

THE REMEMBRANCER

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

FOR

THE LORD'S PEOPLE

“Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them. Yea, . . . I think it meet . . . to stir you up by putting you in remembrance.”

—2 PET. i. 12, 13.

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The Remembrancer.

A VOICE FOR THE NEW YEAR.

Another year its course has run,
And stamped its change on all below ;
One more, on earth, has now begun :
How shall it end ? None here can know.
The "little while" is growing less,
The Lord His promise shall fulfil ;
He'll come Himself His saints to bless,
And thus complete the Father's will.
The hour is fixed, the day is near
When He will call them hence away ;
His well-known voice each one shall hear,
And—pass into eternal day !

The open door shall then be closed,
The strong delusion come apace ;
To Satan's lie they'll be exposed
Who did neglect the proffered grace.
Who would not hear that gracious voice
Inviting weary ones to come,
Shall then be left without a choice
To meet the sinner's awful doom.
What voice is that which now we hear,
Whose sound the echoes still repeat ?
"Behold the Bridegroom ! He is near !
Go forth your coming Lord to meet."
Ye sleeping saints, Awake ! Awake !
And trim your dying lamps anew,
Our cloudless morning soon shall break ;
That midnight cry calls loud to you !

2

THE FIRST THOUGHT OF CHRIST
IN RESURRECTION.*(Psalm xxii. 21, 22.)*

Remark that the first thought of Christ, when heard from the horns of the unicorn, is to declare the name of God and His Father to His brethren—now glorious, but not ashamed to call us brethren. Perfect in love, attached to these excellent of the earth, He turns, when once He is entered into the position of joy and blessing through a work which gave them the title to enter, to reveal to them what placed them in the same position with Himself. Thus He gathered them; and then having awakened their voices to the same praise as that which He was to offer, He raises the blessed note as man, and sings praises in the midst of the assembly. Oh, with what loud voices and ready hearts we ought to follow Him! And note, he who is not clear in acceptance and the joy of sonship with God, in virtue of redemption, cannot sing with Christ. He sings praises in the midst of the assembly. Who sings with Him? He who has learnt the song, which he has learnt to sing as come out of judgment into the full light and joy of acceptance.

THE LIVING LINK WITH A LIVING CHRIST.

The word of God links the soul with Christ as He was and is ; it just gives one a *written Christ*. See in Matt. v.: “Blessed are the poor in spirit ;” and who so poor in spirit as Christ ? “Blessed are the pure in heart ;” and who so pure as He ? “Blessed are the meek ;” and who so meek as He ? “Blessed are the peace-makers ;” He was the great peace-maker, the very Prince of Peace. The first thing, of course, is to have Him as the living Christ for the salvation of the soul ; and then, through the written word, we get the spiritual perception of what this Christ is. It is the simple expression of Christ Himself, of Him who was the express image of God—“was made flesh, and dwelt among us, so that we beheld His glory, the glory as of the *only-begotten* of the Father, full of grace and truth ;” and when we thus get the Spirit’s testimony to Christ, the heart clings to Him as the “holy” and the “true.” Thus the Christ found in the word governs the affections ; for we dare not, and would not, be without or depart from this written Christ. This living link to a living Christ is the only safeguard against them that would seduce you. A holy Christ in whom we have the truth is

the blessed strong moral assurance of the soul when a mixed and lifeless Christianity is powerless against delusion, and when the same causes make the professing church incapable of discerning a plain path, when there is not faith enough to do without the world, and mixture is everywhere. Then a holy and true Christ is the assuring guide and stay of the soul. To Timothy Paul said, "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus ;" and surely there can be no better knowledge to be got than the knowledge of Christ. This was the point in John's epistle. The father in Christ knew "Him that is from the beginning ;" he could tell what the true Christ was ; he knew "Him that was *holy*, Him that was *true*." It is not *developement* that is needed, but merely the getting back to the simplicity that is in Christ—to know Him truly that was at first revealed, Him that was from the beginning. Therefore if my soul is attached to the Christ of the written word, the Christ that I have loved down here is the same Christ that I am waiting for to come , and take me up there.



MEDITATIONS ON PROPHETIC PORTIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

INTRODUCTORY.

A good introduction to the Apocalypse would be to take up those characteristic passages in the New Testament where prophetic truth is looked at, not in every detail, but the great leading passages—such as Matt. xiii.; xxiv., xxv.; the Epistles to the Thessalonians, etc. But before beginning, we will have a meditation introductory to prophecy itself, because we ought to enter on it with our consciences and our sympathies rather than with our intellects. So it is well, before entering on it, to put our souls somewhat into right order.

The word of prophecy treats us, not as *sinner*s, nor merely as *saint*s, but, as *friend*s (cf. Gen. xviii. 17, and John xv. 15). The word of the *gospel* treats us as sinners, and proposes relief; and the *preceptive* parts educate us as saints. But the moment we come into *prophecy* we forget our character as sinners—it is disposed of—and we listen to that which addresses us as friends of Christ. A special dignity thus attaches to us the moment we come to listen to prophecy. I am an intruder upon prophecy if I do not enter upon it as one entitled to call God my Father, and I am open to the Lord's rebuke

to Nicodemus—"Go and make *yourself* your object." When I can read my title clear as a sunbeam, *then* I can come to Christ as a friend. And this clothes the mind of the saint with great moral dignity. It is another *kind* of relationship from that of the sinner or of the saint.

Then, prophecy comes in on corruption. There would have been no prophetic voice heard in Israel if the priesthood had not corrupted itself. It broke in on Israel in a day of corruption. And the prophetic voice is the introduction of the Holy Ghost. Aaron might have discharged his office, and the daily services of the temple might have been discharged by a title of flesh, without the Holy Ghost. But the moment Aaron and the sons of Levi had corrupted themselves, the Holy Ghost comes forth, and fills a vessel with a *new thing* altogether. So in prophetic ministry I am in company with the Holy Ghost at once. This shows that God always has a remedy for our mischief.

In these ways we must read the prophetic office, and these thoughts are very seasonable before entering on the prophetic details themselves.

There is a way in which you may *use*, and a way in which you may *abuse*, the prophetic words: and these two ways you will

find in Matt. ii., which I propose to consider now as a sort of introduction to our subject. We have gathered how it was that the prophetic voice was awakened in the story of Israel—that corruption was the parent, or rather the occasion of it; and you will not have really entered on the prophetic dispensation if you do not see in it God bringing forth His resources when man has destroyed himself. Now, when you come to *listen* to the prophetic voice you have to inquire, How am I to *use* it? and, How might I *abuse* it? Both are illustrated in the passage before us.

The Evangelist himself shows the first use of prophecy. We are to have it so stored up in our minds, that nothing may be a surprise to us. The Lord Himself rebukes the Pharisees for not knowing the signs of the times. When the hand of God comes to realize what the Spirit of God has already announced, that is “the signs of the times,” and we should be able to identify the voice of God with the hand of God, as the Evangelist does here. When the manner of the birth of the Child was announced, he says, “Oh yes, that fulfils Isaiah viii.” Here was the greatest wonder that had ever transpired in the story of human nature; but Matthew is prepared for it by Isaiah viii. This is to be a real *friend* of Christ. He has

prepared me that I may not be surprised with what takes place. So, again, when the Child is taken down into Egypt, *Hosea* comes to the mind of Matthew, and he now links *Hosea* xi., with the Child's coming forth out of Egypt. He is able again to identify the *voice* of God with the *hand* of God. Is not *that* "walking in the light of the Lord" (*Is. ii. 5.*)?—enjoying fellowship with Christ? All He hears of His Father He makes known to us (*John xv. 15.*).

So, when the terrific fact of the destruction of the children takes place, the Evangelist is prepared for it. He may be shocked at Herod; but he is not amazed. And again, when the Child is carried up to Nazareth, the Evangelist is able intelligently to gather up all the minds of the prophets that attached to the moment that began His humiliation. When He was turned away to Nazareth, the Christ of God began His humiliation in this world. He ought to have been the royal Bethlehemite—He becomes the despised Nazarene; He ought to have been King of Kings and Lord of Lords—He becomes a nothing and a nobody; and the Evangelist is prepared for it. So you and I should be able to interpret the events of the times by inspired interpretation; nothing baffles the Evangelist.

This is the first use of Prophecy.

Then, another use, and the highest use of it, is illustrated in the action of the wise men of the East. These men were *ignorant*, if you please; they knew nothing of the *first* use we have been speaking of, but their *hearts* travelled far beyond the speed of their *heads*. And what do they show me? They show me this: that they treated the prophetic word *as a reality*—as a thing worthy of all their thoughts. When the star of Bethlehem shone, they did not delay a moment. As Abraham, at the call of the God of glory, went out, not knowing whither he went, just so these men, the moment the star appeared, gave witness that everything was secondary to the leadings of the God of glory. This is not the same thing as the Evangelist being prepared to interpret events. *That* is beautiful; but here I find an honest-hearted people that *act* on the prophetic word—treat it as a reality. They set themselves on the way to Jerusalem. I could with much pleasure go through their journey. They come to Jerusalem and inquire, saying, “Where is He that is born King of the Jews?” They keep their gold, frankincense and myrrh treasured up; they do not spend it on Herod. Their eye was very single; they were not fascinated by the magnificence of that king. They came to inquire after the star

of their prophet Balaam. And when they are travelling from Jerusalem to Bethlehem the star reappears. That was the consolation of faith. Nothing is so entitled to the consolations of the Spirit as the victories of faith. They had conquered the fascinations of Herod, and the star greets them. It had left them to themselves on the road to Jerusalem. That is the trial of faith. Does not God sometimes seem to leave you alone? But let faith get a victory and God will reappear.

When they got to the poor, mean manger, *then* there was something to draw out their gold, frankincense, and myrrh; whereas, not a grain of their frankincense is given to Herod—all that they have is laid at the feet of the rejected, neglected Child! They saw things invisible, and the degradation was only a dark ground to set off the brightness of the glory of Him who lay there.

Now, what use did the chief priests and scribes make of prophecy? They *abused* it; they treated it with an unbelieving understanding and an infidel heart. Do *we* ever treat Scripture so? If we had not infidel hearts, what manner of persons we should be! The scribes read out most accurately their warrant from Micah; but they did not take a single step with the wise men. We must change our *hearts* to learn their lesson,

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as well as our *heads*. I see the wise men *acting* on their lesson; I see the scribes intelligent of the prophetic word and indifferent to it.

We have now just introduced ourselves to the prophetic Scriptures. When I look at prophecy, am I in company with that with which God began? No, indeed I am not. He put the priesthood and the kingly office into the hands of man, to see if he could hold the blessing. When man proved unfaithful, then God must maintain a line of prophets to show that all the good that is done on earth must be done by Himself: "The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved. I bear up the pillars of it."

MATTHEW XII. AND XIII.

What we are proposing now to do, is to go through those passages in the New Testament that have a prophetic character, and I want first to review one thought we have already looked at. When we meditate on prophecy, we ought to seek the temper of *friends* of Christ, entitled to know His secrets. Because prophecy becomes the speculations of intellect, if it is not the communications of friendship. Therefore, it is a very holy thing to read prophecy. It recognises us in the deepest and most intimate relationship we can fill. We are par-

doned sinners—we are adopted children; but more—we are *friends* of Christ, entitled to listen to His secrets.

Now I turn to Matt. xii. and xiii., beginning at chap. xii. 38. Chap. xiii. gives us the parables of the sower, the tares and wheat, the mustard seed, the leaven, the treasure hid in a field, the merchantman seeking goodly pearls, and the net. This is our material.

In all this Scripture the Lord is anticipating two great scenes. The first is corruption in Israel, the second is corruption in Christendom, and we shall see how these are connected together.

In ver. 38 of chap. xii., He is asked by the Pharisees to give them a sign. This was the full expression of the infidel principle, to ask for a sign in the presence of the substance of all signs. The Lord at once (because He was quick to discern the bearing of such a question) apprehends the total moral downfall of Israel, and what does He say? “There shall no sign be given you but the sign of a cast-out people. You will now put me to death—you will lose me.” Yes, when Israel crucified Christ they lost Him. So that that was a beautiful moral answer to their question. The Lord answered according to the *moral* of their question. He never answered an *inquiry*, but the moral condi-

tion of the *inquirer*. The men of Ninevah had repented at the preaching of Jonas; the queen of the south had gone from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, yet here was the great Divine Prophet in their midst, and they were challenging Him for a sign! Then in the unclean spirit He shows their total downfall. This is not yet accomplished. There is no unclean spirit there now. The house is empty, swept and garnished. By-and-bye, He will return and find it more ready for His use and occupation than ever. So we find in the prophet Daniel. The idols shall be on the walls of Jerusalem. And again, in the Apocalypse we find how an image is made to the beast, and all the world worships it. The unclean spirit comes in, in more terrific form than ever. The day is coming, in which the last state of that house shall be worse than the first. "Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation." "Generation" here means Israel. In Matthew (chap. xii.) the Lord limits the application of this to Israel. In Luke the Lord goes through the same thoughts, and *does not* say, "So shall it be," etc., because there He is saying it *morally*, in connection with Christendom as well as Israel. For I have no doubt that the Reformation was the sweeping out of the house in the case of Christendom, and

now the unclean spirit (Popery) is looking carefully into the swept and garnished house (Protestantism).

Then the Lord, having thus anticipated the moral ruin of Israel,—having looked out through the great vista of ages to the apostasy, when the desolator shall come in,—then His mother and His brethren come, desiring to speak with Him. But He answers, “Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?” He is here disclaiming everything in the flesh. Israel, that was connected with Him in the flesh, now stood out in apostasy before His spirit, and He begins to disclaim all connection with flesh. He looks to the new creation, of which there was a little pledge and earnest in those now gathering around Him. Do not let these beautiful touches of the mind of Christ escape you; I stand in admiration of this moment. The Lord, having anticipated the full downfall of Israel, being challenged by His kindred in the flesh says, “No,—flesh has disappointed me, and I do not own it any longer. Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? Those who sit and hear my words.” “Of His own will begat He us, by the word of truth.” Are we, you and I, gathered there? Do we know that we are new creatures, children of the word of God? Not children of the loins of Abraham, but

the product of the sowing of the word by the Holy Ghost.

Then in chap. xiii., He unfolds that very thing. He shows Himself *not* as one who had come to gather fruit. He had looked for fruit in the old creation, and had found none. Then He becomes a sower and is the husbandman who begins the work of the new creation. He is a labourer who has gone forth by commission (not from the *throne of God* but) from the *bosom of the Father*. Sometimes He dates His commission from the *throne*. When He comes to publish *grace* it is from the bosom of the Father. So now He comes to prepare fruit for Himself, and He will never gather any fruit that *He* has not prepared Himself. In this parable we find the *seed* was the same in every case. But it had this property, that it *tested the soil*. So now the gospel is preached to all, but it tests the heart of all.

Now why does the Lord link Satan with the way-side hearer? Because if Satan can bear away the seed from the heart, all his work is done. If it finds admittance to the heart, then he tries to corrupt it. Then comes the stony ground hearer. We hear the word, and something awakens a tasteful emotion of mind. There is nothing in the stony ground hearer that intimates a work in the conscience, and *nothing* is done

if the conscience is not reached, because the conscience has revolted from God; and, till that breach is repaired, nothing is done. The stony ground hearers never deal with the word *as sinners*.

Then the thorny ground hearers are those that treat it with great gravity. They acknowledge the importance of eternity, but then they own *time* to be a serious thing also; they own the weighty importance of their place in the world, and they have no manner of mind to sacrifice the one to the other. And thus the two kingdoms go on together in their hearts, and no fruit is borne. Oh, with what divine skilfulness He unfolds and exposes the heart!

Then, the fourth case is what He calls "good ground." What made it good? Was it by any refinement of flesh? No, it was the Spirit of God. *Satan* corrupts the high-way hearer; *nature* makes the stony ground unfruitful; the *world* destroys the thorny ground hearer; the *Holy Ghost* is the husbandman in every piece of tillage that brings forth fruit to the Lord Jesus. Oh, how fruitful in moral warning all this is! Do not let us, you and me, refuse to be exposed. It is good for us. Now, in that parable, the Lord is not giving the likeness of the kingdom of heaven, but the tares and the wheat begin the parables of the kingdom.

Now, we are getting into the story of Christendom. "The kingdom of heaven," here, is the Christendom that surrounds us every day. And has not the Lord anticipated it truly? How did this field become a mingled field? "*An enemy hath done this.*" And how are we to deal with it? We are not to attempt to cure it; and the moment the church begins to purify the world, she has mistaken her business. They were servants, but *mistaken* servants. This stares me in the face, every hour. I see saints occupied with that which Christ has never set them to do. The church's business is not to purify the world. Let the church busy herself in calling out sinners; not in purifying the world. The Lord here sweetly owns they may be servants; but they are mistaken servants, and they will not prosper in their work. Now, I want to pause and ask are *we* listening to these things, as *friends* of Christ? I do dread entering on prophetic truth in a spirit of intellectual speculation. If I have not faith to take the place of a friend, I must let the prophets and myself part company for the present. If I want my conscience or my heart regulated, I must go to the Gospels or the Epistles; and after that, let me come and sit at the feet of the prophets, and learn divine secrets. That is "walking in the light of the Lord." Did *He*

want to wait for the nineteenth century to tell what the tare-field of Christendom would be? And here He invites the disciples of that day to walk according to the light the word of God affords. Every attempt of the church to regulate the world is one which has been taken up in ignorance of the mind of Christ.

Then He gives two parables in which He is pursuing the story of the tares; and in the next two, He is pursuing the story of the wheat. He is giving the story of the tares, in the parable of the mustard seed; and He shows that the sowing of the wicked one, was to grow to be a most important thing in the world. Then the leaven working is varied *doctrinal* corruption. The one is *external, political* corruption; the other is *internal, doctrinal* corruption. And has not all that taken place? What is Christendom? A great thing, more important than heathenism, or any other thing you can name. The mustard seed is there, and the leaven is there,—political and doctrinal corruption.

Then He comes to two sweet little parables, in which He is pursuing the story of the wheat, and under what figures does He present it? First, as the treasure hid in a field. Are the tares hidden? No, they stare me in face on every side. But when I look *after* the children of the kingdom, do *they*

stare me in the face? When I look abroad, do I see some reflection of Christ everywhere? The tares occupy the wide-spread moral scene before me. I have to *look* for the wheat. Could anything be more accurate than these anticipations of Christ? And the pearl in the same way. He *seeks* it. But that is not all. If the mustard tree be occupied by the unclean birds, the treasure and the pearl are unspeakably dear to the heart of the Lord Jesus. You see an un-renewed man *there*, and a saint of God *here*. How little do we realize the immense moral distance between these two! One is the representative of the thing which the unclean birds delight in; the other is nearer to the heart of Christ than anything in His whole creation. How little do we apprehend these things! The treasure was a treasure to *Christ*. The pearl was a pearl in *Christ's* eye. Oh, how beautiful these things are! And, yet, I say, here is Christ, not as the Saviour of sinners, or as the Teacher of saints, but as a Prophet in the light, asking you to walk in the light of Him who knew the end from the beginning. He is my Saviour, my Master, my Lord; and He is a Friend who invites me to sit by His side and listen to what He, and He only, knows—the bosom counsels of God.

Then in the close, we get the parable of

the drag-net. That anticipates a moment that we do not yet see. We have seen the public apostacy abroad. We have seen the heart of God hanging over His hidden thing in this world, but we have not yet seen the drag-net, because that represents the close of Christendom ; the fulness of the dispensation. We have not yet seen it brought to its appointed end, and the good gathered into vessels—the bad cast away.

And now, I just ask : are we behaving ourselves as those nearest to the heart of the Lord Jesus, or as the thing in which the unclean birds find delight ? Are we savouring of the spirit of the world, or the spirit of the church of God !

(To be continued, D. V.)



FRAGMENT.—Prophecy *drives* us out of the world ; Christ in glory *draws* us out of the world. We have the word of prophecy as a candle, a light shining in a dark place—God's candle ; but I have to do with the bright and heavenly side as my own heart's portion.

21

“WHO IS THIS?” “WHO IS WORTHY?”

Luke ix. 9 ; John xii. 34, 35 ; vi ; vii ; Luke v, 21 ; Matt. xvi. 13 ; Luke viii. 22-25 ; Matt. xiv. 27, 28 ; Dan. viii. 16 ; xii. 6, 7 ; Heb. i. 3 ; 1 Tim. iii. 16 ; Luke ix. 28-36 ; Matt. xxi. 10 ; John x. 24 ; viii. 58 ; Is. vii. 13, 14 ; Rev. v ; Is. lxxiii. 1 ; Ps. xxiv. 8-10 ; Luke x. 22 ; Col. i. 19 ; ii. 9 ; Rev. xix. 12.

I.

Who is This? the Nazaræan—

’Tis a Man of wondrous might,
Raising dead, expelling demon,
Healing lame, and giving sight ;
These are works of resurrection,
Though the prophet died in prison,
It is none but John the Baptist
From the dead who hath arisen.

Who is This? The Light is going
That our dim eyes could not scan.
Christ is to abide for ever,

Who is This, the Son of man?
Have the rulers given their sanction,
That we may believe His name?
How can we receive His saying?
For we know from whence He came.

“ Who is This? and who can pardon
Sins of men but God alone? ”
Scribes ! in vain your hearts ye harden,
For those sins He shall atone ;
Son of man, a death to suffer
For the glory of His God,
In His power divine redeeming,
He will cleanse them by His blood.

22

II.

Who is This ? not John the Baptist,
Nor a prophet dead of old,
Tis the living God's Anointed,
Who hath called us from the fold ;
Though unknown the path He leads us,
Trembling, yet we follow on,
For the voice of Israel's Shepherd
All our weary hearts hath won.

Who is This asleep in tempest,
Quelling it when rising high ;
Walking on the treach'rous waters,
Saying, " Fear not ; it is I " ?
It is He that on the river
Stood in Daniel's ancient dream,
Yea, the One Who lives for ever,
See His bright perfections beam !

Who is This ? Adoring angels
Serve the Object of their care,
Second Man and First Begotten,
Of created things the Heir ;
Seen of angels was " THE MYSTERY,"
They their willing homage gave
In the desert, in the garden,
By the manger, by the grave.

Who is This ? Elias, Moses
Yield to Him the honoured place,
As Revealer of the Father,
In His life of truth and grace :
Hidden in the cloud of glory,
For their earthly work is done.
Gladly hear the proclamation
" This is My Beloved Son."

23

Who is This that rides with meekness
To the city in her pride?
Guilty of the blood of prophets,
Shall her King be crucified?
“It is Jesus, ‘t is the Prophet,”
Hear the loud hosannas ring,
“Son of David”—“of the Highest,”
He who will salvation bring.

Who is this? Assailed by reason,
Wearied with incessant strife,
In a veil of flesh appearing,
True God, and th’ Eternal Life;
Though before the elders’ council,
Standing meekly as the Lamb,
Heard they not the words of Jesus?
“Ere that Abr’ham was, I AM.”

III.

“Who is worthy?” Sounds the herald
’Mid the circling throngs on high,
But from heaven and earth and hades
Silence is the sole reply;
Cannot angel, man or demon
Shew his title to the book,
Or prevail the seals to open,
On its secret page to look?

No! but there the weeping prophet
Sees a Lamb as had been slain,
In His wisdom and perfection
He the title shall retain;
All the power to Him is given
Seated on His Father’s throne,
Root of David, Judah’s Lion,
Him the hosts of glory own.

24

"Thou art worthy!" is the answer,
From th' adoring throngs above,
"Worthy of the power and glory,
Won by Thy redeeming love;"
New the song they sing in heaven,
While the angels cry the same,
And the voice of every creature
Echoes back His glorious name

IV.

Who is This that comes from Edom,
All His raiment died in blood?
Saviour, Kinsman and Avenger,
Lord of lords and Word of God;
In His day of power and vengeance,
Willing shall His people be;
He that slew and led them captive
Goes into captivity.

Who is this? The King of glory—
Lift the everlasting gate!
For the triumph of Jehovah
All His willing people wait;
Lift ye up the doors Eternal!
Let the King of glory in,
On His priestly throne supernal
All their homage meet to win.

V.

But alone the Father knoweth
All the Fullness in the Son
Dwelling, in this scene of sorrow,
And on high when all is done;
Lord and Christ, by God exalted—
Jesus Christ, for aye the Same—
Yet beneath that weight of glory,
Lies an unrevealed Name!

MEDITATIONS ON PROPHETIC PORTIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

(Continued from page 20).

MATTHEW XXIV., XXV.

We are now to look at a very serious Scripture. When we reach Matt. xxiv., we have done with the testing of Israel. I mean, that if we discern the structure of Matthew's gospel, we shall find that the Lord is conducting thus far a very elaborate testing of Israel. He first proposes Himself to them as the Bethlehemite of Micah; then, as the light from Zabulon and Nephthali; and lastly, as riding on an ass, He proposes Himself as king, to the acceptance of the daughter of Zion. So that, all through His life, read in one great light, He is testing the state of the daughter of Zion: and John, in His gospel, draws the conclusion, "He came to His own, and His own received Him not." How beautiful it is to see the ministry of the Lord in such a light! He was the patient tiller of the vineyard, to see if, at the eleventh hour, He could get any fruit. But when we come to chap. xxiii., the testing is over, and He gets up on the judgment throne and pronounces their guilt, and the judgment that attaches thereto. Just as a judge, He sums up the evidence and pronounces the verdict. Then

He turns His back on them, saying, "Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." There is great exactness in all this, and we are not in a position to meditate on chaps. xxiv., xxv., if we do not apprehend what I have said as a preface.

If I were to link Zechariah xi., and Isaiah l., with this prophecy, it would be beautiful to see such distant lights forming so beautiful a constellation before the eye ; and these different stars, contributed by one part and another part, all shining together.

Then, having pronounced the judgment, Messiah, being rejected, takes leave of Israel. He goes out from the Temple. Here we are introduced to thoughts that attach to ourselves. Chapter xi., of Zechariah, tells us of two staves, called "beauty and bands." Here, at chapter xxiii., the Lord broke the staff called "beauty." (He did not break the other till the Acts of the Apostles.) Here He withdraws Himself. Now, I ask, should we see beauty in that which Christ has rejected ? It was a poor thing for the disciples to come and show Him the beauty of the Temple. They ought to have said, "If our Master has turned His back on the Temple, its beauty is gone." Instead of that, nature hangs about that which faith has left. If the counterpart of the Temple of Solomon

were here, it might be beautiful still; but we should not be giving it our admiration. You will say, Are not the mountains, the valleys, the woods, beautiful? *Exquisitely* beautiful: but you should accustom yourself to say, The trail of the serpent is over every bit of it. All will be revived in Millennial days; but *now*, do not you turn aside to mark the exquisite scenery of nature for its own sake. That is where the disciples failed. Well, the patient Lord Jesus says, "What you are admiring, I have left." There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down. Then, in verse 3, their minds are restored under the correcting hand of Christ: We believe it, since Thou hast said it, and now tell us further, when shall these things be. Then the Lord pronounces the solemn prophecy that fills chaps. xxiv., xxv., and gives the characteristics that are to mark the judgment of Israel. He begins to answer them in ver. 4, and He carries the first part of His answer down to ver. 14, and details the story of what shall be before the end comes--what He calls the beginning of sorrows. Having reached that point, in ver. 15, He anticipates the story of this Israel, who is now His subject. And mark, *the Church is not here*. It was a stranger to His thoughts while He was talking of Israel. He was in-

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vited to speak of the Temple, and the end of the age, and to that He applies Himself. In verse 15 He begins to speak of the Antichrist—the abominable desolator who shall come. The moment that takes place (it will not be till the Church has gone from the scene) He begins to instruct His disciples how they are to act: “Let them which be in Judæa,” etc. This is the great tribulation of which Daniel, Jeremiah and the Apocalypse speak. *There*, there is a constellation again. Do be looking out in Scripture for such constellations. You will find Jeremiah, Daniel, Matthew, and the Apocalypse each contributing a star. A little skill and industry will constellate them, and in the glory of the light they give, we are invited to walk.

Then down to verse 28 He is telling them how to behave themselves, and in verse 28 the judgment is executed. That is the rider on the white horse of Revelation xix., and His armies. They come down to execute judgment on the carcase. The Lord here is represented under the figure of an eagle coming down for his prey. Then in verse 29 He shows the *action* of judgment. And what verses the 29th and 30th are! What a solemnity the judgment of God is! The sun and the moon and the powers of heaven array themselves in blackness. It reminds

me of chapter xxvii. of this very gospel. When God was judging sin, the whole earth was darkened for three hours. There is a moral suitableness in this. When the blessed Surety for sinners was bearing the judgment of sin, the earth arrayed itself in sackcloth. God retired from the scene, and the whole creation felt the moment. So, when the rider on the white horse comes forth to execute judgment (not on *sin*, but) on *sinner*s, "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light," etc. How little do I know of my spirit being arrayed in darkness when I talk of judgment, or in brilliancies when I talk of glory! Would to God one knew a little more of that! Our spirits should be in sympathy with these different things.

Then, the judgment being executed, in verse 31 we get a mere glimpse of the kingdom that is to follow; because judgment never closes the scene—it only purges the vessel which is to be filled with glory.

Having left verse 31, we have left, for a time, the prophetic part of these chapters to take up a moral parenthesis. This is a style which I find constantly in the Book of God. When the prophet Isaiah is relating historical facts, he is turned aside every now and then to look at the operations of the Spirit. That is the style of the parenthesis

which we are looking at—from verse 42 of chapter xxiv., to verse 30 of chapter xxv. Here the Lord is morally talking to our souls, and telling us that we ought to sustain two beautiful characters: we should be *watchers* and *workers* while He is absent. He turns aside to give a look at each one of us, for all this moral teaching attaches to our very selves. While He is absent His people ought to be watching and working. Do you enjoy this style in the Book of God? I would the people of God partook of His *style*, as well as of His *spirit*. We are not set together merely to pick up knowledge; but to stir up and animate one another's souls. These watchers and workers are here represented by the wise virgins and the faithful servant. Now, what I observed on verse 31 of chapter xxiv., I am going to observe a little carefully in this chapter. No communication I get from the Lord puts me right into the kingdom. He stops short of anything like a detail of the kingdom. He gathers his elect who are to *constitute* the kingdom; but we do not see them *in* the kingdom. So in this chapter. Do you see the wise virgins in the kingdom? No; they are only seen at the door. So with the servant. He was to enter into the joy of his Lord. We are not told what the marriage-supper is, or what the joy is; but they

are invited to enter the one and the other. The moral of this is deep and exquisite; because it tells us what the *moral material* is that goes into the kingdom, and what it is that is kept out. Is not the *character* of your friend more important to you than his *circumstances*? So the Lord does not tell me the circumstances of the kingdom; but He lets me breathe its moral atmosphere. You will have glories, too, I grant; but moral atmosphere is much more important. So He tells me that all that finds entrance into it is that which was *waiting* for Him in His absence. And in the parable of the servants we see what goes in—those who honestly owned Him as Master while He was absent. These two materials form the moral element of the place. How unspeakably blessed to go into a place that teems with love to Christ, and teems with a desire for His service! If the Lord were to take me into all the material beauties of the place, He would not gratify my heart so deeply by the *scenery* of the kingdom as in these few little verses.

Now, in verse 31 (chap. xxv.), He resumes the prophecy, having turned aside, in the parable of the virgins, to address our hearts; and in the parable of the servants, to address our consciences. Now, He resumes the prophetic current of His thoughts.

But, here again, we are not properly in the kingdom. It is a scene just at the opening of the kingdom. The kingdom has not yet arrayed itself; but, just on the Lord assuming the throne of His glory, He calls the living nations before Him to judgment. Now, *you* have nothing to say to that. It is not a resurrection scene; it is not the great white throne; but it is the Lord Jesus, when He has assumed the throne of His millennial glory, coming to inquire how the living nations have treated His poor messengers; how the nations have treated those Jews who have gone out with the everlasting Gospel. The settlement of that question is given in the parable of the sheep and the goats. And let me add one thing: the moral feature of this parable is just as beautiful as that of the others. The element that gets into the kingdom is not selfishness, but those who had loving gracious care of His poor people. Do you wish to carry the selfishness of man's world into Christ's world? Could you be happy if you thought the foolish virgins, the unfaithful servant, and the selfish nations could enter there? So the Lord conducts us by the help of the wise virgins to the borders of the kingdom; and again, He conducts us there by the faithful servant; and now, by those who sympathized in the day of distress, with the people

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of an unmanifested Jesus. The Lord keep us near Himself in these thoughts, for they are holy and deeply beautiful. Oh, that we may give our hearts to the Lord Jesus, our hands to His work, and our sympathies to His people. Amen.

MATTHEW XVII., XIX., XXI., XXVI.

We will now read a little cluster of Scriptures in Matthew's Gospel: part of chaps. xvii., xix., and xxi., and one verse in chap. xxvi. These four Scriptures belong to each other, as presenting a prophetic scene to us. I think we shall find they beautifully combine. They point our thoughts *onward*. We see the *future*, but we see it in very different lights.

Now, you see, in a short passage in chap. xix. 28 we get the future spoken of under one simple title, "The regeneration." Now that is a title which we only find in two places; here, and in Titus. *Here* it does not mean the *process* of regeneration, but the *condition* of the regenerated world; what is commonly called the Millennium. It is called in Hebrews, "The world to come." We call it, for convenience sake, the Millennium. But we often, for convenience, lose that which is important. If the only sense I have of the future is that it will last (as the word implies) a thousand years, that is

a very poor thought of it. The Millennium will be the scene of a regenerated world—a world in new moral conditions. Now, in Titus, the apostle uses the same word, but there he is speaking of the *process* of regeneration, not the thing fully regenerated; and beautifully these things go together. Your being regenerated, fits you to stand in the regeneration of glory by-and-bye. Titus uses the same word to express the *process* in the individual which is used in Matt. xix., to express the result.

Now this regeneration is to have various departments of glory. The Son of man will then sit on the throne of His glory. But when He seats Himself in that blessed and glorious scene, He will have the heavens with Him and He will have the earth with Him, as the great departments of that scene. Now the office of the transfiguration in chap. xvii., is to present a sketch of the *heavenly* part of the regeneration. The office of chap. xxi., is to present a sample of the *earthly* part of the regeneration. Thus we see a beautiful link between three of these passages, chaps. xvii., xix., and xxi.

We will now turn to chap. xvii. We find here that the Lord takes them up to a “high mountain.” There is a meaning in that. Just as when the Lord took Moses up to the highest summit of Pisgah. God is conduct-

ing Moses mystically to the very same spot as that to which the Lord takes Peter, James and John—the heavens of the millennial world. Moses sees the land before him just with the eye of God. He was looking at the footstool in company with Him who sat on the throne. And just what God was doing to Moses at Mount Pisgah (which was mystically heaven), the Lord is doing here with His disciples. And what did God show to Moses? He showed him glory. The earth will be the scene of glory in one style; but the glory of the terrestrial is one, and the glory of the celestial is another. Exactly so, the Lord takes these three up, to be witnesses of the glory that is to fill the world to come. And then He Himself is transfigured. This is a pledge and sample of 1 Cor. xv. The Lord here appears in His glorious body, just as those who are the Lord's will pass into their glorious bodies. In a moment, His face shone as the sun and His raiment was as white as the light. He had a title to pass into the glory at once. He might have had twelve legions of angels; but if He had taken it alone, He would have abided in it alone. The Lord need not *die* to pass into the glory, but if He had not died He would have passed into it alone. But the house *must* be filled. It was morally impossible that the Lord should dwell

there alone. The love of God, the counsels of grace, all forbid such a thought. So we find Him here in company with others. Here, they are *in glory* with Christ, and *talking* with Christ. If there is a blessed secret in the Scripture it is the intimacy of the Lord with His people. Whether He comes down to be in *our* conditions, or He takes us up to be in *His* conditions, there is the same personal intimacy between us. They are not only *in glory* with Christ, but *talking* with Christ. Will glory estrange Christ from you and me? If my *necessities* did not throw me at a distance from Him, His *glory* will not throw Him at a distance from me. This is a volume of delights. I want, in one sense, no other writing to show me the blessedness of the millennial heavens.

“*Like Him and with Him for ever to be.*” Moses and Elias are talking intimately with Him, face to face. You may say there is very little told me there about heaven. *Volumes* are there, and enough to satisfy the heart. You get them “like Him” and “with Him.” Then Peter feels the power of the place, in spite of himself, and says, “Lord, it is good for us to be here,” etc. Nothing could be a more exquisite picture of the moral power of the place. It took Peter *out of himself*, and that is just what you and I want to make us

thoroughly happy. Peter was willing to work, and let others enter into his labours. His heart was satisfied.

So we learn here, that glory will not throw us a single inch from Him, the blessed Lord; and it will take us out of ourselves. When Peter had spoken, the cloud came and separated the glorified from those in flesh and blood, just as it will be in the regeneration. The glory of the celestial will be one, the glory of the terrestrial will be another. The glorified saints may visit the earth, there may be a ladder, but the two glories cannot commingle. The cloud comes in to do its own office. It takes, within its folds, the glorified family, and leaves outside those in flesh and blood. The disciples were not at all prepared for this; "They fell on their face, and were sore afraid." Then, Moses and Elias returned to heaven. The Lord Jesus had still to travel on to Calvary, and when they saw Him, His robes of glory were laid aside, and there He was in their intimacy as Jesus again. One moment in the intimacy of glory; the next, in the intimacy of Him who was bound for the altar.

Now we come to chap. xxi., and we find ourselves in a scene altogether earthly. It is a scene of royalty. We get no royalty in heaven. People sometimes call the Lord Jesus, King of the Church. This is a great

mistake. He is King of Israel, that will be on earth. He will be the Firstborn among many brethren in heaven, having the pre-eminence there as well as here. He has the pre-eminence wherever He shines; but He will shine there in *celestial* glory as He will shine here in *terrestrial* glory.

Now the Lord sends out two disciples to bring Him an ass; and if any man said anything to them, they were to say, "The Lord hath need of him." Now we must be a little careful here. We are about to pay a visit to the earthly part of the regeneration. Here we get the Lord Jesus in two distinct glories, in His lordship and His kingship. There is a sample of each given here. His lordship of all things, and His kingship in Jerusalem. We get His lordship first, where He sends for the ass. He assumes that the cattle on a thousand hills are His. The owner might have the title of a *purchaser*, but Christ had the title of Creator. The two disciples were the representatives of the rights of Christ. As they were about unfastening the ass and the colt, the owner naturally says, "Do not be touching my property." "*The Lord hath need of him,*" and just as Peter was made to feel the power of the holy mount, so this man was made to feel the lordship of Jesus. Human nature keeps what belongs to it, and gets

more if it can ; but this man was crowning Him Lord of all, and blotting out his own title deed. So the Lord gets the ass and the colt, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah. Then He gets on the ass, and as soon as He is seated there He is transfigured into royal glory. The Lord of the whole earth, and the King of Jerusalem are only different glories in one Person. So the moment that as Lord of all He gets on the ass, He enters the city in royal glory. Then the whole multitude is forced, just as the owner of the ass, to express the power of the moment. They hail this coming King, and cry, "Hosanna to the Son of David." How beautiful ! Is it a happy thing to you that Christ has your heart in His power ? He can twist about that wretched heart of yours, and make you to feel the proper virtue of His presence. As we read somewhere, "the hearts of kings are in Thy rule and governance." Peter was made to feel the power of the moment, and the owner of the ass, and the giddy multitude were forced to take the impression of the occasion and cry out, "Hosanna to the Son of David,—blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," Now we have paid our visit to the earth, the picture has faded and passed away. I do not see the Lordship of Christ on earth now, and He has been rejected as king. And now, was not I authorized in placing these three passages together ? They are different departments of the regeneration. And do not you be saying, "I wish the Lord had spread out a larger picture of the millennial

heaven and earth." Make much of what you have got, and you will find it enough for the moment. I have *Himself* in various characters of glory. The whole regeneration has been mapped out before me.

Well, now just go with me to chap. xxvi. 64. You will say, What connection has this with the other three? I say if you do not introduce this verse in connection with the passages we have already had, you will have a very imperfect knowledge of the whole way of God in the future. The intimation of the Lord is this, "I am coming back *in judgment*." He sits in *power*, not in *grace*, at the right hand of God, not till His *elect* are gathered in, but till His enemies are made His footstool. The soldiers of Cæsar had seized Him. He was the world's prisoner, and the Lord lets the world know that when He came back it would be in judgment. The judgment of the world introduces Him to the scene of His brilliant glories. Judgment lies in the foreground. The cloud is constantly in Scripture, the symbol of judgment, as in Isaiah, "The Lord rideth upon a swift cloud"; and in Revelation, "Behold He cometh with clouds"; and so here.

So we see the kingdom shining in the distance, and then a solemn awful intimation is given to the world, that the Lord will enter on the scene of His glories through judgment. Till He has judged the present evil world, the world to come cannot be displayed. Till He has set aside a world of corruption, He cannot enter on a world of glory.

(To be continued D. V.)

“NOT OF THE WORLD.”

(Ephesians i.)

We get here the whole scope of God's thoughts and purposes. The Epistle to the Ephesians takes in two things: the presence and power of the Holy Ghost on earth, and the condition that we are in as the result of it; and what this is founded on, the exaltation of Christ at God's right hand. Ephesians does not speak of the coming of the Lord, because the way our glory is brought about is not its subject, but the present blessing of the saints. There is a distinct part at the end where our conflict with Satan comes in, but the general scope is what I have said: the basis, the exaltation of Christ; then a purpose, what is in God's mind; and then the knowledge of it, by the Holy Ghost come down. “He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand;” this was needed for us to know our place and the most important consequences flowing from it down here. The presence of the Holy Ghost who has come down from heaven, the seal of our being heirs, and the earnest of the inheritance, is our present condition, based upon Christ raised to the right hand of God. A Man is sitting at the right hand of God: a wonderful truth for

us. "His delights are with the sons of men" (Prov. viii). Being a man, and having died and therein perfectly glorified God, God has raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand; and thereupon the Holy Ghost is come down here, so that we are associated with Him and the things that are on high, in heart and mind, though not yet there as to our bodies. This is where the heart has to be; "our conversation in heaven" (Phil. iii. 20), for the Lord is there, not here; He is coming to make our bodies like unto His glorious body, but at present we have the Holy Ghost associating us with the place where He is.

God has "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." That is God's mind. We are not yet there in fact, but it is the thought of God about us, and we ought to have it always before us. Blessings of the Jews in earthly places under Christ will be fulfilled in time, but for us it is "spiritual blessings," and "in heavenly places," and "in Christ" Himself; and our present connection with it all comes through the Holy Ghost.

We next get, in vs. 4 and 5, two aspects of these spiritual blessings: they are brought before us in connection with the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is, Christ is

looked at as Son and looked at as Man. The Father owned Him in manhood, as the Son Matthew iii., "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." God is called the God of our Lord Jesus Christ as Man ; He is called His Father as Son.

This is the great basis of the wonderful place in which we are. It is man that God has in His mind put in this place of glory in His own Son. And this is not without its consequences, and those of the very highest nature.

God's choosing us before the foundation of the world is not what affirms, in the time of choosing, the sovereignty of grace ; for, supposing for a moment that God were to choose us now, it would be just as sovereign an act as doing it then. The practical truth brought out in His choosing us before the foundation of the world is, that it proves that we have nothing to do with the world ; before its very foundation we were chosen : we have nothing to do with it but to get through it. God would bring us into this blessedness with Himself which has nothing to do with the world. We have just to go through it "unspotted ;" that is all we have to do with it. Our living place was settled with God before ever it existed. God had this thought to have a people in Christ, "holy and without blame before him in

love." This is what God Himself is. He thus brings us to be according to His own nature—"holy and without blame" before Himself. We have an infinite Object before whom we are, and having the divine nature we can enjoy that Object. We are not taken out of the world yet, nor are meant to be; but we are to pass through it as Christ did. If one look at it in another point of view, it is just what Christ was Himself, and that before God. This is the thought of God.

Then (ver. 5) I get the Father. He might have had servants like the angels, but this was not His thought: "He predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself." He insists on that, it is the blessed part of it—that it is before God, and to Himself as Father. If it be a relationship, it is to Himself.

Thus we have the nature, "holy and without blame." It does not say there "according to the good pleasure of his will," for God could not have beings in His presence in a sinful state. But when it is relationship, it is "according to the good pleasure of his will:" He chooses to have us as sons. I get love, the nature of God—"in love"—and love of predilection too. The place we get into is one that is according to the good pleasure of His will, and He brings us according to His own

nature before Himself ; there is not a cloud because He has “made us accepted in the beloved”—Christ assuredly ; but He gives that name to Him to mark the full character of the blessedness, and thus brings us into His own presence.

This is the purpose : it does not say here how much of it is accomplished ; it will not be fully until we are in the glory. Only in the end of the chapter we get what is accomplished in fact, as the ground-work of all our present enjoyment of it in spirit. God takes Christ out of death and sets Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. This is an accomplished thing ; it is “wrought in Christ :” Christ as Man is in the glory of God.

And then we get the third thing : the Holy Ghost has come down meanwhile. Before the purpose is accomplished, but when the work in Christ is accomplished, the Holy Ghost comes down, the seal with which God has sealed those here who have part in His purpose, and the earnest of their inheritance. We are then competent to see God’s plans about Christ Himself, His purpose “to gather together in one all things in him, both which are in heaven and which are on earth.” Then it is glory.

The first verses were our calling ; now it is our inheritance. And this inheritance is

"after the council of his own will." It is sovereign grace to poor sinners that brings us into this place. It will not be accomplished until He come ; it is in Him we have obtained it, being "predestinated according to his purpose." That which is believed in order to our being sealed is "the gospel of our salvation." John the Baptist was the forerunner of Him who was to accomplish it ; but now we have the glad tidings of it consequent on the actual exaltation of Christ, and the seal of the Holy Ghost as the earnest of what is to come.

This is where we are whilst still in the world which is no part of the purpose of God, but in which, passing through discipline, we learn the difference between flesh and spirit ; it is His ways, but no part of His purpose. The Holy Ghost comes down from heaven, gives us to know Christ, reveals to us our inheritance, bears witness to us that we are "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." He makes us know where we are ; that we belong to heaven and not to this earth at all. As we read in Proverbs : In the beginning of his way, before his works of old, from the beginning or ever the earth was, then I was by him, as one brought up with him, and my delights were with the sons of men," so He became a Man, and is one into glory as our Forerunner.

I desire that our hearts may feel that, in God's thoughts and purposes, He has given us a place that is not of the world at all; and that all our business in this world is to keep ourselves unspotted from it. I do not belong to this world; before the foundation of it I was chosen. It is not thus simply the sovereignty that does what it pleases, but that we, as Christians, do not belong to earth at all. "Epistle of Christ" (2 Cor. iii. 3) is what we are; we may not live up to it, but it is what we are called to; to manifest the second Man in the midst of the world that has rejected Him.



DECLINE AND ITS ANTIDOTE.

When we first receive the knowledge of life in Christ we are absorbed, we readily admit all else to be "dung and dross" (Phil. iii.). But when decline comes in, we get old motives into action again. Little by little, we are not absorbed, and then a hundred things begin to be motives—things of which I took no notice, which did not act before. People say, "What harm is there in it?" When I begin to enquire, "What harm is there in this, or in that?" there is the tendency to decline. There may be no harm in the thing, but the thought about it shows that I am not absorbed with that which is heavenly: "Thou hast left thy first love." It is not in great sins, but here, that decline

in the saints is manifested. When the sense of grace is diminished, we decline in practice. Our motives must be in God. Sometimes effort is made to press conduct, works, and practice, because (it is said) full grace was preached before; and now that there is decline in practice, you must preach practice. That which is the rather to be pressed is grace—the first grace. It is grace, not legalism, that will restore the soul. Where the sense of grace is diminished the conscience may be at the same time uncommonly active, and then it condemns the pressing of grace, and legalism is the result. When conscience has been put in action through the claims of grace, that is not legalism, and there will be holy practice in detail.

We may fall into either of two faults—that of (because fruits have not been produced) preaching fruits; or that of getting at ease, when certain things come to have influence over us again, through thinking that what we approved of before was legalism. We shall not get back by dwelling on detail. Christ is the great motive for everything, and we must get up into the knowledge of resurrection with Christ to remedy detail. Here there is wonderful truth and wonderful liberty.

Another very important point is, the tone and spirit of our walk. Confidence in God, and gentleness of spirit, is that which becomes the saint. For this we must be at home with God. The effect of thus walking in Christ, setting the Lord ever before us, is always to make us walk with reverence,

lowliness, adoration, quietness, ease and happiness. If I go where I am unaccustomed to be—if I get, for instance, into a great house, I may have much kindness shown me there; but when I get out again, I feel at ease, I am glad to be out. Had I been brought up in that house, I should feel otherwise. The soul is not only happy in God for itself, but it will bring the tone of that house out with it. Because of its joy in God, anxieties disappear, and it will move through the ten thousand things that would trouble and prove anxieties to another, without being a bit troubled. No matter what it may be, we bring quietness of spirit into all circumstances whilst abiding in God.

If a man walk as one risen with Christ, if he be dwelling there, it will show itself thus: we shall not be afraid of the changes around. We shall live, not in stupid apathy and listlessness, but in the exercise of lively affections and energies toward the Lord. One great evidence of my dwelling in Christ is quietness. I have my portion elsewhere, and I go on. Another sign is confidence in obeying.

This connects itself with “fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ”—fellowship not only in joy, but in the thoughts of the Father and the Son. The Holy Ghost, the third Person of the blessed Trinity, is our power of entering with the affections into the things of God.

“The Father loveth the Son.” What a place this puts me in, to be thus cognizant of the Father’s feelings towards His beloved Son.

In our proper place we get our mind filled and associated with things that leave this world as a little thing—an atom in the vastness of the glory which was before the world was.



MEDITATIONS ON PROPHETIC PORTIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

(Continued from page 40.)

ACTS I. TO VII.

I propose now to meditate on the first seven chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. They have a great prophetic character. I must introduce them by a few observations. When the Son of man was refused, God had still a reserve left, that was, *the Holy Ghost*. The mission of the Spirit comes after the mission of the Son. It is always the divine way, that the Lord will not give us up till He has made every trial of us. Thus God tried Adam in innocence by a law. The *innocent* creature having defiled himself, God tries the *guilty* creature again and again, and does not give him up till He has spent all His resources on him; so, though the Son of man had been refused, yet God had still the Spirit, and that opens the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, or, as it might more properly be called, the Acts of the Holy Ghost. That being so, we enter

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on the book, and we find it is God, in His abounding grace, testing Israel by the Spirit. The result of this last trial is reached in the first seven chapters; it is, as to man, found utterly to fail, just as the mission of the Son had failed as to man. So that when the Potter came to that, He had nothing to do but to declare the vessel to be worthless.

Now in these seven chapters you will observe that the Spirit is unhindered for a time, just as the Son was. If we travel through chaps. v., vi., vii., viii., and part of ix., of Matthew, we shall find that the Lord is unhindered. And so the Apostles are here; but at length the enmity reaches such a height, that Stephen ("full of the Holy Ghost") is cast out as the Son was, and is taken to heaven as the Son had been.

Now we turn to chap. i., and we find the Lord in ver. 3 speaking of things pertaining to the *kingdom* of God. He keeps their thoughts in connection with *the earth*. The Lord Jesus was born King of the Jews, and it was because of the unbelief of the Jews that He was not received as such. So the Lord here, in his forty days' resurrection-sojourn, keeps their minds in connection with *earthly* glory. And when they were looking up, ver. 11, the angel comes and says: "Why stand ye gazing up *into heaven?*"

As much as saying, *That* is not the place of your hope. You are not to follow Him *there*,—He is to come to you *here*. All this is a ministry keeping the hopes of the elect in connection with the earth.

There is no thought yet of ascension to heaven. Then Peter and the rest continue in Jerusalem, and appoint another to the bishoprick of Judas, because an apostleship of twelve was suited to a nation distributed into twelve tribes. So before the Holy Ghost could come down with a ministry to Israel, the vacancy must be filled up.

Now I will linger a little here. Pentecost arrives, and the Spirit is given; but in what form is the presence of the Spirit manifested? "They began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Did you ever think *why* the Holy Ghost was manifested in the gift of tongues? If we go back to Genesis xi., we shall find that the children of men had so far departed from God, that they took counsel to make themselves a name that they might not be scattered abroad. That was an attempt affecting divine rights—a universal monarchy. In the counsels of God a universal monarchy is reserved for Christ. So, though it has been the effort of one Beast after another, and in later days of the great Napoleon, it has never been reached. When they thus

affected to defy the God of heaven, He stopped their purpose by scattering them. Now when God comes down to repair the mischief, He comes down on the humiliation of the Son to re-gather, to bless and to establish. The Lord Jesus has gone through the scene of His humiliation, and upon what Christ has done the Spirit is given to re-gather the human family—"and they heard them speak, every man in their own tongue, the wonderful works of God." Man was scattered and confounded ;—there was no brotherhood left in the earth, because *man had exalted himself*. Because *Christ has humbled Himself* for the glory of God, all this is to be reversed. Pentecost is just the reverse of the scene at Babel. God is restoring man to Himself and his brother by the accomplished work of the Lord Jesus.

Now that gives entrance on this ministry of the Spirit. The Jew begins to betray his ignorance : "These men are full of new wine." Then Peter opens his mouth and takes for his natural text the thing before him,—the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel, and upon the occasion delivers a precious sermon on the glories of Christ. He finds Christ in Joel, and Christ in Psalm xvi. He is discovering the glories of Christ in the Scriptures of God. Is there any such witness of the fresh power of the Spirit as

that? A sermon on the glories of Christ as embosomed in Scripture. A very blessed thing it is that the Spirit should begin His work by testifying to the glories of the rejected, crucified Christ. Not a word as yet about *grace*; but going into the bosom of recondite Scriptures in Joel and the Psalms, and finding Jesus of Nazareth there—the crucified One, of whom the rabble of the earth had said, “Crucify Him, Crucify Him”—the Spirit takes up and says, He is the God of heaven and earth. He goes to Psalm xvi., and says, *David* is not in that Psalm; and He goes to Psalm cx., and says, *David* is not in that Psalm. It is Jesus of Nazareth whose soul was not left in hell. It is Jesus of Nazareth to whom it is said, “Sit thou on my right hand till I make thy foes thy footstool.” It is admirable, beyond all thought, to find such an opening of a freshly anointed lip. Under this preaching there was pricking of heart. Nothing causes pricking of heart like the disclosure of the glories of Christ. Was not this disclosure the confusion of Saul of Tarsus, and of Peter on the Lake of Galilee, and of the prophet in Isaiah vi.? We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God; and if I am introduced to any sight of it, I cannot bear it until I know that He who occupies the glory has reconciled me by blood. So

they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They are convicted. They have found out that they are sinners. Peter is ready at hand, and says, "Repent," etc. They received the word. "Convicted yet confiding": that marks those that are truly converted. The next passage is beautiful. They were *satisfied*, and they could part with everything. It was "the expulsive power of a new affection," and the things they had boasted of before, now might leave them.

Then, in chap. iii., Peter again uses *the occasion* for his text, and *now* he is presenting *grace*. Having spoken of the glories of Jesus, he now speaks of the grace that is in the name of Jesus. What God hath joined together let no man put asunder. And will you not consent to let His glories go before?

Now, we must mark this. In all this testimony there is *not a thought of heaven*. No: "Repent . . . and *He shall send Jesus.*" Ye men of Galilee, keep your eyes *down here*. Heaven is not your home. Repent, and Jesus *will come*. Most advisedly the Spirit is keeping the hopes of faith in connection with earth.

Up to that moment the work of the Spirit had not been hindered. Now the Sadducees begin to resent it. The self-righteous Pharisee stood up in contradiction to *grace* in THE

SON. Now, the *resurrection* is spoken of and the Sadducee stands in contradiction. Peter and John are put in prison ; but Peter has now been “converted” (‘restored’ Luke xxii. 32). Instead of being intimidated by a maiden, he can now confront the Sadducees as well as the Pharisees, and lead his brethren on from strength to strength.

Then they go on through chap. iv. It is lovely to see two qualities of boldness and tenderness in these chapters:—the *boldness* with which they confront the enemy, their *tenderness* with a poor lame beggar ; and the exultation yet brokenness when they address themselves to God. Would you blot out such beautiful *qualities* of action ? We are clumsy. We ought to clothe right things in right qualities, put “apples of gold in pictures of silver.” Then in chap v., we see a beautiful action, the keeping of the House of God clean. Ananias and Sapphira are beguiled by this : they wanted to appear on a level with their brethren ; they did not like to appear to come behind, yet they had not faith to part with their money, and that ensnared them to death. I do not say that it was anything more than judicial death,—the death of the body.

Then through chap. v., Peter was bold as ever : “We ought to obey God rather than men.” Here is the man that denied the

Lord before a damsel ! Then Gamaliel stands forth and, for the time, is a kind of partition-wall between them and the enmity.

As we enter on chap. vi., we must pause on a very humbling thing. Could you believe that before such heated enmity from the world around, they would have bickerings among themselves ? We often say persecution binds the church together, but here is a witness that it is not enough. The chapter opens with the domestic bickerings of the saints ; and closes with the martyr spirit that was in their bosom all the time. How the Book of God leads our thoughts hither and thither and exposes us to ourselves !

But now comes the crisis. Just as in the cross of Christ, in the martyrdom of Stephen we get a critical era. Chap. vii., closes the Book of Acts, so far as it is kindred with the four Evangelists. The path of the Spirit is critically the same as the path of the Son. The Spirit, like the Son, comes down with hopes for the earth, finds indisposedness, and takes His flight to heaven, just as the Son was forced by His rejection to find His inheritance in heaven. There were two different aspects in which the Lord was looked at in His death,—as a victim and as a martyr. As a poor sinner, I go to the cross where the *Lamb of God* bled ;—as a saint, I

go to it and say, "That is where my great Exemplar was cast out, and I was cast out with Him." The last is how Paul looked at the cross when he said, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." So in 1 Cor. i., "We preach Christ crucified."

Commonly when people speak of the cross, they limit their thoughts to it, as the place where the *Lamb of God* hung. As a sinner I know nothing else; but as a saint I take another look at it, and see my great Exemplar hung there because He was a witness against the world. In this way Stephen followed the path of a martyr. He was a witness against the world, and the world cast him out. So the Spirit in Stephen meets the same reception as the Son.

Now, let us mark it: Stephen was cast out; there was no angel to open the prison doors for *him*. But before he meets his death he is made a child of resurrection. Before ever a stone disfigured his face, God had glorified his countenance. God put His beauty on him, before ever man had put his marring touch on him. Now, just as Peter in chaps. ii., iii., takes *the occasion* for his text, so Stephen here takes his own beautiful glorified visage, takes *himself* as his text. Will not you take *yourself* as

your text for eternity:—"Worthy is the Lamb." We ought to be able to preach a sermon on ourselves *now*. Stephen takes himself for his text, and what does he say? He says, "Why, *I am* no novelty in your history. It has been the same thing from Abel downward." There has always been a heavenly parenthesis in the bosom of the earthly story. For instance, Abraham went forth from his father's house into a strange land, where his only company was his tent and his altar. In due time, God said his children should inherit the land. Joseph in the same manner became a heavenly stranger. He was cast out by his brethren and sent down into Egypt.

Abraham's heavenly strangership in Canaan was a picture of Stephen's heavenly ascension; and Joseph's dignity and joys and new found family in Egypt are a picture of the heaven Stephen was going to. In the same way *Moses* was taken for a time to the back of the mountain, where he found a new family and was happy with his dear Zipporah. And when we come to the history of Christ, we find the same thing. He came with glad tidings. They cast Him out and heaven received Him. And heaven is just about to receive Stephen. And now I ask, are you in company with Stephen? Do you believe you are occupying the heav-

only parenthesis in the bosom of God's history of the earth? What were stones to Stephen? "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God; and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory." What did he see when he looked up? "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" Was that still the voice? The Holy Ghost directed Stephen's eyes. The scene of our expectation is transferred; Stephen went there as our representative. How beautiful to see him thus on the confines of the two countries! His left foot on earth where he was about to be martyred, his right foot scaling the heavens that were about to receive him! From that day to this the Church has been travelling the path of a heavenly stranger. As far as you and I are pulling down our barns and building greater, as far as we are covetous and worldly, we are not in chap. vii. of Acts; and let me not dare for a moment to disfigure the work of God, and take myself for my text.

It is the path of the Church from that day to this, and will be, till we are taken to meet the Lord in the air, and be for ever with Him.

(To be continued D. V.)

DIVINE LOVE.

“ Beloved, let us love one another : for love is of God ; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God ; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.” (John iv. 7-14.)

The three tests of true Christianity are here distinctly laid down, and the apostle pursues his exhortations, developing the fullness and intimacy of our relationships with a God of love, maintaining that participation of nature in which love is of God, and he who loves is born of God, partakes therefore of His nature, and knows Him (for it is by faith that he received it) as partaking of His nature. He who loves not does not know God. We must possess the nature that loves in order to know what love is.

He then who does not love does not know God, for God is love. Such a person has not one sentiment in connection with the nature of God; how then can he know Him? No more than an animal can know what a man's mind or understanding is when he has not got it.

Give especial heed, dear reader, to this immense prerogative, which flows from the whole doctrine of the epistle. The eternal life which was with the Father has been manifested and has been imparted to us: thus we are partakers of the divine nature. The affections of that nature acting in us, rest by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the enjoyment of communion with God who is its source: we dwell in Him and He in us. The actings of this nature prove that He dwells in us. The first thing is the statement of the truth, that, if we thus love, God Himself dwells in us. He who works this love is there. But He is infinite, and the heart rests in Him; we know at the same time that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. But this passage, so rich in blessing, demands that we should follow it with order.

He begins with the fact that love is of God. It is His nature; He is its source. Therefore he who loves is born of God, is a partaker of His nature. Also he knows

God ; for he knows what love is, and God is its fulness. This is the doctrine which makes everything depend on our participation in the divine nature.

Now, this might be transformed on the one hand into mysticism, by leading us to fix our attention on our love for God, and love in us, that being God's nature, as if it was said, Love is God, not God is love, and by seeking to fathom the divine nature in ourselves ; or to doubt on the other, because we do not find the effects of the divine nature in us as we would. In effect, he who does not love (for the thing, as ever in John, is expressed in an abstract way) does not know God, for God is love. The possession of the nature is necessary to the understanding of what that nature is, and for the knowledge of Him who is its perfection.

But if I seek to know it, and have or give the proof of it, it is not to the existence of the nature in us that the Spirit of God directs the thoughts of the believers as their object. God, he has said, is love ; and this love has been manifested towards us in that He has given His only Son, that we might live through Him. The proof is, not the life in us, but, that God has given His Son in order that we might live, and further to make propitiation for our sins. God be praised ! we know this love, not by the poor

results of its action in ourselves, but in its perfection in God, and that even in a manifestation of it towards us, which is wholly outside ourselves. It is a fact outside ourselves which is the manifestation of this perfect love. We enjoy it by participating in the divine nature; we know it by the infinite gift of God's Son. The exercise and proof of it are there.

The full scope of this principle and all the force of its truth are stated and demonstrated in that which follows. It is striking to see how the Holy Spirit, in an epistle which is essentially occupied with the life of Christ and its fruits in us, gives the proof and full character of love in that which is wholly without ourselves. Nor can anything be more perfect than the way in which the love of God is here set forth, from the time it is occupied with our sinful state till we stand before the judgment-seat. God has thought of all: love *towards* us as sinners (vs. 9, 10) ; *in us as saints* (ver. 12) ; *with us as perfect in our condition* in view of the day of judgment (ver. 17). In verse 9, the love of God is manifested in the gift of Christ: first, to give us life—we were dead; secondly, to make propitiation—we were guilty. Our whole case is taken up. In verse 10, the great principle of grace, what love is, where and how known, is clearly

stated in words of infinite importance as to the very nature of Christianity. Herein is love, not that we have loved God (that was the principle of the law), but in that He has loved us, and has given His Son to make propitiation for our sins. Here, then it is that we have learnt that which love is. It was perfect in Him when we had no love for Him; perfect in Him in that He exercised it towards us when we were in our sins, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for them. The apostle then affirms, no doubt, that he who loves not knows not God. The pretension to possess this love is judged by this means; but in order to know love we must not seek for it in ourselves, but seek it manifested in God when *we had none*. He gives the life which loves, and He has made propitiation for our sins.

And now with regard to the enjoyment and the privileges of this love:—if God has so loved us (this is the ground that He takes) we ought to love one another.

No one has ever seen God: if we love one another, God dwells in us. His presence, Himself dwelling in us, rises in the excellency of His nature above all the barriers of circumstances, and attaches us to those who are His. It is God in the power of His nature which is the source of thought and feeling, and diffuses itself among them in

whom it is. One can understand this. How is it that I love strangers from another land, persons of different habits, whom I have never known, more intimately than members of my own family after the flesh? How is it that I have thoughts in common, objects infinitely loved in common, affections powerfully engaged, a stronger bond with persons whom I have never seen, than with the otherwise dear companions of my childhood? It is because there is in them and in me a source of thoughts and affections which is not human. God is in it. God dwells in us. What happiness! What a bond! Does He not communicate Himself to the soul? Does He not render it conscious of His presence in love? Assuredly, yes. And if He is thus in us, the blessed source of our thoughts, can there be fear, or distance, or uncertainty, with regard to what He is? None at all. His love is perfected in us. We know Him as love in our souls: the second great point in this remarkable passage, the enjoyment of divine love in our souls.

The apostle has not yet said, "We know that we dwell in Him." He will say it now. But, if the love of the brethren is in us, God dwells in us. When it is in exercise, we are conscious of the presence of God, as perfect love in us. It fills the heart, and thus is

exercised in us. Now this consciousness is the effect of the presence of His Spirit, as the source and power of life and nature, in us. He has given us, not here "His Spirit"—the proof that He dwells in us, but "of His Spirit;" we participate by His presence in us in divine affections through the Spirit, and thus we not only know that He dwells in us, but the presence of the Spirit, acting in a nature which is that of God in us, makes us conscious that we dwell in Him. For He is the infiniteness and perfection of that which is now in us.

The heart rests in this, and enjoys Him, and is hidden from all that is outside Him, in the consciousness of the perfect love in which (thus dwelling in Him) one finds oneself. The Spirit makes us dwell in God, and gives us thus the consciousness that He dwells in us. Thus we, in the savour and consciousness of the love that was in it, can testify of that in which it was manifested beyond all Jewish limits, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.



FRAGMENT.—Christ's love was not the theory of one who comes and merely tells what God is, but the practical exhibition of Him. He shows out God in all the variety of His unreserved and immeasurable love!

DEVOTEDNESS AND SEPARATION.

(Romans xii., 1, 2.)

At different times we see that the testimony of the Spirit of God has been to some particular truths to meet the special need of the day. In our day it is a testimony to *practical devotedness, and entire separation from the evil that is in the world.* It has been through God's laying these two truths home on the conscience that anything like a revival in these last days has been accomplished. Notice the lever the apostle uses in this chapter to move the saints. Had he not a *heart* for the sheep? Assuredly he had. But there was another he had a heart for, and that was the Lord Jesus Christ. He begins, "I beseech," &c. (observe the claim which this emphatic love is led to use), "by the *mercies* of God." This is the motive by which he appeals to them. *Mercies* went up to the *God of heaven*, and down to the mind of the poor, feeble Christian. Without a sense of the *mercies* there cannot be devotedness to God, and separation from evil. *Holiness* will not do it. If I am lingering in Sodom, it is because I have not learnt what *mercy* is. What do you think God ought to do towards you? Have you any claim upon Him, but that He should hate you? Are you just clay in the hands of the

Potter, what no other potter could make anything with? Are you in His hand, for Him to mould you as He will, guilty and loathsome as you are in contrast with Christ? Christ is light, and you are darkness. God could do nothing with you but pick you up in *mercy*.

Observe what this mercy really is. It is not merely providential mercy as men talk, but the mercies are summed up in all the preceding chapters of the epistle; and the summing up does not even close at chap. viii., but after showing the dispensations in chaps. ix., to xi., when he has opened and shut all that for the earth, &c., he breaks out, "I beseech you, by the mercies of God." What there is for man must be all on the ground of *mercy*. God does not want a testimony from us in *heaven*, but He does upon the earth; and He will have one. We must get into *God's* thoughts about things, and we see that God never brings any one into such a position as not to need *mercy*.

"That ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect," &c. The thought is, that we are to prove what the *risen Christ* is in one who has the consciousness of sin in the members. We are told to "cease to do evil." Aye, but you say, I find evil is within me, and I cannot get away

from it. But you are told to cease to *do* evil. As to the evil within you, remember that God went into that question at the cross, and that not only "sins" (what we've done) were atoned for by Christ's precious blood-shedding, but that the evil you find within you, "sin in the flesh" was also dealt with, "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" (Rom. viii.). And now, the believer as "dead with Christ" is enjoined to "reckon himself to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. vi.). The epistle to the Colossians takes us a step further, showing us that, before God (and to faith), the believer is not only looked upon as "dead with Christ" (chap. ii.) but "risen with Christ" (chap. iii); and that, having Christ as our life," we are to "mortify our members" &c.

Why is the Christian left here at all? If a man makes a clock, it is for a purpose. It has hands to show the time, and they are like the living members of Christ here—made for use, *for service to Christ*; or else why are you converted before you are just going to die? It would have saved God a great deal of trouble and much dishonour if He had not converted people till just before

they died. God meant to get honour to Himself down here. As the clock is made to show the time, so God's people were intended to show forth His praises. A clock is never kept in order if it is not kept going; and you will never find a body in health if not in action; and in spiritual things, you will never find a Christian in a healthy state who does not keep his body a living sacrifice for God. A Christian ought to be full of joy and of the Holy Ghost.

The second exhortation of the apostle is to nonconformity to the world, and this is a point which tests us all very closely. It is a most difficult thing to get the true test as to what worldliness is. There is one thing certain—you will never get it if you keep to the *outside features* of conduct; for worldliness may be as nicely fed in the heart with all the appearance of denying it. In Cain we see the selfishness of his plea, "Lest any finding me, *kill me*." What does he do when God sets His mark upon him? He goes and settles himself down nicely without God. It was self and not God he thought of. He had not the single eye, his thoughts all clustering round self, and not the God that had spared him: and there was his sin. If a man is grasping after something for self, he is not satisfied with God, and is wanting something else, and some-

thing by which he may exalt himself a little in the world. It is "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." All these deny that God made us for Himself. The moment Adam and Eve catered for themselves, all the mischief was done. With Christ Satan tried these three things, but could not get in, because Christ had no mind to cater for Himself. The world can creep in between the leaves of the thoughts of one's mind, and do more mischief than the bookworm in a library. Just as the worm does the harm in secret, so does the world in the heart: self is most difficult to detect.

That form of worldliness which connects itself with feebleness of conscience is most deceitful. The body, soul and spirit are for Christ. A man says, "I am not at liberty to eat meat." Well, he must not eat it against his conscience, and yet after a while he may find it just the world in his conscience that hindered his doing it. It might be his own great religiousness, and more light will show him this. How can you decide between *conscience* and feeling? In answer to this question, I would ask another: Do you really mean to say to God, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, "Thou requirest this of me, and I give it thee?" Ah! I say, Take care you do not mistake *feeling* for

conscience. If you walk like the world, you are no witness for Christ, and you have to pick your way out of Sodom as quickly as you can. Does the world come in where God should be? If I am seeking something apart from God, it is the world, lust, &c. The only power to sustain this pilgrim course is *mercy*. If you leave it behind you for a moment you break down directly. Nothing dissolves the ties to the world first or last but that which separated us at first.



MEDITATIONS ON PROPHETIC PORTIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

(Continued from Page 60)

ROMANS IX., X., XI.

When we enter on the Epistle to the Romans, and look for prophetic truth, we find it very distinctly standing out. The epistle consists of three parts.

The first part closes with chap. viii., and is the education of the *individual* saint. You are there *alone* with Christ, and you are introduced to the justification of your person, and may shout in spirit, "Who shall condemn?" "Who shall separate?"

In chaps. ix., x., and xi., you get the dispensations of God, or His dealings with the earth from beginning to end, and there you

get prophecy. It is most desirable for the soul to acquaint itself with God's story of the earth.

Then, when we close chap. xi., it takes up practical details, still addressing itself to the saints of God, but now they are looked at, not alone with Christ, but in company with one another, in their *social* place. It is very important to see these distinctions.

Now supposing we direct our eye to chaps. ix., x., and xi., the second great division of the epistle. They introduce our thoughts, as I have said, to divine dispensations—the dealings of God with the earth from beginning to end. Chapter ix., opens with a very fervent protest on the part of Paul. He is about to tell Israel that they are going to be cast off for a time, and he could not approach such a subject without feeling it. He begins, therefore, by a very fervent utterance of his heart—"I could wish* that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren," etc. He shows how he had continual sorrow of heart for them. Then he recalls their ancient dignity. The promises were theirs,—the fathers were theirs,—Christ was theirs, concerning the flesh. That takes him down to ver. 5.

* Or rather, "I have wished"—a moment's earnest appeal, as beside himself. He had loved them as much as Moses (Ex. xxxii. 32).

Then, in ver. 6, he goes on to relieve himself and you. It is not that the present ruin of Israel has broken God's word. Nay, it has fulfilled it. It does not follow that all who are *of* Israel *are* Israel; and he goes on to prove that in the case of Ishmael and Isaac, Jacob and Esau. When you are tracing the dispensational ways of God, you are always in company with His *word*. His *hand* always verifies His *word*. We see this in the opening of Matthew's gospel. Was the Child to go down into Egypt? He turns to the prophet Hosea and finds it there. Was the Bethlehemite to be called a Nazarene? He turns to all the prophets and finds it there. When you mark a correspondence between the word of God and the events passing under your eye, you are dealing with "the signs of the times." Therefore, in the second part of the chapter, he says, Do not think the word of God has failed. I have the Book in my hand, and you under my eye, and I find you are *fulfilling* His word. That carries us down to ver. 13. Then, in ver. 14, he says: "What shall we say then? Is their unrighteousness with God?" No, that cannot be; but their is *sovereign mercy* with God. And then he illustrates this in the beautiful parable of the two vessels. Pharaoh was a vessel of wrath. Israel was a vessel appointed to mercy. Mark how beautifully

he speaks of these. Did *God* prepare Pharaoh to be a vessel of wrath? Indeed He did *not*. When Pharaoh forgot Joseph he was fitting himself by his iniquity for the righteous judgment of God. But as to the vessels of mercy, it is Himself who prepares them from the very first; and if He did not, not one of us would ever be a vessel of mercy. If He did not begin to set His love upon you, and to make you His object, you never would be prepared to glory. Did He not prepare Israel in Egypt? that wretched people that said, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?" If God had not prepared them, they had entitled themselves to no better treatment than Pharaoh himself.

In these two figures the necessity of sovereign grace shines out, yet the perfect responsibility of the creature. Could Pharaoh have forgotten Joseph, who had made Egypt the queen of the earth, and been guiltless? Then, when the apostle comes down in the close of the 9th chapter to assert sovereignty as a necessary thing, he shows that God will act in sovereignty in behalf of the Gentile, as well as in behalf of the Jew. In the 30th verse he draws up his soul again to another meditation: "What shall we say then?" This is what I say:—"That the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness have attained to righteousness, even

the righteousness which is of faith." Israel is now cast off for their own unbelief. "They stumbled at *the* stumbling stone." Then chap. x., occupies itself with that subject. He is still breaking his heart over them, and is a beautiful model for you and me. If we sit in company with the prophets, we should not be unmoved readers of them. "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." Now, it is not their ancient dignity, but their *religion* that moves him. If there is a heart-breaking thing in the world it is to have to mourn over a man's religion. We are living among people steeped in religiousness, yet every bit of it is cause of sorrow to us. And what is his prayer? "That they might be saved." What! does a religious people want to be *saved*? Yes; they want to be saved from their own religiousness, as well as from their own corruptions and lusts. "Being ignorant of God's righteousness." Not taking righteousness as a gift, they go about to establish their own righteousness, and have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. A fine moral word is this word "*submitted*." If you take divine righteousness you have *subjected* nature. Then he discusses the two right-

eousnesses. The first duty of the heart is to believe in Christ, and the first duty of the lips is to confess Him. The righteousness of faith says, "I will sit as still as a stone and let the salvation of God pass before me."

Then, having established that, he says beautifully in the 14th verse, "How can you attach guilt to Israel? Perhaps they have not heard." Yes they have. They cannot plead that; they have looked for righteousness in an unscriptural way, and cannot plead ignorance. For "to Israel He saith, All day long have I stretched forth my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people." He leaves Israel under the guilt of not having found the righteousness which is by faith.

Then in chapter xi., he looks at the dispensations of God. He opens by saying, "Hath God cast away His people?" This epistle, among other things, checks our own inferences. Here is one of them "Hath God cast away His people?" No. That is your own conclusion. I myself, being an Israelite, am a witness that He has not cast away His people. The apostle stands forth as a beautiful witness that God has an election in the midst of the nation, as He had in the time of Elias. But, for the present, the *nation as such* is still an outcast nation.

“But now I want to know” (he says in the 11th verse) “has the *nation* stumbled?” In the 1st verse the enquiry was, “Has God no people among Israel?” I am a witness that *He has*,” says Paul. “Well, then, has He cast off Israel, *as a nation*?” The rest of the chapter discusses that question. If we are intelligent in the mind of the Lord we will see that Israel is to be restored, *as a nation*. Now he comes to answer the question: “Have they stumbled that they should fall?” No. It is a *remnant*-day now; it will be a *nation*-day by-and-bye. That is, God will by-and bye deal with them nationally, as He is dealing now with an election in their midst, and with the very grace in which *you* stand this moment. This dignity attaches to you as Gentiles that you stand out before the nation of the Jews as a sample of God’s mercy, on which ground they themselves will be taken up, as a nation, at a future day.

But then he says, “You Gentiles that are grafted in, take care that you are not boasting. Do you mean to infer that they will not be grafted in again? That is your own speculation. Because of unbelief they were cast off, but let me tell you, if He spared not the natural branches, take heed lest also He spare not thee.” Do you believe Christendom has continued in the goodness

of God? You *could* not say it. And what shall be its end? The apostle tells you it shall be cut off. And there is not a ray of hope for Christendom. There is nothing before it but the judgment of the day of Christ. But there shall come out of Zion a Deliverer to turn away ungodliness from Jacob. *There* is the answer to the question: "Hath God cast away His people?" By-and-bye they will be beloved as a nation, for the fathers' sakes. If you do not mean to deprive God of one great article of His own delight, the nation of Israel must be restored. Do you think God is going to tell Abraham He has repented of His covenant when He promised him the land? "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

"For God hath concluded all in unbelief that He might have mercy upon all." Whether it be the Gentiles for heavenly places, or the Jews for earthly places, it is all one story of boundless grace and wondrous mercy, warranted and perfected in the blood of Christ. Redemption is too precious a story not to be rehearsed in every part of God's creation.

Then his heart runs over and he burst forth: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" Here it is the shout of his spirit over the wisdom and knowledge of God. "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

(To be continued. D. V.)

THE CONFEDERACIES OF MEN, AND THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD.

SCRIPTURE contemplates *hostile* associations of men and of nations. Isaiah vii., viii., was the era of one, and the prophecy of another. Joel iii., tells of “multitudes, multitudes,” gathered together in the day of Jerusalem’s final sorrow. Psalm lxxxiii., anticipates a confederacy against the Israel of God; and “Gog” is the witness of a host of nations leagued in infidel defiance of the Lord.

But Scripture also contemplates *civil or worldly* associations—and it is our business to watch their spirit, their purpose, and their working, awful indeed as they are in forming the character and history of the world, and in urging it on its way to meet the judgment of God.

It was confederacy of this sort which was among the descendants of Noah. The one speech and the one language of the children of men in that day led them to judge that they were strong, and that by a little skill and effort they might wax still stronger, even to independency of God. The material under their hand in the plain of Shinar, promised very fair. They were all of one language, and were journeying in one direction. They were invited by favourable cir-

cumstances (*providences* as they might say), and they would make a common effort, and try the industrial resources of nature. Things looked well for progress. With a little skill and diligence of their own, the fruitful plain would yield them brick and mortar, and they might accomplish much. And why should they not use the resources of nature, and exercise their own capabilities? Why should they not try what "the raw material," by man's "art and manufacture," would lead to, and do for them?

This was the language of the children of men in Genesis xi. Whether God would have it thus or not, they never thought of waiting to consider. He was not before them. They did their own pleasure. They built a city and a tower, that both name and security, glory and strength, might be theirs.

Thus was it in those early days. In other and very distant days, in the days of the Saviour, it was the same—with this aggravating circumstance—that confederacies then formed themselves of strange, discordant elements, because of the working of the natural enmity of the heart to God—let that heart be disciplined or trained as it may be, whether in a Jewish or Gentile school. In that enmity, the Jew and the Gentile are found together; and so are the

Pharisee and the Sadducee—the men of different politics and of different sects. *The world combined these diverse materials against an unworldly Jesus.* This was the secret of their confederacy. The Pharisee and the Sadducee were men of different thoughts altogether, considered simply in themselves; but the world can be their common object in resistance of Christ. This is seen in Matthew xvi. 1-4. “Shew us a sign from heaven,” they come together and say to Him. That is, they challenge the Lord to accredit Himself in some way that the world could appreciate, or that, otherwise, they would reject Him by common consent.

This is to be laid to heart. The world has power to combine very different elements when an *unworldly* Christ stands out as a common enemy. Herod and Pilate were made friends together. There may be the secular and the ecclesiastical, even the infidel and the superstitious; but let an *unworldly* Christ appear, and He will be challenged as the object of common enmity. A heavenly stranger sojourning on earth for a time, is regarded as a trespasser by both; and however else they may differ, they can confederate and act together against Him. God, such as man’s heart or man’s religion gives him, man will accept; but the true

God, whose image Jesus is, will never do for him.

All this is for the present consideration of our souls. For *the world* is becoming a *common object* in these days of ours. All are aiding its advancement, and the development of its capabilities, and the multiplying of its desirable and delectable things—and such a generation as this, may easily become the material of a confederacy or common association against the unworldly Jesus and the church of God.

Strange coalition of this kind is presented to us by the Lord Himself in Luke xi. It is a solemn word of warning; and, I may add, a *seasonable* word, just in this present day.

The unclean spirit had been the original tenant of this leprous house. In due time he left it, seeking other scenes of action. But after a while he returns, and finds his old house in a new condition. His absence, the absence of an unclean spirit, had left it open to *other* influences; and, accordingly, on his return he finds it “swept and garnished.” This, however, does not disappoint him. He rather deems it to be more suited to his purposes than ever. And it is in this fact—this solemn, awful fact—that I judge there is something for our careful and special observation at this time, and for *this generation*.

This leprous house changed its style or condition, but not its owner, nor its fitness to answer the purposes of its owner. If the unclean spirit had been disappointed in his wanderings, he is not so on his return to his old dwelling. So far otherwise is it, that he goes to gather seven other spirits, more wicked than himself, and they all make entrance into the house, more thoroughly than ever to accomplish its ruin. And they succeed: the last state of it is worse than the first.

This is a picture, indeed, of strange, unexpected confederacies. An *unclean* spirit enters a *swept* house, associating with himself seven *other* spirits. This is a strange coalition. Things are found together in this house which naturally suited neither the house itself, nor each other. But still, there they are in company, and dwell and work together. An *unclean* spirit, with seven *other* spirits, in a *swept and garnished* house!

Is this Christendom in her last state? Is it to come to this? Is it not, I rather ask, on its way to this already? Are there not symptoms, somewhat too plain to be mistaken, of such strange, unnatural alliances, all around us? Are not elements in themselves repulsive, beginning to try their capability of combin-

ing? Is not "alliance" the favourite watch-word of the day? Is not the unclean spirit of darker, earlier days making fresh entrance into a reformed, and swept, and ornamented house? Is not this the Christendom of the present hour? Are not the premonitions of the Divine Prophet realizing before us and around us at this moment?

There are many spirits abroad at present, "gone out into the world." The old "unclean spirit" is abroad in growing vigour, the spirit of idolatry or superstition. The *infidel* spirit is abroad. The *worldly* spirit is abroad—that energy which, with its ten thousand arts, is embellishing and furnishing its native place, using refinement of all sorts, morals, religion, intellectual culture and intellectual delights, science and music, books and pictures, everything that can set off and recommend the world, and linking "the million" with nobles in the enjoyment of it.

Thus is it in the history of this present hour. The affecting truth that Jesus is the *rejected* Jesus in this world, is practically forgotten in all this. That mystery is scorned by some, denied by others, slighted by others, and but coldly, carelessly, and feebly acted on by us who thoroughly and entirely own it among the deep and precious things of God. For we say, How could

God meet anything in this world but rejection? The world had already departed from Him, ere He came into it. It had set up for itself long before, even from the days of Cain and the city of Enoch. But how deep-seated its enmity must be, when it refused to know such an one as Jesus! This enmity of the world was as the enmity of the Jews, who could forget all their hatred of the Gentile, settled and rooted as that hatred was in the very heart of the nation, and say, in the desire to rid themselves of Him, "We have no king but Cæsar." They refused the waters of Shiloah that flowed softly, and rejoiced in Rezin and Remaliah's son.

But confederacy has not closed its history, or spent all its energy yet. Far otherwise. It must be witnessed in full action at the end, as it was at the beginning. We have seen it in the early days of Babel, and in the matured meridian days of the Lord Jesus, and are still to see it in the declining days of the Apocalypse. And the "old serpent" will be the life and instigator of confederacies at the end, as he was at the beginning, and hitherto. The book of the Apocalypse witnesses this, especially in the mysteries or symbols of "the woman" and "the beast."

The woman sits on many waters. Multitudes, tongues, nations, and peoples, all

receive the cup of fornication at her hand. Kings of the earth, merchants of the earth, inhabitation of the earth, every shipmaster and sailor, and such as trade in the sea, are subject to her.—The beast has the whole world wondering after him. In himself he combines the lion and the bear and the leopard, and has ten horns and seven heads. “The false prophet” ministers to him, and the kings by one consent, give their power to him. All that dwell on the earth worship him. Small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, receive his mark in their forehead.

These are awful tokens of confederated energies of evil. And in them we see the beginning reproduced at the end. For confederacy is the mode or form in which man makes display of his natural pride and apostasy.

And in that form of confederation God will judge the revolted children of men speedily, as He has already done in early days. At the beginning, it was the alliance between the woman and the serpent that He broke, saying to the serpent, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman.” It was those who were gathered in the rebel-plain of Shinar that He scattered over the face of the whole earth. And so it is the body of the apocalyptic woman in her pride,

He will give to the burning flame ; and His supper, "the supper of the great God," shall celebrate the doom and ruin of the beast and his associates.

Our present victory, beloved, is by separation. Separation is holiness—if it be separation to the place and character which the calling of God suggests.

The purpose of the serpent in the garden was to withdraw Eve from the condition in which the Lord God had put her. She was to sacrifice that, and get advancement from him. She consented ; and at once as a "chaste virgin" she was ruined. Her purity was lost. Whatever she gained, she lost that. She lost what God had made her.

The church, like the Eve of Genesis ii., should be what the hand of God has made her, taking the cross of Christ as its instrument or material. That cross has brought her nigh to God, but estranged her from the world. And when the principles of the world propose to cultivate and advance the church, and such proposal is listened to, we see again, what of old we saw in Genesis iii., the mystic Eve has lost her virgin-purity.

The proposal to advance the church by such means is attractive. But so was the proposal of the serpent at the beginning—

“Ye shall be as gods.” This was an angel of light, a minister of righteousness, in the judgment of flesh and blood. But it worked corruption and utter moral ruin, for it beguiled her from the state in which God had left her.

And this generation is doing its best to commend the world to the church, “the tree” to “the woman” again. It speaks, as though the world were now a very different thing from what the cross of Christ has declared it and proved it to be. It speaks, as if Christ were no longer a *rejected* Christ. But if the saint listen, as of old Eve did, he is so far corrupted—for he is surrendering the place, the condition, and the character, which the cross of Christ has given him and made him.

The serpent would fain give man a garden again. And a happier garden it shall be than God once gave him. He shall have *every* tree in it. The world shall be a wise world, a religious world, a cultivated world, a delightful place, and still advancing. The man of benevolence, the man of morals, the religious and the intellectual man, the man of refined pleasures, all will find their home in it. And this shall be the world’s oneness. And all who desire their fellow-creatures’ happiness, and a common rest after so many centuries of confusion and trouble, will

surely not refuse to join this honourable and happy confederacy.

Nothing will withstand all this but "the love of the truth"—nothing but faith in that word which gathers a sinner to Jesus and His blood, and the hopes of a poor world-wearied believer to Jesus and His kingdom. Come what may to you, beloved, though it be moral or refined or religious in its bearing, it is "unrighteousness," if it be not of "the truth" (2 Thess. ii.)

"All the world is to wonder after the beast" before "every tongue confesses Jesus to be Lord." Each will be in its day—but the beast will have his day, his day of the rule of evil, ere Jesus has His day of the dominion of light and righteousness. The saint has to walk apart from those schemes or confederations which are undertaking to make the *world* what God can accept, till the rejection of Christ be answered from heaven. Little do many who favour the system of religious ordinances, and assert the rights and dignities of office, think that they are combining with those who are cultivating the masses and the people by liberal institutions. But it is so—for all are *cultivating* man, instead of *renewing* him. All are doing something against the truth, and not for the truth. (See 2 Cor. xiii. 8.) The attempt is very specious. The system

of the beast and his kings will, in its day, be very fair. They have all "one mind"—and from the attractiveness of such unity nothing will preserve the soul but the faith that knows the principles of God, and that any thing or every thing that proposes to set the world in order till judgments have cleared it, is of the god of this world and not of heaven. The thing that is to have this "one mind," is the very thing that withstands the Lamb, and is judged of God in the day of the Lord (Rev. xvii. 13, 14; xix. 19, 20).

Easy to write this, beloved—but I know that it is the *power* of separation that is to be cherished by us. It was so in the soul of the dear apostle, as we see him in 2 Timothy. In that affecting Epistle, he breathes a spirit which was strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and consciously treading the borders of the glory. And with this he had ardent love for the prosperity of the church, and of his beloved Timothy. Here was the hidden virtue of his beautiful and distinct separation from the world, or the corrupted "great house," which was then rising up before him and around him. His separation was in the power of this faith and hope and charity. And to like grace the Spirit calls us in this day, when the "great house" of that Epistle has become the Christendom of this day.

The scenery of the Prophets (and that scenery is as real as what at this moment is under our eye), and I may say, very specially that of the Apocalypse, is acquiring increased distinctness in the thoughts of many of the saints of God in these days. In other days it was looked on as dim and clouded. And is not this, I ask, some symptom that we are *approaching* those regions—that we are conscious of increasing distinctness because of *nearness* ?

And besides ; there is something of an instinctive turning to thoughts of judgment and of glory among us. There is something of a sense of this solemn fact, that God is about to interfere in some way or another with the course of things around us. The energies of evil are seen to be very active, and the world to be very haughty and self-sufficient. The present day is the *manhood* of the world. The world is playing the man now. It speaks of other days as one would remember his childhood. It is boasting itself beyond all former pretensions, and promising to do greater things still. And so will it proceed, till in the moment of its loftiest pride the judgment of God overtakes it.

The people of God should wait with the *girdle* and the *lamp*, which are the beautiful standing symbols of their calling, till the

Lord appears—that is, with minds girt up unto holy separation from present things, and with hearts brightened up with the desire and expectation of coming things.

These thoughts of judgment may profitably move our hearts at this hour. But let me add, for it is a comfort to remember it, that the judgments of God are always only *by the way*, and never *close* the scene, or terminate His action and purpose. He does indeed pass through them, but He only passes through them, or rather with them, onward to glory and the kingdom, which is His calling. The deluge, one of His judgments, led to the new world under the government of Noah. The judgment of the cities of the plain was survived, and Abraham is seen on high, the next morning, above it all, and Lot is delivered. The judgment of Egypt was the redemption of Israel destined for the inheritance.

And for still further strength and comfort I may add, that if the mind could be delivered from the blinding and prejudicing power of self-love, it would speak the judgment of righteousness, and justify God in His judgments. Look at Adam. His hiding behind the trees of the garden gave judgment against himself with God. Look at the camp in Numbers xiv. Their utter silence the moment the Glory appeared did

the same. It was like Adam's hiding of himself. Look at David. Nathan catches his conscience when he appealed simply to his moral sense, his estimate of right and wrong, his measure of iniquity and its retribution. He got from David such a sentence as justified the judgment of God against himself. He little suspected that he was pronouncing sentence in his own cause. But it was so—and self-love being dismissed or set aside for a moment, and the moral sense being left alone in company with the offence, David out of his own mouth is judged, and God's judgment is justified.

So, the husbandmen of Matthew xxi. Like Nathan with David, the Lord catches the conscience of the Jews, and makes them pronounce their own condemnation. And all this, because self-love was again, as it were, sent out of court, and the mere moral sense, the sense of good and evil, right and wrong, is alone on the judgment seat. The decree of God against them is there anticipated by themselves.

And so with the man without the wedding garment in Matt. xxii. He got into the marriage feast with a careless heart, just thinking of himself in the power of some form or other of mere nature. But again, in his case, when the sense that judged what was fitting and necessary was called

into exercise, and there was nothing to interfere with its action in the conscience—when the simple, unmixed thought is presented to him, whether any person in *such* a dress should be in *such* a place, he is “speechless,” he is convicted, he has nothing to say, and his own judgment tells him that such an one as he has no business in such a place as that.

These may be used by the soul as illustrations of the great truth, that the Judge of all the earth will do right, that He will be justified when He speaks and clear when He judges. Out of our own mouth will He condemn. When Eve pleaded the serpent’s guile, and Adam pleaded Eve’s gift to him, the Lord God did not condescend to answer the pleas. And who of us at this hour does not justify Him in pronouncing that sentence without replying to those excuses?

All this is for us and our comfort, when we think of Him with whom we have to do; and we may sing of Him and of His praise, when the subject is either “mercy” or “judgment.” (Ps. ci. 1.) But judgment, again I say, never *closes* the scene. It is never “the end of the Lord.” The things of Job were all set right, and much more than that, ere “the end of the Lord” in his history was reached. His things in the *world*, in his own *person*, both mind and body, in

the *family*, and in the *church*, were all in confusion. His cattle were stolen, his houses were in ruins, his children were dead, and his brethren were set against him, he misunderstanding and reviling them, and they injuriously reproaching and condemning him. All was thus out of order, within and around him, as to the world, the family, and the church.

How could there be more confusion? But God's "end" lay beyond all this—for we never reach God's *end* in either discipline or judgment, the discipline of an individual saint, or the judgment of a people or a world.

So does the Holy Jesus alone close and crown the Book which details the coming judgments of God. (Rev. xxii.)

How little does the soul rise up in the power of these things which are so easily discerned, and so freely spoken of and written about!



"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and *touch not* the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." 2 Cor. vi. 17—vii. 1.

BABYLON AND THE BEAST.

(Rev. xvii.)

Rabylon is a great system in the earth by which men's hearts are drawn away from God. It supplies them with something to have natural enjoyment in besides joy in God. In this Babylon is the great whore drawing out corrupt affections. She is supported by the great power of the earth; but power is not what is presented in Babylon, but the withdrawal of affection from God to have it spent on what ministers to natural lust. There are the kings of the earth, merchants of the earth, and all nations brought in as acted on by Babylon. She ministers to the enjoyment of kings, to the wealth of merchants, and to the excitement of nations: she is borne by the beast whose character is blaspheming power; but she, by corrupt fascinations, rules over the kings of the earth. When she is judged then the beast will rule by blaspheming power, drawing out the wonder of the whole world, and their worship too; but before the beast comes to rule, he supports the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. Open blasphemy is not the character of prevailing evil in the present day; neither is it an astonishing display of combined power, because the beast still car-

ries the woman. But the evil of the present day is enjoyment in the world, not in Christ; riches in the world not in Christ: and the excitement of these things intoxicates men's minds, so that engagement in the things of Christ are put out of mind. All this may be under a profession of the truth; because it is the beast that is the blasphemer, who, before he himself rules, supports the mother of harlots--the parent of all who draw affection from God to the things of the world.

The woman is drunken with the blood of the saints; but the inhabitants of the earth are drunken with the wine of her fortification. When the saints are persecuted, then the spirit that draws the heart away from God becomes excited: it takes fresh stimulus from this to present with attraction its sinful gratifications; and then these abominations act on the spirit of the inhabitants of the earth, and excite them. The kings, as the great ones of the earth, commit fornication with her; the inhabitants, as the common people of the world, are excited by it. If there is a wicked show in the town, it acts thus doubly: the rich people pay for going in and enjoy the show; the poor people crowd outside the door under the excitement of it. Both are acted on by the evil.

The beast was full of names of blasphemy:

but the woman had a cup full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication. The effort of the woman is not to make you an open blasphemer, but to mix the things of the world with religion, so that, whilst letting people have the form of godliness, the power thereof is practically denied. The beast has not even the form of godliness, he is full of names of blasphemy : but he is not ruling, he only supports the woman who does rule.

“The beast which thou sawest was, and is not ; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition.” The beast in its first constitution is seen in Dan. vii., thus it was—but it has declined and ceased to exhibit itself ; but in its revival it will assume a new feature as coming out of the bottomless pit. Its constituted strength was not this, but its restored is. That which has its source in wickedness, and its end in judgment, revealed to the servants, will have its importance lowered before them in some little moment of boast ; but they who have not the mind of God, and walk by sight, are altogether dazzled by this display ; and so, “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 yet is.”

DEVOTEDNESS.

Begone, each earth-born tie and bond,
Begone affection, deep and fond,
That Christ does not partake.
Have I a box of alabaster,
Not yet broken for the Master,
To which my heart but clings the faster?
Help me my box to break.

Oh ! break, whatever it may be,
That holdeth back my heart from Thee,
Who died my heart to win.
All other love, however dear,
However old, or strong, or near,
Of which *Thou* art not theme and sphere,
Is only polished sin.

All other love would cease to flow—
But *Thine* no chill nor change can know,
In spite of ill return.
The source of *Thine* is not in me—
In what I am, or I can be—
The deep, deep spring is found in Thee —
It cannot cease to burn.

Upon my callous heart impress
The depth and height of all Thy grace,
That I may love Thee more.
That Thou canst call a worm Thy treasure—
That Thou canst find in me Thy pleasure—
Tells of a love which none can measure,
But worship and adore !

“THE VERY GOD OF PEACE SANCTIFY YOU WHOLLY.”

(1 Thess. v. 23.)

There is something very sweet to the heart to notice (and ponder over) the different titles God takes to Himself in the word, and how He, in matchless grace, adapts Himself to the circumstances and needs of His people. How peculiarly appropriate then, in view of all the troubles and persecutions the Thessalonians were called to pass through (see Acts xvii. 1-15 ; 1 Thess. ii. 14-16), that, in concluding this precious epistle, the apostle should bring before them God in the title of “The very God of peace.” After an epistle like this his heart turned readily to God in this character ; for we enjoy peace in the presence of God—not only peace of conscience, on the ground of the work of the Lord Jesus, but peace of heart.

In the previous part is found the activity of love in the heart ; that is to say, God present and acting in us, who are viewed as partaking, at the same time, of the divine nature, which is the spring of that holiness which will be manifested in all its perfection before God at the coming of Jesus with all His saints. Here it is the God of peace, to whom the apostle looks for the accomplishment of this work. There it was the activity of a divine principle in us—a principle connected with the presence of God and our communion with Him. Here it is the perfect rest of heart in which holiness develops itself. The absence of peace in the heart

arises from the activity of the passions and the will, increased by the sense of powerlessness to satisfy or even to gratify them.

But in God all is peace. He can be active in love; He can glorify Himself by creating what He will; He can act in judgment to cast out the evil that is before His eyes. But He rests ever in Himself, and both in good and in evil He knows the end from the beginning and is undisturbed. When He fills the heart, He imparts this rest to us: we cannot rest in ourselves; we cannot find rest of heart in the actings of our passions, either without an object or upon an object, nor in the rending and destructive energy of our own will. We find our rest in God—not the rest that implies weariness, but rest of *heart* in the possession of all that we desire, and of that which even forms our desires and fully satisfies them, in the possession of an object in which conscience has nothing to reproach us and has but to be silent, in the certainty that it is the Supreme Good which the heart is enjoying, the supreme and only authority to whose will it responds—and that will is love towards us. God bestows rest, peace. He is never called the God of joy. He gives us joy truly, and we ought to rejoice; but joy implies something surprising, unexpected, exceptional, at least in contrast with, and in consequence of, evil. The peace that we possess, that which satisfies us, has no element of this kind, nothing which is in contrast, nothing which disturbs. It is more deep, more perfect than joy. It is more the satisfaction of a nature in that which perfectly answers to it, and in which

it develops itself, without any contrast being necessary to enhance the satisfaction of a heart that has not all which it desires, or of which it is capable.

God, as has been said, rests thus in Himself—is this rest for Himself. He gives us, and is for us, this entire peace. The conscience being perfect through the work of Christ who has made peace and reconciled us to God, the new nature—and consequently the heart—finds its perfect satisfaction in God, and the will is silent; moreover, it has nothing further to desire.

It is not only that God meets the desires that we have: He is the source of new desires to the new man by the revelation of Himself in love.* He is both the source of the nature and its infinite object; and that, in love. It is His part to be so. It is more than creation; it is reconciliation, which is more than creation, because there is in it more development of love, that is to say, of God: and it is thus that we know God. It is that which He is essentially in Christ.

In the angels He glorifies Himself in creation: they excel us in strength. In Christians he glorifies Himself in reconciliation, to make them the first fruits of His new creation, when He shall have reconciled all things in heaven and on earth by Christ. Therefore it is written, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the chil-

* Hence there is the opposite to weariness in the heavenly enjoyment of God; because He who is the infinite object of enjoyment is the infinite source and strength of capacity to enjoy, though we enjoy as recipient creatures.

dren [sons] of God." They have His nature and His character.

It is in these relationships with God—or rather it is God in these relationships with us in peace, in His communion, who develops sanctification, our inward conformity of affection and intelligence (and consequently of outward conduct) with Him and His will. "The God of peace himself sanctify you wholly." May there be nothing in us that does not yield to this benignant influence of peace which we enjoy in communion with God! May no power or force in us own anything but Himself! In all things may He be our all, so that He only may rule in our hearts!

He has brought us perfectly into this place of blessedness in Christ and by His work. There is nothing between us and God but the exercise of His love, the enjoyment of our happiness, and the worship of our hearts. We are the proof before Him, the testimony, the fruit, of the accomplishment of all that He holds most precious, of that which has perfectly glorified Him, of that in which He delights, and of the glory of the One who has accomplished it, namely, of Christ, and of His work. We are the fruit of the redemption that Christ has accomplished, and the objects of the satisfaction which God must feel in the exercise of His love.

God in grace is the God of peace for us; for here divine righteousness finds its satisfaction, and love its perfect exercise.

The apostle here prays that, in this character, God may work in us to make everything respond to Himself thus revealed. Here only

is this development of humanity given—"body, soul and spirit." The object is assuredly not metaphysical, but to express *man* in all the parts of his being; the vessel by which he expresses that which he is, the natural affections of his soul, the elevated workings of his mind, through which he is above the animals and in intelligent relationship with God. May God be found in each, as the mover, spring and guide!

In general, the words "soul and spirit" are used without making any distinction between them, for the soul of man was formed very differently from that of animals, in that God breathed into his nostrils the breath (spirit) of life, and it was thus that man became a living soul. Therefore it suffices to say *soul* as to man and the other is supposed. Or, in saying *spirit*, in this sense the elevated character of his soul is expressed. The animal has also its natural affections, has a living soul, attaches itself, knows the persons who do it good, devotes itself to its master, loves him, will even give its life for him; but it has not that which can be in relationship with God (alas! which can set itself at enmity against Him), which can occupy itself with things outside its own nature as the master of others.

The Holy Spirit then wills that man, reconciled with God, should be consecrated, in every part of his being, to the God who has brought him into relationship with Himself by the revelation of His love, and by the work of His grace, and that nothing in the man should admit an object beneath the divine nature of which he is partaker; so

that he should thus be preserved blameless unto the coming of Christ.

Let us observe here, that it is in no wise beneath the new nature in us to perform our duties faithfully in all the various relationships in which God has placed us; but quite the contrary. That which is required is to bring God into them, His authority, and the intelligence which that imparts. Therefore it is said to husbands to live with their wives "according to knowledge," or intelligence; that is to say, not only with human and natural affections (which, as things are, do not by themselves even maintain their place), but as before God and conscious of His will. It may be that God may call us, in connection with the extraordinary work of His grace, to consecrate ourselves entirely to it; but otherwise the will of God is accomplished in the relationships in which He has placed us, and divine intelligence and obedience to God are developed in them. Finally God has *called* us to this life of holiness with Himself; He is faithful, and He will accomplish it. May He enable us to cleave to Him, that we may realize it!

Observe again here, how the coming of Christ is introduced, and the expectation of this coming, as an integral part of Christian life. "Blameless," it says, "at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The life which had developed itself in obedience and holiness meets the Lord at His coming. Death is not in question. The life which we have found is to be such when He appears. The man, in every part of his being, moved by this life, is found there blameless when Jesus

comes. Death was overcome (not yet destroyed): a new life is ours. This life, and the man living of this life, are found, with their Head and Source, in the glory. Then will the weakness disappear which is connected with his present condition. That which is mortal shall be swallowed up of life: that is all. We are Christ's: He is our life. We wait for Him, that we may be with Him, and that He may perfect all things in the glory.

Let us also here examine a little into that which this passage teaches us with regard to sanctification. It is connected indeed with a nature, but it is linked with an object; and it depends for its realization on the operation of another, namely, of God Himself; and it is founded on a perfect work of reconciliation with God already accomplished. Inasmuch as it is founded on an accomplished reconciliation, into which we enter by the reception of a new nature, the Scriptures consider Christians as already perfectly sanctified in Christ. It is practically carried out by the operation of the Holy Ghost, who, in imparting this nature, separates us—as thus born again—entirely from the world. It is important to maintain this truth, and to stand very clearly and distinctly on this ground: otherwise practical sanctification soon becomes detached from a new nature received, and is but the amelioration of the natural man and then it is quite legal, a return—after reconciliation—into doubt and uncertainty, because, though justified, the man is not accounted meet for heaven—this depends on progress, so that justifica-

tion does not give peace with God. Scripture says, "Giving thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." Progress there is, but not in Scripture connected with meetness. (The thief was meet for Paradise and went there.) Such views are an enfeebling not to say destructive, of the work of redemption, that is, of its appreciation in our hearts by faith.

We *are* then sanctified (it is thus the Scripture most frequently speaks) by God the Father, by the blood and the offering of Christ, and by the Spirit—that is to say, we are set apart for God personally and for ever. In this point of view justification is presented in the word as consequent upon sanctification, a thing into which we enter through it. Taken up as sinners in the world, we are set apart by the Holy Ghost to enjoy all the efficacy of the work of Christ according to the counsels of the Father: set apart by the communication of a new life, no doubt, but placed by this setting apart in the enjoyment of all that Christ has gained for us. I say again, It is very important to hold fast this truth both for the glory of God and for our own peace: but the Spirit of God in the Epistle to the Thessalonians does not speak of it in this point of view, but of the practical realization of the development of this life of separation from the world and from evil. He speaks of this divine development in the inner man, which makes sanctification a real and intelligent condition of soul, a state of practical communion with God, according to that nature

and to the revelation of God with which it is connected,

In this respect we find indeed a principle of life which works in us—that which is called a subjective state: but it is impossible to separate this operation in us from an object (man would be God if it were so), nor consequently from a continual work of God in us that holds us in communion with that object, which is God himself. Accordingly it is through the truth by the word, whether at first in the communication of life, or in detail all along our path: “Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth.”

Man, we know, has degraded himself. He has enslaved Himself to the lusts of the animal part of his being. But how? By departing from God. God does not sanctify man apart from the knowledge of Himself, leaving man still at a distance from Him; but, while giving him a new nature which is capable of it, by giving to this nature (which cannot even exist without it) an object—Himself, He does not make man independent, as he wished to be: the new man is the dependent man; it is his perfection—Jesus exemplified this in His life. The new man is a man dependent in his affections: he desires to be so, he delights in, and cannot be happy without, being so; and his dependence is on love, while still obedient as a dependent being ought to be.

Thus they who are sanctified possess a nature that is holy in its desires and its tastes. It is the divine nature in them, the life of Christ. But they do not cease to be men. They have God revealed in Christ for

their object. Sanctification is developed in communion with God, and in affections which go back to Christ, and which wait for Him. But the new nature cannot reveal an object to itself; and still less could it have its object by setting God aside at its will. It is dependent on God for the revelation of Himself. His love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost whom He has given us; and the same Spirit takes of the things of Christ and communicates them to us. Thus we grow in the knowledge of God, being strengthened mightily by His Spirit in the inner man, that we may "comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge," and be filled unto the fulness of God. Thus, "we all with open face beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth."

We see by these passages, which might be multiplied, that we are dependent on an object, and that we are dependent on the strength of another. Love acts in order to work in us according to this need.

Our setting apart for God, which is complete (for it is by means of a nature that is purely of Himself, and in absolute responsibility to Him, for we are no longer our own, but are bought with a price, and sanctified by the blood of Christ according to the will of God, who will have us for His own), places us in a relationship, the development of

which (by an increasing knowledge of God, who is the Object of our new nature) is practical sanctification, wrought in us by the power of the Holy Ghost, the witness in us of the love of God. He attaches the heart to God, ever revealing Him more and more, and at the same time unfolding the glory of Christ and all the divine qualities that were displayed in Him in human nature, thus forming ours as born of God.

Therefore it is, as brought out in this epistle, that love, working in us, is the means of sanctification (Chap. iii. 12, 13). It is the activity of the new nature, of the divine nature in us; and that connected with the presence of God; for he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God. And in this chapter v., the saints are commended to God Himself, that He may work it in them; while we are always set in view of the glorious objects of our faith in order to accomplish it.

We may here more particularly call the reader's attention to these objects. They are, God Himself, and the coming of Christ: on the one hand, communion with God; on the other, waiting for Christ. It is most evident that communion with God is the practical position of the highest sanctification. He who knows that we shall see Jesus as He now is, and be like Him, purifies Himself even as He is pure. By our communion with the God of peace we are wholly sanctified. If God is practically our all, we are altogether holy. (We are not speaking of any change in the flesh, which can neither be subjected to God nor please

Him). The thought of Christ and His coming preserves us practically, and in detail, and intelligently, blameless. It is God Himself who thus preserves us, and who works in us to occupy our hearts and cause us continually to grow.

It is important to remark, that the more vigorous and living Christianity is, the more objective it is: it is but saying that God and the Lord Jesus have a greater place in our thoughts; and that we rest more really upon them. The Epistle to the Thessalonians is the part of Scripture which instructs on this point; and it is a means of judging many a fallacy in the heart, and of giving a great simplicity to our Christianity.



MEDITATIONS ON PROPHETIC PORTIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

(Continued from page 80).

1 CORINTHIANS XV.; AND 2 CORINTHIANS V.

I propose looking now at a prophecy in 1 Cor. xv., and at another in 2 Cor. v.

Now I read these two Scriptures together, not only because they have each a prophetic character, but because they supply two thoughts on the prophetic subject; the story of the body, and the story of the spirit: therefore I put them together. There is nothing of the story of the spirit in 1 Cor. xv.; you would not learn from that chapter the life of the disembodied spirit. 2 Cor. v., comes to supply that.

The subject of 1 Cor. xv., is the resurrection. He introduces it by the simple gospel, that the Lord Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. Now Paul saw the Lord Jesus, not merely as risen, but as risen and glorified. He was the apostle of the ascended Christ. The twelve apostles were the apostles of the Lord in the flesh, and also in resurrection, for the lost apostleship of Judas was supplied before the descent of the Holy Ghost. The twelve were sent forth by the Lord, not only in the days of His flesh, which, in a certain sense, failed, and nothing was gathered; but an apostleship of the same order was instituted after His resurrection: and till Matthias supplied the place of Judas, the Spirit did not come down, for there was not a complete thing for Him to anoint. Then in the beginning of the Acts, we see that the early ministry of the apostles confined itself to the house of Israel. But when Stephen was martyred and the hopes of *faith* were transferred to heaven, when the eye that had been diverted *from* heaven by the angels in the first chapter, had been directed *to* heaven by the Holy Ghost in the seventh chapter, then the whole dispensation took a new character, and Paul's apostleship was established upon the new condition of things. Consequently Paul was called into office from the glory, by the ascended heavenly Christ, and that is where the church dates her formal beginning from. So he beautifully says, "As of one born out of due time." I only speak of this passingly, because of what he says, "I am not meet to be called an apostle." Then he enters on the

great theme of the chapter,—Resurrection. We will look at the resurrection in its prophetic, not its evangelic, character. The resurrection has an evangelic character. It is that on which the whole gospel rests itself. But we will look now at its prophetic character, and there we find three resurrection eras. The first is of Christ Himself; the second is “at His coming; and the third is “the end.” The first fruits, the coming, and the end. The Lord occupied the first of these resurrection seasons, entirely alone: “Of the people, there was none with Him.” It was a victorious resurrection, and so is yours, but His was wrought out entirely by Himself. He had a title in His own person to rise. God was debtor to raise Him. It infinitely distinguishes itself from yours in this feature, that *you* are a debtor to grace for it. It was morally due to Him, therefore He must rise alone. “Of the people there was none with Him,” and of the people none *could* be with Him. Did not His *person* demand resurrection? Was it *possible* He could be holden of death? The glory of God owned His title. He “was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.”

Then the second resurrection era is called “at His coming.” That is confined to “those who are Christ’s,” an innumerable host from Adam to the present time, and on to the very end. The first was Christ’s, because He was *what* He was. The second is yours, because you are *whose* you are. You will be a witness of victorious resurrection, but the difference is that your title is *in* Him. He shares the victory *with* you, but He

gained it *for* you. You never gained it. "Thanks be to God who *giveth* us the victory." How could death hold its Conqueror? He had conquered death, and "him who had the power of death." So He gained the victory, and He has imparted what He earned to you.

His be "the Victor's name,"
 Who fought the fight alone ;
 Triumphant saints no honour claim,
 His conquest was their own.

Then the third era comes, in the 24th verse, and is called, "the end."

This is a mere resurrection of the dead, not *from* among the dead. I find the Lord anticipating it in John v. The Spirit is here discussing it, and in the Revelation xx., the thing is historically verified. The Lord speaks in John v., of a rising to life and a rising to judgment. The rising to life is the second of the two eras. The rising to judgment is the third, which is awfully illustrated in Revelation xx.

The first resurrection era was a triumphant one, by *worthiness*. The second is the gift of *grace*, and the third is merely *judicial*—they come up to stand before the throne of judgment. So in the 23rd and 24th verses of our chapter, the apostle is exposing to our thoughts this great mystery of the resurrection seasons.

Now he goes on to open to us wonderful prophetic truth. In verse 24 he had told us that the end would not come till the Son of Man had delivered up the kingdom. Then I ask, am I to expect a kingdom to be mani-

fested between the first and second of the resurrection seasons? No, I am not. But I am to look for it between the second and third. The indefiniteness between the first and second is striking; but I am stopped then, and told that the third cannot take place till the kingdom has discharged its duties. Need a wayfaring man err as he reads this? Is there any intervening object between the first and second era? Is there any intervening object between the second and third era? Indeed there is.

Now we will inspect the kingdom. Do you know the difference between grace and power? This is the age of grace. The millenium will be the age of power. *Grace* is fully performing its duties *now*, but when the kingdom comes, *power* will be put into commission, and will fulfil its duty with the same fidelity that grace is doing now. How beautiful to see this lovely dispensational order! If power went before grace, not one of us would be saved. Grace does its business, and then, and not till then, power will take its place. Then he shows the kingdom: "For He hath put all things under His feet." "He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet." And do you think, if that be the commission of the sceptre which is put into the hands of the Son of Man, He will give it up till He has discharged His duty? "The last enemy which shall be destroyed is death." Then when power has done its business, and verified its faithfulness, "then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."

But, now, mark here a little word, pregnant with moral beauty, in the bosom of his argument.* That fine little word is "*delivered*." There never has been a kingdom delivered up to God yet. Every other steward of power has been unfaithful to his stewardship. Every beast—the head of gold, the breast of silver, &c.—every imperial steward of power, has been unfaithful to his commission; and power has been taken away from him. Was not power taken from the head of gold and given to the breast of silver? God has committed the sceptre to one after another, and in due time has sent some one to take it away. But when the Lord takes the sceptre, He will hold it faithfully till He "*delivers*" it up. The blessed Lord Jesus has been the only one, from the beginning hitherto, who has been faithful to God. Was Adam in the garden faithful? Was Israel in the land faithful? Has the candlestick of this dispensation been faithful? Christ is the grand and solitary exception to the unfaithfulness of all. Now this is the way the interval between the second and third eras is shown to you. Between the first and second you are to be gazing up into heaven. Do I wait for a circumstance *here*? No, I wait for a circumstance *there*. But suppose I were living *after* the second era, I should know that the kingdom could not come till certain events had taken place here. Then in Rev. xxi., you find what is intimated here—God all in all.

*I call it argument, for Divine reasoning gives substance to Divine revelations. Some one has said, "Paul is very fond of proving his points." He clothes Divine revelations with Divine reasonings.

If we had read the rest of the chapter we should see that it referred to the second of these eras. It *assumes* the first—does not concern itself with the third—and *discusses* the second, and what manner of body you will occupy. It will be like the Lord's glorious body.

We do not here get the story of the *spirit* at all. But now, suppose we turn to 2 Cor. v., we shall have a beautiful supplement. You might say, What will become of me if I die between the present time and the glorious resurrection? Well, "We know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God," &c. &c. "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon," &c. You see several conditions here,—a *burdened* condition—an *unclothed* condition, and a *clothed upon* condition. A *burdened* condition is our present state. Then, to be unclothed, there must be SOMETHING to be unclothed. Now, he says, I do not groan for the unclothed condition, for the body would be still earth to earth, dust to dust. Now mark how beautifully he gives the story of the spirit. He says it is to be *with* Christ: "Absent from the body—present with the Lord." If our affections were right we should say, this is enough for me to know. I remember a dear brother in the Lord, who was dying some years ago, saying, "If a person were to come to me and say, 'I will go to heaven and bring you word if all you have believed is true,' I should say, 'Friend, you may save yourself the trouble.'" And if anyone would give us large volumes of

descriptions of the heavenly country, we ought to be able to say, It is enough for me to know that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. With one stroke of the pen he satisfies the heart as to our condition if we die.

“Wherefore we labour,” &c. That is how we should actively supply the interval, viz., by doing that which is acceptable to Jesus. We shall fill up the interval between the second and third eras by reigning on thrones. Between the first and second we should fill up the interval by doing the good pleasure of the absent Master. And let me ask, When did the story of the spirit begin? It began when the Lord Jesus said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” It was continued when He said to the thief on the cross, “This day shalt thou be *with Me* in paradise.” It was continued in the person of Stephen, and very beautiful it is to see the new creature, born but a minute before, going to the same place as the martyr, who was sealing his testimony to Christ by his blood. We get the story of the spirit also in Paul—a man in Christ, carried up to heaven, whether in the body, or out of the body, he could not tell. So we have seen the story in a *promise* to the dying thief, in a *vision* in the case of Stephen, in the *rapture* of Paul, and its blessedness is didactically taught here.

This is the prophetic meditation that Corinthians furnishes. The Lord help us with obedient and desirous minds, abounding in hope, and letting the world in its best conditions know that it is by no means good enough for us. Amen.

FAITH, OR PRESENT ADVANTAGE.

ABRAHAM AND LOT.

(Genesis xviii., xix.)

There is much profitable instruction in tracing, in contrast, the characters of Lot and Abraham. Both were saints of God, yet how different as to their walk! how different also as to their personal experiences in regard of peace, joy and nearness to God! And there is ever this difference between a worldly-minded believer and one, through the grace of God, true-hearted. In the scriptural sense of the term, "a righteous man" (2 Pet. ii. 8), Lot was "vexing his righteous soul from day to day." Abraham walked before God.

The Lord cannot but be faithful to His people, still He does mark in their path, that which is of faith and that which is not of faith: and Lot's trials are the consequences of his unbelief. There is one thing very marked in his course throughout—great uncertainty and obscurity as to his path, and as to the judgment of God, because of not realizing that security in God which would have enabled him to walk straightforward, whilst there is no hesitation in things connected with this world. And it is thus with ourselves if we have not taken Christ for our portion heartily. Ab-

ram's was a *thoroughly happy life*—he had God for his portion.

Lot is seen rather as the companion in the walk of faith of those who have faith, than as one having and acting in the energy of faith himself. This characterizes his path from the beginning. Therefore, when put to the test, there is only weakness. In how many things do we act with those who have faith, before having it for ourselves! It was thus with the disciples of the Lord, and the moment they were put to the test there was weakness and failure. The soul will not stand, when sifted through temptation, if walking in the light of another.

God's personal call of Abram at the first is mixed with a sort of unbelief in Abram, much like the reply in the gospel, "Lord, suffer me first to go home and bury my father." He sets out, but he takes Terah, his father, with him, and goes and lodges in Haran (he could not carry Terah with him into the land of Canaan). Now God had called Abram, but not Terah. He left everything except Terah, and entered into possession of nothing. But he tried to carry something with him which was not of God, and he could not. It is not until after Terah's death that he removes into Canaan, where God had called him. (Compare Gen. xii. 1 and Acts vii. 4.) "So Abram departed,

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as the Lord had spoken unto him, and Lot went with him they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came."

Lot (though having faith) goes in the path he treads as the companion of Abram. As to actual position, he stands with Abram. He is truly a saint of God, though afterwards we find him treading the crooked path of the world's policy.

God blesses them. The land is not able to bear them so that they may dwell together (Chap. xiii.). They have flocks, and herds, and much cattle, and there is not room for them both—they must separate. Circumstances, no matter what (here it is God's blessings), reveal this.

They are in the place of strangers, that is clear ("the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land"). They have nothing in possession, "not so much as to set a foot on" (Acts vii. 5); all rests on their valuing the promises (Heb. xi. 9). They have just two things, the altar and the tent. Journeying about and worshipping God, they are strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Abram confesses that he is such; he declares plainly that he seeks a country,*

*In chap. xii., Abram goes down into Egypt, which is evidently a mistake, for he comes back again to the place of the altar which he built at the first. He had no altar in Egypt.

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“wherefore,” we are told, “God is not ashamed to be called” his “God.” (He is never called “the God of Lot.”) This acts upon the whole spirit and character of Abram.

The land is not able to bear them that they may dwell together; there is a strife between the herdsmen; they must separate. Abram says, “Let there be no strife, between me and thee Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left”—the promise is my portion; I am a thorough stranger, the city of God is open in glory before me. His heart is upon the promises of God, and everything else is as nothing in comparison. It might seem a foolish thing to let Lot choose—to give up to Lot the right to do so is certainly his own; but his heart is elsewhere, his faith was entirely free from earthly advantage.

Not so Lot: he lifts up his eyes*—the plain of Jordan is well watered everywhere, even as the garden of the Lord, and he

*“And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever,” etc.

chooses it. There is nothing gross or wrong in itself in his choosing a well watered plain, but it just distinctly proves that his whole heart is not set upon the promises of God. Thus is he put to the test ; and thus, in the way of the accomplishment of God's purposes, character is displayed. Abram's conduct has for its spring a simplicity of faith which embraces God's promises (Heb. xi. 13), and wants nothing besides. Faith can give up. The spirit of a carnal mind takes all it can get. Lot acts upon the present sense of what is pleasant and desirable ; why should he not ? what harm is there in the plains of Jordan ?* His heart is not on the promises.

The companion of Abram, he is brought to the level of his own faith.

But he will dwell in the cities of the plain if he chooses the rivers of the plain. It is not his intention to go into the city, but he will get there step by step. (He must find trouble in the place he has taken pleasure in.) There is not the power of faith to keep him from temptation. Where there is not the faith that keeps the soul on the promises, there is not the faith to keep it out of sin. It is not insincerity, but people's souls are in that condition, and God proves them.

*A man says, What harm is there in the well watered plains of Jordan ? are they not the gift of Providence ? I answer, the devil has planted Sodom in the midst of them.

Abram's path all the way through is characterized by personal intimacy with God, constant intercourse with God, visits from God, the Lord comes to him, and explains His purposes, so that he is called the "friend of God" (2 Chron. xx. 7; Isa. xli. 8; James ii. 23); and this not only as to his own portion, but as to what He is going to do with Sodom—the judgment He is about to bring on Sodom, though personally he has nothing to do with it, and the promise is his hope (chap. xviii.). So now, He tells His people what He is going to do about the world. Though their hope is connected with their own views, with the promises, and the heavenly Canaan, He takes them into His confidence as to what is to happen where they are not to be. (John xv. 15.)

Lot the while is vexing his righteous soul: does he know anything about the purposes of God? Not a word. He is saved, yet so as by fire; though a "righteous soul," his is a vexed soul, instead of a soul in communion with God--vexed "from day to day" (there is, so far, right-mindedness that it is a vexed soul). He is there, before the judgment comes, with his soul vexed; whilst happy Abraham is on the mount holding conversation with God. And when the judgment does come, how does it find Lot? With his soul vexed, and totally unprepared

for it, instead of being in communion with God about it.

“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations” (2 Pet. ii), and He delivers “just Lot.” But whilst thus vexing his righteous soul with their unlawful deeds, the men of the city have a right to say to him, What business have you here? (“this one came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge.” Chap. xix. 9.) You are quarrelling with sin in the place of sin. They have a perfect right to judge thus. All power of testimony is lost by reason of association with the world, when he ought to be witnessing to his total separation from it; there is vexation of spirit, but not power. When Abram got down into Egypt, he had nothing to do but to go right back to the place of the altar he had built at the first. Lot testifies, but he cannot get out of the place he is in; the energy that ought to have thrown him out is neutralized and lost by his getting in to it; his daughters have married there; he has ties where his unbelief has led him. It is far more difficult to tread the up-hill road than the down-hill road.

Whenever the counsels of God are revealed to faith, it brings out the spirit of intercession. The word to the prophet, “Make the heart of this people fat, etc.” (Isa. vi.), at once brings out, “O Lord, how long?” So

here Abraham pleads with the Lord to spare the city. (But there are not ten righteous men in Sodom, Lot was the only one.) As regards his own position, Abraham is looking down upon the place of judgment. And in the morning, when the cities are in flames, he finds himself in quietness and peace on the spot where he “stood before the Lord” (ver. 27), not at all in the place where the judgment had come; solemnized, indeed, by the scene before him, but calm and happy with the Lord.

The Lord sends Lot out of the midst of the overthrow. Angels warn him, and faith makes him listen. But his heart is there still. There are connections that bind him to Sodom, and he would fain take them with him. But you cannot take anything with you for God out of Sodom; you must leave it all behind. The Lord must put the pain where you find the pleasure. “While he yet lingered;” there is hesitation and lingering in the place of judgment, when the judgment has been pronounced: he ought to have left it at once; but the place, and path, and spirit of unbelief, enervate the heart—“the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters”—the Lord being merciful unto him—“and they brought him forth, and set him without the

city." And now it is, "Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain, escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed" (ver. 17). As for the goods, the sheep, and the much cattle, he must leave them all behind. If the Lord's faithfulness is shown in saving Lot, it is shown also in breaking the links that bind him to the place. His mind is all distraction; he says, "Oh, not so, my Lord . . . I cannot escape to the mountain lest some evil take me, and I die." He has lost the sense of security in the path of faith. Such is ever the consequence of the path of unbelief in a saint of God, he thinks the path of faith the most dangerous path in the world. Lot has become used to the plain, and the mountain (the place where Abraham is enjoying perfect security and peace) is a mountain. The Lord spares Zoar at his request, and lets him flee thither, but on seeing the judgment, he flees to the mountain, forced to take refuge there in the end.

This is an extreme case: we shall find the same thing true in various degrees. Abraham could give up (that sacrifice always belongs to faith); but there are trials to the believer because of unbelief—because he is a believer, but in a wrong place. Lot was a "righteous man;" but when he did not

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walk in the path of faith, he had vexation of soul and trouble—a righteous soul, but where a righteous soul ought not to be. Observe his incapacity simply to follow the Lord. Observe also his uncertainty. So will it be with us, if we are walking in the path of unbelief; there will be trouble which is not our proper portion, but which comes upon us because we are in a wrong worldly place, the trial that belongs to unbelief. We may be seeking the compassion of the church of God, when we are only suffering, like Lot, the fruit of our own unbelief—the simple path of faith having been departed from, because we had not learned to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. Giving up is our proper position, simple sacrifice, in the knowledge and present consciousness that “all things are ours.” But the promise is “a hundredfold more in this present world,” and that is not vexation of spirit.



'Tis the treasure I've found in His love
 That has made me a pilgrim below;
 And 'tis there, when I reach Him above,
 As I'm known, all His fulness I'll know!

THE RED HEIFER.

(Numbers xix.)

We learn in this chapter 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 (John xiii.). 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, that is 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 (Exod. xxix. 42). 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 about; 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 elapsed in the type before there was full restoration. The spirit takes and applies the ashes (that is, 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 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.

MEDITATIONS ON PROPHETIC PORTIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

(Continued from page 120)*

LUKE XIX. 12-27.

We will meditate on the parable of the nobleman who went into the distant country. But I refer to it as illustrating a cluster of Scriptures in Luke, just as we got a cluster of Scriptures in Matthew.

We are going to look at chaps. xvii. 21; xix. 11; and xxi. 8; and, together with these three, we will look at a passage in the 1st chapter of Acts, and we shall find that, though in *different* language, they speak *one* language. The terms may be different, the teaching is the same.

Now, as you read these passages, does your mind suggest this thought as common to each of them:—that it was the suggestion of the human mind in the Pharisees, the multitude, the deceivers, and the disciples, that the kingdom of God was ready to appear? There may be a little progress, perhaps, but in each the coming of the kingdom was a question of time and cir-

*This paper is properly a continuation of page 40 and should have appeared in "The Remembrancer" for March. But the series of which it forms a part had no general title in the Magazine in which it originally appeared, and it was overlooked.—Ed. 'R.'

cumstances, not a *moral* question. I get the Pharisees asking, "when the kingdom of God should come?" just as if nothing delayed its manifestation but reaching a certain moment of time. Then, the thought of the multitude was, that they had only to reach the city and the kingdom would appear. The deceivers come with the lie, "I am Christ, and the time draweth near"—the positive deceit that the kingdom was at hand already. Then we get the same mind in the disciples in Acts i. We shall see presently that the Lord answers each suggestion by saying that the kingdom of God does not depend on the mere lapsing of time, but on certain *moral* conditions. And if any one say, now, the kingdom may be here *to-morrow*, he is fraught with a lie from the devil. This is the answer to a quantity of moral energy that is abroad at present. If you were asked, Do you think the kingdom of God is about to appear? you ought to say, "Indeed I do not,--the earth is not in a right moral condition to receive it. God could never deposit His glory in such a vessel as this present evil world. He must rid it of the evil before He can fill it with His glory." That should be the moral conclusion of your soul. The Lord Jesus would be utterly ashamed to own the world as it is *now* as His kingdom. And it is bless-

ed to see how the prophetic leading concurs with the righteous judgment of the mind.

Now, we will just go over the passages a little shortly, because I am going to contrast with the manifestation of the kingdom the rapture of the saints. The rapture of the *saints may be at any moment; the manifestation of the kingdom not till a certain moral action takes place here*. But before we go to the rapture we will look at the kingdom. Now, we will turn to chapter xvii. The Lord is asked *when* the kingdom should come. "Oh," He says, "the kingdom of God is a moral, spiritual thing. It takes a form *within* you, now. I must take you to your own moral conditions. Do not be talking about it as a foreign thing. It is *within* you." Then He turns to His disciples and talks to them about what must take place before the kingdom shows itself in external, moral glory. He tells them that they are first to tread the path of desire after an unmanifested Jesus: "Ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man and ye shall not see it." Then He goes on to details: deceivers shall come, and so on. *And the kingdom will be introduced, when the world is lying in iniquities, by the judgment of the carcass*. That is His answer to the Pharisees, who thought it was a question of *time*. Christ must pass through

a time of rejection; the church must pass through a time of desire; the world must pass through judgment; and *then* we may talk of the manifestation of the kingdom. So, if people say, "Oh, it is only a little progress, a little evangelical labour, a little advance of science and civilization," it is all a delusion.

In chap. xix., we get the multitude, awakening the same line of thought in the Lord's mind. With them it was a question of progress, as it is at this very hour. Your men of science and literature are in the company of the poor multitude. They thought that when they got to the royal city the kingdom would show itself. The Lord rebukes them in the parable of the nobleman. A different phase of the interval, I grant you, from that which He showed the disciples in chap. xvii. He tells them that the nobleman went to a distant country, and the spirit of the age sent word after him, "We will not have him to reign over us." And is not that the language of all the activity of the children of men? Has *pride* a welcome for Christ? Have *selfishness* and *covetousness* a welcome for Christ? No. In every lust of the human mind the language is, "We will not have this man to reign over us." There is a thing here that must be judged and got rid of before God can manifest His glory.

So when the Lord comes back He judges the citizens. And here He shows the interval also in Christendom. The servants have gone forth, some faithful, some unfaithful, to occupy till He comes. Thus the Lord is teaching us, in the mouth of witness after witness, that things are not morally ready for the kingdom.

Then in chap. xxi., where the Lord speaks His great prophetic word, which we were looking at in Matthew, they ask, "when shall these things be?" He says, "*Take heed that ye be not deceived.*" There will be two declarations on the lips of the deceivers in the last days, "I am Christ; and the time draweth near," "*Go not after them.*" And the Lord, in order to rebuke the thought, goes through a solemn portraiture of what must take place before the kingdom can possibly appear.

Now we come to the disciples in Acts i., "Lord wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Is not this a kindred thought with what I have just read? The blessed Lord had words of tenderness and of rebuke for them. "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons." Leave them in the hands of Him to whom they belong; but do you go about your own business. Now we see how differently the Lord treats the mere ignorance

of the disciples, and the captiousness of the Pharisees. For the Pharisees He fills up the interval with the most awful scenery. For the thoughts of the disciples He fills it up with most blessed scenery : “ Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea.” But in all these passages we get the same mind, and that mind disposed of in exactly the same way. And we must boldly take our stand on this well accredited ground. If we went through the prophetic words in the Old Testament we should find exactly the same language. God will have a testimony to His own name to go forth. Then judgment will purify the scene, and the purified vessel will be filled with glory.

I will remind you now of a few Scriptures in which we see the rapture of the saints in contrast with all this. When we turn our thoughts from the kingdom to the rapture, we find Scripture after Scripture speaking in a totally different way. I will give you four Scriptures to show this, as we had four referring to the kingdom. In John xiv., we read :—“ 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 to myself, that where I am there ye may be also.” Now, I ask, is there a single thought in the Lord’s mind here, that any necessary *delay* attaches to that moment, or, that before we

can be taken to meet Him in the air a single thing must take place? Why cannot the Lord return to His kingdom? Because He must first cleanse the scene. You cannot put Christ and Belial in company. The earth must be *prepared* for glory. But what does He tell us in John xiv.? He is doing now, by His presence in heaven, for the resurrection-saints, the very thing that judgment will do for the earth by-and-bye. Heaven must be prepared for us, but the Lord does not tell me that *that* scene wants judgment. *His presence* will do there on our behalf, what judgment will do on behalf of God's glory on the earth. The presence of the Lord Jesus in heaven is all that is needed to get it ready for me—judgment is not needed *there*.

Then we come to 1 Cor. xv., where we get the story of the children of the resurrection again. And is there a single breathing there that tells me I must *wait*, till I put on my glorified body? There is a thing shining before me, for which everything is ready. It may take place to-morrow.

So, when we travel on to 1 Thess. iv., there we see the *rapture* of our glorified bodies. I take up my glorified body in 1 Cor. xv., I carry it to heaven in 1 Thess. iv. And, is there a single suggestion that that cannot take place till something else takes place before it? As for any necessary delay, there is not the slightest word about it. Here we are in company, not with the manifestation of the kingdom on earth but,

with the children of the resurrection,—the saints of glory in heaven—a different mystery and connected with a different line of thought. I am a liar if I say the kingdom is immediately to appear: I am astray if I say I may not be glorified to-morrow. If we keep in mind these two mysteries, that will introduce us to 2 Thess. ii., because the Spirit there comforts them against the *day* of the Lord, by the *coming* of the Lord; thus distinguishing these two things. Therefore the saints of this day are to comfort themselves against the thought of the *day*, by the thought of the *coming*. It comes to keep these two mysteries apart in our minds.

Then in Rev. iv., we read of a door opened in heaven. And when John looked into heaven, he saw the glorified saints there. *How* they got there I know by 1 Cor. xv., and 1 Thess. iv., but *when* they got there, not a Scripture tells me. They are there when God pleases. The fulness of that time is known to Him.

So that in these two strikingly beautiful clusters of Scriptures, we are in company with two distinct thoughts: the manifestation of the kingdom *here*, and the appearing of the sons of glory *there*. O that we may know a little of the constraining power of these things, if we have apprehended them! What manner of persons should we be? Should we be busy with calculations about things down here? We have reason to be humbled when the apostle Peter stands before our hearts and says "What manner of persons ought ye to be?"

GOD'S WAYS AND TESTIMONY.

(Jeremiah ii.)

There are two distinct points in the ways and testimony of God as regards us: first, faith is the condition of soul in us which, as it is in exercise or otherwise, may either hinder or favour the enjoyment, which habitually the testimony of the word is to give us. Then in presenting the objects of faith to our souls—the Father's love, the Son's work—the word of God applies itself to the *conscience* and heart; for where the conscience is not in exercise the heart will not be, and all will be hollow. When the affections are dull then self comes in, and I attach these holy affections to myself; for when I am thinking about *my* affections I am thinking about *myself*. But when the conscience is in exercise we are thinking of the object presented: otherwise the heart is turned in upon self, the Lord is forgotten, and weakness ensues; consequently we sink into a feeble state; but then the word of God presenting the object of faith applies itself to the conscience, bringing that into exercise, and thus the heart is brought back to God.

There can be no true love to Christ while there is the sense of wrong done; for I cannot love a person I have wronged. What

is needed then is the consciousness of the wrong done: "I have sinned, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." When the conscience is aroused, and the heart is brought into play, we rest in the presence of God. The Spirit of God may humble us on account of what *we have done*, but when conscience is in play it brings out our *whole condition* before God. It is not the law coming in again, but God presenting *Himself*; thus there will be right affections, and the conscience will be in exercise. Self-confidence and self-exaltation in every form are always the effects of an unexercised conscience. Only put a man in the Lord's presence, and that will keep him lowly, and in a spiritual state of discernment; but there is nothing out of which we so easily get as the consciousness of the presence of God. So also in our prayers. You may often be sensible that you go on praying after you have lost the consciousness that you are speaking to God, still the soul goes on expressing itself; even when led by the Spirit the consequence will be that the manner will be all wrong, though the words may be right. Well, though all this be true, whenever the Lord recalls a soul He recalls it to His own presence. He will act on the conscience; He will speak plainly to us. Why? Because He is conscious of the rela-

tionship which ought to have produced the conduct befitting the relationship which we have forgotten. "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him" (Jer. xxxi. 20). When the Lord recalls a soul to Himself He may reproach it with having forgotten the relationship in which it stood to God, and God to it; but He cannot reproach it as *not having known* that relationship. The power of every rebuke is founded on the relationship, and God remembering the relationship acts on the ground of it with all the affections belonging thereto. Thus every rebuke comes to us as the expression of the most wonderful tenderness; and the more deeply we learn that there is no failure in God's affection, the more deeply we lament our short-coming and failure in that relationship which never fails.

God said to Jeremiah, "Go say in the ears of Jerusalem;" but, alas! Israel would not hear. Now this was most disastrous; but God remembers His relationship to them, and says, in Hosea ii. 16, "In that day thou shalt call me Ishi;" that is, my husband, "and shalt no more call me Baali;" that is, my Lord. Evil as their state was, He recalls with all its force and energy the re-

membrance of their relationship—"Go cry in the ears of Jerusalem." It is not, "He that hath an ear let him hear," but God goes and speaks in their ears. Oh that He may speak in our ears! When God spake comfortably to Jerusalem then He spake *to the heart*, and that was after chastening; but here He is at another work, speaking in the ears of Jerusalem that they might hear what God had to say to them. He could say—the true Servant—"The Lord God hath opened mine ear" to hear what God had to say to Him, and He was not rebellious, neither turned away back; but Israel "had forsaken Him days without number." They had done a terrible thing, such as no other nation had done: "Hath a nation changed its gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit." And again, "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." And now that God is sending a message after them, does He say, "Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, I remember *thy sins*"? No, but "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when

thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." He is recalling what Israel was to God Himself: "I remember the outgoings of thy heart towards Me, I remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals."

Now, what a thing it was for God to say to Israel, 'I have not forgotten what you were to me in the days of thy youth, when the heart first turned to me.' In all this we have the same principle as "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations," when they were quarrelling which should be the greatest. And so Israel were always murmuring, thinking their leeks and cucumbers better than God: but God remembers the *principles* on which Israel acted—"When thou wentest after *me* in the wilderness." They got much of this world's goods in Canaan by following God; they got cities which they had not built, wells that they had not digged, palm-trees that they had not planted, and the like. All these things were the consequences of following God; but He does not mention these: but, "thou wentest after me in the wilderness, which was a land of deserts and pits, a land of drought, and the shadow of death, a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt;" 'thou wentest after *Me* in the wilderness, where there was

nothing to set your affections on but Myself; *I Myself* was the whole and sole object of your affections;’ and this it was that God remembered. He overlooks all failure, and the condition which God notices is that He Himself was everything to them; and this is what characterizes a heart when first converted to God—the Lord is everything to it. What is the world to that heart? Dross and dung. Everything, cares and pleasures are alike forgotten, everything counted as nothing, except what is found in God Himself. The praises of Israel were freely given—“I will prepare Him an habitation;” “my father’s God, I will exalt Him,” because they had found Him who was everything to them, and the world and all that it had to give a mere nothing.

Now let us look at the other side of the picture, and see the desperately bad state which the heart of Israel had got into, remembering they are but types of us. They were dissatisfied, and cried, “Would to God we had died in Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and ate bread to the full.” And again, “Wherefore have you made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us into this evil place? it is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink.” In the wilderness there is nothing to see, nothing to look at; and

this is what Israel wanted. God says, "I brought you into a plentiful country to eat the fruit thereof, and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered ye defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination." They felt their own importance, and forgot the Lord; they had the blessing, and did not want the Lord of the blessing (vs. 6-8). And is not this true of the church of God? We bring in self, which is but a broken cistern, and depart from Him, who is the living fountain and power of blessing, forgetting that, "a Syrian ready to perish was my father." Consequently there is moral weakness, and Satan gets power. A believer cannot get back into the world: a mere professor may, and enjoy it; but a true Christian cannot. An Israelite could not get back through the Red Sea again. You cannot think of yourselves and the Lord together with satisfaction to your own souls. The Lord's presence in the soul will bring *self* into utter ruin and nothingness. We have only to let the Lord have His place in our souls, and that will put us into our place. If I am walking through the world, shall I find it a wilderness? To be sure I shall; but then I shall not be thinking about the wilderness if the Lord is my joy and my strength. Are your hearts saying, This is a land we cannot see? If so, what does that

prove? Why, that you are looking for something to see; and this is the thought you will find in your hearts, "*It is a land not sown*," although you may be ashamed to own it. But God remembered Israel when they thought it worth while to follow God for His own sake. We feel bound to say it is a happy thing to be a Christian; but when we are alone do not our hearts say, "It is a land not sown?" If it be so with you, do not rest until the Lord Himself satisfies your soul; for you should delight yourself in Him. Lot *saw* a well-watered plain and a city, and then dwelt in it on the earth, and consequently was in the midst of judgment; while Abraham sought a city *out of sight* (Heb. xi. 1, 8-10), and he enjoyed the blessing and comfort of God being with him, go where he might. When the soul is down, like a ship when the tide is low, it is in danger of shoals and sandbanks; but when the tide is up there are no sandbanks, because the ship is lifted up above them all. Thus when the soul is happy in Christ it will go on peacefully, independently of all the trials we may be called to meet with in our fellow-saints. We are called to walk together through the world, and a mere natural fitness will not do for that. No, we can only go on so far as Christ fills the soul; and thus going on in the tide of divine

goodness, forgetting everything else, we can walk together happily, being occupied with Christ, and not with each other.

But notwithstanding what Israel was, still God does not forget Israel. And why? Because He remembers her affection in the day of her espousals, “when thou wentest after me in the wilderness.” The soul, when occupied with God alone, is holiness to the Lord. God says to Israel, “If thou wilt return, return *unto me*” (Jer. iv. 1). It is of no use to attempt to set the soul right except it be set right with God. Israel was “holiness to the Lord.” Now holiness is not innocence. God is not what we call innocent, but holy. He perfectly separates between evil and good. So Christ Himself when on earth was separated unto God; and when about to depart out of it He says, “For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth;” for the meaning of the word “sanctify” in this place is separation to God. So it is with the church of God. She is separated from the world unto God, taken out of creation for Himself, the first-fruits of His increase. There will be a harvest of blessing when Israel and the nations are brought into blessing, but the church is the first-fruits of God’s increase. God remembers *this, though the church may have forgotten*

it; but if we know what it is to get back into the *affections* of God, we must enjoy the love that fails not; for God says, "I remember." The soul then apprehends what the church of God is in the affection of God, and not what it is down here. Christ was the corn broken and bruised, and afterwards the wave-sheaf before God. So the church is to be in a low and oppressed state, and afterwards to be exalted to where Christ is. God will have the whole harvest, but the first-fruits of His increase is that which occupies His affections.

"What iniquity have your fathers found in me?" Have I failed towards you in goodness? What is the matter now? Is the Lord changed? Is He worth less now than when thou wentest after Him in the wilderness? No; but we have got far from Him, and have walked after vanity, and have become vain. We have enjoyed His blessing, and have got fat and kicked, and consequently have fallen down into the weakness and wretchedness of our own hearts. When did the Lord bring up His people? When the very circumstances through which, and into which, He brought them was the proof that *the Lord* was bringing them there; for He brought them into a land of deserts and pits, where they had no need to lean on "a broken reed,

whereon if a man lean it will go into his hand and pierce it," because they leaned on God Himself. "Neither did thy raiment wax old upon thee, nor thy foot swell, these forty years." And why? Because "the Lord alone did lead them, and there was no strange God with him." So was it with Gideon (Jud. vi.). He remembered what God had been to Israel in the day of their espousals, saying, "Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?" And the Lord looked upon him, and said, "Go in this thy might." Thus we see that Gideon's remembrance of what God was to Israel in the day of their espousals was the secret of his strength. In Gideon was a soul near enough to God to say, "Where is the Lord?" and then what a burden is taken off the heart. Only let us place ourselves before the Lord, and see if He does not come in remembering the day of espousals.

If I am thinking of the cucumbers of Egypt, the wilderness will not suit me; but if I am thinking of the Lord, I shall have no thought at all whether I am in the wilderness or not. The affections of my soul will be going on with God's affection for me; for He ever remembers "the love of thine espousals" when He first revealed Himself to our souls. It is true we may see chastening, but God never forgets the work

of grace in our souls. He never forgets "the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals when thou wentest after Him in the wilderness, in a land not sown." And now thou art "holiness to the Lord;" and though God will have His joy in the harvest of the earth, yet thou art the first-fruits of His increase.



FRAGMENT.—In the Epistle to the Ephesians, the stand-point is ascension. God has "raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ." You are brought entirely into another world, and your privilege is to be so completely there in spirit as always to look down.

Do you look down upon things as Christ looks on them? Do you look down upon things at the present time in the church in the mind of Christ? Have you His thoughts about them? How do you think about your domestic circumstances? How does He think about them? He sees exactly. Does He find in you what would be an expression of your being a member of that body of which He is the Head? I believe the very question so put would realize to one's soul, and show one the blessedness of what it is to be so with Him, and bring in the light on every step, that we should judge and refuse everything that is practically inconsistent with Him there. He has His thoughts. The word contains

them. The Spirit of God wrote what those Ephesians should be. If they had kept it in their hearts they would never have forgotten their first love. He had a claim to everything from them. He who had left heaven and given up everything to bring them into that vital relationship, and fellowship, with Himself, as member of His body; so that what the Head thought the feet should do.



MEDITATIONS ON PROPHETIC PORTIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

*(Continued from page 140)**

GALATIANS, EPHESIANS, PHILIPPIANS, AND COLOSSIANS.

I might observe, as introducing the present meditation, that prophetic truth in the New Testament is given in fragments. There is no one digested treatise on the subject till we reach the Apocalypse. Prophetic truths lie scattered through the gospels and epistles, and all the fragments we have been able to glean in them we get, put together in order and consistency, in the book of the Apocalypse.

Now we are going to read four short passages from Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians: and our subject is to be,

*The present "Meditation" is properly a continuation of page 120: see foot-note to page 133.

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“the redemption of the purchased possession” (Gal. v. 5; Ephes. i. 14; Phil. iii. 21; and Col. i. 20).

These four short and fragmentary passages suggest to our thoughts “the redemption of the purchased possession.” What does the Spirit mean by saying that? In these pregnant and fruitful words we get three ideas presented to the mind. 1st, that there is the *purchase* of the possession; 2nd, that there is the *redemption* of the possession; and 3rd, that there is an *interval of time between* the purchase *and* the redemption. If words mean anything, they mean this.

Now the possession itself is the creation of God; and when we get the creation in a purchased and redeemed condition, we have what is called the “*new creation*”; and when we get to that in its fulness, we shall be in “the world to come.” That is the subject we will now look at.

When was the possession purchased? when will it be redeemed? and what is the difference between purchase and redemption? The *purchase* was by the *blood* of Christ. *Redemption* will be by the *power* of Christ. Purchase was the fruit of His *first* coming. Redemption (or appropriation) will be the fruit of His *second* coming.

Is there anything logically difficult

in this passage ? Nothing can be simpler. We make difficulties for ourselves by our partialities and early prejudices. I say, then, that the inheritance has been purchased already, and the blood of Christ has paid for it. Now look at Col. i. 19, 20, and tell me if it is not so. "By Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven." Does reconciliation confine itself to believing sinners? No, it does not, The value of the blood of Christ will be felt throughout the whole creation. Here you get the great mystery, that the possession has been purchased,—reconciled,—brought back to God in a new character. Now I linger over a few thoughts here, for I want to get them impressed on our spirits. For we speak of things which for many years have lain outside the range of Christian thought. Could you stand forth before the world, on the authority of that verse, and say, the efficacy of the blood of Christ is to stretch beyond the believing sinner ?

Then when we come to Phil. iii. 21, we get redemption by *power* when Christ comes the second time. Here it is a question of *ability*. "He is *able* to subdue all things.' That is *power*,—put forth for the redemption of all things. If Col. i., taught me the *purchase* of all things, both in heaven and earth,

Phil. iii., teaches me the *redemption* of all things by Christ, who has ability to subdue all things unto Himself. We are now passing the interval between purchase and redemption. Is your body yet redeemed from pain and sorrow? Redemption by power has not yet gone forth in your behalf. You are in corruptibility—within the clutch of disease and every malady. It is an age of humiliation ; you are the companions of the rejection of Christ, and left in your miserable circumstances of life.

Now these two things we find put together in Eph. i. 14, “The earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.” Then, when we go back to Gal. v. 5, we find one little intimation of a *hope*—“We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.” We are *in* the righteousness of God by faith, and by the Spirit in us we are looking out for something, the object which the righteousness of faith entitles us to look for.

When I come to analyse that hope, I find it is the new creation. If we turn to Rom. viii., we shall have that verified. The creation was made subject to vanity—that means decay and ruin—in Gen. iii., under the touch of the sin of Adam. “Not willingly :” the trees of the wood and the beasts of the field had not sinned, but Adam

had sinned. This passage tells us in a larger and brighter form than the others, of the *redemption* of the inheritance, not of its *purchase*. "The creature itself also shall be *delivered*." That is redemption by power, and is it not in company with the other Scriptures?

Now let me ask you, is this to be a surprise to us? Have I had notices, in earlier times, of the difference between purchase and redemption? To be sure I have. How beautifully we see it reflected in the book of Exodus! Was not Israel redeemed by blood in chap. xii., and by power in chap. xiv.? In chap. xii., if the blood had not been on the lintel, the first-born among the Israelites would have fallen as surely as the first-born among the Egyptians. There was no question yet between *Egypt* and Israel, but between *God* and Israel. As a sinner you are cast alone and entirely with *God*. The blood of Christ has settled *that*; and so, when the blood was put on the lintel, Israel was not yet delivered from Egypt, but from the claims of God. They need not fear the sword of the destroying angel. But when we pass on a few chapters we get then the question between Israel and Egypt. Christ is the Purchaser and Christ is the Redeemer, and when Israel stood with the hosts of Pharaoh behind and the

Red Sea before, the One who had passed over the blood on the lintel looked forth from behind the cloudy pillar and delivered them.

This is the difference between the old and new creation. Supposing I had been in the garden of Eden, could I have looked in the face of the serpent and defied him? No, I must *take care* and beware of him. And could I have looked in the face of the Creator, and rested in having everything settled between Him and me? No, I was yet to be tested. But in the new creation I can look at the enemy and say, "he has been *conquered* for me;" and I can look at God and say, "He has been *satisfied* for me." Shall I, by-and-bye, have to keep myself on the watch because of the serpent? I shall be able to say, the trail has been blotted out for ever and ever. But we are passing the interval now between purchase and power. Do you see yourself purchased but not yet redeemed by power? And are you passing the time of your sojourning here in fear, as knowing that power has not yet been put forth to quell the strength of the enemy? How *softly*, yet how *gladly*, should we pursue our journey day by day! The moral glory of such a position is inestimable: a creature, carrying in spirit the sense of entire acceptance with God, yet walking softly; happy as

to God, yet mindful of his ways because power has not been put forth as to the circumstances around !

Now, let me ask you again, if we had figures of purchase and power in Old Testament times, had we figures of the purchased and redeemed thing? Yes ; the new earth in the time of Noah was that.

Is Christ in this world the representative of God in *power* as King of kings and Lord of lords? No ; He is the representative of the *Father*. The day will come when He will say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the King of kings." God has not yet thrust Himself forward in kingly power, but 1 Timothy tells us that *in His times* He shall show who is the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords." Is there not blessedness in the thought that the Lord has come forth as the image of God the Father to tell the secrets of the Father's bosom, and to reflect the grace of the Father's heart? When He comes forth as the image of the King of kings, we shall have a world kept in beautiful order. Have you that now? No ; you have a purged conscience.

Well, then, we have figures in the Old Testament of these things. Noah's new world was that. Egypt under Joseph was that. The feast of tabernacles was that.

The land in the palmy days of Solomon was that. God is telling out, in figure after figure, the story of the redeemed thing, and when we come to Rev. v., we find the thing rehearsed in the praises of "every creature which is in the heaven and on the earth, etc.

Now I will close with one other thought. In the Gospels—say the Gospel by John—we see the *Purchaser* at His work. In the Apocalypse we get the Redeemer at His work. In John, we see the Lord doing the work of His *first* coming, and there He is set before us simply as the *Lamb of God*. John speaks of Him as "The Lamb of God which taketh away," etc. But when we see Him doing His work in the Apocalypse, we see Him not only as the *Lamb*, but as the *Lion*. The Lamb must be associated with the Lion, to redeem by power; so He is not only the "Lamb slain," but the "Lion of the tribe of Judah." "Do not weep," says the angel; "the Lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed to open the book" of the inheritance. He is not acting *now* as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He is the Lamb rejected. By-and-bye the hosts of Pharaoh will fall on the banks of the Red Sea, and we shall celebrate redemption by power, as now we enjoy redemption by blood.

(*To be continued, D. V.*)

THE THREE ANOINTINGS.

"I was set up (lit. 'anoointed') from everlasting." Prov. viii. 23.

"God anoointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power." Acts x. 38.

"Yet have I set (marg. 'anoointed') my king upon my holy hill of Zion." Ps. ii. 6 ; 1 Ki. xix. 16 ; Lev. vii. 35, 36 ; viii. 12 ; 1 Sam. xvi. 13.

I.

Would'st thou the power of the anointing
know ?

The first of all was in eternity ;
Ere God had made the earth, or caused to
grow

Herbs for the food of man, or olive tree,
Whence the anointing of His king should
be,

He was anoointed, had the Spirits seven
Which burn incessant at the glassy sea,

Before the throne of majesty in heaven ;
When clouds and ocean and the world had
been,

And morning stars had sung together,
then

Was the Belovèd in His glorious scene,

And His delights were with the sons of
men,

Who by His Spirit evermore, I ween,

Would lead them to His love beyond their
ken.

II.

'Twas in His plenitude of power, but hark !

A gentle dove He seemed in outward form,

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As when one hasted from the windy storm
 And gladly rested on the sea-borne ark—
 'Twas thus the Father set His holy mark
 Upon the Holy One, in wisdom, might,
 And understanding, shone the sevenfold
 Light,
 Counsel and knowledge, in a pathway dark,
 Illumined with His radiance; surely still
 That light will fall upon his path who sees
 And follows Him who came to do God's will,
 Anointed He with power, and giving peace
 To those He'll ever with His Spirit fill
 When all the deluge of this world shall
 cease.

III.

The waves may rage, but on His holy mount
 God hath anointed Him, and 'neath His
 crown
 The oil of joy will evermore flow down,
 For who can all the heavenly blessings
 count
 That meet for aye on Him who is the Fount
 Of life and goodness? In the kingdom
 time
 This earth shall blossom as in Eden's prime
 To more than Adam's bliss shall His amount;
 The Prophet shall the word of blessing send,
 The Priest shall lift His holy hands in
 power,
 The King upon His throne shall make
 amend
 For all oppression in the coming hour
 Which through the darkness doth its sun-
 shine lend,
 To cheer the pilgrim ere the tempest lower.

“I WILL CONSIDER THY TESTIMONIES.”

(*Psalm cxix. 95*)

How varied and precious are the “considerations” set before us in the Epistle to the Hebrews, striking chord after chord in our hearts, and producing note after note of praise! In the first chapter the personal and official dignities and glories of the Lord Jesus Christ crowd themselves together and unfold themselves before our souls; while in the second chapter, we have the grace of Him, by whom God spake in these last days, in associating others with Himself when passing through death to the Headship of all things, crowned with glory and honour: it is as thus set before us, we are told, as holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, to “*consider*” Him, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession; to gaze on Him, and have our souls enlarged in contemplating Him, “who was faithful to Him that appointed Him.”

But how can such as we sit down and feast ourselves with such considerations, with consciences unpurged and not at rest? In view of this need, and before the next “consideration” is presented to us, we are led, in chapters ix., and x., to see the altar of sin-offering receiving a victim, once and

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for ever, that has satisfied all its righteous requirements, and which has fully answered all the demands of the glory of God as to sin and uncleanness ; satisfied the need of the convicted conscience, and silenced every accusing foe. And with consciences thus at rest, we are set down to another consideration for our souls. We are told, in chap. x., 24, to “ *consider* one another to provoke unto love and to good works.” With the holy peace and calm of purged consciences we are thus, as it were, told that we have leisure to turn round and look upon one another with such an end in view, and so much the more as we see the “ day ” approaching.

But, you will say, there are the trials and difficulties of the way to contend with, and there are the weights and hindrances that would hamper and clog us in our journeying onwards to the glory. And, in view of these things, we are told to turn our eyes toward Him again, and we are exhorted, in chap. xii., to “ *consider* Him who endured,” as One who has been in the way Himself, and understands the grace needed for every step, and who has learned “ how to speak a word in season to him that is weary ” (Isaiah l.) at every stage of the journey to the place where He has Himself sat down, “ lest we should be weary and faint in our minds.”

And, lastly, as those who are in the midst

of the things that are about to be shaken, and who are dwelling in spirit, and by faith amongst those thing which, when all things are shaken, will remain, we are exhorted to "*consider*" the end of the conversation of those who minister amongst us—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

Varied and precious are the "considerations" thus laid before us, and to which we are set down to contemplate, in their order and suitabity, as every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of our God.



MANIFESTATION.

(*Mark iv. 1-34.*)

God, sooner or later, will have all manifested, all things and all persons. Again and again, this is declared. This thought, I may say, pervades Scripture.

So will He have His own grace in the operations of His Spirit manifested.

In the parable of the sower different soils had been disclosed. The one seed, the same in each soil, was the occasion of this.

The good soil had been made good by the husbandry of God, or the hidden visitation of the Spirit. It would not have been good otherwise. But having been thus visited by God, it must be fruitful, because of this

principle that God will have His operations manifested. He never lights a candle to put it under a bushel.

This is further taught in the parable that follows, "the seed which grows secretly." For there, the earth is declared to bear fruit fit for the sower "of itself." That is the point in the parable. God has tilled that soil, and it must therefore be fruitful.

And on the authority of this great truth, that all is to be manifested, the Lord warns us to take heed to the heart, for all in our history depends on that (vs. 24, 25). And the parable of "the mustard seed" appears to enforce that warning. The evil soil of the heart is betrayed and convicted. That which yields luxuriant entertainment for the unclean grows naturally there.*

Thus, there is a great manifestation through the preaching of the gospel. Christendom becomes a field of wide and varied observation. Within it, there is ground visited and tilled by the Spirit, and

*The "seed of the sower" and "the mustard seed" are essentially different, I judge, from this Scripture itself. The sower's seed is good, because the devil is at enmity with it, and nature (whether highway, stony, or thorny) cannot nourish it. It needs soil made good by the husbandry of God. But the mustard seed never provokes the enemy nor needs good soil. It grows where it is cast, in nature's soil, yielding entertainment for the unclean. It is therefore evil.

fruit is yielded to the divine sower; and within it also there is the native ground of the human heart, and fruit in luxuriant abundance is yielded to the unclean.

By and bye, however, complete manifestation will be made, and all this constitutes truth of a solemn character.

The secrets of the heart shall be all declared. God "will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He has ordained." All must be manifested before the judgement-seat of Christ. This is one holy serious truth connected with this, and which may well persuade us even now to be upright and truthful in our ways.

And there is another. If our ways are by and bye to be all manifested, and the very counsels of the heart declared; if there be nothing in us now that is not then to come abroad, so God's operations declare themselves. If He convert a soul or visit a heart, making good the soil in any of us, we may be sure that such operation is ordained to to show itself. His tilled ground shall bear fruit "of itself." If no fruit appear, the fact of the Spirit's hidden husbandry may be denied. On the ground of this great truth that all is to be manifested, the Lord exposes the folly of hypocrisy (Luke xii. 1, 2). The apostle, in his ministry, behaved himself in the faith of it (2 Cor. iv. 5). The great white throne with the opened books will at last vindicate it and illustrate it (Rev. xx.).

MEDITATIONS ON PROPHETIC PORTIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

(Continued from page 160)

FIRST AND SECOND THESSALONIANS.

We are now entering on the Epistles to the Thessalonians, and we will just review a little what we have been looking at. In Rom. ix. x. and xi., we saw what we called the dispensations of God. Then, when we entered on Corinthians, we found the stories of the body and of the spirit. When we got to Galatians, Ephesians, etc., we saw the purchase of the possession as the fruit of Christ's first advent, and the redemption of the possession as the fruit of His second advent. What blessed, beautiful mysteries these are! There is wonderful accuracy fulness, and variety in these prophetic intimations. You and I can talk of heavenly and earthly secrets. We may be little capacitated to indulge in such high conversations, but we are not straitened in the oracles of God.

Now, the Epistles to the Thessalonians introduce our thoughts to two other things—the *coming* of the Lord and the *day* of the Lord. We have been prepared for such distinctions from the very beginning. In the early patriarchal times there was the

difference between Enoch and Noah. Enoch was translated to heaven at some undefined moment, in a silent, secret manner. Noah's story was altogether different. Noah had to witness the judgment of the old world and pass through it. Till 120 years had spent themselves, he could not enter the new world. Are not these as distinct as possible? And if we had time we might trace the same thing in Abraham and Lot, and in Moses and Joshua. So I am prepared for the *coming* being different from the *day*. You will ask me what I mean by these two. The *coming* is the Lord's descent from heaven to the air, there to meet His transfigured glorified saints. The *day* of the Lord is His coming from heaven all the way to the earth, bringing His saints with Him, to judge it and set up His kingdom upon it. So the *coming* links itself with your rapture or translation. The *day* links itself with the judgment of the earth; and in 1 Cor. iv. 3, "It is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's *judgment*," the word rendered "*judgment*," is really "*day*," see margin. And does not the morning judge the night? Does it not rise on the scene to turn out night and darkness? So the *day* brings *judgment*. There was that in Noah—not in Enoch—Enoch had nothing to say to judgment. Noah witnessed and

passed through it. Now it is striking that in the divine argument of these two epistles, the *first* keeps us in company with the *coming*—the *second* introduces us to the *day*. We will turn now to the 1st Epistle, and we shall find the *coming* at the close of each chapter. In chap. i., “Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven.” Now, beloved, that is your proper, personal attitude. You are to be turning your back on the idolatrous world, serving the true God, and waiting for His Son from heaven. This is proper Christianity. Now, in the close of chap. ii., we get the same “coming” connected with *service*. “Why are we so earnest to come to you—to spend ourselves upon you? Because ye are our hope and crown of rejoicing in the presence of the Lord *at His coming*.” “We are willing now to serve you, because we are waiting for a day when you will be our glory and joy.” How far do you and I draw encouragement from the hope of the coming of the Lord? When we appear before the Lord, service will be recompensed.

In the end of chap iii., he uses the coming for another subject, but we *still get* the coming. It is given in a different phase. It will be a day when we shall be presented by the Lord to the Father with all the breth-

ren, and on the way to it we should be cultivating brotherly love. Would not the children in a well-ordered family be ashamed if they were quarrelling, and suddenly their father opened the door? That is the thought here. The more simple our impressions of God are, the happier for us.

This will not be the royal kingly scene which waits for the *earth*. The family scene is the secret of *heaven*.

In chap. iv., the coming is used for a different purpose altogether, for comfort under bereavement, "that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope For the Lord Himself shall descend," etc. "Wherefore, comfort one another with these words."

So here we are kept in constant company with the "*coming* of the Lord." and the spirit has not yet glanced at "the *day* of the Lord." The day of the Lord has not yet taken place when the Son comes, when the servants receive their rewards, when the brethren meet in the Father's house, and when those who have been bereaved are reunited.

Now look at chap. v., "Preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." We are still kept in company with the coming, and here it is used as a reason

why we should cherish personal holiness. How full the mind of the Spirit is of this one precious mystery, and undistractedly so—using it again and again for different moral purposes !

Now, the apostle has told me certain things that attach to the coming of the Lord : waiting for the Son ; service ; brotherly love ; being taken to meet Him in the air ; without any thought at all of the day. In due time He is coming back ; the saints will rise to meet Him, and go together to the Father's house. This is intimated in John xiv., "I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also." Then there is the whole Apocalyptic action lying between the coming and the day ; that is, it lies between our being taken in the air to meet the Lord, and our returning with the Lord to execute judgment. Two simple things entitle me to say that. One is that I find the church (or living creatures) in heaven in the opening of the prophetic part of the Apocalypse. I know, from Corinthians and Thessalonians how they got there. Rev. iv., does not tell me how they got there, but there they are, seated on thrones in their glory, round the rainbow-encircled throne ; and all through the action of the Apocalypse they may raise the shout in heaven at certain things on earth,

but they are never found on earth. And if the Lord make good His promise, as He surely will, He will put the saints into the judicial action of the Apocalypse, judging along with Himself: "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?" Can the judgment go on without that promise being fulfilled? So the saints are there, conducting the judgment with their Head and Lord.

The Thessalonians were a people morally entitled to talk of these things because they were in trouble. The Corinthians, Galatians, and Colossians were not so exposed. Among all the churches the Thessalonians were a troubled, persecuted people, and most fittingly and beautifully the consolations of the Lord are administered abundantly; thereby telling us that these consolations are for the Lord's prisoners, whether in Spain, or on the coast of Africa, at this present moment. They are Thessalonian saints; *I* may be a Corinthian saint.

Now we come to the 2nd Epistle—and there we are introduced to the day of the Lord. There was *one* glance at it in the 1st Epistle—but the coming was its burden, as the *day* is the burden of the 2nd Epistle, "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God." This is the Lord's return

to the earth in the terrors of judgment. Then He does not stop in the air to meet His glorified saints, but He comes taking vengeance. However could you put these two things together?

Then when these things are presented to the thoughts of the saints, they might alarm them. Is this what we wait for? "*No*," says the apostle, in chap. ii. His coming in flaming fire cannot take place till that man of sin be revealed. You are to make use of the coming of the Lord and your gathering together unto Him, to comfort yourselves against the thought of the *day* of the Lord. The *day* will find out its object, and the *coming* will find out its object. If ever there was accuracy it is here. Was I told in the 1st Epistle that I must wait for a something before the Lord could come? *Here* I am told that I must wait till the man of sin be revealed. All the daring of the world must show itself in its Babylon front. The Herod of that day must be displayed in the full bloom of apostasy, "sitting in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God;" and *then* the day of the Lord will come, and, as we read in Luke, "wheresoever the carcase is, thither will the eagles be gathered together."

Is that the way the church waits for her Lord—as the carcase waits for the pouncing

of the eagle? Would that be a comely thought for the church of God?

I pause here. May our thoughts be guided in the light of God's word; may we walk in the understanding of His ways and hope for the fulfilment of His promises. Amen.

TIMOTHY AND TITUS.

In going through the detached prophetic passages in the New Testament, we have reached the Epistles of Timothy and Titus. Now we will read a few verses in these Epistles, viz., 1 Tim. iv. 1-5; vi. 13-16; 2 Tim. i. 8-10; iii. 1-5; iv. 1; and Titus ii. 11-13.

We are now to introduce ourselves to the two appearings, or advents, as we speak, of the Lord Jesus in this world. But I want first to direct your thoughts for a moment to two anticipations of the age through which we are passing, in 1 Timothy chapter iv., and 2 Timothy chapter iii. There we find the Spirit anticipating what we see with our eyes, hear with our ears, and handle with our hands. In 1 Tim. iv., we see the Christendom corruption of the middle ages—all the dark superstitious pravity that we get before the Reformation; a system of abstinences, yet deep hypocrisy. Then, in 2 Tim. iii., we get an anticipation of what he calls "the last days." Now "the latter times" are anterior to "the last days," and so, Protestant pravity comes

after Romish pravity ; the free-thinking age has set in after Romish times. Here we get a fearful picture of moral iniquity practised and sanctioned in the bosom of that scene which calls itself by the name of Christ ; an awful, solemn picture of what you and I see around us. Thus the Spirit accurately distinguishes the two corrupt eras in the history of Christendom, and delineates for you the characteristic pravity of the one, and the characteristic pravity of the other. I do not say that the characteristic pravity of the "latter times" is gone when we reach the "last days" : but each has its own form of pravity ; and they occupy Christendom. If you get godliness it is a hidden thing, according to Matt. xiii. You see a blessed remnant of godliness, but the tares characterize the field. So the Spirit here gives you the grand characteristic that occupies the scene before you.

Now, having said this, we will turn to the two appearings. We get that word "appearing" in the 14th verse of 1 Timothy vi., and in the 10th verse of 2 Timothy i. These are the two advents, as we speak. One of these has been accomplished, the other is still in prospect, and we cannot let the one do the business of the other. We cannot combine the two ; just as in Thessalonians we saw the business of the *coming* and of the *day*.

Can you confound these two things? So, exactly as to the two appearings. The first did its work, and the second will do its work.

Now the business of His *first* was this—to abolish (or ‘annul’) death, and bring life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel, and to leave His people behind Him prisoners; as Paul says, “me, His prisoner.” He abolished (‘annulled’) death by dying, and saved you with a certain salvation. No *probability*, no *question* about it. That was the business of the first appearing, and at the same time to leave you, it may be, the sport of a persecuting world; or “partaker of the afflictions of the gospel,” as Timothy was.

Now turn to 1 Tim. vi., and you will see the business of the second appearing, and I ask you, can you put them together? That word “before,” in the 13th verse, I would rather leave out, as in the original. It seems to depreciate the personal glory of the Lord Jesus. “That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, *until* the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now here is an appearing still in prospect, and what will be its business? “Which in His times He shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings and Lord of lords.” This is an appearing bril-

tart with glory; but can I plian with the thing that is precious for the thing that is magnificent? I travel on from the exquisite, wondrous grace of the first appearing to the glorious magnificence of the second. The first teams with the riches of precious grace; in the second I am lost in a world of glories. The angels performed the business of Sinai; but to hurl the thunders of Sinai, would *that* have been the proper business of the Son of the bosom? The Son comes forth when the boundless riches of grace are to be announced. And at His second appearing He is to be the reflection of the effulgence of the blessed and only Potentate. He is not merely a Potentate but a *blessed* Potentate. Has there ever been a blessed Potentate in this world? Solomon was that for a time, but he soon lost his happiness. None can retain happiness without purity.

So the first appearing had its work, and the second will have its work. When He comes the second time will He be a houseless, homeless man in His own creation? When He was here the first time, He said "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." When He comes the second time, He will be able to say "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the King of kings and Lord of lords."

Now just turn to Titus ii. 11, and you will find these two appearings kept in the same connection. "The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men: teaching us," etc., * * * "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing (or literally "the appearing of the glory") of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Grace *has* appeared, glory *will* appear by-and bye. Did any glory accompany the *first* advent of Christ? There is no glory equal to moral glory, to the eye of faith, but there was no palpable, outward glory. The first coming brought, not power nor the kingdom but, salvation. But it did more—it taught us to believe. It saved us, and called us with a holy calling, as we read in Timothy. And more than that; it has put us in the expectation and prospect of the second. The salvation-bringing appearing has put us into a condition to look for the glory-bringing appearing of the great God. Was there ever such beauty? How thoroughly lovely it is to see God at His work, telling out by one mystery after another the secrets of His own bosom! He has linked my soul with the grace of the first appearing, and fitted me for the glory of the second. In that short passage in Titus we get the two appearings of Timothy put close together and showing how beautifully they suit each other; that the grace

perfected by the first, has entitled me to wait without apprehension for the glory of the second.

But there are one or two more things that we must not let go. We read in 2 Tim. iv. 1, "I charge thee, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom." Has that verse been a little obscure to you? If we read it carelessly it will be so. If you have in recollection Rev. xix., you will find there the judgment of the quick, and in Rev. xx., the judgment of the dead. The judgment of the quick takes place when the Lord appears; when the armies of Satan, and the beast and the false prophet confront Him, and perish in the light of His presence. But when we go on to chap. xx., and stand, not before the Rider on the white horse, but the Sitter on the white throne, we get the judgment of the dead, whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life. Now when we come to this verse in Timothy, there might seem to be a little collision. How are we to combine it with Rev. xix. and xx.? A little thought will show you that they combine beautifully. The appearing judges the *quick*—the kingdom judges the *dead*. It is mere *style* that would awake any confusion there. The more one stands before these divine communications, the more one is lost in the fulness, accuracy and variety of these things. There is no confusion in the counsels themselves, or in the communication of those counsels to you and me.

(To be continued, D. V.)

THE EXCELLENCIES OF CHRIST.

“But ye are....a royal priesthood....that ye should show forth the praises (‘excellencies’) of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.” 1 Peter ii. 9.

Come let us sing the matchless worth,
And sweetly sound the glories forth
Which in the Saviour shine :
To God and Christ our praises bring ;
The song with which high heaven will ring,
“Praises for grace divine.”

How rich the precious blood He spilt,
Our ransom from the dreadful guilt
Of sin against our God ;
How perfect is the righteousness,
In which unspotted beauteous dress
His saints have ever stood !

How rich the character He bears
And all the form of love He wears,
Exalted on the throne ;
In songs of sweet untiring praise,
We e’er would sing His perfect ways,
And make His glories known.

And soon the happy day shall come,
When we shall reach our destined home,
And see Him face to face ;
Then with our Saviour, Lord and Friend,
The one unbroken day we’ll spend
In singing still His grace,

“WE HAVE A GREAT HIGH PRIEST”

EXODUS XXVIII.

We are told in Hebrews that “we have a great High Priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God;” and again, “We have such an High Priest who is set on the right hand of the majesty in the heavens;” and again, “If He were on earth he would not be a priest.” The place of the exercise of the priesthood of Jesus is the heavens; and He has gone there as priest, “when He had by Himself purged our sins.” His priesthood follows redemption for us. He is gone as a priest there to sustain, according to the light and perfections of God’s presence, those whom He has redeemed. “We see not yet all things put under Him,” says the apostle, “but we see Jesus * * * * * crowned with glory and honour.” The same words (see LXX.) as those in verse 2 of our chapter, when speaking of Aaron’s garments of “glory and beauty” (or “honour”); so we find that what Aaron was typically and officially, when clothed in these garments, Christ is personally. But before we see Him thus as represented in our chapter, let us look on Him in His life down here, before the way into the holiest was made manifest. We read, in Exodus xxvi. 31, 33, of a vail which

separated the holy place from the most holy, and concealed the glory of God within: a vail composed of "blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine-twined linen of cunning work; with cherubims shall it be made." This vail figured to us the flesh of Christ, as we are told in Hebrews x. 20. The materials which composed the vail tell us of the purity and graces of Christ. We find that the "blue" was the first of these things, the heavenly colour. Heavenly was He in all His ways, walking through the world as "the Son of Man who is in heaven" (John iii. 13). Truly perfect His humanity, yet with a savour of heaven in all His ways. The royal colour, the "purple," was there too; born a king, as we read from the Gentile mouth, "Where is He that is born king of the Jews?" And then the "scarlet" which conveys to us the human glory of Jesus (Psalm viii.). And "fine-twined linen," His own perfect personal spotlessness, and inherent righteousness. With the cherubims added, for God the Father had "given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man, "as we read in John v. The cherubims are always the companions of the throne, the judicial executive of the throne in government (see them in Gen. iii.; Ex. xxv.; 2 Chron. iii.; Ezek. i.—xi.; Rev. iv., &c.).

Thus we have in the vail that which concealed God within, and in it the figure of Christ's flesh. And He was thus presented to man, and He put forth His claims; but one after another they were refused, rejected and set aside. His earthly claims being thus refused, He must die and rise again that He may have a heavenly people, and bring them in divine righteousness before God. In verse 4 of the chapter before us, we find certain garments which were to be made: "a breast-plate, and an ephod and a robe, and a broidered coat, a mitre, and a girdle." Now the ephod was that which peculiarly characterized the priesthood. In 1 Sam. xxii., we read of Doeg the Edomite falling upon and slaying fourscore and five persons who wore the linen ephod. David, when he enquired of the Lord, put on the ephod (1 Sam. xxiii. 9). The ephod was composed of the same materials as the vail (without the cherubims), but there was one material *added* to those composing it, which was *gold*. Gold is the figure of divine righteousness in Scripture. The inner part of the tabernacle and the furniture and vessels were of gold. We learn from this, that while God's Son had come down in divine and perfect love, and "had taken not hold of angels, but of the seed of Abraham he had taken hold;" He who was "in

the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him." God took Him up and set Him, in divine righteousness, in His presence. He is "with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." And we find Him thus set there in divine righteousness before God, and girded with the girdle of service for His people: to wash their feet and cleanse them practically according to the purity of what God *is*, not merely according to what they *ought to be*. We find Him thus in John xiii. All His earthly claims had been put forth before this and refused—as Son of God, Son of David, and Son of Man (see John xi., xii.). He looks beyond it all into the heavenly glory; and, in the washing of the disciples' feet, we learn that which He girded Himself to do in the glory into which He was about to go. He had come from God and went to God. In the end of chap. xiii., He speaks of His work that gives them a title to be there, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." And in chap. xiv., He enters into the Fath-

er's house, now as a glorified Man, upon a title that brings others in too, and we find those others in our chapter, His people, associated with Him (vs. 9-29). Their names are borne upon His shoulders and His heart; on the "stones of memorial" and the "breastplate of judgment;" and they *are set in their places in GOLD! Brought in and set in divine righteousness* in Him in the presence of God, "who made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21). He bears the weight and burden of His people on His shoulders before God Himself; and more, He cannot be there without representing them, for we read in ver. 28, "They shall bind the breastplate by the rings thereof unto the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it may be above the curious girdle of the ephod, and that the breastplate *be not loosed* from the ephod. And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually." And, more than this, He bears their judgment according to the light and perfections (the Urim and Thummim) of God's holy presence. The robe of blue was under all the official garments—the personal, heavenly character of Christ. But

when He went into the holy place, to "heaven itself," He left them behind to a "holy Father's" care. As the Father had sent Him into the world, even so does He send them into the world (John xvii.) to bear testimony to Him, and for His name; and to manifest the savour of His life on earth, to bring forth fruit to the praise and glory of God. Thus, as at Pentecost, as our great High Priest went into the holy place, even heaven itself, He sent down the Holy Ghost to His people; and as the golden bells and pomegranates were on Aaron's robe, that "his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the Lord." So was the sound of Jesus, the testimony and fruits of the Spirit (the golden bell which made the sound, the testimony; and the pomegranates, the fruit), heard upon earth at Pentecost, when He went in to the holy place.

But the precious fruits are often mingled in their purity with something of the flesh and the natural man; and we read that, "Thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, *Holiness to the Lord*; and thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy

things" (the testimony and fruits when mingled with anything of the flesh or the natural man), "which the children of Israel shall hallow, in all their holy gifts: and it shall be always upon *his* forehead that *they* may be accepted before the Lord."

Precious and varied and beautiful are the offices He thus sustains for His people—sustains, not merely according to their inconsistencies, but according to the light and perfections and holiness of what God is, to whom they have been brought in Him.



MEDITATIONS ON PROPHETIC PORTIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

(Continued from page 180)

HEBREWS II., IV.

In pursuing the prophetic fragments, as we have called them, in the New Testament (for prophecy breaks out incidentally in the Gospels and Epistles), we find they very much abound in the Hebrews, so we must linger for several meditations on this Epistle. We will meditate to-day on the first four chapters, and we shall find them very full of prophetic intimations. I will read a few passages in them, in which we shall find Adam and Joshua put together. There is a great kindredness between the places

they hold in the book of God. We will read now, in chap. ii., from the 5th to the 10th verse; and in chap. iv., from the 4th verse to the end.

The leading characteristic business of the Epistle to the Hebrews is to present the Lord Jesus as He now is, in heaven. It distinctly looks at Him as ascended. He is ascended, but it is in the character of the Lamb of God. He is glorified in the highest heavens, but is as the Purger of our sins; and the Spirit is summoning one glory after another, to pass under the review of our souls. It is not the business of the Spirit in this Epistle to conduct us to His *future* glories. Several classes of glories belong to the Lord Jesus. His *personal* glory is that in which we find Him to be perfect God, as well as perfect man. His moral glory is seen when He walked as an obedient Jew in all the paths of human activity. His official glories in heaven are now revealed to faith, and by-and-bye His millennial glories will find their exhibition on the earth. In looking at the glories of Christ you span, or bridge the two eternities. If you look at the eternity that is past, you see His personal glory as co-ordinate with the Father and the Holy Ghost. When He was down here on the earth, you see His moral glories. Now, in heaven, you see His

official glories; and by-and-bye, be it the glory of a King, a Judge, or the Head of His body,—the *form* of glory may change, but you are only travelling from glory to glory with Christ. Now the business of the Hebrews is to present Him in His official glories, as the Purger of our sins; the High Priest of our profession; the Executor of the new covenant; the One who sits there as having perfectly done the will of God. There He is, and He has a title to display Himself there in this galaxy or constellation of glories. Among these glories is this, He is the Lord, or expectant Heir of the world to come. You will ask, is He not now the Heir? No; He is the Heir-expectant, expecting till His enemies are made His footstool. You could not properly say a person was the heir till he had stepped into the inheritance. If it was uncertain that another might not step in instead of him, he would be the heir-presumptive. If he was *sure* of it in due time, he would be the heir-expectant; that is the Lord Jesus. And the business of Psalm viii., is to present Him in this character. We cannot occupy ourselves too much with the Lord Jesus. Descriptions are better than definitions. Take for instance the millennium. When the Spirit comes to speak of it He *describes* it as the “times of refreshing,” the “kingdom of the

Father," "the restitution of all things;" and our Lord speaks of it as the "regeneration." Now I ask your sensibilities, are not descriptions much better than names? The Spirit does not merely talk to me of the millenium in *name*, but describes the thing to me. I welcome such a style as that. Now here, the beautiful thing that Christ is expecting is called "the world to come." It is a world to come, not merely because it is *future*, but because there has never been anything like it seen yet. It will be a kind of second Genesis. Genesis is the old creation. The world to come will be the new creation. It is the regeneration, which the Lord speaks of, "When the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory."

When we come to look a little further, in Hebrews ii., we find the path which led the Lord to the world to come. It is a totally different path from that which led Adam to the garden of Eden. Adam entered the garden simply by creation. The Lord God breathed into him the breath of life, and put him into the lordship of everything. It was a great coronation day to Adam. The day of his espousals followed, and he was installed in the garden in full delight. But Adam got there simply by this act of grace in the Creator. The Lord Jesus got into the very same thing in

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the world to come, but by an entirely different path. He was "made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death;—that He, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man." That was the path by which He found His way into the world to come. Before He could survey His monarchy He must bow Himself to death, He must "lie a prisoner in the grave" and then be lifted up to His coronation. The apostle takes up the oracle of the psalmist, and does not add to it, but unfolds and interprets it to our thoughts. The apostle is God's *second* letter to us. I might write you a letter, and if there was anything difficult in it I might write you another. Now the apostle's letter is God's interpretation of the psalmist's description of Christ's brilliant occupation of the world to come. The Spirit in the apostle engrafts our Jesus on Psalm viii. He introduces into it our dead and risen and glorified Christ. The One humbled a while is set over the works of God's hands. And then I ask you, Is He to go *alone* into that world to come? Why then did He die? Must He have died to go there Himself? Every *thought* resents it! Why then did He die but that He might bring the sons of glory into this beautiful world to come. What do I want now, as a poor sinner, but to deposit myself in the

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hands of Christ, as an old writer says, "Let Christ see to it." I commit myself to Christ and it becomes His business not mine, and He conducts me to the world of glory. When we meditate on this what a blessed thing is before us! Marking the path of the Son of Man, through death and resurrection, into His dominions. There is material in the book of God to keep our souls in an eternal rapture. But then we want souls to be enraptured. We are not straightened in Him but in ourselves.

If I were to linger a little on John i., I should find it connected with all this. John i., illustrates this simple truth, that the Lamb of God is the Creator anew. This chapter just shows me the same thing. The Creator anew enters on the world to come as the Lamb of God. Not merely as the Omnipotent One, who could call light out of darkness; that was creative power. But everything now stands in the blood of Christ, and is therefore infallible. It is a *purchased* thing. If I look at Adam in Eden, I see God laying out His power, but not *Himself*. But the God-man has laid down His life for the world to come, and will any one tell me that the thing which Christ has purchased with His own blood is a forfeitable thing? Christ has laid Himself out on it, spent Himself upon it,

and the power of the serpent can never reach it. It is impregnable, unassailable, invulnerable. And this introduces that word *must*. "Some *must* enter therein" (chap. iv. 6). God has appointed that others shall be there with Him. And now we come to Joshua, and we find that he did no more for Israel than God did for Adam. He put them into Canaan and everything depended on their fidelity--the same title of legal fidelity as Adam's--and they lost it. If God had given Adam an infallible creation, He would never have spoken of the world to come. So, the land of Israel was a forfeitable thing, and "there remaineth therefore a rest;" that rest is "the world to come." Christ has not got there yet. Acts iii., tells me the heavens must retain Him till the times of restitution. So, here I get Christ retained in the heavens. That which Adam lost, and Joshua lost, in the hands of Christ is infallibly secure. *All* the promises of God in Him are Yea and Amen. The moment a promise gets into Christ's hands, to be ministered from Him to me, that moment that promise is sure. There is a Sabbatism that remains for the people of God, and some *must* enter therein. In Adam and Joshua all was lost. There is not a hand capable of holding a single blessing, but the once bleeding, infallible hand of the

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Lamb of God. Let any promise get there, and it is sure and infallible. Let any glory get there and it is unclouded for ever.

CHAPTERS V.—VIII.

We will now pursue our way through the next four chapters, which introduce us to the two priesthoods and the two covenants. One of these priesthoods and one of these covenants are still prophetic things, and we are therefore entitled to look at them.

First, then, as to the two priesthoods, the Aaronic and the Melchisedec priesthoods. The priesthood of the Aaronic character is a bygone thing. The priesthood of the Melchisedec character is, in one great sense, still future. The three passages in the Book of God where Melchisedec is referred to, are Genesis xiv., Psalm cx., and the passage before us. The Epistle to the Hebrews refers to the two places in the Old Testament where he is looked at. In Genesis xiv., we find the battle of the four kings, and as they were returning with the spoils of victory, it was told Abram that his brother Lot had been taken prisoner. While it was a mere fight between the potsherds of the earth, Abram took no part in it; but when he found Lot was involved, it became the duty of the kinsman to bestir himself. Such is the intelligence of faith. He knew when to be quiet

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and when to be active. So out to the fight he goes, and rescues Lot and brings back the spoil. On his return he is met by an august personage of whom we have never heard till now; he is met by Melchisedec, coming forth from the sanctuary of Zion, where he dwelt, exercising the priesthood of the God of heaven and earth.

Now I am going to introduce you to the different way in which the Spirit is looking at Melchisedec in Genesis xiv., and in Psalm cx. In Gen. xiv., he is shown to you in his *actings*. In Ps. cx., you do not see him in his actings, but in his *consecration*. Now his actings are millennial actings; his consecration is resurrection consecration. While you are looking at Melchisedec's actings you are in the millennium. Because Abraham had finished his warfare and brought back the spoils of the victory when Melchisedec met him. And what did he get? Did he want the relief of the Aaronic sin-offering, or the cleansings of the sanctuary? No, he was a weary conqueror. He presented himself in the laurels of victory, and all Melchisedec had to do was to welcome him with the refreshments of the kingdom. In the same way the Lord Jesus will come forth from His hiding-place, but not till the warfare is accomplished, and He can greet His people who have gone through their conflict here,

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not till the due millennial hour. The blessing suited to the lips of Aaron we read in Numbers vi., "The Lord bless thee and keep thee," &c. Did Abraham want that blessing *now*? Did he want to be kept? Did he lack grace and peace? He was in the full bloom of his triumph and wanted the refreshments of the weary conqueror, not the cleansing of the defiled* saint. The Lord Jesus is both Aaron and Melchisedec; and by-and-bye His saints will be greeted by a blessing, not from Him who has comforts for sorrows, but from Him who has kingly refreshments for conquerors. The moment you look at Melchisedec in his actings, you are in the future. But now, when we turn to Psalm cx., we see him in resurrection consecration, and there we get a *present* Christ. The Psalm cx., is very important, and is variously used by the Holy Ghost in the New Testament. Now we will read and analyse it a little. "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." That is Jehovah's language to Christ when He ascended from the Mount of Olives and took His place at the right hand of God. I believe His response is found in Psalm xvi., "At Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." Then when He has taken His seat, in verses 2, 3 and 4, the Spirit addresses Christ at

the right hand and says, "Jehovah shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies." He must wait there for a certain time, the heavens must retain Him, but in due time He will come forth to the day of Revelations xix. Then, "Thy people shall be willing." The moment His enemies are made His footstool, He will gather His people together, and the Spirit calls it here, "the dew of thy youth." This will be "in the day of thy power." *Your* dignity is, that you have been made willing in the day of His *weakness*. It will be a blessed thing for the Jew to own Him in His millennial power, but the dignity of the Church is to own Him in the day of His rejection and weakness. She has been allied to Him in the day of His humiliation. The Jew will never have companionship with Him in the day of His weakness. Then in verse 4, He is addressed in His own personal dignity, and it is with that that the argument of the Hebrews links itself. This is the *consecration* of Melchisedec; and it is what makes the Lord Jesus a priest, this moment, after the order of Melchisedec. He is not now *acting* after the manner of Melchisedec; He is acting after the manner of Aaron; but He is consecrated with the consecration of Melchisedec. It would have been unworthy of Him to be consecrated after the pattern of Aaron—a dying man who was to be succeeded by another; Christ is a *living* priest. Aaron went through his life and service, and died. Could God be satisfied with that? But the

moment the Lord proves Himself the Conqueror of death, not only have I a living priest but God is satisfied. Jesus in resurrection is life in victory, and that is His consecration. And, consequently, we find in Hebrews, that He was not a priest while He was here. He had not yet abolished death. He must first destroy ('annul') death, and in resurrection display life in victory. Then God put Him into office after the manner of Melchisedec, who had "neither beginning of days nor end of life;" that is, there is no record of him. He was a shadow of the risen, living, priesthood of the Son of God. Again I say, when we come to look at Aaron, who sets forth the *present* actings of Christ, Aaron was to meet you in your present defilement. He had a sin offering, a trespass offering, a eucharistic offering in his hand for you. All that the Lord Jesus is doing now. Do you want your defilement cleansed? He washes your feet. Do you want your sacrifices of praise presented to God? They go up *by Christ* to Him. The Lord Jesus at present is acting in the varied grace of Aaron for you, and by-and-bye He will act as Melchisedec, in greeting His elect, after their journey and warfare are accomplished, with kingly refreshments.

Now our next subject we get in chap. viii. This treats of the two covenants. As to this subject of the covenants, you may look at them as the patriarchal, the legal, and the evangelic covenants. The patriarchal covenant was all on the ground of promise. There were not two parties to it. When we get under law, the very form and phase of

the covenant is changed. The Israelites had to act their part in the covenant just as much as God. It is no longer a covenant of promise but of works. It is no longer *one* undertaking to *do* and the *other* bowing the head in the obedience of faith, but one undertaking to do *this*, and the other undertaking to do *that*; that is the *legal* covenant. Then in the prophets we get the *new* covenant, which falls back on the patriarchal covenant, and shows it to be simple promise. That is what the New Testament takes up, and calls "the new covenant." Heb. viii., shows you that the Lord found fault with the old covenant, and why? Because it made Him a *receiver*. He rests in the new covenant, because it puts Him in the place of Giver, and the sinner in the place of receiver. He takes delight in it, because He has found it "more blessed to give than to receive." Of that *style* of thing, Paul declares himself the minister. It is not prophetically fulfilled yet, but it will be, with the house of Israel and Judah in the day of their repentance. Paul is the minister of that which makes God a Giver, and me a receiver. So there is an element in both these things that is prophetic. We must *wait* for His millennial actings, and *wait* for the accomplishment of the new covenant in the day of Israel's repentance.

May the blessed Lord shut up our thoughts and affections with Christ in the Scriptures, and make us wise with God and in God, in this day of human wisdom. Amen.

(*To be continued, D.V.*)

GLORYING IN THE CROSS.

(Galatians vi. 14.)

Nothing is so difficult as to take a man out of himself; it is impossible, except by giving him a new nature. Man glories in anything that will bring honour to himself—anything that distinguishes him from his neighbour. It does not signify what it is (it may be even that he is the tallest man), anything his pride may come in, in that which gives him advantage over others.

Some may glory in their talents. There are differences in men's minds; vanity is seen more in some, wishing for the good opinion of others; pride more in others, having a good opinion of themselves. Wealth, knowledge, anything that distinguishes a man, he will glory in, and make a little world around himself by it. There is another thing, too, that men glory in, besides talent, birth, wealth, etc., and that is their religion. Take a Jew, and you will find he glories in not being a Turk; the Christian, so called, glories in that he is not a heathen and a publican. Man will thus take the very thing that God has given him to take him out of himself to accredit himself with. Those who are so deluded as to be throwing themselves down to Juggernaut

may have less to glory in, or to fancy they can glory in; but the measure of truth, connected with the religion men hold, is the very occasion of their glorying. Thus the Turk, who owns the true God, will glory in his religion over those who do not; the Jew, in his religion, he had the truth, and "salvation came to the Jews;" the Gentile Christian, too, has truth, but then he prides himself upon it, and this brings in the mischief. The subtlety of the enemy is seen in proportion as it is truth in which he makes a man glory; and it is not so difficult to detect, either, for if you are proud of being a Christian, the whole thing is told at once.

It is quite another thing, of course, for the true, genuine child of God walking in the power of the cross, etc., who glories in that he knows God. With Jonah there was just this pride at work: he was proud of being a Jew, and would not go to Nineveh, as God told him, because he was afraid of losing his reputation. He had rather have seen all Nineveh destroyed, than have his own credit as a prophet lost. Jonah was a true prophet, but, glorying in himself, he turned his religion into a ground of self-glorying. Whatever you are decking yourself out with (it may even be with a knowledge of Scripture) it is glorying in the flesh. Ever so lit-

tle a thing is enough to make us pleased with ourselves; what we should not notice in another is quite enough to raise our own importance.

Glorying in religion is a deeper thing. Whatever comes from man must be worthless. A man cannot glory in being a sinner. Conscience can never glory, and there is no true religion without the conscience—not speaking now of righteousness in Christ. What is it then in religion that man glories in? It always must have a legal character, because there must be something for him to do—hard penance, or anything, no matter at what cost, if it only glorifies self. “As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh constrain you to be circumcised . . . they desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh” (Gal. vi. 12, 13). Man could bind heavy burdens. Why should he? Because self would have to do something. When man glories in self there may be the truth in a measure, but it is of a legal character always, because there must be something man can do for God. Glorying in the flesh is not glorying in sin, but, as in Philippians iii., religious glorying, glorying in something besides Christ.

But in the cross man has nothing to say to it. It is not my cross, but “the cross of

our Lord Jesus Christ," and the only part I had in Christ's cross was sin. My sin had to do with it, for it brought Him there. This puts man down altogether. That which saves man, and what God delights in, man could not put a finger to in bearing. "The foolishness of God is wiser than men" (1 Cor. i. 25). The one single thing I have in the cross is my sin. There is this further thought: we are utterly lost without it. Divine love treats me as an utterly lost sinner, and the more I see that perfect divine love, the more I see how vile I am, utterly contemptible, defiled and lost. I have liked defiling myself; I am a wretched slave, dragged down to my defilement. The cross, when I see what it is, destroys my glorying in self, and puts truth in the inward parts, too, for it not only shows me how bad I am, but it makes me glad to confess my sin, instead of making excuses for it. I am awakened to say, "I am guilty of having loved all this." Love opens the heart, and enables me to come and tell Him how bad I am. I thus delight to record all that He has done, all that I owe Him; and that is thankfulness. My heart tells out its vileness; there is no guile—not delighting in the sin of course, but rejoicing in the remedy.

Then we have, on the other side, farther, God's delight in the cross. "Having made

peace through the blood of the cross " (Col. i. 20), God gives us to delight with Him in the value of it. And first, we see in it God's unutterable love—not love called out, like ours, by a lovable object. No ; " God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us " (Rom. v. 8). It was love acting in its own proper energy—from itself only—so properly divine that a soul expecting it, as a matter of course, could not be a fit object for it. God's work and God's ways are shown in a manner that man could not and ought not to have thought of. I am a poor miserable sinner, and there I see God's love in giving His own Son. When He forgives, there is the positive active energy of love in giving the best thing—the thing nearest to itself—for sin, which is the thing farthest from itself, giving it to be " made sin " (2 Cor. v. 21). When I look at the cross, I see perfect and infinite love, God giving His Son to be " made sin ; " I see perfect and infinite wisdom also.

With a conscience, I cannot enjoy God's love without seeing Him dealing about my sins. Even a sparrow God can be good to, it is true ; but can God accept me in my sins ? Can He accept an imperfect offering ? As Micah says, " Can I give the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul ? " Cain brought

the fruit of his own work, without any sense of sin: the hardness of his heart was proved by it, and an utter forgetfulness about his sin. I see in the cross what my sin is. I cannot look at that as God sees it without learning God. Man has forgotten God enough to rise up against Him who was God's remedy for his misery. Then judgment must be exercised; God's authority must be vindicated. "It became Him to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb. ii. 10). Are angels to see man flying in God's face, and He take no notice of it? No! Therefore, "it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things," etc. God is a righteous judge, and judgment must be executed. There is judgment as well as love seen in the cross. There is not only a holy nature taking sin, but Christ is undergoing the judgment due to evil. There is the unsparing wrath of God against the sin, but God's perfect love to the sinner. There His majesty, which we insulted, is vindicated: even the Son bows to that. If He is to keep up the brightness of the Father's glory, He must vindicate His character in this way. God's truth was proved at the cross: "The wages of sin is death." Man had forgotten this; but Christ stands up, the witness of God in such a world, that

what God has said is true: "The wages of sin is death." The love with which God wins man to Him proves this very thing at the same time.

There is more in the cross. God accomplishes all His purposes by it. He is bringing "many sons to glory," and how could He bring these defiled sinners into the same glory with His own Son? Why, God has so fully accomplished the work that, when in the glory with Him, we shall be a part of the display of that glory. Therefore He says, "That in the ages to come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace" (Ephes. ii. 7)—a Mary Magdalene, a thief upon the cross, trophies of that grace, through all eternity! And how could He set them in such a place with His own Son? His own glory and love ride over all our sin and put it all away: He Himself has done it.

For us, then, the cross has done two things: it has given peace of conscience, and not what man can see outside, and then spoil. No, He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified. All sin is blotted out and put away. I can glory in the cross, then, for my sins are gone!

Again, "After that ye have known God, or rather are known of God" (Gal. iv. 9)—poor wretched things that we are, to be made the vessels of such love and grace.

The conscience has certainty and peace, and more than that, a confidence that Adam in innocence could never have had. There is communion and peace in my own soul, and there is another thing also—I have clearness of understanding in the ways of God. Should I go through a course of ceremonies, genuflections, &c., to add to my perfectness which I have through the cross? You do not know the cross; you do not know Christ—what God—has done by the cross, if you are trying other things to make you better. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin?” When you know not the cross, you may use all these efforts to satisfy and quiet your conscience. When you know it, it leaves spiritual affections free. When I see the cross, I can love God. If I have offended Him, I can go off to Him directly and tell Him; for I am a child, and my relationship is not thereby altered. My fellowship is with the Father and the Son—this is my happy privilege.

When I can glory in the cross, there is an end of glorying in self; for I am nothing but a sinner. He has brought us to God by the cross, for Christ has suffered, the just for the unjust. Are our souls glorying in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, or in vanity, or in self? If you are not glorying in the cross, it is your own loss, not to say your

own sin ; for you can never see God's love, God's holiness, God's wisdom, God's truth, as on the cross. Even where you are you may learn it, for you have not to climb up somewhere to get it ; but it has come to you where you are. It is not when you are better you may come. You cannot come when you are better, though it will make you better. It is as a sinner you must come. The apostle came as " the chief of all sinners." Then " the world," as he says, " is crucified to me, and I to the world." The very nature which is connected with the world is what occasioned Christ's death, therefore, when I glory in the cross, I am crucified to the world.



LAODICEA.

The expression, " the beginning of the creation of God," as used by the Lord in addressing Laodicea, is very significant. Everything had failed on earth, and, so to speak, everything had ceased to be regarded by God as a testimony for Him in its actual state. All was a moral chaos in His sight. Christ alone remained ; and, therefore, the Spirit falls back on Him as the " Beginning of the creation of God "; the faithful and true Witness, the only real and permanent One, the Head of the new creation ; and,

therefore, the One in whom alone there was deliverance from chaos. In Col. 1., He is called "the First born of every creature," which expresses His title and pre-eminence. To Laodicea a like expression is made use of, but it is more a presentation of Himself as the last reserve, as men say. His own people had failed to witness for God on the earth, though thereby the Father would have been glorified, and now things on earth were about to be judged, and there still remained the true Noah—"the beginning of the creation of God." And though there had been loss all the way down, there was recovery in Him. All now reverts to Him; and any one who would escape the evil influences in Laodicea must know themselves in spirit connected with Him in this peculiar aspect; no where else was there recovery. Still further, His counsel to them is to *buy of Him* "gold tried in the fire," white raiment, eye-salve. I think "gold tried in the fire" is walking with Christ—to me to live is Christ—through the difficulties, association with Him in the trial; the felt expression of His grace in the soul assured to it while breasting against the evil influences at work around. No one who is acquiring "gold tried in the fire," who is really exercised in the difficulties of the day, can have sympathy with the religious exultation of Laodicea.

He finds his path daily more difficult and narrow; but, reverting to the faithful and the true Witness, he obtains succour from Him, and the empty profession of the day has no interest or attraction for him. Gold tried in the fire, — grace known in trial, is the internal strength and power to rise above the evil influences; while the white raiment is the manifested power and walk of victory, and the eye-salve the word of God. No one would anoint his eye with eye-salve, unless he felt that he needed to improve his sight; and this is what souls must require, viz., the sense of how much they need the counsel and succour of the word to enable them to see their way through the present confusion. It is the only thing for faith to cling to, and it is in dependence on God's word because it is God's word, that the soul is strengthened in God, and not merely from the blessings which flow from keeping His word. The more the soul feels its journey to be a journey of faith, the more unceasingly will it seek the word as the trellis-work on which its faith may climb.

The faithful adherence to God's revelation is the great necessity and the only bulwark in the now existing state of things, when all is verging on the Laodicean state. The influences which, without let or hindrance will, when the Church is taken away, con-

form nominal Christianity into Babylon, are now in their elements working and seducing the unstable and the wilful into the circling power of that vortex. In proportion as man attempts, through progress in science or discovery, either to contravene or dispense with the revelation, he is deluded by a false light; but in proportion as I am guided by the true light held in faith, shall I be in the intelligence and power of that which will openly certify God's wisdom by-and-bye.

If I read Jude's epistle and the address to the church of Laodicea together, I see two evil influences at work, which must inevitably ensnare any soul not elevated to a sphere above them. The one is the improvement of the world materially, the other the extension of religion. Jude gives us the former, the address to Laodicea the latter. Under the head of material improvement I class all advancement of man in any form of developement. The strides which this advancement has taken and is taking in the present day are almost fabulous. An artisan now is more advanced in comfort and information than was the highest peer two centuries ago. Is it any wonder that a man who has no region for practical citizenship, beyond the present, should be allured by an improvement so flattering to himself? Could Cain have believed in a curse while

he sedulously gathered the fruits of the earth? And he gathered them for God too. Now this *last*, gathering the fruits of the earth for God, reaches out into the other influence set forth in Laodicea, by the extension of religion. Who by merely looking at the world in its present state, with all its advancement and religious extension, its prodigious circulation of Bibles, &c., could believe that it had suffered anything by the rejection of its true Lord? Let my eye, even as a Christian, have no range but earth, and I know not where my soul may be carried. I see rationalists giving importance to man's mind above the word of God, at least regarding the latter as only a by-way help and not as a guide; and this contributes to swell the sense of self-importance, which the education of the present day likes to produce, while the Popish element affords to man the feeling of being religious, which supplies all that is wanting for self-satisfaction. I believe that nothing but the heavenly portion of the Church, and practical association with her rejected Lord, now the only "faithful and true Witness" for God, can possibly preserve the saints of God from these evil influences. It is true a godly soul, who feels the entire corruption of human nature, may be preserved in a measure; but it is wonderful how little the

completeness of this corruption is believed in, in practice or sentiment, when the soul becomes occupied with *its* religiousness; and if with the religiousness, it sees how much man can effect, there will be no check to its going in the way of Cain, Balaam and Core. If I have a heavenly place, and find my existence above, I must necessarily be looking for the Lord to come and emancipate me bodily from the scene here. I cannot be practically heavenly without looking for the coming of the Lord; for, as heavenly I feel myself a stranger here, and there is no hope of full release for me until He comes.

It is a solemn and humbling thought for those who have, in these "last days," been led outside the camp, and who have been entrusted with the truth which is alone effectual in delivering souls from the "hour of temptation," which is to come on all the "habitable world," and the elements of which are evidently now at work. I believe that all, whether young or old, who have drawn back from the responsibility which such truth claims from us, and have allowed their eyes to rest on earth, have been ensnared, possibly unknown to themselves, by these evil influences. In such cases there is, no doubt, where there is life, a relief for the conscience in the Laodicean prosperity, in which, while there is no testimony for

God, salvation is, through mercy, granted to some, though the whole system is to be broken up and spued out of Christ's mouth as a worthless and evil thing. It is most important for us to understand our responsibility as to our testimony for God; but to retrograde is to take the direction of all this vortex of evil and delusion.



MEDITATIONS ON PROPHETIC PORTIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

(Concluded from page 200)

HEBREWS XII.

We will read to-day a part of the twelfth chapter, and meditate on the two mounts and the two shakings. Now in this very weighty Scripture there are several contrasts. There are two mounts, and two voices; and there are two shakings, and the shakable things and the immovable things. The first thing we come to is the two mounts; one of which is a symbol of the dispensation of law, and the other of the dispensation of the grace of God, which bringeth salvation. When you look at the first of these, you see that there is not a feature that gives it character that is not *against* you. We know that it was so in Exodus xix.; but the Spirit rehearses it here in a very striking form. There is a great propriety in God

coming down *to earth* to speak of law, and speaking from *heaven* when He speaks of grace. Because when He speaks of law He speaks of ourselves, and He comes down to our level to do it; but *heaven* is the birth-place of grace, where was conceived the salvation of God. So when He speaks of this, He speaks of Himself, and therefore He speaks from Heaven.

To return to the first mount, all was against man. Darkness and thunder and earthquake are things that strike terror to the heart of man. If so much as a beast touched the mountain it was to be stoned or thrust through with a dart: because all creation was in the condemnation with man, its head and representative. Now your title and mine is to turn our back totally to that hill, and our face to the other hill, and faith does not know how to take up any other attitude. I do not say the quickened soul is not often glancing back, but *faith* turns its back to Sinai, and greedily drinks in the light of Mount Zion, whence was the voice that tells us about God and not about ourselves.

Now when you turn to the second mount, everything is *for* you. There is not a rumble of thunder, or a fork of lightning. From the top of the hill to the foot, there is not one single thing that is not *for* you.

Now we will inspect the material of the second hill, and we shall discover that we travel from the top of it to the foot: "Ye are come," &c. Now I read this beautiful and wonderful description of our calling, as though the Spirit were conducting us first to the top of the hill and then down to the foot. Supposing we look at it in inverse order, which is often the Spirit's way. When we look to the hill, the first thing we see is the blood of the Lamb, speaking better things than that of Abel. That is the foundation of our calling and of all that is immovable: all depends on the blood of Christ, which achieved the victory that the resurrection published. Whatever the risen Lord touches He imparts infallibility, immovableness to it—the priesthood, the covenant, the kingdom, the throne. He imparts the virtue of His own eternity to them. So when we look at the mount, we begin with the blood. The Lamb must speak good and comforting things to me, a sinner, before I can take a step in company with God. Then we are introduced to "Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant." The moment by blood I get relief from my sins, I am introduced to Jesus in another character, as having undertaken the cause of the one who has trusted in the blood. Christ my sacrifice introduces me to Christ

my Mediator in heaven. The third object is "The spirits of just men made perfect," or, perfectly just men. When you got the question of sin settled with God, and began to look round about at the saints, how were you introduced to them? Was it to their circumstances in the flesh? I do not want Christ to introduce me to a man's beautiful house, but to his *spirit*. He introduces me to my brethren, and whether those spirits be embodied or not, it is the same thing. Then the next thing is "God the judge of all." There is a *future* thing, and is it *for* you as well as everything else? It is. Have you an interest in the day of the manifestation of all things? If you are hiding any naughtiness it will come out in that day, but if you are passing by slights and neglects, and saying Christ will settle it all, that is having an interest in that day. Are we conscious that we are carrying ourselves in such a way that we can welcome the day of manifestation? Then God, the judge of all, is just as much for you as the blood of Christ.

Then, still going upward, we reach "The Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven." This is the Church glorified. We are introduced to one another now in *spirit*. *Then* it will be in *glory*. Then the general assembly—the innumerable company of angels—lies next door to you, as we find in Revelation. The exultation of the

angels followed in the track of the harpings of the Church. There they are—their ministering service is over, and they constellate themselves into the general assembly. When we get there, we are in the presence of “the city of the living God.” There you see is a graphic, vivid picture of our calling in grace and in glory . . . We only want a spiritual eye to gaze upon it, and as we gaze to bless Him who has given such a calling to the poor sinner who sees his sins laid on Jesus.

We are introduced now to the two shakings, and they are connected with the two voices. The first mountain itself is a symbol of the dispensation of law. The voice of shaking symbolises the *result* of the dispensation; which is judgment on the breach of law. God knew from the beginning what the result of testing would be, therefore shaking accompanied the delivery of the law.

The other mount is accompanied by a voice which speaks from heaven. That voice says, Take care: everything on the mount is *for* you, but take care that you do not refuse it, for the result of such a refusal will be more terrible than the result of the breach of the law.

The voice of the second mount is this: If you refuse the dispensation of grace, there will be a more terrible shaking than that which waited on the breaking of the law. All Scripture bears witness to this second shaking. It will effect everything that is *made*. It will shake the whole creation out of the creation of God, and leave nothing

but that which has connection with Christ. Isaiah ii., gives you a terrible account of it; Isaiah xiii., gives a similar account; Joel ii., and Haggai ii., give it to you; the Lord tells you of it in Matt. xxiv.; here it is commented on; and the Apocalypse, in one part of it, is the story of God arising to shake terribly the earth. And this terrible process will be just at the close of the present earth's history, the close of man's world and the introduction of Christ's world. We can easily see why it is more terrible than Mount Sinai. That said, If you do not fulfill the demands of God you are treated as a leper and put out of His presence. But if the Lord has come down to give salvation for the mere receiving of it, and I refuse it, God will arise to shake far more terribly the earth. The judgment that rests on Christendom will be a consuming fire. The God of this dispensation, the God who has arisen in the riches of His grace to bring home His banished one, that very God will be a consuming fire. But, in contrast with all this, we get an immovable kingdom, and on the title of that immovable kingdom the blessed Lord Jesus will take His way into the world to come.

The Lord keep us in the thoughts of these things, and let us ask ourselves, with what is our heart forming its daily associations? The things to be shaken, or the things to remain? The things in man's world, or the promises and expectations of Christ's world? The Lord give us to trust in the simplicity of His grace, and to walk in the power of the calling. Amen.

COMING !

Thou art coming, Lord and Master !
Yes, at last :
Storm and shipwreck and disaster,
Wave and blast,
Seas of anger—
Babel's clangor
Shall be past.

Thou art coming, blessed Saviour !
Matchless love,
Measured not by our behaviour,
Strong will prove,
Till Thou gather
To our Father,
Us above.

Thou art coming, Strong Deliv'rer !
Changeless Friend !
All who trust Thy love are ever
By Thy hand—
Held securely,
Shelter'd surely
To the end.

Thou art coming, Star of Morning,
For Thy Bride ;
Faithful ! from afar returning,
True and tried :
Who to save her,
And to have her,
Bled and died.

Thou art coming, Shepherd ! Ever
Good and Great.
None from Thee Thy sheep can sever,
But 'tis late !

And all shatter'd,
Torn and scatter'd
Still we wait.

Thou art coming, Mighty JESUS !
Then shall be
Death's hold plunder'd to release us,
Jubilee !
In the power
Of that hour—
Victory !



“MY LORD DELAYETH HIS COMING.”

(*Luke xii. 31-48.*)

Nothing can be more solemn, beloved friends, than the Lord's testimony here to His disciples (and it applies to us). If I look for the will of God being carried out anywhere, I must go, of course, where Christianity is. They are those who will be “beaten with many stripes ;” that is, the professing church—Christendom, if you will.

The warning is not against saying that Christ will *not* come (every one says that He will but the infidel) but against saying, the Lord *delays* His coming. Now I desire to speak a little of the condition of soul of one who is manifestly waiting for Him, as to whether it characterises those who read this ; whether, if He come at midnight, or in the cock-crowing, or in the morning, He

would find us watching ; and I speak of it, not as an interesting topic, which those who have studied much perhaps may receive some light about, but as a subject for our hearts.

Christ is waiting, and, so far as His people are right here, *they* are waiting. He is not sitting on *His* throne yet. The blessed work of Jesus on the cross being done, He sits at the right hand of God, on His Father's throne, until His enemies are made His footstool. From thence He sent the Holy Ghost down to fill our hearts, and make us abound in hope whilst waiting for Him. He is sitting down (He has no more to do as to His atoning work) and He has sent the Holy Ghost to gather out His joint heirs to wait here, or to wait there—which is better, of course.

Christ has appeared and brought salvation ; but, beloved friends, we cannot have too fast hold of the fact that the heart and intention of Christ is not merely to clear us from *judgment*, but to have us *with Himself*, and that is what He is waiting for. I speak of this hope now, not as a little Christian knowledge, but as the only and proper hope of the church.

Now, for instance, when the Lord was comforting His disciples when He was going away, what did He say to them ?—"I will

come again, and receive you unto myself." And He shows what will be their hope meanwhile; not the knowledge of the Father, nor the coming of the Holy Ghost, but the coming of *Himself*. What is it that the angels say in the first chapter of Acts? "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." And so we should find in every respect that what God has set before us in His word all sinks down when this hope is lost. It is this hope which characterises the church, in the mind of Christ and in Scripture, and the Lord is now awaking and calling us back to this expectation. Paul tells us, in Phil. iii., that "our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." I find that as characteristic of the Christian. It is not to doubt the fact of our dying and departing to be with Christ, precious as it is and useful as it is for us to think of it, but this is His coming to take us to Himself.

There are nothing but troubles here for us in the world. We belong to it until we are converted, and then it belongs to us: "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours"—even the trials through which we pass. The poor

thief says, "Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom." How little they thought, when they sent the soldiers to break his knees, that they were sending him off to heaven.

Another point—if the saint dies, he is just "absent from the body and present with the Lord." But we are to be "conformed to the *image of his Son*" (Rom. viii. 29). Now I do not want to be conformed to Christ in the *grave*. The poor thief was, of course; *he* saw corruption. Of course Christ did not "see corruption." But we are not to be conformed to him in the *grave*, but in the *glory*. That is the full, blessed result of the hope that is before us—to be *with* Christ and *like* Christ. The reason why I have found the Lord's coming so precious is that it brings so definitely the Lord *Himself* before me. *He* is coming to take me; it is not that I am going to be happy in heaven, but that Christ Himself is coming to fetch me.

Now it is delaying the Lord's coming that brings such deadness into the church. Take the first chapter of 1st Thessalonians: you will see it is the Lord's coming which gives the character to the people. What were they converted for? "To serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven." Here were a number of people who had turned away from all their idols to

serve the only true God, instead of all the gods they had before; and Paul says to them, 'I am looking for the Lord to come, and then you will be my joy and crown' (see chap. ii. 19). Then, if you look at holiness, it is "That he may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Then in the fourth chapter he gives full expression to it, and in the second Epistle you find the coming of the Lord with respect to judgment. It was the object that was perpetually before them, as that which formed and fixed their character.

If you take the virgins (Matt. xxv.) :— They went forth to meet the Bridegroom. Well, the Bridegroom tarried; He delayed His coming (we know He *has* tarried); and they all slumbered and slept. People say, "Why did not all these good and holy people find it out long since?" Why? Because they all slept! They had all gone out to meet the Bridegroom; but, as people say, it is not very comfortable to bivouac out, and so they all turned in somewhere—turned into the world, in fact; and there they all slumbered together, for people can very well *sleep* together. But at midnight the cry was made: and then, when they began to awake, they found they had not all got oil; and the effect of the cry was to separate the professors from the true ones. The professors go to buy, and whilst they are gone the Bridegroom comes, and those that are ready go in with Him to the wedding.

You will see that you never find the Lord's coming delayed beyond the life of the

people to whom it was being written of, and you find the same thought in the Lord's teachings on the subject. What I mean is this—we know the servants who received the talents are the same ones who are judged for their use of them; and it is the same virgins who went to sleep that wake up again. We find in Revelation ii., and iii., the history of the whole time of Christendom. Is He going to make a long tale of it? No. He takes seven churches then existing to tell it all out. So there is no excuse for a single soul to say, "He delays His coming." It is a present thing. As James says, "The Judge stands before the door."

But the hope of the coming of the Lord has been lost, and the church has gone quite into the world. Do not you think that, if it were believed in the place in which you are living that the Lord was coming, it would not alter every detail of people's lives? Paul says, that after his decease there would be a complete turning aside; men speaking perverse things, and drawing disciples after them. And then in the midst of this darkness there is to be the cry at midnight. How can I resist such a testimony?

People say, Well, though I am occupied with what is here, my heart is not in it, so it is not my treasure. They always say, Where my heart is, there is my treasure. Now, that is not at all what the Lord says. He says, "Where your treasure is, *there will* your heart be." If you have a great treasure in heaven, you may be sure your heart will be there. It is no use talking; an unconverted man knows very well that if he

were looking for Christ it would alter all his life—converted people too. Do not you believe that it would separate professors off in a very short time, if we were all walking like men who are waiting for their Lord? It is the delay between the cry and the coming that separates them off. And they were to have the character, and tone, and ways of men that were waiting: and these were to be “blessed”—*blessed*.

You find two parables (Matt. xxv.) that treat this quite in a different way—the Virgins and the Talents: one, the state of affections; the other, the activities of service. Any one can understand this. The Lord gives us Himself the character that He looks for and likes. We are to be watching. He says, You must be all alive! You must have your loins girded! You must be watching while I am away, and when I *do* come, then I will have things my own way. I will make those watching servants sit down to meat, and I will serve them. The Lord has made Himself a servant for ever. When a mother is nursing her sick son, her delight will be to do all sorts of unpleasant, disagreeable things for him sooner than let anyone else do them, because it is *love* that makes her.

When He made Himself a servant, He came down to do it. Well, His coming down was *glory*. But we should have all said—*naturally*, when He was going away, Well, there is an end of service now; He is going to glory. No! When He is going out of the world He says, as it were, Do you think I am going to leave off serving you? Not at

all! I am not going to give you up, if I cannot stay down here to have a part with you; you must have a part with me where I am going, and so I must wash your feet.

This was not blood; this was water. A soul, though really born again, wants to be kept clean by the way. When He goes away into glory He becomes the Advocate, as it is expressed. If one of His people sin, He sets about to restore him. We do want our feet washed with water. "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but *I have prayed for thee*, that thy faith fail not." Peter has learned his own weakness, and the Lord has prayed for him. That is what He was going to do in heaven.

He says, when I have things in *my* way I shall not expect you to serve me any longer; I shall come out and serve you then. And that is what was meant figuratively, when in Ex. xxi., He said, "I love my wife and I love my children; I will not go out free." He had served perfectly down here, and then He says, I love them right on to the end; He girds Himself and becomes a servant for ever. It is His glory, really, but it is put as a figure in that way. He is Himself the loving, blessed Minister of all the happiness that is in heaven. What hearts we have, compared to the love that Christ has to us! The consciousness of our wretchedness makes it hard for us to believe that it can be Christ's delight to serve us for ever! But, as I have often said, love delights to serve, selfishness to be served. Christ delights to show us that "God is *love*." If I want to know what the Father is, the

answer is "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." It is the Son coming and bringing perfect, blessed, divine love to our hearts, that we may be done with ourselves and know *God*! It is a great thing when we can say, "We have known God, or, rather, are *known of Him*." As I have often said to infidels, Though I am a poor creature, yet I *know God*. I have met Him, and found Him all love, and I know Him a great deal better than I know myself. I am never sure of myself, such a poor creature as this. Though I love your souls to-day, to-morrow I may not care a bit about them. Who put it into God's heart to love the world? There are two kinds of affection in the world, love *up*, and love *down*. Of course God's love is love *down*. If I love a noble thing it has a noble affection; if I love God, so far as it goes, it is a *perfect* affection. I learn what is good in loving Him.

It is His delight and joy to minister to our necessities. I will take a very common illustration known to you all, in Luke xv. Who was happy in finding the sheep? Was it the sheep or was it the shepherd? Of course it was a good thing for the sheep. And who was happy that the piece of money was found? Was it the piece of money or the woman who found it? And when the prodigal son came back to his Father, who was the happy one—the Father or the prodigal? Of course it was a good thing for the prodigal to have the calf in-

stead of the husks, but the happiness is described as being the Father's.

Peter says to Him, "Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?" I have had a man watching, and now I find a man serving, giving a portion of meat in due season. The one has the affections going out to Him; the other is serving: it may be the apostle, or it may be the smallest work of any Christian now—it may be even the giving of a cup of cold water. It is to be "holy, without blame before him in love," always *before God*; that is what Christ was. Oh! you say, *He was God!* Well, and you? You are in Him. Now I am an heir—I am a child in the house, and if I am a son, I am an heir. Of course the greatest blessing is to be an heir, and in heaven it will be all positive enjoyment. If I have a right Christian heart, what will be my next joy to seeing Himself? It will be to see you all like Him. My next joy to seeing Christ Himself will be the seeing that He has the travail of His soul and is satisfied; not His own personal glory that He had before the foundation of the world, but the seeing every one of us—what a thought!—*not one single saint but will satisfy the heart of Christ!*

Now, beloved friends, let me ask, does all this awaken desires in your hearts? Or, are you still under the power of the world, and saying (not openly, perhaps, but *in your heart*), My Lord delays His coming? I do not doubt a moment that that coming is hastening on. What a comfort it is to have one single object before you; to have your

eyes looking right on, and your eyelids straight before you! There is this kingdom that cannot be moved, and there is the promise that everything shall be shaken. I find that word, "Yet once more," because the things that are shaken are what cannot stand God's presence. Now, have you what cannot be moved? Has Christ such hold on your heart that you can say, Let everything else go, I have got Christ? Have you first, simple, full, distinct, clear persuasion by faith that the first coming of Christ has wrought perfect, full salvation for you? And, that being settled, have you care enough for Him to wish for His coming again? If I were to hear that a great Russian prince was coming here, do you think I would trouble myself about it? But supposing I knew that my mother was coming—why, I would go down to the pier at once to meet her.

The heart must be set upon *Christ Himself*, and then the longing of the Spirit and of the Bride says, "Come." What kind of a bride would that be who did not look for the bridegroom's coming? If your heart is not properly fixed, looking for the Bridegroom, your heart is not right with Christ. It is not merely a *feeling*, it is the Spirit who is down here: it is "the Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Christ is the first object; then the saints who have the desire awakened; then it goes out to all the world.

Now, can your hearts say, Come? May our hearts be so set upon Him, that we may be amongst those to whom the Lord, when He comes, will bring the blessing promised to those who are found "watching."



THE CHARACTER AND ATTITUDE OF THOSE WHO KNOW THE WORD OF THE LORD.

(Zechariah xi. 11.)

It is with the *moral* teaching of this passage rather than with its dispensational and primary application, I am now dealing. With regard to the latter, it may be well to say that the subject evidently is the history of Israel in connection with Christ. Jehovah takes up the case of His desolate people and flock. There was no compassion in their own shepherds towards them: it is very blessed to see that, while the nation is handed over to reap the fruit of its own ways and sins, Jehovah, in the infinite compassion of His heart, cares for the poor and oppressed of His people; but the nation as such are left to themselves. Then it is we find that the poor of the flock are they who recognize *the fulfilment of the prophetic word* in those ways of Jehovah. So much for the literal application of the passage.

Now the *moral* bearing of this is of the deepest moment for our souls in these days, for there are now morally, as then in the history of Israel, "the poor of the flock." How blessed to think of this divine charac-

teristic! It carries one's thoughts at once to Matthew v.: the very first mark of that which meets the mind of God in a world where all has departed from Him, is poverty of spirit—that which is in no sense indigenous to man or the earth; that which so far from being promoted, is suppressed and hindered by all that obtains amongst men and in the age. Poverty of spirit is only found in those who are broken, those who are down in the dust before the Lord, as their rightful place. Alas! how little of it is to be seen, how much of the opposite; self-exaltation and self-assertion, a determination to maintain self at all costs; lowliness of mind and humility of mind, are not virtues of the present moment or age; on the contrary, high-mindedness and pride, alas! prevail to a sad extent. How blessed to dwell upon that which is kindred to the thoughts of God, that which He takes pleasure in, and that which has ever met His mind from the very first. But further, this spirit has, as it were, its own surroundings and atmosphere; it grows and flourishes far away from that which is found amongst men. It is impossible to maintain poverty of spirit if men and the world are mingled with. “All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world”—these are the principles and objects governing in the world, and none else beside. It is a solemn question for conscience and heart, how far apart from such a sphere do we walk? May the Lord exercise each of us before Himself as to this.

But not only do we find here “the poor of the flock,” but we also find their *attitude*—“*that waited upon me.*” This is ever the attitude of the soul where poverty of spirit is the characteristic; confiding dependence and expectation mark them at all times, whether the remnant in Israel, or the few who to-day in loyalty of heart cleave to the Lord: hated, reviled, slandered, and despised, they have ever been, and will be, yet He knows them as trusting in Himself and waiting on Him.

But not only is there in this attitude a very marked dependence on, and expectation from, the Lord Himself, but there is an active exercise of heart implied in the words “*waited upon me.*” How unlike the busy restlessness of the moment we are in, and the scene we are passing through! The moral greatness of one who waits on God simply is beyond all admiration! How blessed to be brought to this simply, so as to say, “thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I *wait* all the day;” or again, “this is our God, we have *waited* for him;” or again, “yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we *waited* for thee.”

It was this which marked the Lord Jesus in all His blessed perfection as a man on earth: how blessed to hear Him say, as in Psalm xl. 1—He takes the place of patience *without failure*—“I waited patiently for Jehovah.” It is exactly opposite to what man is as man, with his will and all that belongs to it. Observe it is “for Jehovah” that is, until He came in: His own will never moved; Christ would have no other deliver-

ance than Jehovah's. That which was found in the blessed One in His own perfection, is by grace wrought in the poor of the flock, and in feebleness and imperfection still is exhibited in some small measure by them. Oh, may it be ours more and more to be known simply as a poor and an afflicted people who wait on the Lord and trust in Him! Then, lastly, observe how the Lord says, "the poor of the flock that waited upon me, knew that it was the word of the Lord." This shows very blessedly the connection between the *state of soul* according to God, and the discernment of His mind through His word: and may we not ask is it not ever so? The *wise* and *prudent* on the one hand and the *unseparated* on the other, never discern His will; it is *hidden* from the former (very solemn reflection this); it is revealed to babes. As to the other class, those not separated and consecrated to God, it is written, "the knowledge of the *holy* is understanding; and further, "do not drink wine nor strong drink . . . when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation . . . that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean" (Lev. x. 9, 10).

May the Lord apply His own word to all that needs its piercing light at this moment, so that there may be, by its divine action, formed in our souls that capacity and ability of His Spirit, to know what is the word of the Lord in its application to all the difficulties and exercises of the way at this present moment.