

THE REMEMBRANCER

A MAGAZINE FOR THE LORD'S PEOPLE

PUBLISHED MONTHLY

("IF THE LORD WILL").

"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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BIBLE & TRACT DEPOT

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Erratum. Page 140, fifth line from bottom :—
For "Larephath," read "Zarephath."

The Remembrancer

“YET A LITTLE WHILE.”

(Heb. x. 37.)

Only “a little while,”
A moment it may be,
Ere I shall see Him face to face,
Who died, who lives for me.

Only “a little while”
The wilderness to roam,
And then the Father’s house above,
My dwelling-place, my home.

Only “a little while”
To walk by faith alone,
And then without a veil to see,
And known as I am known.

Only “a little while”
To tread the path He trod,
And then the home of rest and joy,
The dwelling-place of God.

Only “a little while,”
Then watching will be o’er,
And we shall see Him face to face,
And worship evermore.

Only “a little while,”
Oh, precious, cheering word !
It may be ere this day shall close
I shall behold my Lord.

Then not “a *little while*,”
But through *eternal* days,
To sing the never-ending song
Of tribute to *His praise* !

SIGNS, AND WAITING FOR THE SON FROM HEAVEN.

In the calculations of men, events unfold themselves as the effects of causes which are known to be operating. But, while this has its truth, to faith it is God who, in His supremacy, holds a seal in His hand, to stamp each day with its character or sign.

This gives the soul a fresh interest in the passing moments. Some of them may be more impressively stamped than others, but all are in progress, and each hour is contributing to the unfolding of the coming era. Like the seasons of the year, or the advances of day and night. Some moments in such progresses may be more strongly marked than others: but all are in advance. Every stage of Israel's journey through the desert was bringing them nearer to Canaan, though some stages were tame and ordinary, while others were full of incident. And so, all the present age is accomplishing the advance of the promised kingdom, though some periods of it have greater importance than others.

These "signs of the times," or sealing of God's hand upon the passing hour, it is the duty of faith to discern. Because they are always according to the premonitions of Scripture. Indeed, current events are only

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“signs,” as they are according to, or in fulfilment of, such previous notices.

The words of the prophets made the doings of Jesus, in the days of His flesh, the signs of those days (Matt. xii. 1-23). And have we not words in the New Testament which, in like manner, make all around us at this moment, or in every century of the dispensation, significant? Have not words, which we find there, abundantly forecast the characters of such dispensation, and given beforehand the forms of those corruptions that were to work in Christendom? They have told us what now our eyes have seen. They told us of the field of wheat and tares—of the mustard seed which became a lodging place for the fowl of the air—of “the unmerciful servant,” or of the Gentile not “continuing in God’s goodness”—of the great house, with its vessels unto honour and dishonour, and of other like things. They told us of “the latter times,” and of “the last days,” and they still tell the deadly character which that hour is to bear—that is to usher forth the man of sin, and ripen iniquity for the brightness and the power of the day of the Lord.

All this is so. And let me ask, if every hour be, after this manner, bearing its character, or wearing its sign, what mark are we, individually, helping to put upon

this our day? Is the purpose and way of the Lord ripening into blessedness, at all reflected in us? or, are we, in any measure, aiding to unfold that form of evil which is to bring down the judgment? If the times were to be known and described according to *our* way, what character would they bear; what sign would distinguish them?

These are inquiries for the conscience of each of us. We cannot be neuter in this matter. We cannot be idle in this market place. It may be but in comparative feebleness, but still, each of us, within the range of the action of Christendom, is either helping to disclose God's ways, or to ripen the vine of the earth for the winepress of wrath.

The Lords tells us that the sign on which our *faith* must rest is that of a *humbled* Christ, such a sign as that of Jonah the prophet. Our faith deals with such a sign, because our need as sinners casts us on a Saviour, or a *humbled* Christ. But *hope* may feed on a thousand signs. Our expectations are nourished by a sight of the operations of the divine hand displaying every hour the ripening of the divine counsels and promises, in spite of the world, and in the very face of increasing human energies.

These signs may be watched, but watched by the saint *already in the place and attitude*

assigned him by the Spirit. They are not to determine what is his place, but they may exercise him in it. His place and attitude is beforehand and independently determined for him—waiting for the Son of God from heaven.

This posture the Thessalonian saints assumed on their believing the Gospel (1 Thess. i. 9, 10). The apostle seems afterwards to strengthen them in that posture, by telling them that from it they were to be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. iv. 17). And again afterwards, he seems to guard them against being disturbed in that attitude, against being tempted to give it up, by further telling them, that that place of *expectation* should be changed for the place of *meeting*, ere the *day of the Lord fell in its terrors on the world and the wicked* (2 Thess. ii. 1). And still further. This very posture of waiting for the Son from heaven had induced a certain evil. The Thessalonian saints were neglecting present handiwork. The apostle does not in any wise seek to change their posture, but admonishes them to hold it in company with diligence and watchfulness, that, while their eye was gazing, their hand might be working (2 Thess. iii.).

Other New Testament Scriptures seem

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also to assume the fact, that faith had given all the saints this same attitude of soul; or, that the things taught them were fitted to do so (See 1 Cor. i. 7; xv. 23; Phil. iii. 20; Tit. ii. 13; Heb. ix. 28).

Admonitions and encouragements of the like tendency, that is, to strengthen us in this place and posture of heart, the Lord Himself seems to me to give, just at the bright and blessed close of the volume.

"I come quickly" is announced by Him three times in the twenty-second of Revelation—words directly suited to keep the heart, that listens to them believingly, in the attitude of which I am speaking. But different words of warning and encouragement accompany this voice.

"Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book" (Ver. 7). This warns us, that while we are waiting for Him, we must do so with watchful, obedient, observant minds, heedful of His words.

"Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every one according as his work shall be" (Ver. 12). This encourages to diligence, telling us, that by the occupation of our talents now during His absence, on the promised and expected return He will have honours to impart to us.

"Surely, I come quickly," is again the

word (Ver. 20). This is a simple promise. It is neither a warning nor an encouragement. Nothing accompanies the announcement, as in the other cases. It is, as it were, simply a promise to bring *Himself* with Him on His coming again. But it is the highest thing, the dearest thing. The heart may be silent before a warning and before an encouragement. Such words may get their audience in secret from the conscience. But this promise of the simple personal return of Christ gets its answer from the saints ("Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks"), "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Thus the Lord, after this various and beautiful manner, does the business of the Spirit in the apostles. His own voice, in these different and striking announcements, encourages the saints to maintain the attitude of waiting for Him.

Great things are a doing. The church, the Jew, and the Gentile, are all in characteristic activity, each full of preparation and expectancy. *But faith waits for that which comes not with such things.* The rapture of the saints is part of a mystery, a part of "the hidden wisdom." The coming of the Son of God from heaven is a fact, as I judge, apart altogether from the history or the condition of the world around.

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THE WAY OF SAFETY, AND GODLY
CONDUCT FOR THE FAITHFUL,
IN REFERENCE TO THE
LAST DAYS.

Luke xxi. 34-36. Acts xx. 29-32. 2 Tim. iii.
1-iv. 5.

(Notes taken at a meeting.)

In these Scriptures, the way of safety and of godly conduct for the faithful is connected with individual character and nearness to God.

When God reproves, we should accept the reproof as from God ; we should bring our doings to the light, and that is, the word of God : "He that doeth truth cometh to the light" (John iii. 21). There is danger of trying to find excuse for what we suspect to be wrong, and instead of searching the word of God to find out the evil, searching it to defend the evil, and thus darkening the light.'

In Luke xxi., when there is distress of nations, and men's hearts failing them with fear, then the disciples of Jesus should lift up their heads ; and, therefore, they are warned against having their hearts overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life.

1. *Surfeiting.* The heart, when filled with engagement in circumstances, has little

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relish or appetite for the things of the Lord.

2. *Drunkenness.* The excitement of circumstances in the world hinders sober enjoyment of heart before God. In Isaiah xxviii. 1-7, the drunkards of Ephraim are marked as seeking refreshment in what passes away; and the effect of drunkenness is marked in error of judgment.

3. *Cares of this life.* Distressing anxiety about circumstances, in not casting our care on the Lord, so occupies the heart, that the things of God are not thought of. In reference to these things, the Lord says to His disciples: "Watch ye, therefore, and pray always:" these are the means by which we take heed to ourselves. We should watch against those evil things, and we should watch our own hearts. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. iv. 23). We should watch in communion with God, and in the light of God's truth.

In "praying always," there is the breathing forth of dependence on God as we go on our way, not looking to channels or looking to circumstances, but in conscious dependence looking to God.

As to the expression, "standing before the Son of man," the position of standing is not like that of a soldier lying down and weltering in his blood. When the apostle

speaks of our conflict, in Ephes. vi., he says, "that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand." In the day of the Son of man, while some will hide themselves in the rocks, the faithful will stand in quiet peace.

In Acts xx., the apostle warns of the danger the brethren are in. Our danger may be from *things* acting on the heart, as in the warning in Luke xxi., or it may be from *people*, as here.

1. There are "grievous wolves."

2. There are "men speaking perverse things."

In the one, the character is fierce, "not sparing the flock." In the other, the character is attractive, "drawing away disciples after them." The brethren are in danger from those who would act on their fears, terrifying them with threats; they are also in danger from those who would act on their feelings, to draw them after themselves. Here, there is double danger: first, the men; secondly, the perverse things they speak: but there is deliverance from both in God and in the word of His grace.

When there is danger from bad men, the apostle does not commend them to any man, but to God and to the word of His grace. Our blessing lies in nothing short of this. The men speak perverse things; but we are

commended to God and to the word of His grace; and in this we will be followers of God and not of man. Many are following men; but if the disciples of Jesus should be called on at any time to tell what they are, they should say: "We are Christians," and not name any individual upon earth, as being his followers: there may be those who need to be instructed in this, that they may not, in ignorance, dishonour their Lord. Some may call themselves after a person who desires that they should not do so, as when at Corinth they said, "I am of Paul;" but if some do it, let us be cautious.

In 2 Tim. iii., the perilous times of the last days are spoken of; and the persons involved in them are described in parts of their character, in the same way as the reprobate Gentiles in Rom. i. The characters of being proud, boasters, disobedient to parents, and without natural affection, are applied to both of them. The same horrible characters found among the heathen, whom God gave over to a reprobate mind, are found also in the last days among the false professors of Christianity.

Some of the grosser evils, as in the eyes of man, which are ascribed to the heathen in Rom. i., such as murder, are omitted in the description of characters in the perilous times, where there is "a form of godliness."

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Some other features of character are specially found among these latter, such as "despisers of those that are good," because these were found coming more in their way, as the painful witnesses against their evil. So it was with Diotrophes, desiring to have the pre-eminence, and speaking against the apostle with malicious words.

In marking the character of a disciple, the words of the Lord Jesus are: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself;" but, in the perilous times, men are "lovers of their own selves."

The apostle says: "From such turn away," for evil communications corrupt good manners. They have a form of godliness. It may be any form; but by their fruits ye shall know them; and we must turn away on individual responsibility.

We need not only to watch our hearts against evil things, but also our communications, that they be not with evil people. The apostle directs Timothy as to his positive conduct at such times. Two things are set before him: the order and connection of these it is most important to observe. The first has reference to Timothy himself; the second has reference to others. The Lord would teach us not to be like hypocrites, having the beam in our own eye while taking the mote out of our brother's eye; and

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so in these two directions: the first is, "Continue thou in the things thou hast learned and been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them:" this had reference to Timothy himself. The second is, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine:" this had reference to others. In the exercise of individual care of ourselves, we are capacitated to take care of others; and so when the apostle spoke of one overtaken in a fault, his direction was: "Ye that are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted." Consciousness of failure and weakness makes us to sympathize with a brother in his weakness, and then consciousness of strength in God gives ability to help that brother. While Paul warned Timothy, he could also say of himself: "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience."

The apostle gave further warning thus: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." The sound doctrine

which they would not endure means *wholesome doctrine*; it is humbling to oneself, but giving glory to Jesus. This cannot be endured where one's own lusts prevail, and so they heap up teachers to themselves: these teachers may gratify their taste with learning and soft language. The danger is of leaving the truth with itching ears—trying, it may be, to get a more enlarged mind.

There is another double direction given to Timothy: "Endure afflictions; do the work of an evangelist." While troubles come upon us, blessing should flow out from us. Our ministry should take its character from what God is to us, not from what man is to us. Afflictions come from man, and we should endure them;—glad tidings come from God, and we should be His Gospel ministers of them.



THE HOPES OF THE CHURCH OF GOD, IN CONNECTION WITH THE DESTINY OF THE JEWS AND THE NATIONS.

As Revealed in Prophecy.

(Continued from Vol. xv. 236.)

LECTURE VIII.

Read Romans xi.

ISRAEL'S FIRST ENTRY INTO THE LAND
WAS THE RESULT OF PROMISE.

We have, in Romans xi. 1, this question put by the apostle as to Israel: "Hath God

cast away his people?" As far as chapter viii., in the epistle to the Romans, he has been detailing the history of us all as men, whether Jews or Gentiles; he has fully stated the gospel of the grace of God, namely, the reconciliation of man by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. After having established this point, he begins in chapter ix., the history of the dispensations: he makes known the manner in which God has acted towards the Jews and the Gentiles; and in this chapter xi., he starts the question, "Hath God cast away his people?"

We have seen, in studying the history of the four beasts, and also that of the church, that the Jews were put aside; and that the gospel has appeared in the world to save sinners, whether Jews or Gentiles, in order to reveal the hidden mystery of a heavenly people, and that "unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God." A Jew, who is now converted, enters into the dispensation of grace; but upon this comes the immediate inquiry, "Hath God cast away his people?"

It is not concerning His spiritual people that the question is asked, but concerning His people according to the flesh — His people, the Jews. The apostle says (ver. 28),

“As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes.” In this chapter xi., the gospel is not in view—namely the calling of the Jews, as a people, into grace by the gospel—although, indeed, there is a gospel election from among this people; but the question treated is that of the Jews, as God’s manifested people, of Jews according to the flesh, who are enemies as to the gospel, but beloved on the principle of a national election on account of their fathers.

Because, then, the gospel has come in, has God rejected His people? Does He count them enemies? The answer of the apostle is, “God forbid.”

We Christians boast of this, that “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance;” well we may—it is a Scriptural principle: but to whom does the apostle apply it? Not to us, but to the Jews. It is always important to consider the context of every passage of the word of God, and not to force it out of the situation where God has placed it.

The present is the dispensation of the calling of a heavenly people, and, in consequence, God puts aside His earthly people, the Jews. The Jewish nation is never to enter into the church; on the contrary,

“blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in;”—until all the children of God, out of them composing the body of the church in this dispensation, are called.

Israel, as a nation, will be saved. “There shall come out of Zion the deliverer.” He has not cast away His people. As touching the gospel they are enemies, and they will so remain until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in: but the Deliverer will come. This is a summary of the divine purpose as regards the Jews.

From the moment it can be affirmed of the dispensation of the Gentiles, that it has not “continued in the goodness of God,” we can say that, sooner or later, it will be cut off. “Toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.”

The root of the olive-tree is not alone Israel under the law; far from it. It is Abraham, to whom the call of God was addressed. It was the calling of a single man, separated, elect, the depositary of the promises. The choice fell upon Abraham, and upon the family of Abraham according to the flesh. Israel has served for an example, as depositary of the promises and of the manifestation of the election of God; now it is the church which so serves.

In order to make you understand the *root* of the promises, which is Abraham, I will touch upon the series of dispensations which preceded.

First, at the fall of man we see him left to himself. Although not without witness, he had neither law nor government; and, as a consequence, evil was carried to the highest pitch, so that the world was full of violence and corruption; and God purified it by the deluge.

Afterwards came Noah. A change took place; it was this—that the right of life and death, the right of taking vengeance, was given into the hands of men: “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, *by man* shall his blood be shed.” To this is added a blessing to the earth, greater or less. “This same,” said Lamech, in speaking of Noah, “shall comfort us, . . . because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed;” and a covenant is made by God with Noah and with the creation; a covenant in witness of which God gives the rainbow. “The Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground.” (Gen. viii. 21; ix. 6, 12, 13.) This was the covenant given to the earth immediately after the sacrifice of Noah, the type of the sacrifice of Christ.

It may be said, in passing, that Noah fail-

ed in this covenant, as man always has done. Instead of drawing blessings out of the earth by tillage, he begins to cultivate the vine, and gets intoxicated. By this forgetfulness and fault of his, the proper principle of government also lost its power in its first elements. Noah, who held its reins, became the subject of the derision of one of his sons.

We see in all dispensations the immediate failure of man ; but that which is lost in all of them by human folly will find its recovery at the end in Christ ; whether it be blessing to the earth, prosperity to the Jews, or the glory of the church. All that has appeared and has been spoiled, under the keeping of the first Adam, will blossom again under that of the Second Adam, Bridegroom of the Church, and King of the Jews and of the whole earth.

Another still more signal failure took place after Noah's. God had made His judgments terribly felt in the deluge, and His providence was thus revealed. What did Satan do ? As long as he is unbound he takes possession of the state of things here below. No sooner did God manifest Himself in His providential judgments, than Satan presented himself also as God ; he made himself, as it were, God. Is it not written, "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to

God?" (1 Cor. x. 20, cited from Deut. xxxii. 16, 17.) Satan made himself the god of this earth. Joshua xxiv. 2: "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood (or rather, 'river') in old time . . . and they served *other gods*," said the Lord to the Israelites. It is the first time that we find God marking the existence of *idolatry*. When it made its appearance, God calls Abraham; and thus, for the first time, appears the call of God to an outward separation from the state of things here below; because Satan having introduced himself as influencing the thoughts of man, as the one whom man was to invoke, it was necessary that the true God should have a people separated from other people, where the truth might be preserved; and consequently all the ways of God towards men turn upon this point—that here below God called Abraham and his posterity to be the depositary of this great truth, "There are none other gods but one" (see Deut. iv. 35). Consequently, all the doings of God upon the earth have reference entirely and directly to the Jews, as the centre of His earthly counsels and of His government. This is shown us in Deuteronomy xxxii. 8. It was according to the number of the children of Israel that the bounds of the nations were set. It was with reference to Israel that He gave them their habitations.

(To be continued, D. V.)

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“WATCHMAN, WHAT OF THE NIGHT?”

The night is dark
 And earth is weary with its long deep groan ;
 The church, once ardent in its fair first love,
 Lies broken in a ruin of its own--
 Few wake to know and own its low estate ;
 And Satan's power is great.
 The sun, that set on Calvary long ago,
 Keeps vigil o'er the night “far spent ;”
 While bright and high above all clouds I see
 “The Morning Star”
 ('Tis nothing to the world, it sees it not)
 Which shines in all its beauty for faith's eye--
 Aye shines within the Christian's throbbing breast,
 And sheds its light as harbinger of rest.
 The watch will soon be past,
 For night is passing fast ;
 The shadows deep and wide that strew the path--
 Hide not the “Star.”
 They'll flee, and in their lengthened track shall flow
 Deep tides of woe :
 While He who is the “Morning Star” will come
 For those who love and hail the Saviour near--
 Blest issue to the desert dark and drear.

* * * * *

But stay, and let the watchman yet be heard ;
 Hath he no other solemn weighty word ?
 Yes, hark ! there stands outside the door
 The “Faithful Witness,” (He hath knocked before)
 He stands, He knocks, He waits in patient grace :
 Wilt thou not ope the door and give Him place ?
 He'll bring a feast *and sup with thee*,
 And saith (Oh wondrous grace), “and he with Me !”
 He'll tell thee all His heart
 And give, e'en now, in night's dark closing hour
 The joy of His own love.
 His strength too He will give
 And bear thee onward for His own name's sake :
 The spring of love in Him to find unchanged,
 And keep thee from the state that He doth hate
 Of “neither cold nor hot.”

THE NIGHT OF THIS WORLD.

“It is high time to awake out of sleep ; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” The night of this world is the absence of the Sun of Righteousness. Let us clearly conceive this. In the busy and pleasure-seeking course of this world, for him who has understanding and to whom Christ is known, it is still night. The gloom of night is over it, but the day has dawned to his faith ; the Morning Star is arisen in his heart, but the world is asleep in the still-continuing darkness of night ; for indeed the night is far spent, but the world is asleep in the night. The waking soul sees in the horizon, the Morning Star—the dawn along its edge, and waits for day. The heart is in the day, and walks as in the day. As Christians we have done with works of darkness. In conflict we are still, but our armour against evil, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, is the light in which we walk. The power of light, and truth, and godliness, and judgment of evil, which belongs to that day, is in our heart, and the weapons and snares of darkness are foiled and detected, getting no entrance into, no hold on, the soul. We walk honestly as in the day ; we put on in our ways and heart the walk and character of Him who is the true

light of it, the Lord Jesus Christ. Having the hope of being like Him there, we purify ourselves as He is pure. We do not provide for the lusts of the nature which belongs to the darkness to satisfy it, but walk as Christ walked. Such is the Christian in view of Christ's coming, and bringing on this dark and benighted world the light and day of God in His effectual power, and are the two springs and characters of Christian conduct—recognition of, and acting up to, every relative duty in love, and knowing the time, the near approach of day to which he belongs. (Compare 1 Thess. v.) “the night is far spent, the day is at hand.”



“KEEP YOURSELVES IN THE LOVE OF GOD.”

(Extract from a Letter.)

* * * * * I trust God is keeping you very near Himself, and that He maintains the freshness of His grace and love in your soul. We need to be constantly renewed ; without that, spiritual energy does not keep up —“they shall renew their strength,” it is said, “like eagles.” And it is not progress in knowledge that effects that ; although this is profitable for helping others in the truth :

what is of moment is the keeping oneself near God. There love maintains itself and grows—His love in our souls, which finds its activity and comfort in exercising itself towards poor sinners and towards the saints: one seeks the glory of the Lord in them, and their own well-being. God gives you to enjoy Himself; but God reveals Himself not only as infinite blessedness in Himself, but also in the activities of His love in which He finds His delight. And when His love is shed abroad in our hearts we enjoy assuredly what He is, but this love is active towards us by His grace. Activity, unless renewing itself in communion with Him, may be sincere, but will degenerate into routine and into a habit of acting, and is even dangerous; the soul gets far from God without knowing it. But abiding in His love in Jesus and His word abiding in us, we can count on an answer to the requests we address to Him in our hearts.



THE GLORY OF GOD.

(*Rom. iii. 23*)

The path of the glory through Scripture may be easily tracked, and has much moral value for us connected with it.

Exodus xiii. It commences its journey in the cloud, on the deliverance of Israel from

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Egypt, when the paschal blood, in the grace of the God of their fathers, had sheltered them.

Exodus xiv. In the moment of the great crisis it stood, separating between Israel and Egypt, or between judgment and salvation.

Exodus xvi. It resented the murmurings of the camp.

Exodus xxiv. It connected itself with Mount Sinai, and was as devouring fire in the sight of the people.

Exodus xl. It leaves that Mount for the tabernacle, the witness of mercy rejoicing against judgment, resuming also in the cloud its gracious services toward the camp.

Leviticus ix. The priest being consecrated and his services in the tabernacle being discharged, it shows itself to the people to their exceeding joy.

Numbers ix. Resuming their journey in company with the tabernacle, the congregation enjoy the guidance of the cloud, which now attends the tabernacle, while the glory fills it.

Numbers xvi. In the hour of full apostasy it shows itself in judicial terror in the sight of the rebellious people.

Deuteronomy xxxi. In the cause of Joshua, an elect and faithful vessel, it reappears in the cloud.

2 Chronicles v. On the temple being bui

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a new witness of grace, the glory and the cloud reappear to the joy of Israel, as of old.

Ezekiel i.-xi. Again, in another hour of full apostasy, the glory, taking wings and wheels to itself, as it were, leaves the temple.

Acts vii. Stephen, an earth-rejected man, sees it in heaven in company with Jesus.

Revelation xxi. 9. In millennial days it descends from heaven in its new habitation, the holy Jerusalem, "the Lamb's wife," resting above in the air, from whence it shades and illumines the dwellings of Israel again (Isaiah iv. 5), as it once did from the cloud in the wilderness, or enters the second temple, the temple of the millennium. (Ezek. xliii. ; Hag. ii.)

Such is the path of the glory, the symbol of the divine presence. Its history, as thus traced, tells us that, if man be in company with grace, he can rejoice in it; but that it is devouring fire to all who stand under Mount Sinai. It tells us also that, while it cheers and guides them on their way, it resents the evil and withdraws from the apostasy of God's professing people.

It is very instructive and comforting to note these things in the history of the glory, which was the symbol of the divine presence. And if that presence displayed itself in other forms, the same lessons are still taught us. The most eminent of the sons of

men were unable to brook it in themselves ; but in Christ all, high and low, unnamed and distinguished ones, could not only bear it but rejoice in it.

Adam fled from the presence of God. But the moment he listened to the promise of Christ, believing it he came forth into that presence again, with fullest and nearest confidence.

Moses, favoured as he was, could not abide it save in Christ, the Rock, the riven rock of salvation. (Exodus xxxiii.)

Isaiah, chief among the prophets, dies at the sight of the glory, till a coal from the altar, the symbol of Christ in His work for sinners, *purges his sin away.* (Chap. vi.)

Ezekiel and Daniel, companions with him in the prophetic office, with him also fail utterly in the divine presence, and are able afterwards to stand it only through the gracious interference of the Son of man. (Ezek. iii. ; Dan. x.)

John, the beloved disciple, the honoured apostle, even in the very place and time of his suffering for Jesus, takes the sentence of death into himself at the sight of the glorified Jesus till He who lived and died and lived again spoke to him and gave him peace and assurance. (Rev. i.)

These distinguished ones cannot measure the divine presence by anything but the

simple virtue of what Christ is to them and for them. In that virtue they abide it at peace; and so, with them, does the most distant and unnamed one of the camp witness a scene already referred to (Lev. ix.) There, all who stood at the door of the tabernacle beholding the consecration and services of the priest, the typical Christ, triumph in the presence of the glory; as also in another scene referred to (2 Chron. v.), when the ark, another type of Christ, is brought into the house of God.

Sin and righteousness account for all this.

Sin is attended by this, as its necessary consequence—a coming short of the glory of God. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” This has been illustrated in the cases or in the histories I have been tracing. Sin incapacitates us to stand the force of the divine presence. It is too much for a sinner. But there is full relief. For if sin and incapacity to brook the presence or glory of God be morally one, so is righteousness and a return to that presence.

Sin implies a condition or state of being; and so does righteousness. And as sin is incapacity to come up to God’s glory, righteousness is that which measures God’s glory. It is capacity to stand in the fullest brightness of it; as these histories also illustrate. For in Christ, through the provisions of

grace, or set in the righteousness of God by faith, all those whom we have looked at, whether great or small, found themselves at ease in the divine presence.

We experience all this towards our fellow-creatures. If we have wronged a person, we instinctively "come short" of his presence; we are uneasy at it, and seek to avoid it. But if we receive a pardon from him, sealed with the full purpose and love of his heart, we return to his presence with confidence. And how much more so, I may say, if we saw that he was pressing that pardon upon us with all the skill and diligence of love, and at the same time telling us that all the wrong we had done him had been infinitely repaired, and that he himself had good reason to rejoice in the wrong because of the repairing! Surely all this would form a ground, and be our warrant, for regaining his presence with more assurance and liberty than ever.

Now, such is the gospel. It warrants the sinner to entertain all these thoughts with full certainty. The wrong we had committed, the offence which Adam did against the love, the truth, and the majesty of God, has all been gloriously repaired by Christ. God is more honoured in the satisfaction than He would have been, had the wrong never been done. All His rights are provided for

in their fullest demands and to their highest point of praise. He is "just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

Faith assumes this, and the believer, therefore, does not come short of the glory of God, though as a sinner he once did. Faith receives "the righteousness of God;" and the righteousness of God can and does measure the glory of God. In His righteousness we can stand before His glory. And that it can in this sense measure His glory—that faith in the gospel, or in the ministry of righteousness, can set us with liberty, or open face in presence of the glory of God—is taught in 2 Corinthians iii., iv.; yea, indeed, that the expression of that glory can be had only in the ministry of righteousness, the full glory only "in the face of Jesus Christ."



THE HOPES OF THE CHURCH OF GOD,

(Continued from page 20.)

LECTURE VIII. (Continuation.)

ISRAEL'S FIRST ENTRY INTO THE LAND
WAS THE RESULT OF PROMISE.

You will see also these two principles distinctly presented in the word: on one side, the promises made to Abraham without condition; and on the other, Israel receiving them under condition, and so losing all.

But as Abraham received the promises without condition, God cannot forget them, although Israel may have failed in the conditions which they engaged for. And this is very important; for if God had failed in His promises towards Abraham, He could fail also in His promises towards us.

It was at Sinai that Israel received the promises under condition, and failed; but this in no wise weakened the validity and the force of the promises made to Abraham four hundred years before. I am now alluding to the spiritual promise, "All nations shall be blessed in thee," which has found a partial fulfilment by the gospel in this dispensation; but I allude to the promises made to *Israel*, which rest on the same faithfulness of God.

Let us begin our citations upon this subject out of Genesis xii. The chapter is the call of Abraham, who was then in the midst of his idolatrous family. The terms of the promise are very general; but they contain earthly blessings as well as purely spiritual ones. The two kinds are found in the same verse equally without condition. The spiritual part of the promise is only once repeated (chap. xxii.), and that to the seed; not so the temporal ones. In chapter xv., we have the promise founded upon a covenant made with Abraham, also without condition; it

is an absolute gift of the country. Here is also found that of a numerous posterity (vs. 5, 18); and even the exact limits of the country given (vs. 18, and following). In chapter xvii. 7, 8, the promise of the earth is renewed. These are confirmed to Isaac (chap. xxvi. 3, 4), and to Jacob (chap. xxxv. 10-12). Here are "the promises made unto the fathers," and to Israel, "beloved for the *fathers'* sakes:" they are made to Abraham, whether spiritual or temporal, without any condition.

If you say that the spiritual promises are without condition, by parity of reasoning the temporal ones are. There is as much certainty in the promise made to Abraham, "To thee will I give this land," as in those which have been made in favour of us Gentiles.

There is no need to cite the wrestling of Jacob. It is, in general, thought to be a proof of extraordinary faith in him. This is true; but, at the same time, it is a faith which, exerted after conduct much to be reprehended, was to be accompanied by an evident humiliation. It was God who wrestled with him; but God also sustained his faith. So shall it be with Israel at the end; they shall feel the effect of leaning on the flesh; but God shall take this controversy into His own hands and bless them after all.

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Thus God made Himself "*the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob*"—heirs of the promises, and pilgrims upon earth.

We shall see that in this name, God, as it were, makes His boast on the earth, and that the faithful in Israel ever find in it the motives of their confidence. "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations" (Ex. iii. 15).

But in another point of view, Israel placed themselves in relationship with God, in a way which is opposed to all this; namely, their own righteousness—the principle of the law—by virtue of which, acknowledging that we owe obedience to God, we undertake the doing of it in our own strength; for the history of the people of Israel is, whether in its largeness or details, but the history of our hearts.

Exodus xix. Here was an immense change taking place in the state of Israel: until then the promise made to them had been unconditional. If you cast your eyes over the chapters from xv. to xix., you will find that God had given them all things gratuitously, and even in spite of their murmurings; as the manna, water to drink, the

sabbath, etc.; and that He had sustained them in their combat with Amalek at Rephidim. He recalls all this to their memory: "Ye have seen," says He to them, "how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself; now therefore, if" "This is the first time, in the relationship between God and Israel, that the little word *if* is introduced. "Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation."

But the moment a condition comes in, our ruin is certain, for we fail the first day; and this was the foolishness of Israel. In vain God gives His law, which is "holy, and just, and good." To a sinner His law is death, because he is a sinner; and from the moment that God gives His law conditionally—namely, that something is to come to us by keeping it—He gives it, not because we can obey it, but to make us more clearly comprehend that we are lost because we have violated it.

The Israelites should have said, It is true, most gracious God, we ought to obey Thee; but we have failed so often, that we dare not receive the promises under such a condition. Instead of this, what was their

language? "All the words that the Lord hath said will we do." They bind themselves to fulfil all that Jehovah had spoken; they take the promises under the condition of perfect obedience. What is the consequence of such rashness? The golden calf was made before Moses had come down from the mount. When we sinners engage ourselves to obey God without any failure (although obedience is always a duty), and to forfeit the blessing if we do not, we are sure to fail. Our answer should always be, "We are lost;" for grace supposes our ruin. It is this entire instability of man under any condition, that the apostle wishes to show (Gal. iii. 17-21) when he says, "A mediator is not a mediator of one." That is, from the instant there is a mediator, there are two parties. But God is not two; "God is one." And who is the other party? It is man. Hence the accomplishment depends on the stability of man, as well as of God; and all comes to nothing.

There being nothing stable in man, he has of course sunk under the weight of his engagements; and this is what must always happen. But the law cannot annul the promises made to Abraham: the law, which was 430 years after, cannot abolish the promise; and the promise was made to Abraham, not only of a blessing to the na-

tions, but also of the land, and of earthly blessings to Israel. The reasoning of the apostle, as to spiritual promises, applies equally to temporal promises made to the Jews. We see that Israel could not enjoy them under the law. In fact, all was lost as soon as the golden calf was made. Yet the covenant at Sinai was founded on the principle of obedience. Ex. xxiv. 7, 8: "And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood" Here is a covenant ratified by blood—and upon this foundation,—“We will do all that the Lord hath said.” You know that the people made the golden calf, and that Moses in consequence destroyed the tables of the law.

In Exodus xxxii; we see how the promises made before the law were the resource of faith. It was this which sustained the people by the intercession of Moses, even in ruin itself: and by means of a mediator, God returned to man after his failure. (Vs. 9, 10) “It is a stiffnecked people: now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation.” Then Moses besought the Lord: “Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of

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this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven ; and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people."

Thus, after the fall of Israel, Moses beseeches God, for His own glory, to remember the promises made to Abraham ; and God repents of the evil which he had thought to do.

Turn to Leviticus xxvi. This chapter is the threat of all the chastisements which were to follow the unfaithfulness of Israel. Verse 42 : "Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham ; . . . and I will remember the land."*

God returns to His promises made unconditionally long before the law ; and this is applicable to the last times, as we shall presently see.

*See also, for this appeal to promises apart from conditions, Deuteronomy ix. 5, 27 ; x. 15. In Micah vii. 19, 20, these same promises made to Abraham constitute the prophetic hope. And the faithful Israelite, Simeon (Luke ii. 25, etc.), recalls them as the ground of confidence to Israel, who, in these promises, might rest on the faithfulness of God.

There are two more covenants made with Israel during their wanderings in the wilderness. That under the law having been broken, the intercession of Moses made way for another (Ex. xxxiii. 14-19), of which we have the basis in Exodus xxxiv. 27 : "And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words ; for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel." Observe, *with thee* ; for there is a remarkable change in the language of God. In Egypt, God had always said, "My people, my people." But when the golden calf was made, He uses the word which they had used—"Thy people which thou broughtest up out of the land of Egypt ;" for Israel had said, "This Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt" (Ex. xxxii. 1). God takes them up in their own words. What happened ? Moses interceded, and, so to speak, he would not permit God to say "Thy people," as of him ; but he insisted upon *Thy people*, as of God's people.

Now then, it is a covenant made with Moses, as mediator. Here comes in the sovereignty of grace, introduced indeed when all was lost (the condition of the law having been violated). If God had not been sovereign, what would have been the consequence of this infraction ? The destruction of all the people. That is, though the

sovereignty of God is eternal, it is revealed when it becomes the only resource of a people lost by their own ways: and this sovereignty manifests itself through the means of a mediator.

There is still another covenant in Deuteronomy xxix. 1: "These are the words of the covenant, which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb." And the subject of this third covenant with the Israelites is this:—God makes it with them, in order that under it they, being obedient, might be able to continue to enjoy the land. They did not keep it, and so were expelled from the territory. They were installed in it at the epoch of this third covenant, and by the keeping of it they would have been maintained there. (See vs. 9, 12. 19.)

Thus we get the principle on which they entered at all into the land of Canaan. But we have also seen that before the law God had promised them the land for a perpetual possession, by covenants and promises made without condition; and it is owing to these promises, by the mediation of Moses, that Israel was spared, and at last enjoyed the land—enjoyed it, we say, on the terms of the third covenant, made in the plains of Moab.

After the fall of the Israelites in this promised land, there remains still to be applied to them, as to their re-establishment, all the promises made to Abraham. After this people had failed in every possible way towards God, the prophets show us clearly, that God has promised again to restore them and to establish them in their land, under the Lord Jesus Christ as their king, to receive in Him the full accomplishment of every temporal promise.

Let us recollect, dear friends, that all we have been going through is the revelation of the character of Jehovah; and that, though truly these things have happened to Israel, they have happened to them on the part of God; and that they are, as a consequence, the manifestation of the character of God in Israel for us. It is not only of the failure of Israel that we are to think, but of the goodness of God—our God. Israel is the theatre upon which God has displayed all His character; but not alone is Israel to be considered: the glory of God and the honour of His perfections are concerned. If God could fail in His gifts towards Israel, He could fail in His gifts towards us.

We shall have yet, on another occasion, to continue our account of this people.

(To be continued, D. V.)

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THE PEERLESS ONE.

O Thou, Jehovah's fellow, Man !
JESUS, my Lord, God's Son :
Human perfection at its height—
But found in Thee alone.

To Abba's love, to God's high claims,
Thou can'st not short at all ;
Perfect in everything art Thou
Alone since Adam's fall.

O matchless, peerless Man ! shall we
Begrudge to Thee this praise ?
Perfect, alone Thou can'st in love
To glory us to raise.

Peerlessly spotless One ! 'twas Thou
The wrath did'st bear for me :
Peerlessly righteous One ! I'm made
God's righteousness in Thee.

Peerlessly glorious One ; how soon
Shall I be like to Thee !
Thy very glory then reflect,
Thy perfect beauty see.

THE ONLY - BEGOTTEN OF THE
FATHER.

“ He that cometh from above is above all.”—
John iii. 31.

It is only when we begin to “ behold the glory of the Lord ” in one light and another by the four evangelists, and especially as presented throughout this gospel of John,

that our souls gather up, and at last concentrate all their rays in the one great confession of His person as "the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." The knowledge of *this* glory will then prepare us for its blessed counterpart; viz., "the Son in the bosom of the Father" come to declare Him to us.

On our part we thankfully and gladly own, as taught of God, "He that cometh from above is above all;" and in happy keeping with this glorious manifestation of His person, one loves to hear the forerunner say of Him at the *outset* of this gospel, "There standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose." Consistently too with this testimony, and the further unfolding of Christ's glory from first to last, one loves the sweet savour of Mary's spike-nard at *the close*, when in the maturity of her faith and ripening affection she anointed the feet of Jesus for "His burial," and wiped them with the hair of her head. Between these varying appreciations of John the Baptist and Mary of Bethany, the mother of Jesus likewise holds her place at "the marriage of Cana," and in the full satisfaction and confidence of her heart bids the servants *do* "whatsoever He saith unto you."

Happy and encouraging as these and other such experiences of personal love to the Lord from one and another are to us in our day, yet *we* only advance in it individually as we are led on by the word, and our own anointing through the Spirit to Himself, in the deepening knowledge of who, and what He is. We shall find ourselves thus drawn into the circle "of His own glory" by His acts and deeds, and shall be detained *there* by the immensity of the objects which brought Him down from above, and the weighty words which He spoke, and the mighty work of redemption which He began and finished for the glorious and holy majesty of God upon this earth, ere He departed into the heavens.

In the beginning of His loving ways and intercourse with men and women day by day as "He who cometh from above," we recall likewise with delight those two disciples whom He attracted into the place where He dwelt, and who abode with Him that day. Indeed, from His own dwelling below in the first chapter of John, on and up to "the Father's house" above in the fourteenth, which He is gone to prepare, and into which He is presently coming to receive *us*, these various habitations could only suit and serve Him as they were owned or shared by "the excellent of the earth,"

in whom was all His delight. His divine errand in grace to us, was to draw men out of the world to Himself, and attach them by a love which made them feel it was past all finding out, but which nevertheless had them for its object, and found its satisfaction with them and in their company. "His delights were with the sons of men:" and his whole life long was but one gathering-time, in which the whole multitudes who pressed upon Him, either to be taught or to be fed, were His welcome guests. Much more if we add to this His love, which was stronger than death, and by which He saved us on the cross, and brought us to God.

Still, as an example of its varying manner and measure, it may be helpful and certainly refreshing to recall the two extremes—of Nathanael drawn out from under the fig-tree to Him; and John, the beloved disciple, drawn to Him in the confidence of loving assurance at the supper-table to repose upon His breast. So again, as "the Son of man which is in heaven," He drew Nicodemus on, that He might, through the cross, give him a title to life, and show him how to see and enter into the kingdom of heaven. How lovingly too He did this by the way of Moses, and the serpent lifted up upon the pole, as foreshadowed in the hour of Israel's calamity at Hormah, and their sore rebuke

under the hand of Jehovah! But in His rich grace He descended further down into the depths of human misery than this, that by impassable gulfs and distances from God (to every one else) He might draw sinners out of their distresses and ruin, and attach them by redemption through His blood eternally to Himself and to God. Who does not over and over again recall the day when He sat upon Jacob's well, and tarried for the woman of Samaria to come for its water, that He might give to her guilty conscience and troubled heart, a drink from the springs of life in glory? How too He loved to reveal Himself, and who He was that drew the living water, as He handed it to her, and bade her thirst no more, neither come thither again to draw! Higher and mightier than the angel of Bethesda, as He travelled on He declined to trouble the water for the first who could step in, but drew forth the man to Himself who was the last—that one who had been bound thirty and eight years, and had no friend to put him in. Immediately He takes the place as “above all,” and gave him the power to carry the bed which had hitherto held him as its captive; and in virtue of a transmitted energy which was from above, to take it up and walk, as the every-day witness of the One who had made him free.

After all, this living water to the woman of Samaria, and this loving power to the impotent man at Bethesda, are only some of the droppings out of "the fulness" which dwells in Him. In the greatness of His own glory, which He had with the Father before the world was, He had come down into this valley of Baca, as the Lamb of God, to make it a well, and even be in it as He passed along, like the rain which "filleth the pools." He is come who alone could reach the very core of its misery, and heal it at the fountain-head of its corruption, as "the taker away of the sin of the world." Moreover, in Him was life, and the life was the light of men; and to "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." Life and light have issued out from divine love in the bosom of the Father, and are brought into the midst of men by "the Word made flesh," who dwelt among us in the veiled, and yet unveiled, glory of His mysterious manhood.

"He that cometh from above is above all" was manifested in every thought and deed of his life. This brightness of the Father, is the unfailing Sun of the new creation of God; and it is in "this glory" He passes along by the well and the pool in this groaning creation. "The glory" of the One in

the eternal Sonship, which He had with His Father and the Holy Ghost before ever the world was, accepted the body prepared for Him ; and in this manhood-glory it is that " God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." He it is moreover who has thus entered into the palace of the strong man and spoiled his goods, and taken away the armour wherein he trusted. The height of His own person in the glory of the Godhead, and the depth of His own grace in the humiliation-glory of the body He assumed, were necessary for the accomplishment of the work which was given Him to do—a work which in its result reached to the highest heavens, and delivered from the lowest hell. But whatever the skill and love of the potter, " the flesh profiteth nothing ;" for though He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, yet the world knew Him not.

A lapsed world and the usurper were in question before God ; and therefore a world that lieth in the wicked one, in its alienation and enmity against Christ the Son. Besides this He had come " to His own " (according to the flesh), " and His own received Him not." Where was He to turn *now* in such a world, when even these were against Him on whose behalf He came ? Could He

count upon the excited multitude who ate of the loaves and were filled, and who were moved towards Him in favour every now and then, when they saw the miracles which He wrought in Jerusalem? No! Jesus would not commit Himself to their selfishness and pride, because He knew all men, and "needed not that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man." Their highest thought would be to take Him by force and make Him a king for their own political ends, and by popular will. Everything on His side with the Father was perfect, and shone out in its brightest and best; and yet at such a moment all was at its very worst with men, and pointing at the greatest moral distance from God. These extremes are manifest as we come forth to stand upon the threshold of this wonderful gospel by John. On the one hand we measure all by Him who cometh from above as the Saviour of the world, and who "is above all;" or view the awful chaos, and confusion, and enmity which came from beneath, and with which sin, and Satan, and death filled it, and wrapped it around.

There is at this crisis of time a parallel to be found between the creation in the book of Genesis, and this beginning of the new creation in the gospel of John; and it lies

in this one thing, that when God began to act in each for His own glory, everything was either in a material chaos ; or else morally under sin and the curse, and was at its very worst. In Gen. i., the darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the earth was without form, and void. We must remember too that it was this very world, made by Him, into which He came as "God manifest in the flesh"—a world which had lost the knowledge of God, and which *now* knows Him not. Moreover, it is "His own" according to the flesh, with whom He had journeyed by "the angel," and which He had redeemed out of Egypt by the hands of Moses and Aaron, that *now* received Him not. In Genesis i., ii., man was only seen and known in happy relationship with the Creator, and standing before God in His own likeness too, and the Creator walking with him. In John, after the first had been "made subject to vanity," and when the Word that was with God, yea that was God, came forth into this ruined world in grace, it was swarming with millions of hearts which knew Him not, or would only hate Him, even if He revealed Himself to them in the mystery of flesh and blood. What a contrast! Who but He that came from above could bring "life and light" into it, as He did in Himself by His incarnation? Who

but He could proclaim "grace and truth" in its streets as He loved to do, so long as they would let Him live to do it? Who but He could "fall into the ground and die" as a corn of wheat, that through His death He might be waved before God in resurrection on the first day of a new week, in triumph, as the first ripe sheaf from off this harvest-field that would eventually fill the heavenly garner? Who but He "could breathe upon His disciples" after He was risen from the dead, and say, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted"?

"He that cometh from above is above all;" for who but He could redeem us to God by His blood, and put us in present relationship with Himself as the ascended One with His Father and our Father, His God and our God? Who, save this Son of the bosom, could thus bring back the Father into a world from which as Creator He had withdrawn in righteous judgment, leaving the cherubim with the flaming sword to keep the way of the tree of life in proof of His holy grief against sin, and of His hot displeasure against the liar and murderer? Who else than this Son from the beginning could walk, though in unknown paths as yet, but still in conscious power, amidst all the ruin of mankind, to meet it and hush it, and call

those who felt its heavy pressure the most, to come unto Him for relief, and find rest to their souls? Again, who but He could come forth from behind the cloud that concealed Him to mere flesh and blood (and yet that revealed Him to the eye of faith) in company with the Father, in that work of all other works—as “the quickener” and raiser of the dead? “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.”

If challenged in all these glories by the men of the Pharisees, who made a fair show of themselves in the flesh, and who refused Him in all His own characters; who but He could gird Himself with power, yea, step into another position, and as the Son of man declare that “God had given Him authority” to execute *judgment* also? Have to do with the Son of God they must, for “He that cometh from above is above all;” and if they would not take eternal life and forgiveness of sins, by faith in Him while they lived upon the earth, and talked with Him in the day of grace; He would call them out of their graves to be judged by Him for their sins, and for their refusal of eternal life, in the day of the vengeance of Almighty God. They shall come forth unto the “resurrection of damnation (‘judgment’);” for He is to be “the Judge of the quick and the dead.” In the meanwhile He could pass

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along day by day in this world as through a valley of dry bones, and speak a quickening word, by which all those who heard should live, through "the incorruptible seed" dropped into the hearts that received Him. The heavenly source and springs of sovereign grace and almighty power in the Father and the Son must needs be uncovered, and flow forth in power by the Holy Ghost. The time was come to set aside the flesh, and to refuse the six waterpots of purification at Cana in Galilee, or the well at Sychar, or the pool of Bethesda, and the angel of the Lord ; for these were but remedial measures, and were neither the fulness of life nor of grace. The ministry of the Son who came from above, and which is now before us, is of a totally different order, and takes its rise in "the bosom of the Father," and flows forth through the unfailing and loving channel of Him who dwelt there ; and is dispensed according to no other rule, and given out in no scant or uncertain measure to us who are its recipients. There is but one love and this love dwells in the fulness of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and is the well from whence the living and healing waters spring forth in our gospel, where all is "from above," and brought to us by Him who is "above all." Sing ye unto it ; for this is the well of which Jehovah spake typically to

Moses—"Gather the people together, and I will give them drink."

This new wine must be put into new bottles, and with our evangelist the bottles are as new as the wine, and "both are preserved." Mere probation and relief imply help, and mere help is only human support; but quickening into life, is divine power. The vessel itself was in question with Nicodemus; for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Thus in like manner "the wine for the marriage" was drawn from another vintage, and the fruit of grapes which never grew under this material sun. The bottles and the wine were by new creative power. Who does not bow before the Son of the eternal counsels, when presented in this gospel in His grandest act, as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world"—He who will eventually bring back and put all the tempted, strayed, and lost, but "elect" ones, into correspondence with God? Yea, more than this, bring them into relationship with the Father by means of redemption through His own most precious blood, as the "Lamb foreordained before the foundation of the world"? Who has not stood and wondered at the love of God which surmounted its greatest sin, and only took occasion by it to come down into its darkest hour, and send

forth the dove with its olive-branch, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved ?

Moreover, what was this in figure but "the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost," that in a new nature, and under this anointing, and as sons of God, we might enter upon our new fellowship with the Father and with His Son in the light where God dwells ? "The only-begotten of the Father" is thus declared to us by John, and from His first introduction by incarnation, till He comes up out of death in resurrection, and breathes out the Holy Spirit on His disciples, He passes along in His glories "full of grace and truth." He was thus seen, and handled, and felt ; so that one and another could say to us, Out "of His fulness have all we received," and grace "answering to the grace that is in Him." If we group the persons together of whom we have spoken, it is only to add that Nathanael received of this "fulness" when he left his place under the fig-tree, and confessed Jesus to be "the Son of God," and "the King of Israel." Likewise the wedding of Cana changed its character under this "fulness" to gain another and a divine one, by becoming the scene for the "beginning of miracles," and the place where Jesus "manifested forth His glory." So also Nicodemus, master of Israel, turned his back

upon himself and the law of Moses, in order to receive "grace for grace" through faith in "the Son of man lifted up" upon the cross; and, as we well know, the woman left her water-pot to receive from the "fulness," and drink at the Spring-head of life eternal. Again, the impotent man left the pool which he had clung to for its healing virtue, and the angel which descended at a certain season; to receive out of the "fulness" that quickening and raising and overcoming "power of life" by which he took up that whereon he lay, and walked.

Sin and transgression, violence and corruption, had ripened the world for the judgment of God in righteousness; but their existence and growth upon the earth had likewise suited it for the fulness of quickening power and the grace of Christ. It was this turned it into a corn-field "white already to harvest," and fitted for the reaper. The true Boaz had come "in the fulness of time" into His barley-field, and was gathering His sheaves into His bosom, as we have seen in these blessed ways of His with the elect; or else ordering those whom He had sent into harvest to let fall "handfuls of purpose for the stranger," that the man of the Jews, and the woman of Samaria, and the cripple of Bethesda, and *we*,—might rejoice together with the sower and reapers, and

gather the fruit thereof unto life eternal. Jesus does not know this world as God created it for a resting-place, but He accepts it as sin and the devil have marred it. He found it fitted only for another sowing and another reaping, and so He uses it "as the Sower" who brought the good seed to scatter broadcast over the earth.

Beautiful and suited is it for us in this our day, according to these and other patterns than the sower, to work with Jesus in His loving ways of emptying the vessels, and then filling them up to the brim, as He passed in and out amongst the sons and daughters of men, with whom "were all His delights" when on earth. Nor is He changed a whit, now that He is in the heavens; for what is the "still small voice," if we listen to the gospel of God from the right hand of the Majesty on high, but "bring me yet a vessel," and in the fulness and freeness of His grace adding, "borrow not a few"? Better still, if when we pass into the depths of His delights, and understand Him when He bids us to "draw out now, and bear to the governor of the feast." And "the ruler of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that

which is worse : but thou has kept the good wine until now."

Blessed Jesus ! and this is what thou art doing for thine own glory, and the delight of God with the sons of men--the redeemed ! Well may we have this Scripture engraven on the fleshy table of our hearts : "HE THAT COMETH FROM ABOVE IS ABOVE ALL," till He come again to receive us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also !



THE HOPES OF THE CHURCH OF GOD.

(Continued from Page 40.)

LECTURE IX.

Read Ezekiel xxxvii.

ISRAEL'S FAILURE AND DISPERSION ; PROMISES OF RESTORATION.

That which happens to the dry bones seen by Ezekiel exhibits, very forcibly, the matter to be treated of this evening ; namely, what God in His goodness will yet do in favour of Israel. We shall follow our usual method of giving a succession of passages out of the word of God upon it. You remember, that in commencing this subject, we remarked the difference between the covenant made with Abraham, and the

covenant of the law given on Mount Sinai ; and that whenever God was going to show grace to His people, He called to mind the covenant made with Abraham. We also remarked that Israel took the promises under the covenant made in the wilderness, and not under that made with Abraham ; and that, from that time Israel, being put under the condition of obedience in order to persevere in the enjoyment of the promises, failed altogether ; but that, notwithstanding, thanks to the mediation of Moses, God was able to bless the people.

We shall have to see how *Israel failed again after that, even when established in the land which the Lord had given to them* ; and that God raised up prophets, in a way altogether apart from His necessary dealings with them, to convict them of the sin into which they had fallen, and to show the faithful ones that the counsels of God towards Israel would not be put aside ; for that, by means of the Messiah, He would accomplish all that which He had spoken. We shall see also, that it was just when Israel would fail, that these promises of their re-establishment would become precious to the faithful remnant of the people.

Let us remember that in the history of the sin of Israel under the law, we have the history of every heart among us ; that if we

place ourselves before God, we shall recognize that it is only the grace which is known to us by the work of God, which can not only sustain us in, but relieve us from, the situation in which we find ourselves in consequence of sin.

I am going to look through the decline and ruin of Israel under every form of its government, from the time of the entry into the land of Canaan. It was Joshua who led them. *The book of this name is the history of the victories of Israel over the Canaanites—the history of the faithfulness of God in the accomplishment of all that He had promised to His people. The Judges and Samuel are the history of the failure of Israel in the land of Canaan until David; but, at the same time, of the patience of God. First, then, how does Joshua describe the Israelites—their condition and character?*

In chapter xxiv., he recites all that God had done on their behalf—all His favours, and all His goodness; upon which (ver. 16) the people answer, "God forbid that we should forsake the Lord." In verse 19, Joshua says to the people, "Ye cannot serve the Lord;" and the people say, "Nay, but we will serve the Lord;" "The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey." "So (ver. 25) Joshua made a covenant with

the people that day." This captain of their salvation led them into the land of promise; they enjoy the fruits of grace, and they anew undertake to obey the Lord.

In Judges ii., they are found in complete failure, and in consequence God says, "I will not drive out your enemies from before you, but they shall be as thorns in your sides." Verses 11, 14: "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim; and the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel." It is always the same picture—kindness on the part of God, ingratitude on that of man.

(To be continued, D. V.)



FRAGMENT.—The prophet Habakkuk gets up into his watchtower and strikes the keynote of the gospel: "The just shall live by faith." He gets into the presence of God, and only watches for what *He* will say. He had not a single thing besides and he says, "If you want to be justified it must be by faith." This did not alter Habakkuk's circumstances, but his soul being occupied with the secret of God was kept at rest.

One who has faith takes God's estimate—does not look for the evidence of his own senses, but says, Let me hear what *God* says, He must be true. What God says will come into constant collision with what is in myself, but I have to say, "Let God be true and every man a liar."

CHRIST OUR LIFE.

It is a wondrous consolation, and a profound depth of joy that we can say as we walk about this world, Christ is my life—yes! I can point to Him and say, that is what my life is. If we look to ourselves we see failure. The measure and pattern is ever spoiled in *me*. But we look to Christ and we see devotedness, purity, perfection. Oh what comfort and thorough joy, with the stamp of eternity on it, is there in thus seeing the eternal beauty of Christ—“And this life in his Son.” 1 John v. 11.

My soul can look at the Son in all the perfect display in which He is in heaven, and then say, He is my life. And surely it is in the measure that we trust in Him and delight in Him, that we can see Him as this Life. True it is that He thus judges all that is inconsistent in *me*, but then, the consistent One is *mine*.

Being before the Tribunal in the life and glory of the Son, we shall learn and see with delight all God's ways of grace toward us.

May the Lord give us to be delivered from every reserve in our poor hearts as to the perfect power of life in Christ (which is ours), to enable us to triumph over death, the world, and sin; and to live, not unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again.

THE GOOD OF BEING UNDER GOD'S HAND.

"But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel."—Phil. i. 12.

In the circumstances to which the apostle here alludes, we get the result of the overruling hand of God in His power and ways toward us in the church. There is nothing so good for us as the hand of God coming in and leading us, as He did Paul, in a path altogether contrary to our will. But the flesh always tears away from the hand of God; and even the will of those who are renewed dislikes to be thus under it. There is nothing that we more shrink from than from the hand of God. When Paul wrote this epistle, it was exactly his case. For if the things which happened to him fell out for the furtherance of the gospel (as he says), nothing at this time happened to him, according to his prayers; but there was the hand of God upon him, keeping him from his longed-for service. But this very thing is used of God to set the saint in Christ far above the service he is occupied in—precious in its place as it may be—and to give the greater blessedness of the enjoyment of Christ Himself. Paul, at Tarsus, for a while rested from ser-

vice; afterwards he laboured more abundantly than they all. The early part of his course sent him into activity, and he "conferred not with flesh and blood;" but on he went in the power of the Spirit in him. But here we see him the subject of another process in his soul. In Romans we find him saying, "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea." (Rom. xv. 30, 31). There he prayed to be delivered from ungodly men, yet they put his feet in the *stocks*. While there was *service to be done*, there was another matter with Paul. He was *idle* two whole years at Cæsarea from service. He was a prisoner; but as a prisoner was able to teach them all. All this time the hand of God was upon him. The Lord was meeting the remainder of *self-will* in His *servant*. The value of being with the Lord alone is, that he himself gets more thoroughly into the presence of God; and then he knows what the saints are before God, from being in the presence of God Himself. Paul advances in *the joy of being with the Lord*, that he might know the difference of the joy of being with the Lord, and in service here. He uses the joy of being here or there, as, "far better;"

and so dwelt in God's love, that when he saw service to the church, he says, "I know I shall stay here." Though in a strait, yet he had *no doubt*—because he knew what was in God. It was "far better to depart and be with Him;" but—in seeing the other principle of God's *active love*—"to abide in the flesh *is more needful for them.*" God is ever acting in love; therefore, we should never be disturbed at anything which can happen to us, as though some strange thing had happened to us. The *things* which happen to us, always happen of God, and are all perfect, being of God.

Never a time when God more deferred acting in Paul than the two years at Cæsarea. Paul was entirely and painfully set aside by these circumstances. If your soul is in communion with God, you will know God's mind about the saints. But you are not to be content unless "changed into the *same image.*" That which is well pleasing to God, **SHOULD BE WROUGHT IN US.**



"*He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous.*" (Job xxxvi. 7.) If the God of heaven be occupied with us, how many thoughts ought not we to have of that God! It is only as occupied with God and with Christ that we can be unworldly.

THE HOPES OF THE CHURCH OF GOD.

(Continued from Page 60.)

LECTURE IX. (Continuation)

Read Ezekiel xxxvii.

ISRAEL'S FAILURE AND DISPERSION ; PROMISES OF RESTORATION.

Let us now turn to some passages which detail the transgressions of Israel under every form of government.

1 Samuel iv. 11. Eli was the high priest, the judge and head of Israel, yet was the glory of Israel cast down to the ground: "the ark of God taken, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain." Verses 18, 21. Eli himself died, and his daughter-in-law named the child which was born of her, Ichabod, saying, "The glory is departed from Israel (because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father-in-law and her husband)."

After this, God, who raised up Samuel, the first of the prophets (Acts iii. 24 ; xiii. 20), governs Israel by him ; but Israel soon rejected him (1 Sam. viii. 6, 7): "And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee : for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them, according to all the

works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt even unto this day." It was then that God "gave them a king in his anger;" and we know what befell the king of their choice (1 Sam. xv. 26). The judgment is pronounced; Samuel says to Saul, "I will not return with thee; for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel."

These extracts are sufficient for our purpose. Israel has failed under king, prophet and priest. They are ruined under the king whom they had chosen.

David is raised up in the place of Saul: God made this choice in His dealings in grace. David—type of Christ, as he is the father of Christ according to the flesh—was His gift to Israel.

Thus it is solely by the goodness of God, that Israel becomes rich and glorious under David and Solomon. But still this people transgressed afresh under these two princes (1 Kings xi. 9, 11); "And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel." *

It is an unhappy subject to dwell on—this

*And the royalty, raised up of God Himself, thus failed, and judgment passed upon it, though a lamp was reserved to David in Jerusalem till the days of Zedekiah.

constant distaste of man's heart for God, under every condition in which he is placed; and this is the instruction which we ought to draw from the history of the children of Israel. They subsequently divided themselves into two distinct parts, and the ten tribes became altogether unfaithful. It was in the person of Ahaz that the family of David, the last human stay of the hopes of Israel (for after its fall nothing but God's promises remained), began to become idolaters (2 Kings xvi. 10-14). The sin of Manasseh put the finishing stroke to all their misconduct (2 Kings xxi. 1-16).

Such, in a few words, was the behaviour of Israel, and even of Judah, until the captivity of Babylon. The Spirit of God sums up the history of their crimes, and of His patience, in this impressive language (2 Chron. xxxvi. 15, 16): "And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy."

This was the end of their existence in the land of Canaan, into which they had been introduced by Joshua. The name of *Lo-*

ammi (not my people) is at last written upon them.

Having thus rapidly run through the history of their fall until their deportation to Babylon, let us consider the promises which sustained a faithful remnant among them during this prevalence of iniquity, and during the captivity of the nation.

There is a prominent one to be noted, which served as a kind of pedestal, on which the faithful Jews might build their expectations. It is to be found in 2 Samuel vii., and 1 Chronicles xvii. Between the two there is this difference: in 1 Chronicles xvii., the application is made directly to Christ, which is not quite so plainly seen in 2 Samuel vii.; and this distinction holds good as to the matter of the books themselves, of which the one (Samuel) is historical, and the other (the Chronicles) a synopsis or *résumé*, which connects all the history genealogically from Adam to Christ, and to the hopes of Israel; and from which book, consequently, all the transgressions and falls of the kings of Israel are excluded. (Compare 2 Sam. vii. 14 with 1 Chron. xvii. 13). This is the promise (2 Sam. vii. 10), "Moreover, I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness af-

flict them any more as beforetime." 1 Chronicles xvii. 11-13: "And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired, that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me an house, and I will establish his throne for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son." In Hebrews i. 5, application is made of these words to Christ; that is, all the promises made to Abraham and to his seed--all the promises made to Israel--are placed in the safe keeping, and gathered together in the person, of the Son of David.

We have now, dear friends, seen the promise made to David, which is the foundation of all those which concern the family of that name.

We have seen the failure of the people, and also the promise made to the Son of David--to the Messiah. Let us pursue the study from the direct testimony of the prophets.

Isaiah i. 25-28 decrees the full restoration of the Jews; but by judgments which cut off the wicked.

Isaiah iv. 2-4. "In that day (time of great trouble) shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them

that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem; when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning." Chapter vi. of the same book gives us full entrance into the spirit of prophecy. It was at the moment when Ahaz came to the throne—the same Ahaz who sent the heathen altar from Damascus to Jerusalem—that Isaiah is sent to meet this king, the son of David, who introduced apostasy. The first thing we have presented to us is the manifested glory of Christ, the Lord thrice holy (we have the interpretation of the Holy Spirit by John as to this, in chapter xii., of his Gospel); that glory which condemns the entire nation; but which produces, by grace, the spirit of intercession, to which the mercy which re-establishes the nation is the answer—mercy, notwithstanding, which finds no accomplishment, until the wicked are got rid of from the people and the land, after a state of prolonged hardening on their part carried to its utmost height, in the rejection of Jesus Christ and of the test-

imony given to Him by the Spirit in the apostles. (Read Isaiah vi. 9-13.)

Isaiah xi. 10: "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse to it shall the Gentiles seek." Here we learn how and when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord: it is after He has slain the wicked "by the breath of his lips." Then "the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people." (Read vs. 9-12).

Isaiah xxxiii. 20-24; xlix. It has been asserted, that in these chapters, Zion means the church; but when all the joy is come, "Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me." Impossible, if Zion be the church. What! the church forsaken in the midst of its joy? * Read Isaiah xlix. 14-23; also chapter lxii., which likewise applies to Israel; also chapter lxxv. 10-25, where there can be no question, but of earthly blessings—such as are hitherto unknown on earth. In that day God Himself will rejoice over Jerusalem.

* If Zion means the church, the gathering of all, and the joy of the heavens and the earth, would be necessarily the church's joy; for that gathering would constitute the church's joy. Therefore the supposition of its desertion would be ridiculous; whereas the chapter, if we suppose desertion of the literal city Zion, when the gathering takes place, is very intelligible; but the Lord goes on to say, that she shall be the centre of blessings, for that He can never forget her.

These are some of the promises which plainly announce the forthcoming glory of the Jewish people and of Jerusalem. But there are others still more direct. Jeremiah iii. 16-18: "It shall come to pass when ye be multiplied," &c. Certain foreshadowings have happened, which have looked like the accomplishment of many of the prophecies relating to their restoration: as, for example, the return of the people from Babylon. But God has given His own marks. He has linked circumstances together which have never yet had their fulfilment; as, in this passage, "All the nations shall be gathered unto it." It is certain that this did not take place at the return from Babylon. But you will reply, It is the church. No; for "in those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers." We see, in a word, three things happening together, which most surely have not had as yet a simultaneous accomplishment: namely, Jerusalem the throne of Jehovah; Judah and Israel united; and the nations assembled at the throne of God. When the church was founded, Israel was dispersed; when Israel returned from Babylon, there was neither church nor assemblage of nations.

Jeremiah xxx. 7-11. "It is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him; but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid." These happy times for Israel have assuredly not yet been realized.

Jeremiah xxxi. 23, 27, 28, 31-40. Remark verse 28. Who is it that the Lord has broken down, thrown down and destroyed? The same that He will build and plant. It is a little unreasonable to apply all the judgments to Israel, and all the blessings which concern the same persons to the church. And if the church be indeed here spoken of, what is the meaning of "from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner," "the hill Gareb," &c.? Observe, also, the last words of the chapter: "It shall not be plucked up nor thrown down any more for ever."

Jeremiah xxxii. 37-42. Touching passage as to the thoughts of the Lord concerning His people! After having given them promises of blessings in grace, and assured them that He would be their God, the Lord says, "And I will plant them in this land assuredly, with my whole heart and with my whole soul. For like as I have brought all this

great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them."

Jeremiah xxxiii. 6-11, 15, 25, 26. This is again the blessing of Israel—of Jerusalem: and that by the presence of the Branch, which shall grow up unto David, who shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. Let us remember, dear friends, that the word of God in no way presents to us the Holy Spirit as the Branch of David, nor His office as that of executing judgment upon the earth. On the other hand, if you insist upon this chapter applying to the restoration from Babylon, I would quote Nehemiah ix. 36, 37: "Behold, we are servants this day and we are in great distress," as showing how little the return from Babylon was the fulfilment of all these promises we have been reading. Was that restoration the whole heart and the whole soul of God in favour of His people? We have seen the estimation in which the Spirit of God held that event. No: these promises of God were not at that time accomplished. (Ezek. xi. 16-20.) Until this day, Israel, or rather the Jews, are under the judgment which the first part of this passage imports. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none" (Matt. xii. 43).

The closing verses speak of their last state, in which they are subjected to judgment; and at that time (ver. 19) God gives a new heart to the remnant, the nucleus of the future nation.

In Ezekiel xxxiv. 22-31 we have David their king in the midst of them, and their blessings immovable.

Ezekiel xxxvi. 22-32. If you make the objection, These are spiritual things in which we participate, I answer, Yes, we participate in the blessings of the good olive-tree; but our joy has not dispossessed the Jew (the natural branch) of that which belongs to him. Why are we made partakers? Because we are grafted into Christ. If we are Christ's, we are Abraham's children, and partake of all that is spiritual.

"Ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers" (ver. 28). The church has only one Father, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I would now remark, for a moment in passing, on our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus (John iii., particularly ver. 12). where there is an allusion to "earthly things." Previously (ver. 10), He had said, "Art thou a master [teacher] in Israel, and knowest not these things?"—namely, the need of being born of water and of the Spirit to enter into the kingdom of God. This knowledge was to be

got out of the Old Testament, the source whence the teachers drew their instruction. The passage just quoted out of Ezekiel contains almost the very same words used by our Lord. How! says He, you a master [teacher] in Israel! you ought to understand that Israel must have a new and purified heart in order to enjoy the promises. How is it that you know not these things? If you enter not into my saying that you must be born of water and of the Spirit, and do not understand these earthly things, how can it be expected that you should believe about heavenly things? As if He had said, I have spoken to you of the things which apply to Israel, if I have told you that Israel must be born again to enjoy those *terrestrial promises which belong to her*, and you have not understood me, how will you comprehend about heavenly things—about the glory of Christ exalted in heaven, and the church, His companion, in this heavenly glory? You have not even understood the doctrines of your prophets. You a teacher in Israel! you should at least have made yourself acquainted with the earthly things, of which Ezekiel and others have spoken.

In this chapter of Ezekiel, as in many others, expressions are found, such as “fruits of trees”—“increase of the field”—details of earthly things, which are the

earthly blessings promised to Israel; whilst, at the same time, the necessity of a new heart is connected with them, in order that those to whom these promises belong may be able to enjoy them. Israel must be renewed in heart to receive the promises of Canaan. God must cause them to walk in His statutes by giving them a new heart, and then, but only then, they will enjoy the blessings foretold for them.

Ezekiel xxxvii., gives a detailed history of the re-establishment of Israel—the joining together of the two parts of the nation; their return into the land, and their state of unity and fidelity to God in this same land; God being their God, and David their king being present—present for ever, in such a way as that the nations shall know that their God is the Lord, when His sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.

Ezekiel xxxix. 22-29. It is evident that the time here mentioned is not yet come; since, when it does, God “will not hide His face any more from them,” as He is doing at the present time, and that He will gather them “unto their own land,” and will leave none of them among the heathen.

In conclusion, let us call to mind the great principles upon which these prophecies rest. The restoration of the Jews is founded upon the promises made to Abraham *without con-*

dition; their fall is the result of their having undertaken to act in their own strength. After having exercised the patience of God in every possible way "until there was no remedy," judgment is come upon them; but God reverts to His promises. Let us make a proper application of this to our own hearts. The same history is ours—always that of the fall. No sooner has God placed us in such or such a position than we immediately fail in it. But there is behind our failure a principle of strength, that is to say, the revelation of the counsels of God, and, by consequence, unconditional promises; and we have seen (in Moses as the type), that it is the mediation and the presence of Jesus which is the accomplishment of these promises. We have also seen that God executes judgment only after extraordinary patience, after having used every possible means (however long that judgment may have been pronounced) to recall man to a sense of his duty, if there had been a spark of life in his heart; but there was none. Individuals, quickened by grace, hold to the promises which will have their fulfilment in the manifestation of Him who can realize them, and merit the realization for others. And nothing puts these principles in clearer relief than the history of Israel: "All these things happened unto them for types (see

margin), and they are written for our admonition " (1 Cor. x. 11). It is like a mirror, in which we can see, on the one hand, the heart of man, which fails always; and on the other, the faithfulness of God who never fails, who will fulfil all His promises, and who will put forth a strength able to surmount all the wickedness of man, and the power of Satan. It is when the enmity has arrived at its height, that He says, "Make the heart of this people fat" (Isaiah vi. 10): but it is not until nearly eight hundred years after (Acts xxviii. 27), that we find the accomplishment of this judgment pronounced so long before by the prophet. It was when the people had rejected everything, that God hardened them, to make them a monument of His ways. What patience on the part of God!

And so in that which concerns us Gentiles—the execution of the judgment has been suspended for eighteen centuries, and God is still exhausting all the eternal resources of His grace to try if there be any who will listen to His testimony of salvation. As the Lord said (John xv. 22, 24), "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now they have both

seen and hated both me and my Father." Admirable patience! Infinite grace of Him who interests Himself in us, even after our rebellion and iniquity!

To Him be all the glory!

(To be continued, D. V.)



"LOVE IN THE TRUTH"

Read 2 and 3 John.

The semblance of love which does not maintain the truth, but accommodates itself to that which is not the truth, is not love *according to God*; it is taking advantage of the name of love in order to help on the seductions of Satan. In the last days the test of true love is the maintenance of the truth. God would have us love one another; but the Holy Ghost, by whose power we receive the divine nature, and who pours the love of God into our hearts, is the *Spirit of truth*, and His office is to glorify Christ. Therefore it is impossible that a love which can put up with a doctrine that falsifies Christ, or which is indifferent to anything that concerns His glory, can be of the *Holy Ghost*—still less so, if such indifference be set up as the proof of that love. Compare also 1 John v. 2, 3, and 2 John 6.

SIMPLICITY.

It is nearness of heart to God that produces simplicity, and that enables us in simplicity to enjoy the blessings of God as God Himself bestows them, as they flow from His heart, in all their own excellence—to enjoy them in connection with Him who imparts them, and not merely in a mode adapted to the state of those to whom they are imparted, or through a communication that only reveals a part of these blessings, because the soul would not be able to receive more. Yes, when near to God, we are in simplicity, and the whole extent of His grace and of our blessings unfolds itself as it is found in Him.



EVERY FAMILY IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH.

(*Read Ephes. iii. 14-21.*)

In Ephesians i. 16-23, the revelation of the ways of God presents Christ to us as man raised up by God from the dead, in order that we should be raised up also to have part with Him, and that the administration of the counsels of God should thus be accomplished.

But in Ephesians iii. 14-21 (in verse 15 ‘the

whole family' should be 'every family') Christ is presented to us as the centre of all the ways of God, the Son of the Father, the Heir of all things as the Creator Son, and the centre of the counsels of God. It is to the *Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ that the apostle now addresses himself; as in chapter i., it was to the *God* of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every family (not 'the whole family') ranges itself under this name of Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Under the name of Jehovah there were only the Jews ("You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you for your iniquities." Amos iii. 2); but under the name of Father of Jesus Christ all families—the assembly, angels, Jews, Gentiles, all—range themselves. All the ways of God in that which He had arranged for His glory were co-ordained under this name, and were in relation with it: and that which the apostle asked for the saints to whom he addressed himself was, that they should be able to apprehend the whole import of those counsels, and the love of Christ which formed the assured centre for their hearts.

For this purpose he desires that they should be strengthened with all might by the Spirit of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that the Christ, who is the centre of all these things in the counsels of God

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the Father, should dwell also in their hearts, and thus be the intelligent centre of affection to all their knowledge—a centre which found no circle to limit the view that lost itself in infinitude which God alone filled—length, breadth, height, depth. But this centre gave them at the same time a sure place, a support immovable and well known, in a love which was as infinite as the unknown extent of the glory of God in its display around Himself. “That Christ,” says the apostle, “may dwell in your hearts.” Thus He, who fills all things with His glory, fills the heart Himself, with a love more powerful than all the glory of which He is the centre. He is to us the strength which enables us in peace and love to contemplate all that He has done, the wisdom of His ways, and the universal glory of which He is the centre. And Christ being the centre of all the display of divine glory thus dwells in our hearts so as to set them, so to speak, in this centre, and make them look out thence on all the glory displayed. Here we might lose ourselves ; but He brings them back to the well-known love of Christ, yet not as anything narrower, for He is God, and it passes knowledge, so that we are filled up to all the fulness of God.”

THE LINK BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH,

(*Isaiah vi.*)

The link between heaven and earth has been signified from the beginning in various ways. Visions, dreams, and audiences, introducing the spirit of man to unseen regions, did this in their way. Angelic visits did it still more palpably. But more strikingly still, the appearances of the Son of God at all times; in patriarchal days very specially, but also in the days of the nation of Israel.

The translation of Enoch told of this link between heaven and earth; and so did that of Elijah, leaving behind him, as he became the heavenly man, his mantle, with its mystic virtues, for the use and endowment of one who was to know his place only in the earth.

Moses too called up to the elevation of the Lord of Israel, and there, as with the eye of the Lord, surveying the tribes of Israel—the citizens of the earth—beneath him. All this tells the same; and all this tells the nearness of these different regions of the divine presence. They are but the several parts of the same temple, and, though separated; it is but a veil that lies between. And all this in figure teaches the mystery, even “the mystery of His will which He hath purposed in Himself, that in the dispen-

sation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him."

But if the passage be short, the title to make it is simple. The link between heaven and earth is seen; the descending of the Prince of life, who is the Son of man, has made it so. But the link between the glory and the poor sinner is seen also, the blood of the same blessed One makes it so.

Isaiah is brought into the presence of the glory. The throne of the Lord is seen, and His train fills the temple, while the seraphim, with veiled faces, worship. Nature in the prophet is overwhelmed. He takes knowledge of the glory and of his own uncleanness, but of nothing else. This was nature, and it is nature still. Nature does not rise out of these thoughts, it comes short of the glory of God. It takes knowledge of the two things—the *divine presence* and *our unfitness for it*, like Adam, but that is all, and the distance is felt to be infinite.

But there was an *altar* in the scene to which the prophet was led, as well as a *throne*, and the Lord's train, and the seraphim, and the smoke that filled the place, and the angelic worship, but the prophet knew nothing about it; and yet its virtue was such that, in the twinkling of an eye, it

links what had been felt to lie at infinite distances. The live coal touches his lips, and there is no longer any mention of his uncleanness, no longer any sense of distance, no dismay of soul, no amazement, but such full and entire liberty, that the prophet forgets himself altogether, save as one who was now *free to serve*. "By faith he is free, by love he is subject." "Here am I, send me," says the delivered prophet, having boldness in the holiest; for "by faith the believer rises to God, by love he descends to man." These fine conditions of soul Isaiah here represents, and we learn in him, as in a figure, that there are links between the glory and the sinner which can stand and answer the shock and the trial which conscience and the law and the accuser may occasion.



THE HOPES OF THE CHURCH OF GOD.

(Continued from Page 80.)

LECTURE X.

Read Isaiah i.

SAME SUBJECT AS THE PRECEDING, AND MANNER OF ITS ACCOMPLISHMENT.

Some passages of Scripture upon the destiny of the Jews, which at our last meeting there was not time to quote, will terminate our sketch of historical prophecy concerning this people; I say historical,

because prophecy is the history which God has given us of futurity.

I would again remind you of that important fact, that Jewish history is especially the manifestation of the glory of Jehovah. To ask, In what does this history concern us? is to say, Of what use is it that I should know what my Father is about to do for my brethren and the manifestation of His character in His acts?

It is evident, from the place which the subject occupies in His word, that their affairs are very dear to our God and Father, if they be not to us. It is in this people, by the ways of God revealed to them, that the character of Jehovah is fully revealed, that the nations will know Jehovah, and that we shall ourselves learn to know Him.

The same person may be king of a country, and father of a family; and this is the difference between God's actings towards us and the Jews. Towards the church, it is the character of Father; towards the Jews, it is the character of Jehovah, the King. His faithfulness, unchangeableness, His almighty power, His government of the whole earth—all this is revealed in His relationship towards Israel; it is in this way that the history of this people lets us into the character of Jehovah.

Psalm cxxvi. "When the Lord [Jehovah]

turned again the captivity of Zion then said they among the heathen, The Lord [Jehovah] hath done great things for them." See, on the same subject, Ezekiel xxxix. 6, 7: "And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles; and they shall know that I am Lord [Jehovah]. So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord [Jehovah], the Holy One in Israel." Verse 28: "Then shall they know that I am the Lord [Jehovah] their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen; but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there." This is the way in which Jehovah reveals Himself. The Father reveals Himself to our souls by the gospel, by the spirit of adoption; but Jehovah makes Himself known by His judgments—by the exercise of His power on the earth. I have said, that the Father reveals Himself by the gospel, because the gospel is a system of pure grace—a system which teaches us to act towards others on the principle of pure grace, as we have been acted on by the Father. It is not "eye for eye, tooth for tooth;" it is not what justice requires, the

law of retaliation, or equity ; but a principle according to which I ought to "be perfect, as my Father is perfect." But it will not be mere grace that is suffering evil and doing good, in the government of Jehovah. Jehovah without doubt, will bless the nations ; but the character of His kingdom is, that "judgment shall return unto righteousness" (Psalm xciv. 15). At the first coming of Jesus Christ, judgment was with Pilate, and righteousness with Jesus ; but when Jesus shall return, judgment shall be united to righteousness. The people of Christ now, the children of God, ought to follow the example of the Saviour (that is, not expect or wish that judgment should be in the rigour of righteousness ; but they should be gentle and humble in the midst of all the wrongs which they suffer on the part of man). United to Christ, they are indemnified for all their wrongs in the strength of His intimate love, which comforts them by the consolations of the presence of His Spirit ; and, more than this, by the hopes of the heavenly glory. On the other hand, Jehovah will console His people by the direct acting of His righteousness in their favour (see Psalm lxxv. 5), and by re-establishing them in earthly glory.

The Jews, then, are the people by whom, and in whom, God sustains His name of

Jehovah, and His character of judgment and righteousness. The church are the people in whom, as in His family, the Father reveals His character of goodness and love.

We have already touched upon the events which will happen to the Jews in the last time, by the quotations from Jeremiah, chapters xxx to xxxiii; and from Ezekiel xxxvi to xxxix. I will now cite a few other passages to the same effect, following the order of the prophets.

Daniel xii. 1. . . . it is the presence of him who will act for the people of Daniel, that is, for the Jewish people.

There are a few remarkable traits in this prophecy. First, God in His power, by the ministry of Michael, is to stand up for the children of Daniel's people; and it is to be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation. In this we have a clue to Matthew xxiv., and Mark xiii. 19.

The resurrection (Dan. xii. 2) applies to the Jews: "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." You find the same expression in Isaiah xxvi.: "'Thy dead shall live';" and in Ezekiel xxxvii. 12. It is a figurative resurrection of the people, buried as a nation among the Gentiles. In this revival it is said of those who rise, "Some to shame and everlasting contempt." This is what will happen to the

Jews. Of those brought out from among the nations, some shall enjoy eternal life, but some shall be subject to shame and everlasting contempt (Is. lxvi. 24). At the time of the accomplishment of this prophecy all of Daniel's people are not brought up from among the nations.

In a word, on the one hand, God standing up for His people in a time of distress ; and, on the other, a remnant delivered—such is a summary of Daniel xii.

In Hosea ii. 14-23, we see that the Lord will receive Israel, will bring her into the land, after having humbled her, but having spoken to her also after His own heart, and will make her such as she was in the days of her youth ; that Jehovah will make a covenant with her, and bless her in every kind of way on this earth, and will betroth her unto Himself for ever.

But more. There is an uninterrupted chain of blessings from Jehovah Himself, down to the earthly blessings poured out in abundance upon Israel, who is the seed of God (for this is the force of the word Jezreel). On this account there is added (ver. 23), "I will sow her unto me in the earth." For Israel will become the instrument of blessing to the earth, as life from amongst the dead. At this time all is hindered by sin ; spiritual

wickedness is now "in heavenly places" (Eph. vi. 12); and every description of misery abounds, accompanied though it be with many blessings (for God makes "all things work together for good to them that love him"); but at that time there will be a fulness of earthly blessing.

Hosea iii. 4, 5. "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim. Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." They shall have neither the true God nor a false god (so it is with them now); but after that they shall seek Jehovah and David—the well-beloved, or Christ.

Joel iii. 1, 16-18, 20, 21. After having spoken of the nations at the time of the return of His people from captivity (vs. 1-15), and the judgments exercised upon the Gentiles, God speaks in the latter verses of the Jews. Jerusalem is to be holy; Jehovah will dwell in Zion; He will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel. This will be their case when the judgment of God shall fall upon the nations.

Amos ix. 14, 15. "And I will bring again the captivity of my people and I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up." This is not yet accomplished.

Verses 11, 12, of this chapter, are quoted in Acts xv., not for the purpose of showing that the prophecy had then come to pass; but to prove that God had all along determined upon having a people from out of the Gentiles; and that, therefore, the language of the prophets agreed with that which Simon Peter had been relating of what God had done in his days. It is not the accomplishment of a prophecy, but the establishing of a principle by the mouth of the prophets, as well as by the word of the Spirit through Simon Peter.

Micah iv. 1-8. Nor is this yet brought to pass. It is, so to speak, a topographical description of Jerusalem, when her first dominion is restored. In chapter v. 4, 7, 8, the name of Christ is respected and great to the ends of the earth, Israel everywhere the dew of divine blessing, and coming off victorious against all who oppose her.

With regard to Micah, you will remark (as was observed in a former lecture) how, in chapter vii. 19, 20, the Spirit adverts to the promises made to the fathers without condition.

Zephaniah iii. 12-20. What language is this? God is said to be "silent [see margin] in his love;" He is so moved that He is "silent." On whom does He lavish all this? Read verse 13: "The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid." Jehovah is in the midst of them, and nothing can disturb them.

Zechariah i. 15, 17-21. Mention is here made of the four monarchies who scattered Israel, as themselves scattered by the force of the judgments of God.

Zechariah ix. 9-17. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee" This, you will assert, is already accomplished. No; only in part. The Holy Spirit, in the New Testament (John xii. 15), cites this passage; but with the omission of the words "He is just, and having salvation" (saving himself, margin). Jesus, in fact, cared not for Himself. When they said to Him, mocking Him, "If thou be the Son of God come down from the cross," He took no notice. He hid not Himself from grief: far from saving Himself, He saved us; He spared not Himself that we might be spared.

Zechariah x. 6-12. When was it that Israel had been as "though the Lord had not cast them off?" Never.

Let us now turn to some passages which will show that, though the people of Israel will be restored in their land, there will only be a remnant saved.

Zechariah xii. 2, mentions a time of war, even of all the people round about, the people of the earth, against Jerusalem: but God will defend the city and its inhabitants in a miraculous manner, and the nations will be destroyed (Ver. 9). The spirit of grace and supplication shall be poured out upon the remnant of Israel—"all the families that *remain*;" and "they shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn."

Isaiah xviii. Whatever critical difficulties exist in this chapter, its great object is too evident to be obscured by any rendering whatever. The rivers of Cush are the Nile and Euphrates.* The enemies of Israel, in

* We learn from Dr. Hales' Analysis of Chronology, vol. i. p. 379, that the descendants of Cush extended their settlements from Chusistan, "the land of Cush," or Susiana, on the coast of the Persian gulf (into which the Euphrates falls), through Arabia to the Red sea, and thence crossed into Africa beyond the Nile. The rivers of Cush may therefore well mean the Nile and Euphrates. He also makes (p. 355) the descendants of Nimrod settled in Assyria to be called Chusdim, or "Godlike Cushites." (p. 354.)

the biblical part of their history, were situated on these two rivers.

There is, in this prophecy, a call made to a country which is beyond them, to a distant land, which had never, at the time of the prophecy, come into association with Israel. The prophet has then in his view some country which would later come upon the scene.

Verse 3. God bids all the inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, to take cognizance. The nations are to have their eyes upon Israel; they are summoned by God to pay attention to what was taking place as to Jerusalem; they are all interested in her fate. The world is invited to watch the judgments about to take place. In the meanwhile (ver. 4), God takes His rest, and lets the nations act of themselves: Israel has returned into her land. (Vs. 5, 6.)

It is a description of Israel returning into Judea by the help of some nation at a distance from the scene itself, which is neither Babylon or Egypt, nor other nations who meddled in their affairs of old. We say not that it is France, or Russia, or England. The Israelites return to their land, but God takes no notice of them. Israel is abandoned to the nations; and when everything would appear as if it were going to bear fruit (verse 5) anew, behold the sprigs and

branches cut down, and left to the fowls of the air to summer on, and to the beasts of the fields to winter on (which terms are designations of the Gentiles). Nevertheless, at that time a present of this people shall be brought to the Lord of hosts, and from this people "to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, the mount Zion."

Psalm cxxvi. 4. "Turn again our captivity, O Lord." Zion and Judah will be first brought back. The captives of Zion were already brought back when this prayer was presented to God (verse 1); they are but the earnest of what God will do in the restoration of all Israel.

But it is fitting, here, to touch on the manner of God's dealing with the houses of Judah and Israel in their judgment and dispersion. The first to be gathered are those who rejected Jesus, those who were guilty of His death. The ten tribes, as such, were not guilty of this crime; the ten tribes were dispersed before the introduction of the four monarchies into the rule of the world. It was the Assyrians who led captive the ten tribes, before Babylon had existence as an empire. A circumstance relating to a Jewish family or tribe (Jer. xxxv. 1-10), found living in the midst of the Arabs, is related of Mr. Wolff, who visited it of late years. These Jews say of them-

selves, that they are descended from some who refused to return to Judea with Ezra, because they knew that those who returned with Ezra would put the Messiah to death; and for this reason they remained where they were. Even though this be false, the existence of such a tradition is not a little wonderful. One thing is evident that those who rejected the Christ will be subjected to the Antichrist; they will make "a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell" (Isa. xxviii. 15); but their covenant will destroy all their hopes; having united themselves to Antichrist, they will undergo the consequence of this alliance, and at last will be destroyed. Two thirds of the inhabitants will be cut off in the country of Israel itself after their return. (Zech. xiii. 8, 9.)

But with the ten tribes the occurrences are different, as we know from Ezekiel xx. 32-39. Instead of two parts cut off in the land, the rebels—that is, the disobedient and rebellious ones among them—will not enter at all into Canaan. God does with them, as He did with Israel upon their rebellion after their coming out from Egypt; He destroys them without their even seeing it.

Thus there are two classes, so to speak, of Jews in this return. First, the Jewish nation, properly speaking—namely, Judah,

and those allied with her in the rejection of the true Christ: they will be in connection with the Antichrist, and of them two thirds will be cut off in the land. Secondly, those of the ten tribes coming up, of whom some will be cut off in the wilderness on their way into the land.

Matthew xxiii. 37-39. This prediction, delivered by Jesus Himself, gives us the assurance of the coming of Christ to restore Israel, and reign in their midst: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, your house is left unto you desolate till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Israel will see Jesus, but it will be when this word of Psalm cxviii. 26 shall go out of her mouth. The psalm itself gives a happy picture of her joy at that time; and out of it the Saviour drew the announcement of the judgment which He pronounced against the Jewish rulers upon their rejection of Him: "The stone, which the builders refused, is become the head stone of the corner. Out of this psalm, also, is drawn the joyful salutation with which the little children welcomed Him in the temple with Hosannahs—fit precursors of those who, in happier times yet to come, will receive the hearts of little children, and will confess that Saviour formerly rejected by their fathers! It is

this psalm which celebrates the exaltation and blessing of Israel—that blessing due to the faithfulness of Jehovah alone, whilst it points out the sin of the nation in rejecting “the Stone” which was to become the foundation of God in Zion; but which was also, by the unbelief of that nation, the “Stone of stumbling” and of judgment.

Besides these two classes of Israelites who will return by providential agency, but still of their own free accord, the Lord after His appearance will gather together from among the Gentiles the elect of the Jewish nation, who will be yet among the nations; and this return will be accompanied with great blessing. (See Matt. xxiv. 31; compare Isa. xxvii. 12, 13, and Isa. xi. 10-12.)

We subjoin two principles, very simple and clear, which distinguish all preceding blessings (as, for instance, the return from Babylon) from the accomplishment of the prophecies of which we have been speaking.

These two principles are—

First, That the blessings flow from the presence of Christ, Son of David.

Secondly, That they are a consequence of the new covenant.

Neither one nor the other of these conditions was fulfilled at the return from Babylon, nor has it been since.

The gospel does not occupy itself with the earthly blessings of the Jews, which is the matter of these prophecies.

(To be continued, D. V.)

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“ AT HIS FEET.”

Luke x. 39 ; John xii. 3.

Silently the hours were passing,
As she sat *at Jesu's feet* ;
One blest voice all else surpassing ;
Self is hushed in that retreat.

Wondrous place of lowly nearness
Mary chose with Him alone ;
Lord, may we too know its sweetness,
Take her place to be our own.

At Thy feet, when grief's dark shadow
O'er our desert pathway lies,
We shall find Thee in the sorrow,
Thou wilt wipe the weeping eyes.

JESUS, Lord, though man despise Thee,
We would pour *upon Thy feet*
All the wealth of hearts that prize Thee,
Precious ointment, pure and sweet.

One there was, when man betrayed Thee—
Heaven records it to her fame—
Who, for death, with cost arrayed Thee,
Loved Thee in Thy garb of shame.

Saviour, every crown in glory
Will be cast *before Thy feet*—
Feet that tell of Calvary's story,
Tale of love divinely sweet.

Till that day, oh, keep us near Thee !
We would *at Thy feet abide*,
Whilst our voices rise to praise Thee,
Son of God, once crucified.

A MEDITATION ON ISAIAH LIII. 2.

“My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord.” Ps. civ. 34.

The miracle of a tender sapling growing out of a *dry* ground was unheeded by man; there was no grandeur, no imposing height, no outstretched branches like the trees in the garden of God (Ezek. xxxi.), no delightful shade by rivers of water, such things as the world seeks after, led on in folly by Satan down to everlasting destruction in the pit. Here, God alone appreciates the wonder, the shoot full of sap, green *before Ilim*, that did not draw its vigour from the utter barrenness around, and wanted no moisture to keep it green. Its power was in itself, wholly divine yet perfectly human, a root out of a dry ground growing up in this poor world, a desert indeed as God saw it. “No man knoweth the Son but the Father.” Man seeks the well-watered Eden, with all its glory, greatness, envy, jealousy, noise and bustle—the world as Satan has made it for man, after he was driven out of God’s paradise—the Eden he has made for himself, in which God is to have no right nor portion. But, to see God’s beautiful green Tree, ever fresh in its beauty, yet come down to the intelligence of a child, small and tender in all its quiet glory—beside us

here, so to speak—we must go into the desert; and surely to *know* Him, we must *live* there. What depths of moral instruction for us! How it explains Paul's earthly path in Philippians ii., iii., and 2 Corinthians iv.

It is a solemn question for our souls in connection with Christ: What are we looking at, what seeking for, what interested in? The Eden of Ezekiel xxxi., or the desert ground of Isaiah liii. 2?



FRAGMENT.—God has always desired to have the perpetual adoration of His redeemed. We thus read of singers in connection with His service who “were employed in that work day and night” (1 Chron. ix. 33). And when the Lord was parted from His disciples, He blessed them, and was carried up into heaven: “And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.” Then, too, there are the four living creatures who rest not day and night in their ascriptions of praise. So will it be when all the redeemed are gathered around the Lord in heaven. Their whole existence will be characterized by continual never-ending praise!

If here on earth the thoughts of Jesu's love
Lift our poor hearts this weary world above,
If even here the taste of heavenly springs
So cheers the spirit, that the pilgrim sings,

What will the sunshine of His glory prove?
 What the unmingled fulness of His love?
 What hallelujahs will His presence raise?
 What but one loud eternal burst of praise?



GRACE AND GLORY.

(2 Chronicles ix. 1-12.)

It is commonly apprehended among us, and very justly, that *grace* is the thing exhibited in David, and *glory* in Solomon. Grace had a very full exhibition in David. It raised its objects from degradation to honour, it comforted and sustained him in sorrow, restored him from wandering, and kept him to the end in safety. But when the time came for glory to shine forth, grace having thus displayed itself to the full, David delivers the throne into the hand of Solomon.

Each of these, grace and glory, has its peculiar method. It is this which just at the present has drawn and fixed my thoughts a little. *Grace only divides the scene with other principles, glory forms it all alone.* Grace meets David in either his degradation, sorrow, or defilement, and brings honour, comfort, or restoration, leaving the struggle between the former and the latter things in measure to the end, and the whole a divided empire. But glory holds the entire scene at its disposal, and leaves the

trace or reflection of itself on everything. It is not God bringing out His resources to mingle themselves with man's circumstances ; but it is the supreme presence of the Lord forming the whole sphere of the action according to itself. This appears in this chapter. There is no darkness at all upon the scene abroad, nor working of nature in the heart within—no trace of man, or of his passions, or his miseries ; the finger of God and the Spirit of God delineate and animate the whole picture.

The Queen of Sheba is the witness of this. Her consciousness of what she saw tells us of *glory being everywhere in the regions of the king of Israel*—the stirrings of her own heart tell us of *the absence of all the ways and principles of nature*. There was nothing minute under her eye, that did not reflect the glory. As the stars of the heaven differ in their glories, but each of them is glorious, and lends something to the common magnificence, so here. There is the house of the king, and his ascent up to the house of God ; but there is also the meat of his table, and the apparel of his servants ; and the latter are glorious like the former—in other measures, it may be, but still equally parts and parcels of the glory. The glory was leaving its reflection on all she saw. It might be small in the great account,

but still it was glorious. And because it was small, it was only the worthier of the notice of the Spirit-led soul, that delights to put honour on the uncomely member, and enable her the more fully to testify to us that glory was everywhere, even, so to speak, on the kitchen furniture—"the sitting of the servants!" Just as another voice of the same Spirit, anticipating the sanctity or cleanness of the antitype of Solomon's day, tells us of "Holiness unto the Lord" being, at that time, upon "the bells of the horses," and "every pot in the Lord's house being like the bowls before the altar" (Zech. xiv.). For the glory had taken the whole scene into its hand, and there was nothing hid from the reach of its beams. It was a morning without clouds—there was no shadow anywhere. All was in the light. The very equipage of the attendants and their sittings reflected it. All was delivered into "the liberty of the glory" (Rom. viii. 21, A. V.), and fashioned by the power of it.

But the kingdom within was as excellent in its way. If the day dawned around, the day-star had arisen in the heart. There was no blemish of nature or of the flesh in her spirit, as there was no dimness or uncertainty in the scene around her. She was small in comparison with the king in Zion, but there was full delight and no grudging

because of this. She trafficked for wisdom, and esteemed the merchandise of it above gold or rubies. The best of her land she offered to king Solomon, doing all she could to beautify the house of God's glory. Nothing that she had, could she esteem too good for him. O the blessedness of all this within and abroad! Glory abroad, leaving its memorial everywhere, the beauty of the Spirit's mind within, ordering the whole conversation of the soul, without touch or soil of nature! "Scenes surpassing fable, and yet true!" Scenes to be realized to the enjoyment of our hearts and eyes, and to the glory of our Lord, in the days of the kingdom!

Well is it that *grace now divides the scene with nature's misery and defilement*; and still well is it that *glory then will know nothing but its own creation*, for light and its principles will be triumphant. The light which God has as yet brought in shines, it is most true, but shines in a dark place; the light that He will bring in by and bye, will be light everywhere, the day-dawn around, and the day-star within (2 Peter i. 19). It is now the valley of Baca with wells of water, by and bye it will be the dwelling of praise *still*, unbroken, undivided praise. (Ps. lxxxiv.)

"The Lord will give grace and glory."

THE HOPES OF THE CHURCH OF GOD

(Continued from Page 100.)

LECTURE XI.

Read Revelation xii.

SUMMING UP, AND CONCLUSION.

I have read this chapter, not as professing to explain it in detail, but because it gives a summary of that which will happen at the close of this dispensation, at least the heavenly sources of these events, and the woes of the earth. * My object this evening is to take up, in their order, the prophetic events which have been occupying us, as far as God shall give me ability.

But, beforehand, dear friends, it will not be amiss to return to a few of the thoughts which were given out at the very beginning of these lectures. Let us be reminded, in treating of these subjects, of their great end—a double one. One end is that of detaching us from the world, to which (though indeed the effect of every part of the word, when the Spirit of God is applying it) prophecy is peculiarly adapted; its tendency must be to “deliver us from this present evil age.” The other end is to make us intelligent of the character of God, and of His ways towards us. These are two precious

* The deliverance of the earth is found elsewhere.

and wholesome fruits, which spring from the acquirement of the knowledge of prophecy.

Many are the objections made to its study; it is thus that Satan always acts against the truth. I do not mean objections against such or such a view, but against the study of prophecy itself. And Satan works in this way as to the entire word of God. To one he says, Follow morality, and do not meddle with dogmas, because he knows that dogmas will free a man from his power, by the revelation of Jesus, and of the truth in their hearts. To another he suggests the neglecting of prophecy, because in it is found the judgment of this world, of which he is prince. But to allow weight to such objections, is it not to find fault with God, who has given prophecy to us, and who has even attached a particular blessing to the reading of the part reputed the most difficult?

Prophecy throws a great light upon the dispensations of God; and, in this sense, it does much as regards the freedom of our souls towards Him. For what hinders it more than the error so often committed, of confounding the law and the gospel, the past economies or dispensations with the existing one?

If, in our internal fighting, we find our-

selves in the presence of the law, it is impossible to find peace ; and yet if we insist on the difference which exists between the position of the saints of old, and that of the saints during the actual dispensation, this again troubles the minds of many. Now the study of prophecy clears up such points, and at the same time enlightens the faithful as to their walk and conversation ; for, whilst it always maintains free salvation by the death of Jesus, prophecy enables us to understand this entire difference between the standing of the saints now and formerly, and lights up with all the counsels of God the road along which His own people have been conducted, whether before or after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Again, dear friends, as we have before said, it is always the hope which is presented to us which acts upon our hearts and affections. There are thus always enjoyments in prospect which stamp their natural character upon our souls. That which occupies the heart of man as hope makes the rule of his conduct. Of what vast importance is it not, then, to have our souls filled with hopes according to God ! Persons say it is the idle curiosity of prying into hidden things ; but if it were true that we ought not to look into prophecy, the conclusion is inevitable, that our thoughts are not to go

beyond the present. The way of knowing what God's intentions are for the future is certainly the study of that prophecy which He has given to us. Prophecy records things to come; it is the Scriptural mirror, wherein future events are seen. If we refuse the study of what God has revealed as to come, we are necessarily left to our own ideas upon it.

The famous passage of Paul (1 Cor. ii. 2) has been quoted to some here: "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." It is constantly used as an objection against the study of what is found revealed in the word. This arises from two causes. The one is due to that prolific source of error, namely, the citation of a passage without examining the context; the other, alas! arises from a greater or less want of uprightness—from a desire (unrecognized, it may be, in our own deceitful hearts) of standing still in the ways of the Lord, by making as little acquaintance with them as may be. It is not true that we are to limit ourselves to the knowledge of Jesus Christ crucified. We must also know Jesus Christ glorified, Jesus Christ at the right hand of God; we must know Him as High Priest; as Advocate with the Father. We ought to know Jesus Christ as much as possible, and not be content with saying,

"Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." So to say is to take the letter of the word and abuse it. The apostle, seeing the tendency that there was in the church at Corinth to follow rather the learning and philosophy of man than Christ (a thing not to be wondered at in a city renowned for science), points out, in leading their souls back to Christ, how foreign his entry among them was from earthly wisdom. He "was with them in weakness and fear; his speech and his preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom;" he "determined not to know anything among them but Jesus Christ, and Him Crucified"—Jesus Christ, and even Christ as the despised One among men. He is not speaking of the value of the blood, but of the condition of Christ Himself, in order to bring down, by the cross, all their vain glory, and found their faith upon the word of God, and not on human wisdom. But in the same chapter he says, that from the moment he comes into the midst of true Christians, his conduct changes; he speaks "wisdom among them that are perfect." He would have nothing to do with human wisdom; but as soon as he finds himself among the perfect ones, he says, "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect." Desiring to confine ourselves to Jesus crucified, in the way it is urged, is,

I repeat, to confine ourselves to as little as possible of Christianity. In Hebrews vi., the the apostle says, he is unwilling to do what they would make him say in this place; he altogether condemns that which is urged upon us. "Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ," says he, "let us go on unto perfection."

After these observations on the study of prophecy in general, I proceed to recall, in a few words, how God has revealed Himself by it.

Revelation xii., presents to us the great object of prophecy, and of all the word of God, that is, the combat which takes place between the Second Adam and Satan. It is from this centre of truth that all the light which is found in Scripture radiates.

This great combat may take place either for the earthly things (they being the object), and then it is in the Jews; or for the church (that being the object), and then it is in the heavenly places.

It is on this account that the subject of prophecy divides itself into two parts: the hopes of the church, and those of the Jews; though the former be scarcely, properly speaking, prophecy, which concerns the earth and God's government of it.

But before coming to this great crisis, namely the combat between Satan and the

Second Adam, it was necessary that the history of the first Adam should be developed. This has been done. And in order that the church, that is, Christians, may be in a position to occupy themselves with the things of God, it was needful, first of all, that they should be in happy certainty as to their own position before Him. At His first coming, Christ accomplished all the work which the wisdom of the Father, in the eternal counsels of God, had confided to Him; this effected the peace of the church. The Lord Jesus came, in order that the certainty of salvation, by the knowledge of the grace of God, should be introduced into the world, that is, into the hearts of the faithful. After having accomplished salvation, He communicates it to His followers in giving them life. His Holy Spirit, which is the seal of this salvation in the heart, reveals to them things to come, as to the children of the family and heirs of the family estate. During the period which separates the first coming of the Lord from the second, the church is gathered by the action of the Holy Spirit to have part in the glory of Christ at His return.

These, in a few words are the two great subjects which I have been opening; namely, that Christ, having done all that is needful for the salvation of the church—having

saved all those who believe, the Holy Ghost now acts in the world to communicate to the church the knowledge of this salvation. He does not come to propose the hope that God will be good, but a fact—that fact, once more, that Jesus has already accomplished the salvation of all those who believe ; and when the Holy Spirit communicates this knowledge to a soul, it knows that it is saved. Being then put in relationship with God as His children, we are His heirs, “ heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.” All that concerns the glory of Christ belongs to us, and the Holy Spirit is given to us, in the first place, to make us understand that we are children of God. He is a spirit of adoption, but more, a Spirit of light, who teaches the children of God what their inheritance is. As they are one with Christ, all the truth of His glory is revealed to them, and the supremacy which He has over all things, God having also constituted Him Heir of all things, and us co-heirs.

After Christ has fulfilled all that was necessary, the church, until the second coming of its Saviour, is taken from out of all nations, and united to Him. It has, whilst here below, the knowledge of the salvation which He has accomplished, and of the coming glory, the Holy Spirit, in those who believe, being the seal of salvation accom-

plished, and the earnest of the future glory.

These truths throw a great light upon the entire history of man. But let us ever remember that the great object of the Bible is the conflict between Christ, the Second Adam, and Satan.

In what condition did Christ find the first Adam? In a condition into the lowest depths of which He was obliged to enter, as responsible head of all creation. He found man in a state of ruin—entirely lost. It was needful that this should be unfolded before the coming of Christ; for God did not introduce His Son into the world as Saviour until all that was necessary to show that man was in himself incapable of, anything good was brought out. The whole state of man, before and after the deluge, under the law, under the prophets, only served as a clearer attestation that man was lost. He had failed throughout, under every possible circumstance, until, God having sent His Son, the servants said, “This is the heir; let us kill him.” The measure of sin was then at its height; the grace of God then did also much more abound, and gave us the inheritance—as poor sinners, the inheritance with Christ in the heavenly glory, of which we possess the earnest, having Christ in spirit here below.

But (to enter a little more into the succession of dispensations, and also into that which concerns the character of God in this respect) the first thing which we would remark is the deluge, because until then there had not been, so to speak, government in the world. The prophecy which existed before the deluge was to this effect, that Christ was to come. The teachings of God were ever to this end: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints" Jude 14).

In Noah's time there was government of the earth, and God's coming in judgment and committing the right of the sword to man.

After this comes the call of Abraham. Mark: the principle of government is not put forward by the word, but the principle of promise, and the call to be in relationship with God, of that one person who becomes the root of all the promises of God—Abraham, the father of the faithful. God calls him, makes him quit his country, his family, bidding him go into a country which He would show him. God reveals Himself to him as the God of promise, who separates a people to Himself by a promise which He gives them. It is at this epoch that God re-

vealed Himself under the name of God Almighty.

After that, among the descendants of Abraham, by this same principle of election, God takes the children of Jacob to be His people here below—the object of all His earthly care, and out of whose midst Christ was to come according to the flesh. It is in this people of Israel that God displays all His characters as Jehovah; it is not only as a God of promise, but it is a God who unites the two principles of calling and government, which two had been each successively brought out in Noah and in Abraham. Israel was the called, separated people—separated indeed only to earthly blessings, and to enjoy the promise: but, at the same time, to be subject to the exercise of the government of God according to the law.

We say then, that in Noah was marked the principle of government of the earth, and in Abraham that of calling and election; and so Jehovah will accomplish all that He has said as God of promise, “who was, and is, and who is to come,” and govern all the earth, according to the righteousness of His law—the righteousness revealed in Israel.

We have shown that God (Ex. xix. 4-9) made the accomplishment of the promises, in those times, to depend upon the faithful-

ness of man, and that He took occasion to prove him, and to represent in detail, as in a picture, all the characters under which He acted towards him. It was this which He was doing under priests, prophets, and kings. And it is to be particularly observed, that the bearing of prophecy, in the unfolding of this succession of relationships of God with Israel, and with man, is not alone the manifestation of the fall of man, but also, and chiefly, of the glory of God.

When Israel had transgressed in every possible way and circumstance, even in the family of David, which was the last human resource of the nation—at the moment that family failed in Ahaz, prophecy commences in all its details, having these two features: one, the manifestation of the glory of Christ, in order fully to show that the people had failed under the law; the other, the manifestation of the coming glory of Christ, to be the support of the faith of those who were desiring to keep the law, but who saw that everything was out of course.

It is too late to take an interest in the prophecies when they are fulfilled. Those to whom at the actual time the prophets addressed themselves, were the people from whom submission was expected. The word of God should have touched their conscience. It ought to be so with us. In the midst of

all this, however, were predictions which announced that the Messiah was to come, and to suffer for ends most important.

Prophecy applies itself properly to the earth ; its object is not heaven. It was about things that were to happen on the earth ; and the not seeing this has misled the church. We have thought that we ourselves had within us the accomplishment of these earthly blessings, whereas we are called to enjoy heavenly blessings. The privilege of the church is to have its portion in the heavenly places ; and later blessings will be shed forth upon the earthly people. The church is something altogether apart—a kind of heavenly economy, during the rejection of the earthly people, who were put aside on account of their sins, and driven out among the nations, out of the midst of which nations God chooses a people for the enjoyment of heavenly glory with Jesus Himself. The Lord having been rejected by the Jewish people, is become wholly a heavenly Person. This is the doctrine which we peculiarly find in the writings of the apostle Paul. It is no longer the Messiah of the Jews, but a Christ exalted, glorified ; and it is for want of taking hold of this exhilarating truth, that the church has become so weak.

(To be concluded in the next, D. V.)

“THE TREE OF LIFE.”

Soon we taste the endless sweetness
Of the Tree of Life above ;
Taste Its Own eternal meetness
For the heavenly land we love !

In eternal counsels founded,
Perfect now, in fruit Divine ;
When the last blest trump has sounded,
Fruit of God, for ever mine !

Fresh, and ever new, are hanging
Fruits of life, on that blest Tree ;
There is stilled each earnest longing ;
Satisfied my soul shall be :

Safety—where no foe approaches ;
Rest—where toil shall be no more ;
Joy—whereon no grief encroaches ;
Peace—where strife shall all be o'er !

Various fruits of richest flavour
Offers still the Tree Divine :
One Itself, the same for ever,
All Its various fruits are mine !

Where deceiver ne'er can enter,
Sin-soiled feet have never trod,
Free, our peaceful feet may venture
In the paradise of God,

Drink of life's perennial river,
Feed on life's perennial food,
Christ, the fruit of life and giver,
Safe through His redeeming blood !

Object of eternal pleasure ;
Perfect in Thy work Divine !
Lord of glory ! Without measure,
Worship, joy, and praise are Thine !

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But, my soul ! hast thou not tasted
Of that Tree of life on high ?
As through desert lands thou'st hasted,
Eshcol's grapes been never nigh ?

Ah ! that tree of life was planted,
Rooted deep in love Divine,
Ere the sons of God had chanted
World's where creature glories shine !

Love Divine without a measure,
Godhead glory must reveal ;
In the Object of its pleasure,
All its ways of grace must seal.

As a tender sucker, rising
From a dry and stony land,
Object of man's proud despising,
Grew the Plant of God's right hand !

Grace and truth, in love unceasing,
Rivers on the thirsty ground,
Every step to God well pleasing,
Spread their heavenly savour round.

He the Father's Self revealing, —
Heavenly words none else could tell,
Words of grace, each sorrow healing,
On the ear of sorrow fell.

Yes ! that Tree of Life is planted,
Sweetest fruit e'en here has borne !
To Its Own rich soil transplanted,
Waits alone the eternal morn ;

Fruits that our own souls have tasted,
By the Spirit from above,
While through desert lands we've hasted ;
Fruits of perfect, endless love !

THE HOPES OF THE CHURCH OF GOD.

(Concluded from Page 120.)

LECTURE XI. (Concluded.)

Read Revelation xii.

SUMMING UP, AND CONCLUSION.

Having thus briefly retraced the history of the different dispensations, it remains for us now to see the church glorified, but without the Lord Jesus having abandoned any of His rights upon the earth. He was the Heir: He was to shed His blood, which was to ransom the inheritance. As Boaz said (whose name signifies, In him is strength), "What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth, the Moabite, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance" (Ruth iv. 5). So it was necessary that Christ should buy the church, co-heir by grace, (as Boaz, type of Christ, bought the inheritance by taking to wife Ruth) to whom the inheritance had devolved in the decrees of Jehovah. *

Christ then, and the church, have title to the inheritance, that is, to all that Christ Himself has created as God. But what is the state of the church actually? Does it

* This is true in principle; but Ruth, as a figure, applies more directly to the remnant of Israel, brought in under grace.

actually inherit these things? Not any; because until we are in the glory we can have nothing, possess nothing, except only "the Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession." Until that time Satan is the prince of this world, the god of this world; he accuses even the children of God in the heavenly places, which, however, he occupies only by usurpation (the way being made to him by the passions of men, and the power which he exercises over the creature, fallen, and at a distance from God, although, definitively, the providence of God uses all to the accomplishment of His counsels).

And now, dear friends, having contemplated the rights of Christ and of the church, let us consider how Christ will make them good. The consideration of this will lead us into the discovery, in their order, of the accomplishment of events at the close. Perhaps, however, having arrived thus far, it would be better (as I have only been speaking of the Jews) to turn for a moment to the Gentiles.

We have remarked that, when the fall of the Jewish nation was complete, God transferred the right of government to the Gentiles; but with this difference, that this right was separated from the calling and the promise of God. In the Jews, the two

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things were united, namely, the calling of God, and government upon the earth, which became distinct things from the moment that Israel was put aside. In Noah and Abraham we had them distinct; government in the one, calling in the other.

With the Jews these principles were united; but Israel failed, and ceased thenceforward to be capable of manifesting the principle of the government of God, because God in Israel acted in righteousness; and unrighteous Israel could no longer be the depository of the power of God. God, then, quitted His terrestrial throne in Israel. Notwithstanding this, as to the earthly calling, Israel continued to be the called people: "for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." As to government, God transports it where He will; and it went to the Gentiles. There are, indeed, the called from among the nations (namely, the church), but it is for the heavens they are called. The calling of God for the earth is never transferred to the nations; it remains with the Jews. If I want an earthly religion, I ought to be a Jew. From the instant that the church loses sight of its heavenly calling, it loses, humanly speaking, all.

What has happened to the nations by their having had government given over to

them? They have become "beasts:" so the four great monarchies are called. Once the government is transferred to the Gentiles, they become the oppressors of the people of God: first, the Babylonians; secondly, the Medes and Persians; thirdly, the Greeks; then, the Romans. The fourth monarchy consummated its crime at the same instant that the Jews consummated theirs, in being accessory, in the person of Pontius Pilate, to the will of a rebellious nation, by killing Him who was at once the Son of God and King of Israel. Gentile power is in a fallen state, even as the called people, the Jews, are. Judgment is written upon power and calling, as in man's hand.

In the meanwhile, what happens? First, the salvation of the church. The iniquity of Jacob, the crime of the nations, the judgment of the world, and that of the Jews—all this becomes salvation to the church. It was accomplished all in the death of Jesus. Secondly, all that has passed since that stupendous event has no other object than the gathering together of the children of God. The Jews, the called people, have become rebellious, and are driven away from the presence of God; the nations are become equally rebellious; but government is always there—in a state of ruin indeed; but the patience of God is always there, also

waiting until the end. Then what takes place?

The church goes to join the Lord in the heavenly places.

Let us now suppose that, in the time decreed by God, all the church is assembled; what will happen? It will go immediately to meet the Lord, and the marriage of the Lamb will take place. Salvation will be consummated in the seat of the glory itself—in the heavenly places. Where will the nations be? The government of the fourth monarchy will be still in existence, but under the influence and direction of Anti-christ; and the Jews will unite themselves to him, in a state of rebellion, to make war with the Lamb. Why all this? and why has not the gospel hindered such a state of things? Because Satan, unto this hour, has not been driven out of the heavenly places, and, by consequence, all that God has done here for man has been spoiled—whether government of the Gentiles, or the actual relationship of the Jews with God. All has been deteriorated by the presence of Satan, always there exercising his baneful influence.

But God now, at the close, when the church is gathered and called up on high, takes things into His own hand. What will He do? Dispossess Satan—drive him from

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power. It is what Jesus will do when the church shall be manifestly united to Him, and He begins to act to restore everything into its proper order.

Dear friends, as soon as the church shall be received to Christ, there will follow the battle in heaven, in order that the seat of government may be purged of those fertile sources, and of those active agents, of the ills of humanity, and of all creation. The result of such a combat is easily foreseen : Satan will be expelled from heaven, without being bound ; but he will be cast down to earth, "having great wrath, because he knoweth he hath but a short time." Thenceforward, power will be established in heaven according to the intention of God. But on the earth it will be quite otherwise ; for when Satan is driven away from heaven, he will excite the whole earth, and will raise up in particular the apostate part of it, which has revolted against the power of Christ coming from heaven. It is said, "Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea !"

Behold, then, the created heavens occupied by Christ and His church ; and Satan in great wrath upon the earth, having but a short time. Under the conduct of Anti-christ, the fourth monarchy will become the

sphere upon which the activity of Satan will then be displayed, who will unite the Jews with this apostate prince against heaven. I do not enter upon the Scriptural proofs here—they have been already spoken of ; I merely sum up the facts in the order of their accomplishment. It need scarcely be said that the result of all this will be the judgment and destruction of the beast and Antichrist, the heads of evil among the Gentiles and among the Jews, the secular and spiritual heads of mischief and rebellion on the earth. Jesus Christ will destroy, in the person of Antichrist, the power of Satan in that government, which we have seen was confided to the Gentiles. The wicked one, having joined himself to the Jews, and having placed himself at Jerusalem, as the centre of government of the earth, will be destroyed by the coming of the Lord of lords and King of kings ; and Christ will anew occupy this chief seat of government, which will become the place of the throne of God on the earth. But although the Lord is come to the earth, and the power of Satan in Antichrist is destroyed and the government established in the hands of the Righteous One, the earth will not be reduced under His sceptre. The remnant of the Jews is delivered, and Antichrist destroyed ; but the world, not yet acknowledging the rights

of Christ, will desire to possess His heritage ; and the Saviour must clear the land in order that its inhabitants may enjoy the blessings of His reign without interruption or hindrance, and that joy and glory may be established in this world, so long subjected to the enemy.

The first thing, then, which the Lord will do will be to purify His land (the land which belongs to the Jews) of the Tyrians, the Philistines, the Sidonians ; of Edom, and Moab, and Ammon—of all the wicked, in short, from the Nile to the Euphrates. It will be done by the power of Christ in favour of His people re-established by His goodness. The people are put into security in the land, and then will those of them who remain till that time among the nations be gathered together. When the people are living thus in peace, another enemy will come up, namely, Gog ; but he will come only for his destruction.

It would seem that in those times—probably at the commencement of this period—besides the personal manifestation of Christ in judgment, there will be a discovery much more calm, much more intimate, of the Lord Jesus to the Jews. This is what will take place when He will descend on the Mount of Olives, where “His feet shall stand,” according to the expression of Zecha-

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riah xiv. 3, 4. It is always the same Jesus ; but He will reveal Himself peaceably, and show Himself, not as the Christ from heaven, but as the Messiah of the Jews.

Blessing to the Gentiles will be the consequence of the restoration of the Jews, and of the presence of the Lord. The church will have been blessed ; the apostasy of the fourth monarchy will no longer have existence ; the wicked one will be cut off, as well as the unbelieving Israelites ; in fine, the land of the Jews will be at peace.

Afterwards there will be "the world to come," prepared and introduced by these judgments, and by the presence of the Lord, who will take the place of wickedness and the wicked one. Those who shall have seen the glory manifested in Jerusalem will go and announce its arrival to the other nations. These will submit themselves to Christ ; they will confess the Jews to be the people blessed of their Anointed, will bring the rest of them back into their land, and will themselves become the theatre of glory, which, with Jerusalem as its centre, will extend itself in blessing wherever there is man to enjoy its effects. The witness of the glory being spread everywhere, the hearts of men, full of goodwill, submit themselves to the counsels and glory of God in response to this testimony. All the promises of God

being accomplished, and the throne of God being established at Jerusalem, this throne will become to the whole earth the source of happiness. The re-establishment of the people of God will be to the world as "life from the dead." (Rom. xi. 15.)

One thing is to be added, namely, that at this time Satan will be bound, and in consequence the blessing will be without interruption until "he is loosed for a short season." Instead of the adversary in the heavenly places; instead of his government, the seat of which is now in the air; instead of that confusion and misery which he produces, as much as is allowed him to do; Christ and His church will be there, the source and instrument of blessing ever new. Government in the heavenly places will be the security, and not the hindrance, or the compulsory instrument, of the goodness of God. The glorified church—witness for all, even by its state, of the extent of the love of the Father, who has fulfilled all His promises, and has been better to our weak hearts than even their hopes—will fill the heavenly places with its own joy; and in its service will constitute the happiness of the world, towards which it will be the instrument of the grace which it shall be richly enjoying. Behold the heavenly Jerusalem, witness in glory of the grace which has

placed her so high! In the midst of her shall flow the river of water of life, where grows "the tree of life," whose leaves are for the healing of the Gentiles; for even in the glory shall be preserved to her this sweet character of grace. Meanwhile, upon the earth, is the earthly Jerusalem, the centre of the government, and of the reign of the righteousness of Jehovah her God; as indeed in a state of desolation she had been of His justice, she will be the place of His throne—the centre of the exercise of that justice described in such language as "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish." For in that state of terrestrial glory—though indeed placed there by the grace of the new covenant—this city will still preserve its normal character, that she may be witness of the character of Jehovah, as the church is of that of the Father. God also will realize the full force of that name—"The most high God, possessor of the heavens and the earth;" and Christ will fulfil in all their fulness, all the functions of High Priest, after the order of Melchizedek, who after the victory gained over the enemies of God's people, blessed their God on the part of the people, and the people on the part of God. (Gen. xiv., 18, &c.)

Dear friends, you will understand that

there is an infinity of details into which I have not entered ; for example, the circumstance of the Jews who will be persecuted during the troublous times in Judea, of which we have some instruction in the word. This general sketch will engage you to read the word of God for yourselves on the whole subject. For myself, I attach more importance to the larger features of prophecy ; and for this reason, that there is to be found in them, on the one hand, the distinctions of dispensations, which become, by the consideration of these truths, very clear ; and on the other, the character of God, which is, in this manner fully unveiled. However this may be, there is nothing to hinder your study of prophecy, even in its minute details. If, indeed, we attempt the examination of the works of man in this way, an abundance of imperfection is found ; but it is the contrary in the works of God. The more we enter into their minute details, the more does perfection appear.

May God perfect in you, and in all His children, this separation from the world, which ought to be, before God, the fruit of the expectation of the church, at the discovery of these its heavenly blessings in store, and of the terrible judgments which await all that which still binds man to this lower world ; for the judgment will come

upon all these earthly things! May God also perfect the desires of my heart, and the witness of the Holy Spirit! *

* "THE HOPES OF THE CHURCH OF GOD," here concluded, began in "The Remembrancer" for January, 1906.



EARNESTNESS OF SOUL AFTER GOD.

PSALM XLII.

*To the chief musician,
Maschil, for the sons of Korah.*

As the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land

PSALM LXIII.

*A psalm of David,
when he was in the
wilderness of Judah.*

O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live; I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: When I re-

of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar. Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts ; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. Yet the LORD will command his loving-kindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me : while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God : for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

member thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. My soul followeth hard after thee : thy right hand upholdeth me. But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. They shall fall by the sword : they shall be a portion for foxes. But the king shall rejoice in God ; everyonethat swear-eth by him shall glory : but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

God wants every thought and desire of our hearts. That is the effect of His coming down to us, and is very blessed. There is another thing, and even a better, that is, His lifting us up to Him where He is. When God meets our thoughts, wants, and feelings, it is His answering according to the measure of our need ; in the other He surpasses all the desires of our hearts and minds. See it in Psalm cxxxii., when certain blessings are asked, and each desire is surpassed. See the request in ver. 8, and the answer to it in vs. 14, 15 ; again in ver. 9 is the request,

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the answer to which is in ver. 16 ; and thirdly in ver. 10, the request is presented, the answer to which, in vs. 17, 18, goes far beyond.

There is *trial* of faith: He suffers His people to hunger, &c., that they may know the value of being fed by Him as He will.

“In the desert God will teach thee
What the God that thou hast found ;
Patient, gracious, powerful, holy,
All His grace shall there abound !”

There is personal relationship between the saint and God—“mine and thine,” in John xvii., which connects itself with what He is for us.

To Abram God said (Gen. xv.), “*I am thy shield,*” because he wanted protection, “*thy exceeding great reward.*” It did not go beyond Abram’s want—he wished an heir. This is different from his delighting in God. What God is bringing us to is to delight in Himself. See Abraham in Genesis xvii. 17: “*I am the Almighty God.*” This is quite another thing. It was God’s revelation of Himself to Abraham. True, all kinds of blessing are connected with it ; but it is a higher thing, because it revealed God, and led him up to communion with Him, while the other threw him back on his own need and wishes.

It is a different thing to have the joy of the relationship, and to have the fruits of it. "Oh my God, early will I seek thee." There is activity of soul thus seeking God. The soul athirst for God seeks—there is diligence in seeking God for Himself—the mouth is open for everything. The Psalm does not speak of seeking for water; when a man is thirsty, he seeks for water; but here it is more thirsting for Him who gives the water.

The conscious relationship was founded: "O God, thou art *my* God." The more he enjoyed God, the more it was felt to be a dry and thirsty land—not dry because of the weariness of the way. What does it matter, the dry and thirsty land, if I have the living water in my soul? I do not think about the dryness then. It is not being at home yet either. It is the wilderness in Romans viii. If I know that I am to be in the same glory with Christ, what will affect me here? What! people going to be with the Lord in glory; and yet the slightest thing can upset me now! I feel the wretchedness; *because* I have got the glory—I am not acquiring it, but seeking it because I have it. Think of a person who had seen heaven—knowing all the blessedness of it—going through such a world as this! That is what it was to Christ. What made Him feel it

was the joy. "Because thy loving-kindness is better than life," this world is a wilderness.

"Thy loving-kindness is better than life;" but it brings death upon one. No matter. "In every thing give thanks." What! in sorrow? Yes, to be sure, we have the key to the joy in having Himself. "Thy loving-kindness is better than life; therefore will I praise thee while I live." "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness." What! in the desert? Yes, that is the very place, because God Himself is his portion. "My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips." Now we often praise, when we are not very joyful (there is a certain pressure on the heart), and it is right to do it at all times; but here the heart is so full of the blessing that it is pressed out of him. We learn from Psalm xlii., that "the health ('help') of my countenance" is the effect of "the help ('health') of His countenance." The heart is lifted up above the sorrow because occupied with God Himself.

In Psalm lxiii., the soul is in the state in which Psalm xlii., ends. It is not an oppressed heart looking out for what would make him joyful, but rejoicing because the spring is there: "Therefore will I bless thee while I live."

There is help in God (see verse 7) for the

difficulties of the way. It is not here the enjoyment of God Himself, but His protection. Do I look forward to my life to come? I defy any one to know anything but that His window is open. God, then, is the only certain thing. I have no certainty that there will be a to-morrow, but there is God. Because the heart is in heaven, we can rejoice in the thing itself we have got for all times. "Jehovah is my Shepherd: I shall not want." It is not, He has put me in certain circumstances, and I shall be happy there; but it is something to depend on, to know He is my Shepherd. Then there is earnestness of purpose in following after (verse 8). So Paul: "I press towards the mark," following hard after Him in a "dry and thirsty land." Paul in prison was pressing on toward Christ, and rejoicing in the Lord; he had nothing else to rejoice in. In nothing should we be terrified by adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition (vs. 9, 10); as on the other hand Christ and they that are His alone shall be exalted for ever. (ver. 11.)



FRAGMENT.—Compare the faith of the Shunammite in 2 Kings iv., with that of her of Larephath in 1 Kings xvii. The latter put her dead in her bosom, the former on the prophets bed. Death reminded one of her own sin; it reminded the other of God's resources.

“THE TIME IS SHORT.”

A Marriage Salutation.

“The time is short: it remaineth, that they that have wives be as though they had none.” 1 Cor. vii. 29.

“THE TIME IS SHORT;” Let not this warning prove
A cloud to dim the sunshine of your love;
It was not meant by Him, who joys to bless,
E’en for an hour to damp your happiness.
He, who Himself the feast at Cana graced
With His presence, and the best wine placed,
To cheer the guests, upon the festal board,
Would rather gladden by this needed word.
“The time is short:” my children spend it well;
As “heirs of life” together seek to dwell.
Helpmates in following JESUS may you prove,
Yielding yourselves as captives to His love.
Your union with each other serve to show,
As more and more you in His likeness grow,
Your closer union with your risen Head;
And His dear presence its sweet perfume shed
O’er all your conversation in your home,
As pilgrims waiting till the Bridegroom come.
“THE TIME IS SHORT” for joy or suffering here;
Soon shall the morning without clouds appear:
The “little while” He tarries still, redeem—
Your motive, aim, and end, to live to Him.
In heaven there’ll be no cross for Christ to bear,
No sufferings with your blessed Lord to share;
No souls to win from error’s devious maze;
No works of grace to show your Father’s praise.
NOW IS THE TIME, and, oh, how short the hours,
Those fruits to bear no plants can yield but ours!
Soon, when transplanted to a brighter sphere,
We’ll lose th’ occasions that He gives us here,
In this drear wilderness of sin and woe,
The fruitful power of heavenly love to show.
Gird up your loins together for the fight;
Trim well your lamps; give no uncertain light;
Boldly your banner lift; confess His name:
That you are His let all your ways proclaim;
Your home, His home; your Lord, and yet your Guest,
By Him protected, with His favour blest:
Cheered by His smiles, may you more fully prove,
As time flows on, the sunshine of His love;
When time is o’er, that love divine shall be
Your mutual portion through eternity.

MARRIAGE.

“And He answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife : and they twain shall be one flesh ? . . . What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

“They say unto Him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away ? He saith unto them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives : but from the beginning it was not so.”—MATT. xix. 4-8.

An old proverb says, “Marriages are made in heaven,” and in a certain sense I believe it to be true ; I mean in the sense of the preceding words—namely, that husband and wife being one flesh is of *Divine* ordaining, and their oneness is a oneness of God’s own making. “What therefore *God* hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

What then is marriage ? I believe that but comparatively few are rightly instructed concerning it, and that many enter into and continue in the state without ever having understood its Divine origin, or sought Divine sanction.

In the majority of minds the bond of marriage depends on a legal ceremony of some kind or another, performed in what is called a place of worship, a registrar’s office, or other lawfully appointed place. Their thoughts rise no higher than this. Connect-

ed with this legal act, there is often, indeed almost generally, the desire for a religious act; hence the preference shown by most persons for marriage in a "church." But if we search God's Word, where truth alone is to be found, whether concerning things eternal or things temporal, we learn that marriage in His thoughts depends not either upon a legal or a religious observance. "He which made them in the beginning" ("the beginning," when there was neither legal nor religious ceremony known), "He which made them in the beginning, made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh." That is, *He* which in the beginning made them *two*, namely male and female, ordained that in their union they should become *one*, and that for this cause (because of this new oneness, which He had made out of twain), a man shall leave father and mother,—that is, he shall forsake the nearest and closest of existing natural ties,—and cleave to that new tie, that other, who is now made *one* with himself—"his own flesh" (Eph. v. 29). Then, adds the Lord Jesus to those who raised the question, "What therefore *God* hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

"What God hath joined together." Is not

this then something more than a legal or religious ceremonial? Surely it is. It is a mystery, but withal it is God's truth, and not all the sin, nor all the confusion which sin has brought into this most solemn and sacred subject, can alter the fact, that the man and the woman who mutually agree and consent to live together, are in the sight of God "one flesh," joined together by God's own ordinance; and of such and to such it is said, "Let not man put asunder."

But it will perhaps be asked, Are the legal or religious ceremonies then to be put aside, for you speak as if they were unnecessary? No, I answer, by no means; but we must give them their right places. Neither legal nor religious ceremony makes marriage as before God, but, like Moses' bill of divorcement, legal marriage is necessary because of the hardness of men's hearts.

The laws of men are necessary because of man's natural lawlessness and sin. So the law of every country as to marriage is needful because of the lawlessness of man, and his utter ignorance of, or disobedience to, the ordained and revealed will of God upon the subject.

The law, therefore, says that unless the man and woman appear before a legally appointed authority, and witnesses, and declare their consent, which act is then and

there registered, their union is not marriage, but *sin*.

The Christian, therefore, who is subject to the powers that be, and owns that they are "ordained of God," gladly on his part complies with the law of the land in which he dwells, and conforms to whatever rule the law requires of him to render his marriage valid in the sight of man; but for all that, he must know that *mere* legal compliance will not suffice as before God, however needful it may be as subjection to man's ordinance for the Lord's sake.

I say the legal ceremony will not suffice before God, and I say so for the following reason. What the *law* joins together, the law *can* put asunder. A legal marriage can be legally dissolved. The law tolerates divorce. It does not profess to rise to the Divine standard. It says to the man and the woman, "If you mutually desire it, I will bind you legally, and give you certain legal rights as married; and if you disagree, I will, under certain conditions, loose you again, and you shall be free. If you then desire to re-marry, I will bind you again, and it shall be all 'legal' from beginning to end." The law does not, cannot own that God has joined together, and that even though sin may outwardly separate, the Divine decree remains unchanged,—they

whom He has joined are inseparably "one flesh."* The law does not profess to dissolve the relationship of parent and child; but ignorant of the Divine ordinance of marriage, it professes to dissolve the relationship of husband and wife, which God has put on higher grounds than the former. It is evident, therefore, that the legal idea of marriage comes short of the requirements of God, for He who is above all law says, "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder," and He then explains that the divorce permitted by Moses was not so "from the beginning," was a thing tolerated because of the hardness of heart of the children of Israel. That is, they were so carnal that divorce was permitted, to avoid worse evils.

The Lord Jesus, however, does not confirm the permission of Moses; and thus to

* It may be a question how far sin, committed by either party, such as is spoken of by the Lord (Matt. xix. 9), may break the marriage tie between Christians. Without confession it must of necessity outwardly separate, but I doubt not that before God they are yet bound. There is no liberty at all events for re-marriage, except the tie be dissolved by natural dissolution or death. (Rom. vii. 1, 2; 1 Cor. vii. 10, 11.) Even the law recognises condonation of such sin, and grace can surely do no less on confession and evidence of true repentance. But if the tie were broken, or dissolved by sin, there could be no condonation. It must be admitted that there is a difficulty, but can sin create a difficulty which grace cannot meet? I think not.

those who are under grace, to Christians in fact, as distinguished from Israelites under law, there is no toleration for divorce. The workings of the flesh and the hardness of the heart are not legalized or consented to, but are to be judged, and all their fruits condemned and mortified; but nevertheless Paul is permitted to say, "Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" (1 Cor. vii. 2). Blessed permission of a gracious God who knoweth the frames, the necessities of His poor creatures, who cares for their joys and for their sorrows, and who says still, "It is not good for the man to be alone." (Compare Gen. ii. 18; John xvii. 11; Eph. v. 25-33.)

What, then, is required of those who desire to marry? I write more especially for Christians, for those who know and believe the love of God in Christ, who take His name, and who thus through grace are able to know and do His will.

Firstly, let us remember (even if it humble us) that though marriage is good and blessed, yet to be unmarried, free for God and Christ, is better (1 Cor. vii. 1, 7, 8, 27, 29). To walk in the Spirit, above the claims and affections of nature in this matter, is a higher path than to follow nature: "But every man hath his proper gift of God, and

if thou marry thou hast not sinned" (1 Cor. vii.), and the Lord Himself says, "All men cannot receive this saying" Matt. xix. 11).

If, then, marriage is your desire, seek to know the mind of God concerning it (and this is equally needed by those who are already united). Do not measure marriage by man's standard, nor limit it to what is often called by its name in an evil world. Remember that the union of those whose hearts are leading them, or have led them together, is *inseparable*. God made the woman for the man, and yet neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man in the Lord (1 Cor. xi. 9-11). He made them the one for the other, and being joined they are *one* in the flesh, even as it is true "in the Lord," and none can separate. Never mind what sin has done, or is doing in this evil world, but hold fast what God says about it, not only in the institution, but in "the great mystery," the type of human marriage: "I speak concerning Christ and the Church" (Eph. v. 32). There in that wondrous mystery, the union of Christ and His bride—the two made one—is seen the thought of God concerning the union of man and wife, of whom He says, "Wherefore they are *no more* twain, but one flesh." None can separate that which God hath joined together in

Christ, and let none put asunder those whom God hath made one in flesh.

And, next, as to your individual case. There should be, surely, perfect conviction before God and before one another that the proposed step is according to His will. It is greatly to be feared that many enter on marriage without any such conviction, or any dealings with God about the matter. The motives are often low and altogether unworthy of the Christian's calling, or such as should dictate his acts. To ensure a good and peaceful conscience before God, and an ordinary prospect of mutual happiness together, neither party should have a shadow of doubt that the person of their choice is *the* only person to whom they could be united, and that it is the will of God distinctly that such union should take place. Some have said that this is rare, and the standard is too high; but is it too much to ask the Christian never to act in doubt before God, and above all in a step which, if any step can, may make for or mar his fellowship with God all through his earthly path? If then there be a doubt, wait patiently until the Lord resolves it.*

* It is not a question here as to whether the Lord, in His grace and pitifulness, is not a resource, and has not a remedy for our mistakes even in marriage. We know what He is, and what His grace can do.

Then as to the outward form of marriage to be observed. I doubt not that in this the Christian's path is clear. God's word says, "Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake" (1 Peter ii. 13); "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thes. v. 22); and to such words he bows. The law of man requires an outward observance, and it must be observed. But amidst the confusion and variety which arises from the self-will of man, who does that which is good in his own eyes, the Christian needs discernment, lest while following the letter, he fails in the spirit.

It has been already shown that the legal standard of marriage falls far short of the Divine thought; and yet the world, and Christians in the world, for the most part desire to *combine* a religious with a legal observance, thus placing them on an equal footing as to the bond they form. Hence the large preference which is shown for marriages in so-called "places of worship," in which, though the religious element predominates, yet the law recognises the act and registration there as "legal." But herein is sad confusion. The religious act or ceremony is professedly the seeking for Divine sanction and blessing on the marriage. Professing Christians prefer marriage by a "minister of religion," for

this reason ; they profess, and many sincerely desire to ask the blessing and sanction of God on their act. But the ceremony in such places constitutes, by law, a legal marriage, and we have seen that what the law binds it can also loose. Is it right, therefore, to seek the Divine sanction on marriage, in an act which comes quite short of the Divine ordinance ? Can we, if we think of it, honestly come into the presence of Him who says, "*Let not man put asunder,*" in a form or ceremony, which can be undone or dissolved ? Surely we cannot, and thus the ordinary combination of the legal and religious ceremony in one act, only proves what I said at the first, that the Divine thought of marriage is but little understood ; and moreover, that in a day of professing *Christianity*, marriage law is still based upon the standard and permission of Moses, as adapted for the people of Israel, and is not founded upon what "God made in the beginning," "and SAID," and confirmed by the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christians—believers who know God in Christ, who bow to *His* word, and who desire to be in communion with *His* thoughts, and to own *His* will in all things—ought not then to approach Him in that which is confessedly short of His require-

ments, but in any religious act in which they seek His blessing and sanction on their marriage, they should do so in spirit and in truth.

They should bear in mind the distinction as to marriage in the laws of men and in the ordinance of God, and then give to each the recognition which is due.

If man's law requires a certain observance, observe it. If God claims a higher motive and acknowledgment, render them to Him.

And in the land in which we live, the Lord has in His goodness made the path for faith and conscience very easy. The Christian in this country can satisfy the claims of man's law, without being compelled to combine with it a religious element distressing to the conscience; for the law of England permits the registry of marriages apart from any religious ceremony whatever.

It may then perhaps be asked, What more then is necessary? If the motive is pure, and the marriage has been legally registered, that may suffice.

But I would answer, though it may suffice for a worldling, or for the one who gladly avails himself of the registry office, to evade anything like religious form or profession (as many do in this age of growing infidel-

ity), it is not enough for the Christian, who should desire the prayers and fellowship of fellow-believers, in seeking the blessing and sanction of God upon his marriage. And for this end, how blessed and real a thing, after having complied with the law's demands, to assemble with those "who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Tim. ii. 22), and seeking their prayers and fellowship in the marriage, solemnly confess *before* them and to *God*, that in it His *own* institution is owned and recognised, that those whom He joins together may not be put asunder.

It has been truly said by a servant of God, that the Church of God claims a higher confession from the believer in his marriage than the law of man. The Church has a right to ask, and to expect, that the believer shall enter upon marriage on higher grounds than mere outward conformity to a legal observance; and more than this, the assembly with which remains the presence of Christ and of His Spirit, *must* judge, and may even withhold its sanction and fellowship in any doubtful case which may come before it, for it is evident that there might be marriage which, though *legal*, the assembly could not sanction, and on account of which communion at the table of the Lord might be withheld from those con-

tracting it.* Hence the propriety of separating the two acts, conformity to the law, and the seeking blessing from God in the presence of His people.

I would now briefly recapitulate the points which I have sought to press.

1. Marriage rightly undertaken is sanctioned by God.

2. That what He sanctions and joins together, man may not separate.

3. That though sin has brought in confusion, the Divine thought of marriage has not been thereby changed, nor the facts altered.

4. That what man joins together, man can and does separate.

5. That conformity to man's law as to

* It gives much rest and comfort to the soul to trace everything to its source, and have a good and valid reason for all that we do. Therefore in marriage, whether in the legal observance, or in the communion of saints, it is right to acknowledge and to seek the sanction of *God*, in both as His ordinances. "For as the powers that be are ordained of God," and He has delegated to them government in the earth, it is happy to be subject to them not for "wrath," but "for conscience sake;" not in fear of them, but submitting to them as "the ministers of God." Again, in seeking the fellowship of God's saints, to own in them as gathered in Christ's name and by His Spirit, the assembly of God which can bind and loose, can remit and retain, can pronounce in His name sanction or refusal of our acts. The sanction of *God* should therefore be that which is before our souls, whether by His "ministers to us for good," or by His Spirit in the assembly of His saints.

marriage, does not by itself satisfy the Divine requirement.

6. That nevertheless man's ordinance *must* be observed for the Lord's sake.

7. That having conformed to man's law, it is good and blessed to own before God and His people, His higher claims and standard, and to seek His blessing and sanction, and their fellowship, prayers, and testimony in connection with marriage so entered into.

Finally, may all whose hearts are exercised about the marriage state, look to God and to the word of His grace for guidance upon the subject. It is more fully entered into in the Word of God than any other of our natural relationships. In type and in substance it is constantly referred to, and good it is for the present peace and happiness of husband and wife, when their affections, their relationship, and all their mutual claims and duties, are founded on this sure and eternal guide.



WOMAN.

(Gen. ii.)

Alienated as fallen man is from God, nothing is so strange to him as the truth. And no wonder. It brings the true God before him, and reminds him of his depar-

ture from God. He is under Satan's lie, and naturally opposes the truth, which he is inclined to treat at best as myth, philosophic or religious. But it is by the word of God's revealed truth, that the Father of lights brought of His own will any forth, that they should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures. His word is truth; and of that word Christ is the great personal Object of faith, who puts every soul that hears the gospel to the test. To this end is He born, and to this end is come into the world, that He should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth hears His voice, and follows Him who gives the believer eternal life. "He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John v. 12). If a man recognised his ruin and guilt before God, how would he not from his heart receive the Saviour!

But, owning neither his own need nor God's grace in Christ, he stumbles at the word, being disobedient, and judges Scripture, instead of being judged by it, as all believers are. Such an one sets Gen. ii. against Gen. i., because through incredulity he sees God in neither, and is unwilling to learn the truth in each and in both, alike necessary to give us a complete view.

Beyond controversy Gen. i. 26-28 presents

in noble terms the creation of man, the chief of His works here below. Here only did He call Himself into council; as man only He proposed to make in His image after His likeness, assigning dominion over the rest of earth's living creatures. But whatever may be the expression of singular dignity, it is simply mankind's place in creation, notably distinguished, and indisputably the highest, but yet the highest of earthly creatures, "male and female" like the rest of animated nature. It is therefore God, Elohim the Creator simply, of whom we read. It could not with propriety be otherwise.

Gen. ii. regards the scene from the point of moral relationship which brings in the name of Him who governs on earth as revealed to Israel nationally, and so, in the Old Testament as a whole, Jehovah, but Jehovah here carefully identified with the Creator, Jehovah Elohim, the LORD God. For there is none other. It is ignorance to account for the different names of God here or elsewhere, and any difference of words, style, etc., by imagining distinct writers, when all is demonstrably due to change of standpoint, and the simple but profound and exquisite accuracy of thought and language in Holy Writ. It is no rival account by another hand, but the same

writer guided by the inspiring Spirit to set out man's moral position: the garden of Eden as the scene of his care, and, in the midst of abundance, the prohibition laid on him under penalty of death; the subject beasts, and birds brought to him and named by him as their lord; finally a helpmate, in contrast with every other formation, taken out of himself in the wise goodness of Him with whom we have to do.

All is consistent with the presentation of relationship, beginning with Jehovah Elohim (the LORD God) in chap. ii. 4, not Creator only but Moral Governor. Hence here, not in chap. i., is the garden of delight planted by the LORD God, the testing place of man's obedience. Here only in the midst of the garden we hear of the two trees: one the sovereign gift of life naturally; the other of responsibility. Here only are we told of man formed of the dust of the ground on one hand, and on the other by the LORD God breathing into his nostrils the breath of life. Adam was thus "son of God" (Luke iii. 38), a living soul, not as other creatures by creative power only, but he only by Jehovah Elohim breathing into his nostrils. Nor is the effect lost for the race; for, as Paul quotes to the Athenians, we too are His offspring, as no other earthly creatures are. Therefore is the soul im-

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mortal for good or for ill; if saved, it is for ever with Christ; if lost, for everlasting punishment, because He is refused and men die in their sins. Such was man's relationship to Jehovah Elohim, and the test of obedience here therefore follows.

In pointed contrast with the relationship to him of every animal of the field and every bird of the heavens, to which their master gave names by divine authority, no helpmate appeared, till Jehovah Elohim caused a deep sleep to fall on the man. Then He took one of his ribs, and built it into a woman, and brought her to the man (vs. 21, 22). And the man, notwithstanding his deep sleep, recognised her at once as bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh: "This shall be called Woman (or 'Sheman'), because she was taken out of man." It is the strongest possible statement of her peculiar relationship to himself, and as perfectly suiting chap. ii., as it would have been out of place in chap. i. How sad that men of learning, professed theologians, should be so dull to discern the mind of God in Scripture, so ready to plunge into the dark after any Will-o-the-wisp of rationalism to their own loss and the injury of all who follow them!

The apostle Paul in 1 Cor. xi. 8, 9, tersely sums up the truth of the case as having God's authority: "For man is not of

woman, but woman of man ; for neither was man created for the woman, but woman for the man." Those who venture to dispute the fact must one day learn what it is to give God the lie. It is the ground of the sanctity of marriage, *one woman for one man* (Mark x. 6-8): such was the order, "from the beginning," of Him who made her, as He did, of man, and so to be one flesh--alas! too soon forgotten by men generally and even by Israel. But there it was indelibly written to instruct the faithful and shame the rebellious.

And is it nothing for souls that the same apostle, in Ephes. v. 25-33, refers to this oracle of God? Yes, the first man Adam foreshadows the Second man and last Adam, on Whom fell a deeper sleep, that a heavenly Eve might be formed, even the church for which Christ in His love gave Himself, that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. No doubt this mystery is great, but it is no less true and blessed. It is infinite grace, and only possible through the death of Christ, by which a poor sinner is reconciled through faith to God.

BORN OF THE SPIRIT, AND INDWELT BY THE SPIRIT.

(John iii. 5; Ephes. i. 13)

It is true that we are only sealed by the Holy Spirit after having believed. But it is not then that we are born of God. If the presence of the Holy Spirit were life, every Christian would be an incarnation of the Holy Ghost. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit that we have of God (1 Cor. vi. 19). Being born of God is another thing. We have not received, as to the state in which we find ourselves, the state purposed for us in the counsels of God; but we have all, subjectively, to be able to enjoy it. We have, undoubtedly, eternal life. When it is said, "this is the promise that He hath promised us" (1 John ii. 25), it is no question of whether we have it, or have it not, but what is the promise of God. But the testimony of God is that He has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life, and he who has not the Son has not life (1 John v. 11, 12). Christ is eternal life come down from the Father. Life eternal is indeed spoken of, as at the end (Rom. vi.), because eternal life such as God means by it in His fixed purpose, is in the glory, when we shall be like Christ; but we are already quickened. John v. 24:

he has life, he is *passed* from death unto life, and the hour had already come (verse 25). Also John iii. 36. We are bound to reckon that we are alive unto God by Jesus Christ (Rom. vi. 11). "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). When we were dead, He quickened us with Christ (Ephes. ii.). We are seated only in Christ, and it is according to the power that worketh in us. God does not quicken in heaven wicked people who arrive there dead in sin! And the soul is not in the grave with the body. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. John vi. : "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life." And here it is by faith, and down here ; he who eateth of this bread shall live eternally : if one does not it, *one has not life in oneself*. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." That is to say, resurrection is another thing ; he has life, and made sure for eternity ; he will be raised up at the last day. He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. Nothing appears to me clearer than the doctrine of the word on this subject under various forms ; born of the Spirit, quickened by Christ, by faith in receiving Him as the Bread of Life. It ought

to make the believer perfectly assured on this point. "He who has the Son has life." Christ is my life. The gift of the Spirit is quite another thing, the seal of faith. After having believed I have been sealed. We are sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. iii. 26), and *because we are sons*, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into the heart, crying, Abba, Father (Gal. iv. 6).

"The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John vii. 39). But the passage in Galatians marks clearly the difference between new birth and sealing. "Ye are," chapter iii. 26 tells us, "all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Then chapter iv. 6, "Because ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." "Because ye are sons," not in order that ye may be. It could not be more clear.

God does not seal an unbeliever, a sinner in his natural condition. This would be impossible. He will receive such an one in His grace; then He seals him. Further, the new life is not the Holy Ghost, or we should be an incarnation of the Holy Ghost; this would be nonsense simply. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit," but it is not *the* Spirit, who is God. But when the Holy Ghost dwells in us, our bodies are

temples of the Holy Ghost. The difference is of all importance. The Holy Ghost acts in us, through the word, to produce the new birth, but it is one thing to build a house, and another to dwell in it.

We are not born again without the Holy Ghost; but His work and His *indwelling* are two distinct things. People confound His operation and His coming. The Son of God created the world, but He did not come until His incarnation. The Holy Ghost has wrought from the beginning: He wrought in creation; but He did not come till the day of Pentecost. The Lord said that if He went away He would send Him, but if He did not go away He would not come (John xvi. 7). Man must be in the glory, redemption having been accomplished, before the Holy Ghost could be given to believers, because the Holy Ghost is received by believers only.



THE DYING AND THE LIFE OF JESUS.

(2 Corinthians iv.)

Two things are remarkable in this chapter: first, how entirely it is a new power by which we are enabled to glorify God, although we are so apt to mix up with it human energy and strength, and so bring in weakness; secondly, the deep consciousness the apostle had of the value of the

saints to the Lord. Therefore he could say "all things are for your sakes," and that is how he looks at himself, and offers himself a sacrifice—"ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." He could say, "troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken," etc. "Always bearing about in the body," etc. "For we which live are always delivered unto death." "So then death worketh in us, but life in you," He gives himself up to them and says, I am content to be all this, and to suffer all this, yea, to lose my life for your sake. It is all right. I ought to be a sacrifice for you; it is God's object I should be for you; for He who was entitled to glory was content to lose the whole, and to give up Himself, even His Messiahship. Christ gives up Himself for us, and therefore Paul could say, "All things are for your sakes." It is encouraging and cheering of heart to know that all things are for our sakes, that the abundant grace, etc. Then the vessels in which the Lord may choose His grace to work are counted as sheep for the slaughter; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus. Death works in us, but life in you. Just so far as death works in ourselves, life can work by us in blessing to others. And I would just say here, it is a

remarkable way in which the apostle took Christ's place: of course it was Christ's grace in him. By bearing about in the body the dying—not *mine*, but the death of Christ, that has put an end to him, that another power might work by him. The glory is not veiled as was Moses; it is with an opened face that we behold the unveiled glory of Christ when received. If our gospel be veiled, it is to them that are lost. The word of God has come out of us as bright as it came in—God has not put anything to dim it: the entire fault is in their eyes. If I light a candle, it is to shine. God lit up this in Paul to shine; and, if not seen then, it is their blindness. As far as my energy is concerned, it is death, always bearing about the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. Not Paul's life, but the life of Jesus; "knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also." He is counting on the same power that raised up Jesus raising him. Just as Christ took the resurrection, as the answer to natural death, so the apostle, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

What a comfort to be able to say everything is for yourselves! But how far can we say, "death worketh in us," so that the

life of Christ should shine—be made manifest in our mortal body? If it is to shine out of our hearts, it must be as bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, and then, come what will, we can say that the full portion of Christ is ours.



CHURCHES AND THE CHURCH.

You ask me, were there not churches in Scripture? I answer, there were; but what are churches? The effect of the question is to bring out the state of the mind. Most christians would immediately think of what are called churches in the religious world, perhaps in christendom at large. They would think of the Presbyterian church, or Congregational and Baptist churches, or else of the church of Rome, or the like. The person who lived habitually in the mind of Scripture would think of Corinth, or others which we meet with in Scripture. Are, then, the facts which exist in christendom, or the thoughts there current, different from the facts found in Scripture, or the thoughts formed by it? Let us enquire into this, not with a haughty heart, but if we find all gone far away from the scriptural state in principle and practice—if we find all ruined, instead of power in the Holy Ghost and unity, a fair show in the flesh—let us

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mourn in heart, and cry to the Lord. He will meet us in our need.

What were churches in scriptural times? Church means simply an assembly; or, from local use in Greek, an assembly of privileged persons, of citizens. The whole multitude of believers, gathered into one by the Holy Ghost, formed the assembly, or church. Only here, of course, it was God's assembly. Of course those in Rome or Corinth could not meet in Jerusalem. Hence there were assemblies in different places, forming each locally God's assembly in the place. It may be well very briefly to examine how the assembly is viewed in Scripture as a whole, before we speak of local assemblies. It is viewed as the habitation of God, and also as the body of Christ. And first of the former. In one sense the church is not yet formed, is not complete. All that shall be united to Christ in glory form part of it. "I will build my church," says Jesus, "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." This will be infallibly accomplished. So Peter, evidently alluding to this, says, "Unto whom coming, as unto a living stone, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house." So Eph. ii., "In whom the whole building fitly framed together groweth into an holy temple in the Lord." This is yet unfinished, and still goes on; and though at first a pub-

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lic and evident body, the Lord adding daily to the church such as should be saved, it has become what is called the invisible church. It is invisible: though if it was to be the light of the world, it is hard to tell the value of an invisible light. If it is acknowledged to have fallen for ages into corruption and iniquity, a very Babylon in character, that has not been the light of the world. The persecuted saints—for God has surely had a people—gave their testimony; but the public body in the world was darkness, not light, in it.

There is another way in which God's assembly is spoken of, and still first as the house, a habitation of God, that is, as established by the instrumentality of man, and under the responsibility of man. "As a wise master-builder," says Paul, "I have laid the foundation, but let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon." There is human instrumentality and human responsibility. It was a large body formed on earth, which was God's house or temple, the Holy Ghost dwelling in it down here as descended on the day of Pentecost (1 Cor. iii.); not the body, there can be no wood and hay and stubble which is to be burned in that. Again, "Ye are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph. ii. 22.) This is a very interesting and

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precious truth : I mean, God's dwelling down here in His house prepared for Him according to His will. God never dwelt with Adam innocent, though He visited him ; nor with Abraham, though He visited, and singularly blessed him ; but the moment Israel was redeemed out of Egypt, God came and dwelt among them. The dwelling of God with men is the fruit of redemption. (See Exodus xxix. 46.) The true redemption has been accomplished, and God has formed a habitation for Himself, where He dwells by the Spirit. It is so, indeed, as to the individual (1 Cor. vi.), but I now speak of the assembly, the house of the living God. This is now on the earth, the habitation of God by the Spirit. He dwells and walks among us. We are God's building. Man may have built in wood and hay and stubble, but God has not yet executed judgment to remove the house out of His sight, though judgment will begin there (1 Peter iv. 17).

The assembly is also the body of Christ. (Eph. i. 23.) It is by one Spirit we are baptized into one body. This, though the final completeness of it will be in heaven, is established on earth, for the baptism of the Holy Ghost was His coming down—the day of Pentecost. (Acts i. 5 ; 1 Cor. xii. 13.) That this is on earth is further clear, for in the same chapter we find He has set in the

church, first apostles, secondly prophets, where we have miracles, gifts of healing, clearly on earth. Where, remark also, that they are set in the whole church, members of such or such a kind, in the one whole body. Such is the church, or assembly, as depicted in Scripture. What are churches or assemblies? These were local. The apostle could say, "To the church of God which is at Corinth." It represented the whole unity of the body in that place. "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." Two bodies of Christ, even in one place, representatively, there could not be. In Galatia, which was a large province, we read "the churches of Galatia." So in Thessalonica, a city of Macedonia, we have the assembly of the Thessalonians. So in the seven churches; so John writes to the assembly. So everywhere there was God's assembly in any given place which could be distinctly addressed as such. In Acts xx. he calls for the elders of the assembly. There were several appointed by the Holy Ghost to be the overseers of *God's* flock. Hence Titus was left in Crete to ordain them in every city. We have (Acts xi. 22) the assembly which was in Jerusalem, though it was exceedingly numerous. In Acts xiii., the assembly that was at Antioch. So Paul (Acts xiv. 21-23) returns to Lystra, Derbe,

and Iconium, and chooses for them elders in every assembly. All Scripture clearly shows there was one assembly in a place, which was God's assembly. Churches, as buildings, they had none. The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands ; and hence, they met in houses where they could ; but all formed one assembly—God's assembly—in that place ; the elders being elders in the whole as one body. The local assembly represented the whole assembly of God, as 1 Cor. shows us plainly. The position which christians who composed it held, was that of the members of Christ, of the whole body of Christ. The only membership known in Scripture is membership of Christ's body, as an eye, a hand, &c. ; ministry was directly connected with this last thought. When Christ ascended up on high, He gave gifts to men, apostles, prophets — they were the foundation (Eph. ii.)—evangelists, pastors, teachers, these were set in the whole church or assembly. (1 Cor. xii.)

If a man was a teacher at Ephesus, he was such at Corinth. Even as to miraculous gifts, a man spoke with tongues where he was ; the gift belonged to no particular assembly, but was that member or gift in the whole body on earth, wrought by the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. xii.), and by which a man was a servant of Christ. In 1 Cor. xii. we

have the Holy Ghost on earth distributing them as they then were. In Eph. iv. they are given from Christ on high, and only such referred to as ministered to the perfecting of the saints and edifying of the body till we all grow to the stature of Christ. They were the talents with which a man was bound to trade, if he knew the Master, in virtue of having them, "as every man has received the gift, so minister the same, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (1 Peter iv. 10.) They were to wait on their prophesying or exhorting. Rules are given for their exercise in Scripture. Women were to keep silence in the assemblies. But my main object now is to show that it was as gifts in the whole assembly of God everywhere that they who possessed them acted. Elders were local and were not a gift, though aptness to teach was a desirable qualification. Still all had it not. (1 Tim. v. 17.) Elders were elders in a given city of God's assembly there. Gifts were exercised as set in the whole body, wherever the gifted member was, according to scriptural rules. The result of the examination of Scripture is that there was one assembly of God in each town where there were christians; that these were members of the body of Christ—the only membership known in Scripture, and gifts were exercised in the

whole church, or one assembly of God in the whole world, as members and servants of Christ, by the operation of the Spirit, according to rules given in Scripture. Eldership was a local office to which persons were chosen and appointed by the apostle or his deputy, and they were elders in the one assembly of God in the place over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers. Acts xiv. 23; Titus; Acts xx. 17, 28.) It was not a gift, though one gift was desirable to make the office more effective, but the chief requisites were qualities which made them fit to be overseers.

No trace of this subsists at present in the common order of what man calls churches. Thank God, men cannot hinder the Lord in His work, or His raising up such as may minister to His own in a sovereign way; but man has organized churches, each according to his fancy; and the church of God, and the word of God, are forgotten, save the owning by some of an invisible church which the Lord is faithful to carry on. But that they leave to His care, and arrange the visible church, each as he sees good. The church, as a public body in the world, had sunk into popery (or Greek corruption, with which we have less to do in the West). All was in ruin, as the apostle had predicted; and at the Reformation civil

governments set up national churches. The church of God no one thought of, and for some time nothing else was allowed. Religious liberty then became more common, but no one thought of the church of God, but of mere organizations which were called churches, united by a system of man's devising, or independent one of another; but *man* arranged and organized them. The unity of the body—that membership was membership of Christ alone—that the Holy Ghost was on earth—that gifts were given by Christ, and brought responsibility for their exercise with them—all this was wholly forgotten and left aside; that is, the whole original scriptural truth on the subject of the church and the presence of the Holy Ghost. The Episcopal body was so far different that they pretended to have the original title by succession, and made people members of Christ by the baptism of water—a dream of which there is no trace in Scripture. It is by one Spirit there we are baptized into one body. Baptism is to the death of Christ. But leaving aside the Episcopal pretensions and errors, the existing system is that of assemblies formed by men, on some principle they have adopted, with a man, chosen by themselves, at their head; and people are members of this so-formed church or assembly, and vote

in it as such ; they may be members of Christ or not ; that which gives them their title is that they are members of that particular assembly. In most churches a majority, if the vote does not create a division, carry out their will. The Holy Ghost is not in question. All action, from beginning to end is man. The Presbyterians may have various church courts, and have an aristocratic element in their organization. Congregationalists have all their decisions come to by each separate body, and the vote of the members of the assemblies ; but the whole is a human arrangement formed and carried on by man. A man is a member of a body which man has organized, and acts as such. The actual state of things is a church or assembly of which a certain number of persons are members, with a person educated for the ministry at its head. It is Mr. So-and-so's flock, or church ; he is paid so much a year ; he may or may not be converted, but he is ordained ; he may be an evangelist, and put into a pastor's place ; he may be a pastor, but must preach to the world. Although, if he does not succeed in this, he may be dismissed ; generally directly, sometimes indirectly. The whole constitution of the church of God is ignored—God's constitution—and man's substituted for it ; and the order and the

power of the Holy Ghost is ignored, or not believed in at all. In Scripture there is no membership of a church, no pastor of a flock peculiar to him, no such voluntary assembly formed on its own particular principles. Not a trace of such an order is in the word, if it be not in the incipient divisions called carnal in Corinthians. There was God's church or assembly, not man's churches. If Paul were to address an epistle to the assembly of God at——, no one could get it; there is no such body in existence. Churches have set aside the Church of God. The operation of the Spirit of God is set aside—that is, evangelists, servants of Christ for the world; pastors and teachers, not of a flock who have chosen them, or their flock, but exercising their gift where God may bring them; teaching at Ephesus in God's assembly, if they were there; at Corinth, if they were there; acting according to gift given them from on high wherever God sent them, trading with their talent because their Master has charged them with it, as every man has received the gift, ministering the same as good stewards of the manifold grace of God; if they exhort, waiting on their exhortation; if teachers, on their teaching, and that in God's Assembly as a whole. Man has organized, but he has wholly set aside, as far as

his arrangements go, God's order and arrangements as to the assembly. Thus the church, God's assembly, is set aside to have churches; the Spirit who gives gifts to various members, to have a minister of their own choosing; and the word in which God's order is revealed. The church, and Spirit, and word are all set aside by what is called order; that is, man's arrangement and organization. We are told it must be. That is, there is not faith to trust the Lord to rule and bless in His own house, according to the ordering He gave to it; yet true blessing can only come from His operation by the Spirit He has sent down. And what is the effect? It would be ungracious of me, nor am I the least inclined to do it, to expose the miserable consequences which often ensue. They are well known; the world knows them. My object is to show that the system is anti-scriptural, and denies the Holy Ghost and the true church of God. But it is evident that a person chosen and paid by an assembly, of which very commonly half or more is unconverted, where the object is to increase numbers and influence, and have rich people, must please those whom he serves. And, says the apostle, "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. i. 10). They must adapt them-

selves to their audience. For the practical result I appeal to every godly and conscientious person conversant with the state of things. I hear their groans on every side. But it is the natural and necessary effect of the system. Ministry is not the exercise of gift given of the Lord, but a person educated for a profession and ordained, so that a great many are not really converted. The true church of God established on earth (1 Cor. xii.) is ignored, as are true churches, God's assemblies, in each place; and churches are made by men according to their view of what is right, and men are members of their churches, not viewed as members of the body of Christ. An unconverted member of a church has all the rights and power of a converted member of Christ.

The influence of wealth, not of the Spirit of God, is paramount, and a majority decides cases, not the guiding of the Spirit. If a majority had decided at Corinth, what would have been the effect? In the whole system, man, and man's will, and man's organization, have taken the place of the Spirit and word of God, and of what God organized Himself, as declared in that word. People say, Were there not churches, then? I answer surely, and that it is that shows the anti-scriptural character of what exists.

Let any one show me in Scripture such a thing as a separate distinct body, such as is called a church now, and membership of it. Or, as I have said, if Paul wrote a letter "To the church of God at —," who could get it? All is anti-scriptural, and sets aside what is in Scripture to form something else. I do not touch on many collateral subjects—the ruined state of the church as a whole, the coming of the Lord—wishing to confine myself to the question, is the existing order of things scriptural or anti-scriptural? That men, having drunk old wine, straitway desire new, I understand, is not likely; but happy is he who follows the word, and owns the Spirit, if he be alone in doing so. The word of the Lord abides for ever, as does he who does His will (1 Pet. i. 23; 1 John ii. 17). The 2nd and 3rd chapters of 2 Timothy clearly point out the condition of the church in the last days, and the path of the believer in them; as the first epistle gives the external details of the church when first arranged by apostolic care.

NOTA BENE.—How striking is the similarity between the state of christendom and that of Israel in the time of the Judges, "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (chap. xvii. 6). What a contrast to Moses who, "admonished of God, See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee" (Heb. viii. 5), obeyed: cf. Ex. xl. 16, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32! "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. xv. 22). *Ed. "R."*

REMARKS ON JOHN XVI.

The Lord has been telling the disciples, as a little flock now separated from the world, that they would be put out of the synagogues, and that the time was coming when they that killed them (so obnoxious were they, and so blinded were the others) would think that they were doing God's service ; and this because they had not known the Father, nor Him the Son. This spirit and this darkness they showed in their rejection of the Son : had they known and received Him, they would have known and received the Father. But as in all this Gospel, so here, the Lord takes His departure, not in the light of His suffering and rejection—dying as a man here, but according to the dignity of His person, “departing out of this world to the Father.” And it is in the light of this He sets the disciples that had loved Him. “And now I go my way to Him that sent me ; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou ? and because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your hearts.”

They had received Him as their Master and as Messiah from God, but were quite dim as to the economy of grace, founded on the resurrection of the Lord, and His glory with the Father. Nevertheless, by their

owning Him, they were set in complete contrast with the world, which rejected Him. The Father had sent the Son into the world: the world had rejected and refused, or not known nor received, Him; and He was returning to the Father. This is just one principle of the gospel. But He had attracted in grace these few hearts to own Him, witnesses of what He really was. These were naturally sorrowful at His going away, specially accompanied as it was with the declaration of their being left to the relentless enmity of a world of power, to those who would conscientiously, and therefore with no scruple, even kill them.

But He proceeded to explain to them what their portion and place would be, and that by virtue of another and most important truth. "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I go away, I will send Him unto you." Such, then, is the position in which the scene of this world is set in this passage. The world has rejected, not believing in, the Son of God; and He goes away to the Father. The disciples, a little remnant, had believed. On Christ's going away, He sends the Spirit to them. The fact of the presence of the Holy Ghost, consequent upon the departure of the Son, is

then the point of this passage. And the presence of the Holy Ghost, that other Comforter, supposes the rejection of the Son, being sent by Christ from the Father. That Comforter is then looked at as personally present with the disciples in the world, as come on the Son's departure to the Father. The world is therefore viewed only as having rejected the Son; for the Spirit would not be thus here, but for the Son's rejection : "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you ; but if I go away, I will send Him unto you." But, He being thus sent by the Lord Jesus from the Father, His presence was the evidence, not only that the world had rejected Jesus, but that the Father owned and had received Him. Towards such a world God might deal in grace, and the greatness of that grace be enhanced ; but such a world it was.

The Spirit had ever wrought, even in creation and onward ; but the Comforter had not come personally till after the ascension of Jesus, any more than the Son till the incarnation, though He had created all things. "For the Holy Ghost was not given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John vii. 39). Thus come, He would convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (or, convict it) ; His very presence would do this. Of sin, because they

believed not on Jesus. The world was convicted of it, not a few wicked men; many had been their sins and evils. But there was now one plain universal question between God and the world in which these had been summed up: they had rejected His Son.

The world before the flood had sufficed to prove that the imaginations of the thoughts of men's hearts were only evil, and that continually. The law had shown the wilfulness of man in breaking through the prohibitory enactments by which God had forbidden the indulgence of their evil imaginings. The prophets God had sent in vain to man, rising up early and sending them, till there was no remedy; and God said, "I have one Son; it may be they will reverence my Son." And the Son came in direct mercies, even those which nature could feel, as well as grace, and in grace ministering to all their wants, proving in grace (coming into a world into which they were all driven out by sin, and into the midst of miseries which told that they were outcasts from paradise) who He was. They saw it, and said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill Him, and the inheritance shall be ours."

Thus was their hatred of the Lord, and the ripeness of sin, fully shown. Therefore, because nothing more could be done but

through a change by divine power, the Lord says, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. If I had not done amongst them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father."

The presence of the Holy Spirit, then, being sent down by the Son of God received on high, convinced the world of sin in their rejection of Him, for He was there only by virtue of the Son's rejection. But He was also the evidence of righteousness. Righteousness on earth was there none, not even on the cross. The one Righteous Man had been crucified and slain by men; and then, to man's eye, God had not owned Him. Why, He had been constrained to say, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The saint may and does see all security in this by faith, and the necessities of our eternal righteousness; he may be fitted for heavenly places by it; but there was no manifested righteousness to the world in it. The Righteous Man suffered, and God in no way interfered, and that Righteous One had openly to proclaim that God was not with Him. We, indeed, know why, in His infinite grace: it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him, that "with His stripes we might be healed."

But the Lord had previously declared that, if He went to the Father, He would send the Comforter. The coming and presence of the Comforter, then, was the testimony that the Father had received the Son. And here was the witness of righteousness and the full estimate of the value of Christ's work, even His reception on the Father's throne; as His rejection by man had been the proof and full estimate of their sinful state. Therefore it is that Christ appeals to His Father at the end of John xvii., "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee!" In reference to the children, He says, "O Holy Father, keep, &c."

Thus the presence of the Holy Ghost, sent by the Son from the Father, or (as it is also said) sent by the Father in the Son's name, proves the sin of the whole world in having slighted and rejected that Son, and shows that the only righteousness is found to be in the reception of the Son by the Father. Then and thus consequently the believer is found "accepted in the Beloved." But the great fact is what is here stated: then, and then only, in God's sense of it, righteousness is found.

A mere saving and recognition on the cross would not have been righteousness; for why should the Son of God have been

ill-treated? Why should He have suffered at all? But sitting on the right hand of God, after leaving the world, and going to the Father—this, while it was in a certain sense righteous discernment as against the world, was the only worthy public estimate of what He was, of His person, and work. They saw Him no more: of Him above all “the world was not worthy”; but He went to the Father, the true testimony of His excellency, and the due estimate of His acceptance. The Holy Spirit’s presence was the testimony of this also.

But was all to be left thus? The rebellious and rejectors, unjudged? those that loved Jesus, sufferers (as He had told them in the beginning of this chapter xvi.)? and Jesus still rejected as regards the world? No! The coming and presence of the Holy Ghost convicted the world of the judgment due; and that it would come, because, the prince of this world was judged, had been proved by the cross (in whose hands the world was). “The prince of this world,” saith the Lord, “cometh, and hath nothing in me.” Whether religion among the Jews, or power among the Gentiles, or self-will and recklessness amongst both, all had been led up under his guidance, under one ministration of selfishness and blindness, to the murder of the blessed Son of God. Fear

possessed the few that owned Him ; and all His disciples forsook Him and fled. They were proved to be the strong man's goods. But, in order to attempt to hold them, he was obliged to commit himself, in all the power he had, against the Prince of Life, One stronger than he, the Captain of our salvation. He is here looked at, as the leader and prince of a sinful world ; and so the world's judgment is involved in it.

Now the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus, proved by the presence of the Holy Ghost, convicted or proved the world's judgment. For one shown to be its prince of whom it was the slave, was now judged ; and this, consequent on what was previously noticed, *His* reception on high, Whom under his guidance they had rejected. Satan had put forth all his power, the power of death ; and He who had willingly bowed under it for our sakes was risen and glorified ; and, in evidence of it, the Holy Ghost was in the world (among the disciples, but *in* the world.)

The world might not receive the Spirit of the witness of Christ's power whom they had rejected, listening to, and led'by, that other and evil spirit. But the predominance of the power of the Holy Spirit, yea, His very presence in the world, was the witness of the judgment of a world under

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the dominion of him who was thus shown to be judged. Therefore, in speaking of gifts which were the manifestation of the Spirit, it is written, "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gives gifts to men." But, though it might be publicly manifested by them, the truth itself is what is here, and what concerns us; for I know the Spirit not by the gifts, but by His being in us. Thus the believer and the church know it. The other is a consequence of course valuable in its place, and its manifestation in whatever respect given to profit withal. The force of the judgment of the world, being proved by the presence of the Comforter, is in attacking him who is still prince of this world.

Thus was stated the operation and effect of the Spirit's presence as to the world; whereby, if a man by grace be actually convinced, he is a believer. This is the efficacy of grace; for in the passage it is spoken, not of efficacy, but fact; a fact understood by faith. The Lord, having stated all this, then goes on to show what the Holy Ghost would do among the disciples. He had many things to tell them, which they could not bear then. For they knew Him after all, after the flesh, not having yet received the Comforter. But when He was come, He would guide them (the disciples) into all

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; He would show them things to ; and in all He would glorify Christ, ng of His and showing it unto them, t is, all that the Father had, for all this belonged to Christ the Son. It is not here simply as the Spirit of adoption and sonship, but as present to communicate the truth, and knowledge, and glory which belonged to them as children. This also was theirs, consequent upon the ascension of Jesus ; and this was communicated to them in the sending of the Comforter.

A little while, then, and they would see Christ no more ; and a little while, and they would, *because He went to the Father*, on which all this hung, partially fulfilled in pledge and witness on His resurrection, but fully, really, on His return in glory, when He had gone to the Father, to receive the kingdom, and to return.

The difference between us and the then disciples, I should perhaps notice. They received this communication of truth primarily as a fresh revelation ; and, according to the wisdom and dispensation of God, they have by His will treasured it up in the written word, so that it is now to be revealed as a previously unknown truth. But to each of us the Spirit works the same work, actually guiding us into all truth. That truth is only revealed in the written

word, as says the apostle John : “ Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.” Thus it is connected with our life ; for the unction is from the Holy One. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; for they are foolishness unto him, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. ii. 14).



THE BOOK OF GOD.

The Book of God, the Bible, in its object, is a whole, which presents to us God coming forth from His essential fulness to manifest all that He is, and to bring back into the enjoyment of this fulness with Himself those who, having been made partakers of His nature, have become capable of comprehending and loving His counsels and Himself.

But before this purpose is fully revealed, man is brought upon the scene as a responsible being, and his history, as such, given to us in the various phases through which he has passed, up to the cross, where his enmity against God was manifested, and the foundation laid for the full revelation of that purpose, and the accomplishment of God's good pleasure in man, and laid by that in which the whole divine character in love and righteousness was revealed and

glorified, and God perfectly glorified in every respect in bringing man into glory. The creation has served as a sphere to this manifestation of God ; but as a manifestation it would have been in itself altogether imperfect, though in a measure it declared His glory.

Sin moreover having entered, the state of the creation and the effects of providence, which regulated its order and details here below, tended, in the state in which man was, to give a false idea of God. For if he referred this creation and this government to God, he saw a power which belonged to Him alone ; while there existed at the same time evil which overthrew every idea he could form of powerful goodness. The mind of man was lost in the effort to explain it, and superstitions and philosophy came in to complete the confusion in which he found himself. On the one hand, superstitions made falser still the false ideas that man had formed for himself of God ; and on the other hand, philosophy, by the efforts which man's natural intelligence made to get rid of the difficulty, plunged him into such obscurity and such uncertainty that he finished by rejecting every idea of God whatever, save the need which had made him seek one.

These superstitions were in truth nothing

more than that Satan had possessed himself of the idea of God in the heart, in order to nourish, under this name, its lusts, and degrade it in consecrating them by the name of a god, who was in truth a demon; and philosophy was but the useless effort of the mind of man to rise to the idea of God—a height which he was incapable of attaining, and which in consequence he abandoned, making it a subject of pride to do without it. Even the law of God, while declaring the responsibility of man to God, and thus asserting His authority, only revealed Him in the exercise of judgment, requiring from man what he ought to be, without revealing what God was, save in justice; and in no way in relationship with the scene of misery and ignorance which sin had brought upon the human race. It did not show that God was in the midst of that misery, nor could do so; for its office was to require from man consistency with a certain line of conduct, of which the Legislator constituted Himself judge, at the end of the career of him who was subjected to it. The Son of God is God Himself in the midst of all this scene, the faithful Witness of all that He is in His relationship with it. In a word, it is the Son of God who reveals God Himself, and who becomes thus necessarily the Centre of all His counsels, and of all the mani-

festation of His glory, as well as the Object of all His ways.

We shall find then three great subjects in the Bible:—

1st. The creation (now under the effect of the fall).*

2nd. The law, which gave to man, such as he is now, a rule; to man in the midst of this creation to see if he could live there according to God, and be there blessed.

3rd. The Son of God.

The first two, namely, the creation and the law, are bound up with the responsibility of the creature. We shall find all that is connected with these two either guilty or corrupted. The Son, on the contrary (the manifestation of the grace and love of the Father, and of God's love to the world, when this guilt was already there in lawless sin and lawbreaking, the express image of the subsistence of God, in whom the Father was seen) we shall see suffering in love in the midst of this fallen creation and the

*I confine myself more especially to the lower creation where man was placed. There are fallen angels, and the created heavens are defiled through sin. But angels were a distinct creation, and present to celebrate with joy the creation as we view it, and as it is viewed in Genesis i., after the first verse, as a scene with which man has to do. Still as responsible and creatures, where not preserved of God, they were liable to fall, and in fact did fall. But they were a distinct creation. Hence we have them not in the creation recounted in Genesis.

contradictions of a rebellious people, and when God had been perfectly glorified in respect of sin, accomplishing all the counsels of God in uniting all things in blessing by His power and under His authority, those even who with hatred had rejected Him being forced to own Him Lord to the glory of God the Father; and at last, when He shall have subjected all things, giving up to God the Father the kingdom of His glory as Son of Man, that God may be all in all.

Besides all this, there are in the counsels of God those with whom the God whom we know in Jesus surrounds Himself, who are to be brought into the likeness of Him with whom they are associated as sons, He the Firstborn among many brethren who are to enjoy eternally with God His favour and blessing, as it rests on Him with whom and through whom they enjoy it. There is also an earthly people in whom God manifests the principles of His government here below and His unfailing faithfulness; it is to this last, consequently, that the law was given. Finally, in the purpose of God before the world was (but hidden until the fit moment when, its redemption being accomplished, the Holy Spirit could, by dwelling in it, consequent on the accomplishment of the work of redemption and the

glorifying of Christ, reveal to it all the efficacy of its redemption and the whole extent of its blessing), there was a church, chosen in Christ, His bride, to be presented to Himself without spot or wrinkle, His body too, the fulness of Him who filleth all in all, united to Him by the Spirit with which all the members are baptized, and soon to be manifested in glory when He takes that headship.

The cross is the centre of all this in every respect. There the history of man in responsibility, as the child of Adam ends, and there begins anew in grace reigning through righteousness. There good and evil are fully brought to an issue, hatred in man and love in God, sin and the righteousness of God against it.* There God is perfectly glorified morally, and man judged in sin and redeemed in righteousness, the dominion of evil destroyed, and that of man established in righteousness as God willed it should be, death and he that had the

*This is morally of the greatest depth and fulness. We have man in absolute evil, hatred against God manifested in goodness; Satan in all his power over all Adam's children; man in perfection, Christ, in love to His Father and perfect obedience; God in righteousness against sin, and in love to the sinner; and all this in the very place of sin where man was. Hence all founded on it is immutably stable. A risen Christ is, as to the human state in itself, the result of this, man in a new eternal condition, beyond sin, death, Satan's power and judgment.

power of it set aside, and this by an act of love which set the Son of God as Man at the head of all things in righteousness. All, through the cross, rests secure and immutable in result on the ground of redemption: *what shall the end of the despisers of it be?*

Hence we find, not only the creation, the law, and the Son of God, but the dealings by which God has prepared the way for, and led men to expect, His manifestation; the development of all the principles on which He entered into relationship with men; the consequences of the violation of the law; and lastly, in its place, the manifestation of the church upon the earth, and the directions He has given to it, together with the course of events which are connected with its existence and its unfaithfulness on the earth; with that of the earthly people of God; and with man himself, responsible to God and clothed with authority by Him on the earth: the whole closing with the glory of Jesus, Son of Man, maintaining the blessing and union of all things under the reign of God; and, in fine, God all in all. The history of Jesus; the position granted to the church in glory according to the counsels of God, the mystery hidden from the ages; her participation in the sufferings of Jesus, and her

union with Him ; and in general the testimony of the Holy Ghost given from on high, are clearly revealed in the New Testament. That which has been spoken of previously forms the course of the ages ; the church forms no part of them.

This separates the Bible naturally into two parts : that which speaks of the first two subjects, the creation and man in his relationship with God without law, and His people under law ; and that which speaks of the Son come upon the earth, and and all that relates to the church and its glory—that is, in general, the Old and New Testament. However, in the Old, promise and prophecy refer always to the Son, eternal Object of the counsels of God : as, in the New, there are prophecies of the future dealings of God with the earth, and so far connected with the Old ; and, further, the rejection of the Son gave occasion to the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth—a fact which modified the whole state of the people of God, and introduced special subjects which depended on this presence. For there is this peculiar in the historical part of the New, that the Son was presented first to the world, and to the people under the law, to put them anew to the test. The bearing of His coming at first was not the accomplishment of the counsels of God, but

to present to man, still placed under the old order of things, the faithful testimony of what God was, if the heart of man had any capacity to receive it, or to discern Him who returned in grace into the midst of a fallen creation, and did so in the very form and nature of him in whom the fall had taken place; and to the Jews, if they had been willing to receive Him, the Lord of glory, the Object of all the prophecies and of all the promises; and, in fine (the world not having known Him, and His own not having received Him), to accomplish the sacrifice, which could lay the foundation of a new world before God, and place the redeemed in joy before the face of His Father, heirs of all that was established in Him the second Adam to make the church His body and His bride.

From all that has been said, it results also that the Old Testament contains two very distinct parts—often united, it is true, in the same book, and even in a single passage, still distinct in their nature—the history of man as he was, and God's way with him, or the historical part, whether before the law or under the law; and the revelation of the thoughts and intentions of God as to the future, which are always connected with Christ. This revelation sometimes takes the character of a positive prophecy,

sometimes the form of a typical event which prefigures what God would afterwards accomplish. The sacrifice of Isaac may be cited as an example of this last way of expressing the thoughts of God. Evidently there is an historical instruction of the utmost importance in the touching example of Abraham's obedience; but every one easily recognizes in it the type of a sacrifice, for which God prepared for Himself a Lamb, of which Isaac, the beloved of his father, was but a feeble figure; and where resurrection, not in figure but in power, is the source of life and hope to every believer.



FRAGMENT.—The Spirit and the word are all in all for spiritual life. Furnished with this power faith goes forward, strengthened by the encouraging word of our God. God has a way in the world where Satan cannot touch us. This is the path where Jesus walked. Satan is the prince of this world; but there is a divine path through it, but no other, and there God's power is. The word is the revelation of it. So the Lord bound the strong man. He acted by the power of the Spirit, and used the word. The Spirit and the word cannot be separated without falling into fanaticism on the one hand, or into rationalism on the other—without putting oneself outside the place of dependence upon God and of His guidance. Mere reason would become the master of some; imagination of others.

THE CHURCH OF GOD.

God has "a Church." God has not been ashamed to connect *His* name with one Church—"the Church of the living God" (1 Tim. iii. 15). Oft He calls it "the Church of God" (See Acts xx. 28; 1 Cor. xv. 9; Gal. i. 13; 1 Tim. iii. 5). This it was which Christ called (Matt. xvi. 18) "My Church." And oh, how wondrous! In Ephes. i. 22, Christ given of God to be Head over all things to the Church, *which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.* (See also iii. 10; v. 23, 25, 27, 29, 32; Col. i. 18, 24.)

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

What am I to do? Humble myself down into the dust, so far as I know how (and I have sought to do so these last twenty-five years), not because saints are scattered, but because of man's entire failure in responsibility to God as to the Church! Then you will say, "You look to see what God will do *for you* and His saints as to communion." Not so: if my eye be single, I look then to see what God will do *for* His own honour, and for the glory of Christ, *with all* His believing people, under these circumstances;

and this is quite another thing. He may count it to be for His honour, and for the glory of Christ, and for our blessing in the Spirit, to make us taste the fruit of man's doings, and the failure ; and taste it with inward bitterness and individual experience. May God do with us as seemeth Him good !
No union, no communion which is not that of the Church of God, in the power of the name of the Lord Jesus, could satisfy the Spirit of God in us.

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

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

“ AS OBEDIENT CHILDREN.”

1 Pet. i, 14-21.

“ As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.”

But for simple faith in God and the consciousness that the Spirit of God is still Guardian in the church, one would not know how or what to speak in these days. If you speak of grace, and dwell upon the fulness and freeness of it, there are so many hearts that will delight in it after a carnal manner, and use it for a cloak for evil; not merely those who do, as Jude says, “turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness,” but who will cover over a deep spirit of worldliness, excusing themselves much obedience on the ground of grace. Indeed, this is the prevailing leaven of these days. It is the root of that latitudinarian spirit which is tolerant of many evils and much disobedience. On the other hand, if you speak of holiness of walk, many souls put themselves under legal bondage, which robs them of their joy, mars their peace, or at the best makes them the slaves of their own frames and

feelings, or promotes that self-righteous spirit which fills the heart with intolerant pride.

Still the truth must be told; and it will have its fruit in some hearts. In the passage above we see the most touching appeal to the heart of a saint; and these two principles, grace and holiness, exactly in unison. The appeal is not to bondmen or servants, but to children: "As obedient *children*;" and it is from "Him which hath called you." Grace has brightly shone in these two facts, "He *hath* called us," and "whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the First-born among many *brethren*" (Rom. viii. 29). That is, He hath called us, and has made us *His children*. The appeal is this, seeing He who has thus acted in such grace, and brought us into such relationship, is Himself holy, so should we be holy. And there is grace in this appeal, for He desires that we should be before Him in joy and love; which could not be without holiness. This our God has secured to us in Jesus, "having chosen us *in Him* before the foundation of the world, that we should be *holy and without blame* before Him in love" (Ephes. i. 4). But God has *now* separated us, not only *from* an evil world and *from* our own evil

too but, *unto* Himself; hence the present appeal to be “as *obedient* children.” The principle is this, the children should be as the Parent. God is holy: hence His children are to be holy. As holiness is a characteristic of the Father, it should also be a characteristic of the children. (See Matt. v. 45 and 48.)

Now, if this principle had more weight in our minds, our chastenings would be found much more fruitful; for surely that soul that longs after holiness will profit more than the careless soul, by the varied chastenings of the Father's hand: “For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness” (Heb. xii. 10).

Many are apt to contrast grace and holiness, but there can be no *contrast* between any of the attributes of God. All His attributes express Himself, and He is One. Grace, indeed, shines most in this, that *we sinners of the Gentiles* should be *reconciled* unto God, and built up with the Jews a holy temple in the Lord, etc. (see Ephes. ii. 11-22; see also same chapter all through, especially verses 4, 7, 10). “Grace reigns through righteousness” (Rom. v. 21).

I am sure of this, if we would serve the Lord, we must be walking in holiness (see

Is. lii. 11); not in self-righteousness, but “as obedient *children* ;” as those who wish to be as He is. Every exhortation to His children, and every recognition of them is full of this principle—holiness. As, “To the saints,” “holy brethren,” “redeemed from all iniquity, to be a peculiar people,” etc.

One could dwell very much upon this subject, important at all times, but especially so in these last evil days in which we are enjoined to “turn away from those having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (2 Tim. iii. 5). I trust the Lord may lead our souls more into it. For it is evident, from the word of God, and from past experience, that God’s work is accomplished by means of a holy and godly people. A true ecclesiastical position and clear knowledge of truth will not suffice; holiness is what God looks for. The reason is evident, since to do God’s work He must have the soul walking with Himself in communion with His mind. Witness the contrast between Abraham and Lot.

Let brethren in Christ everywhere look well to this, for there is lack of power: much truth abroad; but it seems to have little power in separating souls from evil. For when we see light spreading, if that “light in them be darkness, how great is that darkness.” There seems to be lack of

power for *obedience* to the truth when it is seen. Why is this? 2 Tim. ii. 21 implies there is such a thing as *meetness* for the Master's use. And this is the *meetness* "being purged from these" (vessels of dishonour)—*not*, having knowledge.

Let us remember this, "the Lord knoweth them that are His; and let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." I doubt not the Lord is doing a work among souls; and if we would share the rewards of such a work, we must see to it that we are found "in all things *approving* ourselves as the ministers of God." "As workers together with Him, giving no offence in anything." (See 2 Cor. vi.).



THE REST, THE WORD, AND THE PRIESTHOOD.

Hebrews iv.

We get three things spoken of here: one that we have not got, and two that we have.

The thing we have *not* got is rest: There *remaineth* a rest for the people of God. The prophet says, "Arise ye, and depart, for this is not your rest, for it is polluted." We are partakers of the divine nature, and we must rest where He rests.

The other two things are the word of God and the priesthood of Christ. Also I wish,

in speaking of this help by the way, to refer to that in which all is absolute perfection, to shew the difference between our standing before God, and that which is a help more for infirmity than for sin. We have to learn—if we have not yet learned—the place in which we are set through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first exercises of the heart do not come in in this portion at all, those which we have when we do not know our place, when we try to do good, and do it not; but that is not the path of the people of God as such: it may be the way into it, but the place of the Christian is in perfect acceptance before God, with every question of sin perfectly settled. Just as with Israel: they were delivered from the place they were in, God's judgment met by the blood upon the door-post, and they brought through the Red Sea *to Himself*: "I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you *to myself*." (Ex. xix. 4). That is where the Christian is, the veil rent, and we now before God without any veil at all, though it may be on our hearts through unbelief. I do not speak of that now.

As far as God's government goes, all are in relationship with Him, but I speak now of the relations of the heart. Every possible trial of man has been made, and it only

came out that those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Christ has been rejected, and the world has no place before God at all, though His love goes out towards it, for He has had His purpose and thought of grace ever since Adam fell, and souls get *into* a place in which they *are* in relationship with God. We have to see where *we* are, when the whole world is lying in wickedness. Men own Christ outwardly, that He died on the cross, &c., and go on just as they did before. You cannot call that relationship—there is none.

There remains a rest even for God's people (just as Israel were journeying on to Canaan), they cannot have rest in a world which is contrary to Christ. We are exercised in the wilderness, we are in conflict, too, with wicked spirits in heavenly places; and that is not rest. Israel will get their rest in time; but I drop that for the moment, and apply it to ourselves. It is a blessed thought, that there will be rest and joy for this poor sin-stricken world, but for *us* it is a heavenly rest—we are blessed in heavenly places in Christ. Where God can rest in His love, we can rest. If God rests in His love, there is nothing wanting. He is active now in His love, seeking to save that which was lost; but that is not rest; He rests in His love when those whom He has brought by

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His love are there, and no single thing lacking to their enjoyment. That rest, it is ours, but we are not there yet. Christ is waiting too. He does not yet see the full result of the travail of His soul, but He will do so, and be satisfied. That rest, of course, is according to God's nature. He brings us now, "holy and without blame, before him in love," having the adoption of children, knowing God as our Father, and the blessed rest of God's people is also according to His nature. And it is all revealed now, the veil is rent, and all that is revealed which eye had not seen, nor ear heard. The Father fully revealed in the Son, the essence of all the blessing. The more spiritual we become, the more we learn what it all is. We get the figures of it in Revelation, where the spiritual apprehension lays hold of it, so that we can live in it, but it is clear we have not come to it.

It is a mistake to speak of this rest as rest of conscience. "We that have believed do enter into rest" only means the character of those who enter; as I might say, Men come in by this door, and women by that. I do not say that any are coming in now. We have rest in the sense of ceasing from our own works for righteousness, but not in the heavenly sense.

But then, beloved friends, all has been

completely brought out now—they are not *promises*, the grace of God which bringeth salvation *hath* appeared. The work is all completely finished and revealed. The moment the Son of God was rejected, all that could be done to test man's heart had been done, and He says, "Now is the judgment of this world." For when Christ was there, in perfect love and goodness, revealing the Father, He had to say, "The world hath not known thee, but I have known thee." He appeals to the righteous Father to judge between them.

We get Man then—Christ—in the divine glory, because He had finished the work His Father gave Him to do : there, *when* He had finished it, and *because* He had finished it. And Paul says he did not know the Christ who came to be Messiah among the Jews ; they had forfeited all the promises, and it was all over with Jew and Gentile, and there was no relationship that God recognised at all. Man cast out of the first Paradise, but set in Christ in the heavenly Paradise, and between the two there is nothing really that God owns. "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." Satan was the prince of the world before, but he was never called it until the cross, where the world proved what it was : not a question of the responsibility of man, but

the proof that he is enmity against God, and that he will not have Him on any terms. But in that, God wrought His own work, the work He had always had in His mind before the foundation of the world, and as the fruit of which, Christ is in heaven. (Of course, He always was there, but I speak now of Christ as Man.)

The more we dwell upon it, the more we shall see the whole question of good and evil definitively settled at the cross. The perfect wickedness of man was fully brought out there; the disciples run away, and all the rest were delighting in getting rid of the Lord, saying, "Aha! Aha! so would we have it.

We get here, man entirely rejecting the Lord, and that is what we are ourselves, our natural state. On the other hand, when the wickedness of man's heart is brought out, then I get man perfect (in Christ, of course), absolute obedience at all cost, even to the cup and the curse, perfect love to the Father: "that the world may know that I love the Father, even so I do." That love was shewn really and perfectly where He was *made sin*. I get Man in His perfectness here, glorifying God at all cost; God revealed in His Majesty—He could not let His own Son be spared when He had put Himself in that place—His judgment against sin, the thought

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of which made the Lord sweat great drops of blood ; and all this done for *us* : He suffered, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. Morally speaking, the whole question of good and evil was resolved : Satan's power, the wickedness of man, the perfection of Man, and the nature of God, all fully brought out. It is not now a question of probation, but of belief in a thing that is so settled, that God has set the One who did it at His own right hand. He was perfectly glorified in the place where Christ was made sin, and Man is sitting at the right hand of God in glory. It is all done, and that is what the Holy Ghost comes down to reveal to us.

Exercises of heart there will be, finding out what we are, that in our flesh dwells no good thing—that we are the very persons who were thus manifested at the cross ; but I find, too, that, being one of those persons, and having that evil nature, it was all met at the cross—a settled thing. He would not have the twelve legions of angels, He went on to the end. “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”

When, beloved friends, I have been thoroughly convinced of sin and sins, I find then, when I get before God in the full conviction of what I am, I get Christ instead of myself ; He is before God for me. Not that

all the sin is nothing, but that Christ has borne it all for me; God has accepted it as meeting it completely and absolutely, not giving me a legal righteousness—it is infinitely beyond that—but giving me a place in glory, in virtue of the work which has perfectly glorified God. I do not believe we get the sense of *that* until we have done with all confidence in self; it is a very subtle thing. A man does not set about saying there is something in me to trust, but he goes on as if there were, and he will not get that liberty spoken of in Romans viii.

I am utterly condemned, and taking my place under the righteous judgment of God, I find Christ is not on the cross now, He is sitting at the right hand of God, *after* He has been on the cross; all I was as a child of Adam done away, and I sanctified by the will of God, “through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once.” He is sitting there at rest, because He has finished the work. (I do not speak now of the grace He is daily ministering to us).

If I am looking for anything to put away my sins, I do not believe in the finished work of Christ, and therefore the apostle says, in Hebrews ix., “then must Christ *often* have suffered.” There is not a thing to be done, but it *is* done—“no more conscience of sins.” It is not that I do not fail,

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but when I look up to God, faith cannot have a thought that God imputes anything to me. And why so? Because Christ is sitting at the right hand of God when He *had* purged our sins.

If I go in faith, I go through the rent veil—His flesh—into the holiest of all, in boldness, because He who has accomplished the work is there, I find Him there when I go. I press that, beloved friends; because you are not on the full, true ground of liberty before God, until the thought of imputation, when you put yourselves in the presence of God, has completely disappeared. It is well to put yourselves there to test your souls. Supposing I stand before the judgment-seat, why, the One who is there is the One who bore my sins! I see it more every day, that the whole question of the church's ruin hangs upon this; whether or not the worshippers once purged have no more conscience of sins. People speak of Christ bearing their past sins, but there is no sense in saying Christ bore my sins up to the 16th of July! He was there before God meeting the whole question of sin, and he sits down because it is all settled. God has made death and judgment, like the Red Sea, to be a wall on my right hand and my left.

What, then, comes of our present life? The first thing to get quite clear is, that my

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place before God is Christ's place every instant. "No condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." How can you condemn one who is in Christ? It is absurd, and the apostle says it triumphantly.

But what do we get as to what is going on now? It is not a question of imputation at all, but we have to do with the same Christ who is the perfect Witness to God's satisfaction.

I am here, a poor weak creature, exposed to all sorts of snares and temptations, and we have the word of God, sharper than a two-edged sword, which comes and judges; it runs right through, and says, What is this in your heart? Is that in accordance with the light? No buts, no buts, there is no excuse, you are brought into the *light*. It shews me things I never suspected before—all things naked and opened; the word is God's eye, prying into my heart, and shewing me what suits that eye, judging not merely *acts*, but the thoughts and intents of the heart.

But, supposing all the thoughts and intents of my heart were as perfect as possible, still I am a poor weak creature, and then I get the Priesthood of Christ. There are snares all round—the world, christian friends who are not spiritually-minded—and I have to go through all that, all the

difficulty and trial that comes from those who do not wish the cross to be quite what it is. We are in danger in passing through this world, and so I have Christ, who has met every difficulty and temptation, and ten thousand times more than we do, and understands it all, not only in the divine, but also in the experimental, way. But for the evil movements of my heart, I want the *hatchet* : for the difficulties, trials, &c., I have got the *throne of grace*--God Himself, the perfect and adequate supply of all grace to overcome.

The Priesthood of Christ does not apply to sins. Many a one who does not quite know that he is perfected for ever, if he gets into a low state, goes to Christ, just as if he could not go to God. I have a High Priest there, and I go to the throne of grace, it is for help in time of need, not for sin.

If you go to Christ about your sins, as if He was to go about them to God, that is not what He does as Priest ; the Priest is to obtain grace for me, that I should not sin ; He is always there to obtain every needed grace, to help in time of need. It is impossible a temptation can be too strong for us, for He is faithful not to suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, and we have all the strength of God. We go to the throne of grace, and get what is needed to help in time of need.

The epistle never connects the priesthood with sin; it is well you should feel it, that you may not think you may sin, and then run to the Priest to get it set straight. But supposing I fail, and sin (which we all do) then I have an Advocate with the *Father*; it is not then going to *God* to get grace and strength, but fellowship with the *Father* must be restored. Fellowship is interrupted if I even allow a sinful thought; it were blasphemy to say He could have fellowship with that. I go, then, not doubting His love, but not cheerful and happy, as if nothing had happened: while the *righteousness* in which I stand is not touched, communion is destroyed. If I allow anything that is not of God, communion is interrupted: and "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father;" *that is* about our sins. But mark how he speaks, that there may be no cloud—"Jesus Christ, the *righteous*." Why bring in that word? Because our righteousness is not touched, it all remains in unalterable value.

But it has brought me, too, to walk in the light, as God is in the light, and after communion is broken, He interferes to restore it. If I look at the sins as interrupting my standing before God, Christ is not my righteousness, but the effect of His work is to put me into the light, there to judge of every-

thing, as He does; there is no other place for a man except that of being *in his sins*.

The moment there is anything inconsistent with the presence of God, in the measure in which I realise it, communion is interrupted. Then do I go out of the position of grace? Not at all. He interferes to break me down about my sin, to make me judge the root, the place where I got away from the path. My soul has to go through the judgment of all that, and there I do get the question of sin raised, but then it is as Advocate with the *Father*.

If I think of the Priesthood, I am before God perfected for ever. But though this is true, I am a poor weak creature going through the wilderness, and there is infinite strength for me, and He is my Priest, representing me before God. We never can excuse ourselves if we fail, because He is faithful. There may be negligence, and we may not have power at the time to overcome; negligence in prayer, and in using the means God has given, but I never can excuse myself.

Have your hearts *right open* before God. Do not leave any chambers locked up before Him, or you cannot have joy and liberty. You may walk well outwardly, not scandalise anybody, but if you have anything in your heart not open before God, you have

lost your communion, and there is that which tends to weaken your whole path.

There are two things: the full and distinct apprehension that before God there is no more conscience of sins: if you have not reached it, never rest till you do: He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Here comes the fact that we are poor, weak, infirm creatures, and we are put through all sorts of things to exercise us, and He is my Priest where the *intention is right*. I have to have my will broken, things I do not suspect brought out, and, even if I fail, the advocacy of Christ is founded on His righteousness, and in that there is no progress, and no change.

I press it upon you distinctly and definitely—for the loss of it was the very ruin of the church—and for your own souls, not to rest till you have no more conscience of sins. Then, not only watchfulness against evil, but growing up unto Him in all things; but no *perfectness* till we are like Him in glory. I press toward the mark.

The Lord give us diligence and earnestness of heart thus to follow Christ!



“The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.” Amen.

“WHERE IS THE WISE? WHERE IS THE SCRIBE?”

Read Luke ii. 1-20.

All intelligence of the things of God comes from His revelation, and not from the reasonings of men. Hence, the simple go farther in spiritual understanding than the wise and prudent of the earth. God acts here so as to set aside all appearance of human wisdom. Happy he who has so seized the intention of God as to be identified with it, and to want none but God! This was the case with the shepherds. They little entered into the great intent of the registration; but it was to them, and not to the prudent, that God revealed Himself. Our true wisdom is through what God reveals. But we never get God's fullest blessings till we are where the flesh is brought down and destroyed—I speak as regards walk. We cannot get into the simple joy and power of God till we accept the place of lowliness and humiliation, till the heart is emptied of what is contrary to the lowliness of Christ. These shepherds were in the quiet fulfilment of their humble duty, and that is the place of blessing. Whoever is keeping on terms with the world is not walking with God; for God is not walking with you there. From the manger to the

cross all in Christ was simple obedience. How unlike a Theudas, who boasted himself to be somebody! Christ did all in God's way; and not only so, but we must come to this too.

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

Such, then, is the sign of God's accomplishment of promise, and of His presence in the world—"a Babe in a manger"—the least and lowest thing. But God is found there,

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though these things are beyond man, who cannot walk with God, nor understand His moral glory. But God's sign is within the reach of faith; it is the token of perfect weakness; a little infant who can only weep! Such born into this world is CHRIST THE LORD; such is the place God chose—the low degree. God's intervention is recognized by a sign like this; man would not have sought that. The heavenly host praise God, and say, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward ('in') men." Nothing higher or more astonishing (save the cross) for those who have the mind of heaven. The choir above see God in it—God manifested in flesh, and praise God in the highest. They rejoice that His delights are with the sons of men (cf. Prov. viii. 31). Of old God had displayed Himself to Moses in a flame of fire without consuming the bush, and here, still more marvellously, in the feeblest thing on earth: infinite thought morally, though despicable in the eye of the world. How hard it is to receive that the work of God and of His Christ is always in weakness! The rulers of the people saw in Peter and John, unlearned and ignorant men. Paul's weakness at Corinth was the trial of his friends, the taunt of his enemies, the boast of himself. The Lord's strength is made perfect in weakness. The thorn in

the flesh made Paul despised, and he conceived it would be better if that were gone. He had need of the lesson, "My grace is sufficient for thee." It is God's rule of action, if we may so say, to choose the weak things. Everything must rest on God's power, otherwise God's work cannot be done according to His mind. One can hardly believe that one must be feeble to do the work of God; but Christ "was crucified through weakness," and, "the weakness of God is stronger than men" (2 Cor. xiii. 4; 1 Cor. i. 25.). For the work of God we must be weak, "that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us" (2 Cor. iv. 7); and that work will last when all the earth shall be moved away.



THE POTTER'S BROKEN VESSEL.

Read Jeremiah xviii., xix.

I feel and judge very distinctly that there is a special character in this present time through which we are passing. The great powers which are destined to fill out the action of Christendom's closing day are practising themselves, each in its several sphere, with great earnestness and skill. I mean the *civil* and the *ecclesiastical*.

I do not doubt but that, for a season, the ecclesiastical will prevail. The *woman* is to *ride* again for a while—a prophetic symbol, as I believe, signifying ecclesiastical suprem-

acy. And this present moment is marked by many efforts on the behalf of that which takes the place of the Church, or of the ecclesiastical theory, thus to exalt itself; and she is so adroitly directing those efforts that success may speedily await them, and then the blood of the saints may flow afresh.

The *civil* power, however, is anything but idle. The wondrous advance that it is making every day in the cultivation of the world proves great skill and activity on *its* part. It is largely boasting itself, showing what it has done, and pledging what further it means to do.

At this moment each of these powers is abroad in the scene of action, and the minds of men are divided between them. In some sense they are rivals. There is the *commercial* energy, and there is the *religious* energy; the one is erecting its railroads and making its exhibitions; the other is extending its *bishoprics*, building its temples, multiplying its ordinances, and the like. The attention of the children of men is divided between these things; but the saint who knows the cross of Christ as the relief of his conscience, and the reason of his separation from the world, is apart from them both (Gal. i. 4; iv. 9, 10).

I doubt not that the civil power will have to yield the supremacy for a time, and the woman will ride again, though her state and greatness will be but for a little; for the civil power will take offence, and remove her.

If we, in God's grace, keep a good conscience towards Christ and His truth, we

may count upon it that no inheritance in the earth is worth, as people speak, many years' purchase. If we consent to become whatever the times would make us, of course we may go on, and that, too, advancing with an advancing world.*

I have been sensible lately how much the spirit of Jeremiah suits these times. He lived in the daily observation of evil. Iniquity was abounding in the scene around him, *though it was called by God's name*, and was indeed His place on the earth. The house of prayer had become a "den of thieves," though they still cried, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these." He knew that the judgment of God was awaiting it all, and he looked for happy days which lay in the distance, beyond the present corruption and the approaching judgment. Over all this *corruption* Jeremiah *mourned*; against it all he *testified*; and, like his Master, he was hated for his testimony (John vii. 7). He was, however, full of faith and hope; and in the strength of that (anticipating the future) he laid out his money in the purchase of Hanameel's field (Jer. xxxii.). All this was beautiful—the present sorrow over the corruption of the daughter of his people, faith's certainty of the coming judgment, and hope's prospect of closing crowning glory.

This is a pattern for our spirit. And I observe another feature of power in the pro-

* I speak simply of things as they are on the earth. I know that at any time, independently of them, the saints may be taken up to meet the Lord in the air.

phet. He was not to be seduced from the conclusions of faith by occasional fair and promising appearances. (See chap. xxxvii.). The Chaldean army had broken up their camp under the walls of Jerusalem because of the arrival of the Egyptian allies. This circumstance flattered the Jewish people into hopes; but Jeremiah left the city, because he would still hold to the conclusions of faith—that Jerusalem was doomed of God in righteous judgment.

All this is a fine exhibition of a soul walking by the light of God, not merely through darkness, but through darkness which seemed to be light.

All seems to be quiet around us at present, * and even more than that, things are greatly and rapidly advancing, as far as all the accommodations of social life extend. But the *moral* of the scene, in the eye of faith, is more serious than ever. The apostate principles of man's heart are but ripening themselves into their most fruitful and abundant exhibition. There is something of rivalry in the different powers that are in action just at present. The secular and the religious are apart to a great extent. Each has its respective worshippers; but ere long confederacy will take the place of rivalry, I believe. The world must, even for its own ends, adopt religion for a time, that man's system may grow solid, as well as extended and brilliant, and propose itself as that which has earned a title to conform all and everything to itself.

* This paper was written about half a century ago. (*Ed. of "R."*)

Separation is the Christian's place and calling—*church* separation—separation because of heavenly citizenship and oneness with an already risen Christ. Abraham's separation was very peculiar; it was twofold. He was separated from the *natural* associations of Mesopotamia, "country, kindred, and father's house," and from the *moral* associations of Canaan, or its iniquity and its idols.

In the thought of these solemn truths, beloved, may the Lord Himself be more real and near to us! May the hope of His appearing be found lying more surely and calmly in the midst of the affections and stirrings of our hearts! All was reality with Jeremiah, to whom I have referred. The present corruption was a reality to him, for he rebuked it and bewailed it; the approaching judgment was a reality to him, for he wept at the thought of it, and deprecated it; the final glory was a reality to him, for he laid out his money upon it. He had occasional refreshments of spirit. His sleep, and the dream that accompanied it, in chap. xxxi., was, as he says, "sweet unto him." It was a moment on "the holy hill" to him; for light from the kingdom, or the glory, visited him. He had likewise revelations, and he could speak and write of them—but not only as thus refreshed and gifted in spirit; he was real and true in moral power. He testified against this "present world" unto suffering, and laid out his money, his expectations, and labours, on "the world to come."

It was this which completed his character,

and all would have been poor without it. We may speak of Christ, and teach about the kingdom—one's own soul knows it well; but to witness for Him against the world, and to be rich towards God, this is to fill out and realize our character as saints. We may covet these elements of the Christian character. Some of us, if one may speak, are but *half* Jeremiahs. We can *talk* of Christ, but can we *suffer* for Him? We can *teach* about the kingdom, but can we *lay out our money* upon it?

All this may admonish us, beloved, but I have another word in my heart just at present also.

The parable of the potter, in Jeremiah xviii., xix., was designed to let Israel know that, though brought into covenant, they were still within the range and reach of divine judgments, and that such judgments would overtake them because of their sins. In John Baptist's time, Israel is found in the like character of self-confidence. If in Jeremiah's day they would say, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these;" in the Baptist's day they said, "We have Abraham to our father." But John, like Jeremiah, would again teach them that, though in covenant, judgment could reach them. In the Lord's ministry we find the same. Israel still boasted. They talked of Abraham being their father, and of God being their Father (John viii.), but we know how the Lord again and again warned them of the coming judgment. All this has a lesson for our learning.

Christendom or Babylon has taken this

ancient place of Israel. *She trusts in security in spite of unfaithfulness.* She boasts in the Lord, though her moral condition be vile. She says, "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow" (Rev. xviii. 7), though blood, and pride, and all abominations, stain her. But Rev. xviii., is another action. Like that of the prophet in the potter's house, it teaches the unfaithful one that the doom of the broken vessels, or of the millstone cast into the sea, awaits her. This surely is "written for our learning," and also "for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (Rom. xv. 4; 1 Cor. x. 11). God never sanctions disobedience. He did not go into the garden of Eden to accredit Adam's sin, but to bring relief in the way of grace for it. So, in the gospel, He utterly condemns sin, while delivering the sinner who hearkens to His word.

Nor does He ever commit Himself to His stewards. He commits Himself to His own gifts and calling (Rom. xi. 29), but never to His stewards. They are always held responsible to Him, and disobedience works forfeiture. Christ is the only Steward that ever stood and answered for Himself in the *conditional* place, and in this respect, as in every other, He is the moral contradiction of man. In the temptation (Matt. iv.) the devil sought to inspire the Lord with confidence in spite of disobedience. He partially cited Ps. xci., quoted the *promised security*, omitting the *required obedience*. But he was utterly defeated. The Lord in answering cited Deut. vi., and acted accordingly; for

in that chapter obedience is declared to be Israel's ground of security. In this way did Jesus keep His own blessings under Psalm xci., and His Israel's blessings under Deut. vi. But all other stewards, in their several turn and season, have failed ; and Babylon's boast, which we have already listened to, is a lie.

All this may now-a-days be had in our remembrance seasonably ; for we live in a time when Babylon is filling herself afresh with this boast, just before her overthrow, when she is to meet the doom of the millstone. (Rev. xviii. 21.) For the boast of "the eternal city," as she calls herself, only the more awfully signalizes her for the judgment of God. It is a favourite thought with her, that while other churches tremble for their safety, she is above such fears—she is God's city, and has His walls around her. This is imposing ; but, when considered by the teaching of the word of God, it only the more distinctly declares what she is, and witnesses her more advanced ripeness for the judgment of God. Because this boast is defiance. It is not faith in God, but disavowal of His rights and authority. It is the denial of her subjection to Him, of her stewardship or place of being answerable to Him and His judgment. This boast of being "the eternal city" so far identifies her with the Babylon that says, "I sit a queen, and am no widow," and it leaves her for the doom of the potter's vessel in the valley of the son of Hinnom, or of the millstone in the hand of the angel. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts ; Even so will I break this

people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again " (Jer. xix. 11).



**"THE END OF ALL THINGS IS AT
HAND."**

1 Peter iv. 7.

The end of all things was at hand. The apostle, while speaking of the great principle of responsibility in connection with the testimony of God, draws the attention of believers to the solemn thought of the end of all these things on which the flesh rested. This end drew near.

Here, observe, Peter presents, not the coming of the Lord to receive His own, nor His manifestation with them, but that moment of the solemn sanction of the ways of God, when every refuge of the flesh shall disappear, and all the thoughts of man perish for ever.

As regards the relations of God with the world in government, the destruction of Jerusalem, although it was not "the end," was of immense importance, because it destroyed the very seat of that government on the earth in which the Messiah ought to have reigned, and shall yet reign.

God watches over all things, takes care of His own, counts the hairs of their heads, makes everything contribute to their high-

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est good ; but this is in the midst of a world which He no longer owns. For not only is the earthly and direct government of God set aside, which took place in the days of Nebuchadnezzar ; but the Messiah, who ought to reign in it, has been rejected, and has taken the heavenly place in resurrection, which forms the subject of Peter's Epistle.

The destruction of Jerusalem (which was to take place in those days) was the final abolition of even the traces of that government, until the Lord shall return. The relations of an earthly people with God, on the ground of man's responsibility, were ended. The general government of God took the place of the former ; a government always the same in principle, but which, Jesus having suffered on the earth, still allowed His members to suffer here below. And, until the time of judgment, the wicked will persecute the righteous, and the righteous must have patience. With regard to the nation, those relations only subsisted until the destruction of Jerusalem ; the unbelieving hopes of the Jews, as a nation, were judicially overthrown. The apostle speaks here in a general way, and in view of the effect of the solemn truth of the end of all things, for Christ is still "ready to judge" (ver. 5); and if there is delay, it is

because God wills not the death of the sinner, and that He prolongs the time of grace.

In view of this end of all that we see, we ought to be sober, and watch in order to pray. We ought to have the heart thus exercised towards God, who changes not, who will never pass away, and who preserves us through all the difficulties and temptations of this passing scene until the day of deliverance which is coming. Instead of allowing ourselves to be carried away by present and visible things, we must bridle self and will, and commune with God.

This leads the apostle to the inner position of Christians, their relations among themselves, not with God's general government of the world. They follow, because they are Christians, Christ Himself. The first thing that He enforces on them is fervent charity ('love'); not merely long-suffering, which would prevent any outbreak of the anger of the flesh, but an energy of love, which by stamping its character on all the ways of Christians towards each other, would practically set aside the action of the flesh, and make manifest the divine presence and action, "*for love covers a multitude of sins.*" (Rev. Ver., and New Trans.)

“WHAT SHALL WE DO THEN?”

Luke iii. 10.

How much there is that is striking in the chapter from which the above text is taken, as well as in the chapter preceding it. The Lord's land parcelled out among Gentiles; the rightful Heir to it just born in a manger; and an anomalous condition in the religious polity of Israel, two high priests. Then a voice breaks in on this state of things; but it is not the rams'-horn trumpets of Joshua's day, claiming the land for the Lord. That would not have been confessing the ruined condition and the sins of Israel. John is not driving back Jordan to prepare the way of the Lord, but calling a people down there to confess their sins. It is taking the true place before the Lord of utter failure, and this remnant Jesus joins. He can attach Himself in grace to such, and when taking that position was sealed by the Holy Ghost, and owned by the Father's voice. How good it is to be in the secret of the Lord! (See Ps. xxv. 14). In later days He writes the name of His God, and the name of the city of His God, and His own new name, on the lowly remnant who *hold fast His word and do not deny His name.*

“HE THAT HATH EARS TO HEAR, LET
HIM HEAR.”

THE GOAL.

Though with colours torn, 'tis a homeward
march,

Soon the golden gates will be entered ;
They await the palm, the triumphal arch,
When each eye on the Victor is centred.

The darkness deepens on every side,
And the tempter their faith would weak-
en ;

But day by day through those portals wide,
More brightly shineth their beacon.

For the goal in glory before them gleams,
Where the Saviour Himself is their treas-
ure,

And the onward path of suff'ring seems
Unworthy with Him to measure.

LORD, fill our hearts, if on earth we stay,
With an eager and earnest yearning
To press toward the mark, whilst we watch
and pray,
For the hour of Thy blest returning.

Not pausing to rest in a scene like this,
Nor to dwell on the wilderness sorrow,
Lest the path Thou hast trod our feet should
miss,
And the light of the coming morrow.

Ah ! keep our eyes on the Victor's face,
Where confidence ne'er can be shaken,
That with fleeter step we may run the race,
Till to "Thy Father's house" we are taken.