

The Bride of the Lamb

by John Gifford Bellett

John Gifford Bellett's sermon explores the profound relationship between the Lamb's bride, the heavenly Jerusalem, and the Church's journey towards glory in Christ.

Scripture: Psalm 139:23

Topics: "Heavenly Jerusalem", "Eternal Church"

Description

John Gifford Bellett preaches about the heavenly Jerusalem as the Lamb's bride, distinct from Messiah's kingdom, emphasizing the importance of keeping the earthly Zion in its rightful place. He traces the bride's history from Genesis to Revelation, highlighting the heavenly link established between earthly Zion and the Lamb's bride. Bellett discusses the heavenly city's perfection and the three pathways to glory for the Church. He delves into the significance of the golden city as the place of kings and priests, emphasizing the continuity of God's light and blessings through different dispensations.

Transcript

The Lamb's bride is distinctly the heavenly Jerusalem, the heavenly companion of her Lord, quite distinct from Messiah's kingdom. Jerusalem is the earthly counterpart of the Lamb's bride. In our thoughts about these things, I feel that we do not keep the earthly Zion distinctly in her right place. In tracing her history as the centre of Messiah's kingdom on the earth, we see that she is to be lifted up in a very especial way, to catch the glory of the heavenly bride. The earthly Zion will be lifted up, as a royal diadem in the hand of her God; glory will be her covering, and the nations will be coming up to worship at Jerusalem.

Thus a heavenly link will be established between them. It will not be then, "the gospel of the grace of God;" but, the gospel of the glory of God. We can trace the bride from Genesis to Revelation, till we get her as the heavenly thing in glory, and that closes the book of God. In the description of the heavenly city, we find everything is perfect, everything that can delight the hearts of the saints. To take a right view of you, beloved, I should come forth from the counsels of God, and this would be a Pisgah view.

It is blessed to get a Pisgah view, or glimpse of the glory. It was such a view as this that Paul had, when he exclaimed, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" etc. I judge, beloved, that the history of the family would not be a suitable conclusion to the whole book of God. I feel there are parts of God's Word that are passed over, and I do feel a sort of secret pride to vindicate the neglected parts of the Word of God, and to rescue them from the dishonour done to them.

Often have I found that out of these parts have come especial sweetness; and that by being pressed upon, and bruised a little, have become the most precious grains in the granary of God. What we get in Rev. 22, is not the family taken home, but the manifestation in full of God's Work, -- the law manifested man. The Lord Jesus Christ was the manifestation of the Father and the Son. But at the last, we shall have the manifestation of the Church's glory in connection with the earth.

I see three pathways to glory. The first path of the Church, will be upward to meet her Lord in the air; her second, will be into the Father's house, there to be presented to the father, and there she will be married; her third path, will be to come forth with Jesus as her Lord and her husband, to enter with Him into the possession of His glory. The golden city, I judge to be the place of the kings and priests. It is the place out of which the light goeth forth; it is the dispensation of blessing.

All that goes out of it will be blessing; all that comes into it will be blessing. The people walking it, will walk there with all the consciousness of their royal dignity, Now we never find God, when He brings out any new thing, sacrificing that which He had brought out before. We see Him taking with Him, as He travels on through each succeeding dispensation, carrying the light of that which is past into that which is to succeed it. And thus, beloved, will it be with us, as we travel with our Lord into the different paths of glory, we shall not leave anything behind.

When we enter with Him into the golden city, we shall not lose any of the home joys of the Father's house. I was much struck with what our brother said, of the beautiful picture that is given to us in the little story of the prodigal of the mind of our Lord. As when the father brought his son, and presented him in his house, he adorned him with his best things; so, when the Lamb presents His bride before the world, there is no ornament that He has that He will not adorn her with; there is not a bit of glory and beauty of His own that He has not put on her.

And yet it is not her beauty that He loves, so much as herself. He cared not for her rags and her defilement when He loved her. He sanctified and cleansed her, with the washing of water by the Word, because He loved her. I do believe this to be the deepest thought, beloved, that you can have. He loves you, not because of the grace you may have, but it is yourself. He calls us mother, sister, brother. His love for us engrosses every form of affection, also the nearest ties of relationship.

He loved the Church, because He had ever put a bit of beauty on it. The whole scene closes with the Lamb getting up on the throne. When the people are got ready, and the scene is made ready, then you have the kingdom. As to the Jewish remnant, I believe they will pass through a great deal of preparatory discipline, and a great mass of Scripture is taken up with describing this preparation, so careful is God in His discipline of the Jews. In Psalm 44 we read, "For thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter."

In the first book of Samuel, we get Saul made the occasion of displacing David; in the second book, Absalom is used by God for the same purpose. In the first instance, we see David as a martyr, suffering for righteousness; in the second, as a penitent. And so it is in this way, under the type of David, that the remnant will be so sweetly exercised. When David was suffering under Saul, there was no comfort that his soul did not lay hold of, everything that could link his soul with God, knowing that he had a right to it all.

But when suffering under Absalom for his sins, he knew he had no title to consolation, and put it all beyond him for the present, till the Lord had restored him to favour. Let us then be prepared for all this variety in the Psalms in some pleading righteousness, in some confessing sins, in some expressing

confidence in God. If then we have the character of the remnant, let us have the testimony of a good conscience, and there is no height or depth that we shall not fathom, because we have confidence in God.

It was in the time of David's sin and sorrow, that we see more of his confidence in God. If, like David, we have sinned, we must, like David, return to our first works, and travel up the mount in sackcloth. I believe the establishment of the kingdom is in preparing the remnant. We find the people getting ready by a process of most blessed discipline, and then we find the scene closed by the destruction of the enemies. The eye of the gazing disciples followed their Lord up in the air, but could not pierce the cloud; but in Psalm 110 David did pierce the cloud, and saw the Lord on the throne.

When the disciples asked our Lord about the time in which He would restore again the kingdom to Israel, He said to them, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." He instructed them in the character of His coming, though not about the time. "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." Now in this Psalm we find it written, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

The structure of this little Psalm is quite perfect. The first verse carries Adam (man) up to the throne of God. Then we find God pledging Himself to Adonai, and telling him from 1-5 what is provided for him. In verse 5 it is written, "The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath," etc. "He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall he lift up the head." He engages to remove every hindrance, and to bring Him into the inheritance. It is beautiful, the prophet looking up and seeing the Lord on the throne.

Beloved, all we want in travelling up to these is unshod feet, and sure I am that there is no limit to the height we may get at. Get yourselves but unshod, and I say it is a base fear that would keep you from taking these journeys. We see that it is the Father who gives the title, and the Son takes the power. It is not that the Lord Jesus has now begun His judgment of His enemies. He has not yet put them under His feet; but He is waiting in grace, and the word now is, "The long-suffering of God is salvation."

As to the duration of Messiah's kingdom, those words in Psalm 72, "His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun," -- I think the Spirit defines here how long His kingdom will continue, "as long as the sun,." that is, till the heaven and earth shall pass away, and God will be all in all. We are here, beloved, to help one another's joy in the discovery of truth; and though there may exist little differences in our views, they need not cause a ruffle.

Will the standing of the saints differ? The earthly saints will, I judge, walk in all the power of the recovered affections of human life; but this is not the character of joy that will be known by the Church. It is not that we undervalue natural affections now, -- for it is a sin to be without them, - but we are not henceforth to know any man after the flesh; but with the earthly people in the kingdom, there will be an enjoyment of all these affections. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers. When the apostacy among the Jews came in, it was no longer, "Blessed art thou," etc., but rather, "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." As to the fitting posture of the saints, I should say if we are children in the Father's house, let us encourage the affections and temper of children; if we are the bride, let us be waiting for the day of our espousals. The day of the wedded pair is not yet come; let us therefore be waiting for it; and, beloved, it is no pain to us in parting, to know that we may go forth and acquaint ourselves more with Jesus, and to show forth more of the attractive beauty of our Lord.

Joshua 3.

J. G. B.

THE Book of Genesis begins with man created in uprightness; then comes the fall; then God's remedy for that, in the promise of Jesus and in His election of a people. In Exodus, we see His actual deliverance of His elect out of Egypt. In Leviticus, there is the exhibition of the priestly character, and the institution of sacrifices to meet the daily need of His elect people. In Numbers, we get their trials and failure in the wilderness. In Deuteronomy, after the experience of Israel in the wilderness, we get God's relief for their failure in His own grace.

It is beautiful to me to see God's grace witnessed to; and the order of these books to my soul is most blessed, as setting forth Moses, Aaron, and Joshua, in their typical character and action. Moses is represented as the redeemer and kinsman of the heir, doing his redemption work; but we want Joshua to redeem the inheritance, and bring the heir into it. This we find in the Book of Joshua, which therefore closes the action of God. Between the time of the redemption of the heir out of Egypt, and the redemption of the inheritance out of the hand of the Amorite, we have the wilderness; and it is here that we have sympathy with Israel, not in Egypt, because the blood had delivered them actually out of it.

We do not know Canaan fully yet, because we are not yet brought into the land, and this gives us sympathy with Israel in the wilderness. The more we act as redeemed ones, the more we shall know this to be the wilderness, and be like Israel, who were taught that all their resources lay in the hands of the blessed God, and that when they get into the land they might not forget the wilderness. They learned the grace of God there, just meeting them in their necessity; and wonderful to say, they learned their own glory there, there they became the priests of the Lord.

We, like them, beloved, are learning our joy in the wilderness, and teach our glory in this apostate world. We learn our glory by the Holy Ghost, our oneness with Christ, the hope that takes us up to heaven. There are two lessons that the wilderness has to teach us, -- grace and glory; and our happiness is to learn them. When Israel came to the banks of Jordan, there was a new thing. Joshua had now to deliver the inheritance out of the hands of the enemy, and God meets him, with the gracious expression, "As I have been with Moses, so will I be with thee."

It is a blessed thing for us that God only knows Himself as meeting our necessity. When Israel was in the furnace, God knew Himself in the burning bush; thus choosing the insignificant bush, which we might suppose would be easily trampled upon, or consumed, to prove His strength perfect in their weakness. It was unconsumed, and therefore they were unconsumed. When they wanted guidance, He knew Himself in the cloudy pillar going before, and directing them in their path. And when they came to Jericho, He knew Himself as the man of war.

Thus we see God knowing Himself, and making Himself known, according to the circumstances of their need; and under whatever circumstances of danger or difficulty we may find ourselves, let us take for our especial comfort the assurance, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee;" so that we may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me." And whatever our necessity may be, we shall find Him in all His anxiousness proving that He has never exhausted His resources, or the faithfulness of His love.

Now I see that the waters of Jordan must be parted, and this could not be done till the feet of the priests had touched the waters. The Red Sea was parted by the simple shepherd's rod of Moses; but another power must act on Jordan. It waits for the holy priesthood. And we, beloved, are just waiting for our own

fulness, till the holy priesthood of the Son is completed, then shall the waters part hither and thither to let the Church of God go up into the Father's house. We do not know exactly what was Joshua's purpose in sending the spies into Canaan, but doubtless the Lord and Joshua were in co-operation here, though undoubtedly the Lord's thoughts overpassed Joshua's.

It is the Lord's thoughts we have to do with. There was a little circumstance to be transacted before Israel could enter the land, before Jericho could be destroyed, and this was the saving of a poor sinner, the harlot Rahab. And it is for such work as this, the testifying of God's grace to sinners, that we are left here. Our proper joy is, waiting to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air; but if He tarries, to rejoice that the delay of our joy is to bring the grace of God to poor lost sinners, accounting that the long-suffering of God is salvation.

Such should be the position of the saints, either looking for the approach of glory, or else for the outward path of testimony to sinners through the blood. It is written, that they came to a harlot's house named Rahab and lodged there. She had heard that the Lord was with Joshua; upon this her faith rested; so she received the men, disobeyed her king, and sent his messengers back with a lie. Rahab, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of her house. Surely fear may be a base root, but the Lord will not despise it.

She confessed their hearts did melt with fear, when they heard of the Lord's dealings with Israel; wherefore she says, "I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have showed you kindness, that ye will also show kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token: and that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death. And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business.

And it shall be, when the Lord hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee." There was another reason for faith, she had faith in the word of the men, and she wished to save her family as well as herself. I know not what made Joshua choose these men, but certainly they were beautiful men; they were firm representatives of the camp of God; they needed not to go back to Joshua to know his mind; they carried the thoughts of Joshua with them, they knew his willingness to save.

And we, like them, carry the thoughts of our Joshua with us, and are not afraid to pledge the grace of God to the poor sinner. Indeed, beloved, these were fine men, their graces were as large as their desires. "Our lives for yours," they answered. She binds the scarlet line on her window, and was just as safe in the devoted city of Jericho as she could have been in the heart of the camp, or under the banner of Joshua. The scarlet line to her was as the blood-sprinkled door, or the city of refuge; and as the blood of Jesus puts us to rest, and enables us to sit and sing of redemption, so it was with her, she knew no fear.

Like Noah in the ark, she was now above the billows that were round her, and could think of the grace that had saved her. When the grace of God had just brought in the one that had faith, they entered the land. Now, beloved, these are the paths in which we should move; either waiting to be taken up, or going here and there seeking poor Rahabs, to tell them that there is salvation in Israel, pledging the mercy of God on His own eternal faithfulness. Oh may we in spirit know more of the upward path to glory, and of those outward paths of mercy and blessing to poor sinners.

The Knowledge of Our Present Standing.

J. G. B.

MANY of you here, beloved, have not perhaps been travelling up with us, into the knowledge of our present standing, and therefore up to the present time have perhaps been strangers to the conclusions we have been brought to. But being brought into a blessed oneness in the knowledge of the Father, and oneness with the Son, -- one with Him who is on the throne, one with Him when He comes to be glorified in His saints, - we have been led on in further discoveries of truth. If we have felt one time more a moment of interest than another, it is now that our minds are directed to the question, Whether we have a right to expect to be taken up into our glory without any intervening contingencies? The Word of God in this, as in everything else, is the only abiding rule for all our hearts and judgments; and here I would add a word, which is one of much comfort to my own soul, that we carry within us "the seed of God," and the wicked one toucheth it not. We carry also another character of glory with us, and that is, "the mind of Christ." Yet this is hindered by the flesh, and with the darkness that remaineth in us, therefore we have need to stir up one another. Still, through our want of perfect intelligence, we must expect to find differences of judgment. If I hear anything from the mouth of my brother which shakes my judgment, I must try it by the Word.

The whole dispensation may be said to be one great day, -- "Knowing that it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." We do not understand our position in Christ aright, if we do not see that the presence of the Holy Ghost in us gives us the character of those who have entered on "the day." "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." Only look out, beloved, and you will see the light breaking through us, in the chamber windows, and it becomes us to arouse one another, knowing that the day draweth nigh.

The Scriptures tell us that we are in the last times, and this gives us an identity with our brethren, though they lived hundreds of years ago. We find in 2 Tim. 2: 18, etc., that the error of "the resurrection" being "passed already," brought out that great house. The Church was getting down from her high standing, and acting as if she were entitled to use all the things around her, and to be kings already; and I believe the Lord will find the great house, with all its impure furniture, when He comes.

The Book of the Revelation I judge to be a book of judgment. In this book we learn about God. In John we learn the Father. I do confess I love the atmosphere of my Father's house; I love to dwell on the Father's character: yet I believe we have also to learn God. The lesson given us now to learn, is the patience of Jesus Christ in God, and this is to be learned in communion with the Father; and what we have to do, beloved, is to look into such a revelation of Jesus Christ as God has given us.

We find in what different ways the energy of the Spirit led Jeremiah and Ezekiel. While Jeremiah was weeping among the ruins, we see Ezekiel standing above them; and when Jerusalem was no longer fit for the glory of God to rest on it, he sees with joy the cherubim departing from it, and ascending up to the throne in the temple above. In the Book of Revelation I judge, beloved, that we get not the weeping Jeremiah, but the triumphs of Ezekiel. In Rev. 1 we get our Lord as the Priest in the sanctuary, walking among the candlesticks, not with the golden oil, but with the snuffers, to see if they will burn, and if not, to judge them.

Having put the candlesticks on their responsibility, He comes and says to them, "Give me an account of your stewardship;" or as when God said, "Adam, where art thou?" So I believe the candlesticks have been tried; they could not answer the challenge, and therefore were judged unworthy of their place. What should we do in such a position? We should humble ourselves, and not rejoice as if all were right. And though we may see here and there a little to be thankful for, yet to feel that the Church is a broken thing.

Revelation 4 and 5 form a preface to the second scene of judgment. In chapter 4 I judge we get the throne of Him to whom all, by right of creation, belongs. We see the rainbow, which was the sign of God's covenant with the earth, round about the throne. "Out of the throne proceeded lightnings, and thunderings, and voices." - In Revelation 6, 7, and 8 we have the power by which this is to be effected. Let us now turn for a little to Psalms 23 and 24, which, I believe, bear the same relation to each other as the Gospel of John does to the Book of Revelation.

Psalms 23 beautifully harmonises with the Gospel by John, and describes the Shepherd by the way of goodness and mercy leading up the Church into the Father's house. Psalm 24 is altogether of another character, and represents the Church as led up into the holy hill, or the golden city. The question is, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place?" Who shall be found worthy to take the place of dominion on the earth that Adam forfeited? It was God's good pleasure to set up an image of Himself in Adam, and He has set it up again in Christ.

We find a question very similar to this in Rev. 5: 2, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" Who shall stand as the image of the blessed Creator on the earth? just as John's Gospel leads us up to the Father's house, so I judge that the Book of Revelation prepares the way of the Church from the Father's house into the golden city. It is that which I believe governs the whole of the actions of this book, the inheritance got out of the hand of the enemy, and made ready for the Church to enter upon and shine forth in all the glory of the golden city.

In chapter 4, in the elders, we get ourselves. Then the cherubims, these we always see attendant upon the pleasure of God, always fulfilling His mind and will. We see them executors of His wrath in the Garden of Eden, standing with the flaming sword. Again we see them shadowing the mercy-seat. These cherubims were made out of the matter of the mercy-seat, showing their reflection of the mind of Him who sat between the cherubims, as it were delighting and searching into the secrets of the mercy-seat.

We get them again in Ezekiel. The temple was now become a defiled place, where the Spirit of God could find no rest, and what do we find the cherubims doing? Not, as before, delighting in the mercy-seat, but doing His holy pleasure, and stretching out their wings to throw over the devoted city. The Lord has two thoughts of glory for His saints, -- the first is, that they should be co-heirs with the Son; the second is their entering into the place of true joy and glory; and then we shall see the angels opening their ranks to let once defiled sinners go in, and they must surround us, as they now surround the Lamb.

The Lord's title to the kingdom we see in chapter 5 is settled in heaven, and the next thing is, the action of the Lord. He takes the book. We find two voices owning the power as lodged in Jesus, and saying that all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth. But the moment that God owns it, all will be compelled to own it too. And this is the way that God settles everything in righteousness. The Church is now made the witness for the displaying of this truth, as we find Paul writing to the Ephesian Church in Eph. 3: 10, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God."

In Revelation 5 I see the angels having learned the lesson, and following in the train of the Church. When the four living creatures, and four and twenty elders, sing the new song, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed 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," etc., then the angels join, saying, with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power,

and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

I believe the Church to be taken up at some undefined moment between Revelation 3 and 4. When we perceive the truth of the martyred remnant among the Jews, we get a key to much that would be otherwise unintelligible to us. The Church, I believe, to be taken out of all the transactions in judgment of this book after the third chapter. The Church of God, beloved, is a very tender and delicate plant, and we should take care how we mix her up with the political revolutions of this world.

When we speak of her, it should be in a very gentle, delicate way. We never find the elders stepping down to the earth, but always surrounding the throne; though we see them at times coming forth in peculiar expressions of their joy, as in Revelation 7, when they beheld the multitude redeemed with the blood of the Lamb. We get them again in Revelation 11 coming forward to express their joy when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, saying, "We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned."

And again, in Revelation 19, was heard the voice as of a great multitude, coming out of the throne, saying, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." Thus we find that while the elders are always happy, yet there are times when they know particular elevations of joy; and this, beloved, is very sweet, they are always round the throne engaged in this joy, and in that intelligence. I judge the Revelation to be like the Book of Joshua, -- taking the inheritance out of the hand of the enemy, and this goes on from chapter 6 to 19.

The Lord will not take up Israel till the fulness of the Gentiles is come in. Then we get the judgment of the earth. I do not believe that the Church will have anything to do with this judgment on the earth, but the Jews, as it is written, "In Judah were the instruments of his power." I believe we get in Enoch and Noah types of the Church and Israel; while Noah was preserved through the judgment, I find Enoch was taken out of it. In the opening of chapter 6, I believe we are standing much in the same position as the disciples were in Acts 1, for signs to Jerusalem.

The seals govern the action of the whole book, and I believe an answer to the disciples' question in Matt. 24: 3, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and the end of the age?" This chapter of Matthew, I believe, the Church has nothing to do with. We do not find the mercy of God exhausted till the end of the Book of Joshua, and so it is not till we get to the Revelation that we see the Church as the heir, the bride of the Lamb, taken up into the golden city. I believe this book to be just the Joshua of the New Testament.

In chapter 19 we have the marriage of the Lamb. I judge the marriage takes place in the Father's house. No doubt He will by and by come down to the earth, but that is not what we have to do with, beloved. We look for His touching the air, and for our being caught up to meet Him; the trumpet will sound, not for our meeting Him in Jerusalem, but in the air. "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. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye maybe also" (John 14: 2-3).

And do not we know that He went to the Father's house? I see that there are two pathways to glory, -- first, when the Lord comes to meet us to receive us to Himself; the second, when we travel with Him from the Father's house into the golden city. Thus, in the same way, we see our Lord Himself making a pause after His resurrection, before he ascended to the Father. In Revelation 19 we first get the marriage, and then the Church preparing to take her stand in the glory. In Revelation 20 we find her in the kingdom, as it is

written, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them, and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

They shall be priests of God, and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. When the kingdom comes, the ladder will take its proper place, the top will be set in heaven, the bottom of it on the earth, then will be seen the heavens open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man. Do you not delight, beloved, in the thought of all submitting to the sceptre of righteousness in the hands of "the Beloved?" It is not only the throne of God, as in chapter 4, but here it is the throne of God and the Lamb.

All is now contributing to prepare the throne, not for Him who created all things, but also for the Lamb. Then it will be universally declared who is the worthy one; then will be sung that song of triumph and of joy, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." Above everything, beloved, let our hearts be right with the promises of God. Let it be our joy to be for ever and ever by the side of Him, who gave up everything for the love that he had to the Church.

It is to such a one that we are betrothed. The time of the marriage is not yet come; this is the time of our betrothal, the season in which we may be occupied in learning one another, in learning all the devoted ways of that love to get us for Himself. It is not that we are the bride of a glorious King, but we are nothing less than this, "The Lamb's bride;" and may our hearts, beloved, be unceasingly breaking out, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

Deuteronomy 26 - 34.

J. G. B.

THERE is one thing we must remember in God's dealings with His people, that is, that we have reached God. We are far gone, and upon the ground of this the gospel comes in to tell us what God is, beloved; and on our part, the thing to be proved by us is, that we have reached God. We find that, having God, we have everything, a fulness to supply every emergency. What thought had a Sadducee of God? No right thought at all, beloved. So the Grecians at Corinth (1 Cor. 15), "Some have not the knowledge of God, I speak this to your shame."

When the Apostle was expressing the state of the Gentiles in Ephesus, it was "without God and without hope in the world;" and in 2 Thess, 1, "them that know not God." There, again, he charges them with simple abstract atheism; and why so? Because the gospel is such a provision for all man's necessities, that it brings in God; and where does His glory shine, but in the face of Jesus Christ? so that whosoever does not believe the gospel, rejects God. And these two are so intimately connected, that He cannot reveal Himself without revealing the ground of our hope.

God is love, and it must be so. The gospel comes, not to bring ourselves to our view, but to bring God; and faith, whether it be weak or strong, gets this blessing. God forbid that anything should be said that could check the poorest and weakest saint! What does faith do? Why, it just presents God to Himself, just presents to God His own remedy, nothing of ours. Christ crucified and Christ risen was preached to Adam, and Abel believed it; and all religion in the family of God has been the same from that day to this; and God will own no principle of religion but this, from that day to the endless ages of eternity.

But Cain would not take God's remedy, but chose his own; Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness; and when Abraham in Gen. 16 had fallen into Cain's state, the Lord reveals Himself to him in chapter 18, "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect." And what do we find? He falls upon his face and worships God. And what can we do, beloved, but fall down before God, and tell Him what He is Himself; and nothing will give the soul a graceful ease in its movements towards God, but this simplicity of faith.

In delivering Israel, the Lord only knew Himself, and in His own grace delivered them; but at Mount Sinai we find Cain-work again, but still God rises above it; and however the people throw themselves into the fires of Sinai, He cannot but act in grace. In connection with these things, in Deut. 26: 1-11, we see the covenant that put God and the people together. Now, beloved, nothing can exceed the blessedness of that; there is not a religion of grace under the sun but this. The principle of every religion of human nature is, "Thou art a hard and austere master;" but here are the people worshipping God, by bringing the full basket to present to Him of what He had given them.

And on the same principle, beloved, we come presenting Jesus to God; it is not the first-fruits of the land, it is only to come acknowledging "a Syrian, ready to perish, was my father," in the simple consciousness of His love, and that is worship. Beloved, I know no other principle of worship than this, to bring the full basket, to say "a Syrian, ready to perish, was my father;" but Thou hast brought me to Jesus, Thou hast brought me to a land flowing with milk and honey, Thou hast given me Jesus.

And now as to the verses following this, -- Deut. 26: 12-15, -- we must come, as Israel did, with clean hands to compass His altar, we must not regard iniquity in our hearts -- (Pilate washed his hands, but there was iniquity in his heart); we must be able to say, as Israel did then, "Look down from Thy holy habitation," Deut. 27. From henceforth to the close of the book, we have a beautiful exhibition of what God is; and oh! beloved, how blessed it is to know that we have reached God, and done with ourselves.

Well now, we have the ten words inscribed upon the tables of stone; but where are they put, beloved? They are put at once, without trial, upon the mount of curse, and it comes as a warning that the result of the trial must be a curse; as the Apostle says, "All that are under the law are under the curse." But the Lord has taken His stand (in principle, I mean, of course) upon Mount Gerizim. He speaks of nothing but grace, of nothing but blessing. In Heb. 2, while the law was the thing ministered, let the angels take it, let Moses take it; but when it is grace, the Son takes it, the Spirit bears witness to it.

Where does the law come from? from His hand; but the gospel comes from the depth of the heart of God. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, hath declared it; and while my conscience stands in company with the throne of God, my heart, my affections, stand in company with the bosom of the Father. Deut. 28 was just Gerizim and Ebal in another style. In Deut. 29, and onward to 32, there is a great transition. It is the thoughts of God, as it were, passing from the law unto grace, and it gleams forth here and there, but not distinctly.

It was an awkward thing to get grace into the hands of the Legislator, but we do here and there get faint traces of it. The pillar of the cloud was one of the expressions of the grace of Him who was carrying them through the desert; it stood in company with the manna, the ark of the testimony, and all that was the expression of grace. In the song of Moses, mercy rejoices against judgment; but there is another note to be heard, beloved. In verses 42 and 43, the Lord shows what His plan is.

Let Moses and the law go to Mount Ebal, He takes His place upon Mount Gerizim with the pillar of cloud for His companion. The gospel, beloved, is God dispensing Himself, giving Himself In Deut. 33, the earthly people are brought into the inheritance and blessed. If you travel through this 33rd of Deuteronomy, it is all blessing. Compare this with Genesis 49; Dan has recovered his place, so to speak, he has leaped back from Mount Ebal to Mount Gerizim; the fruit of this song, mercy rejoicing, against judgment.

Did you ever mark in that lovely song of Hannah, beloved, it is the Lord that is the theme of her song? So here, so Samuel, it is Ebenezer, it is a witness to the Lord; and so it will be to eternity, beloved. You may enjoy the glory you are brought into, but you will celebrate nothing but the blood that brings you there. In the last chapter, we get Moses, who lost the land, who died on the other side Jordan, brought up to an elevation beyond all that passed the banks of Jordan.

He is taken up as the representative of the heavenly calling of the Church. It was his own want of faith that kept him back, but out of the eater we find meat brought forth. He lost the earth, it is true, but he got the heavenly glory. May the breathing of our hearts be, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee." Then, though flesh and heart fail, we may still say, "God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

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