great moral principles of it, the three stages of sin, suffice here—lust; lawlessness in will, or transgression; and hatred of God Himself as goodness. The first Adam, the flesh, is thoroughly and wholly condemned. Another Adam is set up—the second man. God looks for nothing from the first. He sows. (This is just the truth of the parable of the sower: He brings something by the word of life.) He does not look for fruit. The fig-tree in His garden, after all His pains, only cumbered the ground. It is cut down for faith, and will be so, in fact. Leaves it had, but no fruit, and the judgment of the Lord is not only that it had not produced fruit, but "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforth forever." It may be said this was Judaism. True, but Judaism was flesh under law. And this was what judgment was here pronounced upon. Flesh was judged—Adam and all that sprung from him. Not only was evil fruit condemned, but no fruit (which the Lord, in a probationary way, looked for) was ever to be borne by it. The false principle of all this system is, that it is making out the righteousness of the first Adam under the law, instead of putting us in the Second entirely and absolutely, and treating the first as dead and gone. Had I then no personal responsibility? Not indeed under Law, as a Gentile—still I had. Sin reigned over me and death. Hence Christ was, in sovereign grace, made sin for me and died; but not to build up the old man again, after death, when it was dead, and confer righteousness on it, but to put me in a wholly new position in the heavenly man, who is my righteousness—to set me in the righteousness of God, seated in heavenly places in Him. Christ was the root and spring in life of the redeemed race, and the first is wholly set aside, judged, condemned, and dead. Christ is of God righteousness to us. All is wholly new, though we are personally brought into it only as quickened with the life of the second Adam, having Him for our life.

This is the special doctrine of Paul: no thought of a righteousness of law acquired by another for us. There is atonement for sin, in which we lay, which we had committed as in the first Adam; but I repeat, no conferring of righteousness on it, but closing its history, and being before God in death,

in which He in grace took its place, in respect of the judgment due to it. "I am dead to the law, by the body of Christ, being married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead." Hence, there was no connection of sinners with Christ under law. A corn of wheat, except it fall into the ground and die, abides alone; if it die, it brings forth much fruit. We are united to Christ in His new position, where He is the righteous man, at the right hand of God, when He has died unto sin once, and is alive unto God. But if the corn of wheat die alone, as come amongst the family of the first Adam, death is written on all that is of Adam. It has ceased to exist, so to speak, before God. And when the Spirit of God speaks, in its full extent, of the blessing we are called to, He does not speak of man as having lived in sin, or being condemned under law, as having a life in which he had to keep law. He was dead, wholly dead, in trespasses and sins; the Jew, not a transgressor, but by nature a child of wrath, even as others. But what is the first object presented 7 Christ dead (i.e. in the place, by grace, where we were), raised far above all principality and power, and then we "quickened together with him; raised up together, and made to sit in heavenly places in him "In view of the counsels of God, there was, so to speak, no living man at all. There was man dead in trespasses and sins, but a Christ dead there too; and as God raised up Him, so us with Him who descended for us there. When God deals with us morally, as responsible beings, He does see us living in sin, breaking law, despising goodness.

(To be continued.)

## The Righteousness of God: Part 2

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This last is the way the point is looked at in the Epistle to the Romans. In the Ephesians it is simply a new creation when we are dead. To make this a little more clear, there are two ways in which I can deal with the point of the relationship between God and man. I may simply take the counsels of God and begin with them. This is done in the Ephesians. Or I may take the actual state of men as responsible children of Adam, and show how grace meets this state: the result is blessedly confirmatory of the other, but the point of view different. This last is the view taken in the Romans—the ways of God in His moral government met by grace. In the first, man is found dead in sin. All is God's work from beginning to end. Christ is seen to bring about this blessed counsel in grace—dead; and we, dead in sin, are brought back up to God according to these counsels with and as Him. In the Romans man is proved to be dead, dying under the effects of in and his moral condition as a living, responsible being, a child of the first Adam; and this responsibility, as a sinner who has ruined himself, met by grace.

But before I unfold the Epistle to the Romans in its bearing on the point which occupies us, under the added light of that to the Eph. 1 would gather the statements of Scripture as to righteousness, to see how far it has to do with law, in the case of a believer. Of course a man under law could only be righteous by keeping it. But is this the way (i.e., the making good legal righteousness in any way) in which righteousness is obtained by the believer—his title to be in heaven I turn to Rom. 3: in verse 21 I read, “But now the righteousness of God without the law” —not without the man's doing it and by another doing it for him, but apart from law entirely, *χωρίς νόμου*. It is witnessed by law and prophets, but it is another kind of righteousness, made out independent of it. “To him that worketh not” —well, what instead? —but believes on Him that has wrought it out for him instead? Not at all— “but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly.” It is opposed in kind: So, further on, the promise he should be heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed by law. It was not on this principle. It is not that it was on this principle but that another had to carry it out; but it was not on the principle, not by law. The law entered by the by (chap v. 20). We are not under the law, but under grace (chap. vi.). Why then to have it fulfilled in my place? We are become dead to the law by the body of Christ (chap. vii. 4). How held to its fulfillment if I am dead to it and consequently it has no more dominion over me? So further on, we are delivered from the law, being dead in that in which we were held. Then he enters into its power as a means of convicting of sin, which is not my object here, but of which I purpose speaking further on. So in Galatians, as many as are of works of law are under a curse—not as many as have broken it: all under it had; but that is the position of one under it. No man is justified by the law; for the just shall live by faith, but the law is not of faith; that is, our justification does not proceed on this principle, whoever may meet it. And how are we redeemed from its only effect—a curse? The curse is taken by another. It is not met by another's fulfilling it: not a hint of it. After faith is come we are no longer under a schoolmaster. I have nothing to do with it as a way of righteousness. How was another to be my righteousness by keeping it? I must have righteousness; but I am not under law, so that righteousness should be claimed in that way. If righteousness came by law, Christ is dead in vain. How could this be said if it does come by

law, Christ having livingly fulfilled it to be our righteousness? And mark, His death is appealed to. Christ is dead in vain, if law is the principle on which I have righteousness; for faith, in the death of Christ, the very nature is dead in me from which the righteousness of the law would have been expected. I am crucified with Him; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. Is He under law? if not, I am not. If I am justified, says the Apostle, by works of law, why have I cast it all down? If I build law after Christ, I am a transgressor in leaving it to come to Christ; but I through law, says he, am dead to law (i.e., not bound to it), that I might live unto God (which no one under law ever did: it is weak through the flesh); for by works of law shall no flesh be justified, be he Jew, or Christian, or who he -may, or whoever may do them. No one is justified by works of law. We are set on a wholly different ground—dead and risen again in the second Adam. We are in the presence of God through the rent veil.

Again, Christ is become of none effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law. You are fallen. from grace. It is on another principle. It is not, Do this and live. As regards walk, even, it is the same setting aside of law. If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under law. If led of the Spirit, they were going right, yet they were not under law. We are not children of the bondwoman. The whole of the system on which I am now commenting, which places man on the ground of legal obedience, flows from not apprehending the truth of being in Christ. But of this point in examining the Epistle to the Romans.

These quotations will give not a particular, difficult, or contested passage, but the well-assured view of the Spirit, often expressed. The Epistle to the Romans, to which I now turn, will give the great principle on which this depends, and how the saint passes from the old state to the new. What I find in the Scripture is this: when I read in the Ephesians of the counsels of God, I find nothing of the law at all. All is God's work, and all is in Christ; who is not spoken of as alive down here, but is first viewed as dead, then exalted, and believers exalted in Him. It teaches unity now of all saints in Him when taken out of death. If I turn to the Romans, I find the responsible man in flesh proved guilty, not seen dead; but no remedy for his condition by making it in any way good, but death brought in; at which point we arrive at the beginning, so to speak, of the Ephesians, but so making the state of man uncommonly clear. We do not find even Christ exalted in the Romans (save in one passage which does not apply to this point, and confirms the general view I am presenting), nor the counsels of God as to the Church. The results of the union of its members is presented in one practical passage. The Epistle to the Romans places the individual on the ground of righteousness, and thus of true liberty in life, but does not reach the union of the body with Christ. Hence, death and resurrection, which supposes man to have had to say to sin in life, are its theme. After stating that its purport was God's good news, it begins with a divinely powerful display of the wickedness and evil state of man, alike terrible and true; and terrible because true. Gentile conscience must quail before its plainness, telling things as they were; and Jewish hypocrisy, too, laid bare by the edge of that very word in which it made its boast, seek to hide itself in vain in its anger. All the world is guilty before God. But grace meets this—by deeds of law none are justified, by law is knowledge of sin.

But now righteousness of God is manifested. What is this? The first idea, so to speak, which is given us of God's righteousness (Rom. 1:17), is exceedingly abstract. In other passages, we shall see the way it is brought about and made good as to us; but here I do not doubt it is its general nature and character. It is God's, not man's. It is, has its character, quality, and source, from God,

not from man. It is what it is that is spoken of, not how it is. It is a righteousness after this fashion, not man's. It comes from God for man, not from man for God. Hence it has the character and qualities of its source, whoever may be given to profit by it. So wrath of God from heaven; it is not human wrath or justice on earth ending there in its nature and quality, nor even divine wrath exercised in an earthly way by earthly instruments. It is divine from heaven. It is not the righteousness of God, a fact, an existing thing, which is spoken of, but righteousness of God—this quality of righteousness. But hence it must first be found in God Himself, or it would not have that essential quality. Hence we are after God as to the new man, created in righteousness and true holiness. The righteousness which is valid before God (which is the sense put by Luther and Calvin on the expression), is utterly astray, because legal righteousness, where it existed, would be valid before God. If accomplished, it would be accepted. Man would live in doing it; but then it would be not God's righteousness but man's: whereas, the whole point on which the Apostle insists in this expression is, that it is God's and not man's. I would also state that it is not inherent righteousness—an expression of questionable character as to any consistent meaning. Indeed, on this subject, it is rather a contradiction in terms. “Righteousness” is indeed used for the quality which is disposed to judge and act righteously; or at least “righteous” is. As we say, a righteous man. But, in general, certainly righteousness is a relative term; that is, it refers to conduct towards another. Hence, inherent righteousness is a very loose expression, as inherent conduct towards another is evidently very little exact. However, to take it as it is meant, as the quality by which man is disposed to be righteous, although this cannot be separated from the righteousness here spoken of (because if Christ is our righteousness, He is our life also; it is a justification of life), yet here we have nothing to do with inherent righteousness. The question of Job, “How can man be just with God?” is that to which the Epistle to the Romans gives an answer. When it is said the Jews were going about to establish their own righteousness, and did not submit to the righteousness of God, it is clear that it is not submitting to inherent righteousness. So when it is said, “Now the righteousness of God is manifest,”— “to declare, I say at this time, his righteousness” —these words cannot apply to inherent righteousness. It is righteousness before God which the Epistle treats of. But farther, this is viewed, on the other hand, and for the very reason that righteousness before God is treated of, as applied to or judged of in the person who is to be accounted righteous. The man is accounted righteous—righteousness accounted to him or reckoned to him.

Thus, when it is said, faith was imputed to him for righteousness, it is not the distinct substantive value of his faith which was reckoned as righteousness in itself and then imputed to him, but that he was accounted righteous, held for righteous before God, because of his faith. The why or how remains. A believer in Christ is justified through faith; he is reckoned righteous; yet it is not the value or strength of his faith which is accounted as itself equivalent to righteousness, and then imputed (—yet it is said for us also to whom it shall be imputed if we believe (who believe)—but that he was accounted, and we are accounted, righteousness on the ground of believing. That is, the meaning of imputed righteousness is not a substantive righteousness, apart from the person, and afterward reckoned to him, but the condition of the person in God's sight. God views him as righteous, though he be not such as would entitle him to it by reason of anything inherent. It is righteousness reckoned to him, but not thought of apart from him, but his standing before God. They are in righteousness in God's reckoning, though they are not intrinsically so. Hence it is imputed or reckoned. The whole difference lies in this. The meaning of imputed righteousness is

not a quantity of righteousness apart from the person and afterward reckoned to him in the present sense of the word, as I impute anything to a person, but the state or condition before Him in which God sees the person. I beg the reader to remark that I am examining the force of the scriptural expression, "imputed righteousness" —not the scripture doctrine.

From all I have said, there may or may not be a quantity of righteousness outside a person put to his account. But the meaning of imputed righteousness is the character or quality in which the person appears in God's sight, not the cause of his so appearing. It proves it is not inherent, for then there could be no more reckoning of it. Why he is reckoned righteous remains to be proved. The not seeing this has produced insurmountable difficulties where such passages as "his faith was imputed to him for righteousness" had to be considered; for then, if a certain thing in its own value was put to the person's account and reckoned to him, faith was the valuable thing for the worth of which he was so accounted, and in truth it was inherent. So, blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sin is covered: Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute sin. It is not merely that Haggai does not impute the sin done, but He does not view him as in sin, but as in righteousness; for innocence there is no question of. Hence it is not δικαίωμα when imputed righteousness is spoken of, but δικαιοσύνη not an act or sum of things done, but a state. He is reckoned to be in the state of δικαιοσύνη. Δικαιοσύνη is imputed to him. As the Thirty-nine Articles express it, "We are accounted righteous before God;" so in Rom. 4:3, "It was counted to him for righteousness."

Here, as we have remarked, it cannot be the value of something reckoned to Abraham, but the state in which he was reckoned or accounted to be: so we read, (ver. 11,) "Righteousness might be imputed to them also." Here nothing is spoken of as that which is there to be imputed, and the passage as clearly as possible shows that the meaning of the phrase, "Righteousness imputed to them," means they were accounted to be righteous. Of 21-33 I have spoken. -Faith is still here the thing imputed. (Galatians in. 6.) It is again faith which is imputed for righteousness.

There are eleven passages in Scripture which speak of imputing righteousness or for righteousness; in nine of them faith is imputed for righteousness; so that here it does not mean the value of the thing done which is imputed, or our faith would be the merit. They are Rom. 4:3, 5, 9, 10, 22, 23, 24; Gal. 3:6; and James 2:23. The others, where it is said, righteousness is imputed, are Rom. 4:6, 11. In Rom. 4:6 it is, God imputes righteousness without works, saying, Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Here, clearly no positive external thing is imputed or put to another's account, but a man is reckoned to have δικαιοσύνη. Verse 11 leads us to exactly the same result. The Gentile believers were to be reckoned righteous, because faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness when he was uncircumcised. These are all the passages. An analogous passage (Rom. 2:26) gives the same sense—the circumcision is counted for uncircumcision. That is, the man is accounted circumcised when he is not. Thus, though a person is reckoned to be in a state which he is not de facto in, a quantum of righteousness read/ outside himself reckoned to him is not the meaning of imputed righteousness. It means the state in God's sight of the person so accounted righteous. Righteousness imputed to a man is the same as the man's being accounted righteous.

(Continued from page 195).

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## The Righteousness of God: Part 3

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(Continued).

NEXT comes the question, How and why is the man accounted righteous? It is God's righteousness, by faith in Jesus Christ towards all, Jew or Gentile, and upon all them that believe. "We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth [to be] a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness." Here we have a very plain principle: God is righteous in remitting the sins of Old Testament believers, as to which He who foreknew all had exercised forbearance, because of the blood of Jesus. He declares at this time His righteousness. There is this difference in our's and the patriarchs' position, not in the substance of the matter, but in our status before God, that we stand in a known revealed righteousness, not in hope of forbearance, great as the mercy may be which grants it to us. He is just and the justifier.

Who is just? God. Here there is an all-important principle: the righteousness of God means, first of all, His own righteousness-that He is just. It is not man's, or even yet some other's positive righteousness, made up of a quantity of legal merit, put upon him. The righteousness spoken of is God's being righteous ("just" is the same word) and yet so declared that He can justify the most dreadful sinners. But it will be said, that there must be a ground for this, which makes it righteous to forgive and justify. Right. Righteousness has a double meaning. I am righteous, say, in rewarding or forgiving that this supposes an adequate claim which makes it righteous that I should do so- merit of some kind. If I have promised anything, or anything be morally due, to righteousness, I am righteous in giving it. Thus that God should be righteous in forgiving and justifying, there must be an adequate moral motive for his doing so. In the sinner, clearly, there was not. In the blood of Christ there was. And, God having set Him forth as a mercy seat, faith in His blood became the way of justifying. This showed God's righteousness in forgiving. Thus accepted, I stand before God on the footing of His righteousness.

Here we have most important principles-the righteousness of God means, what the words express, God's righteousness. It is not δικαιομα here, some act or complete sum of righteousness by an act or thing done, but δικαιοσνη the quality or habit. God is just or righteous in this. Next, this righteousness of God is declared or manifested in virtue of the blood of Christ. God is thus righteous in forgiving and justifying; proved so as regards the former saints foreborne with before the blood was shed, abidingly and known so now by faith once for all, when all is accomplished, and the perfect ground of the justifying is declared. Further, by this forgiveness (inasmuch as it is through blood, so that God is just in it), the man is justified, accounted righteous. It is redemption, and God's righteousness is upon all them that believe. So afterward (chap. v.) it is said, "We are justified by his blood." Man is a sinner, without law and under law -and now entirely apart from law, χωρδ νμους. God's righteousness is displayed in justifying the believer through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, by reason of His propitiating blood, and through faith in it.

God is righteous and justifies, men that believe in Jesus. We have gained an immense point in understanding that God's righteousness is the quality or character that is in God Himself, nor an unimportant one that we are justified by his grace through redemption, and that righteousness is declared in remission.

Such is the direct testimony of Rom. 3 (Compare iv. 6, 7.) But is this justification by blood all? It is not. A very important part indeed of the Epistle remains behind—the doctrine of resurrection. It is thus introduced. Gentiles, and Jews under law, had been disposed of and set aside as sinners, but Abraham had not. God accepted him, called out from Gentiles, and not under law surely. But how? He, too, was justified by faith. But faith in what? This is the second great point of the Epistle. But the Apostle will not give up the truth, that in justifying the ungodly, forgiveness has the full value of reckoning righteousness without works; nor that death, redemption by blood, is the ground of this. He will give us David's testimony to this great truth, "To him who worketh not, but believeth on him who justifieth the ungodly" —mark that; not, who substitutes another legal righteousness instead of the wanting legal righteousness in the sinner, but justifies one who has none — "his faith is counted unto him for righteousness." The point is, that it is no debt, because of any works that deserved it, but of grace to him who works not.

Now, clearly, here the force of the argument is destroyed, if it be works which do merit it in another. And what is our David's declaration? He declares the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputes or reckons righteousness without works, *χωρὶς ἔργων*. It has naught to do with works of righteousness, which are done or imputed. And what is this declaration?— "Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered." And who is believed in here? God who justifies the ungodly, —He reckons them righteous apart from works.

But I have said this is not all, and that Abraham is introduced to bring in an additional principle of truth, but not to weaken this; for indeed it is founded on it. No more than this sets aside the additional one. So far from it, if we do not seize what this Epistle now goes on to teach, our knowledge of our position before God will be exceedingly imperfect. But before I pursue this second point, let me remind my reader that that ground of forgiveness or justifying which we have been already considering is no light thing or acquired for us at little cost on the part of Christ. Perfectly agreeable as all He was, thought, and did was to the Father, yet His death, of which we are now speaking as justifying us, was of all the rest that which had the deepest character and the highest value. He gave Himself for His Father's glory as for us. Therefore, He could say, "doth my Father love me because I lay down my life that I might take it again." No living act of obedience under law, perfect as all was, rose to the excellency of a dying surrender of Himself and that drinking the cup His Father had given Him to drink.

Still there was another point, connected with this cardinal fact of everlasting history, to be brought out. He was raised again for our justification, as He was delivered for our offenses. This was, with obscurer light, Abraham's faith too. It is not union with an exalted Christ in heaven. That is Ephesian doctrine, where nothing is said of Abraham. But Abraham believed that God was able to perform what He had promised. We believe that He has raised up our Lord Jesus from the dead, and therefore to us as to Him faith was reckoned for righteousness. Thus, as the blood of Christ was that which was presented to us as sinners, as that by which through faith in Christ we were forgiven and justified and the righteousness of God declared, so now resurrection is laid as the

ground, and the following chapters are based upon this truth, which yet, of course and evidently, supposes the dying and blood-shedding. This carries us farther than the thought of blood-shedding. That lays the ground on which we are cleared. This puts us in the cleared place and standing before God and an entirely new one. I believe on Him who raised up Jesus; that is, that God, perfectly satisfied in righteousness and glorified by the sacrifice of Christ, has raised Him up in witness of it and given Him a place, as alive to Him, in resurrection, sin being put away, our offenses for which He was delivered buried in His grave, and we alive again here below by the power of His life, in an entirely new condition in the favor of God, the present grace wherein we stand and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God who has been perfectly glorified by Christ. I say, or rather the Apostle says, We stand, because it is not now simply, as before, the being cleared from sin, but the new place in which we stand as cleared. Having been (for that is the force of the word), justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand. We walk thus in newness of life. We are not seen here risen with Christ. He is risen so that we are justified, have a sure ground of confidence, and are alive unto God through Him.

It is doubted if the doctrine of imputed righteousness be not shaken, looked at, as I do look at it, as contrasted with inherent living righteousness in us. In no wise. True it is that Christ is our life, and that we have received a nature -which in itself is sinless, and that, looked at as born of God, we cannot sin, because we are born of God. It is a life holy in itself as born of Him. But besides that, we have the flesh, though we are not in it, and the practical result in respect of our responsibility as to the deeds done in the body does not, even if we have this new life, meet the just demands of God, if we should pretend to present them as doing so. That is, righteousness is not made out by our being born again. We need, and have, a perfect righteousness apart from our life, though in Him who is our life. Christ is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. No soul can nor ought to have solid, settled peace in any other way. The whole perfection of Christ is that in which, without any diminution of its value, we are accepted. The delight of God in His obedience is that in which we are received. What we have done as children of Adam, He took on the cross in grace and entirely put away. And what He did is our acceptance with God. It is needed for us, for otherwise we have no righteousness. It is a joy to us, because we enter, as immediate objects of it, into the delight which God has in His own Son. What Scripture does not speak of is a certain quantum of legal righteousness attributed to us, because being under law we have failed in it; because we are not under law. It is an unholy doctrine, because it is not atoning by the blessed One's bearing the curse for breaches of law by those who were under it, but allowing failure under it by Another's accomplishing it. It is one thing to make an atonement for sin, and another to have one's neglected duty accomplished de facto by another. Besides, if done, it is human legal righteousness, by whomsoever done. Hence the Apostle says, "Not having mine own righteousness, which is by the law," supposing it ever so perfect; for it could be and would be no more than man's; "but the righteousness which is of God," another kind and sort of righteousness.

But have I not, or at least has not one under law, neglected duty? Yes, alas! But this has been atoned for, (why then, in passing, also to be fulfilled by another, and if fulfilled by another, why to be atoned for!—the whole system is false in its nature), and I am put into an entirely new position as wholly dead, the whole being and nature in which I was set aside, since Christ died for me as in

it: and thus my whole condition and being as before God in the first Adam is set aside I AM NOT IN THE FLESH (my first Adam standing to which the law applied). And I have an entirely new status before God in resurrection in virtue of this work of Christ. The risen Christ is the pattern and character of my acceptance, as He is the cause of it. As He is, so am I in this world. And this is by a real living possession of His nature, while at the same time by faith in Him, so that my acceptance is inseparable from godliness of life, as in one dead to sin and alive to God, and yet rests for righteousness and peace, on the perfectness of what is before God for us. Hence it is called justification of life. Hence also our responsibility is not now the making good the failures of the old or first Adam: I am wholly out of it, and, as in absolute and perfect acceptance in the Second before God, I am called to yield myself to God as one that is alive from the dead. The old thing is gone—atoned for, (so that God is glorified in His majesty and righteousness,) but done away. To that it was that law applied, and hence was weak through the flesh; but my first husband, law, (if I had been under its power, as the Jew was and many a one practically gets,) is gone, not through destruction of His authority, but by Christ's dying under its curse. That authority is thus, on the contrary, fully established by Christ's having met it in death; but then, thus, by the body of Christ, I am delivered from it, having died in that in which I was held, so that I should serve, not in the oldness of letter but in newness of spirit. Instead of satisfying the requirements of my old condition under law, I am passed out of it, Christ having borne the merited curse, so as to establish its authority, and passed into another - Christ's- before God, as one alive to God through Him, God having been perfectly glorified.

This is the doctrine of Rom. 5; 6:7, founded on chap. 4, and the results fully developed in chap. viii. It will be found that the whole ground-work is laid in the death, not in the life of Christ on earth. See chap. v. 6-11. All is attributed in the fullest way to death. Death and blood-shedding is the theme, only it is thence concluded in the blessed reasoning of the Holy Ghost, (who always reasons, not from what we are to what God must be, but from what God is and has done to what must be for us; as one that reveals in grace must do), that, a fortiori, we shall be saved by His life, as now risen - life, not before death, but in resurrection, saved from coming wrath. With all this, at the close of the chapter, law is contrasted, when righteousness is treated of. To this I will recur specifically in a moment. I pursue the evidence of the truth of our new positions in the chapters quoted has applied resurrection to justification, founded, as we have seen, on death. VI. applies it to life. If it be the obedience of one that justifies, we can do as we please, says the opposer of grace. Nay, says the Apostle, you are justified because you are dead, and have now to walk in newness of life. How can a man dead to sin (and that is the way you have justification and life,) live in it? If he do, he is not dead, he is in the first Adam, he has no part in Christ at all; for we are baptized into His death, and it is in resurrection we have life. In chap. 7 this death is applied to law. Law has dominion over a man as long as he lives: but we are not alive, we are dead. In a word, Christ is alive for me before God, and I am justified, but as having died, and thus it is I have a place in this blessing. Hence, I am dead to sin; and, further, I am no longer alive in the nature to which law applied; therefore, he says, in Rom. 7, "When we were in the flesh." I am married to another, I cannot have two husbands at a time, Christ and law. But it is not by weakening the first; nothing glorified it like Christ's death, under its curse. But, if under it, I have died under it in the body of Christ, and thus I am free. Through law, I am dead to law.

I do not enter into the blessed and beautiful unfolding of this true liberty before God and from sin, and the heavenly security which accompanies it, God, as with Noah, shutting us in; not because it would not be delight to follow it out, but because I must confine myself to my subject. The character of the deliverance may be seen in viii. 1-11. There the Spirit is life. Thence, to 28, He is the Spirit of God, personally considered; the spring of joy; the Comforter in the sorrows that spring from that joy itself in such a world as this. It is God in us. From 28 to the end it is the security and sure glorious results afforded by God's being for us. Hence sanctifying or life are not, spoken of here—that is wrought in us.

What is, then, the righteousness of God, and how is it shown? How do we have part in it? How is righteousness reckoned to us? We are said to be the righteousness of God in Christ. (2 Cor. 5) The Apostle speaks of having the righteousness which is of God. (Phil. 3) But it is not said, God's righteousness is imputed to us. Nor is Christ's righteousness a scriptural expression, though no Christian doubts He was perfectly righteous. Still, the Spirit of God is perfect in wisdom, and it would be wonderful if that which was the necessary ground of our acceptance should not be clearly spoken of in Scripture. One passage seems to say so. (Rom. 5:18.) But the reader may say see in the margin of a Bible which has references, that there is "one righteousness." There cannot be the least doubt that this is the true rendering. When the Apostle would say, by the offense of one, he uses a different and correct form, a different one from that which he uses for one offense. Theology may make it the righteousness of one, but not Greek. Now the expression, "the righteousness of God," is used so very often, that it is not necessary to quote the passages. Now, it is not in vain that the Holy Ghost on so important a subject never uses one expression, that is the righteousness of Christ, and constantly the other, that is God's righteousness. We learn the current of the mind of the Spirit thus. Theology uses always that which the Holy Ghost never does; and cannot tell what to make of that which the Holy Ghost always uses. Surely there must be error in the whole way of thinking of theology here.

I am satisfied that the source of it all is their notions about law. Law is for the first Adam—for the unrighteous (the Apostle tells us so expressly), righteousness is in the Second. Christ was born under law here below, that He might redeem those who were under it out of that condition, bearing the curse they had incurred. We are told that law is the transcript of the divine mind. I deny it wholly and entirely. It is the transcript of what the creature ought to be. Can God, speaking with all reverence, love God with all His heart or His neighbor as Himself? It is simple nonsense. These teachers of the law know neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. The law is not made for the righteous, but for the unrighteous; and never made anybody in the world righteous. It is righteous, but it was given to sinners when in their sins, and never as a law to anybody else- not speaking here of Christ's coming under it in grace. It entered, παρεισλθε, or came in by the bye, between promise and its accomplishment in Christ, that the offense might abound. Christ is the image of the invisible God- the transcript of the divine mind, if you please. The law is an imposed rule. Thou shalt love. Is that a transcript of the divine mind? It does love sovereignly. Christ was made under law, and of course was perfectly under it—but in that character was and abode alone. But He was God manifest in flesh, and thus was the image of the invisible God. He that had seen Him had seen the Father. He was love, and was holiness. Holy enough in His being to love sinners as above sin; and further,—what law does not and cannot and ought not to do, knows nothing of its nature,—gave himself up for sinners which law knows nothing of, for it will have no sinners at all

unless to curse them. Hence, when Christian practice is spoken of, we are to be “imitators of God as dear children,” — “to lay down our lives for the brethren.” What has law to do with this? It knows nothing of it.

The whole doctrine of Paul, and of the righteousness of God, these law teachers are striving against. Where, then, and what is the righteousness of God? God's righteousness is His perfect consistency with His own perfect and blessed nature; and that (hence it is said, “if my unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God,”) as it concerns us now in His dealings with others. “The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, His eyes behold the upright. God is a righteous judge, and God is provoked every day. For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, evil shall not dwell with thee. Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness.” The first Psalm opens with this great truth. So when He comes, He will judge the world in righteousness, and the people with equity. So Psa. 97-99, and indeed a multitude of others. It will be said, The righteousness here spoken of, however essential the principle to the being of God, yet is applied to the law. I admit it, and hence the instruction contained in it ends in the government of this world; and until order be brought about by power there, the state of things perplexed those who looked for it, when they saw the prosperity of the wicked. We are called to another position, a heavenly one, and even as Christ did, to “do well, suffer for it, and take it patiently.” This is acceptable with God. But the keeping of the law is never said. to be a title to heaven, still less to sit at the right hand of God. Morally—not personally of course, I need not say—but as to the quality of our righteousness we have a title to be there. So, on the other hand, we say as to sin, we “have come short of the glory of God;” and “we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” And Christ declares, “The glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that the world may know that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me.”

Righteousness is shown in the punishment of the wicked, and in the world's seeing Christ no more. This is the solemn answer to that vain conceit of love which denies righteousness, and makes of love indifference to sin. But I do not now dwell on this solemn application of righteousness, namely, that vengeance belongeth to God, as not being our proper subject. How as regards us, in the Christian revelation of it, is righteousness set forth? In the resurrection no doubt of Christ. But there is yet more. He shall demonstrate righteousness to the world, because I go to my Father. God has shown His righteousness in setting Christ as man at His right hand. There, more fully than shall be in His direct government, though of course it is perfect there, the righteousness of God is shown. Christ had a title to be there and He is there. Righteousness is in heaven, it is divine, a title to glory, and in man That is what we want, what is ours. But why is Christ's being there righteousness? He has title as Son. He was there before the world was. But that is not our point here.

Let us see how He speaks of it. First, He says in John 17, “Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.” This I leave, because it is His personal title, though a just and blessed claim, and characterizing His position, and thus most interesting to us. But he adds a second ground, “I have glorified thee on the earth. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do, and now glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory I had with thee before the world was.” And when was this done John 13:31, tells us: “When Judas went out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.” He shall not wait till the public government of the world;

and His appearing from heaven will glorify Him according to the eighth psalm, but straightway when He says, "Sit at my right hand till I make thy foes thy footstool" —where He is crowned with glory and honor, when all things are not yet put under Him. But why was it righteousness to do this? Because the Lord had a title to it to be glorified as Son of man, (though He had been in it as Son before the world was; because God Himself in His nature and moral being had been glorified in Him, and He was therefore entitled to be glorified in God. We have seen when this was, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him" Heavenly glory with God was the righteous consequence. As He says, "If God be glorified, God will glorify in himself." But how was this? Surely it was a glorious thing for a son of man to maintain, nay, not merely maintain, but make good the glory of God. Doubtless, He must have been much more to have enabled Him to do it. Still, as He tells us Himself, it was as such He did it. Blessed and infinite grace for us that it is so! The more we weigh what the cross was, the more shall we see how God was righteous in raising and setting Christ at His right hand. Sin was come in, disorder in the universe, the government of God unintelligible, angels occupied in conflict in God's creation, witnesses of the success of evil. Had God judged in righteousness, and destroyed all the wicked, there was no love. Did He spare them, there was no righteousness. It would have been but merely undoing the evil if all were restored, or sanctioning it if they had been glorified. Where His truth which had pronounced death on the offender? where His majesty which had been trodden under foot? The whole character of God was in question by sin. The Lord offers Himself for His father's glory, according to the counsels of God. His truth is made good. The wages of sin is death. It is an absolute proof of it. It was the paid wages of sin by the Son of God Himself. None escaped but by His dying for them, and He the Son of God.

The majesty of God was vindicated as nothing else would have done it. Christ spends Himself and submits to wrath to make it good. God's righteousness was glorified in the full judgment of sin. Yet His love to the sinner was displayed as naught else could have displayed it. What a scene for the moral universe! Nothing next nor like it is there in all created history. Things that, are have been created, and may be destroyed, but this abides, making good what God is for all eternity. Such was the cross. There the Son of man was glorified, and God was glorified in it. Hence He glorified Christ in Himself, placed Him at His right hand. This was righteousness. No glory amongst men would have been an adequate recompence for glorifying God Himself. The true reward for, glorifying God was God's glory. Into that the Lord entered, where He was before the world was made. This is what displays divine righteousness, the setting the Son of man at God's right hand. As I have said, it was God's own righteousness; but as this must merit a title to make it righteousness, it was such because Christ had done what gave Him the title to be there. But this was done for us, for all that have the faith of Christ,—this glorifying God about sin. It was about our sin He did it. Therefore the value of the work is reckoned to us; God righteously receives us into His glory as He has received Christ, for He has received Him in virtue of the work done for us -us therefore in Him. We are made the righteousness of God in Him, for in blessing us in this heavenly and glorious way, in justifying us, He only gives its due effect to Christ's claims upon Him. Towards us it is pure grace, but it is equally the righteousness of God. Thus it appears that all the value of Christ's work is reckoned to us, and reckoned for righteousness. He who knew no sin has been made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Has His living obedience to God nothing to do with this? I do not say this. First of all, "He knew no sin" was absolutely necessary to His being made sin. But the truth is, His obedience is looked at as one whole moral

condition or perfection in which He was agreeable to God. He was the obedient one, as Adam the disobedient. And though His obedience in life was not for sin, it was part of the sweet savor which went up to God, and in which we are accepted. It was finally tried at the cross, and found perfect. This was the perfect man, and in circumstances alone this nature, but perfectly agreeable to God. Once He had undertaken obedience, it was His own duty; but that He accomplished and glorified God in it, at all cost; but He was alone, and stood alone, that He might then take man's sinful condition on Himself, and therein glorify God. He did not, as towards God, make good God's character in it, but a divine perfect man's. He did display God's character when alive—He was it. But that was addressed to man, not a satisfaction to God for man. He took up man's cause as born of a woman. He took up the remnant of Israel's as born under the law. He was made sin to reconcile the one, and bore the curse of the law to redeem the other from it, and will never bring the lawless under it. As a living man, sinners had no part in or with Him—He abode alone. As a dying man He met their case. There they could come by faith. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." That was when He said, "The hour is come that the Son of Man must be glorified: except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abides alone, but if it die, it brings forth much fruit." It is an entire setting aside the old man, his whole condition and existence before God, by which we get our place before God; not keeping the law for the old man. Then you must keep him alive. God forbid. I live by the second Adam only, with whom I have been crucified; nevertheless live not I, but Christ in me. But then, in the new man, I am not under law, so there is no question of fulfilling it for me; because, I am already accepted and have life. There can be no Do this and live. I am, as even Luther expresses it, Christ before God. If righteousness come by law, then Christ is dead in vain. But if Christ has fulfilled the law for me, it does come by law, and Christ is dead in vain. Law applies to flesh, is weak through it, sets up, if it could, the righteousness of the first man. But I am not in the flesh at all—I am in Christ.

But the fifth of Romans requires some of its details to be referred to. The subject the apostle takes up is, as we have seen, death, in order to have a wholly new place and standing in resurrection. But this goes beyond the limits of law; for man sinned and died when he had none. Death reigned from Adam to Moses over them who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the image of him that is to come. Theologians have puzzled themselves with this, ignorant that it is simply a quotation from Hos. 6:7. They (Israel) like Adam (men) have transgressed the covenant. Adam was under a law, not indeed to do this and live, as Mr. Molyneux so unhappily says, but Do this and die when alive; Israel under law of Do this and live when he was dead—as indeed the words, rightly weighed, implied.

But between Adam and Moses there was no law -none of either kind, but they sinned and died. Hence we must go up to the great heads of the two systems -the first and second Adam: not to mend the first by the second, but through death substitute one for the other. I do not speak of the persons to whom it is applied, but the abstract nature of the act. Adam sins, is disobedient, cast out of an earthly paradise, and is the head of a lost, condemned, sinful race. The second Adam obeys, glorifies God in righteousness, is received into heaven, and is the head of a new justified race. In either case the act causative of the whole condition was accomplished before the consequences were entailed on those that came under it. It is not a course of action on the ground of the first man, which, accomplished by the second, forms our righteousness, as belonging to the first. We pronounce whole and entire condemnation on ourselves, as belonging to the first-

children of wrath, Jew or Gentile. Death closes on that in Christ; and, after redemption, we begin to exist, before God in Christ, and accepted in Christ, and Christ in us is our life. We do not go back to seek a legal righteousness in flesh, the other Adam-side of redemption; we may know ourselves only as lost, dead in sin there. It is too late to get a righteousness for our first Adam state: I have fled to Christ because I was already lost by it. By the disobedience of one many were made sinners; by the obedience of One—looked at as one moral whole, perfect in death, His character contrasted with that of Adam's, without any thought of law—many are made righteous. In death He bore the curse of the law for those Under it; but this was not keeping it in life. He was obedient all His life—learned what it was by suffering; He was obedient in death, in bowing to suffering, when it was His Father's will, where law had no place, though He bore the curse of that too. What law commanded to endure God's wrath when a person was sinless I He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

Not only so, but this obedience is expressly contrasted with law, in order to meet the sin of those also who are not under law. This is the great point argued in the chapter. Personal headship is insisted on in Adam and Christ; and on this ground we stand, the law having come in between, occasionally, though to meet important ends. Adam died by disobedience, and Christ as obedience. The law came in by the bye, says the apostle [παρεισθη], that the offense might abound. That is, he states the obedience as an absolute perfect quality of the Christ, available for sons of Adam, while the law had merely a special place, which did not come into this question of obedience. It brought out sin in the way of multiplying transgressions, but where (not transgressions, the apostle takes care not to say that; for so the grace would not have applied to those not under law—the very point he was insisting on being that it did apply to them; but where) sin abounded, there did grace much more abound. There was one offense, *παρπτωμα* towards all for condemnation, one *δικαιωμα* act of accomplished righteousness towards all to justification of life. It is as abstract as possible, but, as the following verse shows, to the exclusion of law—that is brought in with *νμοδ παρεισθη*, an accessory which had a peculiar effect, and which did not come under his general argument (yea, to exclude which was the effect of his reasoning), in order to let in the Gentiles.

If the one offense swept wide beyond Jews, the one act of righteousness must do so too. The law came in by the bye to do its own work to produce transgressions (not sin); but where sin abounded, grace did much more. The purport of the reasoning of the apostle is to get out of the scene of law as to disobedience, obedience, and righteousness—not to bring it in. If it comes in, it is with a special object, by the bye, which does not concern the Gentiles, and for the Jews served for increased guilt; but of which Christ has borne the curse for those who believe. I am not under law but under grace, if I am a believer. I am not in the flesh if I am in Christ: when I was, I was under law, or lawless. In Christ I have entered (be I Jew or Gentile, on a new ground), where I am alike dead to sin and law, and alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord, made the righteousness of God in Him.

It is a very striking fact that Luther should have excluded from the New Testament that on which the Apostle everywhere insists as the foundation of his doctrine, the revelation of Christianity—that is, the righteousness of God. Nor does Calvin get a step farther. “I understand,” he says, “by the righteousness of God, that which can, be approved before the tribunal of God; as, on the contrary, men are accustomed to the righteousness of men, what is held and esteemed righteousness in the

opinion of men.” (Rom. 1, so 2 Cor. 5) But his whole statement is very poor. To come short of the glory of God means, he says in the same way, what we can glory of before God. In Rom. 10 he makes the righteousness of God that which God gives, and their own that which is sought from man.

## Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

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2 Tim. 2:15

The Second Epistle to Timothy is not only specially important to us in this day of corrupted Christianity, but it has its own peculiar force and attraction in the general moral character of it. It shows the apostle Paul to us in a very affecting light—holding on in service, though in the midst of hardships, desertion, and disappointment, under scorn and all contradiction from without, and amid the ruin, likewise, of the Church condition.

At the opening of it, the apostle is very personal and affectionate—a style which was natural in one who found himself in the midst of sore disappointments; for if, at such a time, there was one, a single friend, who did not join in aggravating this disappointment, such an one would naturally, nay, necessarily, have a large measure of the remembrances of the poor tried and broken heart. And such an one, I believe, Timothy was to Paul, at the time of this epistle.

But looking at this in another light, I might say, what a victory, in the heart of the apostle, all this expresses! “Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold,” —a common, natural experience. The heart has been disappointed in the scene around it, and from which it had promised itself much, and in other days had gathered something, and its tendency would be to shut itself up. But so was it not with Paul. His heart was as large, and earnest, and loving as ever; and if it cannot go forth and spread itself over a wider surface, it will return and spend its fervors over the little that remains to it.

This is an affecting sight we get of the apostle. And if Paul, in spirit, had gained such a victory as this in his own heart, he would have Timothy, “his dearly beloved son,” gain another.

In days of corruption, there is a temptation to throw up all as lost, to look on all as hopeless. It was thus in Jeremiah's day: and the day contemplated in 2 Timothy is like Jeremiah's, a day of moral relaxation and general corruption, in the very place where truth and righteousness should have flourished. But Paul cannot let Timothy yield to this temptation. He calls on him to stir up the gift of God that was in him. However hopeless the scene of labor might be, still there was a gift of God in Timothy, and that gift was to be used.

Jeremiah had to struggle in the strength and title of such a gift, in the midst of such another scene of corruption and disappointment. And he did struggle— it may be with some infirmity, but still honestly and successfully—to the end. And Paul would have his Timothy do likewise.

He arms him, however, for this struggle. He exhorts him to be “strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.” And he reads out to him his title to be thus strong. He tells him that he had not received from God a spirit of fear, but of love, and of power; that God had already saved him; that by the appearing of Jesus, death had been abolished, and life and immortality brought to light; and that the One whom he believed was able to keep all that was committed to Him, so that nothing should be lost, but all should be found in the forthcoming day of His power and glory. (Chap. 1.)

Here was title, indeed, to be “strong in the grace” of God. Timothy, like David, (though in a day like the day of the capture of Ziklag,) might well “encourage himself in God.” (See 1 Sam. 30)

But with this exhortation to be strong in grace, the apostle further exhorts him “to endure hardness,” and he intimates that this exhortation was the more needful, because some were teaching that “the resurrection was past already.” (Chap. 2.)

Such a doctrine overthrows faith, as the apostle here says. It is destructive of the Church's place and calling; for she is not as yet the witness of a risen but of a rejected Christ, as far as her connection with the earth or the world goes; Christ who is her head, being still a rejected Christ here. She knows Him in His poverty and humiliation. And this calls on His witnesses to endure hardness, to fight as those who entangle not themselves with the affairs of this life, to labor as those who are not to reap till they have labored; to remember “the seed of David” who died ere He rose, all which things the apostle here speaks of to Timothy. The word of Hymeneus and Philetus was destructive, morally destructive, of all this. They taught that “the resurrection was past already.” They encouraged the thought that the fellowship of the Church is now no longer to be with a rejected Head; and this thought has so worked (finding natural alliance with the heart of man) that the “great house,” as Paul here speaks, has been generated. Christendom (the mustard seed become a great tree) has sprung from this root, in this soil. The corrupted church has assumed the world, as though the kingdom had come.

According to all this, Timothy is here told of a house that he has to leave, and not (as the first epistle had told him) of a house in the midst of which he was to “behave” himself. That is, this epistle contemplates a time of victorious corruption, such as Christendom now is. We are, therefore, to purge ourselves from it and not strive to purge it. It is too late to attempt it. We cannot purge out leaven in a day of victorious corruption. It waits the judgment of God.

Now, it is in the midst of all this that the apostle thus addresses Timothy, “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” A most necessary word, for Hymeneus and Philetus were at that very time doing the very contrary. They, as the apostle says of them, “concerning the truth had erred.” They said, in a general way, “the resurrection is past already.” As a universal proposition, a doctrine to be taken in all its applicability, it is false, in special application most true. But these men who were overthrowing the faith of some, did not heed this right division of the truth. But truth itself depended on this right division of it. We are in the perfect grace of God, to know the resurrection as past, when we think of sin and judgment. We are to know it in our conscience. We are to be free there, to have “the answer of a good conscience towards God,” because of “the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” We are to know Him as delivered for our sins, and raised again for our justification.

So, as to our affections, as well as to our conscience we are to be risen or heavenly, because Christ is seated at the right hand of God. We are surely to have our objects and our hopes with him that is risen.

As, however, to our circumstances, or in our relation to the world, we are to be the witnesses of a rejected, and not of a risen, glorified Christ. In the world Jesus has, as yet, no place. It has cast Him out, and He has disowned it.

But this division of the word of truth Hymeneus and Philetus would not know. They taught, as a truth of universal present application, that the resurrection was already past. And what a canker has their word proved to be! It has generated "the great house." Christendom, where a worldly, and not a rejected Christ is seen, derives itself out of this error. It makes the little seed, (the smallest of all herbs,) a great tree, like the king of Babylon of old, where the fowls of the air lodge. It has given us Babylon instead of Jerusalem. It has given us Babylon, where we should have had Jerusalem. It has built Babylon in the land of Israel.

## Thoughts on Romans 9

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WE now approach another subject. In Rom. 9-11 Paul is reconciling the special promises given to Abraham with the leveling which the gospel makes of Jew and Gentile, by placing them on equal conditions, whether before judgment or before grace.

Chap. ix. They are not all Israel who are of Israel. There is an election which admits Gentiles among the children of promises. The apostle reasons in this way: You, Jews, allow that it is from Abraham you hold the promises. Well, if simple descent from Abraham conferred a right to the promises, you must take in along with you Ishmael and Esau, with their races; for they also were descended from Abraham. Notwithstanding, they do not belong to the congregation of the Lord. And wherefore? Because God chose Isaac and Jacob, and did not take up Ishmael and Esau. There is then an election which distinguishes between the children of the promise and the children of the flesh. You must needs again allow the sovereignty of God, for without it all is over with you since Sinai, where you broke the covenant of the Lord. If you have subsisted since that time, if till this day there yet remains a resource for you, it is in virtue of the sovereign grace God exercises as and where He pleases. Thus, then, there is no unrighteousness with God. You have no room to complain, if He acts toward the Gentiles in the same sovereign mercy which He has shown to you.

Ver. 1—3. Paul begins by protesting solemnly his affection for Israel, and deep concern for their blessing. Their state was to him a source of great grief and continual pain. Far from despising his nation or returning their dislike and rancor against him he loved them as much as Moses ever did. If Moses had pleaded in his anguish, "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written," Paul was not at all behind in his love. "I could wish (or I did wish) that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Of course, it is not a calm settled desire, but the impassioned feeling of his heart, expressing in all its strength his intense interest in Israel. There is no difficulty in Paul's words if we compare them with the similar outburst of Moses' heart.

Ver. 4, 5. Hence, too, he hastens to recognize the privileges of Israel, before striking what he knew would be a great blow. "Who are Israelites, whose is the sonship, and the glory, and the covenants, and the law-giving and the service, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as to flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen." His controversy, therefore, -was not with their privileges, but rather with Israel, because they were not rated highly enough. He owns those privileges as theirs, and appreciates them far more than the Jews did.

Ver. 6-13. Next he denies that the word of God has failed, and pronounces the declaration in their face that not at all Israel are Israel; God in His sovereignty decides, by election, who are to inherit the promise. Nor was there any need of going beyond the family of the fathers to demonstrate this truth; for undeniably not all the seed of Abraham himself were called, but "in Isaac shall a seed be called to thee." In vain, then, did the Jews found their exclusive rights upon their descent from him to whom the promises were made. Ishmael was Abraham's seed no less than Isaac, and yet undeniably God chose Isaac, not Ishmael, for the line of special favor. Thus, it is not the children of

the flesh that are the children of God, but the children of the promise are reckoned as seed. "For this word is [a matter] of promise. At this appointed time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son." This was confirmed in the next generation; for though the children sprang from the same father and mother, -yea, before they were born, or had done anything, good or evil, (that God's purpose according to election might abide) it was said to Rebecca, The greater [elder] shall serve the less [younger]. And so ran the prophetic testimony of Malachi at the close, I loved Jacob and hated Esau. What could be more conclusive than this reasoning? For of all the Gentiles, none were more odious in the eyes of Jews than these very races, the Arabs and the Edomites. Yet clearly, if mere descent were to decide, they sprang from Abraham and Isaac as certainly as Israel. They must fall back, therefore, on the principle of God's sovereign choice.

Ver. 14-18. Man, stumbled by the doctrine of election, objects and says that it involves unrighteousness with God. Far be the thought, says the apostle; for if God deals in the way of righteousness, man, being sinful, falls under judgment, and all are lost. But it is not so. God acts as He will; He shows mercy or judgment, as it pleases Him; and so it should be and is best, for His will is the highest wisdom and goodness. Nor has a single soul right to complain, for those on whom this sovereign will is exercised are all covered with sin. Two examples are therein given in illustration; one of mercy towards the people when guilty and deserving death, the other of judgment on their enemy.

Now the circumstances in which God announced His sovereignty add amazing force to all this. For when was it that He said to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion?" It was when, on grounds of bare righteousness, Israel ought to have been cut off. God then withdrew, as it were, within His sovereignty, in order to spare Israel, whom righteousness must have condemned around their golden idol. How blessed then for Israel that it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs; but of God that shows mercy! Verse 16 is an abstract enunciation of this principle, that the question is not of man's desires or efforts, but of God's will. Besides, when we come to the facts of the case, we find that man neither wishes nor seeks for mercy. It is too late, then, for man to talk of rights. The truth is that he himself is all wrong, and that the foundation of righteousness is that God should have His rights. As we have seen, and we may bless Him for it; He uses His rights in maintaining His prerogative of mercy in behalf of the people who had utterly destroyed themselves! (Comp. Ex. 33:19 with the preceding history.)

Thus, too, we find it in the history of every day. When men are self-righteous, they are ready to dispute at every step with God's sovereignty: when really broken down under a sense of sin, they are right glad to hear that God's mercy is sovereign enough to show them mercy: when saved and at peace themselves, they can rejoice at that mercy flowing out towards any.

On the side of judgment, the apostle cites the instance of Pharaoh. For the scripture says to Pharaoh, For this very thing have I raised thee up, that I might show in thee my power, and that my name might be declared in all the earth. Nor, in fact, could any dealing be more just; for Pharaoh had derided and denied the right of God over His own people. He was a proud and rebellious man against God, who righteously made an example of him. Hardening came on him judicially, and in the end utter ruin. Therefore has He mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He hardens. On a large scale, it was so with Israel, (Isa. 6) and it will be so with Christendom. (2 Thess. 2) Man is

wicked and rejects God, who thereon -according to His sovereign wisdom-can and does give men up to hardness. Though election belongs to the eternal will of God, it is occupied with man under sin, since it settles for him the question of mercy or judgment. It is not the less sovereign for that. If God were to show His glory in the place where we are, for instance, and were suddenly to take to Him one or two persons, that act would be as sovereign as if He had decreed it thousands of years before. Observe, too, that while God hardens whom He will, He does not render wicked; but He may take a wicked man to make an example of His justice in his case. Had God created man evil, there would not have been room for a fall, and in that case man might have fairly complained.

Ver. 19-29. But man does complain, and a second objection is: Since the sovereign God decides everything, why does He any longer find fault? For who has resisted His purpose? And what I am, I am: I can only be what He pleases. Nay, but thou, man, says the apostle, who art thou that answerest again to God? Does the creature of the dust dare to judge the Creator God does what He will, and renders account of His acts to none. Thus man complains of God's righteousness when it touches himself, as he dislikes the grace which justifies others freely and absolutely. And to this indeed the question will be found to come: Is God to judge man? or is man to judge God? In the entire answer there are three propositions. First, as we have seen, the apostle maintains, in all its strength, the right of the sovereign God-the authority that He has to do just as He will with His creatures. Has not the potter power over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? Next, he comes to the facts, and sets before us, that God, even when minded to show his wrath and make His power known, endured with much long-suffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction-vessels which He did not fit, but had long endured. Thirdly, there is the revelation that He had afore prepared for glory vessels of mercy. The vessels of wrath were fitted by themselves-by their sins-for wrath; but the vessels of mercy were prepared of God, for in truth no man is prepared of himself for glory: grace alone effects His work in favor of the elect. The passage is written, if we may so say, carefully, by the Spirit, that we should not impute the fitting of the wicked to God. His title to act sovereignly is asserted as a general and abstract truth in verse 21. But when we come to the facts as they are, Paul declares that it is not by God's act that they are fitted to destruction. On the other hand, it is expressly said that God endured vessels of wrath, (ver. 22) and that he prepared vessels of mercy. Such are the cases supposed. Who or what, then, prepared those vessels of wrath? Sin, without doubt. Nevertheless, the word on this point preserves silence. What profound revelations result from the existence of sin-from God's way for us and for His own glory in respect of it! God alone suffices to Himself; and His power is necessary to the maintenance of everything, as it was needed to create all. The creature can only fall, if it be not sustained. The moment it seeks an independent existence it is fallen, and that even before committing a positive act of sin.

It is God's sovereignty, then, which is here established, and this necessarily dissipates the exclusive claim of the Jews to the promises. The call of God was established in Isaac, else they must share all with their most detested neighbors and enemies! The pure compassion of God was proved to be the only hope of Israel, for they had set up the golden calf! Thus, all pretense for taking the promises as a right in virtue of descent from Abraham or of obeying the law was clean gone. The sovereignty of God was the sole resource that remained. But if God was sovereign, a Jew had no more right than a Gentile: it was a question henceforth of God's will and God's word. Accordingly He calls not only from amongst Jews but from amongst Gentiles, as is shown in Hos.

1; 2 Nay, more: Esaias, (ver. 27-29,) far from strengthening the Jews pretension, declares too plainly that, numerous as the sons of Israel might be, the remnant should be saved-not the mass; even as the same prophet had said before, that had not the Lord left them a seed, they had been as Sodom and Gomorrah. In a word, judgment on Israel was the burden of the testimony in their own prophets, as well as the disclosures of mercy to the Gentiles.

Thus Paul puts the Gentiles under the benefit of the principle of sovereign election-the very same principle which opened the door for Israel's blessing, as their past history showed. Thus had God spared the Jew; thus He was now calling the Gentile. It is well to remark that this election is not a national election, as men often say; for, on the contrary, God uses His sovereignty to draw individuals out from the nation,- "us whom he has also called, not only from among Jews, but also from among Gentiles." Indeed, the greater part of the reasoning of the chapter is precisely against the national pretension of the Jews.

Ver. 30-33. These last citations from Isaiah pave the way for the grand subject in chap. xi.—for the temporary setting aside of Israel. They have shown that if all the people were not cut off, what remained of them was to be but a little remnant. In the closing verses we have the principle under which Israel are seen cut off, and Gentiles let in. "What then shall we say'? that Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness, have attained righteousness, righteousness which is by [or from] faith. But Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, has not attained to a law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because [it was] not from faith but from works of law. For they stumbled at the stumbling-stone," &c. Thus their cutting off is not-a fact which merely flows from the scripture, but which results from the conduct of Israel, and that not only from their failure in accomplishing the law, which they undertook to do under the fearful sanctions of Sinai, but far more because they rejected their own Messiah, forfeiting thus their title to the promises. They stumbled at the stumbling-stone.

## Thoughts on Romans 10

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Chap. 9. has brought before us the sovereign counsels of God towards Israel; chap. 10. occupies us with His ways in respect of the people during the present period.

Ver. 1. We may remark, first of all, that the knowledge of the irrevocable counsels of God about Israel had not at all extinguished the affection of Paul for his nation, nor taken away from his heart every hope of salvation for his Israelitish brethren. The thought which delighted his heart and which drew out his affections in supplication to God was their salvation. He says "for them," (not for Israel, as in the vulgar text). Occupied as he is with Israel, its insertion would have been needless: its omission is beautiful, for it implies how they and their salvation-not their judgment, much as Israel might deserve it-were before his mind.

Ver. 2, 3. Nor does he fail to bear them witness that they have zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about seeking to establish their own righteousness have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Their zeal, which had for its object the righteousness of man according to the law, was the obstacle which hindered their knowing the righteousness of God and submitting to it. When God presented His righteousness, offering it to Israel in their own Messiah, they rejected Him. They failed in their own righteousness and what was worse, they would not submit to God's.

Ver. 4. The righteousness of God is in Christ- Christ the end of law for righteousness to every believer. This verse gives the subject round which turn all the developments of the chapter. Christ is the object of faith and the end of law. For though Christ was in view in the law, these words mean rather that He was its accomplishment, so that law ends in Him. He closes the ancient order of things. The whole principle of the first Adam, namely, the principle of the responsibility of man before the righteousness of God, dies in Christ. But in Him also everything recommences, on a new footing. Christ is Himself God's righteousness-righteousness which becomes the portion of the believer, and which sets him before God in a position of acceptance. It is in Jesus Christ that we pass from the first state to the second, from the responsibility that has failed to real righteousness.

Ver. 5-13. The righteousness of faith is established in the scriptures of the Old Testament. Several citations follow.

Ver. 6-8. He quotes a portion of Deuteronomy, which has this peculiarity, that it is addressed to Israel by Moses to serve as a resource when all should be lost under the law, when Israel might be in exile, far from the altars of the Lord, suffering the consequence of their transgressions. We know that for a Jew righteousness consisted in the observance of the law, in all its precepts and all its ordinances-ordinances which were bound up with the establishment of Israel in the land of Canaan, and which could not be observed save in the country where God had set up His altar. But Israel for their rebellions, and under the chastisement of the Lord, were to be carried away. Then there was no more altar, and, of course, no more possibility of attaining righteousness by means of

law. "And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee." ( Deut. 30:1.) Thus when all hopes of legal righteousness are overturned and gone, a new principle comes in. The passage used by the apostle begins at verse 11, "For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say, who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." (Deut. 30:11-14.)

If, in the discourse of Moses, you remark these words and those which precede them, you will see that before expressing what belongs to the righteousness of faith, Moses has done with the law as a thing revealed. What the law could produce, alas! has been produced: Israel have shown themselves transgressors, and the wrath of the Lord weighs down upon them for their transgressions. It is all over. They are under chastisement. There is nothing more to expect on the side of the law. "The Lord rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land." (Deut. 29:28.) But is there an end without hope of return? Ah, says Moses, "the secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." (ver. 29). The things revealed were their rules of action and are summed up in this: "Obey, and you shall abide in the land; if not, you shall be driven out." They did not obey all the words of the law and were rooted out. But what are those secret things? Grace which remained with God for the time in which Israel should find themselves under chastisement. This subject is the theme of the prophets.

Let Israel be ever so far off, the testimony of God was addressed to them: they might turn to Him in spirit. But this was not legal righteousness: it was by faith they might have relations with God. They had not practiced the things commanded in the law; they were under punishment. But the righteousness of faith speaks thus to any one who asks where he must go to recover what is lost, to return to God: "Say not in thine heart," &c. Paul interprets this movement of the Israelite's heart, or rather he answers it according to God. To ascend to heaven, to descend into the abyss, would be to bring Christ down, or to bring Him again from the dead. Taken thus, spiritually, Christ is the aim of the law. There was need of going nowhere. The word had come from God to them. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness: and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10:8-10.)

Two other quotations follow: ver. 11, Isa. 28:16, and ver. 13, Joel 2:32, If none that believe on Him shall be ashamed, the Gentile believer need not be any more than the Jew. Therefore, adds the apostle, "there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." If all were on one level of sin, grace equally levels all difference between Jew and Gentile. (Comp. Rom. 3)

Thus it is clear that the words “in thy mouth and in thine heart” (verses 8, 9, 10), cited from Deut. 30 are in contrast with the merely literal accomplishment of the law. This is supposed to be impossible, for Israel is viewed as scattered and in captivity, far away from their land and the place which the Lord their God chose to set His name in. There only could the law in strictness apply; but the gracious word of his God might be in the heart and mouth of an Israelite. It was not necessary, then, to go to Jerusalem across the sea, any more than to go up to heaven. The word was near them, “in thy mouth and in thy heart;” that is, adds the apostle, the word not of law, but of faith, which we preach; that, if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, [or Jesus as Lord,] and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart is belief to righteousness and with the mouth is confession to salvation. Hence even the law indicated that the faith of the heart is the sole resource of the Jew when all was ruined—the sole means of drawing near to God at any time, for man is a sinner And to this agree the words of the prophets; Isaiah, on the one hand, declaring that none who believed on Him should be ashamed, and Joel, on the other, affirming that every one whatsoever that should call on His name should be saved. Negatively and positively, then, it was manifest from the law and the prophets, not to speak of the gospel, that in this respect there is no difference between Jew and Greek: if there is none as to their sin, neither is there in the Lord's grace, For the same Lord of all is rich toward all that call upon Him.

Ver. 14-21. Here the apostle, pursuing the thread of the same passage of Joel (ii. 32), justifies his own ministry, and what God was doing thereby among the Gentiles. The word of faith was preached to them. God, by means of preaching, is making them acquainted with the name of the Lord, who must be called on in order that they should be saved. “How then shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that announce glad tidings of peace, of them that announce glad tidings of good things!”

Evangelization characterizes the action of God in Christianity. It is a part of His scheme of grace, the activity of His love in seeking as well as saving the lost, be they who and where they may. Evangelization, I say, and not the Church; for the confusion of the two ideas is, at bottom, popery. Ministry is the action of God in the world, and is characteristic of Christianity (as priesthood on earth was of Judaism); it is a testimony of goodness and grace, addressed from God to man. It is the Lord who sends, the Lord who teaches by His servants. The Church does not teach, but is taught. Teaching is a care which the Lord confides to special members of His body, for the good of all.

This announcement of glad tidings was clearly not the law: for this was a report of what the Lord had done—a report to be believed by man, not works to be done by him Their own prophet, Isaiah, spoke of it as a future blessing; why, then, should the Jews be so incredulous? But even this incredulity was only an accomplishment of the same prophet's words, and that too the incredulity of Israel. “They have not all obeyed the glad tidings, for Esaias says, Lord, who has believed our report? So then faith is by a report, and the report by the word of God. But I say, have they not heard? Yea, verily, their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the bounds of the world.” Israel is thereby shown to be inexcusable. Not only had they heard, but all the habitable world—Gentiles as well as Jews—had had the testimony of God's Son published to them. Thus

Psa. 19 from which he quotes, is a witness of the universality of God's message. It was not like the law given to a particular people, but like the light of the sun, "whose going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit to the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." But this seems rather to be hinted than plainly brought out. The next verses (19-21) are express. "But I say, has not Israel known? First, Moses says, I will provoke you to jealousy through that which is no nation, and through a senseless nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and says, I was found by those who sought me not; I was made manifest to those who asked not after me. But to Israel he says, All the day long I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people," That is, Israel should have known that God would receive the Gentiles. Moses was the first to say so, and Isaiah declares it with great boldness. Isaiah had predicted outright that the Gentiles were to find God, and what was still more, that Israel would oppose and be rebellious against God. It was indeed no other than the Lord Jesus had intimated in the parable of the king and his servants, (Matt. 18) no other than the Holy Ghost develops in word and deed throughout the history in the Acts. And there it was in their own prophet 700 years before.

## Thoughts on Romans 11

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The subject of the chapter is this—God has not rejected His people. The apostle gives three proofs that Israel is not finally rejected of God. 1. There is, as in the time of Elijah, a remnant. The rejection which affects Israel does not strike in an absolute way the totality of the people. (ver. 1-10.) 2. This rejection is not definitive. God, in putting His people aside for a time, calls the Gentiles to provoke His people to jealousy. Israel is not therefore cast off, if there remains for them the opportunity of returning to God, even in a case of being animated by a feeling of jealousy towards the Gentiles. The call of the Gentiles should arouse Israel, instead of being a proof that God had done with them. (ver. 11-24) 3. The time will come when all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. (ver. 25-32.) The chapter, with the exception of the last four verses of doxology, is summed up in these three points. There are details to consider, above all in that which concerns the olive tree of the promises mentioned in this subject, and on which we may gather up the following remarks; -The olive-tree represents the line of promise and testimony, (“by nature” Israel, the posterity of promise which issued from Abraham) That is shown by the fact that the Jews, as well those who abide as those who were cut off for their unbelief, are its “natural branches,” and that it is added that when the Jews shall cease to be disobedient, they shall be anew grafted into “their own olive-tree.” Israel, according to nature, is Israel viewed as a nation descended from Abraham, the posterity issued from him according to the flesh. That point offers no difficulty. Thus, to take Israel at the root, it must be taken in Abraham, for before him it was not a question of Israel. It was in the person of the patriarch that this nation commenced. The root of the promises, then, is Abraham; and the fatness, namely the sap which springs from the root and which circulates in the tree, answers consequently to the promises which God deposited as it were in Abraham. Thus viewed, he is the personification of the three principles—election, calling, and promise.

The olive-tree is upon the earth. God who has once planted it, neither cuts nor roots it up; He could not annul His promises. According as He finds it good, He removes some branches. He graft's in others in their place; but as to the olive-tree, He leaves it -yea mix He maintains it.

It came to pass that at a certain moment God considered the state of this tree, and decided to remove from it the dry branches, i.e., the unbelieving Jews, and to graft in their stead the believing Gentiles. This operation has changed for a time the aspect of the olive-tree, without causing nevertheless that the tree should cease to be the same stock. In this respect it is with the olive-tree as with a bank, whose firm changes in the course of years whilst the capital abides the same. The persons who have their fortune there deliver drafts upon this bank; and though, in course of time, their drafts may have borne different addresses, the fact is, notwithstanding, that the clerks have always been at the same bank to cash them.

The place which the Jews and the Gentiles occupy on the olive-tree has not been given to the one and the other in virtue of the same principle. The first, as being the Israelitish race, Abraham's posterity, are found there by birth; they are there according to nature; this tree is their own

olive-tree. But the Gentiles, grafted on this tree by the blessing of the gospel, enter in by virtue of a new principle, that of faith. An example of it is seen in Cornelius. With regard to this, it may also be remarked that Christianity, as grafted upon the olive-tree of the promises, succeeds Judaism. The national Churches, such as established Protestantism, Popery, and the Greek Church, are right as to this. But it must be added that Christianity, after having been set up by God, has been over-run, later on, by the number of professors, and is become Christendom such as is seen at this day. The doom of this grafting in of the Gentiles, and therefore, the doom of the professing masses, is found thus decided; for the Gentiles, in receiving a place on the olive-tree, were put under this condition; "toward thee, goodness, [i. e. of God,] if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

If it be asked whether the olive-tree is not the Church, the answer is, No. The Church is the creation of one new man, (Eph. 2,) the formation of one new body, which, far from succeeding to Abraham and to Israel here below, has only its existence for heaven. The olive-tree leaves the Jews and the Gentiles distinct, (Rom. 11) whilst the Church takes out of the one and the other, and unites them in one single body. ( Eph. 2) It may well be that the individuals composing the Church, united to Christ in heaven, are also branches of the olive-tree on the earth—that they have these two relations, but the olive-tree never could be the Church. How should the Jews, at the time of the Savior, Caiaphas, Pharisees, &c., be of the Church? Finally, in the consideration of what is to come, remark once more that if a portion of Israel has been cut off the olive-tree, this chastisement will have an end. The moment will come when the Jews, returned from their unbelief; shall be grafted in again. Then Israel, as a people, shall be reinstated in the blessing of the promises: "the Deliverer shall come to Sion, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." This return of Israel to God is the subject of the close of the chapter. The whole is a blessed picture of the faithfulness of God and His ways towards Israel. Originally the tree was Jewish, it is now Gentile, but finally it will be Jewish again.

Ver. 1-10. Far be the thought, then, that God had cast away His people, Israel. For, as the apostle urges, himself also was one of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. It was a pledge of more, and a proof that God had not cast away His people as a whole, not about the elect remnant, but that remnant showed that God did not finally discard Israel. This leads the apostle to refer to the case of Elijah. "Know you not what the scripture says in [the history of] Elias? How he pleads to God against Israel, saying," &c. But what says the divine answer to him? "I have left to myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." Thus, then, at the present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace; "And if by grace, no longer of works, since [if it were,] grace is no more grace." That is, the apostle illustrates the remnant in his day by a reference to Elijah's day when he, the most energetic of faithful men in Israel, did not know of one but himself that owned Jehovah. But it was want of faith. God knew 7000, whose existence proved God's love and faithful care. If Elijah pleaded against Israel, it only drew out God for them, and the disclosure of a complete though hidden remnant, whom the prophet had failed to discern. There was a remnant still in the apostle's day. God showed thereby that He had not done with Israel. But if sovereign grace thus dwelt with an election from Israel, the mass were but lying under the tremendous maledictions which he next proceeds to quote from their own prophets. (7-10.) The remnant were blessed, the rest were blinded, just as Moses, David, and Isaiah, had predicted. They might talk of their works, but they had eyes not to see and ears not to hear until this day.

Their own scriptures were clear enough that it should be so—clear as to a little godly remnant—clear as to an ensnared and hardened mass in Israel.

Ver. 11-24. Had Israel then stumbled that they might fall? Far be the thought; but by their slip, salvation [is come] to the Gentiles to provoke them to jealousy. God had merciful thoughts in store for Israel. He judged their sin, took advantage of it to call the Gentiles, but this not as if He had abandoned the Jews forever as His people, but rather to stir them up to holy emulation. Israel had slipped, not finally fallen. And if their slip [be] the world's wealth, and their loss the Gentiles' wealth, how much more their fullness? He is speaking to the Gentiles, but it is about Israel, whose temporary slip gave occasion to the revelation of God's grace to Gentiles, and whose future restoration in full would be life from the dead to the world. If their disgrace brought blessing to the Gentile, what would not be the fruit of their honor when grace gives it to them?

It will be observed that Paul is here tracing the question of responsibility on earth, and reconciling it with the sure and triumphant faithfulness of God at the end. The subject is neither the salvation of the soul, nor the peculiar calling of the Church, the body of Christ. It is the line of promise here below, and God's wise and holy ways as to it on a large scale. It need hardly be said that he is not proving that God was saving Israelites individually, for that needed no proof; but as he had used the fact of a Jewish elect remnant to show that God had not wholly cast off Israel, but ever hung over them, as an earnest of future mercy to them as a nation, so he interprets the call of the Gentiles as done meanwhile to provoke Israel to jealousy, not to give them up altogether.

It is astonishing how persons who believe in the eternal life of the believer can apply the olive-tree, of which we next hear (ver. 16-24), to salvation or the Church. If it did bear such a meaning, it would follow that branches, not of the wild olive, but natural branches—in that case meaning members of Christ—could be broken off. Take these branches as the Jews, the natural heirs of the promise to Abraham, and all is plain. They have been broken off in part. They trusted to their works and their own goodness; they have slipped from their place as God's witnesses. The Gentiles meanwhile enjoy the light and testimony of God. They have replaced the incredulous Jews in this respect. They are grafted into the olive-tree.

The unbelieving Jews were in the olive-tree: who will say that they were ever in the Church? Till the death of Christ, Israel, as a whole, composed the olive tree. By nature the Jews were branches in this, the old stock of promise from Abraham. downwards. They were born the natural heirs. All this disappears in the Church, where there is neither Jew nor Gentile: everything there is above nature, and the Jew is no more than a Gentile in that new man, where of twain God makes one. And as Israel nationally never did form the Church or body of Christ, so it never will; whereas all Israel shall be saved and be grafted once more into their own olive-tree. These considerations suffice to show that the Church and the olive-tree are two very different things.

But if the Gentile, wild olive as he was, was grafted into the tree of earthly testimony, let him not boast over the branches: the Gentile does not bear the root, but the root him. And let him remember that through unbelief they were broken off, and that the Gentile, having no natural right, stands by faith. If God spared not the natural branches, it might be He will not spare the Gentile! Nay, it is certain that, if the Gentile abide not in goodness, excision will be his lot, as it was of the Jewish branches who had been unfaithful before him. And God, who cut out the Gentile from the naturally wild olive and grafted him, contrary to nature, into the good olive, how much more will He

graft the branches that are according to nature into their own olive? Israel, then, was not cast off.

Ver. 25-32. But there is another reason more express: blindness in part is happened to Israel, but this is until the fullness of the Gentiles shall have come in; and so all Israel, instead of being rejected, shall be saved. It is the future national restoration and salvation of Israel. They shall be restored to their own olive, to their place in the line of God's testimony and promises on earth: for heavenly hopes do not enter into view here. Instead of being cast off, Israel, as such, are destined to enjoy all that was promised them. The Deliverer shall come out of Sion; and God will take away their sins. Plainly it is the Jews, the literal Jews, who are here meant; for they are distinguished from, and contrasted with, the Gentiles all through the chapter from verse 11, and very clearly in this verse 26. "The fullness of the Gentiles" means the complete number of such Gentiles as believe—all the Gentiles who share in the blessing during Israel's practical obduracy. Israel are enemies on account of the Gentiles now as regards the gospel, but as regards election, beloved on account of the fathers. This is in no wise applicable to what people call the spiritual Israel, for they are friends as regards the gospel, and beloved of God the Father, not on account of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Understand Israel after the flesh, and all is simple: they have made good their enmity as regards the Gospel, and God will not fail to prove in due time that they are beloved on the fathers' account. For the gifts and calling of God are not subject to repentance: they are indefeasible. The election mentioned in verse 28 is that of the beloved people Israel. It must not be confounded with the election according to grace, whereby, in the interval of Israel's rejection, the called Jews and Gentiles are taken for heaven. The first is a national election, the second an individual election, which sets us in far superior blessing, since its object and result are to introduce us into heaven. In fact, the believing Jews, who abode on the olive-tree, share in these two elections.

How strange that Christians who enjoy and maintain the faithfulness of God as to their own souls, should deny it as to Israel, spite of His call and promises to them. But He will never repent. He is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent. He created, and when His work became corrupt, He destroyed. (Gen. 6 vii.) But if He calls, He never casts off: His counsel is irrevocable. He is sovereign in Rom. 9 He is faithful in Rom. 11 "For as the Gentiles at one time believed not in God, but have now had mercy shown them through their (Israel's) unbelief, so Israel have now not believed in the Gentiles' mercy, in order that they also may have mercy shown them. For God has shut up all together in unbelief in order that He might show mercy to all." Israel shall be reinstated in the blessing of the promises by the same road that the Gentiles have followed to enter into the blessing of the gospel—namely the mercy of God. Through rejecting Christ they lost their title to the promises, and they sealed that loss by opposing and denying the mercy of God which passed on to the Gentiles who received the Christ in heaven, whom the Jews rejected on earth. Thus Israel is stripped of title and stands the object of pure mercy just as much as a Gentile. And thus God will save Israel at the end, not on the ground of their claim but of His mercy.

Ver. 33-36. "O depth of riches, both of God's wisdom and knowledge! how unsearchable his judgments and untraceable his ways! For who has known the Lord's mind? or who has become his counselor? or who has first given to him and it shall be rendered to him? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to him be glory forever. Amen."

## Thoughts on Romans 12-13

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Chap. 12. 1. The Apostle now comes to the moral consequences of his doctrine. The compassions of God, manifested in the acts of His grace toward us, and developed in the doctrine of this epistle, are the motive given to the Christian to urge him to obedience and personal devotedness to God. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the compassions of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God—your intelligent service." The devotedness of the Christian is an offering which he renders to God of his life and all his movements. Therefore is it that the Christian life is here called "worship" or divine "service." The compassions of God are contrasted with the law, a living sacrifice with the sacrifices of dead beasts, and an intelligent service or worship with a ceremonial service which the hands or the body could accomplish. In no way should the Christian be a Jew.

Ver. 2. Nevertheless, he is not to be a Gentile either. If, on the one hand, he is to be outside the system of religious ceremonies, he is, on the other hand, to be also outside the world. "And be not conformed to this world, (or age), but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what [is] the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Renewed in understanding, he has no more his relationship with the present age, but with the will of God. Under the law, one had, between ceremonies and the world, nothing but the flesh. It is remarkable that in exhorting to intelligent service, the apostle beseeches Christians to present their bodies as a sacrifice to God, and in warning against conformity to this world, he desires not a mere outward separation, but one that answers to the renewing of his mind, and this in order to discerning the will of God. It does not happen habitually that one knows His will all at once. We are exercised by God in order to know it; and in this exercise, formed by Him, we learn that His will is good, acceptable, and perfect. These two first verses furnish the general character of the Christian life, the principles of conduct that apply to every Christian, and to all his walk here below. They are summed up in devotedness and obedience.

Ver. 3-8. "For I say, through the grace that has been given to me, to every one that is among you, not to have high thoughts, above what he should think; but to think so as to be sober-minded, as God has dealt to each a measure of faith. For just as in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office; so we the many are one body in Christ, and severally members of each other. But having gifts different according to the grace given to us, whether prophecy, [let us prophesy] according to the proportion of faith; or service, [let us occupy ourselves] in service; or he that teacheth, in teaching; or he that exhorteth, in exhortation: he that giveth, in simplicity; he that leadeth, with earnestness; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness." Here the apostle looks at the Christian life in a narrower circle. To trace in all points the service of the gospel, he now looks at the body of Christ—this body in which each has to display conduct and activity which harmonizes with the place he occupies in it. It is the only passage in the epistle where mention is made of the body, the Church, and that in reference to the duties of the members as individuals. The general subject is—man in his individual responsibility before God. But since there is one body, the service of the members should be in the common interest. We

cannot have an isolated action, as if we had a tie with none on earth. And in the general interest, the first thing recommended to our attention is sobriety, which teaches one to abide in the measure of that which he has received, not to put one-self forward, &c. Each is exhorted to modest thoughts of himself and his gift, and therefore to confine himself to the kind and the measure of the gift bestowed by God. A humble, faithful use of whatever gift has been given is the object of the apostle's injunction. The gifts found in the members of the body are different, and that again makes the saints mutually dependent, for all the gifts are not in one individual nor for one. Thus, a certain need before our eyes demands perhaps a service for which we are not qualified. What then? We are compelled, if walking in humility and faith, to wait till the Lord sends the ministry which answers to it.

Ver. 9-21. After having spoken of the particular service of the members, which are joints in the body of Christ, the apostle almost imperceptibly slides into the conduct of the saints in things which belong to the general state of the body. He gives directions and precepts which concern the good collective state, the well-being of the body. He recommends also the sentiments which suit this state. "Let love be unfeigned: abhor evil; cleave to good. In brotherly love, be affectionate towards each other; in honor, setting the lead to each other; in business, not slothful; in spirit, fervent; serving the Lord; in hope, rejoicing; in tribulation, enduring; in prayer, persevering; relieving the necessities of the saints; pursuing hospitality. Bless those that persecute you; bless and curse not. Rejoice with those that rejoice, and weep with those that weep. Have the same mind towards each other, not minding high things, but consorting with the lowly; be not wise in your own conceit. Repay to none evil for evil. Take forethought of things honorable in the sight of all men. If possible, as far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men; avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place to wrath; for it is written, Vengeance [is] mine; I will requite, saith the Lord. If, therefore, thine enemy should hunger, feed him; if thirsty, give him drink; for, doing this, thou will heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." In verse 19 the wrath of man is meant, and the saint is told to yield, letting it alone and not avenging himself. Vengeance belongs to God. The words in the next verse are a citation of Prov. 25:21, 22. The sense of the Hebrew word rendered "heap," and in other versions "to take, or withdraw," &c., is literally to "take coals from the hearth to gather them." The meaning of these two verses amounts to this: leave thine enemy to the vengeance of God, let God do it. The exhortation to patience under wrongs naturally introduces the relations of the Christian to the authorities of the world.

Chap. xiii. The preceding chapter has given instructions which have to do with the conduct of the saints as making part of one and the same body. It has shown what the Christian owes to the internal prosperity of the assembly of the faithful. The chapter we are entering on is occupied with their relations with the outside.

The first thing recommended is submission, on the part of the Christian, to "the powers that be." The principle of the Christian's submission to the power is, that, in submitting to it, he is subject to God who has ordained it. "Let every soul be subject to the authorities that are above [it]; for there is no authority except from God, and those that be are ordained by God. So he that sets himself against the authority, withstands the ordinance of God, and they that withstand will get judgment for themselves. For the rulers are not a terror for the good work, but for the evil. And dost thou desire not to be afraid of the authority? Do what is good, and thou shalt have praise from it; for God's servant it is to thee for good. But if thou shouldst do what is evil, fear; for it bears not the

sword in vain: for God's servant it is, an avenger for wrath to him that practices evil. Wherefore it is needful to be subject, not only on account of wrath, but also on account of conscience. For on this account pay tribute also; for they are God's officers ever attending on this very thing. Render to all their dues; tribute to him [that claims] tribute, custom to him [that claims] custom, fear to him [that claims] fear, honor to him [that claims] honor.”

By the designation, “the powers that be,” we must understand not merely force but authority. Now from the moment that power is there, it is enough to command our subjection, for the power that exists is of God. We have nothing else to do; we have not to occupy ourselves with judging it in what it is or in what it does. Our duty is to be subject. There can be no power save from God, for otherwise there would be several sources of power.

But how then render account of Satan's success in the things of this world? The adversary, though power does not proceed from him, suggests to the established powers different motives, so that they may act in the way that he desires. But this again is not our affair we have not to occupy ourselves with it. The authorities are set up by God. Such is the principle which decides our obedience, and which teaches us to submit not through fear of the consequences, but for conscience' sake. When it is a question of fidelity to Christ, we must obey Him; but in no case should we resist the authority: obedience to it is absolute, unless it involves positive unfaithfulness to Christ.

Indeed, the Christian should owe no person any debt, but discharge to every man, according to the position he is in, whatever is due to him in virtue of that position. Owe nothing to the creditor, to the magistrate, to anybody. Pay to the creditor his account, to the magistrate his honor, to each that which is his due. “Owe no one anything, except the love of each other, for he that loves another has fulfilled [the] law.” Love is a debt of which we are never quit. But, besides the love which works no evil to one's neighbor, and therefore is the sum and substance of the law, there is another principle which encourages the Christian to be faithful. “It is already high time for us to be aroused out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, and the day is at hand, as in daylight, let us walk becomingly; not with revels and drunkenness, not with chambering and wantonness, not with strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and take no forethought of the flesh with a view to lusts.”

## Thoughts on Romans 14-15

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This chapter, 14., teaches in what spirit we ought to behave towards the scrupulous or “the weak,” i.e., towards such as are still under the influence of Jewish elements. The same subject continues to the 7th verse of chap. 15.—the obligation, the grounds, the sphere, and the end of Christian forbearance.

Various principles ought to govern the sentiments and conduct with regard to the weak. It was hard for the Christian, who had been a Jew, to renounce his old and divinely-established differences of clean and unclean, of days holy and days common. The converted Gentile had, or ought to have had, no difficulty whatever; for what respect could he have longer for the particular parts of a system which, as a whole, he had rejected as false and idolatrous? But these very diversities of their circumstances exposed the Christians, who comprised both, to danger from disputes as to these questions of conscience about outward things. For it must be carefully borne in mind, that what the Holy Ghost lays down does not refer to matters of moral good or evil, not to doctrine or revelation, but to questions which grew out of the relics of Jewish feeling. In other words, “the weak” brother was one who loved Christ, and who hated sin, not less really than” the strong.” The weak were not lax, but the contrary: they were extremely and painfully scrupulous, hence their anxiety as to eating meat or keeping a day. It was a remnant of legalism from which they had not been set free, from feebleness in apprehending the place into which we are brought through and in Christ risen from the dead.

Now it is well to remember that human nature always tends to one or other of the perils which threatened the saints at Rome. Liberty, if not exercised immediately in Christ's service, is apt to slip into a lack of conscience: sense of responsibility, if not maintained with full and unclouded rest in God's grace, soon degenerates into a burdened and groaning scrupulosity. The Christian is in principle delivered from both these snares: he is dead with Christ, and so ordinances of “touch not, taste not, handle not” no longer apply. They are meant for those who are living in the world; whereas, he is dead with Christ and risen with Him, no longer to be occupied with such earthly restrictions, but free to set the mind upon things above, where Christ sitteth at God's right hand. Such is the position of the Christian for himself; but then for his brethren, there is the love that bears with and respects the conscience that is tried by the very things in which he realizes his liberty. Love bends to feebleness of faith, never to latitudinarianism; love does not put a cause of tripping or stumbling before one's brother.

The apostle, then, exhorts that the weak in the faith (i.e., as to the ancient ceremonial precepts) should be received, but not to the discussion of questions. The Christian should know his superiority to such a point as eating herbs, but if he had doubts about it from Levitical associations, &c., he was not to be disdained, nor should he judge another who knew no scruples of the sort. It is remarkable that the stress is laid, in verse 4, on not judging. It is the weak who are liable to judge the strong, the strong in danger of making little of the weak. Who art thou that art judging another's servant? he belongs to the Lord, not to us; and what he does, he does to the Lord, giving

thanks to God. Living or dying, we are the Lord's—the expression of entire consecration to God in the Christian life. Founded then upon this truth of Christ's universal lordship over His own, (“for for this end Christ both died and lived, that he might rule over both dead and living,”) the apostle urges once more with increased force, not upon the ground of our service, but of His Lordship. “But thou, why dost thou judge thy brother?” Or, again, why dost thou make nothing of thy brother? for we shall be presented before the judgment seat of Christ... each of us shall render account concerning himself to God. Christ has the authority to judge, we have not: why should we judge our brethren?

Besides, charity demands that we should respect our brother. The more right a man is, the more he can afford to be gracious. “Let not then your good be evil spoken of; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.” We have been called to liberty, but true liberty proceeds by love. It is very touching to serve the Lord even in these details. We shall appear, too, before His judgment-seat, not to be judged, but to render account to God—a striking proof of the deity of the Lord Jesus. We are already accepted, so that the righteousness of God will by no means put us again on our trial; and if it is a question of us on this point in any way, it will be to show that we are “the righteousness of God in Christ.” But in this circumstance what a discovery shall we not make of the tenderness of Christ, and what will not be our admiration, when we shall know all the watchful care wherewith the faithful Savior has surrounded our weakness, during the passage through the desert! Seen in this light, this moment presents something delicious to the mind.

Practically, peace and edification are to be the great aim in all these debatable points. If thou hast faith, instead of doubts, so much the better, but have it to thyself before God. Blessed is he who does not judge himself in what he allows, (or approves,) but he who doubts is condemned if he eat, because it is not from faith; but whatsoever is not from faith is sin: that is, whatever is not done in liberty of faith.

Chap. xv. 1-7. “But we who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves.” If we are really better off than our brethren, how are we to show it? As Christ, we are to act in love and in this spirit of candor which finds pleasure in the society of the humble. How well Paul could speak of it, who, with a ministry so elevated as his knew how to bend down to the level of all, even of the least. Further, the Christian represents God so that if any one outrages God, the Christian receives the outrage. What a marvelous position this passage puts us in! “As many things as were written before, were written for our instruction, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have our hope.” But it is in God that these graces are found which are communicated to us by the scriptures. God is in Himself the God of patience and of comfort. Patience is for the strong; the weak have hardly any; patience is in the number of the qualities which characterize the apostleship. Christ received us, not because we were wise, enlightened, &c., but by an effect of His grace to the glory of God. So should we receive brethren in a like spirit.

## Thoughts on Romans 15-16

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From verse 8 of chapter 15. to the end of the chapter, Paul resumes the great principles of the epistle and his personal circumstances; then in the concluding chapter, affectionate salutations to the Christians at Rome, whom he knew. It is a sort of peroration. Ver. 8, 9 present to us the two sides of the mission of Christ, the ways of God towards the Jew and the Gentile, accomplished in His advent. "Jesus Christ became a minister of circumcision for the truth of God, in order to confirm the promises of the fathers, and that the Gentiles should glorify God for mercy." That explains the conduct of the Lord in the gospels. While the mercy shown to the Gentiles might seem inferior to the promises of the Jews, it is at bottom more excellent still; for this mercy is pure grace, the exercise of the free and sovereign grace of God. The Gentiles had no promises made to them; so that, as far as they were concerned, it was not a question of truth but of grace, if God were pleased, as He was, to abound in mercy towards them by Jesus. To prove that this grace to the Gentiles was in the mind of God, the apostle quotes from the Psalms, the law, and the prophets. (9-12.) How decisive to a godly Jew, who might hesitate before the special promises to the fathers! Without disparagement to—nay, fulfilling, or ready to fulfill, all which God had guaranteed of old, Jesus was the vessel of deeper counsels of mercy; and for these the very law itself made room, though it did not reveal them. But therein was their justification when they were revealed.

In ver. 13 the apostle turns to the saints at Rome, the then center or metropolis of the Gentile world, warmly expressing his desires and prayers on their behalf, as well as (ver. 14) his confidence in them through grace. In ver. 15, 16, he speaks with the authority he possessed in virtue of his apostleship, his peculiarly Gentile mission. In an extraordinary sense he was a minister (λαϊτοργός) of Jesus Christ to the nations or Gentiles. He had a public function in respect of them to discharge, carrying on as a holy rite the glad tidings of God, in order that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. This was not the result of confidence from a ministry exercised in their midst—a special tie which Scripture recognizes; but here the case was different, for Paul had never seen the Roman saints generally. Nevertheless, he speaks figuratively of presenting the nations (i.e., such Gentiles as received Christ) to God, as the priests offered the Levites in Num. 8 It was no longer external birth-holiness, as in Israel, but real separation to God in the power of the Holy Ghost. From Jerusalem, and in circuit as far as Illyricum, Paul had fully set forth the glad tidings of the Christ, and this where He had not been named (18-21.) God had taken care to show that there were saints at Rome before any apostle had arrived there; (23, 24;) and it may be remarked also that his project, as his visit to them, was not realized in the way he had intended or expected. He came as a prisoner to Rome, and whether he visited Spain we know not.

Chap. 16. Paul terminates the epistle by sending to the Roman saints cordial and numerous salutations. (1-16.) It is interesting to see, by this example, the affection which reigns in the relationship of the saints. It is beautiful above all to see Paul, so elevated by the mysteries in which God had initiated him, condescending so far as to put himself on a level with the very least. How

touching, too, it is to hear him recall the things which clothed each with honor! "Priscilla and Aquila, my work-fellows in Christ Jesus, who, in behalf of my life, staked their own neck." "Epenetus, my beloved, who is the first-fruits of Asia for Christ." &c. &c. Alas! there were those who created divisions and stumblingblocks. Such were to be avoided. (17, 18.) Then in ver. 19 we have a precious rule and useful to follow in the midst of the evil which surrounds us. "I wish you to be wise as to (or for) that which is good, and simple as to evil." If the man of the world would escape evil, he has need to know it; whilst the Christian walks directly in good, following the pathway God has marked out for him. If he walks with wisdom, following what is good, he has no need to know the evil. But if he knows not the good way he is embarrassed: he is forced to try several routes. A complete deliverance is at hand. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

The last verses are important, for this amongst other reasons, because they insist on the inspiration and authenticity of the New Testament. The meaning of the phrase in ver. 26 is, "by prophetic writings" or "scriptures," and not "by the scriptures of the prophets." The epistles addressed to the Gentiles, like that to the Romans, had this character.

The epistle we have been studying lays down the foundations of our relations with God in a manner equally clear and powerful. There is this difference between it and the Epistle to the Ephesians, that the latter begins with the counsels of God, and consequently gives all the extent of God's grace in its own perfection, whether as regards the individual or the Church; whilst in our epistle the apostle begins with the sin of man, and therefore addresses himself more to the conscience, develops individual justification, and shows how the believer is set free from sin, and what are the character and the bearing of the freedom he enjoys.

Here is the order of the teachings of the epistle to the Romans After the introduction, which shows the glad tidings of grace, the apostle lays bare the sins of the Gentiles and of the Jews, the sin of every man, of the moralists, as well as of men of pleasure; of those who enjoyed a revelation, no less than of the slaves of idolatry. All are shut up under sin. At the end of this demonstration of the sinful state of all men, he presents the sole and sovereign remedy, the blood of Christ, making this difference as to its application, that the patience of God, in view of the efficacy of the death of Jesus, had borne with the sins of the believers who lived before the work of atonement, whilst now the perfect righteousness of God is revealed. The death of Jesus proved the righteousness of God in the longsuffering He had shown in respect of the sins of the faithful in past times, but this divine righteousness formed now the ground on which the believer found himself set before God. What the apostle had already said closed the mouth of the Jew, in respect of his pretensions as the depository of the law. God would have realities and righteousness, not pretensions founded on the advantages by which they had not profited. But besides the law, there was both Abraham and David, on whom the Jews rested. Now these men bore the same testimony: man is justified by faith and finds his happiness in pardon. But this appeal to Abraham introduces a principle of great importance, namely, the introduction of man into a totally new scene by the resurrection, a scene where sin exists no longer, where man is justified, not only as pardoned, but as agreeable to God in this new state. Abraham had been blessed by his faith in this truth as a principle: he counted on the power and the faithfulness of God to accomplish what was a resurrection. We believe that God has accomplished this act of power in Jesus delivered for our offenses, and risen for our justification. Thus our justification is founded on resurrection, as well as on death; and this connects justification and life. We have the position of the second Adam, of Christ in

righteousness, as we had the position of the first Adam. Now, if the law has had the effect of giving the character of multiplied transgressions to all the sins of the Jews, and if these have thus added something more to the difficulty of the work of reconciliation, it is not less evident that the principle on which man is justified, applies to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. Human justice is shut out, because it is by the obedience of One alone that we are made righteous; but a holy life where sin is not found is brought in by our participation in the life of Christ risen.

This doctrine of resurrection is applied to justification in chap. v., to the new life in chap. vi., to deliverance from the law in chap. vii., which gives us at the same time the experience of the renewed soul under the law. Lastly, chap. viii. presents to us the state of the Christian, the liberty founded on the work of Christ, the liberty which one enjoys in sharing His life; and this deliverance is pursued up to its final application to the body. Then it shows us the Spirit Himself as the power of our joy and the consoler of our hearts, during our sojourn in this body, which binds us to the fallen creation. The apostle closes this part of his instructions, and the fundamental doctrine of the epistle, by showing that God ensures to us the enjoyment of the heavenly blessing by His own power, which guarantees the accomplishment of His counsels, so that nothing shall separate us from His love.

There remained one question to clear. The apostle had just shown that the Jew, viewed as set under the law, had nothing to say in his own justification. The law even condemned him. But what is to be said of the promises? God had given promises without condition. This point is treated in chapters ix. x. xi. In chap. ix. it is shown that, Ishmael and Esau having been put aside though they were children of Abraham, and the Jews under Sinai having been spared purely by sovereign compassion of God, the Jews were forced to own God's sovereignty. Now God exercised this sovereignty in favor of the Gentiles, which the prophets, besides, had clearly announced. In chap. x. Paul shows that the Jews, just as the same prophets had predicted, had stumbled against the stumblingstone, and had not submitted to the righteousness of God. Ought one to conclude that they were finally rejected as a people? Not at all: so chap. xi. shows, by presenting these considerations. 1. There was then a remnant. 2. The object of the admission of the Gentiles was to provoke the Jews to jealousy. 3. Finally, the Redeemer should come to Zion.

In chap. xii. the apostle resumes the thread of his general instructions, by bringing out the conduct, which in all respects suited those who were the objects of so great mercy; and in particular he draws clearly out the principles on which the new relations of the Jews and the Gentiles could be founded and maintained. The teaching on this last point gives room for some directions touching on the unity of the body, and forming the sole passage where the church is introduced. The apostle closes with communications relative to his projected voyage to Jerusalem and Rome; he foresaw in part the dangers which awaited him He adds numerous salutations to the Christians at Rome, whom he knew individually, though he had never founded the church at Rome, nor visited this city itself.

## In What Way Is the Believer Now Sealed With the Holy Spirit of Promise?

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Q. Eph. 1:13. In what way is the believer now sealed with the holy spirit of promise? There was a manifested presence of the Holy Ghost in the early Christians. “received ye the spirit by the works of the law?” to what extent may we apply such confident assertions as, “ye have an unction from the holy one and ye know all things?” (1 John 2:20; see all ver. 27 of the same chapter.) Can this be said of believers now? R. B. A. It is extremely important not to carry any passage as doctrine beyond what is stated in it. The question with the Galatians was how they had received the Holy Ghost was it in connection with works or with faith? How they knew they had received him is not touched upon. I have no doubt that his presence there was manifested in such a way as enabled the apostle to appeal to it as a known thing. Nor is it necessarily the personal experience each one had of it in his soul that was the means of his knowing it was there, though that knowledge could not be separated from its presence in the man. “but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you.” but he does abide and dwell with us, and forever—does not leave the church as Jesus did his disciples. The manner of his displaying his presence is another thing. This may be outwardly sensible or inwardly known. If outwardly sensible, it can be appealed to; if inwardly known, the person who has it can be appealed to as to his knowledge of it. And so can any body of Christians who own his presence in the degree in which that presence is felt, as it often is very really

But the Holy Ghost once given does not leave the Church again. This is certain from the Lord's words. The manifestation of the Spirit, of which the Scripture also speaks, is another thing. It may be by gifts which are only for edification, flowing from the head. The first may fall as ornaments put on the body; but in principle, the latter forms an essential part of the work of God in Christ. God was in Christ committing the ministry of reconciliation. He called His own servants, and gave them money to trade with; and then return and takes account. Men are to hear, and they cannot hear without a preacher. Now this is a gift. He gave evangelists. But the presence of the Holy Ghost is shown in another way, more important even than this. A man might be even partaker of the Holy Ghost as power, and be lost, but not one sealed, or bearing fruit: that accompanies salvation. This (not presence, but) special character of the presence and work of the Holy Ghost in the believer personally is twofold. There is liberty, joy, and love shed abroad in the heart, the crying Abba Father on the one hand, and the producing fruits on the other. This is not the public display of His presence in outward signs of power, but is connected with divine life. The fruits of the Spirit are such and such. “God is not faithful to forget your work and labor of love.” This accompanied salvation. Hence what is ascribed to the Holy Ghost in Ephesians is considered as life in the Colossians. And in the eighth of Romans, the Spirit is first named as the source of life, and identified with it, and with Christ too, and then looked at as personally apart, bearing witness with our Spirit. So He who searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the  $\phi\rho\nu\eta\mu\alpha$ , the moral mind in us of the Spirit; for He maketh intercession for us, and it is said to be according to God. So he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit. Fruits then, in life on the one hand, and the conscious joyous liberty

of children with God in love on the other hand, and the work and presence of the Spirit of God—one giving us the consciousness of His presence within, and of our relationship with God in Christ, the other the proof to others of the reality of what we profess to enjoy, to the consciousness of the union of the body—the knowledge that Jesus in the Father, we in Him, and He in us.

All depend on the presence of the Holy Ghost, which we thus consciously possess. The presence of the Holy Ghost is a revealed fact, and it was to abide forever. The presence of the Holy Ghost must not be confounded with the manifestation of the Spirit. The manifestations, or their absence, depend on the wise and holy government of God in the Church. The presence of the Holy Ghost is certain by the Lord's word. Men may have grieved Him, so that He does not manifest His presence as He would—that depends on the government of God. He distributes as He will; but His Presence depends on Christ's being in heaven, and is the witness of it, and of divine righteousness therein, and cannot cease as long as that is to be made good for faith (that is, as long as Christ sits at God's right hand) The Holy Ghost came on the day of Pentecost, and that day the saints were baptized, and the Church formed into one. This remains till He goes. For individual believers, who have submitted to the righteousness of God in Christ, who have believed, this presence of the Holy Ghost becomes an unction, a seal, and an earnest. "He that stablisheth us together with you in Christ, and also hath sealed us, and put the earnest of His Spirit in your hearts." "In whom, after ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of your inheritance till the redemption of the purchased possession."

Hence, I judge, that the presence of the Spirit is an essential scriptural truth, a matter of faith; that His presence is not to be confounded with the manifestations of His presence, which may vary with the perfect government of God; that for the individual this presence with him becomes an unction, a seal, and an earnest, being founded on and making certain to. hilt the righteousness of God in Christ, and giving the consciousness of His presence, and of the love of God. The lively sense of this will vary with his walk, and further making abound in hope, and know that the inheritance of all things is his, giving him the consciousness of being Christ and Christ in him, and being a Spirit of adoption in his heart towards His Father. This unction and seal and earnest is the undoubted portion of all those who have a part in Christ by faith, having submitted to the righteousness of God. As the Spirit works as to understanding by the word, the degree in which this is intelligently realized will depend on being divinely taught of God from His word. This will enable the believer to account for what he has.

## The Son of Man Is Come to Seek and to Save That Which Was Lost

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(Luke 18:9 to 19:10.)

May not these words, these last words, the only hope of any poor soul to whom God discovers its true condition, and assuredly the joy, and song, and rejoicing of all who forever so great a length of time have known this blessed One,-may not these last words be regarded as a kind of key-note of the whole group of narratives that has now been read? Assuredly the Spirit of God in inditing Scripture had an object, not only in what was inserted, but in the order in which the matter is presented and this gospel is remarkable, as is familiar to all here, for the grouping together, because of their moral connection, things which may even have occurred at different times. But whatever other secret there may be as to the why and wherefore of the order in which these narratives are arranged, may not this be one reason-the illustration which each and all afford of this grand, central, all-important foundation fact. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost?" In the parable of the Pharisee and publican you have a lost one sought, and found, and saved. In the case of the little children you have lost ones received and blessed. He had come to save even them. And in the case of the young man, the ruler, you have one who refuses submission to God's estimate of what he was; one who refuses to take the place of being lost: and he is the one who goes empty and sorrowful away. The case of the blind man is a plain one. He was lost, and Jesus was passing by. He is brought to Him, and mercy triumphs in his case too. And as for Zacchaeus, it is his case which affords the immediate occasion for the words-words littered by the lips of incarnate love, vindicating its own right to be what it is, and do what it does. It is the Son of man come to seek and to save that which was lost. This is the explanation the Lord gives to those who were not only rejecting Him, but quarreling with the grace that received the lost. "This day is salvation come to this house," &c. "For the Son of man," &c. Now it is often of all-importance to get back to the very foundation-truths of all. There is no real progress if these be forgotten. And if there be one snare of the enemy, with which he is permitted to beguile the Lord's own beloved ones, more than another, it is in putting out of sight and memory God's estimate of what they are. We use even the Lord's own grace, and what it gives and does, to put honor upon ourselves, and to think highly about ourselves on account of it; and then we have to find, in one way or another, that whatever grace has given and done, it is grace, and that grace has for its object such as were lost. "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost."

But there is one part of chap. 18 of which we have taken no notice in this rapid recapitulation; but it has been omitted, not because of its having no bearing upon the point before us, but because we would reserve it, as the grand central point of all, for distinct and full consideration. It is related in the most simple language, such as the mere child can understand; yet the disciples themselves, who had been for three years and upwards the companions of the Lord Jesus Christ, did not apprehend what He thus spake. The words are in the 31st and following verses of chap. xviii. "Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For He

shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on. And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again, And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." It is at this cost, and oh! how the heart feels that no heart can estimate it-no heart but His who went through it all, and His to whom it was all presented, and whose blessed provision it was for the salvation of such as are lost If there be the demonstration that we are lost, it is in the fact that we could be saved at no less a cost than the endurance of all possible shame and suffering by Him who was God manifest in the flesh-the only begotten of the Father-by whom the worlds were made, and without whom was not anything made that was made-the man that was Jehovah's fellow. He it was that was to be "delivered to the Gentiles, mocked, spitefully entreated and spitted on, scourged and put to death." And if the indignities from man's hand be what, to a considerable extent, are here dwelt upon, these are not the whole. No doubt it is in harmony with the whole drift of this part of God's word, that Christ's sufferings at the hands of men should be thus presented. But they are not the whole of what the passage sets forth, nor are they even the first subject that it presents. He had all this to suffer at the hands of man, and man expressed it in what he is. He showed there that hatred to God which constitutes the most serious part of his being lost. But the Lord Jesus was to be delivered to the Gentiles. And if by man's wicked hands He was crucified and slain, who is there here that does not know that He was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God to be thus crucified, thus slain?"

Now on the soul's perception and reception of what God intended in that transaction depends the solemn question, and that as to each one here, whether the object for which the Son of man came, "to seek and to save that which was lost," has yet been accomplished. If, through the divine teaching, in simple faith we understand the why and wherefore of the transaction that the Lord Jesus here predicted; if, in the secret of our hearts, we know, not as a question of head-knowledge gathered up from books, but as a matter between God and our souls, why and wherefore Christ was delivered up to the Gentiles to be mocked, and scourged, and spitted on, then we know it to be a transaction of which our sin was the sad, solemn occasion. It was for this that the blessed One, who knew no sin, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, was delivered up to die a cursed death, to be hanged upon a tree! Do our hearts know the secret of this? Can you tell why it was that the Christ of God had thus to suffer? You cannot, unless you are brought to the conviction that you are lost, unless you have been taught of God what you are-utterly, completely lost.

Unless this has been really known in the light of God's presence, it is impossible to tell why the Christ of God should thus suffer and die. But where the conscience has been really enlightened, and the heart made to bow to the conviction that we are lost, then to see by faith the Son of man nailed to the accursed tree, delivered to the Gentiles, mocked, &c., put to death-the soul can adoringly account for it all, and see its own rescue, its own salvation wrapped up in that by which God has been so glorified. Each can thus say, "It was for my sin, to retrieve me from the ruin in which sin and Satan had involved me that His blood was shed." Can your heart say this in simple, happy confidence? Oh! happy they who have thus been taught of God! All will return to this, when we are at home in the presence of God and the Lamb Our song even then will be, "Thou art worthy for thou hast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." Oh yes Redeeming mercy, atoning blood will be heaven's song throughout eternity.

But let us look a little more closely at some of these narratives before us. The first is one that may well come home to each of us. It is one with which every one in the present day, in a country like this, is familiar. Numbers speak about the Pharisee and the publican, who know nothing of the truth that is here revealed. But how is it with ourselves as to this? Have we been brought to take the publican's place before God? and is that the ground on which we now stand before Him? I do not ask whether we are still saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. The publican would not say that, when he had gone down to his house justified. But he would still be upon the same ground as that he took, when, not daring to lift up his eyes to heaven, he stood and smote upon his breast and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

The Pharisee took the ground of what he was. He does not take to himself openly the credit of what he was and did. He does not say, I thank myself that I am this and that and the other. He was quite as orthodox in that respect as numbers in the present day, who are looking within for their grounds of peace, and who say, "We give God the glory of all that we hope He has wrought in us, and own Him as the one who has produced it all." But if He has produced anything in our souls, it is not for us to rest upon, or to glory in, or find peace in. We are upon the Pharisee's ground if we found our peace upon anything that we may suppose grace to have wrought in us. He thanked God, but it was for what he was, what he did, and what he did not. These formed the ground on which his soul sought to stand before God. And he thought he did stand; he was self-deceived; he was on perfectly good terms with himself. "God, I thank thee I am not as other men are," &c. And there are numbers in the present day, bearing the name of Christ, professing, in words, to have no confidence but Christ; numbers who would be shocked at the idea of attributing salvation to any but Christ, who are yet practically and really taking the Pharisee's ground before God. Where such persons have any real work of God in their souls, they are destitute of peace. Where there is thorough self-deception, men may thank God that they are not as other men. But supposing there is any idea of what man is before God, and yet the attempt to take this ground, misery must be the result. It may be the ground on which some here are seeking to stand, who, if asked, Do you take the ground of the Pharisee? would say, "Oh, no!" Then what ground do you take? What are you wishing to stand upon before God? Is not this the reason you allege for not having peace, that you do not find in yourselves such fruit as would be certain marks of your being God's children? Or if sometimes you hope that you see some such marks, you cannot always find them, and therefore you are so cast down and desponding. Is not this the way in which you explain your own state? Or perhaps with some examples of rare devotedness before your eyes you say, If I were but such an one! And what if you were! Would it do then to say, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are?" What are you wishing and seeking? You are seeking and wishing to be something better than you are, in order to stand before God. And if you could have your wish and be that, would you stand upon it? Then you would be the Pharisee outright, But what was the publican's ground? There was the deepest sense of what he was—a sinner; and he was not even asking to be something better. No doubt he did desire deliverance. He would not have been so troubled about his state if he had been content to be a sinner. He had the deepest sense of what he was; but what was his hope? his resource? the only open door before him? It was what God is, and what God is to what he knew himself to be. It was, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." When the soul is once brought there, there is no doubt as to the issue. The word of God contains an answer now to such a state of soul as was not found even while our Lord was living upon the earth. God's perfect, blessed answer is in the fulfillment of the Savior's own prediction of His sufferings and

blood-shedding on the cross. There was the answer on Christ's part to God, for all the sin, let it be what it may, upon your conscience. There is also God's answer on His own part in the love that gave Christ to take the sinner's place, and stand in the sinner's stead, and die the sinner's death: the answer on God's part to the cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Oh! that some here may, through God's own teaching, be led to see how mercy has interposed—how mercy has triumphed. May you see something of the height and length and depth and breadth of mercy, God's mercy, the sinner's only refuge, his only resource. It is not mercy without atonement, without sacrifices, without the full vindication of God's holiness and righteousness. It is not mercy at the expense of these. But as sin has reigned unto death, even so grace now reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

But, passing on, the next scene is one of deepest interest. It is that in which infants are brought by their mothers to Jesus. They are not children that are brought to Him to be taught, but infants, whom their mothers bring, that He might touch them. What faith! What an acknowledgment, both as to what the infants were, and as to there being that in Jesus which met their need! The new-born babe needs Jesus. And while the testimony of God is most blessed, that all dying in infancy are saved, it is not without blood, not without the Savior, that they are saved. These mothers owned this. Partaking of their parent's sinful nature, these infants needed salvation, and their mothers knew that none but Jesus would do for them. So they brought them to Him that He might touch them, owning thus that there was in Him a virtue, a power, which by His touch would be communicated to the object of their affection.

Oh! that there were more of such faith amongst us -faith that would bring even our infants to Jesus, the moment they are given us, and never cease presenting them to Him that He would touch them.

But there were those who thought that He had a more important mission into the world than to bless infants; so they rebuked those that brought them. But Jesus called them unto Him. He shows where His heart was—that there was no part of the work that He had undertaken for which He was not constantly prepared. He says, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God." And He not only vindicates thus these mothers, but takes occasion from their act to read us all a lesson of the deepest importance. "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein." It was not only that there was a hearty welcome for little children with Jesus, but that we must all in spirit become little children. The wisest man on earth—the man of keenest intellectual perceptions -the man of highest attainments -must become a little child to have to do with Jesus. We must become fools in order to be wise. It may be that some one here, looking at such a passage as this, may be perplexed, and say, How is this? Are we not often told that salvation is by faith? that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has salvation and eternal life? How, then, is it that these blessings are here made to depend upon my becoming a little child? There are but two different ways, my friends, of presenting the same thing. Faith is this child-like spirit that each must have if he is to enter the kingdom of God. It is not that little children are good, and that we have to become good like them in order to get blessing from God. It is not that at all. Children are sinners and need the Savior, and He came to save children as well as up-grown people. What, then, is the meaning of the passage? Let me ask, in reply, Is there one characteristic of childhood so prominent as this, the unhesitating simplicity with which the child trusts those with whom he has to do? Try a child;

offer him something that he can value and desire, something suited to him—an apple—a toy. What does he say? Does he begin to make excuses, and say he does not deserve it, that he is not good enough, that he must behave better, feel differently, or the like, before he can expect such a boon. Is this the way he treats your offer? No. His hand is out at once—he gives you credit for being as good as you seem to be, and profess to be, in holding out to him the gift.

And what is the whole matter of receiving Christ -eternal life – salvation? It is the simple faith that accredits God to be as good as He says He is, as good as He has shown Himself to be. Has He not said that He “so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life?” And yet, with such statements throughout God's word, the soul, instead of believing God when He declares how good He is, instead of receiving Christ, stands reasoning, and seeking to evade the love which still pursues us with the needed, indispensable good. Ah! the heart must be bowed to this, to receive God's word in true, child-like simplicity, just as a child accepts unhesitatingly what it is very glad to get. “Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein.”

The next narrative in the group before us presents a thorough contrast to this child-like spirit; not in what you would call a wicked man, but in one of the fairest specimens of human nature that could well be conceived. And, indeed, if anything is to be fairly tested, it must be that thing in its best state. Suppose you were testing merchandize, it is the best sample that the merchant would wish to be tried. Well, the man who is here brought to the test is one of the fairest specimens of humanity that could be produced. “A certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He is not one of the careless throng who, without a thought of God and eternity, are saying, “What shall I eat what shall I drink? or wherewithal shall I be clothed?” Eternal life is the object before him; and the question of questions with him is how it is to be obtained. This is what he is pursuing. He has a certain position in the world; and, holding this place, he pursues eternal life as an ulterior object. He seeks a happy eternity as a sequel to a well-spent life; and the question is what he must do to inherit eternal life.

How remarkable, too, the perception he had of Jesus, in the perfection of His ways as a man. His eyes have evidently been upon Jesus; and he thinks that he has now met with one so perfect as to be able to teach him the way of perfection; teach him how to be good enough to inherit eternal life. Hence, he says, “Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Oh! are there any here (under other terms perhaps, or with other associated ideas that have been gleaned from the gospel) in this young man's state of soul? Perhaps your dream of satisfaction and contentment in the world has been broken in upon, and you see plainly that there is an eternity to face, and a God before whom you must shortly stand. And the question has been raised how you are to stand before Him, and you have an idea that in order to be right there you must be right here; and you have been seeking to be so, and you would fain have further instruction as to how far you must go, and what you must do, to have this question of eternity settled in your souls.

But let us look a little further. Our Lord cuts short this ruler. It was not that He did not feel for him. We are told in Mark's gospel that “Jesus, beholding him, loved him.” It could not be with the love of complacency with which He regards His people; nor was it with the mere compassion that cares for sinners. No; there was a perception by our blessed Lord of that which for time, and for this world, is in itself fair and lovely, and He could give its full place to that. His affections go out. His

heart is attracted to the young man Beholding him, he loved him; but only the more unsparingly would he demonstrate, that, however He might appreciate the attractions of this young man's amiable character for time, as to any link with God for eternity, there was none! He was as completely lost as the vilest wretch that ever tremblingly clung to the garments of Jesus. Accordingly, He at once lays the ax to the root of all that the young man had wished to depend upon. "Good Master," he had said, "what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He looked upon Jesus as the best man he had ever met with; a man so good and perfect, that even with the estimate he had of Himself, he would like to be his scholar. And what is the Lord's answer? "Why callest thou me good? None is good, save one, that is God." It is, in other words, "You are on the wrong track altogether. You are seeking and wishing to be good enough for God, and to use me to help you to be good enough for God. But the fact is, God is good enough for you, however bad you may be." And it was to take him clean off the one ground, and put him on the other, that He thus met his question in this unsparing way.

But let us proceed with the details. "Thou knowest the commandments. Do not commit adultery, do not steal," &c. God had instituted the law, which showed what His claims upon men were. The ruler was under it, and the Lord refers him to it. "Thou knowest the commandments," &c. The young man was impervious to all this. "He said, All these have I kept from my youth up." Still, be it observed, he was not satisfied—still he was asking, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" It is so, where the conscience is at all awakened—where any measure of sensitiveness as to God's claims exists—the soul never can get rest upon this ground. The ruler was not satisfied; and this is the only hopeful thing about him. But whatever God might afterward work in his soul, as yet he was not ready to take the ground of being lost, and to welcome to his heart the One who had come to die upon the cross, that the lost might be saved and have everlasting life. As yet, he had no heart for the Savior, and this was to be proved. The law was not sufficient as a test for him He could say, "All these things have I kept," as the Apostle Paul afterward could say, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." There had been a time, when nobody, by the law, could have convinced Saul of Tarsus of sin. That was the case with the young man here. What, then, was to be done? The only test that unfailingly shows out what man is, was now to be applied to him, and he had subjected himself to the unsparing application of this test, by the very way in which he had come to Jesus. He had said, "Good Master" —owning Him as a teacher competent to teach him how to inherit eternal life, so that subjection to His teaching he had already owned as his place.

And what does our Lord say? "Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me." He puts the world in one scale, Himself and heaven in the other. He offers him the assurance of that after which he had inquired. "Thou shalt have treasure in heaven;" but he offers it on condition of his leaving all to follow Christ on earth—Christ on earth and treasure in heaven. These are in one scale—and, in the other, the world. Not the world in its wretchedness, but in its fair and attractive forms. And, now, what is the issue? The young man, this ruler, this amiable, excellent man, is shown to have a heart as alien from heaven and God as that of the vilest and most abandoned sinner on earth.

What is the mind of heaven How has God expressed His mind? What is God's estimate of the One with whom this ruler was conversing? "He has set him at his own right hand, he has given him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth." No place too high to enthrone, no glory

too bright in which to enshrine the One who, on earth, glorified God and died for lost sinners. This is God's estimate of Jesus. But what was the ruler's? Alas! his riches are more to him than all the peerless excellence of Jesus. He could have them but for a little while; but when put in the balance with Jesus, he grasps them more eagerly than ever, and turns his back on Jesus and eternal life. "When he heard this he was very sorrowful, for he was very rich."

A word or two on what the disciples say. Jesus takes occasion, from what had occurred to exclaim, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." Jesus had not been showing to the ruler, the way of salvation. To put it as the way of salvation, that he was to sell all and follow Jesus, would have been to propose harder terms than even those that had been propounded by the law itself. The disciples, thinking only of being saved, say, "Who then can be saved?" What is our Lord's answer? He does not in the least relieve the conscience from the pressure that is upon it, but He draws us away to God. "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." And, as a matter of fact, but a few short months after this, when the Holy Ghost had come down from heaven, consequent upon the exaltation of Jesus there, revealing to souls the Savior—the crucified, risen, exalted, Savior; and when, by faith looking up, they beheld there the One who had accomplished their salvation, the full tide of blessing so filled their hearts, that hosts of people did, without an exhortation, what the young man declined to do, even at the cost of rejecting Christ Himself, and heaven, when it was put before him as a test. God had come in and had saved these 3000 people, and the result was produced at once.

One word as to the closing narrative. It affords such an instance of another lost one saved, and is such a contrast to the case we have been considering. "As He was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside begging." It is not a rich ruler now, but a poor mendicant, and that with the added misfortune of being destitute of sight. He is sitting by the wayside begging, and they tell him that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. He had heard of Jesus before and in secret had evidently owned that the one who was to sit upon David's throne, is the Jesus of whom he had heard. Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? "Yes," says this poor man, "The Christ of God can come out of Nazareth." His faith owns Him as David's Royal Son; and it is now his one opportunity of having the affliction of his lifetime removed by the royal bounty of the One who had not where to lay His head. It would not seem that his faith reached further than this at first. "Jesus," he cries, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." It is not his soul that occupies him, as in the publican's case; but still it is conscious need, and this is a plea for mercy. "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." And as before with the little children, so now there were those who rebuked him, and told him to hold his peace. But he was not to be put to silence thus. Faith cannot be so easily turned aside. I believe that where persons have been seeking for many years after peace and have not found it, it becomes a very serious question, whether there is any true seeking at all—where there is, the answer of God is usually sooner given. But faith does earnestly seek, and will not be turned aside from seeking the object of its pursuit. He cried so much the more, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." There was confidence in Jesus, not only in His power, but that if only he could reach His ear, He was One who would feel differently towards him from those who were rebuking him. And so he did. "Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him; and when he was come near, He asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, receive thy sight; thy faith hath saved thee. And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God."

It might seem as though this were written in illustration of the receiving the kingdom of God as a little child. At the bidding of Jesus, the man is brought unto Him. "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" He asks. Then there is the simple, confiding utterance of his request. "Lord, that I may receive my sight." No sooner said than done. "Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight, thy faith hath saved thee," &c. The whole thing took less time in the accomplishment, than the perusal of the narrative requires.

And this Blessed One is still waiting, still passing by, if I may so say. He is not beyond the reach of sinners The Holy Ghost has come down from heaven with the testimony of the risen and ascended Lord. And wherever there is a poor soul to cry, Have mercy on me—a soul, sensible of being lost and ruined, and turning the eye to Jesus—there is the answer at once. Once brought here, it is heard in an instant—there is an immediate answer. Faith never gets a refusal from faith's blessed Object, the Lord. Oh, no! it gets its answer at once.

"And immediately he received his sight and followed him." The word to the young man was, "Come, follow me." And he turned his hack and went away. He had too much to leave, to follow Jesus. Here was one who had nothing to leave, nothing to bring—empty and ruined, his need draws forth the grace of Jesus. He receives his sight, and evidently received sight in a deeper sense than the opening of his eyes to the light of day. For he beholds Jesus. The first object that greets his inwardly and outwardly opened eyes, is the One that links his heart to Himself, with an affection that cannot be repressed, and he follows Him of his own accord. The Lord grant that thus it may be with many for His name's sake.

Bristol.

## The Sufferings and the Praises of Christ

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(Psa. 22)

THE result of the truth taught in this psalm is, that they shall praise the Lord that seek Him. It is the fruit of unmingled grace, brought out in a very remarkable manner, and quite different from a hope or a promise. Assuredly, that the Holy One should be forsaken of God is not promise, and that the ground is laid here for praise.

In Psa. 19 we have the testimony of creation and of the law. It is a solemn thought that whatever man has touched he has corrupted. Creation groans when a man has been there. But if I look where man cannot reach, at the moon, the stars, etc., all is glorious. The "heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy-work." Next (ver. 7 and seq.) "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." Here the point is not whether man can keep it or not, but its intrinsic perfection and its value for those who by grace profit by its light. Neither of these witnesses can be changed. Man early filled the earth with corruption and violence. "And God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt; and God said, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them." The heavens spread over all, and the sun going about in unwearied circuit from one end to the other, are the bright, unchanging witnesses, above man's defiling hand, of the divine glory. As little does the law of Jehovah vary: but if man cannot change the law, he disobeys it. The effect of the law is to claim from a sinful man that he should not be sinful.

Mark, in passing, the order of God's dealings. When sin came in, God said that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. This is not promise to Adam, but the judgment pronounced on Satan if a promise it is one to the second Adam. Then comes a word of positive promise to Abraham, the father of the faithful; "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Afterward, when the offering had taken place on Moriah, the promises were made, unconditionally as before, to his seed. But the question of righteousness must be raised, because God is the righteous God. Blessing under law depended on man's faithfulness, as well as God's. At Sinai it was said, "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people." The law raised the question of righteousness, and put man under obedience, instead of his taking his place as a sinner "All the people answered together and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." That was law, and Israel under it: but "as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." Long afterward rises another witness—One who testified to the moral nature of God as well as His power—One who manifested the righteousness of God instead of merely claiming that of man—One who came, as it were, with all promises in Himself, if He had been received.

And how was Christ received? He was entirely rejected. In Psa. 20, Messiah is viewed in the day of trouble. So the Jews will see in their latter-day trouble, identifying Jesus as their Savior. Psa. 21

is the answer to their godly desire touching the Anointed of Jehovah, and the expression of their joy at His exaltation as King. He has been heard, and has His heart's desire given Him.

In Psa. 22 we have a totally different thing. It is Christ forsaken of God. Not that He is not despised of the people there: strong bulls of Bashan beset Him round, dogs compassed Him, the assembly of the wicked enclosed Him; but all this, felt as none but Christ could feel, what was it in presence of the awful reality of Christ suffering from the hand of God -of Christ suffering for sin? It is a sad but useful picture, the side of man for it is all the same nature -such were we; but turn it round, and what is the other side? Christ has brought out what God is, and that is love, even when it is a question of our sins.

What is man? What was Pilate? An unjust judge, who washed his hands, while he condemned to death the One whom he had thrice proclaimed to be guiltless; and this at the instigation-at the intercession!-of the chief priests and the rulers of God's people. And the disciples, what and where were they? "They all forsook him and fled." "And Peter followed him afar off." When he comes into the palace he curses and swears, and denies Jesus again and again. Take man where you will, and if Christ be there, everything is put to the test-only sin comes out. His cross, His death revealed the real character of all: the history of man, morally, is closed. "Now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Man has been weighed and found wanting in every way. "The flesh profiteth nothing:" it breaks law and abuses grace. The end of all I am as man I read in the cross. "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." For there is another thing altogether there. On the cross hung the One spotless, blessed man, yet forsaken of God. What a fact before the world! No wonder the sun was darkened,-the central and splendid witness to God's glory in nature, when the Faithful and true witness cried to His God and was not heard.

Forsaken of God! what does that mean? What has man to do with it? What part have I in the cross? One single part-my sins. Here then is One forsaken of God and saying it aloud before all men. There is none to see and sympathize as in Psa. 20 The women who followed from Galilee were there afar off, but they understood not. It baffles thought, that most solemn, lonely hour which stands aloof from all before or after. How does not the perfectness of Christ shine in it! "The man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth;" yet was his spirit provoked, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job;" yet he opened his mouth to curse his day, and murmured that the Preserver of man had set him as a mark, so that he was a burden to himself. In Christ nothing was brought out but what was perfect.

But if I have to say to Christ, in what only is it first of all? What do I bring to the cross? What have I in it? My sins. There is not a vanity we have not preferred to Him. What a humbling thought for us, for me! The Righteous One is suffering for sin, and vindicates God, though to himself the depth of agony, in deserting Him, when most, we may say, He needed God. "But thou at holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. But I am a worm," &c. It was obedience -suffering-to the uttermost; but as forsaken He was, Christ says, His God was holy all the same. We know now why it was. It was for sin, for our sins, not for righteousness. Our sins were our only contribution. What a tale that tells on our part: on His, O what blessed love!

The wonderful truth is that the Son of God came into the world, and in the cross God has made Him sin who knew no sin. The sinless Savior has drunk the cup of wrath. It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him-to make His soul an offering for sin. He has borne our iniquities. What is the consequence? He died under the burden of sin, and what becomes of it? It is clean gone; not that it has been glossed over, but put away by the sacrifice of Himself.

Thus, before the day of judgment, sin has been thoroughly dealt with by God in the cross of Christ. There will be a day of judgment, and those who believe not will find everlasting condemnation there. But for those who believe, there has been already judgment in Christ. God must judge sinners; but were this all, where would be His love? If He overlooked sin, where His holiness? That would not be love but indifference to evil. When I see the cross, I see the perfect desert of sin, and that not in the destruction of the sinner, but in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, suffering once the just for the unjust that He might bring us to the God who was glorified in the sins being thus completely blotted out. Christ took sin in his own body on the tree, laid down the life in which He bore it, and rose absolutely without it. Now then, the question of righteousness is not raised only, but settled. Neither is it any longer a promise, but a work done. There are promises for the believer to enjoy in their season but the suffering on the cross is ended and past. Redemption is neither creation, nor law, nor promises, but a divine work wrought about sin and already accomplished in Christ through His blood,-in Christ now accepted of God and glorified at His right hand.

Hence, if sin was judgment to Christ, it results in nothing but grace to us in and through Him. For if God takes up sin in my case at the day of judgment, I am lost. But I say, He has taken it up in Christ, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities; and now there flows a stream of unmingled grace. For it is not only that the unsparing wrath of God fell on Christ crucified, but that Christ enters into all the delight of God after putting away sin. God was now no longer a judge and an avenger, but a Deliverer from death and all the consequences of the sin Christ had taken on Himself; His glory as God and as Father was concerned in raising Christ from the dead, and setting Him in righteous glory as man and infinite delight as Son before Him. What a change there is now! Christ is heard from the horns of the unicorns. Resurrection is the answer of His God and Father. But mark, Christ has people whom He calls His brethren, and to them He must go and tell it all. God has righteously and in perfect love brought him back from the grave, and now says the Lord, "I will declare thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I sing praise to thee." Never had the divine complacency in Christ been so complete as on the cross-never was God so glorified as in Him there; but there was not, nor could be the enjoyment of communion in that awful hour when sin was judged as it never will be again. But now, sin-bearing was over, and God so perfectly, justified and glorified in it, that it became a question of Christ bringing others into the place of holy joy and peace, and His own relationship to His God and Father.

Mary Magdalene wept at the grave, for she loved the Lord and knew not salvation in Him risen. "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him" To the apprehensions, if He were gone all was lost. But Jesus made Himself known to her in the resurrection, and says, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." For whom was the work done, but for them? But more than this. God was His Father, He was theirs; if His God, He was theirs also. He brings the disciples into the same place He has entered Himself.

If you love your children thoroughly, you desire them to have the same place as yourself. It was so with Christ. He could suffer alone, but that finished, could He praise alone? No: "in the midst of the congregation will I sing praise to thee." All the suffering and sorrow were His; His joy He would share with those He loved. He Himself leads their praises. He is come out from unutterable, unfathomable agony and shame; and does He keep silence? Does not His tone of praise well assort with the darkness He was in? Does not fullness of joy now answer to God's forsaking Him for our sin? (Compare verses 21, 25). He had been in the depths for us, but now He is out and praising; and how should we praise? With Him in the certainty of what He has wrought. God would have us free before Him in joy by virtue of what Christ has done; He would have us judging every evil, for it is a holy place, but the place He is in is the result of His work and He gives it—nothing less than it—to us. Could I go into the presence of God in my sins? I should flee from Him like Adam. But, believing in Christ, I am in God's presence, because He has brought me there.

Are you then seeking God? Have you heard the voice of Christ? It is no longer the cry of deepest grief unheard. The atonement is made, He Himself is raised from the dead, the accepted, glorified Savior; and what to Him the change from the affliction of the afflicted to His joy as risen! He gathers around Him those who receive Him, and in their midst sings praises to God. If you seek God now, you are entitled by His work to take up and join in His song of praise. For it is not a promise, but an accomplished fact. Do I believe in Christ? If so, I am before the throne of God (in title, not in fact, of course) by virtue of the cross; I am inside the veil, and my sins are left forever behind me.

From verse 22 we find nothing but grace. Do you who seek God say, O that I could find Him But He has found you. Come then and praise Him Christ has been on the cross, bearing our sins. You have to learn it as an accomplished fact—not saying, I hope He will do it. The work is done, sin is entirely put away, and Christ the leader of praise, according to His estimate of sin, of wrath due to it, borne in grace, and of the perfect deliverance displayed in His own resurrection. Thenceforward is heard praise, and praise only. First, Christ in the midst of the congregation praises God, and those that fear Jehovah are called to praise Him. (Ver. 22-23). Then His praise is anticipated "in the great congregation," and "they shall praise Jehovah that seek him, and all the ends of the world are to remember and turn to him." (Verses 25 - 27.) In the millennial earth the homage will be universal, "all they that be fat upon earth" — "all they that go down to the dust;" yea, and not that race then alive only, for they "shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this."

In the light there are exercises of conscience; but how do I get there? Because Christ put away sin and I receive Him. True, we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; but it is the judgment-seat of Him who loved me and gave Himself for me, who saved me and in whom I am accepted. If Christ had to do with a Pharisee, He soon unmasked him; but to one who came to Him as a poor sinner, He was always grace, as to the woman in Luke 7. Never did He deal roughly with one soul who came in the truth of its condition: to such He spoke and wrought in the truth of His own grace. That sinful woman was attracted by divine love in Christ, and hears Him pronounce her many sins forgiven. She knew His great love, and loved Him much. When He comes to this, He does not trouble Himself more about the Pharisee, but says to the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." And no wonder; for it is the self-same thing which brightens heaven that made her heart bright.

We must, then, all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ before the person who by His death put away all my sins. What a blessing to find Him on the judgment-seat! There is nothing in this to disturb the peace He has made by the blood of His cross; and peace we must have in order to enjoy communion with God. Can two walk together, except they are agreed? Then think how it is we get there. Christ will come and receive me to Himself, because He loves me, and wants me to be with Him where he is; and how do I arrive? Glorified in a body like His own. Do you ask, how can people speak thus? I answer by the question, how can you be in heaven in any other way? He who of God is made unto us righteousness is the judge. To believe in His name and yet doubt that we have peace is calling in question the value of His work. He who suffered and is now glorified will not gainsay it when He judges. But there will be nothing secret—all will come to light. What a lesson for us when in glory! And what is the effect? I look on my past life, and what have I been? I look since I have been a Christian, and what feebleness, what failure! But am I therefore to be afraid? No: I look at God and say, What a God I have had to do with! Every step is a manifestation of my Father's love who had led me along the way. In glory I shall see all my foolishness, but it will be in the body risen or changed. I shall learn the love of Christ in every title of my life from beginning to end.

Are your voices tuned to praise with Christ? He is gone from the wrath and darkness of the cross into the light and love of His Father's presence, and is praising. Can you praise with Him? There all trembling disappears. Do you believe "He hath done this?" Oh, beloved, how those who seek Him lag behind His heart? What is it you believe? and in whom? Do you not know that He drank the cup to the dregs? and is all uncertain to you still? If you think of what you are, I say you are a thousand miles off what you ought to be. If you seek Him, His word warrants that you should praise Him He is in the presence of God as the consequence of His work. May your hearts set to their seal that God is true! As a Father, He may chasten; but the chastenings are a Father's ways with children's hearts. May you not reject the testimony of Jesus that He has spent His life, having suffered once the just for the unjust,—that your souls may have present peace with God! "He hath done this."

## The Sufferings of Christ: Part 1

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Dear Mr. Editor,

A good deal that is current on the sufferings of Christ leads me to desire to draw the attention of your readers to this point, and to some simple yet important distinctions which it behooves us to make as to their character and nature. The sympathies of Christ are so precious to the soul, his entering into our sorrows in this world of moral woe, so comforting, so softening, and yet so elevating, that we cannot treasure too highly the realization of them in our hearts, nor guard too carefully against anything that is spurious. This is the more important, because the character of his sufferings more or less connects itself with his person and nature. I shall endeavor to be as simple as possible

In the first place, we have to distinguish His sufferings from man and His sufferings from God. Their cause, and the result of them; are equally contrasted. Christ did, we know, suffer from men. He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The world hated Him before it hated His disciples, it hated Him because He bore witness of it that its works were evil. He was "light," and he that doeth evil hateth the light nor comes to the light, because his works are evil. In a word, Christ suffered for righteousness' sake. Even as it was from the beginning" in that which was a type of Jesus' history in this respect, Cain slew Abel, because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. We may add that the love which caused the Lord to minister to men in the world, and testify of their evil, brought only more sorrow upon Him. For His love He had hatred. This hatred of man against Him never slackened till His death, when, in the folly of human exultation, they could shout, aha! aha! so would we have it. Righteousness and love, and what was indeed the manifestation of the divine nature and ways on the earth, brought out the relentless hatred of the human mind and will. Christ suffered from man for righteousness' sake.

But He suffered also from the hand of God upon the cross. It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when He shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed. He was made sin for us who knew no sin, and then He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him. There He suffered, the just for the unjust; that is, he suffered not because He was righteous, but because we were sinners, and He was bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. As regards God's forsaking Him, He could say, Why hast thou forsaken me? for in Him there was no cause. We can give the solemn answer: In grace he suffered the just for the unjust; He had been made sin for us. Thus He suffered for righteousness, as a living man, from men; as a dying Savior, He suffered from the hand of God for sin. It is most interesting to notice the result of these two characters of suffering as expressed in the Psalm

In Psa. 20 and xxi., we see the Messiah prophetically viewed as suffering on the earth from men. It was the day of trouble. They imagined a device against Him which they were not able to perform. But He asks life, and has length of days forever. Glory and great majesty are put upon Him. What

is the effect of His being thus glorified by Jehovah, in answer to the scorn and violence of ungodly men? Judgment His hands finds out all His enemies. He makes them as a fiery oven in the day of His anger, as He said, "Those mine enemies that would that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me." The same thing may be seen in Psa. 69; 1-24. The effect of His suffering from the hand of wicked men is judgment on themselves.

In Psa. 22 we have, besides all these sufferings from the hand of men, and when they had reached their height, (see the whole Psalm up to verse 21,) His suffering from the hand of God. When under the pressure of the others, God, His only resource, forsakes Him. This is the great theme of the psalm But what is the result of this? This was the bearing of sin—at least the consequence of His bearing it. It -was the judgment, so to speak; it was the wrath due to us. But He came to put sin away by the sacrifice of Himself. Hence the result is unmingled and full grace—nothing else. Who was to be punished for His having drank the cup at His Father's hand? He is heard. God takes the new character of one who has raised Him up, and given Him glory, because He had God and Father He immediately declares to His brethren— "I will declare thy name unto my brethren." So in fact, He did when He said to Mary Magdalene, "Touch me not, (He was not now coming to be corporally present in the kingdom,) for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren and say unto them, I go to my Father, and your Father, my God and your God." The testimony was now grace, and Jesus leads the praises of His redeemed. Next, all Israel, the great congregation, is found in the praise also; then all the ends of the world. The fat eat and worship; all that go down into the dust; and the generation that shall be born, when that time of peace is come, shall also hear the wondrous story of that which the angels now desire to look into—that He hath done this. It is an unmingled stream of grace and blessing, widening to the ends of the earth, and flowing down the course of time to the generation which shall be born. Such is the effect of the cross. No word of judgment follows the tale it has to tell. The suffering there was the judgment on sin, but it was the putting of it away. The judgment was borne, but passed away with its execution on the victim, who had, in grace, substituted Himself: and if, indeed, we shall be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, He before whom we shall appear has Himself put away our sins; yea, we arrive there, because He has Himself come to fetch us, that where He is there we may be also. In a word, it was suffering from God; and suffering from God is suffering for sins not for righteousness; and the effect, unmingled grace, now freely flowing forth. Christ had been baptized with the baptism He had to be baptized with. He was no longer straitened in the exercise and proclamation of love. When He suffered from man, through the whole of His witness among them, up to death itself, He was suffering for righteousness. Sin He had not, in His person, to suffer for. He was no substituted victim in the eyes of men. The result of these sufferings from the power of men is judgment, accomplished on His return—in a providential way already in the destruction of Jerusalem, but fully when He shall return.

But there is another point of contrast, consequently, very important for us. Christ suffered for sin that we never might. We are healed by, not partakers of, His stripes. What Christ has suffered from the forsaking of God as wrath, He has suffered alone, and exactly, as to us, with the object that we never should taste one drop of that dreadful, bitter, to us insupportable, cup. Did we drink it, it were as condemned sinners But in the sufferings of Christ for righteousness, and in those which were caused to Him through His work of love, we are, poor and feeble as our faith is, to have a part. To us it is given, not only to believe on, but also to suffer for, His name. If we suffer for

righteousness' sake, happy are we, and yet more blessed if we suffer for His name. The Spirit of glory and of God rests upon us. We can rejoice that we are partakers of His sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed we may be glad with exceeding joy. The suffering for righteousness and for Christ, I may remark, in passing, are distinguished by the Lord Himself, Matt. 5:10, 11; and by Peter, First epistle, ii. 20; iii. 17; iv. 14.

The principle of these two kinds of suffering, however, as contrasted with suffering for sin or evil, is the same. The difference of suffering for good and for evil are touchingly contrasted in Peter's epistle, while both are attributed to Christ; and we are warned against the latter. Christ is presented as suffering as an example, ii. 19-23, where we see, in verse 23, he refers to the reviling and violence of men; in verse 24, he adds His bearing our sins, showing that it is in order that we may be dead to it, not suffer for that. But this is brought out, as I said, touchingly, in chap. iii. 17, 18, the force of which I take to be this: the apostle had been speaking of suffering for righteousness, and adds, it is better, if it be God's will, that you suffer for well doing than for evil doing; for, he adds, Christ has suffered once for sins: that is, that is not your part in suffering: He has done that once for all. Suffering for righteousness may be your happy portion; suffering for sin is Christ's part alone.

I would notice two other characters of suffering in our blessed Lord. In the first place, His heart of love must have suffered greatly from the unbelief of unhappy man, and from His rejection by the people. We read of His sighing in opening the deaf ears, and loosing the tied tongue, (Mark 7:34;) and, on the Pharisees asking a sign, (viii. 12,) of His sighing deeply in spirit. So, indeed, in the 11th of John, at the tomb of Lazarus, He wept and groaned within Himself, at seeing the power of death over the spirits of men, and their incapacity to deliver themselves; as He wept also over Jerusalem, when He saw the beloved city just going to reject Him in the day of its visitation. All this was the suffering of perfect love, moving through a scene of ruin, in which self-will and heartlessness shut every avenue against this love which was so earnestly working in its midst. It must have been—with bright and blessed moments where its exercise proved sweetness to itself, and led His heart out by times to fields white for harvest—a constant source of sorrow. This sorrow, blessed be God, and the joy that brightens it, we are allowed, in our little measure, to partake of. It is the sorrow of love itself.

A weight of another character pressed upon the Lord, I doubt not often through His life; and must and ought to have done so, though only showing perfectness; that is, in blessed submission to the divine will. I mean the anticipation, when the time was there for Him to look at it, (how often are we distracted by our little anticipated sorrows,) of his sufferings on the cross and their true and pressing character. On His path of life death lay. He could not, as we see, take His part with the excellent of the earth, and bring them into the purposed, or, indeed, any real and permanent blessing without going through death, and death as the alone. There none could follow: not indeed the disciples, as He tells them, more than the Jews. And for Him death was death. Man's utter weakness, Satan's extreme power, and God's just vengeance, and alone, without one sympathy, forsaken of those whom He had cherished, the rest His enemies, Messiah delivered to Gentiles and cast down, the judge washing his hands of condemning innocence, the priests interceding against the guiltless instead of for the guilty:- all dark without one ray of light, even from God. Here perfect obedience was needed, and, blessed be God, was found. But we can understand, and just in the measure of Christ's divine, while human, sensibilities, what such sorrow must have been in

prospect for a soul who looked at it with the feeling of a man made perfect in thought and apprehension by the divine light which was Him We have examples of these sorrows of the Lord's heart in two remarkable cases, which, of course, though none were like the last, do not at all exclude the thought that others may have been, nor give full light on what He may have felt when, in perfect calmness, He spoke of His future sufferings to His disciples. The cases I refer to are those of John 12 and Gethsemane. In the former we read, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour." The coming up of the Gentiles had opened out before Him the scene of the rejected Christ passing into the wider glory of the Son of man; but then the corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die. This brings before His soul the true and necessary path of His glory-death, and all it meant, to His soul, and He looks for deliverance. He could not wish for, nor fail to fear, the forsaking of God and the cup of death He had to drink, He was heard in that He feared. That was truth, and true piety, in presence of such a passage for His soul. So in Gethsemane, when it was yet nearer, and the prince of this world came, and His soul was exceeding sorrowful unto death: when the cup was just as it were being brought to Him, though he had not yet taken it-for he would take it from none but His Father's hand-when His will was that He should drink it, because it was not possible it could be otherwise if the purpose and word of God was to be accomplished;- there this character of sorrow and trial, or temptation, reached its fullness. The tempter who, on His entrance on His public service, and to hinder His doing so, had tempted Him with what was agreeable to the flesh in the wilderness and on the pinnacle of the temple, and had been baffled and bound, and during the Lord's life had his goods spoiled, now returns to try Him with all that was dreadful for the soul of man, and, above all, for the Lord, if He persevered in His obedience and work unto the end. Power had been displayed capable of delivering living man from all the dominion of the enemy. Another awful, dreadful truth had now come out: man would not have the Deliverer. If the Lord was to persevere in interesting Himself in the wretched race, He must be not a mighty living Deliverer by power, but a dying Redeemer. It was the path of obedience and the path of love. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me; but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as my Father has given me commandment, so I do." But in both the cases we are now considering, we find Him still with His Father, though occupied with Him about the cup He had to drink, and His obedience only shining out in its perfection. There was no forsaking of God yet, though there was dealing with His Father about that cup which was characterized by His being forsaken of God. "Father save me from this hour. But for this cause came I to this hour. Father, glorify thy name" Here He gets the answer to obedience to death in judgment of real and complete victory, and the wide-spread opening out of the revelation of love, though the world was judged therein. But in Gethsemane all was closing in. It was the power of darkness, and the deeper agony of the Lord told itself out in few, yet how mighty, words, and sweat as it were drops of blood. But the obedience was perfect. The tempter utterly foiled, the name of Jesus suffices to make all his agents go backward and fall to the ground. He, as far as they were concerned and Satan's power went, was free. But the Father had given Him the cup to drink. He freely offers Himself to drink it, showing the same unweakened power as ever, that of those given to Him He might lose none. Wondrous scene of obedience and love. But whatever the suffering may be, and who can tell it, it was the free moving of a man in grace, but of a man perfect in obedience to God. The cup His Father has given Him to drink, shall he not drink it? How utterly, though indeed there, do the unhappy instruments of this power of evil disappear before the offering up of Christ by Himself in obedience and love. The power of death, as that of

the enemy, gone through with His Father and gone, and He in blessed, willing obedience now taking the awful cup itself from His Father's hand. Never can we meditate too much upon the path of Christ here. We may linger around the spot and learn what no other place nor scene can tell—a perfectness which is learned from Him and from Him alone. But I must turn now to other parts of Christ's sorrow, for I can only touch on its causes and character.

Sin itself must have been continual source of sorrow to the Lord's mind. If Lot vexed his righteous soul with seeing and hearing when so practically far from God, what must the Lord have suffered in passing through the world? I doubt not that, being perfectly in the place God would have Him, He was, not only in degree, but in the very nature of His feelings, calmer than the righteous man in Sodom. Still He was distressed by sin. He looked round about upon them with anger, being grieved at the hardness of their heart. His perfect love was relief here, but did not hinder the sorrow it relieved. "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you?" was met by, "bring thy son hither." But the unbelief was not the less felt. This was at the close, doubtless, and had special respect to their unbelief, which—His own love instantly rises over. Still He was in a dry and thirsty land, where no water was, and felt it, even if His soul were also filled as with marrow and fatness. The holier and more loving He was, the more dreadful was the sin to Him; where His people wandered too, as sheep without a shepherd.

The sorrows, too, of men were His in heart. He bore their sicknesses, and carried their infirmities. Not a sorrow nor an affliction He met that He did not bear on His heart as His own. In all their afflictions He was afflicted. It was no light-hearted remedy that, even as a living man, the Lord applied. He bore in His spirit what He took away in His power—for all was the fruit of sin in man only it was in gracious love. The sin itself He bore, too, but that, as we have seen, was on the cross; obedience, not sympathy. God made to be sin for us Him who knew no sin. All the rest was the sympathy of love, though it was sorrow. This is a blessed character of the Lord's sorrow. Love brought Him to the cross, we well know; but His sorrow there had not the present joy of a ministration of love. He was not dealing with man, but suffering in his place, in obedience, from God, and for man. Hence it was unmingled, unmitigated suffering; the scene, not of active goodness, but of God forsaking: but all His sorrow, in His ways with men, was the direct fruit of love, sensibly acting on Him—He felt for others, about others. That feeling was, oh how constantly, sorrow in a world of sin; but that feeling was love. This is sweet to our thought. For His love he might have hatred, but the present exercise of love has a sweetness and character of its own, which no form of sorrow it may impart ever takes away; and in Him it was perfect. I do not, indeed, deny that righteous anger filled His soul, when occasion called it forth; we know it did—yea, brought out such denouncement of woes, as I believe nothing but perfect love could produce; for what must He have felt of those who took away the key of knowledge, and neither entered in themselves, and hindered those that were entering? Righteous indignation is not sorrow, but the love that gives birth to it, where it is righteous, stamps its own peculiar character upon it.

Another source of sorrow—for what has Christ not drunk at?—was, perhaps, more human, but not less true, I mean the violation of every delicacy which a perfectly attuned mind could feel. They stand staring and looking upon me. Insult, scorn, deceit, efforts to catch his words, brutality and cruel mocking fell upon no insensible, though a divinely patient, spirit. I say nothing of desertion, betrayal, and denial: He looked for some to have pity on Him, and there was no one, and for comforters, but found none:—but of what broke in upon every delicate feeling of His nature as a

man Reproach broke His heart. He was the song of the drunkards Doubtless, Jehovah knew His shame, His reproach and His dishonor; all His adversaries were before Him, but He passed through it all. No divine perfection saved Him from sorrow. He passed through it with divine perfection, and by it. But I do not believe there was a single human feeling (and every most delicate feeling of a perfect soul was there), that was not violated and trodden on in Christ. Doubtless, it was nothing to divine wrath. Men and their ways, were forgotten there; but the sufferings were not the less real when it was there; and even when, at least, anticipating that cup of wrath, He would have his too confident disciples watch by Him, He only found them asleep on His return. All was sorrow but the exercise of love, and that must, at last make way for obedience in death, where the wrath of God closed over and obliterated the hatred and wickedness of man. Such was Christ. All sorrow concentrated in His death, where the comfort of active love and the communion with His Father could put no alleviating sweetness, or be, for a moment, mingled with that dreadful cup of wrath. There, promises, royal glory in title, all was given up, to have them infallibly anew received in glory from the Father's hand, with a better and higher glory, which He had ever had, indeed, but now would enter into as man.

## The Sufferings of Christ: Part 2

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The sufferings of our blessed Lord are too solemn, too holy a subject to dispose one who feels he owes his all to them, to make them a subject of dispute or controversy. It is my desire to avoid this-yet not so as to let disastrous and fatal error overcome my heart. I judge, too, that it is much to be desired that the "Bible Treasury" should not be a journal of controversy, but occupy itself with the positive putting forth of truths such as the Church of God requires, and which edify and enlighten it. I am satisfied that in the unwonted movement of mind, the intellectual craving, and that which always accompanies such a movement, the unsettling of the minds of thousands upon all manner of important questions, which exists at present, the most useful and necessary task for a servant of Christ, in connection with such a publication, is, to furnish food, to meet the requirements of men's minds with truth, which, by solidly satisfying their awakened desire, may peacefully guard them against being blown about by every wind of doctrine; while holding fast fundamental truth, to give from the Divine mind, revealed to us in the word, what can carry the soul, while steadying it at the sometime, really beyond the most venturesome and dangerous flights of human intellectualism. The Christian, through grace, can hope to do this, because he draws, not from his own resources, but from the word of God, from Divine sources of truth. Such, I am satisfied, ought the "Bible Treasury" to be in order to be useful. I am not unapprised, though happily living out of the reach of most of the religious warfare that is abroad in England, that an attack has been made, without naming them, on persons alleged to hold certain views as to the sufferings of Christ, and that they are declared to be semi-Socinians. I do not think that such an attack deserves an answer-at any rate it does not burden me much, and I do not feel disposed to mix up questions that relate to the sufferings of Christ with so small a matter as personal attacks of the kind. The Wesleyans, whatever the correctness of their views on other points may be, would be surprised to find themselves to be semi-Socinians, for such a phrase as this, in Bunting's sermon on justification by faith, which I happen to have lying before me: "It is only as a Lamb slain, that He takes away our sins." Indeed, the errors which are said to be renewed, and declared to be evil, in the passage quoted; by the accuser, are blamed because they divide the orthodox. Do they count semi-Socinianism orthodox? But enough and too much.

Multitudes of saints, with perhaps undefined apprehensions of the manner of the application of the sufferings of the blessed Lord to their profit, look at all the sufferings of Christ with an adoring feeling of their infinite value, and believe that all are for themselves, undergone in love to them, and the means of their blessing. I can only pray God that this feeling may be deepened in them and in myself too. I do not believe one sorrow was wanting to Christ, nor one sigh of His which had not infinite value, nor which is not precious for me, and, blessed be God, a part of my blessing. He has given Himself for us, and this was a part of that given, or the fruit of it. We cannot feel it too deeply. The true question lies beyond all this, and is not touched on in the attack I have referred to, which is an additional reason for my not replying to it as such. What I object to and judge to be evil, in what is afloat among Christians, is not even the doctrine that the sufferings of Christ, during His lifetime, were vicarious; even where this is incorrectly stated, I might seek, in such a case, to make

the apprehensions of the mind clearer, where it was needed; but in no case, that I am aware of, should I have an idea of treating it as heretical. On the contrary, the doctrine which I denounce as evil, where it has been carefully developed and justified, (and the author of these views is in the good esteem of the writer of the article I refer to) teaches very specifically that the sufferings of the blessed Lord, during His lifetime, were not vicarious; that it is a mistake and an error to hold them so. It teaches that they were the consequence of His association, by birth, with man and with Israel, and that Christ had all the experiences which an unconverted man ought to have. It teaches that Christ was dried up and withered by Jehovah's anger, not vicariously, but by reason of the place He was in. That is what I abhor. I do not find the persons so jealous of semi-Socinianism moved to this jealousy by these and the like doctrines, nor others almost equally mischievous, in those they applaud and quote. And this abominable doctrine as to Christ has gone very far. Tracts are published, in which the darkness of unbelief in us, and an inability to pray, are declared to be the partaking of the sufferings of Christ; and that when a Christian doubts of his salvation, that too is the fellowship of Christ's sorrow. "There were moments," I read, "when Jesus appears to have had fears for His ultimate deliverance and safety He entreated, at least, that a way of escape might be left Him that He might not be shut in in hopeless despair! Oh, what deep depths we may be led into, through our own prayer, to know the 'fellowship of His sufferings,' yet who that remembers what joint-heirship with Him involves, can expect, or even desire entire exemption from them?" That is, in desiring to have part in Christ's sufferings, we may get into despair, or all but. Was this doubting His own deliverance vicarious in Christ? What is it in those who come into it after He has wrought a perfect redemption? Nor is this all. I read, "Jesus knew what it was to be apparently set fast in His onward course, as is strikingly expressed under the figure of miry clay, sink in deep mire (margin, mire of the depth) where there is no standing "Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sunk.' 'He brought me up also out of the miry clay, out of an horrible pit.' It was no light thing which made Jesus express Himself thus. He knew what it was, by painful experience, to be in such a position. Thus He says in Psa. 38:16, 17, 'When my foot slipped, (who but knows the difficulty of walking in miry clay without slipping,) they magnify themselves against me, for I am ready to halt.' He would have shrunk back if He could consistently with his Father's will. 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.' What comfort is this for believers when they are ready to halt (set fast)!"

What shall I say to such language? I know not with any certainty whose it is. I have understood that they are the statements of a deceased female, whose life and correspondence I have never seen. Wisdom might have corrected and set them right, if this be so, when she was living; but they have been published as tracts for edification by those who have approved of them, and I am entitled to treat them as theirs. Is suffering vicarious when it is our privilege to pass through the same, and doubt of our ultimate deliverance, as Jesus appears to have had fears for His? Did the Lord slip vicariously? No, reader, you have the fruit, and that published by teachers as piety, of the system I denounce. It is largely afloat. It may be more guarded by the theologians, more nakedly stated when a female's feelings are possessed by it; but the doctrine, the root and principle of it, belongs to a whole school of doctrine. You have some of the ripe fruits here. Christ slipped, "and who but knows the difficulty of walking in miry clay without slipping?" I do not charge the whole school with accepting such fruits as these, but I do charge their principles and their doctrine with being the root which bears them. Some who published the tracts and the biography, (if what I am informed be correct,) must have been brought, by being habituated to this doctrine, and the

ignorant application of Psalms, and other parts of scripture, to Christ, to see only what was edifying in saying that Christ's foot slipped—He not having succeeded in overcoming the difficulty of not doing so—and that this is a great comfort for believers when they are set fast in the mire—it is to be supposed when they slip too, and this is the fellowship of His sufferings! Seasons of spiritual darkness are an answer to a prayer to know Him, and the fellowship of His sufferings; “and in no case, perhaps, can Christian experience be more fully or minutely traced out, as real participation in the sufferings of Christ Jesus, the head of His body.” A justification of the darkness of unbelief— not the travailing sorrows of love for others, which, however, are here confounded with them, but of darkness and almost despair for oneself, viewed as the fellowship of Christ's sufferings,—is beyond all, I avow, that I could ever have imagined the perversion of a misguided mind could have led to. If it were vicarious in Christ, I suppose these doctors must make it so in the Christian now, for it is the fruit of his prayers for fellowship in Christ's sufferings. It is not, they tell us, unbelief but privilege; not a needed exercise of heart, but a conferred one; not one whose blessing is a needed one for the soul who goes through it, its own humiliation or its discipline. For whom is it undergone? Indeed, in the same tract it is said that Christ is to see of the travail of His soul, and Gethsemane and the cross are specifically referred to, so, it is said, ministers travail in birth for their little children, till Christ be formed within them; and this is circulated as beautiful piety. I do not trust myself to express what I feel. It was said by the leader of this school, referring to Christ, that we need not be surprised if a person going up an ice mountain, with a heavy load on his back, should slip. This ripens under female feeling into the declaration that He did; a conclusion unfairly drawn from this abuse of the psalm, fairly followed out. And these public teachers go a step further now, and comfort believers with the thought that Christ actually slipped, His path was so difficult.

But I repeat, it is the just and natural fruit of a school of doctrine admired by very many really Christian people. The tree is known by its fruits.

That Christ suffered every possible sorrow which can come upon man through sin (I do not speak, I need hardly say, of final condemnation); and that all His sorrows were, in one way or other, (for they were various,) the consequence and fruit of sin, though of His own love too, is most precious true. That in all my sorrows and temptations and trials, even those which come through my faults or infirmities, I may know that He feels either with or for me, is of infinite value. But to make the infirmities of my faith, my hours of darkness, and unbelieving fears of final failure, the fellowship of his sufferings, and his slipping a comfort to my soul, is the last excess of spiritual pride and folly.

But the principle which has borne this fruit connects itself on one side with the question of the vicariousness of Christ's life, at least with the view taken of it by the school I have in view, because the true character of wrath against sin and atonement is lost sight of. It is this last point which I would desire now to give its just place to, and leave all controversy connected with it pretty much aside, though I shall refer to the opinion of old writers.

We cannot have too deep a sense of the depth of the Lord's suffering in His atoning work, of that which no human word is competent to express (for in human language we express but our own feelings)—what the Lord's drinking the cup of divine wrath was to Him. With this nothing can be mingled and mixed up. Divine wrath against sin, really felt and truly felt in the soul of One who, by

His perfect holiness and love to God and sense of God's love in its infinite value, could know what Divine wrath was, and what it was to be made sin before God, of One too who was, by virtue of His person, able to sustain it, stands wholly apart and alone. Dreadful as the anticipation of it must have been, as it surely was, it was not that which was anticipated. No simple fact of death, dreadful as it was to the Prince of life, still less any human sufferings, real and absolute as His were, (and without one eye to pity, one heart to feel with the sufferer,) could be put on a level with Divine wrath. Hence, in Psa. 22 the Lord expresses it Himself alone; He refers to the violence and wickedness of man in that Psalm; He refers to His own sense of weakness; and, in the midst of all that, contrasts with it God's being far from Him, as the distinct point of conflict in it, but openly declares that in all sorrow where others had help, God had forsaken Him. Hence, as has been said elsewhere, the fruit of this is unmingled grace, and grace and blessing alone, because it was wrath and suffering from God for sin. Sorrows from man, man might be, and will be, judged for, if viewed as an enemy in will; the forsaking of God when Christ is made sin—who is to be judged for that? No, this stands absolutely and wholly alone, and Christ wholly alone in it. It works atonement, expiation. Can anyone else suffer what works that? Hence Christ puts Himself wholly alone in this Psa. 22—contrasts Himself with other believers. They trusted God and were delivered. He was forsaken. Suffering can go on of the deepest and most poignant kind, distress and anxiety even in respect of sin. Sufferings can go on even to death with its terrible power as such over the heart of man—can culminate to the very point where wrath is also found; but all close and reach their limit here; all stop totally, and wholly in their nature short of the wrath and forsaking of God. They have their place and character as elements of human sorrow, however extreme; but all give way when this is there. Who could feel sorrow though sorrow were there, when wrath, God's wrath against sin is there? Not merely bitter consequences on the sinner, even to death, for all that is true—and Christ has trodden that path—but divine wrath as such against sin—that stands alone: woe be to him who does not know it! Hence, even in the 69th Psalm, far, very far, as it goes in the sorrows and sufferings of Christ, and that in connection even with sins known to God, long as may be His cry, and to sense and feeling long unheard; yet the Spirit can introduce others into the same place. I do not say they suffered as much or as deeply—surely not; but they could suffer in the same way in the same position. “For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou least wounded.” (ver. 26). Hence judgment is looked for on them. It is not atonement. These sufferings from man bring judicial visitation on man. In Psa. 22 not a trace of associating others, or others being associated, with the Lord in his sorrow. All suffering saints are, as we have seen, contrasted with Him. When the redemption is accomplished by it, when He has been heard from the horns of the unicorns, then indeed He associates His brethren with Him, but it is in deliverance, joy, and peace. Who could make atonement, or bear wrath for its accomplishment, but One? In every other sorrow we can bear a part. And this difference between the 22nd and 69th Psalms is so marked that in the 69th, while dwelling on the sufferings which came upon Christ on His drawing near to death, and giving the cry of deep distress as to state and circumstances as its thesis, instead of presenting to us His being forsaken of God while crying to Him, He says, “But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O Jehovah, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation.” (ver. 13). Hence, in the expression of His anguish and sorrow, deep as it was, we have no word like the 22nd Psalm: “but thou hearest not.” Now it is impossible that a spiritual mind, one who knows something of the value of divine favor and being able to look to Him, however deep and inward the distress, be it even

through sins and failures, can fail to understand the immense and absolute difference of these two states: equally impossible, it is true, yea, blessedly so, to fathom the depth of that which the 22nd Psalm expresses.

Now it is the sense of the true bearing of wrath- direct wrath from God—when made sin, and suffering it, the being really forsaken of God as to the state of His soul, and because of sin so that it was necessary and deserved, though through others, but really undergone,—that it is of the very last importance, fundamentally important, to keep quite clear and fast hold of and maintain, and to hold as a clear foundation of everlasting truth. As regards the truth itself I repeat, no divinely-taught mind, however obscure it may be as to the doctrine of the proper nature and character of Christ's living sufferings however it may (through feelings) run up the depth of Christ's sorrows into mixing, with those sorrows, His atoning work -no divinely taught mind will, as to the positive truth, fail to distinguish from all else the reality of Christ's own soul bearing the direct inflicted wrath of God and the forsaking of God, which in grace He underwent; will fail to distinguish this from all other sorrow and suffering, however deep, in which He could say, for example, "But as for me, my prayer is unto thee in an acceptable time," in which He did not say, "But thou hearest not." He may find many passages difficult to explain, may be confused by the reasonings of others. He may as to his feelings, confuse anticipating the cup of wrath and drinking it. We have all, more or less, done this; but when the real bearing of wrath from God, the wrath of God for sin, is before his soul and conscience, he will bow his soul before that solemn work, he will know that Christ stood alone in it; nor will he ever mix it up, for one instant, with sorrow, however deep, in which others could bear a part. In all sorrows of active love, in all brought upon us by the government of God for sin, we—at any rate man—(as for example the Jewish remnant, and, in principle, sinners under the law,) can bear a thankful part or have to bow under it. Reproach may break man's heart: he may stand alone and be forsaken of men, he may cry out of the depths, because of sin; but bear the weight of wrath he knows he could not. He adores when he finds another has done it. But this demands a more orderly exposition.

## The Sufferings of Christ: Part 3

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There is a double character of suffering besides atoning work, which Christ has entered into and which others can feel. The sufferings arising from active love in the world, and the sorrow arising from the sense of chastenings in respect of sin, and these mixed with the pressure of Satan's power on the soul, and the terror of foreseen wrath. In the former we suffer with Christ as privilege, in the latter we suffer for our folly and under God's hand, but Christ has entered into it. He sympathizes with us. But all this is distinct from suffering instead of us, so as to save us from the suffering, undergoing God's wrath that we might not. In atonement He suffers for us; in service we suffer with Him; in our distresses about sin and agony of mind He felt with us. We shall see that the Lord Himself and the teaching of the Gospels clearly distinguish the sufferings of Christ during His ministry here, and His closing sufferings, and these last (even though taking place at the same time) from His atoning work. As soon as the Lord was baptized by John, the Holy Ghost came upon Him and He entered on His public ministry; but as a first and introductory step to it, He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. He overcame, the strong man was bound, and He proceeded to spoil his goods: He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him. Let it be possession, sickness, death: all and every fruit of the power of the enemy disappeared before His word. He went through sorrow—reproach from man, He took their burdens upon Himself. I have no doubt that Christ never healed a sick man without bearing in His spirit and heart the burden of it, as the fruit and power of evil; but all this was the activity of His love. Himself bare our infirmities and carried our sicknesses. This is said, remark, when He healed them. Bearing our griefs and sorrows and delivering us from them by power is not bearing our sin itself under the wrath of God.

But, further, Satan was not with Him in the way of direct temptation during the course of His ministry.

We read in Luke, "And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season." But at the close of His life He could say, "henceforth I will not talk much with you, for the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me," &c. Here a distinct change takes place again as to the position of the Lord in respect of the presence of Satan. Hence He could say to those who came from the chief priests afterward, But this is your hour and the power of darkness. Previously He had sat daily with them in the temple and they had laid no hands on Him; but this (terrible word for these unhappy men!) was their hour and the power of darkness. He that had the power of death was busy there with the Lord, nor did He withdraw Himself from the trial. His soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and he who had the power of darkness brought it all to bear upon His soul; but even here He could look for His disciples to watch with Him. They could be sifted as wheat, though their only resource, as that hour came on with real power, was to flee, or they entered into the temptation; (at least then when they knew not the power of the Holy Ghost working in them, for they should follow Christ afterward, as He told Peter at least). This difference of His own position the Lord marks to them very clearly. "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? and they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now he that

hath a purse let him take it, and likewise his scrip, and he that hath no sword, let Him sell his garment and buy one; for I say unto you that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors, for the things concerning me have an end.”

Now all was changed. Before, He had protected them by His divine power, by which He wrought in the world. Now, while His divine person was ever the same, and His power in itself unchangeable, He was to be rejected and suffer. The glory would come, but first He must suffer many things, and be rejected of that generation. This He taught specially to His disciples from the time of Peter's confession of Him as Son of the living God from the transfiguration onward, and in His last journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. Not that He was suffering these things then: His hour, we read in John, was not yet come; but He taught them that He must. (See Matt. 16:21; 17:12: “shall suffer,” —μ■λλει π■σχειν,—and verse 22 of the same chapter. Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22). And it is the more remarkable because it is then He charges His disciples to tell no man He was the Christ, saying “the Son of man must suffer.” He was giving up, practically, His ministry of the circumcision for the truth of God, the witness of Jehovah Messiah, and about to enter on another, the sufferings of the Son of man. It will be remarked that it is on the suggestion of this title also to His spirit by the coming up of the Greeks, in John 12., that His cross and death rise up at once before His soul. (Compare Psa. 2 and the use made of Psa. 8 by the apostle in Heb. 2).

But to return to our immediate point. He tells them that He was about to suffer. We have seen that the prince of this world was to come. Satan entered into Judas, and it was the hour of His enemies and the power of darkness. This He spoke at the time He met the band from the chief priests, at the close of Gethsemane. Here there was a distinctly announced and openly declared change that took place in the character of the Lord's service and suffering—His position. It is not His service as Prince of life, though He ever was this, and proved it, spoiling the goods of His vanquished enemy—The prince of this world cometh.” It is the power of darkness, and His undergoing it in agony for our sakes;—His soul sorrowful, even unto death; the whole power on His own soul of the enemy, as having the power of death: still this was yet in communion and supplication with His Father about it, and heard of Him. And here we have the most distinct and definite revelation from His own lips that He was not yet drinking the cup which His Father gave Him to drink. He prays that He might not drink it, that if it were possible the cup might pass from Him, but that if not unless He drank it, His submission to His Father's will was perfect. Here, doubtless, His soul enters in the deepest way into what it was that He had to drink—it was sorrowful, even unto death, but being in an agony (conflict) He prayed more earnestly. He was heard. He did not take the cup from man's hand, nor from Satan's hand, though both were there to press Him down, and all His weakness felt as man; but He goes through the thought of that, and death itself, in heard supplication with Him who was able to save Him from it, and takes the cup in perfect peace, as to man and Satan's power of darkness, from His Father's hand, and offers Himself freely, that none that the Father had given Him might be lost. (See John 18:4-11). The Father had given Him the cup to drink. He does not draw back from it, but freely offers Himself for us. Had He not done so in blessed obedience, He had only to walk away before His prostrate pursuers, or have demanded legions of angels to free Him from their power. But how should the scriptures have been fulfilled? But on the cross all is finished God forsakes Him, and all the wrath of God poured out on Him who knew no sin, but was made sin for us—on One who in His fully-tried life knew no sin. If any there had been, or any had been possible, the time for consciousness of it had been then. Every trial which could have drawn

it out, if it had been there to be conscious of, had reached its full height, but the spotless offering on which no yoke had been, He who offered Himself without spot to God, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He made His soul an offering for sin, as it is said in the passage of Isaiah, referred to by the Lord Himself; (Luke 22:37), as that which was yet to come, “and he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors, and bare the sins of many.”

And now, before I go further, I ask, Is not His death presented in Scripture as that by which redemption was wrought; His precious blood as its efficacious means? Have we not redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins? Is it not by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot? Is it not declared that without shedding of blood there is no remission? Let the reader take the 9th chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, which I shall allow myself to quote here in full. It is well worth all human authority, be they of what age they may. “But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover, he sprinkled likewise with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others: for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.” (Ver. 11-28.)

Let the reader remark that “without shedding of blood there is no remission” —the declaration that He must often have suffered if He was to offer Himself often, as the high priest with the blood of others, but that it was once, in the end of the world, He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” Let him turn to chapter x., where, in contrast with daily ministrations, “this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat

down.” Was the way into the holiest to be opened? It was through the rent veil, that is to say, His flesh. Indeed, if we examine the value of the death of Christ, what do we find attached to it in scripture?

Do I need redemption? We have redemption through His blood, an eternal redemption, for neither by the blood of goats or of calves, but by his own blood, he is entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

Do I need forgiveness? That redemption which I have through His blood is the forgiveness of sins -yea, without shedding of blood is no remission.

Do I need peace? He has made peace through the blood of His cross.

Do I need reconciliation with God? Though we were sinners, yet now hath He reconciled us by the body of His flesh through death, to present us holy and unblameable, and unproveable in God's sight. When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.

Do I desire to be dead to sin and have the flesh crucified with its affections and lusts? I am crucified with Christ. Knowing this that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed; for in that He died, He died unto sin once, and in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. This is my deliverance also from the charge and burthen of the law which has dominion over a man as long as he lives.

Do I feel the need of propitiation? Christ is set forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood. The need of justification? I am justified by His blood.

Would I have a part with Christ? He must die, for except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone: if it die it brings forth much fruit.

Hence, unto what am I baptized as the public expression of my faith? As many of us as are baptized into Christ have been baptized into His death; for what indeed has broken down the middle wall of partition and let in the Gentiles, slaying the enmity and reconciling Jew and Gentile in one body to God? The Cross. How have we boldness to enter into the holiest? By the blood of Jesus, by that new and living way which He has consecrated for us through the veil, that is His flesh; for till that was rent the Holy Ghost signified by it that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest Hence it was a lifted-up Christ that was the attractive point for all. “If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me.”

In the power of what was the great Shepherd of the sheep brought again from the dead? Through the blood of the everlasting covenant.

How was the curse of the law taken away from those who were under it? By Christ's being made a curse for them, as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.

How are we washed from our sins? He has loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, for His blood cleanseth from all sin.

If I would be delivered from the world, it is by the cross, by which the world is crucified to me and I unto the world.

If the love of Christ constrains me towards men in the thought of the terror of the Lord, how is it so? Because I thus judge, if One died for all then were all dead, and they that live should live not to themselves, but to Him who died for them and rose again. Hence the apostle knew no man after the flesh—no, not even Christ. All was a new creation. If I would live in divine power, it is always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be manifested in my mortal body. If He would institute a special remembrance to call Him to mind, it was a broken body and a shed blood. It is not less a Lamb as it were slain that is found in the throne.

All was love no doubt, but do I want to learn it? Hereby we know it that He laid down His life for us, and that even of God in that He loved us and gave His Son as a propitiation for our sins. It is to the sprinkling of that precious blood of Christ that we are sanctified, and to obedience; and through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once (contrasted with the many Jewish sacrifices), sanctified and perfected forever, so that there is no more offering for sin, for having offered one sacrifice for sins He is set down forever at the right hand of God. For He should not offer Himself often, as the high priest entered into the holy place once every year with the blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world He hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; for as it is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and to them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Do I desire, therefore, my conscience purged? It is through the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God. For it is by means of death that there is the redemption of the transgressions -which were under the first covenant, and in that view He became Mediator. Indeed, a testament could have no force while the testator lived.

Do I seek the destruction of the power of Satan? It is through death that He destroyed [the power of] him that had the power of death.

What do I find to be the central object of Christ's coming—the groundwork of His glory as man? We see Him made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that He by the grace of God might taste death for every man And even the purifying and reconciling all things in heaven and earth depends on this. (Heb. 9:23; Col. 1:20.)

Would He sanctify even the Jewish people to Himself? It must be by His blood, suffering, rejected, without the gate. No remission for us—no privileges of the new covenant for us, nor establishing of it with them, without this blood—redemption is not without it. The living sinner as such cannot be presented to God, nor a living Christ offer that by which the sinner must draw nigh. The veil remains unrent, the conscience unpurged, the propitiation unaccomplished. God forbore with the Old Testament saints, and has shown His righteousness in doing so now—a righteousness now declared in that propitiatory set forth through faith in Christ's blood. It is alleged, indeed, that He came to do God's will in taking the place of the sacrifices, and that His obedience during life is available in expiation; but we read, “by the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

It is alleged that His living obedience had the same legal character as His death. Is it the same thing, then, to obey the law with unfeigned heart, so as to be perfectly acceptable to God personally, and to bear its curse for others under the wrath and judgment of God? Is it possible

that Christians, who know what the need of their own souls as sinners is, can use such reasoning?

Having thus proposed the blessed value of Christ's death from Scripture, and leaving it to its own force without comment, allow me to go yet a little further into the elements and character of His sufferings as available for us, so that we may the more fully appreciate His grace. Man may be looked at morally in three conditions; first, as a sinner under condemnation; secondly, as a saint through grace, partaker of the divine nature, and of the Holy Ghost as his force; and, thirdly, as suffering, though awakened, quickened, and upright in desire, under the exercises of a soul learning, when a sinner, the difference of good and evil under divine government in the presence of God, not fully known in grace and redemption, whose judgment of sin is before his eyes, exposed to all the advantage that Satan can take of him in such a state, such suffering, for example, as is seen in the case of Job. Christ has passed through all these kinds of suffering, only the last of course as Himself a perfect being to learn it for others; I need not say that He was perfect in all. But what met the first condition, that of a sinner under condemnation, He went through as actually bearing sin, and so enduring wrath vicariously for others, that they never might have it to endure. The second He was truly in Himself, nay our leader in that path. To the first of these conditions, our being under judgment and condemnation for sin, Christ's death upon the cross is the divine answer in expiation. All that God was in His nature, He was necessarily against sin; for though He were love, love has no place in wrath against sin, and the withdrawal of the sense of it, consciousness in the soul of the privation of God, is the most dreadful of all sufferings, the most terrible horror to him who knows it; and Christ knew it infinitely. But God's divine majesty, His holiness, His righteousness, His truth, all in their very nature bore against Christ as made sin for us. All that God was, was against sin, and Christ was made sin. No comfort of love enfeebled wrath there. Never was the obedient Christ so precious, but His soul was to be made an offering for sin, and to bear it judicially before God. At the end of the three hours of darkness, this is expressed by the Lord in the words of Psa. 22, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The result, and that to the end of time and indeed for an endless eternity of unmingled grace for us, has been already touched on, and I will advert to it again in connection with remarkable facts as to the expressions of the Lord Himself. Here the Lord suffered that not one drop of what He took might remain for us. It had been everlasting misery and ruin for us—His own divine perfection in love went through it without one ray of comfort from God or man. All other sorrows pressed Him onward with accumulating power to this and merged in it, in that darkness which hid all but the wrath He was enduring from God. Judges had been heartlessly unrighteous, and washed their hands of such an One and His matters—the chief priests, who should intercede for the infirm, cry for cruel death upon the guiltless—the friends on whom His heart ought to have been able to count (and He looked for comforters, and would have had the most favored of them watch with Him), actually forsake and deny Him; and the unfaithfulness of a friend is bitterer than the assault of an enemy. But all this was the proof of the power of one who exercised unlimited dominion (save so far as grace delivered) over, and had his rights through sin and the power of death over, him whom the Lord came to deliver; and it was his hour and the power of darkness. All he can do he does; but it only led the Lord through conflict, of which I will speak just now, in willing offering of Himself, letting His own go their way, to the last scene when, deprived of all human comfort, He was to accomplish the work of propitiation, alone with God judging sin—that scene which stands alone, which no eye can fathom (though, blessed be God, we truly know its meaning) but His who knows Divine wrath against sin as God alone knows it. Bulls of Bashan were there, dogs with no

shame of heart, but only to drive the sufferer to seek for succor where He was to learn in all its utter depth for us what it was to be forsaken of God—an hour passed forever with divine and eternal glory for fruit. He even could say, so great was the infinite and truly divine value of that hour and work, “therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.”

But willingly as I expatiate on this blessed, yet most solemn, subject, I must leave it and turn to another and brighter, yet to us humbling character of the Lord's sufferings—those which He endured as the Holy One glorifying God, when the reproaches of those that reproached God fell on Him. This went on up to His death. They flowed from His declaring righteousness in the great congregation; from His perfectly manifesting God amongst men, who had no relish for the light, so that for His love He had hatred. I do not enlarge upon this simply because I apprehend it can offer no difficulty to my reader. In our little and imperfect measure, we have our share in this kind of suffering. It is our privilege as saints. “To you it is given.... not only to believe on him, but to suffer for his sake.” “If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him.” “To do well, suffer for it, and take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.” Quotations could be multiplied to show how we are thus called to suffer as He suffered, as Paul speaks of his filling up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ, for His body's sake, the Church. In the measure in which we manifest Christ as He manifested His Father, in our walk and testimony, we shall suffer for it as He suffered, and His consolations will abound—a meat to eat which the flesh knows not of. He could thank His Father when He had most sorrowfully and justly to reproach the world.

But I now come to the third character of trial in which man stands, which requires a little more attention—that which is not the fruit of holy witness in the world, (though it may in a certain way accompany it,) nor the enduring the wrath of God in condemnation, which for us would be everlasting misery, but the fruit of sin under the government of God in this world, and connected with the power of Satan in it. That which, as used of God, is the means of our learning the difference between good and evil, whether in terror before the knowledge of redemption, or even by various exercises though in an altogether different state of soul after we know it, for God continues even then His instructive government, founded on His immutable judgment of good and evil; that which in terror brings righteousness, though not without hope, before us, or when redemption is known and divine righteousness is our state, ministers co practical holiness of life and judgment, according to the divine nature of which we are made partakers. If we take the case of the remnant of the Jews in the latter day we shall more readily understand this, though it is in principle the case of thousands of upright souls under the law, and a principle on which God has acted from the beginning of man's failure. The sentence of death, of sorrow on the woman, were judgments pronounced upon sin, as part of the display of God's government in this world, not in themselves everlasting condemnation and separation from God because of the holiness of His nature. That power of death and its terrors over the mind Satan wields. (Heb. 2:14.) Here it is that the thought of God's righteous judgment against sin, and the pains of death, and the power of Satan, unite in their pressure upon the soul. So when a soul is convinced of sin, and practically under the law, (that is, the requirements of God's righteousness on living man,) the judgment of God is feared, the terrors of the Almighty can drink up the spirit; God thus teaches a man what he is, what he is worth in this solemn question between Satan and God, the power of evil and of good. See the case of Job; God sustains man in grace and the sense of integrity, so that he clings to

dependence on God, come what will; yet judgment is feared, God's holiness and righteousness pressed on the spirit weighed down with the sense of sin, the power of death as ending nature's hope and leading to judgment is there, and Satan uses it to drive to despair, to destroy faith and break the spirit of man away from depending on God and believing in His love. Without the atonement, there could be no answer in grace to this state, because we have deserved condemnation, and if new life be there which clings to God, yet this very life gives the sense of God's holiness, which brings judgment on the soul conscious of sin. When the full work of grace in redemption is learned, the soul obtains a peace only the more solid, and indeed only thereby really solid, that it has passed through these exercises by which sin is known, by which God's judgment of it is before the soul by His own convincing work, and Satan's effort spent and resulting only in bringing us to the answer which atonement gives, and thus his power over us destroyed and gone forever. But though the answer to and deliverance from this state is the full and perfect redemption wrought by Christ, by which we are wholly taken out of the state in which we stood accused and liable to judgment, and transferred into the position of the second Adam before God, of Him who is now gone to His Father and our Father, His God and our God, there is positive and direct grace in the exercise itself. For, besides this deliverance and salvation by which our miserable case is met, there is a real learning of the difference of good and evil before God -learned, I admit, more blessedly when redemption is known and we are in possession of perfect good in grace, so that evil is thus judged, and we are delivered from its deceits; but still, profitably learned in the knowledge of our wretchedness, guilt, sin, powerlessness against evil, even when we would what is good, and the solemnity of the question involved in the salvation of the soul, where the claims and power of Satan through sin, in which we have listened to and subjected ourselves to him, and the righteous nature and title of God, are brought to issue in a soul, subjected to sin on one side, and quickened to own God's title and delight in His nature and so judge its own evil on the other; and that in the presence of the righteous judgment of God. Now before obtaining the peace acquired by the knowledge of redemption Christ sustains, encourages, relieves by times the soul in this state, but not so as to hinder its learning this deep and solemn lesson which has its fruit in eternity; nor so as to prevent its finding its only resource in the redemption He has accomplished.

But in the case of the remnant of Israel in the latter days, we find these exercises of heart and spirit gone through in circumstances where the government of God is historically developed as to a people sinful under law, yet renewed and quickened of God, so that the desires and consciousness of uprightness are there. The circumstances are, with more complete development, the continuation of those in which the Jews were in the time of our Lord, only that antichrist is manifested, the body of the people are given up to unbelief and the unbridled influence of Satan-seven devils, worse than the old spirit of idolatry, but along with it, are entered into them. In a word, it is the time of Satan's power, the power of darkness, of the oppression of the Gentiles, of the same Roman beast. In the midst of this, the remnant find themselves, on the one side, conscious of the nation's guilt under the law, and of their filling up of their sins, so that wrath was come upon them, the just vengeance of God; yet they feel this because they are renewed and quickened; and the Jehovah they have sinned against is their only hope. Yet how difficult to trust God for help in difficulties in which we find ourselves under His hand by our shining against Him! Without atonement, they could not be dealt with in grace. The goat of atonement had been offered so that God could deal with them about their sins for their good, sustain their faith, yet make them feel the weight of their sins, and the darkness they had brought themselves into; and, at the same

time, say, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and seeth no light? let him trust in the name of Jehovah, and stay himself on his God." But the true Aaron had not come forth, so that Israel's sins should be, in administrative application, sent away on the scape goat into the land not inhabited.

Now here the judgment of God against them, the sense of guilt under a broken law and national unfaithfulness, the full power of Satan and the darkness it brings—all rest on the spirit of the people; yet, though smitten in the place of dragons, there is integrity of heart, earnest desires after the law, and after God Himself and His worship, and trust in Him as their only resource. Thus the full judgment of evil is wrought in them, in hope of goodness and mercy prophetically revealed. Who is to furnish thoughts; feelings; faith, hope, which can be known to be acceptable and a sustaining ground of faith till they look on Him whom they have pierced and find peace? The answer to this question, as well as the ground-work of atonement, is found in Christ. All this exercise Christ entered into so as to be able to help them. "This poor man cried" — "God has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted," and that, when He had been really forsaken of God, the real ground of hope for the people. When He was on this earth, the power of Gentile evil, with no fear of God before their eyes, was there; the apostate wickedness of the priestly rulers of Israel who would have no king but Caesar, and who called for the blood of their King to be on them and their children—the power of Satan and darkness was there; the judgment of God standing out in all its truthfulness and terror, not one godly man left; the guilt of Israel under a broken law and in the rejection of Jehovah and their King—of the Anointed as of the Lord, pressed upon the spirit of any intelligent saint, if such there were, as in the last days.

## The Sufferings of Christ: Part 4

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IT was not now, in these last scenes of Christ's life, the manifestation of the Lord in grace to Israel, the revelation of the Father's name to the few given to Jesus out of the world, but the endurance of Israel's own case under the government of Jehovah, when guilty and rejecting their own mercies, yet with the sense a holy soul, wrapped up in Israel's blessings, would have of such a state before the judgment of God; not made a curse and drinking the cup, but the sense of it under God's government and Satan's power. Here good and evil were fully entered into and proved of the Lord. That is, He must undergo the whole power of evil, not as in judgment, but as trial. Was Satan using death as darkness, sorrow, and terror; with God's judgment sanctioning the pressure of it on the soul; men but his instruments to add to the grief, be they friends or foes? Was Israel's sin and rejection of good come to its height? was all this used by Satan against the soul of Christ to stay Him in the path; and was He to enter into the temptation which thus pressed on Him and give way; or, trusting God, was He to go on in the path of obedience, and drink the cup itself in obedience to God His Father? In the synoptical gospels we have the trial; in John, the full and blessed answer. He passes through the trial with God, does not take what death imports from Satan's hand, so to speak, nor stop in His path, but while going perfectly through it as the power of darkness, receives the cup itself, instead of drinking from it under Satan's terror, from His Father's hand, and gives Himself freely up in love and obedience to expiate the sin under God's hand and wrath, which Satan had in vain wielded to deter Him from it. The power of evil as trial was broken entirely, and Satan's power of darkness annulled for us. Man might be made to pass through it under the government of God to learn what he was, what sin is, what the power of evil in which he has been lying is; but the sympathy and sustaining grace of Christ can support him through it, suggest the right thoughts and feelings under it and be found a resource in every pressure, so that faith should not fail, however sore that pressure may be. Atonement was needed for this, but the sympathy and consolations of Christ in the trial are what sustain and encourage the hearts of the remnant through their various trials down to the lowest depths of sorrow. If it be asked how they can profit by it, not having any direct knowledge of or faith in Christ? I reply, it is exactly what is furnished in the most admirable detail in the Psalms, where every part of their external sorrow and internal distress is expressed and entered into, the dreadful weight of a broken law, the power of adversaries without conscience, the temptation and pressure of the adversary, with the thoughts and feelings, whether of distress or faith, are given a voice to by divine grace, with the witness that He who in all their afflictions was afflicted, and the angel whose presence succored them, has not forgotten them in their deepest distress; but, as the poor man, has passed through it for them, and can comfort them when under it, putting His seal upon the holy desires He has awakened in them with the certainty of a divine answer, and that even by that Son of man, the branch which God made strong for Himself. Hence it is that these Psalms, besides the personal piety which is found in them, have been the comfort of distressed souls who were under the law, and not yet knowing the fullness of redemption. Hence, too, we find the desire of the judgment of enemies and the execution of vengeance, because it is by that judgment alone that the remnant of the people will be delivered. Hence, too, we find the assurance that the Lord will build up Zion, and the remnant of

His people inhabit it, in Psalms, where the sufferings of Christ are entered into in detail. Indeed, we have in the Psalms a complete and perfect history of the remnant in every circumstantial and moral phase of their path, both of Jews and Israel, and the result in blessing with Messiah, together with the way in which Christ has entered into it, these last Psalms being prophetic of Christ personally, though in many we have the remnant also, while all the Psalms are the expression of His Spirit. The godly remnant is the first thought in them-their subject; Christ's sympathy is with them. The first Psalm gives us the godly remnant, the subject of God's government; and the second, Messiah, King in Zion, object of His counsel and decree; and after that, all the various experiences which flow from His rejection, up to the glory at the end.

I have already shown that the time in which Christ went through the distress and sorrow, under which the remnant fall through their sins, was not that of those public services by which He was the light of the world, revealing to others His Father's name, but when (going again up to Jerusalem for that purpose, and setting His face as a flint for it, and not hiding His face from shame and spitting, His rejection being the ground of Israel's divorce, Isa. 1.), He was subject to the fullest exercise of soul, under the power of darkness, in the hour of His rebellious rejecters, who could triumph in His apparent rejection; when all was changed from the time that He sat daily in the temple, and no man laid hands upon Him; when the prince of this world came.

Few, comparatively, of the Psalms apply wholly and exclusively to Christ. The great body of them express the working of His Spirit in the hearts of His tried ones. The difference, even where suffering is the subject, between those which are, and those which are not, exclusively applicable to Him, is very evident, and particularly between His sufferings from the hand of God and from the hand of man, even when this was under the visitations of God and the power of the enemy. It is worth while to note these points distinctly. Psa. 2 refers personally to Christ as Messiah, and Son of God, born in this world; 8. as Son of man In 16. we find Him formally taking His place among the godly remnant, treading the path of life through death, up to fullness of joy in resurrection; 20. and 21. have, in a certain sense, also Christ alone for their subject; 22. clearly so. Sins are not confessed till 25. The integrity of heart of the remnant is presented, or Christ Himself. Besides these, 40., though mainly of Him, is not absolutely so; see verse 5. In 45. He is clearly celebrated; 69 speaks also chiefly but not exclusively of Him; see verse 26. In 72. we find Him again as Solomon; 101. and 102. treat also of Him as King in Israel, and as, though cut off, Jehovah the Creator. In 110. He is exalted to Jehovah's right hand, to be priest after the order of Melchizedec. In other Psalms He is introduced, but He is not their personal subject. I do not call to mind others of which He is exclusively or pre-eminently the subject, though it is possible some one may have escaped me; my object is rather to give a certain number of distinct examples, than a list of them. As regards the Psalms which speaks of His sufferings, the marks which distinguish those which speak of His sufferings from man and those which express His sufferings under the hand of God, are very clear and decisive. Thus Psa. 20; 21 He suffers from the hand of man. The consequence is, 21. announces judgment on man. So it is in 69: though other elements are found there. The Psalm treats of the number of those who hate Him without a cause, who give Him gall for meat and in His thirst give Him vinegar to drink; and He desires that their table be a snare to them; that their eyes be darkened, and that God should pour out His indignation upon them. So even in Psa. 31, though it has less of this character, yet it still has this distinctive mark of the looking for judgment on the wicked. (Ver. 17, 18.)

I have already remarked that in sorrows from human persecution, on account of what is good, His saints can have a part. The pressure of it, in connection with sins, and the desire of vengeance or judgment, finds its accomplishment in the remnant of the Jews in the last day. In Psa. 102, where, though the enemies are seen, the sorrow of Messiah is traced to God's indignation and wrath, who has lifted Him up as Messiah, and cast Him down, even to the dust of death, no desire for judgment is expressed, but blessing and grace are the result. This is most strikingly displayed in Psa. 22 where the atoning work of the cross is the distinct and definite subject. As soon as the Lord is heard from the horns of the unicorn, His first thought, as indeed it historically was, is to make known all the blessing of His God and Father's name, where in unclouded blessing in righteousness He now stood, to His brethren. Then He praises in the midst of the Church, then in the great congregation-all Israel in the latter day; then the blessing reaches all the ends of the earth in millennial mercies; then the seed afterward born. To all, the word is that He has done this. No trace of judgment from Him who has borne sin and wrath for us; nor from Him who inflicted that wrath on Christ for us in the counsels of unutterable grace. Now in the 69th Psalm we have the cross also, and not merely the wickedness of man, though that is fully entered into; but the trusting of God and distress under the sense of sins. How is this to be distinguished from the atoning work of Christi Here the difficulty presents itself fully, but if we wait patiently on the Lord, all difficulties of Scripture are inlets to light and blessing. The mark I have noticed as indicating sufferings from man, and other distinguishing ones, are clearly found in this Psalm. Judgment is looked for on the enemies, an absolute and conclusive distinction in the very nature of the sufferings; and there is another characteristic already noticed, but to our purpose here.

We read, verse 26, "They persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and speak to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded." Here we have evidently more than man's persecutions. They take advantage of God's hand upon the sorrowing one, to add to His burden and grief. This is not atonement, but there is sorrow and smiting from God. Hence we find the sense of sins, (ver. 5,) though of course in the case of Christ they were not His own personally, but the nation's (in a certain sense we may say ours, but specially the nation's sin). But we have the clear proof that they are not atoning sufferings; because instead of suffering in the place of others so that they should not have one drop of that cup of wrath to drink, others are associated with the Lord here in them. "They persecute him whom thou hast smitten and speak to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded." When men are wounded too, when Christ is the companion with them-not a substitute for them-then atonement is not wrought nor the wrath of condemnation endured. Yet God has smitten and wounded. It is not merely man that has caused suffering Man comes in in malice to add to the sorrow. Thus we have along with the suffering from man at the epoch of the crucifixion, (the special subject of the Psalm,) bringing judgment on man, the third character of Christ's sufferings, the suffering under the government of God, at the epoch of His final sorrows in which the remnant will have its part and into which Christ is entered for them, afflicted in all their afflictions. Hence too, though in most deep waters, overflowed, weary of crying, Christ is not forsaken-His prayer is to God in an acceptable time. Deep as is the distress, it has a character wholly and entirely contrasted with atonement, yet it is not the ministry of Jesus in blessing in the enjoyment of the light of His Father's countenance, but the conflict and agony of His soul when the power of darkness is at work. Another very striking fact in the path of the blessed Lord, which I alluded to, is this. During the whole of His life of service, all through, including Gethsemane, Christ never addresses God by the name of God. He always says "Father." On the cross we know His

words were, "My God, my God." In His life this title would have been out of place-not of course because it did not belong to Him whom he addressed, but because it was not the expression of the unclouded relationship and conscious blessedness of Sonship in which the blessed Lord always stood. On the cross God was dealing with Him about sin, and therefore as God, in His nature, majesty, righteousness and truth. Here sin was to be dealt with as such by God, and the blessed One expresses according to truth the position in which His holy soul stood. We are permitted in wondrous grace to see Him in such a one. Infinite and wondrous grace it is. But the terms the Lord makes use of mark very clearly and solemnly the difference of the two positions in which the blessed Lord relatively stood. Till the cross the Lord walked in the enjoyment of the relationship of a Son with the Father, yea, an only-begotten Son, knowing that the Father heard him always. On the cross, as we have seen, all that God was against sin, He, made sin, had to feel, and meet, and endure, but then returned into the full joy of all that God and His Father was in righteousness. Redemption being accomplished, He brings His disciples into the enjoyment and joy of both. "I ascend to my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God."

When I speak of three characters of the sufferings of Christ, it is not that He did not in detail suffer in a thousand ways; yea, everything was a suffering, His perfectness and love being shown in enduring. I speak merely of three distinct positions in which, or principles on which, He suffered. Another question arises, connected with these points, as to the active and passive obedience of Christ, as it is called. Whether the righteousness of Christ, as obedient under the law, is imputed to us; and then also as to His priesthood: but this I must reserve, if the Lord will, for another paper; it will be time enough then to consider the opinions of men. One thing is certain, that without shedding of blood there is no remission, and it is a singular atonement and vicarious work which had no such effect. There was, we are told, "a sin-bearing life," —that the sufferings of Christ during His life were satisfactory; yet they obtain no remission, for without shedding of blood is no remission. My earnest objection, however, is not against this, but against a doctrine, which, on the contrary, declares that these sufferings were not vicarious, but the effect of Christ's being born a man and a Jew, and which makes us consequently partakers of these sufferings under wrath as our privilege. Still, those who insist that Christ's living sufferings were satisfactory, and that all His sufferings wrought the work of redemption, should explain how it is that remission is wholly by something else.

Finally, I say that he who says that Christ, when He said, "I cry in the day-time, and thou hearest not," and when He said, "I know that thou hearest me always," when He said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and when He said, "He that sent me is with me; the Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please Him," was in the same position, and accomplishing the same work before God, knows neither the tenor of His life nor the true power of His death rightly before God. Acceptable He always was; but bearing wrath unheard, and enjoying divine favors, knowing He was always heard, is not the same thing; and he who holds that it is, does not yet know what his sins have cost the Lord.

One great root, let me just add, of all this, (prevalent evidently in Scotland, and I fear not confined to it, and the true root of Irvingism and semi-Irvingism,) is an abuse of Scripture language, found, if my memory be not very treacherous, in the "Night of Weeping," — that Christ was made bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. These words have no such application or use in Scripture—they are not indeed found there. We, the Church, are bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh, now that

He is glorified and the saints united to Him who is on high. The thought is a totally different one and does not refer to His incarnation but to our union with Him when glorified. As incarnate, He abode alone. But this would lead me to a point I hope to touch on, the Lord willing, in another paper.

I close this paper, already too long, but justified by the importance of the subject, by stating the different characteristic periods of Christ's life as presented by Scripture. First, until He was about thirty years old, (save-His going up to Jerusalem at twelve years old, and disputing with the doctors, given doubtless as a part of what He was in person and grace, and to show that His relationship to the Father did not depend on any extraordinary anointing for office by the Holy Ghost,) He remained in the obscurity of a patient and perfect life, awaiting His calling of God. He then associates Himself publicly with the remnant and is baptized by John, and is owned of the Father, sealed and anointed with the Holy Ghost. He therefore goes up, before His public service, into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. He overcomes and binds the strong man. Satan departs from Him for a season. Subsequently to this He goes about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him—does always such things as please Him—is always heard and knows it. Satan comes back as prince of this world, and having the power of death. At the beginning he had tempted Christ with all that might be hoped to allure Him, physically, spiritually, and by the glory of the world. Christ, having overcome, displayed the power which could deliver man from all the effects of that of Satan. Now man's enmity is brought out and Satan proves Him by the power of death and the terrible consequences of what man was in judgment, what He must go through if He will take up his cause being such. This was at the epoch of His last visit to Jerusalem. Finally, He drinks the cup which He had freely and submissively taken at His Father's hand, and works redemption on the cross for them who believe in Him.

(Concluded.)

## The Sufferings of Christ: Part 5

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Notice of earlier opinions on the subject, I said I would take notice of the quotations from ancient writers on the point of Christ's vicarious life and living sufferings. What I have already said will have proved that views of His sufferings, in which, what I avow is to me more precious than clearness, true piety may be found, not only fail, in clearness but are superficial in their nature. And this is real loss, for far from losing the piety and the holy affections which should accompany the thoughts of Christ's sufferings, a deeper scriptural knowledge of what they were gives seriousness to our spirits, and makes Him more prominent in our thoughts, emptying us of self. What we have to seek is that everything our mind is engaged in should be filled with Christ, or rather the fullness of the truth of Christ be that in which our minds are engaged. All other things are thus judged, received as belonging to him, or we are freed from them. This enlarges and sanctifies the mind, for, indeed, he fills all things. We lose ourselves thus even in him, and there is very real enlargement of heart. If we have peace and a single eye, scripture does thus feel the soul; sets before it a scene that embraces all things, according to the divine view of all things; gives a large, divine view of things in contrast with, and to the exclusion of a fleshy narrow one, of which self and the worldly mind, and its narrow and confined interests and apprehensions, are always more or less the center; and, moreover, because scripture is the word of God, this gives submission and certainty to the mind, and clearness of judgment as to the walk

I avow, I could not tie myself to any of the ancients, nor own their authority in any way. I may learn, from them; I would, I trust, gladly from any one, and own, thankfully, what was given them of God. I see in Luther an energy of faith, for which millions of souls ought to be thankful to God—and I can certainly say I am, I may see a clearness and recognition of the authority of Scripture in Calvin, which delivered him and those he taught, yet more than Luther, from the corruptions and superstitions which have overwhelmed Christendom, and through it the minds even of most saints. But present these to me as a standard of truth—I reject them with indignation. They were not inspired. Their teachings are not the word of God. To this I hold fast tenaciously. It is the safeguard and guide of the Church and of the saints under grace at all times, and especially in these days. The gifted men I respect, when presented to me as such would become a horror to me if they are in any way substituted for, or made to complete with, the word of God.

I am not surprised if eminent servants of God, not vessels of inspiration, did not all at once cast off every trammel, in which all Christendom, save a few persecuted ones (at that time almost rooted out by persecution, but precious in God's sight) had been bound up. I thank God, heartily, for the light and courage He gave them. But no one can say they were freed from everything that had overburdened the truth. I do not see that these eminent men were so free from human views, and what governs human judgment, according to this world, when they were framing systems for the countries they belonged to, as when they were wielding truth for the deliverance of souls from error. I do not wish to dwell upon the evil which accompanied so much good—evil for which man was responsible—because I do not see that it would be edifying, but I do not wish to blind myself where history shows me facts which ought to have their weight with my conscience. I am writing in

peace, because God has delivered us through the instrumentality of these men, some of whom laid down their lives, for the gospel and their love to Christ and to souls. I have no wish to depreciate them or the work in which they were engaged—I wish I had the faith of many of them: but do not bring their doctors or their systems to me as authority. You are trenching on the authority of the word of God. Am I to believe consubstantiation? Am I to believe in baptismal regeneration? No honest man can deny that it was, generally speaking, the reformed faith, or at least the faith of the reformers, and that forgiveness of sins was obtained in it. I may be told, but they preached justification by faith, so that it cannot be. They did preach justification by faith for the deliverance of souls, and taught baptismal regeneration when establishing a system, and tortured themselves to reconcile both. The evangelical party among the reformed have, at the present day, cast baptismal regeneration off, as freer in their ecclesiastical habits. The stricter Lutherans, at least confessional Lutherans, torture themselves to this day to reconcile both. In England every one knows where we are as to it.

But to refer to the points which engage me at this moment: it is remarkable enough that the term, “righteousness of God,” is not found in Luther's New Testament—the most unfaithful translation I know. He always says the righteousness which is valid before God—die Gerechtigkeit die vor Gott gilt. Calvin is quoted as an authority to show that Christ's living sufferings went to make up righteousness by atonement; that His life, as well as His death, were needed to complete our righteousness. But if I take his doctrine, I cannot stop here; I must believe that his suffering the torment of hell (dreadful thought!) was needed too. These are his -words: “Nor indeed is it right that the descent into hell should be omitted, in which was what is of no little moment for the effecting of redemption.... Nothing was done if Christ had departed by only a corporal death; but it was, at the same time of consequence (worth while) that He should feel the severity of divine punishment whence also it was proper that He should struggle hand to hand with the powers of hell and the horror of eternal death. We have lately cited from the prophet, that the chastisement of our peace was put on him; that He was smitten of the Father for our crimes; bruised for our infirmities; by which he signifies, put in the place of surety for the wicked; and therefore he was bound, like the guilty, to pay and satisfy all the penalties which were to be exacted from them.” Am I to adopt Calvin's view in this, of what -made out a believer's righteousness; or is it true that by one offering He has perfected forever them which are sanctified? But it is alleged, I am to receive his doctrine as to the vicarious merit of His living sufferings. Here are Calvin's words: Furthermore, as a curse, because of guilt, awaited us at the heavenly tribunal of God, in the first place is related condemnation before Pontius Pilate, President of Judaea: that we may know that the penalty to which we are liable was inflicted on the just. We could not escape the horrible judgment of God. That Christ might snatch us thence, he supported being condemned before a mortal man; yea, a wicked and profane one. Nor is it merely to secure credibility to his history that the name of the perfect is expressed, but that we may learn what Esaias teaches, “the chastisement of our peace was upon him, by his bruises we have been healed” —previously, this made hell necessary, not scourging by an unjust judge—which is right? I must confess that such a statement, as to the sufferings of Christ, is very far indeed from carrying any moral weight to my spirit—our deserving God's wrath met in any way by his standing before a human judge. Does this, in any sort of way meet or correspond to God's wrath against sin? And when it is said that with His stripes we are healed, does any person taught of God, for a moment suppose that this refers to a bodily scourging by the soldiers of Pilate, or Pilate himself, precious as this may be in our eyes? I avow,

while fearing to say an irreverent word, while touching on such a subject, such interpretation is (to my judgment, and I am persuaded to every rightly taught mind) in the highest degree revolting, whether we think of the true character of Christ's sufferings, or of the true deserts of sin.

Witsius states it more simply and less offensively, yet as a system of doctrine more strongly. "Still more specially do Isa. 53:5, and 1 Peter 2:24, assert that our healing is due to the scourging of Christ, as a part of His sufferings, when they say, by His bruises we are healed. For by that dreadful scourging, by which the whole body of the Lord Jesus was disfigured, as by one bruise, joined with other sufferings, He has merited for us, that we should be free from the buffetings of Satan, and the rod of divine burning wrath," He adds, that "besides healing by example, there remains in the scourging of Christ a demonstration of the righteousness of God."

You have now, reader, the statements which are relied on to prove that Christ's living sufferings were vicarious and atoning. The proof drawn from Calvin and Witsius is, that "with His stripes we are healed!" refers to His scourging by Pontius Pilate and that He was judged before a tribunal of man to meet our being arraigned as guilty before God. I do not feel that this requires an answer with any sober Christian. The word stripes does not even mean scourging, but the lividness left by blows. Such teaching is simply deplorable. A passage of Isaiah is quoted, "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows," quoted in Matt. 8:17, "And he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." Now I believe that in the sympathetic exercise of His power in love Christ never remedied an ill that He did not bear it on His spirit. But this is not atonement. That atonement may be righteously necessary, that He might sympathize with sinners, in respect of what was the fruit of sin, I can well understand; but bearing on the heart in sympathy is quite another thing from atonement. To apply the principle of atonement here is simple nonsense. Was Christ sick in our place when He made atonement on the cross? He did suffer wrath and bore our, sin so as to come under it. But in these healings He was exercising power. He healed, it is true, not indifferently; He entered into our sorrows when He relieved us. Thus the passage is as precious as it is intelligible, but the only act referred to is His healing by His power. What did that atone for? Was healing vicarious to make up for our not healing? Will it be said, for our want of health? But then He should have suffered the consequence of it Himself. What was healing an atonement for? Nay, infirmity and sickness were not to be atoned for. It needed what the compassionate Lord accomplished—healing. To say that His healings, showing that He bore our sicknesses, means that healing was vicarious, has no kind of sense. The truth, moreover, is that the word is not at all that which is used for bearing sin as a burden imputed. Nor would the Spirit here accept the LXX. translation, which has ■μαρτ■αδ φ■ρει—bears our sins. It is the word employed in Rom. 15:1: "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves." Was this atoning? The quotation of such passages skews only the extreme poverty of scriptural intelligence to be borne with when produced in the first dawn of light or held in systematic and traditional piety; but when reproduced as pretending to the dogmatic maintenance of truth, is as poor as it is unfounded. "The miracles themselves were the manifestation of His sin-bearing work and character." This language shows the real character of the statement and the force of what I have said. If sin be borne before God, man must suffer; but was the exercising power in love bearing sin? It is not said in Matthew's explanation, He bore sin but took our infirmities, which are not sin, and bore our sicknesses. Wrath of God is due to sin, if it

be borne; healing the sick is not bearing the wrath of God. What Matthew says may be a proof of Christ's entering in the fullest way into the sorrows of those who are healed; I believe it is. But this doctrine would destroy all the gracious, sorrowing sympathies of Christ in love: they are but bearing wrath upon Himself. The 53rd of Isaiah is the recognition by the converted Jew, in the latter day, of the way they had treated Christ, which we, of course, anticipate, but is literally applicable to the Jew. It looks at all Christ's course and appearance in the flesh, His sorrows and the way He was received. He was despised and they esteemed Him not. He bore Israel's griefs and carried their sorrows, but besides that, He was wounded for their transgressions. Was that healing the sick? The Lord laid the iniquity of them all upon Him, so He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was He stricken. This remark is connected with His death. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when he shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed." Because he hath poured out his soul unto death, and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many," The chapter speaks of His sorrows, and in doing this goes to their full extent and speaks of His being cut off for sin, and connects His death with this bearing of sin in the most explicit way. This is not saying that all His sorrows were sin-bearing. To say that His healing the sick was His own being wounded for our transgressions, is introducing confusion into all truth and neutralizing the value of Christ's death. Besides, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." On whom? On Christ, Jehovah's servant. But then He was the Christ before it was laid on Him. Further, "when thou shalt make His soul an offering-for sin." Why when, if it was always? Besides, who offered himself through the eternal Spirit without spot to God! The divine person in heaven? Clearly not. If Christ was always the sin-bearer, He did not offer Himself through the eternal Spirit to God, He was always by position under sin. The free love of Christ—man—in offering Himself is entirely set aside. This is a very important point. The 53rd of Isaiah gives the general picture of the sorrows of Christ, so opposite to the unbelieving nation's estimate, and pursues them up to that great truth that He was numbered with transgressors and bare the sins of many.

The statement as regards Dr. Owen is a mis-statement. It is said, that he shows that Christ's strong crying and tears which He offered in the days of His flesh were concomitants of his sacrifice," and in his Exposition of the Hebrews he enters fully into this, skewing that "the days of his flesh" means his life on earth, though specially consummated in Gethsemane. These life-time prayers he calls sacerdotal prayers. He quotes the psalms already quoted in proof of his averment, and shows that thus it was with Him: "not for a few days, or a short season only, but during his whole course in this world." I do not agree with Dr. Owen in many things on this point, but it is here stated that his life-time prayers were sacerdotal prayers. And that it was thus with Him during his whole course in this world. Now, Dr. Owen states, "There was no time wherein he was not, as to his human nature, the king, priest, and prophet of his church;" but, "as to his priestly office, he neither did nor could enter upon the exercise and discharge of it, until the end of his prophetic ministry." He speaks of unction in incarnation, declarative unction at baptism. Then, thirdly, to both these there succeeded an especial dedication to the actual performance of the duties of this office; and this was his own act which he had power for from God. This himself expresses. (John 17:19.)... In that prayer therefore of our Savior (John 17) do I place the beginning and entrance of the exercise of His priestly office." Not only so where Dr. Owen states that from His cradle to His grave He bare all the infirmities of our nature, &c., he adds, as to His sacerdotal prayers, "But yet respect is not had here unto this whole space of time." That is, he declares exactly the contrary of

what he is made to state. Whoever reads the Thirty-first Exercitation may easily see that the whole doctrine of Dr. Owen is opposed to what is stated. “His oblation was at the same time and in the same action with His blood shedding.” His entering into the holy place “was consequential to that offering of Himself whereby He made atonement for us.” “His obtaining eternal redemption for us was by the sacrifice of Himself in His death. For redemption was by price and exchange. And the Lord paid no other price for sin and sinners but His own blood. (1 Peter 1:18, 19.)” As regards 1 Peter 2:24, it is alleged that its true meaning is that Christ bore our sins up to the tree—not on it. He carried our sins during the whole of His humbled state. This ———is only want of acquaintance with the use of the expression; and the passage is only an additional proof of what I feel to be important for our souls in this matter. Ἀναφ[ο]ρεῖν [π] τ[ο] is a sacrificial expression, signifying the proper offering up of the victim on the altar. Peter here compares Christ to a victim laid on the altar as our sin offering with our sins upon it. The reader has only to consult Gen. 8:20 or Lev. 3:5, 11, 16 and iv. 10, 19, 26, 31, Where he will find the formula of Ἀναφ[ο]ρεῖν [π] τ[ο] exactly what there is in Peter used for *hala* and *katar* in Hebrew; that is, the positive offering up on the altar as a sacrifice—the causing it to ascend to God or burning it. The words do not mean at all what they are stated to mean. The cross was as the altar where the victim was consumed by the fire of the proving and just judgment of God about sin and all was a sweet savor, though also for sin.

In result, this doctrine of an expiatory sin-bearing life (I will touch on the righteousness farther on) is built on no scripture ground. It sets aside the declaration that, without shedding of blood there is no remission. It denies the offering up of Christ by Himself, when a man, to be a sacrifice, a most valid truth—for He is it all His life. It perverts, in the most shocking way, such passages as, “with his stripes we are healed,” and casts, at once, both Christ’s sufferings under divine wrath, as the wages of sin, and His living sympathies, into the shade, by confounding them together; making death and blood-shedding to be unessential to the first, and turning the latter into sufferings for sin under God’s hand. And see the fruits. “If Paul could say, ‘die daily,’ how much more Christ. His life was a daily dying. He was always ‘delivered unto death.’ “Was Paul suffering for sin, then, in so dying, and in an expiatory way? What an absolute proof of entire confusion of mind, as to the very nature of these things, is here displayed! We are told a whole undivided life is our expiation. Mark that, reader!—life an expiation. I ask, if such a statement be not in opposition to the universal testimony of the word of God. “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.” So that “without shedding of blood there is no remission.” It separates redemption from expiation, or gives redemption without blood. No sacrifice is needed for expiation. And what is death when it comes, but the consummation of a life the same in legal character as itself? He was born “under the law;” He lived “under the law;” He died “under the law.” Isaiah then, one keeping the law in life, so as to be in the perfectness of divine favor, the same thing as being under the curse of the law, because it had been broken? But it will be replied to me, but we say, that He was under that during the whole course of his life. Yes, but scripture says quite the contrary; it declares that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree. I admit fully an obedience running through life, always perfect, and unto death, when it was consummated; I admit that Christ was in death perfectly agreeable to His Father. The question is not there, but in this—what expiates sin? Is wrath, and the curse, and the cup the Lord had to drink on the cross, the same as His life?

Reader, the word declares that the wages of sin is death; and Christ died to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. If the corn of wheat had not fallen into the ground and died, it had remained alone. He was once offered to bear the sins of many. We are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. Where were we without redemption? And this is forgiveness. Where would you be without that? He hath once suffered for sins, being put to death in the flesh. If death be not written on the old man, you must be judged for its deeds. But it is only in Christ's dying it is so. "Now, once in the end of the world, he has appeared to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself."

One passage I would yet desire to refer to God "has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." We knew no sin? Does he speak of the eternal Son before His incarnation? Clearly not. That would say nothing. It was Christ incarnate in this world. It was when by His path through this world in which His sinlessness was put to the test, it could be said He knew no sin, then it was He was made sin. God did not make the Eternal Son sin in His becoming a man, in the Word being made flesh. It would be hard to say which would be worst, the absurdity or the evil of such an assertion. If not, it was when Christ had been fully tested, and in result it could be said He knew no sin, then He was made sin. It is alleged that "during His life He was made sin for us." When? And, remark, being made sin is clearly as an offering.

It is asked, In what sense and for what purpose was He made under the law, if from His very birth He were not the very Substitute on whom our sins were laid? Scripture will answer. "He was made under the law that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Besides, he magnified the law and made it honorable; a matter, not without its moral importance. It was of moment to honor the law, the measure of God's requirement from His creature, at the moment he was going to take him entirely from under it, to deliver him from it. But this touches on the ground of righteousness, which I reserve for another paper.

## The Sufferings of Christ: Part 6

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To the Editor of the Bible Treasury. 1.

MY DEAR BROTHER, I thank you for sending me the query as to the paper on the sufferings of Christ. It was my desire to send a few words to you on a danger to which saints may be liable, through the inquiry which has been raised on this subject. This question of your correspondent C. affords me the ready opportunity of doing so. But for the circumstance of the words "To be continued" being omitted through a very immaterial mistake, the paper would not have appeared to be closed without a signature, which would have left on the writer all the responsibility of the views contained in it.

The danger I have alluded to is double. First, that the whole doctrine as to Christ, which has been promulgated, should so alarm Christians that they should be afraid almost of dwelling on the sufferings of Christ, and giving them their full human reality, lest they should trench on the perfection of His person and position before God. The tendency to the mind being overbalanced by the fear of one extreme, and running into another, is a well-known infirmity of the human mind. If the enemy could lead the saints to shrink from a full contemplation of the sufferings of Christ, because of the heartless blasphemies which have been mixed up with the teaching on the subject he would have gained a point of the utmost consequence. There is no subject more full of blessing and profit—if the divine nature and perfectness of Christ be fully maintained—than the true humanity and real sufferings of our Lord. It is the channel and expression of His love to us, where the heart meets it most near to us. If this be weakened in the soul (and it has been weakened by the orthodox persons) the link of the heart with the blessed Lord is seriously weakened. I remember, at the time Mr. Irving was promulgating his errors as to the person of Christ, a religious newspaper insisting that Christ's learning obedience by the things which He suffered, meant His teaching it. Now this, though rightly intended in resisting fatal error, sacrificed precious truth, and tended to the very injurious practice of forcing the word of God. There is the danger of losing—through a just jealousy of the abominations which have been stated as to the blessed Lord—a full practical sense of the reality of His human sufferings.

But this danger has another side for every heart that occupies itself with it. It is clear that the peculiar value of this touching part of the Lord's history is that the wretched and cold heart of man may be touched, the affections engaged in a sanctifying way with Christ, and brought up to what is divine, the soul attached to Him, while a reverent sympathy is awakened in the soul with all He went through, and the heart carried with Him into those better scenes into which His sufferings lead him. Now, the truth has to be guarded; but a diligent dissection of all we ought to feel, is very apt to destroy all feeling as to what we dissect; the power of the sufferings of Christ is lost in the effort to be precise as to them, and to guard the integrity of doctrine as to His person and work. The real guilt of this would be with those who brought out the hateful doctrines which have given occasion to hedge around the truth with precautions. But it is the wisdom of those who respect the Lord so to deal with the subject as to keep alive, in all their freshness, and with the bloom of

first-ripe fruit, the sense of the sufferings of Christ, and the simplicity of holy and reverent affections with which they have been first dwelt upon. Such I desire for my own soul, such I desire for my brethren. It is well and very important to have the truth clear, and to guard it- especially when it concerns Christ-with holy vigilance. But it is well to have the heart free and fresh. "In that he has suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." Let us never forget that He laid His hand on the leper, which if another had done, he would have been defiled: but it was not to contaminate Himself, but to drive away what was contaminating from the defiled one. The immutability of His holiness enabled Him to enter in love into the proximity of sin, and all the miseries and sorrows of sinful men, as nothing else but such a holiness could. It was just the blessedness and divine perfections of His work, when alive here, to do so. God was here revealed, and none but God could have done this, and in grace to the fallen.

The mistake of your correspondent-and I am very glad of his jealousy of anything which could have in it a particle of the doctrine that has been and is spread abroad-is, that he confounds sorrows with the cause of sorrows. First of all, to dispose at once of his first question, "Was He himself chastened in respect of sin'?" It scarcely needs an answer, because He had no sin, in respect of which He had to be chastened. He was not chastened in respect of sin, nor by anger applying to His person in respect of sin. But we must not confound voluntary sympathy with sorrows, and entering into them in love, with lying under sorrow by His own position. If He lay under the chastening Himself, He could not enter into it in voluntary love, alive as a man on earth, because in that case He was under it already Himself. Here is just the danger-denying the entering into, because of the fatal doctrine of His being necessarily under. It is just the doctrine of Christ's being necessarily and by birth, when a man, under these sorrows and chastenings for sin, which renders impossible the truth of His graciously and freely entering into them in love; which is just what gives all its value to these sufferings. He could not, as a man on earth, enter in grace and tender goodness towards us into that by sympathy, which He was lying under by necessity in His own person as man, or more than other men were. This point is cleared therefore. But sufferings endured by others can be fully entered into and endured by the will and love of an individual, which they are not in the smallest degree subject necessarily to, and could cease to undergo, at any moment, if they thought fit. A mother could enter into prison with a child, and suffer the disagreeableness and discomfort of the prison in love to her child, and to win his heart to what is right, to whom it was no penalty for a fault, and from which she was free to go out at any moment, if she were disposed. She may enter into all his circumstances, and endure the pain and misery of a prison life, and feel that it is for him, a penalty for his faults, without the smallest sense, whatever, of its being a penalty on herself-as indeed it is not. She is gone there in love. It is no penalty. She is not there, at any time, as in a penal condition herself, nor can she have the sense of its being a penalty on her, as if she was in the same case as her son. Yet, in fact, she is enduring all he is-feels it much more herself; for her natural and moral feelings are much more delicate, and she feels all the shame and misery of it as a penalty on him, without its being in the smallest degree such on her. Not only so; if she were there by the law imposing it on her (even because she was the mother of him who had incurred it), she could not feel in the same way for him. Instead of our being under an evil being a cause of sympathy-so far as we are under it ourselves, we cannot in simple and true love sympathize with one who is. We must morally be out of the evil to feel freely for those in it. The sufferings as to the facts were experimentally the Lord's own, and He entered in spirit and thought for His people into the causes of them, and did so, and

could do so, exactly, because the causes of them had no application what ever to Himself. The scorn and rejection of the Gentiles He underwent; so will the remnant of Israel: but they have been the guilty parties, and are there because they are, though now in heart repentant, and turned away from them. The terror of God's judgment was before Christ in Gethsemane; so it will be with the remnant of Israel in the last day. They will indeed escape it, which He did not because of our salvation. Rejection and scorn on the part of tin: Jews were His portion: so it will be of the remnant. And thus with all this character of suffering, as treachery, desertion, and scorn.

Now, all this is quite a different thing from atonement, where the wrath of God is endured. That the remnant (though they, as ourselves, have deserved it) will never undergo. All these sufferings will form the moral state of the remnant: come upon them as a penalty, they will and ought to feel it as such. They are the fruits of their faults and sins, though at the same time of their integrity, as expressed in the Psalms; but in Christ, while the present fruit of His integrity, they are in no kind of way of His fault, nor is He dealt with as faulty in it by God; quite the contrary. He voluntarily enters into it all in grace. It may be asked, But how could He enter into the sense of wrath in this way? Nothing can possibly be simpler. Israel is under it because they have deserved it, and though they are encouraged, and in a measure comforted in hope, yet, not being yet acquainted with the fullness of redemption in Christ, they cry out of the depths under the sense of sin, and the hand of God upon them bears with it the sense and dread of wrath because of sin. Christ felt this, not because He had earned it in any way, or was necessarily under it by birth amongst those who had, so that He needed mercy and some means to escape it; but exactly the contrary: because when He was not subject to it, but the delight of His Father, He was going to take it in grace voluntarily all upon Him He could anticipatively feel what He was going really to undergo, and cry unto Him who was able to save Him from death. They could groan under the dread of the same wrath, which (when rightly and for their own good taught the truth of it, so that there might be truth in their inward parts) they are not finally to undergo at all. I am not here speaking of the degree and spirit in which He suffered, for here, notwithstanding grace in them, the difference will still be great. The truth is, that, so far is sympathy from the being in the same state, the sympathies of Christ are exercised when He is in no suffering at all. He has a nature cognizant of the same sorrows as sorrows, and hence capable of entering into them. But the spirit and mind in which He enters into them may be as different as possible. His Spirit works in the remnant according to what is to take place from His hand—that is, judgment. He feels and enters into their sorrows, for He has gone through the sorrows. His feelings under them were purely gracious. When they suffer, He is going to judge, and His Spirit works the looking for this judgment. The church alone has properly and fully, as to their natures like thoughts with Jesus Himself. On this side also her privilege is great. We cannot estimate it too highly.

The writer of the article of the sufferings of Christ. - \_

## The Sufferings of Christ: Part 7 (Supplement)

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DEAR BROTHER, Mere attacks on my statements I should not notice, as I see no Christian profit in it. I leave them, where the will of man is at work in them, to Him whose will is above all human wills. I have always found it a happy course, and the way to be really sheltered from any and every attack. Thou shalt hide them by thy presence from the pride of men, thou shalt keep them secretly in thy tabernacle from the strife of tongues. I am uncommonly thankful that the papers on "The Sufferings of Christ" have awakened the inquiry they have. I have no doubt it was needed when the question once was raised. In itself the raising of it would be a cause of regret to me, for fear of the destruction of holy and reverent affections on such a subject. But we all know that it was raised, and a large class of persons in the Free Church of Scotland and elsewhere were more or less affected by it. The original root, in both England and Scotland, was the deadly wickedness of Irvingism. The attempt to meet that in England by explanation led to the statements which have now become notorious. In Scotland it was a more direct result of softened down Irvingism itself. When the English form of the doctrine being put to shame lost its blasphemous virulence though never given up, it tended to coalesce with the softened and pious remains of Irvingism or semi-Irvingism in Scotland. This is the present phase in which the influence of this doctrine appears. It has sought to support itself by old opinions and to make use of phrases employed, as is constantly the case, in a general and inaccurate way, when the question was not raised and no such thought was in the mind of the writer, to sustain a system of doctrine which he whose words are quoted never thought of; but its birth and true nature is a distinct, false doctrine as to the relationship of God to Christ, which is not Irvingism, but which affects both the person and work of Christ by views which have flowed from Irvingism, or been the result of contending against it without the Spirit of God.

But my object now is not to pursue these thoughts farther, but to say that when the humblest saint is honestly exercised on the subject or troubled by any statements which it cannot clear up for itself, I am bound and ready to explain and make the truth, or my own meaning clear, as far as I can. I suppose the replies I have made to your correspondents, C. and another from Manchester, will serve as a general reply to any honest difficulty; but as more than one request for explanation has reached me, I would meet the particular points contained in some of these and clear up what may have been obscurely expressed in my own statements on the subject. The Psalms afforded more especially occasion to that part of the subject which remains obscure to many. This is not surprising. The subject is new to most, and the bearing of particular psalms or parts of psalms in many cases new to my own mind; so that, though perfectly clear as to what I reject and what I hold, it is not surprising if I have not made all clear to my readers. Something, doubtless, is my own fault; but much of it the newness of the subject to themselves. I got one paper stating that my language is to the effect that Christ suffered from God apart from atonement. This surprised me somewhat, and I looked at the papers and I found: "but the moment He (Christ) is suffering from God because of atonement for sin, it is exactly the contrary;" and a little further on, "Christ has only drunk that cup, because He suffered from God—entirely apart, totally alone." Indeed one of the

objects of the papers was to show that Christ's suffering from God was a distinct thing, even if at the same time, from His suffering from man-that the former brought grace and redemption to man, the latter judgments, and that this distinction was carefully kept up in the Psalm. In one place it is said, in the preceding articles, that He was smitten of God. This, however, is the language of the psalm, and my remark is introduced in connection with it, though the question may remain how far it applied to Christ, how far to the remnant. No one, I suppose, at least no believer, has ever doubted the general application of the psalm (69th) to Christ. The knowledge of the degree of its application to Him, or its being exclusively so applicable must be, as of all Scripture, the result of divine teaching.

A simple saint is kept, by what he does know with certainty of the truth of God, from being misled by what is obscure; but we may remain ignorant of many such points till God in His grace carry the soul on to farther light and spiritual apprehension. I think it a great mistake to suppose (as is stated, if I remember right, in Horne on the Psalms) because an expression is applicable to Christ or used by Him, that the whole psalm is so applicable. His Spirit speaks in all and throughout each, and in general in reference to the life of a godly Jew. Where an expression served to give utterance to His own perfect piety or sorrow, He could use it, though the whole psalm could by no means be assigned to Him. This is a very important principle to keep fast hold of. There are some psalms, of course, which are positive, personal prophecies of Himself. That, in Psa. 69, Christ is in the mind of the Spirit of God, though not exclusively so, is, I suppose, hardly necessary to prove to Christians, seeing it is one of the Most vivid descriptions of His outward sufferings on the cross. It is in respect to the remarks in my papers on "The Sufferings of Christ," which arose out of the consideration of this psalm, that difficulties arose in some pious minds. These difficulties I respect, and delight in the jealousy which would not bear anything that they thought touched the divine perfection and relationship with God His Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever expression might throw a cloud on that, or if any did, I condemn it already. I am sure I have no doctrine which does. I hold his cloudless relationship with His Father, save in the act of atonement, to be an essential truth. It was to make this clear that I drew attention to His sufferings from man which brought judgment on man, and His sufferings from God, that is atoning sufferings, which brought forgiveness and peace. This clearly distinguishes a life of communion, and the forsaking and wrath on the cross, and denies distinctly and unequivocally, in whole and in part, the doctrine of Christ's being subject to the displeasure of God as a born Israelite and a born man. He never was but His delight. He was not by birth subject to what He sought to escape and did partly escape from by prayer, obedience, or any other virtue or quality. All this is fundamentally false, makes a false Christ-not the true one at all-let it be vicarious or not vicarious. The former indeed is absurd, if He is subject to the displeasure of God by birth and position as the necessary consequences of these; for He is in it whether He delivers others or not-in it by His own position, not therefore for others. But vicarious or not, it is false; it denies, before the question of vicariousness can arise, the true being of Christ and His true relationship to God, which alone made His gracious work for others possible.

But then another inquiry presented itself. Did these two statements of Christ suffering from man and suffering from God in atonement, explain or rather express all that the Psalms contain in reference to the sufferings of Christ? They do give all that we have to say to as Christians, and hence the difficulty many Christians find in entering into anything further. It is true that in the

indirect comfort of a soul under law a certain application of the Psalms may be found. I remember when the only passage in Scripture which comforted me was the 88th Psalm, because no ray of comfort was in it; yet I was sure it was a saint who penned it, and I might be a saint though in like anguish. There is a certain truth in this, but it is needless to pursue it further here. But it is important. to give all its value to Scripture, without in any way turning aside or shrinking from receiving its full force. God is certainly right. And when the saint holds fast the truth which He has been taught of God, and where a passage is obscure waits humbly till God teaches him, he will not go wrong. But to meet effectually a heresy which uses Scripture we must give their full value to the Scriptures of which the heretic avails himself. This frees the spirit of him who respects Scripture, and is troubled, inasmuch as what he cannot receive, because he sees it contradicts known truth, seems to have a foundation in some unexplained passage. It will be found universally that heresies are founded either on some obscure and difficult passage, the true sense of which not being known, it is easy to trouble many minds with some apparent sense of it, or on some truth neglected by the Church. The practical neglect of the true humanity of the Lord, of the presence of the Spirit, and the coming of the Lord, laid the Church open to the wild pretensions and dreadful doctrines of Irvingism. So the true interest which the Lord takes in Israel as God's people being lost sight of, and His sorrows applied only to salvation and to the Church, the Scriptures applicable to Christ's connection with that people remained open to all manner of interpretations.

Christ died not for that nation only, but to gather together in one the children of God which were scattered abroad. But He did die for that nation as such. What God is displaying in that nation-though no blessing can be without atonement-is His government -not the Church's place and portion. These form, besides individual salvation and relationship to God, the two great subjects of Scripture, its heavenly and its earthly part: in heaven the display of infinite grace in the Church; on earth God's government, in result of the display of blessing, under the direct government of the Lord in contrast with man's misrule and Satan's power. The Church is, in union with Christ, the center of the heavenly blessing, and rules with him; the Jews the center of the earthly blessing, the royal nation in the midst of which Christ governs. In all these, individual salvation, the Church, and the earth's resurrection through the fullness of Israel, Christ must have the pre-eminence; but to have it, man being a sinner, He must suffer (Heb. 2:10) and glorify God (John 17) where man has dishonored Him. First of all, everything is based on atonement -the perfect infinite glorifying of God as to good and evil; that which, if it saves us, angels desire to look into. This, as a moral foundation, is the center of all blessing, and makes the blessing dependent on it immutable. It is not the founding of blessing on creation responsibility-as was the case with angels, Adam, and Israel under the law-but on God's having been already perfectly glorified, in respect of every moral question which could be raised. In virtue consequently of this work, man, in the person of Christ, is raised up and set at the right hand of God in power, raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and set over all the works of His hands. Now Christ must glorify God in every respect in which the divine majesty required it and in which He was to take a place in glory, as regards His life. This was done, not by being in distress under God's hand, which would have glorified nobody, but on the contrary would have been the mere subjection of Him who was without sin to the consequence in His soul of the power of evil and divine judgment without a cause, an effacing the divine judgment of good and evil, and confounding altogether what had to be cleared up. He knew all that was due to God in a divinely perfect spirituality in the midst of evil, and walked in it. To meet this with displeasure would have been the contrary of a display of God's way as to

good and evil.

God was glorified in Him in life by His maintaining in spite of all temptation, and trial, and sorrow, undeviating communion with His Father, perfect always towards God, and as to the circumstances through which He passed, and equally undeviating obedience to His will.

This God did not visit with His anger and hot displeasure. It would have confounded, as I have said, all good and evil. It was met by what the Lord says, "I knew that thou hearest me always." Just as angels and men left their first estate, the creature fell untempted, or tempted in the midst of blessing, Christ kept His as man, and in spite of the efforts of the enemy maintained Himself in His place of communion and obedience, though in the midst of sorrow and loneliness of walk. He overcame the strong man, and could spoil his goods, and did, walking sinlessly in communion with His Father. The essence of His position as a living man was, that He did keep that first estate so that He remained that holy thing. Dependence, confidence, communion, and obedience, according to the spirit of holiness, formed His life towards God. As He knows His sheep, and His sheep know Him, so the Father knew Him and He the Father. The very essence of His position in contrast with Adam was, that He was with God, and never got away from Him or the relationship He enjoyed with Him. The question of good and evil was resolved in the world by the power in godliness in life walking in the midst of evil, and overcoming through every temptation, and by goodness dependent on God. But evil and sin had come in; and if any one was to be saved of the evil race, that evil must be dealt with—the true judgment of good and evil maintained according to what God is. This was done in the wondrous work of the cross, where perfect love to the sinner was at the same time displayed. Here, consequently, the very opposite to communion found its place—the forsaking of God. The Lord Jesus drank that dreadful cup, and made atonement for sin and obtained a place for man in the purpose of grace which is displayed in the fullest way in the Church united to Him, though all salvation and every blessing depends on it. His position was the closest relationship of enjoyed favor in life, and forsaking made more terrible by it in death—these formed the two characteristic conditions of the blessed Lord with God and His Father. His faithfulness in all was made good in spite of every obstacle and all the power of evil in man and Satan. So that the whole work was complete.

But there was another side of Christ's service, besides its aspect towards God, glorifying Him in life and in death—the interest He took in His people spiritual or earthly, His sheep or Israel. They, in the path of life, have to go through temptations and trials: His sheep trials of one character; Israel, of another. His sheep have trials of temptation, persecution, sorrow, and the hatred of the world, sustained by communion with God, when in the relationship with God by grace in which Christ Himself stood when on the earth. Chap. 17 of John fully develops this position; indeed chap. 14 partially so too. This, consequently Christ went through. He is their example in it on the one hand, and on the other has the tongue of the learned to know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. We have His sympathies as well as His example. With all this, with more or less clearness, the hearts of His saints are familiar. In general the subjects I have hitherto spoken of are connected with salvation and the Church, rather than with the government of God, although there may be something of this mixed with our sorrows and temptations. But Israel is the center of that government, and in this Christ must have the preeminence too, must secure the glory of God, and comfort His people with His sympathy. The atonement is the basis of this as of every blessing. It has its own unchangeable character. Christ died for the nation. This was towards God for them.

His sympathies with them have yet to be inquired into. It is this point that has exercised the minds of some-how he could enter into the sorrows of Israel, when we view them as smitten of God. I have already spoken of, not merely the difference, but the mutually exclusive nature of being subject to those sorrows Himself, as born a Jew, and His entering into them in grace. One is subversive of the other, and they are mutually so. I do not pursue this any farther. My object is to explain how He did enter, how, in a fuller personal sense than was once said of Him as Jehovah, "in all their afflictions He was afflicted." If they are to be accepted, if they are renewed in heart, and at the same time dread the wrath of God, which they have deserved, and see death before them, and hostility without the fear of God around them-if they trust God, and yet fear what is before them-if Satan's power is to be let loose against them, and death and judgment still press upon their spirit-if all this were from the hand of God, though human beings be the instruments, Christ, to sympathize with them and by His Spirit suggest the right feelings as to it, must pass through their sorrows, not because they are resting on Him in His position, but because they are resting on them; and He will enter into their sorrows. He could say, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children, for if these things be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Had He need of repentance, or anything to repent of, here He was baptized with the baptism of repentance, in order to walk with the true residue of Israel in the path marked out of them? He was fulfilling righteousness when they were owning sin; but He did come to be so baptized, and it was part of the path of his righteous obedience to do so. He took this place with them and took it because He was not in it. This was its true character-'the gracious and blessed place of answering to God's call, which gave a place and a name to the residue. Still He entered into their position though exactly from another cause, and in the opposite way to theirs. Theirs was confession of sin, His fulfilling righteousness. He came from heaven, having a title to have a will, into obedience, but we from sin, and a will with no title to it; but He came into the path of obedience in which His people had to tread, and walked in it. When they had to be baptized of John, He too, though He had no sin to confess-He would be with them.

This part of the path was indeed quite different in character from what I would now explain. He could walk with them here; when the other part had to be trodden, He must do it alone. They, hereafter, will have the comfort of its being said, "This poor man cried and the Lord heard him, and delivered him out of all his distress." If their piety will be shown in looking on all as coming from the hand of God, whatever the instrument, so Christ, too, had to receive all at the hand of God and so to look at it as entering into their sorrows, though He were perfectly free in His soul towards God. He bears their sorrows, though He were not the cause of them for Himself, as they had been; and looks at them as coming on them from God- on them from whom He would not be separated till all was accomplished for them.

( To be continued.)-

## The Sufferings of Christ: Part 8 (Supplement)

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(Continued)

Nor was this merely sympathetic feeling. Because though government and atonement for sin are two distinct things, yet that government and the wrath borne in atonement would coalesce necessarily if atonement were not already made, for what can finally the government of God, as to a sinner and his sins, be? But till Christ had wrought the atonement, this separation between wrath and government remained, as to the work that wrought it unaccomplished. What makes the sorrow only discipline for the remnant, when they are not yet brought into the sense of divine favor, was before Him, there really (though this be not all the truth on this point as we shall see) as wrath and the hand of God in wrath. What they dread vaguely, as not yet set free, He underwent in the highest and fullest sense. They are renewed in heart, trust in Jehovah, yet cry out of the depths, and see God's hand upon them. Christ, always perfect in heart, trusts in his Father, yet cries out of the depths, and, see it is a cup which His Father has given Him to drink. I speak now specially in respect of Israel. If the nation are to be spared and restored, His strength must be brought down in His journey, and His days shortened and that of God. They are not yet delivered from the sense of wrath, though hoping in God, Christ was looking forward to the wrath He was really going to undergo. To Him government became wrath, for He was going to make an atonement to go through what was needed for the deliverance of the nation, and He was looking forward to this, though not then accomplishing it. Hence, when Peter smites one of the crowd come to take Him, He says, "The cup which my Father has given me to drink, shall I not drink it?" He said this in peace, because He had gone through the whole agony with God in perfectness, and from man He took nothing, though not insensible to his hatred in it. When Israel thinks of it as coming from God, peace not being attained, they mix up enemies and wrath so to speak all together. God's hot displeasure is in the human trials themselves. This was not so with Christ: He takes up the thought of wrath wholly with God. The smiting is entirely God's, and in His case is not separate from that in which atonement is wrought; and taking death as He did, and ought to have done; from the hand of God, He could say, "They persecute Him whom thou hast smitten." Indeed, having given Himself up to the work of the cross, before He was actually crucified, He goes as a sheep before His shearers. He looks at Himself as the smitten One: for His faith the cup is already given Him—He had only now to say, "That thou doest, do quickly." Jesus having bowed to this, men availed themselves of it to trample on Him As long as His hour was not come, He passed through the midst of them and went His way. Now His hour was come, and though not actually drinking the cup, He had taken the position of drinking it, taken it into His hand, so to speak, does not expect God to interfere—has been to God about it, and knows it is to be,—hence does not answer those who interrogate Him, nor reply. They could have no power at all against Him, unless given them from above: but now the hour for Him to suffer was come. It is not the time for the divine porter to hold the fold open and free in spite of all; but for the good and divine Shepherd to lay down His life for the sheep. Jehovah was just going to smite the Shepherd, and He had given Himself up to it. Did men not profit, yea Satan, by this non-interference of God, as He stood with that cup just taken

into His hand, though in perfect peace and power, so that when He said it was He, they went backward and fell to the ground?

The difference between Christ and the remnant in the latter days, even as to anticipated sorrow, is this: He goes, when the hour is come, directly and perfectly to His Father about it. It is then that the dreadfulness of this smiting of God, of the cup He had to drink is all gone through in the agony of it with His Father, in prayer. He is to drink it. Man's will in it and Satan's will in it have disappeared—it is God's will. He enters into no temptation; power and liberty are there: His enemies go backward and fall to the ground. He then offers Himself freely, saying, "Let these go their way;" so that not one sheep is touched, but they are scattered from the Shepherd, whose portion now is smiting. Then Christ let men do what they please with Him; and what did they please? Oh! what a tale it tells of what man is, left to himself. That is for Christ personally, even the anticipations of God's wrath, and man's persecuting are wholly apart. He has gone, as to trial in spirit, through all wholly with God, and then freely offers Himself to man's ways to accomplish His Father's will. Not so Israel, they have not peace with God. They see, because renewed in heart, the smiting of God's hand, but it is all mixed up with the enemy without, the transgressor and oppressor within, the sense and the legal sense of the sin for which they are smitten, and the sense and dread of His wrath. Yet they have hope towards God by grace, through divine teaching as to Jehovah's mercy, though peace-making atonement be not fully known as yet. Hence they can cry and do, as to themselves, "they persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and speak to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded." God in the last days is smiting them, but, in virtue of the atonement for their good, "till the pit be digged for the ungodly." "Blessed (it is then said) is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest out of the law." Hence, we find in the Psalms, pleas of integrity; and from Psa. 25 confession of sin, of the people's past sins and of their own confident trust in Jehovah, yet almost despair under a legal sense of sin; the claim to be viewed apart from sinners and a sinful nation, yet the profoundest interest in the hopes and history of Israel. The atonement being made, they have the sympathies of Christ, who, though personally in another way, has entered into their sorrows. Something analogous to their state may be seen in the condition of a soul under the law. But this part of Christ's history is not that in which He learned sympathy for us, and sets us an example, save in the fact of bearing evil patiently. For this reason: we have full knowledge of atonement—we sit in heavenly places, in Him, with the full favor that rests on sons.

Now the enjoyment of that full favor as Son was His condition through His life, before His hour was come. The divine favor rested on Him and on His walk; and persecutions and trials were such as we in principle may expect to find. We cannot, if on really Christian ground, be in presence of the wrath of God as that the dread of which is not yet passed away, nor be crying out of the depths, because Christ has taken us out of them. Now the remnant of Israel, on the contrary, cannot be in the place of Christ's living delight in Jehovah and comfort in His favor, come what would, because they are not yet assured of this favor as a present relationship, though hoping in mercy. But on the other hand, no depths of distress that they can go through can reach that which Christ did in Gethsemane, though not yet actually drinking the cup. All the circumstances they are in, answer to His at the close as to the state of the people and heathen oppressors. But Christ being in perfect divine favor, and perfect in His ways and thoughts could separate the anticipation of divine wrath and the malice of men, as He did, and present Himself to that malice for the accomplishing the

purpose of God; but He could, as having passed through the experience of a cup given Him to drink, in which the Shepherd was smitten, and the use man made of His being in this position, fully enter into the sorrows of those who had brought it on themselves, as He, save by giving Himself, of course, never did. Hence He can sympathize with them and supply to them the thoughts and feelings which suit their state, although they be not the same as that which He felt when passing through His sorrow. When entering on the path of sorrow after the last supper, which led to the atonement, He, though accomplishing a work in which He must be alone wholly and altogether, yet in the path which led to it and even in the fact of death as rejected of man and with wicked hands crucified and slain, could in His sorrows enter in to the sorrows of Israel under the government of God in the last days, when their blood too will be shed like water on every side of Jerusalem. It could not be said to them as to us, "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," because they are not in our place of union with Him and liberty, but He could enter into the sorrows they will be under, and though what He then felt towards His enemies is not what they will, for He was not only perfect, but entered as in the divine favor, though through agony, into the divine mind, yet He will enter into their sorrows and supply by His Spirit (as He has done in the Psalms) the feelings suited, to them as having passed through, as to suffering and sorrow, all they can do. If He had not, who should help them?

But atonement is not the whole aspect of the death of Christ as suffering. And, indeed, in the Psalms, which are not a directly doctrinal part of Scripture, and occupy themselves with Messiah and Israel, it is scarcely viewed in this light, though the facts in which it was accomplished are fully prophesied of. All the present hopes of Israel, (as indeed of man,) and the accomplishment of all the promises, were connected with Messiah. He was, If Israel had received Him the crown of all their blessings. But all this must be given up; He must be delivered up, even into the hands of the Gentiles, and be put to death. Did the Lord not feel this as to His beloved people. This is what was expressed in his weeping over Jerusalem: there indeed in sympathy. He was the Jehovah who would have gathered them; but, if He was, still He took it all as the obedient an from the hand of Jehovah. This is seen explicitly in the 50th of Isaiah, where this subject is treated. The Lord God had given him the tongue of the learned. Even what He suffered from man He took from the hand of God when thus given up to suffer, yet, even here, with no breach in His entire confidence in God, or thought that His portion was uncertain, as has been blasphemously stated. "He is near that justifieth me" are His words when He was under the suffering. So in the 22nd Psalm He owns Jehovah's hand in His sufferings, "Thou hast brought me into the dust of death." So in 102nd, "Thou hast lifted me up" —that is, as man into the place of Messiah and glory— "and cast me down." "Thou hast weakened my strength in my journey, and hast shortened my days. I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days." But these passages show another truth of the deepest interest. Christ felt it, not only as to the ruin of beloved Israel; He felt it as to Himself, and He received it at the hand of Jehovah. The setting aside of every present joy and hope, of the present accomplishment of all promises, typified in the giving up of Isaac by Abraham; all ending, not in figurative, but in real death. All this Christ's soul passed through. His obedience was tried in it. His devotedness to His Father, His submission in giving up all, entirely up, in death. Was it nothing when every promise and blessing was his natural portion, to find death instead and the loss of all? Surely He shall have all in a more blessed and glorious way, founded securely on that death and resurrection, the sure mercies of David. Still, then He had to give it all up. It was His piety to look to the hand of God in all this, and He did so. No doubt, when the Shepherd was

smitten, atonement was made for sin; but that smiting was a great and solemn fact, besides the atonement which was accomplished in it. God's Shepherd was smitten instead of feeding His beloved flock. Further, death itself was fully felt as such by the Lord. He, with strong crying and tears, made His supplication to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared. It was no light thing to Him to have death instead of life for His portion as a man. He who knew what life was as a true possession of God. But all this has nothing to do with Christ's being subject to it as born into the world. It is exactly and diametrically opposed to that doctrine. Christ's life was the witness of a holy life in divine delight, through every temptation to which we can be subject; a life in which, as regards His Messiahship, He exercised the fullest power, and disposed of all hearts, so that His disciples in going forth needed nothing. Now He says, "But now I say unto you, Let him that has a sword take one; for this that is written concerning me must yet be accomplished, He was reckoned with the transgressors. For the things concerning me have an end." His path was changed from the active exercise of power, in love to the patient suffering the will of God. Not that He had lost the power, as Malchus' healing showed; but that He was arrived where other things written concerning Him were to be accomplished. His HOUR WAS COME. As a man with death before Him, and as the Messiah of Israel, with the loss of all that belonged to Him, His being cut off and having nothing, He came into a place of sorrow destined to Him, but not previously the path in which He served God. This He felt as at God's hand. It was His piety and perfectness to do so. He was heard in that He feared. Yet, till forsaken of God, the work of atonement, the wrath that worked it out in the forsaking of His soul, was not yet in accomplishment. He was till then in communion with His Father; pleaded with Him, was heard in His plea. Yet the smiting of God was the present thing before His soul; for though the outward instruments were men, and the power of darkness at work, He would not stop at secondary causes, nor take the cup from any but His Father's hand. He does not say God's hand. His Father's giving, and the bright joy of obeying, was, though going through conflict, the portion of His soul. In atonement itself, this could not be. But the difference even here is evident. He never asked any other cup to pass. Men had often shown their malice, and sought to kill Him who had wrought many good works amongst them. And surely His heart grieved over this; but He was not given up to them of God, so that His soul looked to His hand in it. Now He did. It was from divine counsels: the word had gone forth. "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts." Though the wounds in His hands had been made in the house of His friends. And the Lord felt it all, as well as, when it came, the all-absorbing cup of the forsaking of His God.

THE WRITER OF THE ARTICLES ON THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

## The Sympathies of Christ: the Spirit of Christ in the Remnant

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OR, THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST IN THE REMNANT. MY DEAR BROTHER, Since reading the valuable paper on the Sufferings of Christ, which has appeared in your pages, and especially the explanations given by the writer of those papers in your last, it has occurred to me that the following extract from a letter written long ago to one who was at that time exercised on these subjects might be helpful to some of your readers now. If you agree in this judgment, the extract is at your service.

Yours affectionately in Christ.

W. T.

As in the Psalms, I do not at all admit that they are all the language of our Lord. Even as to some in which His voice is unquestionably heard, there are other voices also. For instance, (Psa. 102) where the cry of the blessed Jesus is answered in words quoted by the apostle in Heb. 1, as addressed to our Lord by God Himself. So in Psa. 20 and xxi. it is rather the voice of those who pray and give thanks on behalf of Jehovah's Anointed that we hear than His own. At least they express their interest and concurrence in His desires, and then acknowledge how all these desires are fulfilled to the uttermost. I have no doubt that in all the Psalms the Spirit of Christ is to be heard, and that the grand theme of that Spirit's utterance is "the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow." But all this does not prove that the Psalms were all uttered by Christ. as His own language at the time He was here on earth. Some of them were so uttered without doubt. But as to most of the Psalms, they have evidently a different character. There is a well-known passage in Rom. 8:26, 27, which, more clearly than anything, illustrates, as it seems to me, the character of the Psalm In Rom. 8 the intercession is that of the Spirit in Christians, and therefore according to the place given us and the calling wherewith we are called. In the Psalms it is the remnant of Israel that is in question. But how is the passage in Rom. 8 to be understood? We who pray know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the indwelling Spirit helps our infirmities, making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. How are the prayers thus inwrought by the Spirit of God? Not according to the poor, feeble measure of our personal intelligence and desires, but according to the perfect expression of these requests by the Spirit, and according to the value and acceptance of Christ and His work, through which it is that the Holy Ghost has come to make our bodies His abode. "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth (it does not say our mixed, feeble, imperfect desires, but) what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to God."

His intercessions are according to God; while, alas! our apprehensions and utterance of them always fall short of this. Still, what the Searcher of hearts finds in us—that which He hears and receives—is this mind of the Spirit—this intercession of His according to God.

Now it is something analogous to this that we find in the Psalm The circumstances are different: it is another body of people; and in general the blessings sought for are different. The people are the

Jewish remnant; the circumstances in many, perhaps most, of the Psalms, are those of the final tribulation through which these chosen ones are to pass; and where this is not the case, the circumstances are those of one period or another, past or future, in the history of the remnant. The blessings sought for differ in two very important respects from those for which we should seek. On the one hand the supplicants evidently do not stand in the consciousness of God's manifested favor as the Church now stands; and, on the other, they seek deliverance from their complicated and unexampled afflictions by imploring the execution of righteous judgment on their adversaries. In the Psalms we have the confessions, the prayers, the lamentations, the faith, the hopes, the thanksgivings, the worship of this chosen remnant; not according to the feebleness and imperfectness with which they may be actually uttered, but according to the perfect expression of them by the Spirit of Christ, who did identify Himself with this remnant in a most special manner, and whose Spirit will as truly incite in them the desires, &c., thus expressed, as He does now make intercession for the saints with groanings which cannot be uttered.

As to the remnant, and Christ's identification of Himself with it, several points need to be observed. First, there always was such a remnant, from the time that Israel became apostate till the time when "the remnant according to the election of grace," became, along with the Gentile converts to the faith of Christ, the Church of the living God. I suppose, too, we all agree that there will be such a remnant in days to come. Further, there have been times of crisis in Israel's history, when the remnant, or those composing it, have been brought into special distinctness. David and his companions, whether in the days of Saul or of Absalom; Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and in general, of the prophets; and then most especially the disciples of our Lord during His sojourn below, furnish specimens of what the remnant was in the several critical periods in which they lived. Ezra and Nehemiah, with the returned captives of their day, afford another example.

Now I do confess that, as far as I have any light on these subjects, it seems to me incontestable, that it was with this remnant, not with the nation at large, that Jesus in grace identified Himself. And, whatever may be the measure of the manifested favor of God, or whatever the amount of spiritual intelligence enjoyed by this remnant in any period, past or future; and whatever may be their circumstances of outward trial; and in whatever degree their outward trials may be augmented by the lack of that assurance of God's favor, in the knowledge of accomplished redemption which it is our happy privilege to enjoy; their relation to God is one of peace and blessing, and that by virtue of the perfect sacrifice of Christ. They are not at once introduced into the knowledge and power of this relation, as we are immediately believing in Jesus. They have to endure all the outward afflictions which are contained in their cup of sorrow, with the far deeper anguish of receiving them as the tokens of God's righteous displeasure against the sins of the whole nation, with which sins they identify themselves in confession and humiliation before God. But, then, the very fact of their thus confessing their own and their nation's sins, distinguishes them from that nation, and shows that they are the people of God's choice. And, however dark may be their condition outwardly, and even inwardly as to any sense they have of God's dealings with them; and however unheeded their cry may seem to be, and this is surely the bitterest ingredient in their cup; yet, that cry is the cry of the Spirit of Christ in them, and He, blessed be His name! did, in the days of His flesh, and that, too, in circumstances most similar, anticipate all their affliction. He did in spirit, as identifying Himself with them, pass through it all; yea, and more, for He did, as we rejoice to know, bear all their sins as well as ours in His own body on the tree. He

thus endured atoningly the wrath which they dread; and the sense of their having deserved it, i.e., this wrath, draws forth lamentations and mourning from their hearts. Where now is the difficulty in apprehending how Christ could and did voluntarily enter in spirit into all the depths of their agony and distress, and thus give expression to it all before God according to the perfectness of His apprehensions of their state, and of what the claims of divine majesty and holiness are? He thus prepared for them utterances which will be perfectly, because divinely, adapted to their state when they are in it; and which will constitute a cry as entirely “according to God” as are now the intercessions of the indwelling Spirit in the saints of the present dispensation. This is as widely different a thing as possible from Christ being by birth associated with the natural condition of man and of Israel, so as to be Himself in it, and so as to need to be extricated, or to extricate Himself therefrom.

It is, of course, agreed by all, that for them, as well as for us, Christ made atonement. In several of the Psalms, we distinctly hear Christ Himself pouring out the sorrows of His own soul to God, as thus bearing our sins and theirs, confessing them as His own, and appealing (wondrous, affecting, unexampled fact!) to the God—His God—who had forsaken Him owning Him in such words as, “But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.” It is on the alone ground of this atoning work, that any sinner can be brought into acceptable relationship to God. It is on this ground that the remnant we are contemplating are brought into such a relationship. Now it was with the remnant of His day that our Lord did associate Himself when on earth. From the mass of the nation He did entirely disassociate himself. Even the closest ties of kindred in the flesh had to give way. “Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, my sister, and mother.” So also in Psa. 16:2, 3. There, “the excellent of the earth, with whom,” says Christ, “is all my delight,” are set by Him in contrast with “those who hasten after another God.” He identifies Himself with the one class; He utterly disowns the other. In like manner it was with the remnant of every period, that His sympathies, as expressed in the Psalms, were found. And such were, I doubt not, His sympathies, that He did enter in spirit fully into all that they had, or have yet to endure; but the language in which this sympathy is expressed must not be understood as His language personally, as to His own relationship to God; but as their language, in which, by the Spirit of Christ, what becomes them in their state is uttered; and uttered, not in the measure of their dark and imperfect apprehensions, but according to the perfectness of the Spirit, who incites the desires, and has prepared this perfect vehicle for their expression.

## To Adelpnos on Our Being Risen With Christ

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The editor cannot agree with “adelpnos,” that our being risen with Christ accounts for the omission of the church's resurrection, or for the phrase, “the first resurrection,” in Rev. 20 first, it is clear to him that the church is included in those whom John saw seated on thrones, and to whom judgment is given; so that he doubts the fact of any such omission. Secondly, the first “resurrection” is in plain contrast with the “second death.” in it all the dead have their blessed part, who are not reserved for the resurrection of the unjust, just before “the end.” “risen with Christ” is simply said of the Christian, because Christ, raised from the dead, is his life

## The Last Vials

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To the Editor of the Bible Treasury

DEAR SIR, I have had my attention drawn of late to a prophetic, publication named the "Last Vials," proceeding from the pen of Mr. Purdon, of Torquay. I have thought that I would, as far as the Lord enables me, communicate to you the impressions formed in my mind with regard to it. I do not pretend to a careful examination of even the few numbers of the work (about two dozen) that have come under my notice; but these specimens give one, in some respects, a general notion of the character of the whole.

The general outline of Mr. Purdon's prophetic scheme appears correct, as far as I am a judge. It embraces the constant expectation of the Lord, with no intervening events, as the true hope of the Church; a double fulfillment of prophecy as to antichrist, partial in the past, (as applied to Popery,) complete in the future; the restoration and blessing of Israel; the millennial reign of Christ; the new heavens and new earth. He urges the truth of the expectation of Christ's return in the most decided manner, and lashes with severity the worldly and Laodicean ways of professing Christendom and of true Christians, who, alas! so largely share them; and accounts thus, doubtless with much truth, for the unfavorable reception which the doctrine of the Lord's coming meets with from them.

It seems to me, however, that Mr. P. carries matters in this respect to a decided excess, and gives to the rapture of the saints an undue and exaggerated prominence. He considers that "Of all the subjects of revelation, that of the rapture of the Church is the most sublime. The scriptures, like the tree of life, bear twelve manner of fruits, some for the ordinary uses of salvation, others for the Church in its most advanced state; and of these the rapture of the saints is the most perfect and mature. Like the cluster of grapes at the brook of Eschol, the most perfect specimen of the promised land." And again, "It is the constant praise of the Thessalonians that they were WAITING for Christ. But the Thessalonians were the most perfect and advanced of all the churches. Therefore it follows that to wait for Jesus' is the highest act of faith in any Christian Church." Now I would not, for a moment, undervalue the preciousness of the expectation of our Lord. I believe that the rapture of the living saints is the greatest triumph of redemption and the power of the life that is in Christ for His people. But I do not think it is by any means the most sublime of all the subjects of that revelation which, by the Holy Ghost, unfolds to us all that God is, as displayed in His ways, and above all, in His Son. That the Thessalonians were in a most blessed state as a church, I do not doubt; but that they were the most "perfect and advanced" of the churches, I see no reason to suppose, with Philippians and Ephesians before me. In fact, it is evident that the "waiting for His Son from Heaven," in their case, was immediately consequent on turning to God from idols to serve the living and true God, i.e., that it was a truth interwoven with their faith immediately on conversion. It is, or should be, one of the elementary truths of Christianity. I may observe that the Apostle John, in addressing the "lathers"—those most advanced in spiritual life -speaks of them as those, not who had apprehended "the rapture," but who had "known him that is from the beginning." The appearing of Christ (see 1 John 2:28) was a truth familiar to the whole family,

young or advanced. In a word, the knowledge of Christ Himself, His person and His love is infinitely more precious than that rapture (precious truth as it is) which derives all its power and sweetness for our souls from the apprehension of the glory and the love of Him to whose presence it will introduce us—of the riches of blessing, too, to which His love has acquired a title for us, and into the full enjoyment of which we shall then enter.

Mr. P. considers it possible, and even probable, that the worldly-minded portion of even the true Church will be left behind at the rapture. Now, while lamenting equally with him the state of many Christians, denying practically, even if they hold as a doctrine, the hope of the Lord's appearing, it would be, to my mind, a denial of the perfectness of grace to suppose that they will be left out of the Church at her rapture. (I do not believe, as Mr. P. does, that they might, after passing through the tribulation, form part of "the bride" at the end.) But, in fact, Mr. P., while acknowledging that it is only matter of conjecture, dilates on it strenuously, as though it were a certainty. This he carries to a climax in a tract entitled "Remember Lot's Wife," where, on the supposition that Lot's wife may be a type of carnally-minded Christians, he thus writes: "Such thoughts (worldly schemes, &c.) may pass through the minds of saints at the moment of the rapture And so the earthly-minded saint—reluctant to mount into the air—reluctant to meet the Lord—may be struck down to the earth again, as a monument of divine indignation." (!) In another tract he seeks to prove that the "high calling of God" meant the rapture, and that Paul felt doubtful of attaining to it, i.e., of being found worthy of it! Now I feel confident that "calling" never signifies anything of the kind. It is used to express God's call of His chosen ones, and the blessings connected therewith. In 2 Thess. 1:11, it is applied, not to the rapture, but to the place given us in the kingdom, and the tribulation on earth which is our portion in connection with it. So that the contrast between "high" and "low" calling, (if such a thing were mentioned,) would not be, as Mr. P. supposes, the rapture on the one hand, and remaining till the Lord comes to earth on the other; (and how would this be so, if the saints left behind were taken up to the Lord, as Mr. P. thinks, before the marriage of the Lamb, when He has not as yet come to earth, in Rev. 19?); but rather would it not be the being called to know and have part in Christ in heavenly glory, as contrasted with the calling of Israel to earthly blessing?

Mr. P.'s interpretation of symbols I should judge to be by no means always to be trusted. For instance, he treats the man-child of Rev. 12 as the living saints caught up at the rapture, the woman being the Church reigning in heaven. But how can this be so, when, after the catching up of the child to the throne of God, she is persecuted by the dragon who is cast out into the earth, and flies into the wilderness? It seems evident to me that the man-Child is Christ, according to Psa. 2 caught up to heaven consequent on His rejection,—born, according to the flesh, of Israel, set forth by the woman. Doubtless the rapture of the man-child includes that of the heavenly saints.

While there is much that is true in Mr. Purdon's thoughts, as long as he adheres to the teaching of scripture, there is a good deal, on the other hand, of rash and unwarrantable conclusions, based on deductions from scripture, analogies, probabilities, and the like, which renders him an unsafe guide in prophetic inquiry. For instance, from the undoubted fact that the Messiah will, after His second advent, destroy many of His own and Israel's enemies, and Will, in the carrying out of this vengeance, make use of Israel as His weapons of war—from this Mr. P. deduces the idea that there will be what he terms the wars of the Messiah, carried on for a prolonged period, perhaps

half, or nearly so, of the millennial reign. He grounds this supposition – First, on a straining of the types of David and Solomon, (as representing Christ; in His characters as Conqueror and Prince of Peace,) to prove that His Davidic reign will be equal in length to His Solomonic, or at least a considerable period. With equal reason might the period of antichrist's rule be supposed a prolonged one; for Saul, who doubtless in measure typified him, reigned for the like term of forty years as David and Solomon. Next, from Psa. 110 which proves the fact, but nothing as to the prolongation: but gives rather the idea of Divine wrath executing summary vengeance. 3rd, from Dan. 7:12, where the three first beasts are said to have their lives prolonged for a time—hence, Mr. P. argues they will be destroyed at the end of that time; and therefore, “That the three former Gentile empires will take up arms after the Lord's coming, has been shown to be almost certain, from the expression used by Daniel!” Psa. 18, another of Mr. P.'s convincing evidences of protracted wars carried on by Christ through the instrumentality of Israel, shows rather, I think, the effect of his first victories in reducing nations throughout the world to the obedience of fear. (See verses 43, 44; Isa. 66:15-24; Zech. 14:2, 3, 12, 16, 17.) But what is the most objectionable is, that he looks upon such wars, not, according to the whole spirit of scripture, as needful and terrible acts of judgment from God, for the subjugation and overawing of the nations; but moreover, as forming in themselves a part of the privilege of Israel. “God chose a people a warlike people, endowed with the highest attributes of manhood—brave, firm... robust in frame.... He placed them.... in a country filled with strong military positions.” So again, “They will continue to be a fighting nation, as their forefathers were once the greatest warriors of the world. This is an high honor conferred especially upon Israel. To be forever a warlike race, is the height of perfection in human affairs.” I need scarcely say how utterly false is this attributing of the triumphs which display God's power on behalf of Israel to their physical qualifications for conquest. (See Deut. vii. 1, 7; xi. 22-25; xx. 1-4; xxxii. 30, 36-42; Josh. 24:12; Psa. 108:11-13.) Mr. P. considers the enlistment of Jews by the Russian emperor as a sign that they are about to be trained for their future warlike achievements! Worse than this, he regards die conquests of the Messiah, besides the needful inductions of Divine vengeance on the wickedness and pride of man, to be part of his perfection as a man! That such a thought is carnal and not spiritual I need not stop to prove. Ex. 15, where the LORD is proclaimed “as a man of war,” is as far as possible from countenancing Mr. Purdon's imagination.

Another instance of Mr. P.'s speculativeness is found in treating of the restoration of the Gentile nations. Instead of following the alone safe guidance of the word, he uses the following argument: - Ezek. 16:53-55, shows Sodom restored. Now the wickedness of Sodom was especially great, and her destruction the most complete. “We think,” hence argues Mr. P., “that an immense and most important conclusion may be drawn from this prophecy—THE REVIVAL OF THE ANCIENT GENTILES. . . . . If Sodom itself be restored, how much more any other of the Gentile cities?” Why not Tire, Bozrah, Ar of Moab, Zidon, Ashkelon, or even Babylon itself?” Such inferences are surely as rash as they are needless. Scripture tells us explicitly what nations shall, and what shall not, be restored. And does not Jer. 49:13 state the contrary with regard to Bozrah? The last verses of Ezek. 26 xxvii. as to Tire? Isa. 13:19-22, as to Babylon? And a similar imagination with reference to Edom seems plainly contradicted by Jer. 49; 17:18 Ezek. 35; 4:9

While the author of the “Vials” rightly insists that no events are necessary to occur before the coming of Christ for the Church, he nevertheless occupies the minds of his readers with the events

and politics of the day, as being the tokens, in his opinion, of the near approach of the accomplishment of prophecy, to an extent, I cannot but think, very unprofitable for the soul. Thus many of his tracts are filled with supposed discoveries in the present French Emperor of traits which point him out, in his opinion, as the eighth head of the beast. As an instance of these speculations, in a tract on "The First and Second Seals," he conjectures the conqueror of Rev. 6:2, to be the eighth head, in the commencement of his military career, while it is certain that the eighth head will be the chief of the revived Roman empire. But this setting out in a course of conquests must be, he considers, preceded by a period in which this monarch will display a pacific character. Hence the comparison is drawn with Napoleon III., whose "empire is (professedly) peace," while he is, according to Mr. P., master of Rome and Constantinople, (this was written before the evacuation of Turkey by the allied forces), and aiming at the possession of Jerusalem—thus evidently laying the foundations for the re-organization of the Roman empire. Now, the events of the times have, doubtless, their significance and interest for the Christian, especially in the moral principles that are seen everywhere at work, But that the attention should be engrossed with them, or occupied with persons whose playing a part in the scenes of the last days must be entirely conjectural, is, I cannot doubt, a wretched substitute for, and indeed, a means of drawing away the soul from, the contemplation of those heavenly blessings in Christ, which are so entirely outside the scene of the events and politics of this world. Mr. Purdon appears to be absorbed in the contemplation of Louis Napoleon—an unprofitable subject truly! Thus, of the few tracts I have before me, "The woman and the beast," is devoted to showing the strong analogy to Rev. 17, of the relations of the emperor of the French and the Church of Rome. Of two tracts on "the Formation of the Ten Kingdoms," the first proclaims that the convention signed by the ministers of France and England, in the spring of 1854, has made England one of the ten kingdoms of the beast, and treats at length of the plots and designs, against Britain, of Louis Napoleon, showing how completely he had got us under his power in Turkey, while threatening us on the side of Boulogne. The second is a continuation of Mr. P.'s speculations on the Emperor's plans, whom he brands as the "universal conspirator;" and moreover asserts that "since the very last number was published within one week, Napoleon has gained another kingdom, towards the making up of the ten. His forces have landed at the Piraeus, and he is master of Athens. The kingdom of Greece is in his hands," &c. Spain, Italy, Naples, Rome, Belgium, dm., are pointed out as falling into their places, as the ten kingdoms, under the sway of the same individual. Another tract is entitled, "The True Character of Napoleon III.," and shows its similarity to, and adaptation for, the character of Antichrist. While the last two of "the Vials" treat of the significance to be — attached to the late "Meeting of the Emperors" of France and Russia; subjoining a tremendous censure on the sins of the English, connected with their treatment of India.

There may be, doubtless, much moral truth in Mr. Purdon's observations; and possibly some of his speculations may prove correct, though some have come to naught. But such matters are, save for the most passing comment, entirely outside the sphere of the life and hopes of those who are "not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world," It is refreshing to turn from this strain of writings to such passages as Eph. 1:16-23; 3:16-21; Phil. 4:8; Col. 1:9-10, 27-28; 3:16; 1 Tim. 3:15-16; 2 Peter 1:2- 3:18, as setting forth the true character and mode of knowledge in which Christians should be versed. (John 14:26; 16:12-15 John 1-3.)

But I must notice here another feature of Mr. Purdon's character of thought. To judge from the "Vials," his ideas with regard to the blessings which give color to the hope of a Christian, are of the most low and material order. I may observe that while he considers the Revelation not literal but figurative, he nevertheless attempts to show how some of the judgments may be literally and exactly fulfilled, by means of comets, and the like. And the "heavenly Jerusalem" he regards as a real, actual, golden, foursquare city, of certain dimensions. But the lowness of his spiritual thoughts comes out most strikingly in a number called, "The Faith that overcometh the World." He considers that this is something more than ordinary faith, which he designates faith in the atonement, although it is declared that "whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world;" and the faith spoken of, "believing in the Son of God," is the first and grand element of salvation. He says that believing in Jesus as the Son of God, is looking at Him as the heir and proprietor of all things, and thus also the dispenser of them to us hereafter! But among these, Mr. P. puts in the foremost place, power, rank, title, and fame; the perusal of the history of eternity; the magnificence of the heavenly city, ("the new Jerusalem, 6000 miles in circumference and 1600 miles in height, glittering with its golden street, and the light of God's countenance," is to me a most offensive idea); radiant robes; equipages (chariots and horses of fire); eating and drinking in the kingdom; the personal beauty of resemblance to Christ (eclipsing, according to Mr. P., the highest dreams of sculpture!); scientific knowledge; music, &c. It is these enjoyments which constitute, in Mr. P.'s idea, the "unsearchable riches of Christ!" "In every circumstance the Son of God meets point to point with the world—out-rivals and defeats it... He has promised to the saints all that the world can promise to the worldly, and not spiritually but literally. "The world attracts and destroys the soul by its fascinations; the Son of God takes up the world on its own terms; demands what it can give in exchange for the soul, and he then offers the same price; the same in kind, but multiplied an hundred fold It is thus that faith in the Son of God overcometh the world; for it gives us all that the world can give," &c.

May I ask, Mr. Editor, in concluding this summary of what seems to me the general character of "the Last Vials," that you will favor myself and your readers with your thoughts on the true nature of "faith in the Son of God" as that which "overcomes the world," as compared or contrasted with those I have just quoted; and also whether you see any reason for believing that literal eating and drinking will form a part of the "spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," which God has given to His Church. What is proved by Luke 22:18, 29, 30? A few remarks, likewise, on the symbolic force of the description of the heavenly Jerusalem in Rev. 21 xxii. would be most acceptable. I may add, that Mr. P. feeds, in some places, the imagination rather than the souls of his readers by highly colored pictures of the earthly blessings of Israel (physical, climate, and the like) in the millennium. Most strange and wrong is his notion that the saints on their rapture will need time in order to "accustom" them to the new state of things! and that the "morning star" signifies Christ appearing in a less dazzling glory for this end. His idea that the dead saints may rise forty days before the rapture, and warn the living ones of its approach, is contradicted by 1 Cor. 15:52. His observations on "the Progress of Atheism" are striking, and he exhibits a wholesome horror of the advancing evil of the day in Christendom. But I doubt that "the Last Vials" are calculated for the true edification of believers; while in some respects they are positively objectionable.

I am, dear sir, Yours in Christ,

W. G.

## We Have This Treasure

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2 Cor. 4:5.

IT is wonderful the liberty the Holy Ghost gives in the soul. Not that we have no conflict—we have; but we have to maintain it in the power of the Holy Ghost. We possess this treasure, and we have delight in it. We not only know that we are saved, but we enjoy it. It was the desire of the apostle to be in full possession of what he now knew by faith, but was not fully brought into the possession of. He had the treasure, but not in glory. Therefore he says, “we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven.” He was not groaning because of the weariness of the way, the trials and difficulties here; but he had such a consciousness of the blessedness of the treasure, that he groaned to possess it unhindered in the presence of God.

It is good to have the joy now, but there is always a tendency to confidence in the flesh. The spring of all this liberty, and joy, and blessing, is that we have seen Christ. We have seen Him in glory. The eye of faith has rested on Him. We could not have this joy without the certainty of redemption accomplished, which we have in the man Christ Jesus, being accepted in glory.

The sufferings of Christ touch the affections, but do not give this joy. An attachment is formed for God, and he would not go to another; but this is not all He gives us. We must be able to say, ‘I have got redemption—all my sin is gone—all that was against me is taken away through the One who died, and is received into glory,’ in order to have this joy and longing for the glory as the result. It is all contrary to the life of the flesh. Where the life of the flesh ends, the life of the Spirit begins, and practically we have power in the life of the Spirit in proportion as the flesh is dead. CHRIST BEFORE THE SOUL is the key to these chapters and those that precede.

In chap. 1 he says, “we had the sentence of death in ourselves” —no trust in natural life. All that was of the first Adam gone, dead, and therefore nothing would touch the ground of his confidence “in God which raiseth the dead.” That confidence clearly sets aside the fear of things around. If dead to the law and dead to Satan, what power has he over a dead man?

The principle of power is that we are dead. Faith acts on this.

Chap. iv. “We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; for God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Then he says, “we have this treasure in earthen vessels.” What treasure? Christ. Paul has seen the one who has put away his sin—who is his righteousness—who is in glory. He sees Him, and he says, ‘that is what I want.’ In seeing Him I see one who has the power of life, who has passed through death and overcome it. I have this one—Christ. This is the treasure. I have it in an earthen vessel; but I have it. John says, “the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life,” &c. There is Christ, this eternal life. I have Him in that glory known to faith. I shall have this life, the full fruit of eternal redemption in glory. Abraham believed that God was able to perform; but we believe that the Father raised Christ from the dead. It is done, and His being there in glory is the proof that all is

done.

Our standing there in the presence of God is the fruit of the work being finished “He has appeared once to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” He has brought me to God. Has He brought me in my sins? No. I should not be there at all if not cleansed. “He was made sin for us.” “He hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” There is the resting-place of the soul. Then, in this chapter, He (Christ) is presented as the power of life. I have the treasure in “an earthen vessel.” It is a vessel that hinders, for it is earthen; but the faith that sees the treasure has put us in possession of life. If I have life, it is because I have Christ. “He that hath the Son, hath life.” “In Him was life.” “He is our life,” and “when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory.”

Another view of it is Christ, the life down here. When I look at Him down here, I can say, “There is my life.” If I look at myself, I see the life mixed up with much that ought not to be; but when I look at Jesus, what obedience! what patience! what graciousness! and I say, That is my life! I can bless God for giving me such a life. He was perfect in everything. What rest it gives to the spirit to be able to say in beholding all that perfection in Him, “That is mine!”

But now, when I think of power, I must look up to Christ in glory for it. If this earthly tabernacle were dissolved, “we have a building of God,” &c. The essence of the character of life is Christ in glory. In Rom. 1 He is declared to be “the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” The principle of the power was seen in His being raised from the dead. We have a title in Him to say always, we are dead. Therefore it is “Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” When we come to live practically in this way, it is always “bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.” We cannot manifest this life of Christ practically, but as we are reckoning ourselves dead. If I walk by faith, I am bearing about in my body the dying of the Lord Jesus. If I walk by sight, Christ is not my object, or my power. “We are delivered unto death.” (iv. 11.) Sometimes it is necessary we should pass through trouble to break down the flesh, which cannot live by faith. Paul had to go through trial, but through it all, he was beholding by faith the treasure. “The life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.” There is the full revelation of Christ, known to faith, and the certainty that when I see Him I shall be like Him. He is my righteousness now, and when I see Him in glory, I shall be like Him-and this I groan for, and earnestly desire.

Does not His love refresh my spirit now?-does not His love restore my soul (happier not so to need it)? There is no cloud, no fear of judgment, but certainty of being clothed, and therefore there is the earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with the house which is from heaven. So strong was the desire for this, that he did not even think of dying— “not for that we would be unclothed,” &c.

What is the secret of this? He had not only seen. life in Christ, but Christ Himself, and he saw that this life could cause that “mortality should be swallowed up of life.” He had faith in that power of life in Christ that it could effect this-death would slip away and not be. Do you believe in this power of life? As long as there is a soul to gather in, His long-suffering continues, but the power exists. Then the apostle goes on to speak of dying. What can death do? If I die before Christ comes, I am in His presence. I shall only depart from this mortal body to be with Him “Therefore we are always confident,” &c.

“Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be agreeable to Him.” “For we must all appear (or be manifested) before the judgment seat of Christ.”

How are we all to be manifested? All will give an account of themselves, (the saints when they are caught up to be with the Lord, the wicked at the end of the millennium.) The saints give account of themselves in glory. What will be to be judged in the saint? He is identified with the very principle that will judge, if he is the righteousness of God. What was there to judge? Conscience is not awakened by it at all for the believer, for that is purged; but it does awaken something. “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.” There is not only righteousness, but love. He sees the terror of judgment. The sight of the righteousness that judges is the occasion why he sets about preaching to others. It puts love in activity, and then he adds another thing: “We are manifest unto God,” not we shall be. I stand in the presence of the glory now, and whatever does not suit that glory, is judged now. It acts on the conscience in the way of self-judgment. We want this light, but we must have perfect confidence in God, for there can be no happy play of the affections, if there is not this confidence. We cannot have fellowship with a person, if we think he is going to condemn us; but “our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” We cannot have confidence, if we have not a perfect conscience. (Heb. ix. x.) This we have by Christ our righteousness, He having obtained eternal redemption for us. What there is a memorial of now in God's presence, is, that my sins are put away by that one perfect sacrifice. I have a righteousness perfect, and so infinite that I can never get out of it.

CHRIST is the center of everything for the heart.

When I think of the exceeding and eternal weight of glory, it may seem too much for me; but when I see the Lamb there, as the Light thereof, it puts my affections in play. It is the Lamb that was slain for me—the Lamb that took away my sins.

There is grace needed every day for us passing through the wilderness, but not for us to rise up to righteousness, as if we had it not, but to walk according to it. Christ takes knowledge of our wants. Thus there are two parts of His present blessing for us; Himself the object for our affections, and His constant supply for our daily need. We have the righteousness, and we wait for the hope of it, the glorious hope which is suitable to the righteousness of God. We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

## What Is the Wedding Garment and Who Is the Friend?

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Q. Matt. 22 F. R. asks, what is “the wedding-garment,” and who the “friend” is, who is consigned to outer darkness?

A. By the use of the garment is meant putting on Christ, Had the man put on Christ, he would have had everything: Christ of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. The same thing is true practically. (Comp. Rom. 13:14; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:24, &c.) If Judas, the son of perdition, could be styled “friend,” (in the sense of “companion,” and not of a link formed by real love,) this man might be called no less.

## The Word of God and the Priesthood of Christ: Part 1

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Heb. 4

THERE are two things that God employs in carrying us through the desert, as spoken of here. One is the word of God, and the other is the priesthood of the Lord Jesus.

The word of God is used for the detection and discerning of the thoughts and intents of the heart. It is “quick and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword,... and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Whatsoever is flesh it cuts down mercilessly—and thank God for it, because it is a hindrance to our blessing. The warning of which the Apostle speaks here, alluding the history of Israel, is that their carcasses fell in the wilderness. They had got out of Egypt, and yet their carcasses fell in the wilderness. There is, of course, for us the danger answering to that—a very real danger. No doubt, God will keep His own to the end, but there is the principal danger; and if we are kept, it is through faith. Now, that which tends to make us fall in the wilderness is the flesh, and the means that God uses that we should not fall in the wilderness, is the word that is sharper than any two-edged sword. Whatever is not a thought that comes from God, and an intent that goes to God, the word of God judges—that is, whatever springs naturally up in the heart of man, whatever comes from the flesh, which, of course, is everything in a mere natural man—in the heart, out of which are the issues of life. The flesh never gets from the wilderness into the land. It may die in the wilderness, but it never can get out of it. The flesh belongs to it, in a sense, and may die in it, but cannot get from it. There is nothing for the flesh but the sword a figure, of course, of that which judges, detects, and condemns it—and let us thank God for that.

As regards acceptance with God, we can say the flesh is condemned already. “What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” Thus, looked at as a question of righteousness, in the cross of Christ God has condemned sin in the flesh; and then when we come to the journey through the wilderness, the word of God judges whatever is not according to that word. The cross has dealt with the flesh already: whatever did not suit the death of Christ in a thought or act was thereby judged and condemned. The word of God is one means for the practical carrying out of this; and the second means employed is the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The word of God, we saw, judged the thoughts and intents of the heart; while the priesthood applies to all infirmities and failures. The moment it is a question of a thought or intent of the heart, it has to be judged as coming from the flesh; and this is done by the word of God, which is sharper than any two-edged sword. On the other hand, looked at as regards trials and weakness, there you get the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The word of God is the eye of God, judging everything in my soul that is not according to Himself. And then we have “a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.” Where it is a time of need and difficulty, it is the High Priest full of tenderness and mercy, “that we may find grace to help in time of need.” It cannot be, evidently, anything inconsistent with the word of God. It cannot be the one to cut and the other

to spare the flesh; and, therefore, the priest must sustain us, according to the blessing which is given us entirely out of the reach of the flesh. And so it is that Christ becomes High Priest. He is gone up where the flesh cannot enter. That is the place in which we have to say to God; and, therefore, as our High Priest, He has to carry on our affairs in that presence of God, where nothing that defiles can enter. He lays the foundation of that in the sacrifice, by virtue of which He can go there; so that this very priesthood of Christ is founded on our acceptance.

As a figure, the redemption of Israel out of Egypt, which preceded all their journey to the wilderness, is here used. We have done with Egypt altogether. The Red sea put death and judgment between the journeyers and Egypt; and so with the saint now. Death and judgment form the starting-point of the saint. There is that which goes before it in exercise of heart; and when a soul sets out to leave this world of ruin and condemnation, it often finds itself, as Israel did, on the banks of the Red sea, the waters before and their enemies behind them. There they were completely shut in to this judgment, where Satan was driving them. But the moment they had passed over the Red sea, all that was entirely and finally closed. What had been a barrier, when Israel could go no further, was now left wholly behind, and served as a barrier against Egypt. And to us, death and judgment are a securing barrier between us and all that was against us. It is not that there may be no conflict after; no weariness after; but there is no question of deliverance after that. If Israel were not faithful, they failed in gaining victories, but there was no question of God's being against them. Next comes this journey through the wilderness, the judgment of the flesh by the word, and then the priesthood of Christ, which is exercised for us. And when I come to see where Christ is, I find that it is the very One that has gone through the death and judgment that were due to me, and has taken His place in the presence of God, where He is exercising His priesthood.

He has settled the point where I belong to, where I worship; and it is in the presence of God—that is my place. All that belongs to me, as in the first Adam, is done with in my intercourse with God—not as regards conflict with it, but as regards my place with God. The old nature is there still, and the word comes and judges all the movements of it, that would hinder me in my path. But the place where Christ exercises His priesthood is out of the flesh altogether; it is in heaven. “Such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” Israel had a place on earth, and a priest on earth; we have a place in heaven, and a priest in heaven.

“And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him” He must first be made perfect in His place as priest, before He begins to lead and administer to those who were to worship through Him. We shall find that Christ exercises this priesthood because we belong to a place where flesh cannot enter, because He has set aside all that we were connected with in the first Adam. He gives us access into the presence of God, and there He maintains us. The high priest in Israel, taken from among men, was not there; they did not go even in figure within the veil, save once a year, and that was with -clouds of incense, to hide the glory of God from them. They were men in the flesh, and therefore could not be connected with the holiest. We are men in the Spirit, and therefore we are in the holiest; but the flesh has no part there, in any way. The Jews, as a nation, being in the flesh, they must have a high priest in flesh, compassed with infirmities, because they had infirmities; as it is said here, “who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.”

He was outside like them; he was on the same ground. Well, in a sense, we are on the same ground with the High Priest, and it is on the ground of the new thing that is in heaven. We are associated with God in this new place that He has made for us in Christ. But Jesus, as our High Priest, is the very contrast of the Jewish high priest taken from among men. He must be separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, because we are. All the question of our capacity to go on with joy, as being there, depends upon the intercession of Christ.

There are three things here, as regards this fitness of Christ for the priesthood. The first is the title of His person. "No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest." He did not set up to be a person worthy in dignity to take such an office, but God says it of Him, He is my Son. And there He was, having a competency in His own person. "But he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee." In the second Psalm we find it said, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." When I look at Christ as a man upon earth, (for it is not His eternal Sonship that is spoken of here), and say, Who is this man that He can have a priesthood? What is His title? He is the Son of God. He has a competency in His person to have such an office.

Then we come to the installing of Him in this office. "As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." Not like a high priest taken from among men, who dies, and gives the office to some one else, but He is a priest forever, &c. The carrying on of the priesthood of Christ in heaven is founded upon an already completed salvation, as regards both blood-shedding and righteousness. If the righteousness were not already perfect, the failure must bring down judgment instead of intercession. If propitiation has not been made for the sin, the sin must be the cause of judgment. But righteousness having been perfectly made in Christ and made for us, He sits now in heaven, and intercedes, for those for whom propitiation has been made through His blood. The atonement has been perfectly accomplished, sin is put away, and I am made the very righteousness of God in Christ. But the question still remains of our intercourse in this holy place with God in blessing, and in the perfect enjoyment of the position He has brought us into by this death and judgment through which Christ has passed. Here the intercession comes in. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Thus we have the Lord Jesus Christ in the dignity of His person, as Son of God: and in the title for office, as Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec. If He is to be our Priest in the presence of God, we have Him in the dignity in which He can carry it on.

But, then, there is another difficulty. If He has this mighty title, if He is the Son, how can He enter into all the sorrows and trials of such poor creatures as we are? If He were a priest like another man, He could understand the infirmities of other men.

But I answer, the priesthood is carried on where there cannot be a thought of infirmity, where the enjoyment is spiritual enjoyment, where, if there were a thought of the flesh or of sin, there could be no communion with God. Therefore the place of Christ, as Priest, is necessarily out of the reach of all infirmity. Another priest could join with sinners, and feel their infirmities, as being himself a partaker of them. How, then, can the Lord Jesus Christ be fitted, in that sense of the word, to be our High Priest. It is not while He has His priesthood that He is thus fitted for the office. It is what He was upon earth, not what He is now as a Priest, that has fitted Him for such a work. "Such an

high priest became us," &c. He has gone through the difficulties and trials of a godly and perfect man upon earth. He has known every possible difficulty which a godly man can find in his path through this world, and the trials too. He suffered and was "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." Now that is just what I want. I do not want sympathy with my sin—I find the word of God to cut it down, but no sympathy with it. Christ does not intercede for the flesh. What I want Christ's help for is for the new man against my flesh. I want to be helped as a believer going through this world, against myself, so far as the flesh is there.

"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." That is what I am to learn; only in His case I hear, "Though He were a Son," &c., Christ had to learn obedience. Why? Because He commanded everything through all eternity. I have to learn obedience, because I have a wicked heart and will; Christ had to learn it because He was God over all, and therefore obedience was new to Him. It is new to me because I am a disobedient creature; it was new to Him because He was not a creature at all. He was put into all the difficulties and trials that we can possibly go through; and more than that, He was even put under the wrath of God, that we might never be there. Into those sufferings we can never enter. In His sufferings as a righteous man on earth, we can, in our little measure, sympathize with Him. Suppose I am seeking to lead a godly life in this world, I must take up my cross and follow Him. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." And if we get too much ease in this world, it is not a safe thing for us. Suffering must be my portion. If I am godly in my ways, I shall find suffering; and if I walk in the power of the love of Christ, there I shall find suffering too. I may suffer for righteousness' sake and for Christ's sake; but whatever it be, we find there, in our path through this world, the Lord Himself going before us, suffering first and most of all.

In the sufferings of Christ about our sin, He was entirely alone; but there is another kind of suffering which Christ went through, of which we cannot say that we suffer with Him, but in which He can sympathize with us, and that is in the close of His life. The special character of that, though not exclusive, was the suffering of the Jewish remnant in the last days. They are under law; they do not know what it is to be reconciled to God, but they come into the most awful conflict with Satan, antichrist, and all the terrors of that day. They will be under the sufferings which come from the full letting loose of the power of Satan upon them, without the knowledge of God's favor resting upon them. That is anything but suffering with Christ; but, still they will have the sympathy of Christ. Christ has gone through that too. When things were entirely changed in His whole position, (not yet as drinking the cup from God,) but when He comes and has Satan's power let loose upon Him, (and there He can look forward, to wrath,) He was going through all that darkness which the power of Satan could bring upon Him, with the wrath of God staring Him in the face. For that reason He can sympathize with the remnant of Israel in the sufferings that they will pass through. Wherever this character of suffering comes in, judgment against man is what we find called for. Hence the constant appeal to God to arise and avenge them on their adversaries, which we find throughout the Psalms. Whereas when expiation is made, it is mercy that is called for. In the one case, it is calling for judgment upon men, because men, as the instruments of Satan, are making Christ suffer; but the moment He is suffering from God, because of atonement for sin, it is exactly the contrary. You then read, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the

congregation will I sing praise unto thee.” It is all grace, and nothing else.

But how does that apply to us? Take souls that are under the law, finding out something of the depth and extent of their sin—not quite in despair, but all the terrors of the law drinking up their spirit. Christ can sympathize with them; having passed through all this terror and distress from the power of Satan, there is a sustaining grace that hinders the soul from being completely overwhelmed. The sufferings of expiation are another thing. Christ only has drunk that cup, because He suffered from God—entirely apart, totally alone; and nothing but grace remains. After He has said, “Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns,” you will not find one single thing but grace. It is the wrath of God He was bearing for others.

Christ, in going through the two first classes of sufferings, can sympathize with me, where it is the trial and suffering of a godly soul, and can intercede for us and help us on. I have no doubt, too, that the presence of Christ in heaven now sustains Israel as a separate nation.

“And being made perfect,” &c. The whole thing has been passed through, and He becomes a qualified High Priest, as regards my sorrows and difficulties, because He passed through them when He was here. He has gone through all the difficulties of a godly life on the earth, and therefore now while He gives us this place in heaven, He is competent to sympathize with us as we pass through the world. My place is in heaven, and my path upon earth is that which belongs to, and is consistent with, this place that I have in heaven. My path ought to be the expression of that. What was Christ's path in this world? Even as the Son of man upon earth, He was ever “the Son of man which is in heaven.” Every atom of His life was the expression of this blessed One in heaven; and so is it with us, so far as we are consistent. The Christ who is in heaven, and who gives me this place in light, in the presence of God, is the Christ that is in me. So the apostle says, “Always hearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.” The life of the Christian upon earth is the manifestation of that life in Jesus, with whom he is in heaven: he is the expression of that Christ upon earth.

(To be continued.)

## The Word of God and the Priesthood of Christ: Part 2

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Heb. 4-5. Continued.

WHERE we fail, where our life is not the expression of that life in Jesus, there comes the word of God, which is the expression of it, and searches us; and thus there is sanctification by the truth. The word brings Christ to me where I am not showing forth Christ, and judges it.

But if I find difficulties and trials by the way? There I have the intercession of Christ. I have Christ interceding for me, as knowing all the comfort of the grace of God that flows out to this life upon earth. He has known how a soul is comforted in this trial, and He takes it all for me, and pleads for me before God, according to His own knowledge of my need. There I find the supplies of grace that I want, through a person who understands the application of grace to a heart that is going through these difficulties. Before He stands in His place of priesthood, He has gone through them all. Thus His walk upon earth was ever that of a dependent man, and now He intercedes for us, as dependent ones, and thereby maintains our communion with the blessedness of God, in the place where our title is. You may be conscious of much infirmity, but if you say, I am weak, you are also entitled to say, God is for me in that. Do I want light? God is for me in that. Do I want direction for my path? God is for me in that. I get all that God is for my need; and such is the effect of the intercession of Christ. In all this path of trial below, there is not one of the difficulties to which grace does not apply it. There is not a step of my life that God is not thinking of me. There may be that in me which requires that God should deal with it, as, for instance, was Job's case. He sees that Job is not going on well, and He says, I must take that case up, and deal with it. And so He lets Satan loose upon Job, till Job was made nothing of in his own eyes; and that is exactly what was wanted. In Peter's case, Satan, took the start.

The Lord says, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." He prays there before the sin was ever committed. The Lord was thinking about him, and when the fitting moment was come, looks at him, and Peter weeps bitterly. It was good for him to be sifted. He was a man true and sincere, but with too much confidence in himself, and in his love for the Lord. Then, in order thoroughly to restore his soul, the Lord applies the word, "Lovest thou me more than these?" And Simon, conscious of how little love he had shown, is forced to appeal to divine knowledge of it— "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." You know that I love you, though nobody else could. The Lord then says to him, "Feed my lambs." There we get the application of it, "When thou art restored:" He had before said to him, "strengthen thy brethren."

Christ having "learned obedience by the things which he suffered," associates our hearts with Himself in the perfectness in which God is, by applying that perfectness in grace to all the wants of our souls. Then when we fail, intercession comes in, and restores the soul, and yet it always maintains the soul in the confidence of divine love. The Lord intercedes for us without even asking. We do not gain Him to intercede for us, because of our repentance or prayers. He did not intercede for Peter when Peter repented, but before he sinned: He interceded for Peter because

he needed it. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father." It does not say, If any man repent of his sin, but "if any man sin." That is, he wants it. It is the exercise of grace in His own heart towards us to restore our souls.

"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." People are apt to talk about "strong meat," as if it meant something very great. But the simple truth taught here is, that milk is fitted for babes, and strong meat for grown people, and therefore if you are not able to eat solid meat, you are in a bad state. I do not give milk to a grown man, because meat suits him. If we cannot take the solid food, the fact is, we have been content to stay babes, because we have not been growing up into Christ—the thought and intent of the heart is not right. We are called upon to have our senses exercised to discern both good and evil, and that is impossible except as we are walking in reality with God. But the place where Christ keeps our hearts is in the holiest of all. He has sanctified Himself in the presence of God for us, and that is the place where He keeps us. We may forget Him, we may fail in appreciating the position in which He has set us, and in walking according to it; but in the holiest He keeps us, in unmingled, untiring, enjoyment of what is there; there in perfect love and in the light, as God is in the light, sin put away, and ourselves made the righteousness of God in Him. I have nothing more to think about my competency to be there. I am there, and I cannot get there except as being perfectly cleansed. All sin blotted out, and there consequently, as thus cleansed, I enjoy the unclouded favor of God. The place into which I am introduced is the unclouded favor of God that has been brought in by the death of Christ, which has cleansed me. And now here, in this earth, I am to manifest Christ. But in the midst of all the trials and difficulties of the way, we find these two means which God uses to carry us on—the word of God, sharper than any two-edged sword, which judges everything that is contrary to God; and the intercession of Christ which meets all our weakness and failure. He has trodden the same path which we have to tread, and has met the same temptations in that path. And now our very weakness, if we are kept in dependence upon Christ, is but the continual exercise of affection to Christ and the drawing out of His affections towards us.

Bridgewater, June 18th, 1858.

## The Writer of the Article on the Sufferings of Christ 2

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Dear Brother,

Since I sent my reply to some previous questions on the paper on the Sufferings of Christ, two further questions have been sent to me. After the explanation I have given in reply to the former, a short answer will suffice. The inquiry made is, What is the difference between the doctrine of the paper and Mr. Newton's? The question shows the need of making the matter clear to those who have been occupied with it. The answer is very simple. The doctrine of the paper is exactly the opposite of Mr. Newton's. Mr. Newton taught that Christ, as born an Israelite and a man, was at the same distance from God as Israel and man, because He was one of them, was exposed to the consequences of it, and passed through the experiences an unconverted, elect man ought, escaped much of what He was exposed to by being in their position, by prayer, obedience, and piety, but still had the fierce displeasure of God resting on Him as born one of the people. Hence He listened with glad attention to the gospel under John the Baptist, and passed then for Himself as from the law to the gospel. Most of this terrible anguish to which He was exposed, as born one of the Jews and of the children of Adam, was before His baptism by John. I believe, on the contrary, that though suffering from man and feeling for all the sufferings of man and Israel, and the sorrow of love resting continually upon His heart, the sunshine of God's favor was on Him and was His delight and His joy continually; and thus there was no divine displeasure resting on that Holy One, nor was His frame wasted by the anguish of it. I detest it as a false abomination. But I believe that in grace, at the close of His history, when His lifework (as presented to Israel according to promise and gracious service towards man) was brought to a close, He, the object of divine favor, entered into the sorrows of His people.

Your correspondent has said in a short parenthesis "(unless anticipatively)," but what is Israel's sorrow in the last day (unless anticipative)? They will not undergo wrath at the close. Christ felt it in Gethsemane anticipatively, because He was about to undergo it. But He did feel it anticipatively; that is, He did feel what Israel will feel only far more deeply. And He felt it in grace, because He was not under it personally; whereas, Israel, as to his own position, will be; and if Christ had been under it personally, because born a Jew, He could not have entered into it in grace. If the whole family are held under the penalties of high treason, and the mother I have supposed in my previous answer in prison necessarily, though not personally guilty, she cannot go to partake of her son's sorrow in love, for the simple reason that she is there by the necessity of her own case. She is not free to go out because she has gone voluntarily in; Christ could have asked for His twelve legions of angels and have been free. Mr. Newton's doctrine was that He was born under it and sought to escape it by prayer, and obedience, and piety, and partially did: mine, that He was not born under it at all, but, instead of having to seek to escape it, entered into the sorrow in love and grace for the deliverance of others. That is, one is exactly and essentially the opposite of the other. The question of "How long?" is as to this, in itself immaterial; but the point that He was entirely free as born into the world, His state the opposite of what Mr. Newton says, and that by grace He entered into it, makes the difference of a false Christ and a true one—a true One who,

being free, perfectly free, can care for others; and a false one who, being subject to it himself, must think of himself and not of others in love.

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