

PROPHETICAL OUTLINE IN SEVEN LECTURES: SECOND COMING AND KINGDOM OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

by H.H. Snell

A collection of articles and writings by H.H. Snell from Prophetical Outline in Seven Lectures: Second Coming and Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

8 Chapters

Table of Contents

- 0. Prophetical Outline in Seven Lectures: Second Coming and Kingdom of the Lord Jes...
- 1. Lecture 1: the Scripture Ground of Perfect Peace With God
- 2. Lecture 2: the Coming of the Lord, the Christian's Hope
- 3. Lecture 3: the Church of God, and Her Coming Glory
- 4. Lecture 4: the First and Last Resurrections
- 5. Lecture 5: the Man of Sin, and His Complete Overthrow
- 6. Lecture 6: the Kingdom of Heaven
- 7. Lecture 7: the Reign of Christ, and the Eternal State

Prophetical Outline in Seven Lectures: Second Coming and Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ

Lecture 1: the Scripture Ground of Perfect Peace With God

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together (Rom. 7:24, 25; 8:1-17).

If it appear strange to you, beloved friends, that I should begin a series of discourses on the second coming and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ with such a subject as "The Scripture Ground of Perfect Peace with God," I would say that my reasons for so doing are these: In the first place, I find that the Holy Ghost has, in the Old Testament Scriptures, remarkably connected together the sufferings of Christ and the glories that follow; and in the New Testament, where so much about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is brought before us, it is generally in connection with His sufferings. There is great danger, too, in the present day, of persons being occupied with subjects associated with the Lord's second coming in what I would call a political way; that is, looking at the various events of Scripture very much like a person studies the political events of the present age. This may gratify the intellect, but be assured that such will find very little blessing to their souls. To be merely occupied with prophetic events apart from Christ Himself, I am persuaded is not the path of the Spirit; for the sufferings and death of Christ are the very foundation of the glories that will yet be revealed. But there is another reason why I start with the present subject. I would ask, — How is it possible for any one to be waiting for God's Son from heaven, and to be crying truthfully

Come, Lord Jesus {Rev. 22:20}

(which, I apprehend, every Christian ought to do according to the last chapter of Revelation), while he has any doubt as to his acceptance in Christ, and is not assured of present salvation, and eternal deliverance from the wrath to come? Therefore, it occurred to me, that we ought to devote a little time at the very outset on the true ground of peace, especially for the sake of any who have not yet found peace and rest before God, and seek to persuade them to look at this subject solemnly as in God's presence, and in the light of His revealed truth.

Let me say at once, beloved friends, that that person who talks about making his peace with God manifests the greatest possible ignorance — ignorance of himself, and ignorance of God; and if there be a soul here to-night who entertains such a thought, I entreat him from this moment to discard it altogether from his mind, and to take the place of an inquirer as to the Scripture ground of true peace with God.

There are many people in the present day who seem to imagine that they have before them a pair of scales suspended from a balance, and that they put all their good deeds, as it were, into one scale, and all their bad deeds into the other, and if they can only conclude that their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds, then they think there is some hope of their salvation. My beloved friends, God has settled the matter. In His holy word He tells us that salvation is

not of works, lest any man should boast {Eph. 2:9}.

Another large class of persons are diligently seeking to get peace with God by law-keeping, observing certain commandments, religious ordinances, and devoting themselves to charitable doings, and the like. These people, too, are most particular that they should not infringe on a certain routine on the so-called Sabbath day; that they should not fail in certain duties; that they should not take the name of the Lord in vain, and many other things, which are very good in their place; but the snare is, that they imagine, and vainly hope, by such religiousness, they may possibly obtain salvation at last. They little think that that same law of Moses, which tells them the things that I have referred to, says also,

Thou shalt have no other gods before me {Ex. 20:3},

and

Thou shalt not covet {Ex. 20:17}.

How, then, could they stand before God on the ground of law-keeping? But, beloved friends, I am not going to occupy time to-night in going over the various ways in which souls are being deceived by their mistaken attention to God's holy and just law, but refer to one verse of Scripture, which is found in the third chapter of the epistle to the Romans, the twentieth verse, to show the fallacy of expecting peace with God on such ground:

By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin {Rom. 3:20}.

There are some dear people — true, I trust, but badly taught — who are trying to get peace with God on the ground of experience. Now, I am not speaking against Christian experience, or going to define what it should be; but I am sure experience never gives peace — peace with God. The seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans plainly shews that. The more the writer of that

chapter looked at himself the more miserable he felt. He turned himself over a great many times, so that a considerable part of the chapter is occupied with the expression of his feelings and experiences; but he could only come at last to this conclusion —

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? {Rom. 7:24}.

Experience, then, is not the true ground of peace.

Another point I would call attention to, before entering upon the positive side of our subject, and it is this, that the work of the Spirit in the soul is not given to us in Scripture as the ground of peace. Multitudes of dear people — truly anxious souls, souls, no doubt, taught in some way of God — are continually looking at the work of the Spirit within them for evidences, and such never have settled peace. If you read the first seven chapters of this epistle to the Romans, (which especially sets before us God's way of saving and justifying, on the ground of righteousness as well as grace, the sinner that believes in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,) you will find that the work of the Spirit is scarcely alluded to. But in these chapters, where the subjects of justification and peace are looked at over and over again, you will find that the apostle invariably presents Christ—Christ crucified and risen — as the only ground of peace and justification.

And when the soul has been brought to find rest before God on the ground of the already accomplished work of Jesus, as we have at the end of the seventh and the beginning of the eighth chapter, you then see that the work and operations of the Spirit of God are largely entered into, as instruction needed by those who have peace with God in the way of faith. This, then, is the divine order. I would not, therefore, say one word to an anxious soul about the work of the Spirit; but I would present to him the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, crucified for sinners, whom God raised from the dead, as God's way of saving lost sinners that believe on Him. Though every truly awakened soul is regenerated by the Spirit, still the Spirit, through the Scriptures, points him to Christ, and Christ alone, as the ground of peace. But when he has believed, the Spirit of God is sent forth into his heart as the earnest, and the Spirit of adoption; He anoints him, seals him, takes possession of him, leads him, and teaches him all the wilderness way, until he meets the Lord in the air, when he will have possession of what his heart has so long desired, and more than his thoughts ever conceived.

If then the question be asked, What is the true ground of peace with God? I would say that the ground of peace with God is the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Wonderful it is to be able to say, that the source of peace with God is God Himself. It is not from man to God, but from God to man. Only think of this, that God, in His infinite grace, in the perfection of His own love, has given that most wonderful of all gifts, His only begotten Son, to redeem us from all iniquity; so that now, through an already accomplished work, we may have full and abiding peace and rest in God's holy presence, without a question, a fear, or a cloud.

There are three great reasons why many anxious and sincere souls have not peace with God. One is, that they have not fully received the truth of Scripture recorded in this eighth verse of the eighth of Romans, that

they that are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:8).

The second reason is the sense of their own transgressions, the burden of the sins that they themselves have committed. Their consciences have no rest. Every now and then old sins rise up and stare them in the face, so that they are greatly troubled. The third, and perhaps the most important of the reasons, is one's self. Let us look at each of these three points.

In the first place, be it remembered that the statement,

they that are in the flesh cannot please God,

is God's truth, whether men acknowledge it or not. It is God's own verdict of what man is in the flesh. If a person is not clear on this point, if he has not received it as a divine revelation, if he has not grasped it as the truth of the living God, he will be continually thinking about mending, improving, altering — doing something or other to commend himself to God. He will be, in some way or other, looking at self; sometimes, it may be, puffed up with pride, at others cast down with despair. He will be thinking of himself, his usefulness, his benevolence, his piety. In some shape or form, he will be continually recurring to self, unless he sees that God, with one stroke, as it were, has decided the whole matter for him, that

in the flesh {Rom. 8:8},

whether educated or uneducated, virtuous or vicious, religious or profligate, he cannot please Him. Dear friends, I specially and affectionately commend this to any of you who have not settled peace with God. I say that, if you are not clear as to that great principle of divine truth, you will be continually looking at yourself, reckoning upon resources in yourself, raising expectations from yourself; and thus you cannot have peace with God. But believing that no carnal efforts can please God, you then become compelled to look altogether outside yourself for peace, and gladly find it presented to you by God Himself in the death and resurrection of His beloved Son.

As to the second point — sins, I mean actual transgressions, things that a person knows he has committed, and feels to be wicked in God's sight. These things stare him in the face. Every now and then they rise upon his conscience with such force and freshness, that sins of a twenty or thirty years' history come upon him with the guilt of those of to-day. This fills him with distress, and he cries out in bitterness of soul that he is a guilty sinner, and that he does not know any one so vile as himself. He is taken up with his sins. It is evident, that the more he is occupied with his sins the more depression of mind and unhappiness he must have. He may struggle, groan, be diligent in religiousness in ten thousand ways, but he will find no relief till he sees that all has been atoned for by Jesus, the Sin-bearer.

As to the third reason — one's self, you may not all understand what I mean. I will therefore try to make it as clear as I can. By one's self I do not mean outward evil that a person has committed, but the inward things of the heart, which no creature is aware of but one's self, and God who searches the heart. I refer to those horrible corruptions, those vile thoughts, those lusts, affections, inclinations, and motives that we should be ashamed to tell to any one; those workings of selfishness, pride, temper, and all the ten thousand abominations of self that may not be manifested to a single being round about us. This is where many people are. They are groaning over the miseries of self. They have not got deliverance from self. They are not so much troubled, it may be, like some others, about having actually committed terribly bad things, as they are about what they are in themselves. Now God in His Word has fully met all these difficulties, so that the

soul may be in perfect rest and peace before Him, and through His marvelous grace be happier in His presence than in the presence of any one else.

I need not tell you that it is recorded in Scripture, over and over again, that Christ was the bearer of sins. —

He bare our sins in His own body on the tree {see 1 Pet. 2:24}.

In the third verse of the eighth chapter of Romans we read,

God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh {Rom. 8:3}.

Thus we get Christ presented to us as lifted up upon the tree, God's own Son the bearer of sins, and God Himself condemning the sins of the sinner in the person of His own Son. So that the sinner who believes can think of all his sins in the light of God's holy presence, and looking back on the cross of Christ can say,

He was wounded for my transgressions, he was bruised for mine iniquities: the chastisement of my peace (or that purchased my peace) was upon Him; and with His stripes I am healed {see Isa. 53:5}.

Thus if God condemned my transgressions in His Son Jesus Christ, surely it would be to accuse Him of unrighteousness, not to freely and fully pardon and justify me of every part of the guilt. Therefore, in the fifth chapter of this epistle, we are told that we are

justified by faith, and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ {see Rom. 5:1}.

With regard to deliverance from "self," this terrible plague, Scripture gives us clear instruction, especially in the sixth of Romans, and in the epistles to the Galatians and Colossians. There we learn that God has judged and set aside this evil nature which the Christian has so painfully to contend with. It is what the Christian finds in himself that so peculiarly troubles him — what he is as a man in the flesh; and I say we have in Scripture God's own account as to how He has met our need in this respect, so that the soul may be in perfect rest and peace, so far as the conscience is concerned. In the last part of the seventh of Romans we find a person exclaiming,

O wretched man that I am! {Rom. 7:24}.

Now, observe here, it is not "O wretched sins that I have committed!" That might be quite true also. But it is,

O wretched man!

the wretched man that I am. It is what he is himself. I was struck the other day by a lady telling me, that when she was quite a child she was groaning over her wretched self. A gentleman who was near her on one occasion said, "What can that little dear know about sin?" It was not, she said, sins that she had committed, it was not actual transgression against God that so troubled her, but it was the vileness of herself. Be assured, dear friends, it is this that the Spirit of God makes known to souls; for He teaches, that

they that are in the flesh cannot please God {Rom. 8:8}.

The cry is,

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me? {Rom. 7:24}.

Deliver me from what? From my sins? from my transgressions? No; but from a deeper thing than these. From the thing that caused the transgressions; or, shall I say it? from the machine, as it were, that gives birth to the transgressions; from the root from which all the transgressions spring; and the cry is,

Who shall deliver me (from this horrible self)? from the body of this death? {Rom. 7:24}.

Now, I ask, how did the author of the cry get deliverance? Ah! not by looking at self. A dear young lady, a friend of mine, some years ago, said to me, she thought she was going on in the blessed way, and was getting very religious; for, she said, "I have written down all the sins that I can remember, and I read them over every morning, hoping I shall get good and grow humble and pious by so doing." Poor dear soul, what good could she get from that? Why, if taught by the Spirit of God, she would come to this,

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

You will never get deliverance from looking at self in any shape, never! – good self, bad self, religious self, educated self, or moral self, reformed self, intellectual self; for Scripture declares, that

they that are in the flesh cannot please God {Rom. 8:8}.

How then did this troubled soul get deliverance? Ah! the answer is this, he looked to God. He had been running away from God; and that may be what some of you have been about. Yes, running away from God; for you do not know how God loves poor sinners. You have never thought of that perhaps, that

God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son {John 3:16}

to save sinners. Ah! have you never seen, that the love of God, in Christ crucified and risen, to poor perishing sinners, is the source of all true peace?

Who shall deliver me? {Rom. 7:24}

is the cry. And mark the next words:

I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord {Rom. 7:25}.

That is how he obtained deliverance. If a soul say, Will God deliver a vile sinner like me? Yes He will; for though He is a just God, He is a Savior. And you will never find peace, friends, unless you get it from God, and through our Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall deliver me?

I thank God —

there is the voice of praise —

I thank God —

why? —

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

That is where he got deliverance — from God, and through our Lord Jesus Christ. So that God Himself is the very one whose arm has brought salvation; and Himself it is who preaches peace by Jesus Christ. And God Himself it is who declares, that whosoever cometh unto Him, through His only begotten Son, He will in no wise cast out, but save such to the uttermost. Therefore it is that we can say,

I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now how simple this is. There is not only deliverance from the guilt of transgression, but deliverance from the whole thing — one's self. The wretched man, with all his miserable experiences, all the things that grieved, and vexed, and convicted the awakened conscience — all that made him feel how wicked he was, he saw fully met in the cross of Christ. How wondrously God came in to save him as he was — in his sins, in his guilt, in his ruin, a lost man; and He saved him perfectly, and for ever, through the atoning work of His Son Jesus Christ.

But, beloved friends, we have more than that brought before us here. There is not only peace for a poor ruined sinner in and through our Lord Jesus Christ, but God would have His children filled with spiritual wisdom and understanding as to the knowledge of how He has come in and met us, and delivered us, and the acceptance we now have before Him; so that we may be able intelligently, and in all the liberty of love, to enter into His presence, and worship Him, as redeemed by the blood of the cross, and accepted in the Son of His love. We find in the next verse the experience this groaning one now has as a Christian — a saved person. I call attention to this fact, because it is immensely important. Many persons think they ought not, after they have believed on the Lord Jesus for salvation, to feel an evil thought springing up in their hearts, or evil desires, or evil suggestions, as if regeneration and reconciliation took away their evil nature entirely from them. Such, however, every Christian feels is not the case. Mark, therefore, what follows.

So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin {Rom. 7:25}.

That is, he looks upon the wretched man, what he was in the flesh, no longer as himself; he regards "the flesh" as an enemy; he has disallowed it as unfit for God in the cross; he looks upon himself now as a person who has got another nature, he is a new creation, he has another existence; he has life. It is this new nature in him that he now calls "I myself"; it is this principle, this nature, whatever we may call it, that serves the law of God; and it is "the flesh," that incurably bad self which he was groaning under, that still serves "the law of sin." I say that verse describes, as a matter of fact, what every Christian is. There is not a Christian living on the face of the earth that has not these two principles or natures; with one, that which is born of the Spirit, the new life, he himself serves the law of God, but with the other nature, that which is born of the flesh, if he allow it to come into action, he can serve nothing but the law of sin. "The flesh" cannot please God, put into what shape you please; it is a corrupt tree, and cannot bring forth good fruit. The flesh cannot serve anything that is not carnal, and worldly, and evil; and the new nature, which is born of God and cannot sin, can never do anything contrary to the mind of God. These two principles, I say, are in every true Christian. The man, too, who enjoys settled peace with God through Christ, knows well that there is a warfare going on in him between those two principles, according to the

apostle's words in Gal. 5:17:

The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh;

and so far from their ever becoming united, it is added,

and these are contrary the one to the other.

It is immensely important that the believer should clearly see that he has this evil something in him which he must keep under, and not trust. Having life in Christ, he must cry to, and trust in, the Lord for strength, that he may be able,

through the Spirit, to mortify the deeds of the body {see Rom. 8:13}.

Moreover, is it not an amazing comfort to the Christian to have the testimony of God's truth that the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ is the answer for his sins, and to know Jesus also on that cross as his Substitute, and that therefore everything of vile self has been virtually, judicially, and, according to righteousness, crucified, put to death with Him? Is not this what we are told in the sixth chapter of Romans?

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin {Rom. 6:6}.

So that you see it was not merely sins that were laid upon Christ, but the old man was crucified with Him; not only that sins might be atoned for, but that sin, root and branch, the body of sin, might be annulled. If I did not know that, how could I venture to approach God? how could one be happy in His presence?

In accordance, then, with this blessed truth, we have in Rom. 6:11 the following instructions:

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead [or to have died] indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through [or in] Jesus Christ our Lord.

We are thus told by the Holy Ghost that we are to reckon about ourselves in this way:

Reckon ye also yourselves, &c.

While I know I have still this evil nature, I am to reckon that it has been judicially put to death, crucified in the cross of Christ, and buried in the grave of Christ. And be assured, beloved friends, you will never get the victory over self without this. You will never be at rest in the blessed portion God has given you in Christ, until you can see in the cross of Calvary God's righteous judgment of the flesh with its affections and lusts. There is a text to which I must now refer in connection with this subject, and I call attention to it because I believe it is often misunderstood. In Gal. 5:24, we read,

They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Now, what does this mean? Does it not exactly fit in with what we have been considering? How have I crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts? The answer is plain. Because, as a believer, I have consented to God's just and righteous judgment of myself as a man in the flesh, as totally incapable of pleasing God, and unfit for His presence. I have not only consented to the

justice of that judgment, but I have accepted it as my only ground to stand on, and that which God has in His mercy accomplished for me in Christ my Substitute; so that in this way I have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. I have thus set aside the flesh; I have crucified it; I have heard God declaring that my old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be annulled; and I have heartily agreed to it, and said, "Yes, that is a just and a righteous judgment." Faith does this, and sees that God is glorified in it. What a wondrous blessing this is! How exactly God has met our deep need! I know no parts of Scripture so full of comfort and blessing, so calculated to establish and support us, and to draw us out in devotedness to God, as those which show how completely and judicially God has set us aside as to the flesh, and yet secured our eternal acceptance before Him in Christ, giving us a standing in His presence, through the death and in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But further. We have been looking at Scriptures which show what God has accomplished for us in the death of His Son Jesus Christ. Now let us go a step further, because God has given abundant reason in His word why the believer should not only have peace, abiding peace, in His presence, but also be a joyful worshiper, and a happy, loving, obedient child. There are two points to which I am about to refer. One is the believer's standing in resurrection-life in Christ; and the other, the new relationships he is brought into with God and His beloved Son.

We read in Rom. 8:1:

There is therefore now no condemnation

— to whom? —

to them which are in Christ Jesus.

Observe, it is a present blessing — "now." It is to those who are "in Christ Jesus." This is a step beyond the cross of Christ. It is the other side of death. You will say, We were always in Christ according to God's eternal purpose. That is quite true; but I am not speaking of that now. Believers are now actually in Christ, partakers of His life, as risen from the dead. It is life in One who is on the other side of death.

Whatever were God's counsels and purposes, we had not union with Christ before His death. We are told that,

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone {John 12:24}.

It is clear from this that Christ was alone, and would have been alone, if He had not died. We could not have been in Him, there could have been no union, until after He had died; and therefore the Scripture tells us,

You hath He quickened [or made alive] who were dead in trespasses and sins {Eph. 2:1}.

But how? Quickened together, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. We are not yet with Christ, but we are in Christ. Therefore we find in the second verse of this eighth chapter,

The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death {Rom. 8:2}.

It is life, then, in a risen Christ. This is the point. It is not merely deliverance from wrath by the blood of the cross, but life in a risen Christ. Is not this, beloved friends, ground for abiding, solid peace, and also of communion with God? And will not such grace, if really known in power, make us willing to spend and be spent in His service? Oh, that we could all enter into the dignity and blessedness of having life in a risen Christ! A friend of mine some years ago visited a distant place where there were a great many Christians, and in writing to me he stated, "The Christians here do not know life." I fear that few Christians are really in their souls on this blessed ground of death and resurrection, and enjoying the reality of being now in Christ Jesus.

We have then, blessed be God! life in a risen Christ. Christ is our life. We have passed from death unto life; we are seated in Christ in heavenly places.

This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son {1 John 5:11}.

He that hath the Son hath life {1 John 5:12}

— life in a risen Christ. We are risen with Christ. It is not only redemption from sin, but we are brought to God; hence we find in the fifth chapter of the Revelation that the song of the elders in glory is,

Thou . . . hast redeemed us to God {Rev. 5:9}.

It is not merely seeing what we have been delivered from that gives us joy, but seeing where we are brought — made nigh to God in Christ Jesus, through His precious blood. Let us well consider this, and never forget what an unfailing title to blessing we have in the precious blood of Christ. It has brought us to God, nigh to God, into the presence of God. The blood of Christ has given us liberty to enter into the holiest, and a title to stand there, and share the inheritance with the blessed Lord. What a precious truth this is!

But I must take you to another important verse in this eighth chapter. It immediately follows the sweeping declaration,

They that are in the flesh cannot please God {Rom. 8:8}.

The words are most remarkable:

Ye are not in the flesh {Rom. 8:9}.

In the seventh chapter he says,

When we were in the flesh {Rom. 7:5},

and now he says, "Ye are not in the flesh." How is this? Because, as I have tried to prove, as a man in the flesh, you have been judged and put to death in your Substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ; so that you have now no existence before God as in the flesh. God knows you still have the flesh, and will discipline you if you walk in it; but He sees you in Christ, and not in the flesh. Now do receive this, beloved friends, as the revealed truth of God. I cannot tell you what an immense blessing it is to have clear knowledge of this from the testimony of God's word. Our first Adam standing is gone, so that the Holy Ghost says, "Ye are not in the flesh"; and it clearly must be the case, because you are in Christ. You cannot be in both as to your standing before God. You

cannot be under condemnation and justification at the same moment. You cannot be in the first Adam condemned, and in the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, accepted at the same moment. No; the cross of Christ has ignored your old Adam standing; the guilt of it, the evil of it, the old man, with his affections and lusts, has been righteously dealt with in the cross of Christ, and put out of sight in His grave; and happy are those who are content that it should remain there. You have a new life in a risen Christ, and therefore it is that you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; and the life which you now live in the flesh is a life of faith upon the Son of God. You have a spiritual life. The Scripture says,

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life {John 3:36}

— not shall have, but hath everlasting life. Yes, you have the present possession of eternal life. Beloved friends, I affectionately invite your attention to the passage we are now considering:

Ye are not in the flesh.

If you say, “I am in the flesh,” all I can say is, that you contradict God’s truth, and refuse the true grace of God. Be assured you can never have peace with God on any other ground than what He has accomplished for us in Christ. If you cannot submit to the words of the living God, farewell to any peace of soul; you cannot have it. No person can have peace with God who is not subject to His truth. Faith receives and bows to God’s word. And oh! when we look at ourselves, and consider what poor, weak, miserable, wretched beings we are, we ought to rejoice with joy unspeakable when we find God telling us what He has done for us through the blood of Christ, and in Him risen and ascended. Blessed be His name! He has given us a standing in His own presence so perfect that He can say to us,

Ye are [not shall be, but are] complete in Him, who is the

Head of all principality and power {Col. 2:10}.

Is it not a precious truth that Christ has accomplished eternal redemption for us? How blessed to know that He now presents us in all the perfectness of His own acceptance before God!

But I must not pass over what follows about the indwelling Spirit.

If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you {Rom. 8:9}.

A person may say, “I don’t think I have the Spirit of God dwelling in me.” That may be, but we must not forget that Scripture says,

If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His {Rom. 8:9}.

It is a serious matter, beloved friends, to trifle with divine truths. We read,

Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you {Rom. 8:9}.

These are the words of God, and they are full of comfort and blessing.

Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father {Gal. 4:6}.

It is by the Spirit dwelling in us that we know and own Jesus Christ as Lord sitting at God's right hand. It is also by the Spirit dwelling in us that we have access unto the Father:

For through Him [that is, Christ] we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father {Eph. 2:18}.

Before quitting this point, I would refer once more to the Scripture I have already called attention to, because it now fits in so admirably with the whole we have considered.

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord,

or

in Jesus Christ our Lord {Rom. 6:11},

as the passage might be better rendered. This is the believer's life. He is to reckon in this way, that his life is in Christ Jesus, that Christ is his life.

Your life is hid with Christ in God {Col. 3:3}.

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory {Col. 3:4}.

Now let us look at the "relationships" so blessedly brought out here. It is possible that a person might receive a very elevated standing without much affection. You or I might go into the South Sea Islands among persons who have no affection whatever for us; and we might have a very excellent position in the islands without any one manifesting true love toward us. But God, in His mercy, has given us the highest possible position — in Christ Jesus in the heavens; as near to Himself as Christ is, and in all the acceptability of Christ; so that it can be truly said,

As He is, so are we in this world {1 John 4:17}.

Is Christ alive? So are we. Is Christ righteous? So are we. Is Christ nigh to God? So are we. As being in Christ ours is the most dignified standing possible. But beside this there is the highest character of relationship — the relationship of sons. In the fourteenth verse we read,

As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ {Rom. 8:14-17}.

My beloved friends, this is not dry doctrine, it is food for our souls. It is the true grace of God wherein we stand. In the epistle to the Galatians it is said,

Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus {Gal. 3:26};

which again shews that every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is a son of God. He is a child of God, and the Father cares for, and watches over him. So you see it is a blessed, a wonderful reality. The old man is so set aside, that you are brought into a new creation, with new privileges and relationships. You are brought to know that you are in Christ, and He in you, and that you stand in this new relationship of sons of God. Therefore the service that is expected of you is the service of a son. I was in a house some time ago where there were a great many visitors, and not

a sufficient number of servants to do the work. Some of the children kindly assisted in serving the visitors; but what a very different character of ministry theirs was to that of the hired servants. They were prompted simply by love. There was happy liberty; there was no fear of bondage connected with it. They served with delight, caring for the honor of their father. And so our service to God should partake of this character. God has raised us up to this wonderful standing in a risen Christ at His own right hand, and brought us into the highest, the nearest, the dearest possible relationship to Himself — that of sons. This is what the Holy Ghost teaches. We have not received the spirit of bondage, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, “Abba, Father.” And it is in the comfort of this truth that the weakest babe in Christ ought to be. It is here that the believer of yesterday ought to be. It is here that all believers should be, rejoicing in the thorough end of self, and finding in the Lord Jesus Christ life and righteousness, and that we are brought into the blessed relationship of sons to God. Relationship always moulds the affections, and guides the conduct.

There is another thing:

If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ {Rom. 8:17}.

Who can tell the full meaning of such glorious realities? Is it that we are to share the inheritance with Christ? that He will not enter upon the inheritance without us? Is it that Jesus is first coming from heaven for us, His joint-heirs? Is it this that the blessed Lord is coming for? Most certainly, for He who is heir of all things will take possession of every part of the inheritance, whether belonging to the heavens or to the earth. All things are to be put in subjection to Him. He is Lord of all; Lord of the living and of the dead. But He will first descend into the air, and we shall be changed and ascend to meet Him, and enter together upon the inheritance as joint-heirs with Him.

And now let me ask, what manner of people ought we to be? If this be the place, and if these be some of the blessings which we are brought into through the death and resurrection of Christ, and gift of the Holy Ghost, by the grace of God, I say, what should be the characteristics that we manifest down here? what should we show forth? We ought to be subject to Christ, to follow Christ; we ought to serve Him, and honor Him; and what else? We ought to wait for His return from heaven. Now observe, dear fellow Christians, that you have not to wait for everlasting life; we have seen that you already have that.

He that believeth on me hath everlasting life {John 6:47}.

You have not to wait for righteousness; that you have too.

Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth {Rom. 10:4}.

You have not to wait for union with Christ, because you have that.

By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body {1 Cor. 12:13}.

You have not to wait for the Holy Ghost. You have seen that the Holy Ghost is given to them that believe; and

if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His {Rom. 8:9}.

What, then, have you to wait for? You have to wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change this vile body and fashion it like unto His own glorious body. There is nothing else to wait for. You will be caught up to meet Him in the air, and be for ever with and like your loving Lord. The Lord bless and preserve you, dear friends! I earnestly desire that no person may go out of this room without being assured of salvation through the word of the living God. I hope you will see that it is entirely through the death of Christ that you are delivered from the wrath to come, and that you stand now in acceptance before God in Christ risen. As we are told in the first of Ephesians: We are

blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus {see Eph. 1:3}.

May you, beloved friends, enter into these things, and be earnest Christians, doing the Lord's will from your hearts, and glorying in those blessed truths of Scripture by which you are assured of perfect, abiding, and uninterrupted peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lecture 2: the Coming of the Lord, the Christian's Hope

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also (John 14:3).

And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven (Acts 1:9-11).

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself (Phil. 3:20, 21).

For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:9, 10).

Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. . . . And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. . . . He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly: Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus (Rev. 22:7, 12, 20).

I have read these several Scriptures, beloved friends, because my subject to-night is, "The Coming of the Lord Jesus, the Christian's Hope." Observe, the subject is not the day of the Lord, but the coming of the Lord. The distinction is very obvious in Scripture. For instance, the day of the Lord was Israel's hope. The prophets are full of the day of the Lord; but no Old Testament writer gives us the coming of the Lord as the Christian's hope; by which I mean the Lord descending into the air, when all who are Christ's that are alive, and all who are Christ's that are in their graves, will be caught up to meet Him. Our subject to-night is not the Lord coming with His saints, but the Lord coming for His saints. And I call attention to these distinctions, because it seems to me utterly impossible for any one to get clear thoughts as to the particular hope of the Christian, unless he distinguishes between those things which differ. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself said,

If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also {John 14:3}.

This is not the Lord coming to us, as many have supposed, in the article of death, when the believer falls asleep in Jesus; for then the Christian is spoken of as

absent from the body, and present with the Lord {see 1 Cor. 5:8};

or, as having departed to be with Christ. But nowhere in Scripture is the death of the believer spoken of as the Lord coming to him.

Neither is there in this saying of Christ one word about judgment; in fact, we get no such idea in Scripture as the believer looking for a judgment day, to decide whether he is to be saved or not. I am not ignorant that many who do not carefully consider Scripture for themselves, but learn from others, think that what is called the parable of the sheep and the goats is the general assize, the great judgment day; and that until that time no person can be certain whether he is saved or whether he is lost, because he must first go before that tribunal. I am aware that many think Scripture favours the thought of one general judgment; but I am bold to assert, that no Christian, prayerfully seeking the help and guidance of the Holy Ghost on the subject, and comparing one part of Scripture with another, with a mind subject to God's word, would allow such a doctrine to stand. In the first place, in the account of the sheep and the goats, there is no thought of resurrection at all. In the second place, it is Christ as King, when He comes in glory to the earth, having the nations before Him. And in the third place, the whole parable, which I cannot enter into now, clearly shows that it is a judgment which will be held during the personal reign of the Lord, when He deals with the nations according as they have dealt kindly or unkindly with His messengers, His brethren in the flesh — a remnant of Jews, who will publish “the gospel of the kingdom” after the rapture of the saints.

The Christian is not taught in the New Testament to expect death. On the contrary, he is told, in the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, that

we shall not all sleep {1 Cor. 15:51};

that is, that all believers will not die, because there will be some living on the earth when the Lord Jesus comes from heaven. Death then cannot be the hope of the believer; for we may or we may not fall asleep in Jesus. Certain it is that some will not. No one knows whether any of us will die or not. God has not told us; but He did make it known by a special revelation to Peter, and Paul knew also that he would fall asleep. They needed this special instruction about themselves, because the general teaching of Scripture was, that believers were to wait for Christ's return from heaven.

The question is, What are we to understand by those words of the blessed Lord,

I will come again, and receive you unto myself {John 14:3}?

In the first place, observe, that in making this remark our Lord was speaking to persons who were saved. Judas was not present. He had gone out. The eleven were there with Him, and He addressed them as clean ones.

Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you {John 15:3}.

He had been rejected by Israel, and had pronounced their house “desolate.” He was just going to suffer, the just for the unjust, on the cross. Anticipating that Israel would be cast off, and the Church of the living God called out, and formed by the descent of the Holy Ghost, subsequent to His glorification at the right hand of God, He gives us, in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of John, great principles of peculiar teaching that were never found in the Scriptures before. These chapters are full of deepest instruction for those who now form the Church of God, and therefore, among other precious things, He gives this blessed and soul-comforting hope —

I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also {John 14:3}.

We are not left to conjecture about these things. The Scriptures plainly point out to us the meaning of such words. For instance, in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where we have an account of the Lord's ascension into heaven, we are told that there were two men in white apparel, two angelic messengers, who came and spake to the men of Galilee, the disciples who were watching the Lord, and had seen Him go up higher and higher, till a cloud received Him out of their sight. While still gazing upwards, watching where the blessed Jesus, who was so dear to them, had gone, these messengers said,

Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus

— not another Jesus, but this same Jesus —

which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven {Acts 1:11}.

Did they see Him go up personally? Did their eyes behold Him? Was it a personal and a visible ascent? Certainly. Well then He shall come personally and visibly; for He "shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." The interpretation therefore is clear; there is no mystery about it —

I will come again, and receive you unto myself {John 14:3}.

There is nothing about the world here. Not one word about the ungodly. It is Christ Himself who is coming. "I will come again." It is not "I will send angels for you." For surely Christians are too precious to the heart of Christ even to trust them to angels. They are His own flesh and bone. He therefore says,

I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also {John 14:3}.

In pursuing our enquiry, the question may fairly be asked, How did the apostles and Christians in the apostles' days understand such words? Are there any proofs in the epistles that they understood they were to wait for Christ to come personally from heaven? Most assuredly there are; and that is why I read in the third chapter of the Philippians these words:

For our conversation

— or, rather, our citizenship, our country, the place that belongs to us now —

is in heaven {Phil. 3:20}.

I was trying to show in the last lecture that a Christian is a person now in Christ in heavenly places. If a man, therefore, is not in Christ in heavenly places, he is not a Christian at all. If a man says, "I am not a Mahomedan, I am not a Jew, I am not a Pagan; I make a profession of having embraced Christianity, because I belong to Christian parents," that is not being a Christian. A Christian is a person who has fled for refuge to Jesus at God's right hand, as the only hope set before him in the gospel. He is a person who has been taught and regenerated by the Holy Ghost — one who is resting simply on Christ Jesus the Son of God for salvation; he is therefore in Christ, and has passed from death unto life. Hence the apostle, speaking of himself and others, says,

Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for
— for what? For death? No. For judgment? No. What, then?

We look for the Saviour.

Who is that? The answer is given —

The Lord Jesus Christ {Phil. 3:20}.

And what then? Why, when He comes, when we see Him, this body of humiliation will be
changed and fashioned like unto His glorious body {see Phil. 3:21}.

Christians in the apostles' days were, therefore, taught to look for Christ — for Christ Himself. And
if you turn to the first chapter in the first epistle to the Thessalonians, you will see precisely the
same teaching — that when they heard the gospel through the apostle,

they turned from idols to serve the living and true God {see 1 Thess. 1:9}.

Now, I believe that would satisfy a great many people in the present day; a great many sincere
Christians too would, I fear, be perfectly contented with the two things, — turning from idols, and
serving God. But there was another thing that marked these early Christians, and the apostle by
the Holy Ghost commended them for it, and that was, they waited for some one. For whom?

For His Son from heaven, . . . even Jesus,

we are told,

which delivered us from the wrath to come {1 Thess. 1:10}.

You see the Holy Ghost employs a variety of expressions in the different Scriptures to which I
have called attention, to show that it was the Lord Himself who died on the cross to save sinners
that they looked for. They waited for the same Jesus that was buried — that came up from the
dead and said,

A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have {Luke 24:39}

— that went up into heaven, of whom the messengers which came unto the disciples testified, that
He shall so come in like manner {see Acts 1:11}.

Then we know that we shall enter upon eternal joy, and realize that change of body which will
have capabilities of entering into the unutterable glories to which we are entitled through the blood
of Jesus. This is indeed a blessed hope.

Having thus established from Scripture the fact that Christ is coming personally, that He is coming
for His own, and that the primitive Christians waited for Him, another question that naturally
suggests itself is, "What will take place when Christ does thus come for His saints?" Before
replying to this question, let me observe that this subject, as you must perceive, is not dry doctrine.
It is the warmest, most soul-stirring, and one of the most eminently practical truths that Scripture
sets before us. If a person say, "I do not trouble about the coming of the Lord; I do not hold it to be
essential," all I can say is, that your heart, whoever you are, is not very fresh or fervent towards

Christ; for whatever concerns Christ ought to concern you, if you are redeemed by His precious blood. If He is your life, and you are seated in Him in heavenly places, can you be indifferent to what He is about to do? I ask, Is it possible that a Christian's heart can be in that true and fervent state which it should be towards Christ, and be inattentive to the testimony of Scripture (even if he does not understand it), especially as to any thing connected with the person, work, glory, or coming of Christ?

We have in the epistles special revelations with regard to what will take place at the coming of the Lord Jesus: we are not left in ignorance about it. God was so gracious, before the canon of Scripture was complete, that from time to time, as His saints had difficulties, He met them with special instruction, so that we reap the benefit of their exercises and mistakes. For instance; the Corinthians had great difficulty as to the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, and there was a special revelation made to Paul and communicated to them. In the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians he writes, in the fifty-first verse,

Behold, I shew you a mystery;

that is, he then revealed something which up to that time had been a mystery.

Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ {1 Cor. 15:51-57}.

The mystery was this, that we (that is, we believers) shall all be changed — our mortal bodies will be changed into immortal, fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body. The bodies, too, of those who have died in Christ will be changed:

This corruptible shall put on incorruption {see 1 Cor. 15:54}.

And all this will occur

in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye

— the shortest conceivable space of time; so suddenly will this wonderful transformation take place.

There was another revelation made through Paul to the Thessalonian saints, who were in difficulty because they saw some of those, whom they knew to be saints, had died to all outward appearance like sinners, so that they could not understand where the difference was. The thought of the Lord's return was so fresh, so fervent, and so real in the hearts of these Thessalonians, that they evidently thought that not one of them would die, but that they would all be alive and caught up when Christ came. They were constantly looking for the Lord to return from heaven; but some of their brethren died, so that they were very sorrowful and unhappy. But the Lord directed the apostle to write to them about it. He states in the fourth chapter of the first epistle, commencing at

the fifteenth verse,

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord;

observe, by the word of the Lord, thus showing that there had been an especial word given him by the Lord, to meet the trouble of mind in which they then were. How blessed is this!

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [anticipate, or go before] them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air {1 Thess. 4:15-17}.

You see the apostle shows them that those who had slept in Jesus, and had been carried to their graves shall not be behind when the Lord comes, but that they will be raised first; that is, they will come out of their graves first; then the living saints will be changed; and then we shall all be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. The air will be the meeting-place of Christ and His saints; and then we shall

ever be with the Lord.{1 Thess. 4:17}

So that you see we get, from these revelations to the Corinthian and Thessalonian saints, clear instruction as to what will take place when the Lord Jesus Christ descends personally into the air. Let us not forget that

He shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven {see Acts 1:11},

and that then we shall be changed and caught up. For instance; suppose the blessed Lord should come whilst we are in this room, what would take place? Why, every one of us who are in Christ, and all saints around us in this large town, and all that are Christ's everywhere, living or dead, throughout the world, would be immediately changed,

in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye {1 Cor. 15:52}.

This mortal body would instantly put on immortality. Christ's coming into the air would be like a mighty magnet. You have seen a powerful magnet, which when put within a certain distance, attracts small particles of metal to itself from all directions: just so the blessed Lord coming into the air will be like a magnet; for the dead in Christ shall come up out of their graves, and the living saints shall be changed, and all be caught up to meet the Lord.

There is another question, which, perhaps, may be more of a carnal than a spiritual quality, yet it is one which we often hear, and which ought to be met. It is this, — When will Christ come? In the last book of Scripture, in the last page, and amongst the very last words of inspired truth, we have it stated three times that Christ is coming quickly. Oh, say you, that is very indefinite; cannot you tell me the year, if not the day or the hour, when this will happen? No, I cannot, because it is not revealed in Scripture, but left in this indefinite way, I doubt not, that we may glorify Christ by waiting for Him. Some have, I know, ventured, mistakenly, I believe, but doubtless with the best intentions, to predict a given time, or a certain year for the coming of the Lord; but it is just because they did not understand the difference to which I have already called attention this evening, —

between the coming of the Lord for us, and the day of the Lord. They go to Daniel's prophecy of the seventy weeks and other dates, and wrongly supposing, as they do, that the day of the Lord and the coming of the Lord are the same, they try to prove by calculation when the various times will be fulfilled, and the period arrive for the day of the Lord to set in. Almost ever since we have been Christians, have we not heard of this year, that year, or another year, spoken of as the probable time for Christ's coming? Of course, we pay no attention to such statements, because we know that as being in Christ in heavenly places we are not, so to speak, in the region of dates, or times and seasons. I repeat, that the time of our Savior's coming for us is not revealed in Scripture. Is it not rather said, that

in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh {Matt. 24:44}?

The times and the seasons are not given to us Christians in relation to our hope. The Scriptures put us into the blessed position of being delivered from the wrath to come through the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and now presented in Christ Jesus in heaven, who is our righteousness and life before God; so that we have to faithfully serve, and patiently wait for God's Son from heaven, when we shall have the redemption of the body. Then our bodies will be capable of entering into all those joys and glories before us, which are secured for us by the precious blood of Christ. Whilst we wait, we are indwelt by the Holy Ghost, sent down from heaven by a risen and ascended Head to unite us to Him;

for by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body {1 Cor. 12:13}.

We are then fitted, so to speak, to serve the Lord Jesus Christ devotedly, steadfastly, unceasingly, and without any hesitation. Hence we have the exhortation,

Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord {1 Cor. 15:58}.

It is thus that we are to wait for His return from heaven. To expect any clue by signs or dates, or times or seasons, as to when the Lord Jesus Christ is coming for us, would be without the authority of Scripture, and contrary to the true character of the position in which we are set by the grace of God as partakers of the heavenly calling. True works of faithfulness to Christ, of real affection for Christ, of care for the truth of Christ, holding fast His name, obedience to His word, waiting and longing ardently, and yet patiently, for His return from heaven, should characterize all Christians.

With regard to the expressions at the close of the Revelation,

Behold, I come quickly {Rev. 22:7}! Behold, I come quickly {Rev. 22:12}!

and the last words,

Surely I come quickly {Rev. 22:20}!

let us remember that they were given to the Churches nearly eighteen hundred years ago; so that it is clear that the coming of the Lord must be eighteen hundred years nearer now than it was then. There may be some here to-night who have a difficulty on this point, because of another text which is found in the tenth chapter of Hebrews, which says,

Exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching {Heb. 10:25}.

This verse has often been misused. Some have taken it as if it meant that the day of the Lord was the Christian's hope; as if they were called to wait for the day of the Lord, instead of for the Son from heaven to meet us in the air. As I have said, there is an immense difference between these two things. God's earthly people Israel were clearly taught to look for the day of the Lord; and there is something which is of the earth earthy, and intellectual, and we may also say political, in waiting for a particular day that is to come upon the earth; but those who are declared to be not of the world, who are called with a heavenly calling, and united to Christ in the heavenlies, they are called to wait, not for events coming upon the earth, but, as I have sought to prove from Scripture, for God's Son from heaven. But whilst thus waiting for Him, as having the Holy Ghost, having the Scriptures, and spiritual intelligence, as the apostle says,

the mind of Christ {1 Cor. 2:16},

we cannot but observe in the various events that are taking place, especially in this most interesting part of the prophetic world in which we live — I mean the ten kingdoms of the Roman Empire — we cannot but observe that the platform, so to speak, is already being prepared for the approaching day. We see that the time cannot be, humanly speaking, far distant when the Lord Jesus will come and take us away, and then He will begin to deal in judgment with the world, and especially this part of it in which we live. It would, therefore, be quite consistent for a believer to be waiting for God's Son from heaven to come at any time — morning, noon, or night — on any day, and yet to be observing with spiritual intelligence, according to God's word, what is going on round about; particularly what of late years has occurred on the continent, and is still going on, showing that the ten kingdoms of the Roman empire are being gradually developed, according to the prophecy of Daniel's second chapter. But I repeat that, while we

see the day approaching {Heb. 10:25},

it must never be forgotten that the day is not our hope — it is a Jewish hope; but our proximate hope is the coming of the Lord Himself from heaven, and then, of course, all the glories that will follow. This, I say, a Jew was never taught in the Old Testament, nor can I find such an idea there, as a believer being taught to wait for God's Son from heaven to come and take him unto Himself — to meet Him in the air. The day of the Lord, when His saints come with Him, is another thing. This second coming of God's Son to them that look for Him is a distinct hope — a special hope given to those who are in Christ, partakers of the heavenly calling, born again of God's Spirit, and joined to the Lord, one spirit with Him.

That the Lord will come before the millennium is very clear.

1st. Because the restitution of all things mentioned in Acts 3 is connected with God sending Jesus.

2ndly. The Jews, as a nation, will come into their blessing by seeing Jesus. The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

3rdly. According to the eighth chapter of Romans, creation will not be delivered from its present bondage of corruption till the sons of God are manifested; and they will not be manifested till Christ comes.

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory {see Col. 3:4}.

4thly. The world will go on as it did in the days of Noe; and as they did not know till the flood came, so will it be when the Son of man cometh, proving that the world cannot have its promised universal blessing till Christ is manifested in glory.

With regard to the hope, allow me to say that it is one thing to have the knowledge from Scripture that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming again; it is another thing to have the hope of His coming in the soul. It never says in Scripture, he that has the knowledge of prophecy shall purify himself; but it is said, he

that hath this hope in Him (in Christ) purifieth himself {1 John 3:3}.

In watching the Lord's work in Christians for many years, I have been struck with two distinct phases of character, if I may so speak, in those who have received the doctrine of the Lord's second coming. The one is what I would term a spiritual phase; the other is an intellectual or political phase. You will easily perceive that what is merely intellectual has no real power over the heart, because Christ Himself is not the object, but prophetic events are made the object. Some find it an amusing study. I have met with people who could go from Genesis to Revelation, and tell me a great deal more than I know of prophecy, and I have sometimes said that such and such a person has begun at the wrong end. He has begun with prophetic facts, instead of beginning with Christ. Now if any of you, dear people, are taken up with prophecy and prophetic events, I would have you reflect on what I have said. Men in the flesh can be taken up with the history of the Jews, the millennial age, and past, present, or future events; but a spiritual mind starts with Christ, surveys everything in relation to Christ, keeps close to Christ, sees nothing interesting except in relation to Christ, looks up to Christ; he cannot be happy anywhere where Christ is not, but he can live everywhere where Christ is. He sees nothing good apart from Christ. His heart's desire is —

“None but Christ to me be given;

None but Christ on earth or heaven.”

I would not give much for prophetic intelligence, if it does not begin, continue, and end in connection with the person, work, and glory of Christ. Therefore it is that the hope is so prominent in Scripture, for it is the hope in the soul that is so eminently practical. It is that which Christ loves. What would you think of a bridegroom writing tenderly and affectionately to the one espoused to him, and saying, “I will come again, and receive you unto myself,” and that she manifested very great indifference about it? Any one would say that she did not care much for her lover. Above all things, beloved friends, let us be sure that our hearts respond to the love of Christ, that our affections are true to Him, that Christ is the one object of our souls, and that it is He who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, that we now live to please and wait for. And you, dear young Christians, be sure that you keep on the true ground of peace — abiding peace between your souls and God; and knowing that it is for ever settled, take your place up there in communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, and see everything from that stand-point. Do not look at the church or Israel, apart from Christ. Do not look at the millennial world, or anything else prophetic, apart from Christ. Christ is your life, and He is your hope.

I will come again {John 14:3},

He said. If you and I were to be caught up into the heavens at once, and did not see Jesus, should we be satisfied? There is no real child of God who would. There are no persons in this assembly, old or young, who really believe on Christ for salvation, who will ever be fully satisfied till they see Christ. It is seeing Him, and having to do with Him, that can alone fully satisfy a regenerated heart. Therefore I do not come here with doctrine merely for you to receive, or with a number of prophetic events for you to look into, note down, and treasure up in your minds. My object is to seek, if possible, that your dear souls may learn more of Christ, be more attracted to Him, be more able to walk in His ways, and live more for His glory. If ten thousand people in this town were to receive a simple statement of prophetic events, however correct, and that only, I should be disheartened and distressed; but if I find as a result of these lectures, that some have been more attracted to the Lord Himself, have become more filled with the love of Christ, more separated from things of time and this present evil age, by being more taken up with the person of Christ, that would indeed be an abundant recompense for any number of lectures on His second coming.

I now turn to the practical aspect of this great doctrine of Scripture, — the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His saints. And, in the first place, let me notice that it is called in Scripture a blessed hope {Titus 2:13}.

Oh, what a word that is — “blessed!” It will be to us connected with nothing but blessing. It will be fullness of joy and pleasure for evermore. You will then never shed another tear. You will never have another sorrow. You will be so richly and fully blessed, that you will never know the end of your blessings. You never will be able to calculate that eternal weight of glory, that joy unspeakable, that perfect rest, or that ceaseless and uninterrupted delight which you will have when you first gaze upon the face of your precious Jesus, and begin to raise the eternal anthem,

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain {Rev. 5:12}!

It is also a soul-stirring hope. It is a truth for the affections. Consider the reality of bridegroom and bride. Can anything more thoroughly stir the emotions of a true heart? I ask, what faithful, loving, chaste bride would not be delighted with her lover’s promise, “I am quickly coming for you”? What would move the affections, what would stir the deepest feelings of the heart, like the testimony from himself, that “in a little while I am coming for you”? Again, in reference to the preaching of the gospel, can we conceive anything more stirring? Can anything more powerfully urge the faithful Christian to testify the grace of God to poor sinners, than the knowledge of the fact that the Master is quickly coming for the saints, and that then the ungodly will be left behind for judgment? I cannot imagine anything either that will constrain us to real faithfulness to the Lord, and care for His saints, His truth, His glory, like the Master’s voice —

Behold, I come quickly {Rev. 22:7, 12}!

Do we know this hope to be so soul-stirring? Are we so living and walking as to be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless? Would the Master, if He came to-night, say to you and me,

Well done, good and faithful servants {see Matt. 25:23}?

It is set before us in Scripture as a comforting hope:

Therefore comfort one another with these words {see 1 Thess. 4:18}.

How many a child of God may be now in this Hall who has had a dear parent, dear children, a darling wife, or a long and fondly- loved husband, who have died in the Lord? The heart has been made to feel very sorrowful by the separation; but the testimony of the scriptures is, that the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven, and then the dead in Christ shall rise, and we who remain shall be changed; and then all go up together into the air to meet Him: and so shall we be for ever with the Lord.

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

And surely those who have gone before are waiting with patience for the coming of the Lord. Let us not have wrong thoughts with regard to those who have died in the Lord; for though they are absent from the body and present with the Lord, yet their bodies are in the grave. That they are with the Lord, and in the enjoyment of full felicity and happiness as far as they are capable, there can be no doubt; but they are waiting for the coming of the Lord, when they will know the redemption of their bodies too, and then be capable of receiving and enjoying the full measure of their promised blessings. I remember some time ago hearing that a number of, I hope, servants of Christ, felt it their duty to preach against this important truth. My comfort is this, that directly they fall asleep in Jesus they will know its reality; for they will immediately begin to wait for the Lord. Christ is expecting to come; and those who have fallen asleep in Him are waiting for the Lord to come, that their bodies and spirits may be united, and then we shall all meet, and be for ever like the Lord, and with the Lord.

It is also plainly set before us in Scripture as a purifying hope. The apostle John says,

He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure {see 1 John 3:3}.

It is impossible that we can be really hoping for the Lord's return from heaven and be walking carelessly. Our great adversary often cheats us, or we cheat ourselves, by putting knowledge in the room of faith and hope. Many persons have a great deal of knowledge of the letter; but that is very different from the power of truth in the heart. Therefore it is said,

He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself.

If looking for Christ, we cannot be associating ourselves with what we know He will disapprove. We cannot be upholding now what we know we should be ashamed of then. Those who have not yet thought of the coming of the Lord as a great practical truth will do well to consider that Scripture. It is found in the third chapter of the first epistle of John:

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure {1 John 3:2, 3}.

Such a believer lives in this hope like a man separated unto God. We do not know when He is coming, but we are to wait and hope for Him. It is possible that the Lord Jesus Christ may come to-night. I do not say He will; to say so would not be according to Scripture. But I say He may come; and if we are looking for Him, we cannot be occupied with what we know would be hateful in His sight. We may be very ignorant, but we cannot walk in disobedience, and at the same time be

saying,

Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly {see Rev. 22:20}!

Therefore it is that

he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.

Again, it is a rejoicing hope. What can give a Christian such joy as the hope of seeing and being with Christ Himself? But you say, "I hold the doctrine of the Lord's coming, and I have not this joy." That is what I have been saying. Knowing the Scripture about it is one thing, but believing it to be God's revealed truth to you as the present hope of your soul is another. If you believe it to be God's revealed truth that you are delivered from the wrath to come, that your sins have been blotted out, that your old man has been put to death on the cross, that you have received life in a risen Christ, and that He is quickly coming from heaven for you— if it be to you a blessed hope, surely it is calculated to fill the heart with the deepest, purest joy. If that does not give the heart joy, nothing will. I grant that the foundation of all joy is the accomplished redemption of Christ; but the crowning joy is the hope of seeing Him. We shall, through wondrous mercy, have a crown and a robe; but what are the robe and the crown compared with Him? They are not Christ; and it is a precious reality that,

"Greater far than all besides, He, He Himself is thine."

When Paul thought of his service in the gospel, his joy was that the Lord was coming. It is said in the second chapter of the first epistle to the Thessalonians,

What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? {1 Thess. 2:19}.

Thus Paul, who was persecuted, sometimes almost stoned to death, rejected, in poverty, and imprisonment, says, {in other words} "I am looking with joy for the coming of the Lord; for then I shall know, and have the joy of, the results of my labours in the gospel." Again, if we for a moment consider that even now, knowing Him by faith whom we have never seen, we so love and rejoice in Him as to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, what must it be to see Him? What must it be to have His smile continually before our eyes? What must it be to be always in the atmosphere of His changeless, personal, perfect love? What must it be to have the delight of our hearts always before us? What must it be to see Him in all His glory? As I have said, He Himself looks forward to it; He said,

Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory {John 17:24}.

Is not this the highest blessing that Scripture puts before us? —

They shall see His face {Rev. 22:4}!

I do not believe there is anything of a higher quality than that; for whatever blessings we may have before, whatever happiness we may then know, or whatever joy surrounding us, there would still be something wanting if we did not, could not, see Jesus. But surely we shall be satisfied when we awake with His likeness, gazing on His face; and, blessed be His name, He will be satisfied too;

for He will then

see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied {Isa. 53:11}.

But there are two more points to which I must briefly refer in connection with this hope. It is what the Scripture teaches concerning eternal union and eternal separation. How very solemn! This blessed hope is associated with the most uniting idea in Scripture. In this present life we see the Lord's dear children separated, rent asunder, and torn, often manifesting little interest, little sympathy, seldom perhaps giving themselves to prayer for one another. There is now little putting of arms round each other's necks, little embracing of one another, little of the tender-heartedness which characterized the saints of old. But all this will be changed at the Lord's coming. All those who are Christ's, however separated now, will be then drawn together to meet the Lord in the air. Then we shall live as we ought to live, and love as we ought to love. Whatever we now do imperfectly, we shall then do well pleasing in His sight. However ignorant now, we shall know even as we are known then. We shall be perfectly joined together. How blessed! But connected with this truth of saints being united, there is also a most alarming certainty of separation in relation to the coming of the Lord Jesus. Those who are caught up and brought into the sphere of eternal blessing are limited to those who are Christ's. The Scripture is very decisive. It does not include all those who are religious; it does not say those who have been baptized; it does not say those who have been regular in going to church or chapel; no, it does not say any such thing. It says,

they that are Christ's at His coming {1 Cor. 15:23},

whoever or wherever they may be. Many who may hold high offices here, and be considered most religious and devout people, if they be not Christ's, their nakedness will be made manifest, their foul state will be laid bare, every mask will be removed, and it will be made known that he who was not with Christ has been really against Him. It will then be found, perhaps, that there were no such enemies of Christ as mere empty professors. We sometimes feel as if drawing near to the close of working on earth; but of all things our earnest desire is, that God would keep us from making mere professors, sowing tares; for it is most distinctly the work of Satan. I know there are many who think that they ought to make people tares first, and that they will then more easily be turned into wheat. I cannot see that in Scripture; I see that sowing tares is there declared to be the work of the wicked one. What we should desire to live for is, that Christ may be magnified, His saints blessed, and souls brought to the Savior, that He may be glorified. Therefore, if there be a person here who has not received the Lord Jesus as his Savior, I beseech him, before he leaves this room, to bow down to Jesus the Son of God, and take Him as his Savior and his Master. These are the true marks of a real Christian — he owns Christ as his Savior, and also as his Master.

Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? {Acts 9:6}

is the language of the soul that has received Christ as his Savior. Therefore, as the time must come when you will be either for ever with Christ, or for ever banished from His presence, I pray you listen to this truth. When Jesus comes, as I have said, it will be connected with either eternal union in glory, or eternal separation. In that moment the wife who believes will be for ever taken from the husband who believes not, or the believing husband from the unbelieving wife. I entreat you now, while it is the accepted time and the day of salvation, to solemnly think of these things in the presence of God. I earnestly beseech you, as poor, lost, guilty, perishing sinners, who can do

nothing in the flesh to please God, who have a nature that is not subject to God, and never can be, — I entreat you to come just as you are to the blessed Lord Jesus Christ, — that blessed, risen Savior up in the glory, who still says,

Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out {John 6:37}.

But oh, if you still reject Him, remember, if He comes to-night, you will be left behind to perish with the wicked. I entreat you, while God is preaching peace by Jesus Christ, that you refuse not, that you turn not away from this blessed sinner-loving Jesus at God's right hand, who delighteth in mercy, who is able to save to the uttermost, and who still says,

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest {Matt. 11:28}.

May God bless you, dear friends, so that you may escape the coming wrath, and not be among that unhappy number who will knock when it is too late; who will believe only after the door is shut; and who will hear the Lord's voice filling them with unutterable anguish and despair, saying,

Depart from me; I never knew you {Matt. 7:23}.

Those of you who are in Christ, who love and honor His dear name, but who have not hitherto been looking for His coming, may the light of God's revealed truth so shine into your souls, that you may begin from this moment to cry,

Come, Lord Jesus {Rev. 22:20};

because He says,

I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also {John 14:3}.

I say again, begin this night to give to Him the becoming response to that precious promise —

Even so, come, Lord Jesus {Rev. 22:20}.

Lecture 3: the Church of God, and Her Coming Glory

The church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God (1 Cor. 10:32).

And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all (Eph. 1:22, 23).

And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And He carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God (Rev. 21:9, 10).

Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:25-27).

In a day like this, beloved friends, when Ritualism, Rationalism, and Churchism are so prominent, it is exceedingly gracious of God to give to His faithful ones clear light from His own word as to the true character of the Church of God. To the Christian its importance cannot be overrated; for as God is in this dispensation forming and building up the Church, the body of Christ, if the soul be not in communion with Him about that Church, which Christ loved and purchased with His own blood, and which will ere long be presented to Himself a glorious Church, — I say, if the Christian be not in communion with God about that, how can he have clear light on other parts of the truth, which are put before us either in contrast or in connection with it?

The Church of God is an entirely new thing. And when I say "new," I mean new as in contrast with all the former dispensations. Before the death and resurrection of Christ, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, there were only two classes of persons found in the world — Jews and Gentiles. But since the Holy Ghost came down, consequent upon the blood-shedding and glorification of Christ in the heavens, we have three things presented to us as co-existing in the world; therefore I read that Scripture in confirmation of it —

Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God (1 Cor. 10:32).

There are these three classes then in the world at this present moment — Jews, Gentiles, and the Church of God.

Let me also say, beloved friends, that the Church of God is not revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures. Do not be startled at this announcement, I beseech you, because if you follow me patiently, I trust you will see that the Scriptures fully warrant the statement. I do not say that we do not get in the Old Testament symbols of the Church; I am sure we do. Adam and Eve were

symbolical of Christ and the Church. But what I said was, that we get no distinct revelation in the Old Testament Scriptures of the Church of God. In fact, if we had only the Old Testament Scriptures, we should not have had an idea that there was such a thing as the Church of God. I am, however, prepared for objections to this; and will now try to meet such as seem to me worth considering.

Some people say that the prophet Isaiah is full of the Church of God, and that most of the Old Testament prophets have written many beautiful descriptions of the Church of God. But in order to give a shadow of a proof of this they interpret "Jerusalem" to be the Church, the "house of David" to be the Church, "Zion" to be the Church, and I don't know what else to be the Church, without, as far as I can see, any authority whatever for so doing. But you will find, with regard to the prophet Isaiah, that the book is headed with these words:

The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem {Isa. 1:1}.

And therefore, whilst the Holy Ghost, in writing the Scriptures, might underlie and interlace most precious truths which we can now take up and use for our edification, yet it is clear that the plain instruction of these Scriptures has reference to the nation and people of Israel, and not to the Church of God.

To those who may feel a little surprised at my questioning the right or wisdom of what they call spiritualising the Old Testament Scriptures, or at my raising a question whether the words "Jerusalem," "house of David," "Zion," &c., mean the Church, I would say, consider with me two Scriptures. One in Micah, third chapter and twelfth verse:

Zion shall be ploughed like a field (Mic. 3:12).

Now is that the Church? To say such a thing would be an absurdity; for we know as a fact that it has had its literal accomplishment for many years, as travelers have frequently seen. In the second Psalm we find the other Scripture to which I refer:

Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion {Psa. 2:6}.

Where is that? Can it possibly be any other than the literal mount Zion, where God's King by-and-by will actually reign? Surely Christ is not King in relation to the Church. Do not for a moment suppose that Christ is reigning over the Church like a king reigns over his subjects. No, my beloved friends, as I tried to show you lately, the believer is one with Christ ascended — a joint-heir with Christ; and whatever Christ will inherit believers will share with Him as His joint-heirs. Yes, blessed be God, we shall share with Him the honor, glory, dignity, and wealth of the inheritance to which He is entitled as heir of all things. This is a very different thing from being reigned over; and these two Scriptures ought to be enough to show the unwarrantableness of asserting that Zion means the Church.

The second objection perhaps that would be brought to the statement, that the Church of God was not revealed in the last dispensation, would be a passage mentioned in the seventh chapter of the Acts. In the thirty-eighth verse we find the words,

This is He that was with the Church in the wilderness (Acts 7:38).

Now there we see at once an apparent difficulty, because it seems to assert that the Church was known in a former dispensation; but there is no reality in it, when you consider the thing fairly. The same word that is here translated “church” is twice translated in the nineteenth chapter “assembly.” In the thirty-ninth verse of that chapter we find,

It shall be determined in a lawful assembly (Acts 19:39);

that is, in one of the ordinary courts of law at Ephesus. And in the forty-first verse,

He dismissed the assembly (Acts 19:41).

That is, He dismissed the crowd that made the uproar. Precisely the same word is here translated “assembly” as we find translated “church” in the seventh chapter. But further, consider for a moment what the assembly was in the wilderness. Was it not so rebellious, sinful, and unfaithful that not one of that immense congregation except Joshua and Caleb entered the land? Could we then gravely think of that being the Church? Let me be clear on this point. The word for “assembly” is also translated “church” in the New Testament; but why I read the verse from the first chapter of the Ephesians was to show that the assembly which we call the Church of God is there defined to be the body of Christ —

the fullness of Him that filleth all in all {Eph. 1:23}.

Again, those who are acquainted with the book of the prophet Isaiah will remember that there is a passage which has been used by very many as supposed to refer to the Church of God. It is in the nineteenth verse of the twenty-sixth chapter:

Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead (Isa. 26:19).

I have read the passage with the italics, which, as every body knows, are not in the original. These words were put in with the best intentions by the translators, in order, as they thought, to give the passage a better sense; but, omitting the italics, the verse reads,

Thy dead men shall live, my dead body (or my carcass) shall they arise.

The simple meaning of it is, that the Jewish people will by-and-by be brought out of the state of dust and death in which they now are. If you read it in connection with the whole chapter, you will not find the slightest difficulty with the passage. The plain and obvious meaning is, that Israel, in a dead state, likened to a dead body or carcass, shall, by-and-by, at the times of restitution of all things, be brought into the wondrous blessing predicted by the prophets. This must, however, be preceded by judgment; hence, in the last verses, the people are instructed to hide themselves until the inhabitants of the earth are punished for their iniquity.

In the 139th Psalm there is another passage which has often been brought forward in proof of giving us a plain revelation as to the Church of God. In the 14th verse it is written,

I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned,

when as yet there was none of them (Psa. 139:14-16).

Omit the italics from this passage, and you will see, in reading these verses in connection, that the subject spoken of is the creation of the natural body; though from the knowledge we now have, we can easily see that it may also have a figurative application.

These are the chief objections, as far as I am aware, that intelligent persons would raise to the statement I have made, that we do not find the Church of God revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures. And in the New Testament we have the plainest possible intimation that it was not so revealed. For instance, in the third chapter to the Ephesians, it is written —

For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel {Eph. 3:1-6}.

Here we get the distinct statement that “the mystery” was revealed to Paul the apostle, and that it had not been made known to others

as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets {Eph. 3:5}.

And particularly observe one thing here. The order is always “apostles and prophets,” not “prophets and apostles.” In the second chapter the Church is spoken of as

built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets {Eph. 2:20}.

And so, with regard to gifts,

He gave some apostles, and some prophets {Eph. 4:11},

to show that the prophets of the New Testament are referred to, and not the Old Testament prophets. If it had been the latter, the order would have been prophets and apostles; but, as I have said, it is always the reverse — “apostles and prophets.” Hence we have

as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets.

But the difficulty might be raised, that it was partially revealed to the Old Testament saints, although it was not then fully brought out as it was to Paul. But if we go a little further down this third chapter to the Ephesians, we find in the 9th verse,

And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God {Eph. 3:9}.

Mark that expression, “hid in God.” It does not even say, “hid in the Scriptures”; but declares that the mystery of the Church, the body of Christ, was not revealed, but “hid in God.” And in the sixteenth chapter to the Romans we are told that

the revelation of the mystery was kept secret since the world began {see Rom. 16:25}.

So that the Church of God is a new and special revelation — a thing that was not known until it was revealed to

His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit {Eph. 3:5}.

There is another thing which we ought now to enter into a little; viz., that the Church had no existence (save in God's purpose) until after the death and resurrection of Christ. The first mention, I believe, that we have of the Church in Scripture is in the 16th chapter of the gospel by Matthew. Christ had been virtually rejected by the nation of Israel. In the 12th chapter they went about to destroy Him; and in the beginning of the 16th chapter he speaks of them as an adulterous generation. Further on, in reply to Peter's confession of Him as the Christ the Son of the living God, Jesus said,

Upon this rock I will build my Church {Matt. 16:18}.

This is the first time the Church is mentioned. It did not come out until after Christ had been rejected by Israel; and if you read the 21st verse, you will find,

From that time forth {Matt. 16:21},

Jesus began to speak of His sufferings, death, and resurrection. The distinction is most beautiful, because prior to that, at least to the end of the 12th chapter, the testimony of John the forerunner of Christ, and the testimony of Christ Himself, was to the kingdom. John's ministry was

repent

— not, for the Church is at hand, but

the kingdom of heaven is at hand {Matt. 3:2}.

And when John was put into prison, Christ came forth and took up the same ministry Himself, uttering the same words,

Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand {Matt. 4:17}.

In the tenth chapter He sends out His twelve disciples to preach that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. The result was, that this testimony met with almost universal rejection; so that instead of welcoming the Messiah to set up the kingdom, they actually went about to destroy Him. Then, when Peter confesses,

Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God {Matt. 16:16},

Jesus says,

Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona {Matt. 16:17}.

He tells Peter he is a blessed man; and added, that He purposed to build His Church. Now, can anything be clearer than that the Church was then a prospective thing; it was not then in existence. It was His intention to build it. Therefore, at that time, it was a thing in the future. You will also find in the first chapter of the Acts, after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, He says,

Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence {Acts 1:5}.

And we see that actually fulfilled in the second chapter, when the Holy Ghost came down. In the fifth verse of the first chapter of the Acts we read of Jesus saying to His disciples, (those very people on whom He had breathed, and said,

Receive ye the Holy Ghost) {John 20:22},

Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence {Acts 1:5}.

Accordingly, on the day of Pentecost the Holy Ghost came down. For what? He came down and sat upon each of those believers, so that they were all filled with the Holy Ghost {Acts 2:3}. But you may say, "What has that to do with the formation of the Church of God?" It has everything to do with it. That was the time when the Church of God began to be formed upon the earth. Therefore, at the end of the chapter, we read that

the Lord added

— to what? To the nation of Israel? No. To the disciples? No. What then?

The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved {Acts 2:47}.

In confirmation of this, turn to the 12th chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, and you will find in the 13th verse,

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body (1 Cor. 12:13).

No doubt there had always been believers, with more or less distinctness of apprehension of the coming Redeemer, from Adam downwards. Adam evidently had faith in the Redeemer, as well as Abel, Enoch, and a host of others. They were justified by the blood of the promised sacrifice. They had life and righteousness, and they will be everlastingly blessed. But they were always individuals — "just men" {Heb. 11:23}; they were always units. But since the Holy Ghost came down, there is no such thing as being merely an individual Christian. The Spirit has formed a unity, and enjoins us to keep it. In saying this I am not setting aside individual responsibility, because I know that exists; but what God is building now on the earth is a body, a corporation, so to speak, of believers in a crucified, risen, and ascended Savior, who are actually in God's sight baptized by the Holy Ghost into

one body {1 Cor. 12:13},

in union with Christ, the ascended Head in heaven. Therefore, I trust, we can enter a little into the meaning of these words in the first of Ephesians:

The Church, which is His body {Eph. 1:22, 23}.

And let me say, beloved friends, that I cannot conceive any calling higher, any dignity greater; or a more blessed or more gracious way in which God could deal with His creatures, than in thus bringing each believer into direct union with the risen Son of His love in heaven, and in union with one another, by one indwelling Holy Spirit. Some years ago there was a clerical meeting in the town in which I was residing. A Christian passing through the street was attracted, like many others, with the sight of a number of clergymen going into the hotel. Whilst there, he found himself standing beside a Jew, who resided in the town. This Jew turned to the Christian and said, "I was

just thinking what a miserable imitation this is of our glorious vestments and temple. Instead of these vestments, oh, think of the garments of glory and beauty! and instead of that building, think of our glorious temple! What a miserable imitation this is of our religion.” The Christian turned to the Jew, and said, “I entirely agree with you. I am not there at all. I readily accord you all the blessings of earth, and all the blessings of earthly religion, earthly grandeur, vestments, ordinances, and temple; they are yours. I am not there at all. I am up there” (pointing to the heavens). He then inquired of the Jew where he resided? The Jew kindly informed him. “I will call and see you, if you will allow me, in a few days,” said he; and they parted. He called on this Jew, and was kindly received; for I suppose the Jew was astonished to find any Christian who was willing to accord to his people all their privileges, and all the grandeur of their religion. The Christian took a Testament out of his pocket, and having read to the Jew the first few verses of the first chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, he said, “I am not where you are at all; I am in Christ in the heavens; I am blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Him. Christ is my life. Christ is my righteousness. I have redemption through His blood. I am united to Him, and all believers are united together in Him, by one Spirit, and baptized into one body.” Now, what do you think this intelligent Jew said to that? His answer was something like this. “Of course, I don’t believe it; but if that were true, it would be the finest emanation from God that could possibly be conceived.” But, beloved friends, we know that it is true; and the lost and sin-stricken soul who has received Christ as his Savior, and bows to the revealed truth of God, gladly rejoices in these wondrous blessings. It is quite true that Christians have slipped away from the enjoyment of this place of blessing into which God has put them; yet, thank God, the fact has not altered through our failure. We are not only in Christ, who is seated in the heavens, but we belong to Christ here, we are united to Him by the Holy Ghost as members of His body; so that He can speak of us in the fifth of Ephesians as

members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones {Eph. 5:30}.

And most blessed is it to see that the death of Christ is the foundation and security of these marvelous blessings. He died that He

should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad {John 11:52}.

Bear with me, beloved friends, in this digression. I will now proceed with the consideration of the point, that the Church of the living God — the body of Christ — had no existence until after the death of Jesus. How could it, if Christ was not Head till He ascended? but if we turn to Eph. 2 we shall find a text that, to my mind, settles the matter. In the fifteenth verse it is written,

Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace (Eph. 2:15).

This shows that Christ did something “in His flesh,” which completely settled every question as to the law of commandments in ordinances. This He did by His death on the cross — by bearing the curse of the law. He took it out of the way, having abolished it in His flesh. For what was it taken out of the way? Why was Christ to satisfy every requirement of the law, and to be nailed to the cross, and made a curse for it? As it is written,

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us {Gal. 3:13}.

Why was that? To bring in a better thing. That is, Christ died to take away one thing and to bring in another. The second then could not be formed till the first was abolished. We have seen what was abolished. The question now is, What was this that was formed? We are told,

one new man;

in other words, the Church of God. You see that it is the figure of a body that is used here. For Christ is the head, and believers are the members. The head and members form the man. Therefore Christ and His members are this “one new man,” formed or created in Himself. It is made up of believing Jews and believing Gentiles, thus of the twain, united by one Spirit in Christ as Head, we have this new workmanship of God — “one new man.”

Nothing, I think, can be more conclusive than that the Church of God has this new, special, and unique character. It may be well to notice what is said, or rather what is omitted, in the book of Daniel, as to the Church not having been revealed till Paul's day, or not in existence on earth till the descent of the Holy Ghost. Where prophetic truth is recorded, according as the angel gave Daniel concerning the nation of Israel, there is a niche in which this might have come in, if it had been the mind of God to have revealed it then. But it was not. And therefore concerning this niche, which in point of time has already occupied well nigh two thousand years, Daniel is perfectly silent. What Daniel prophesied about was his own people; but his people — the nation of Israel — is one thing; and the Church of God, united to the living Head in heaven, is another. In this famous prophecy of seventy weeks, as recorded in the ninth chapter, we find that the particulars are unbroken until the sixty-ninth week, when the Messiah was

cut off {Dan. 9:26}.

It takes us uninterruptedly down to the death of Christ. Ever since the death of Christ the gap has continued. You would not suppose from that prophecy that there was any thing like the Church of God to come in between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week. The instruction being about the nation of Israel who rejected the Messiah, this present time is entirely unnoticed; and he goes on to the seventieth week, as if it would have immediately followed the death of the Messiah. This period has been occupied with the calling out of the Church of God; for the seventieth week has not yet begun; so that until the Church is completed and taken away, the last week of this prophecy will not begin to have its accomplishment.

I have thus sought to establish from Scripture that the Church of God is a new thing, “one body,” and peculiar to this dispensation; that it began to be formed on earth by the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, who baptized believers, and still baptizes them, into one body. This, I repeat, is going on, and will continue to go on, till every member is united to the Head, and the body fully formed. As far as we know the body may now be well nigh completed. When it is completed, the Lord will come from heaven for us; and when the Church is removed, He will deal again with Jews and Gentiles as such. This subject is immensely important, as giving us a knowledge of what God is about now, and fellowship with Him by the Spirit in it. How impossible it is for a believer to understand according to God's mind what is going on in the present day, if he has not this key which God in His great love has given! But not only is the subject important as giving us intelligence concerning God's present ways, but it influences immensely the practical ways of Christians in testimony for the Lord, in conduct to one another, and in service to Christ. Satan has

certainly wrought a most impoverishing work amongst Christians, in robbing them of the plain Scripture teaching of the peculiar calling, characteristics, and hope of the Church of God as distinct from Gentiles and Jews. It is evident that what Satan is about, and what many Christians are connected with and helping on, to their great loss and the Lord's dishonor, is a mixture of heathenism, Judaism, and Christianity.

Bear with me, beloved friends. Look at the ecclesiastical architecture of the day. What is it? Is it not often an imitation of heathen temples that were once of such magnificence and grandeur in eastern parts? And if you search into a good deal of the religiousness round about us, (I speak with the greatest respect and love for every Christian; it is the system only that I speak against,) you will find that it is more or less connected with what is legal and Jewish, but, of course, blended with some truths of Christianity. But you cannot be connected with a mixture of this kind without terrible damage and loss. If you are a true believer in Christ, you are not now a Gentile nor a Jew. Being united to a risen Christ, you have lost your Gentile standing or Jewish standing; for you are in Him. You are formed by Him into a new thing. You belong to the "one new man" — the body of Christ — the Church of God; and I believe it will be a most profitable time for that Christian to-night who may see for the first time that there are three things at this moment in the world, — Jews, Gentiles, and the Church of God. And there are these three things in this town. There are Jews here. All those who are not Jews are Gentiles, if they are in their sins; and those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, whether before Jews or Gentiles, are united to Christ, and because they are united to Christ they belong to the Church of God. Some thoughts current about the Church are very erroneous. Man says, "You must belong to our Church if you would belong to Christ." Never was anything more thoroughly untrue. Scripture teaches that you cannot belong to the Church of God unless by union with Christ. No ordinance, be it baptism or anything else, will give you a place in the Church of God.

By one Spirit [that is, by the Holy Ghost] are we all baptized into one body {1 Cor. 12:13}.

It is of the greatest importance that every child of God should see what he belongs to, what he is delivered from, where he is brought, and what God says of him. He should not be satisfied merely with knowing that he is a true believer. For instance, in the epistle to the Colossians Paul did not doubt that they were believers. He thanked God for their faith in Christ Jesus, and for the love which they had to all saints. He was thankful also that they were walking orderly, and were steadfast in the faith. But, in the beginning of the second chapter, he tells us that he was in great conflict, or rather in great agony, for those dear saints. He says he rejoiced at their faith, and love, and godliness in some respects, and yet he had this agony. Why was it that he was so distressed for them? He tells us

that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God {Col. 2:2}.

That is, he could not rest till their souls were established in the truth of the Church the body of Christ, the practical acknowledgment of the mystery. The mystery is defined in the sixth verse of the third chapter of Ephesians,

that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel (Eph. 3:6).

As we have seen, at the conclusion of the second chapter of the Acts, there was a body formed on the day of Pentecost; but they were Jews. After God's testimony by the apostles and by Stephen had been rejected, the mystery was revealed to Paul. The Lord came down from heaven to him, and said,

Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? {Acts 9:4}.

That is to say, "Why persecutest thou the members of my body?" There was the revelation of the mystery — part of it at all events. Suppose a person takes a stick, and gives you a heavy blow on your arm or leg, you do not say, Why do you beat my arm or leg? but Why do you beat me? So believers in Christ are His body, and the Lord said to Saul,

Why persecutest thou me?

As believers therefore form the body of Christ, we can see why Paul was anxious that the Colossians should not come short of the blessed truth; for he knew there would be no knitting together of heart, no acting together according to the Lord's mind, unless they knew this blessed truth of being one body, and indwelt by one Spirit. Here, I believe, we have the true secret of forming the Christian character, moulding the affections, ministering to the heart, guiding the life, and stirring the devotedness and service of the children of God. And I believe that no Christian will fully walk for the glory of God, who is ignorant of what His mind is concerning the Church. How can he? Who does not feel his inmost soul moved within him when he knows that he is a member of the body of Christ, formed by the Holy Ghost, and thus united to that blessed living Head who is glorified in the heavens? Nor should it be overlooked, that the apostle traces the errors with which they were associated to their

not holding the Head {Col. 2:19}.

It was not that they did not hold Christ as Savior and Lord, but they were not in their souls on the ground of the one body, which is united to Christ in the heavens. They were not holding the Head. This is a most important point, as the second of Colossians clearly shows; and perhaps no truth is more needed in the present day. The glories of Him in whom dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead bodily — the Head of the body the Church; and consequently our relationship to Him, and to one another, and separation from the world, clearly apprehended in the soul, will keep us from a thousand errors, and guide our feet in ways according to our Lord's mind. If we are really holding the Head, every member of that body must be an object of interest, affection, and prayer; and what is due to Christ will not be overlooked.

Let me ask you to consider another question: How did Paul treat the disorders at Corinth? You know in what a sad state the Corinthian assembly was. One of the remedies, at all events, was to instruct them in this truth. He writes to them, as we have it in the twelfth and fourteenth chapters of his first epistle, that he would not have them ignorant concerning spiritual gifts, and the one body, and how they were to act toward each other as members of the same body, and how to behave themselves in the assembly, especially in relation to the Holy Ghost and the exercise of gifts. He would have them understand for their practical conduct these things. He says:

Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular {1 Cor. 12:27}.

There are weighty obligations to Christ in connection with these truths. On these obligations much might be said, were there not other things to occupy our attention now. Suffice it to say, that our place as members of the body of Christ is to hold Him the Head — not only as Savior, but as Head of the body; to be faithful to Him who is our Lord; to be subject to Him as the wife is subject to the husband; to honor Christ; to serve Christ; to show forth the characteristics of Christ. This is Christianity; and there is no other Christianity than serving and honoring the Lord Jesus Christ, and waiting for Him. The Thessalonian saints

turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven {1 Thess. 1:9, 10}.

The next point that we have to consider is the coming glory of the Church. The blessed Lord will come for her Himself. His heart is set upon that Church which He loved and gave Himself for; and He is looking forward to present her to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Hence, in the last chapter of the Revelation, He three times says,

Behold, I come quickly {see Rev. 22:7, 12, 20}!

to which the faithful are supposed to reply,

Even so, come, Lord Jesus {Rev. 22:20}.

He will come again for His church; therefore it is written, that

the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout {1 Thess. 4:16},

and that we shall all be changed — changed in a moment. This is what is coming. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed — only think of this — in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye: for the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven, and whether we are alive or in the grave, (like many who have gone before,) we shall all be changed. The Lord is looking forward to this. He says in the seventeenth chapter of John,

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory {John 17:24}.

Those who have gone before are also looking forward to this. Perfect as we know their happiness is as present with the Lord {2 Cor. 5:8},

in the condition they are in, they as yet have not their bodies, and are looking forward for the Lord to come, when their bodies shall be raised and united to their spirits, and they will have a body capable of entering into the joys of eternal glory, as one with Christ, for they are His own flesh and bone. In the same way every believer ought to be looking forward to His coming, and one can thank God for the change that has come over many Christians in this respect. Thirty years ago a man who held the truth of the second coming of the Lord was almost thought to have lost his senses. But now there are thousands who hold steadfastly to this important doctrine as divine truth. I doubt not that the Lord is quickly coming; and this is why He is waking up the saints to the truth of His coming. Surely, the voice has gone forth,

Behold, the Bridegroom cometh. Go ye out to meet Him {Matt. 25:6}.

Happy those who are waiting for Him; for it is a most rejoicing, soul-comforting, and purifying truth.

The first stage, then, so to speak, in the coming glory is this change, and then translation — to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Enoch was translated before the judgments were poured out upon the world; and that is what we are expecting. Do you not see how blessed this is? What would satisfy your hearts? Nothing but seeing Christ. Well, that is what you, dear Christians, shall have. Only be patient and you shall have it ere long. In a little while we shall see His face, and then

“We shall sing more sweet, more loud, And Christ shall be our song.”

You remember how Mephibosheth’s heart was set upon the king, and that during his absence he so deeply sympathized with him in his rejection, that he

neither dressed his feet nor trimmed his beard {2 Sam. 19:24};

and when his eyes lighted upon the king himself, he could think of nothing else, and cared for nothing else. He had David, what could he wish for more? Let Ziba or others have all the land, was the utterance of his grateful heart, for as much as

my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house {2 Sam. 19:30}.

And the first glance of our eyes on our precious Lord will so fill our souls with joy, that we shall readily exclaim,

“Farewell mortality!

Jesus is mine. Welcome eternity!

Jesus is mine.”

Yes, we shall then have full possession of what we have so longed for. Our joy will be perfect; our happiness complete. We shall see that blessed Savior, whom having not seen we love. Yes,

“We shall hear His voice, and see His face, And know the fullness of His grace.”

In my Father’s house,

said Jesus,

there are many mansions [many abodes]; . . . I go to prepare a place for you {John 14:2}.

There are many abodes in heaven, but here is a special place for the Church; and He is gone to prepare that place, that where He is there we may be also. You will be there, fellow Christian, as certain as you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. His word is true; His promise is sure; He cannot deny Himself. You will be there in the Father’s house, and in that very place which

Jesus has prepared for you by His own presence, and the sacrifice of His own blood.

When we are changed and translated, taken to the Father’s house, the presentation will take place. We have ready referred to the fifth chapter of Ephesians, where we are told that

Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it . . . that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without

blemish {see Eph. 5:25-27}.

Then Jesus will have before Him all those who form the body of Christ, the bride of the Lamb, the Church of the living God. Yes, He will present her to Himself. His loving heart will then feel — “This is the Church that I love, this is the Church that I purchased, this is the Church that is dearer to my heart than myself, this is my bride, to whom I am united for ever.” What must it be to have Jesus presenting us to Himself? We are exceedingly happy in Him now, but, as a dear friend said to me the other day, when we see the blessed Jesus, there will be such a gush of love! Who can describe it? for our best thoughts are but poor. But what then? There will be the judgment seat, and we shall be manifested before it; the judgment seat of that blessed One who so loves us. I tried to show in the first lecture that the believer has been already judged and put to death as a sinner, in Christ his substitute, on the cross; so that now we are alive in a risen Christ, and death and judgment are behind us. But then, say you, What is the meaning of the passage,

We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ {2 Cor. 5:10},

which we find in the fifth chapter of the second of Corinthians? It refers to those spoken of in the first verse of the same chapter:

We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens {2 Cor. 5:1}.

This describes those who are referred to in the tenth verse. They know they are perfectly safe, and that heavenly glory is secured for them. Nay, more; they know that they have the Holy Ghost, and say,

Therefore we are always confident {2 Cor. 5:6}.

Be assured, then, there is not a question to be raised about our salvation at that judgment seat. That was all settled on the cross, and we have the Holy Ghost as the earnest of our inheritance. In fact, we shall not appear there till we have glorified bodies, and are eternally happy in the love of Christ, and in the personal enjoyment of His glorious presence. Suppose any of you went away from your house for twelve months, and that you left three or four children in charge during your absence. When you came back, would you not have a judgment seat? You would call together those to whom you had committed the trust, and would commend one who had been faithful, reprove, perhaps, another who had not carried out your wishes, would tell a third, possibly, that he might have done better. So at the judgment seat of Christ, each will

receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad {2 Cor. 5:10}.

Thus, you see, it is a question of stewardship, and not a question of salvation at all. Knowing this, it is important that the believer should live and walk so as to be able to say, “I am doing this or that with the judgment seat of Christ straight before me.” In this way the heart will be kept true to Christ.

But what will happen to the saints in heaven after this? Why a great deal, I doubt not, more than we know; but we do know that there will be that most glorious event, the marriage of the Lamb. I apprehend that when Christ comes, according to the fifteenth chapter of the first of Corinthians, they that are His will be caught up to meet Him. This will include more than those who are

members of the body — the Church of God. It will include all the saints — all who have believed in the Redeemer from Adam down to that time.

They that are Christ's {1 Cor. 15:23}

will be caught up to enter upon the enjoyment of their heavenly blessings — will be taken up to meet the Lord, and be for ever with Him. We shall be then enjoying the presence of the Lord before the glories of the kingdom are manifested, and while judgments are poured out upon men on the earth. But after a certain time the nineteenth chapter of the Revelation will have its fulfilment, when it will be said,

the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready {Rev. 19:7}.

Now, without being dogmatic, it seems to me in this part of the nineteenth chapter, that the saints then in heaven are divided into two companies; viz., those who compose "the Lamb's wife," and those who are

called unto the marriage {Rev. 19:9}.

Things then take a decided and special form; afterwards all will come out of heaven following Jesus, when He comes in flaming fire to execute righteous wrath and indignation upon the wicked. When it is said,

The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready,

I apprehend the instruction is, that until that time all those saints will have been in heaven without the Church having taken her distinctive place among them. For, as I have tried to show, the Church has a distinct and special calling, as the bride, and the body of Christ; so that the making ready applies to those who compose the Church of God taking an aggregate form. They will then manifestly and formally, if I may so say, take their position as the bride of the Lamb. The rest of the heavenly saints, as I judge, are set before us as occupying another place, as called ones to the marriage — spectators, if you please. In the fourth chapter they seem all together, under the name of "elders"; but when those who form the Church, the bride of Christ, take the special place which, in God's grace and purpose, is assigned them, we never get the word "elders" used after. We read of those who

are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb {Rev. 19:9}

— that is, as I have said, they are there as guests, or spectators. I do not doubt that they will be eternally happy and blessed, and be associated with Christ in the reign; but what position they may hold in the glory I do not know that we are told. But we do know that the Church of God, the body and bride of Christ, has always a distinctive place in Scripture.

What next are we to expect? There will be manifestation; for that is the purpose of God. The apostle Paul tells us that

the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now {Rom. 8:22};

and he adds that it is waiting for

the manifestation of the sons of God {Rom. 8:19}.

No person knows now who “the sons of God” are. You may go into a town where there are hundreds or thousands of Christians living, and not know who they are; they are not manifested. But the will of God is, that they shall be manifested — manifested to the world;

that the world may know,

said Jesus,

that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me {John 17:23}.

This was the prayer of Christ in the seventeenth of John. We read also, in the first chapter of the second epistle to the Thessalonians, that

the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels . . . when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe {2 Thess. 1:7-10}.

It does not say to be glorified by His saints, but to be glorified in them. That is to say, we shall be like a number of tiny vessels, into which He will pour His own glory, and the world will see what the riches of the grace of God to us in Christ have been. So that when we are manifested with Christ the world will look up and know that we are the people who were redeemed by the blood of Christ. They will see us sharing His glory, vessels of glory, showing forth His praise. Every dear one in Christ will be a vessel bearing the glory of Christ before the world. Christ will then be glorified and admired in those who believe. Do think of this manifestation; and not only so, but think, as we read in the nineteenth chapter of the Revelation, that when the heavens are opened, and one comes out riding upon a white horse, that the armies which follow Christ will be not only the Church, but all the saints who have a place in the heavenlies. At that time, think also what it must be to be associated with Christ in judgment on the living wicked, to be sharing with Christ in His reign over the earth, to be associated with Christ in His judgment of the wicked dead at the great white throne, and to be eternally with Him —

for ever with the Lord {see 1 Thess. 4:17}.

But we expect to be especially manifested to the world as the bride, the Lamb’s wife. This is brought out in the twenty-first chapter of the Revelation, where we are told that an angel called the attention of the apostle John to the fact that he was going to show him — now mark! — show him what?

the bride, the Lamb’s wife (Rev. 21:9).

You see it is the wife now. The marriage is spoken of as having taken place in the nineteenth chapter. The angel says,

Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife (Rev. 21:9).

He does not say, “I will show you a city.” And I call particular attention to this, because I do not believe it to be a literal city at all. People talk about the golden gates, and streets, and precious stones, as if they referred to a literal city. I believe it to be a symbolic city. It is as plain as possible that John was called to see the bride; and we are told that the angel then showed him a city. So also when the apostle had to see the harlot Babylon, as mentioned in the eighteenth chapter, he was again showed a city. But surely Babylon is not a literal city. We are told that in her was found

the blood . . . of all that were slain upon the earth {Rev. 18:24}.

So I understand from this chapter that the Church will come down from God out of heaven, and that those of the nations who are saved will walk in the light of it. You have seen the bright, beautiful sun suspended over your heads, shedding forth its light, so dazzling that you dared not look at its glory. So I believe people who are saved will look up, and see the bride, the Lamb's wife — bright and perfect according to the divine mind, and clothed with the glory of God. She will shine with light

like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal {Rev. 21:11}.

We are told here that she had in her foundation the names of the apostles; and in Ephesians that she is built upon the foundation of the apostles, for they were its doctrinal founders. The Church began to be built on earth at Pentecost. This beautiful picture, in the twenty-first chapter, brings us into the millennium, a period of blessing on the earth for a thousand years. You say, How do you know that? Is it not a picture of the eternal state? No; because we are told that

the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations {Rev. 22:1}.

And we find it afterwards stated, that in the eternal state there will be

no more death, neither sorrow nor crying {Rev. 21:4}.

The millennium, though a time of inconceivable blessedness on earth, will nevertheless be an imperfect condition of things. There will be sin, death, and curse, as the sixty-fifth of Isaiah teaches. The period too is limited to a thousand years. There will be "nations" then who will walk in the light of this city; but I do not understand that there will be nations in the eternal state. People boast of nationality; let them go back to the tower of Babel, and consider the sad history of how nationalities came into existence. The Lord Jesus Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, and to bring in a new creation.

Thus far we have traced the Scriptures a little as to the Church of God and her coming glory; but we must add a thought or two more as to the eternal state, because the subject would be incomplete without it. The Church, the bride and body of Christ, has eternal qualities. It is not only eternal in the sense that it has eternal salvation, but the believer, who now belongs to the Church of God, will always belong to the Church of God. In proof of this, I will only refer to two texts. In the second chapter of Ephesians, which is an epistle emphatically treating of the Church, we are told that God hath made us to

sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus {Eph. 2:6, 7}.

Now mark the words

in the ages to come.

The millennium is one age. What follows the millennium is the eternal state — ages of ages; and therefore I apprehend this one text proves that the Church, as such, will occupy a special and unique position throughout eternity. But there is another text, if it that

“Jesus did it, did it all, Long, long ago,”

whosoever believeth on Him might not perish, but have eternal life {see John 3:16}.

be necessary, which is still more decided on the point. In the concluding verse of the third chapter it is said,

Unto him be glory in the Church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end {Eph. 3:21}.

Here the Church is spoken of as existing as such

throughout all ages.

Nothing can be clearer.

A few words in conclusion. Are there any here who are not in Christ? My beloved friends, what a mercy you are out of hell! Thank God you are not in outer darkness! The mercy of God alone has kept you from the bottomless pit! Dear friends, you will never have this glory of which we have been speaking if you are out of Christ. You may be as religious as you like, as devoted as you desire in acts of kindness; you may say over your accustomed forms of prayer ten thousand times a day; still, the one vital question is, Are you in Christ? If you are in Christ, you are saved; you belong to the Church of God; you are heirs of the coming glory; you will be for ever with the Lord. But oh! if you go away from this place rejecting Him — if you go on to refuse the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, the time of terrible judgment will most surely come. You may die, and be respectably buried, and friends may deeply mourn your loss; but wherever you are, living or dead, Christ, who is the Lord of all, will assuredly find you out. He will bring you to His feet. He will so thoroughly convict you, that you shall not be able to look up, or to answer one word. You will be speechless. He will condemn you to outer darkness, with the devil and his angels, for ever. Do consider, dear souls, what crimson, scarlet sins and guilt you carry about with you. Come, then, to the Lord Jesus just as you are, that you may rejoice in Him as your Savior; for

How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? {Heb. 2:3}.

You may not neglect your honest duties; you may not neglect to say prayers; you may not neglect to go to church or chapel; you may not neglect to read the Scriptures; but, dear souls, you neglect salvation; you neglect Christ; you refuse Him as your Savior. What can be worse? You are, therefore, on the road to eternal perdition. Oh, that you may now acknowledge the rich mercy of God in giving His only begotten Son to die for poor ruined sinners like you and me! that whosoever — observe “whosoever” — whether rich or poor, profligate or moral — “whosoever,” grey-headed or youthful — “whosoever” you are, or whatever be your history, condition, or character, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, He declares that you

should not perish, but have everlasting life {John 3:16}.

Poor, dear, dying sinner, these are the loving words of that blessed Lord Jesus, who is now in glory looking down upon you. And He is still true to His word, that whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish. There is nothing for you to do; He has done everything to save sinners. Yes,

Do not be afraid of this sinner-loving Jesus, the Lamb of God, who delighteth in mercy.

Dear friends, I warn you to-night. Do you ask, What must I do to be saved? I say again that there is nothing for you to do — it has all been done — but believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; that is, take Him at His word, rest on His finished work, His sin-cleansing blood. You may be sure He will be true to what He says.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved {Acts 16:31}.

Lecture 4: the First and Last Resurrections

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years (Rev. 20:4-6).

To the believer, beloved friends, “resurrection” is one of the brightest words in Scripture. You know the Lord Jesus declared himself to be

the resurrection and the life {John 11:25};

and such a blessed reality was it, that death could not reign in His presence. Search the Scriptures, and you will find that death never showed itself where the Son of God was. So emphatically was He

the resurrection and the life,

that whether it were a little girl of twelve years in a house, a young man on a bier on the way to the place of graves, or one who was dead and stinking in the grave, it mattered not who it was or where it was, at the word of Jesus they lived again. And so important did the apostle Paul think the truth of the resurrection of the body, that his heart was on fire when he said,

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable {1 Cor. 15:19}.

When certain persons at Corinth attacked this grand fundamental truth of the gospel, we find him at once grappling with it in the most decided and peremptory manner. He declares that if there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not raised; but that as Christ is risen (this one Man who was dead and buried in the sepulcher), He is risen as the firstfruits of others that were to follow. And so weighty did he feel this foundation truth of Scripture to be, that he asserts that there is no salvation, that we are yet in our sins, that all who have fallen asleep in Christ are perished, if Christ be not raised from the dead. He also sternly insists upon it as the truth of the living God, that as

by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead {1 Cor. 15:21}.

Beloved friends, the resurrection of Christ from the dead is like the brightest and most glorious light rising upon the dark shades of Golgotha and the sepulcher wherein Jesus lay. It sheds its rays forward and backward. Backwardly this divine light reveals the perfect satisfaction that God Himself found in the sacrificial work of Him who bare our sins in His own body on the tree; of Him from whom God had to hide His face because our sin was upon Him, so that He cried out,

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? {Psa. 22:1}.

It tells us of Him who on the third day was raised from the dead— God accounting it a righteous thing to loose the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it; it tells us of the man Christ Jesus who had been dead, that He is alive again, and that for evermore. And, beloved friends, in connection with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead, He is invested by right with all power in heaven and in earth: He is Lord over the dead and over the living.

To this end, says the apostle in the fourteenth of Romans, Christ both died and rose, and revived, that He might be

Lord both of the dead and living {Rom. 14:9}.

So that the Lord Jesus Christ, now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, has the right to unlock the grave, as well as the power to raise every inhabitant out of it. And part of the work, at least, before the blessed Lord is this, to spoil death and empty every grave, and then to cast death and hades into the lake of fire; so that death will be subdued: for the testimony of both Old and New Testament Scriptures is, that

He will swallow up death in victory {Isa. 25:8; see 1 Cor. 15:54}.

I lay these thoughts before you, beloved friends, at the very outset to-night, before we consider what the Scriptures teach about the first and last resurrections.

In the twentieth chapter of the Revelation, we have twice in the verses I have read, the words “first resurrection.” This of itself ought to be enough for any one to conclude that there must be more than one resurrection of the human family. Otherwise why should it be called “first”? Some, I am aware, would feel a difficulty in receiving this, because their minds are prejudiced against this glorious truth. I propose to-night, before entering on our subject, to examine those Scriptures on which some suppose there is warrant for the idea so common, that there will be only one general resurrection and one general judgment. And I trust, before we conclude our search, that it will be clearly seen, not only that such a doctrine is without a vestige of Scripture authority, but that it is dishonoring to the Lord, injurious to souls, and opposed to the written word of God.

The passage which strikes me as calculated to have the greatest weight with a person desirous of defending the idea of one general resurrection, is found in the first and second verses of the twelfth chapter of Daniel. I will therefore refer to it at once.

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people (Dan. 12:1):

[observe “thy people”; that is, “the Jews” — Daniel’s people. There were no others known in those days who would be associated with Daniel:]

and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (Dan. 12:1, 2).

Now observe that the words “thy people” are mentioned twice in the first verse. The period referred to is the period of the great tribulation, which I cannot now detain you to enter into; and what is brought out in the first verse in connection with it is, that some will be delivered out of it. We find this fact referred to over and over again in Scripture. Then mark the second verse; for this is the verse that I wish specially to examine at this time.

Many of them,

not all of them, but many of Daniel's people; so you see, instead of it being a general resurrection of all nations, the circle includes only Daniel's people, and that not all, but many of them.

Many of them shall arise from the dust of the earth, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Observe also that the time when this takes place is not when the wicked dead are judged; for that, as we shall see by-and-by, will be at the close of the millennium. Instead of that, it is immediately in connection with the great tribulation, which precedes the millennium. This proves that it takes place at least a thousand years before the judgment of the great white throne. Then there is another point, which is very important, in connection with the examination of this passage; viz., what we find in the twentieth chapter of Ezekiel. This shows that when the tribes of the children of Israel are brought back, (which they will be at the sounding of the great trumpet,) that some, will be purged out as rebels (put to shame), and others brought into the blessings of their land.

As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: and I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the Lord. As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God: Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols. For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord God, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the firstfruits of your oblations, with all your holy things. I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered: and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to your fathers. And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have wrought with you for my name's sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the Lord God {Ezek. 20:23-44}.

The point here is, that there will be a purging of those tribes that are brought back. They will all arise, as it were, from the dust of the earth, where they have been hidden. Some (the rebels) will be purged out, and others will experience the blessings of the millennial reign of the Messiah. The passage then in the twelfth of Daniel shows, first, that it is an action confined to Daniel's people; not all of them, but "many" of them. Secondly, that it occurs in connection with the great tribulation, which Scripture clearly teaches to be pre-millennial. Thirdly, the prophet Ezekiel speaks of a special judgment cutting off some, when the scattered tribes of Israel are gathered back into their own land. The prophet Amos also shows us that this purging or sifting of the ten tribes will take place before they reach the land; the result being that

all the sinners {Amos 9:10}

are cut off in judgment, and others brought into blessing.

For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.

I ask then, Is there a shadow of evidence from these verses in Daniel to warrant the idea of a general resurrection?

In the thirteenth chapter of Matthew passages are found which are also considered by some to favour the view of a general resurrection. I refer, for instance, to the parable of the tares and the wheat. The explanation given of it by our Lord is,

The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world (age). The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear {Matt. 13:38-43}.

In the first place, observe that there is not one word here about resurrection; and in the second place, that the ministry spoken of is that of angels. Whereas when we Christians are raised, we are told that it will be by the special and direct action of the Lord Himself. Remark also that the action here consists of taking all the bad away and leaving the good — taking out of His kingdom

all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.

This is exactly the reverse of what will take place when Christ comes for us. The true exposition, I doubt not, is, that when the Lord Jesus Christ comes to introduce millennial blessings He will find abundance of wickedness on the earth. You know He is spoken of as coming to

judge the quick [that is, the living wicked] and the dead [that is, the wicked dead] at His appearing, and His kingdom {2 Tim. 4:1}.

This is an action in relation to the living. The living wicked are taken away. Being only Satan's workmanship (tares), they are removed in judgment. And those who are God's true people on the

earth at that time (when the Lord Jesus Christ comes with us at the beginning of the millennium,) will have their place of blessing on the earth. I ask then, Is there the slightest ground whatever for treating this passage as containing any warrant for a general resurrection of believers and unbelievers?

In the 25th chapter of Matthew, our Lord's well-known description of the sheep and the goats appears at first sight to favour the idea of a general resurrection. On considering the passage, however, you will find there is here also the entire absence of resurrection; not a single person judged is raised from the dead. Next, observe, there are four parties — the king, the sheep, the goats, and the king's brethren. So that, without proceeding further, we see there is nothing to favour the doctrine attempted to be deduced from it, of a simultaneous rising of the saved and unsaved to be judged at the great white throne. The chief person presented in this prophetic instruction is the Lord Jesus Christ, occupying His throne as King on the earth, having all nations before Him, and judging them for the manner in which they have treated the special ministry which He, the King, had sent forth. The judgment passed upon those who had not received the testimony of the King's brethren is a very summary one; they are consigned at once to everlasting punishment. But the righteous, those who believed the testimony, and therefore loved and treated His brethren who brought it kindly, go into life eternal. It is a sessional judgment which the Lord will hold in relation to the nations, and His "brethren" will be present. Observe also that the Lord says,

Come, ye blessed of my Father

— He does not say, "Blessed of your Father" —

inherit the kingdom prepared for you from

— He does not say before, but from —

the foundation of the world {Matt. 25:34}.

The Church, we know, is spoken of in Scripture as chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world; but these are blessed in the kingdom, as it is stated, prepared

from the foundation of the world.

They inherit the kingdom. We shall be with Christ at that session;

for, after the rapture, we shall be for ever with the Lord {see 1 Thess. 4:17}.

To sum up then the characteristics of this judgment, it is in connection with "the gospel of the kingdom," which a remnant of Jews will be stirred up by God to publish, after we have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air. They are Christ's "brethren" after the flesh. The "gospel of the kingdom" will consist of the glad tidings that Messiah is coming to establish on earth the kingdom so long prophesied of, when

the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea {see Isa. 11:9}.

All nations will then be blessed, according to God's promise to Abraham. They will therefore publish these glad tidings as a witness in all nations, as we are told in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, and the fourteenth verse. Some persons will receive their testimony, and, consequently,

treat them kindly. Others will persecute, kill (as we find in the ninth verse of the sixth of Revelation), imprison them, and the like. When the King actually comes, He will judge accordingly. We have seen the results. Observe that the Lord fulfils His promise to Abram in His judgment —

I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee {Gen. 12:3},

as recorded in the twelfth chapter of Genesis and the third verse.

I will now, beloved friends, pass on to another Scripture, which is sometimes used as favouring the thought of a general judgment. In 2 Pet. 3:10 we read,

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

The reason why some persons misunderstand this passage is, they take it for granted that one day must be in prophetic language a period of twenty-four hours. This is not so. We are told just before,

that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day {2 Pet. 3:8}.

Now, if you connect this with what we read in the 20th of Revelation, you will find that the reign of the Lord in the millennium is to extend over a period of a thousand years. In the day of the Lord certain things are to take place. The elements will melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up. This is to take place, according to the 20th of Revelation, at the end of the thousand years. Thus we see how all these things can occur in the day of the Lord. There is, therefore, nothing in the passage that favours the thought of there being only one resurrection. The 31st verse of the 17th of Acts is also to be understood in a similar way. It is quite true that God

has appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31);

but when we see that the day will extend over a thousand years, it leaves ample room for Christ to judge the living at the beginning of that day, and to raise the wicked dead, and judge them at the close.

There is only one passage more on this point to which I will call attention. It is found in Rev. 1:7,

Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen.

I once heard this preached from by a servant of the Lord as the day of what he called the general resurrection and judgment. But, in the first place, observe that there is not one word about resurrection in it; and, in the second place, it speaks of the Lord's coming. And if you examine the passage regarding the judgment of the wicked dead at the great white throne, you will find that it says nothing about the coming of the Lord. There will be no coming then; and for this reason, — Christ will have been reigning over the earth for a thousand years, and this judgment will be held at the end of that period.

As I do not remember any other passage of Scripture which is advanced to favour the idea of what is called the general resurrection — that is, of believers and unbelievers, I will now endeavour to examine those texts which decidedly touch on the subject before us — the first and last resurrections.

In the ninth of Mark the disciples were somewhat perplexed because the Lord had spoken of some rising from the dead. They understood it to mean a rising from among the dead ones; for that is the true sense of the passage. They did not question the doctrine of a resurrection of the body. You know the Pharisees held that to be a part of their creed, although the Sadducees did not. We read in the tenth verse,

And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean {Mark 9:10}.

They evidently distinguished between the resurrection of the dead, and the rising from among the dead ones. It implied that some of the dead would rise, while others still remained in their graves. It was a rising from among the dead ones. In the twentieth of Luke the Lord gives an explanation of it. He is speaking on the subject of resurrection, and says in the thirty-fifth verse,

But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection (Luke 20:35, 36).

Now observe that it is those only who shall be accounted worthy to obtain the resurrection from among the dead ones who are referred to here. I call particular attention to this, because it at once sets aside the idea of there being a general resurrection of the saved and lost. These are clearly persons who shall be accounted worthy to obtain a resurrection from out of the dead ones; and the Lord speaks of them as children of God, children of the resurrection.

In the fourteenth chapter of Luke this doctrine is brought out still more clearly. In the fourteenth verse, after speaking of making a feast, and calling to it the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind, and not their rich neighbours, He says,

For thou shalt be recompensed

— When?

at the resurrection of the just {Luke 14:14}.

My beloved friends, let me entreat you to allow these words of the Lord to have their due weight upon your hearts and minds. They are not my words; they are the Lord's. He said,

Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

And, I ask, does that favour the idea, or is it not directly opposed to the idea of a general resurrection? If there is to be, as some say, and as I was taught for many years, a general resurrection of the saved and lost, a kind of general assize, what would be the meaning of the saying,

Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just?

But let us turn to another passage in our Lord's ministry — the fifth chapter of the gospel by John, and examine it carefully. In the twenty-first verse Jesus says,

For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth [that is, makes alive] whom He will (John 5:21);

and afterwards we are taught that He makes them alive first in reference to the soul, and secondly in reference to the body. In this part of the chapter He speaks of two things — quickening and judging.

For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him. Verily, verily, I say unto you [mark this; it is the Judge Himself who here speaks, — the very One who is going to judge the world], He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me [that is, the Father], hath [not shall have, but hath], everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation [or shall not come into judgment, as the word might be better rendered]; but is passed from death unto life {John 5:22-24}.

Oh the blessedness of these words of Jesus! And then the Lord goes on to say,

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live {John 5:25}.

Now observe, the Lord here speaks of Himself as quickening, or giving life, to whom He will, and the action is what He is now doing — giving life to dead souls by His word.

The hour cometh, and now is

— now, to-night, all through this dispensation. But some may say, "This is an hour." True; but it is certain that this hour has extended over a period of more than 1800 years. Further down in the same chapter He says,

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation {John 5:28, 29}.

Be careful to mark that Jesus is here speaking of Himself as having power to empty every grave, and that He will do it by His word. Every dead person in the grave shall hear His voice, and shall come forth — every person, without exception. But at what time will they come forth? Will it not be at different times? What are the words?

They that have done good, unto the resurrection of life;

this is certainly one resurrection;

and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation [or judgment];

this is another resurrection. Well, indeed, may it be said in the twentieth of Revelation,

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection {Rev. 20:6}.

The question may be asked, If there be two resurrections, does Scripture teach us how long the period will be between the resurrection of life and the resurrection of damnation, or judgment? The twentieth of Revelation gives the answer:

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished {Rev. 20:5}.

This is the period, then, that will intervene between “the first resurrection” — “the resurrection of life,” or “the resurrection of the just” — and the resurrection of those who are raised to damnation or judgment. But some one, perhaps, will refer me to the fact of both the actions in this verse occupying only an “hour”:

The hour cometh.

But when we remember that “the hour” mentioned in the twenty- fifth verse {John 5} has already extended over 1800 years, no difficulty will remain as to the extent of “the hour” in this verse.

Nothing then, beloved friends, I think, can be clearer, than that our blessed Lord, during His ministry in the days of His flesh, taught that there would be more than one resurrection. He speaks distinctly, in the passage to which I have just referred, of two resurrections; and this perfectly agrees with what we find in the twentieth chapter of Revelation, where we have the “first resurrection,” and the living again of the rest of the dead a thousand years after. It is true we have not the expression, last resurrection; but we know this will be the last, because when it takes place the heaven and the earth flee away, the elements melt with fervent heat; and this is followed by new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness {2 Pet. 3:13}.

With regard to the passage in the twentieth chapter of the Revelation, the fourth verse begins by saying,

I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them (Rev. 20:4);

. . . and then we get at the end of the next verse,

This is the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5).

This is the only place in Scripture in which the first resurrection is defined; and I entreat your attention for a few moments while we consider the passage.

It is marvelous that some should have thought that the “first resurrection” is merely a resurrection of principles. But when we find “souls” that have been separated from their bodies by death spoken of, and then living again, and reigning with Christ a thousand years, no question can be left on the mind in concluding that they are persons.

The first resurrection, observe, is not one simultaneous rising. This is where some have made a mistake. You do not therefore find, when Paul speaks of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that the dead in Christ shall rise first, and those in Christ who are living upon the earth shall be changed, and go up to meet the Lord in the air, — you do not find him saying this is the first resurrection. No. It clearly forms part of the first resurrection; but the apostle is careful that he does not call it the first resurrection. In fact, as I have said, you get the first resurrection defined nowhere else in Scripture, except in the twentieth of the Revelation. There we have certain classes

of persons put before us, then a short parenthesis, and then the words,

This is the first resurrection.

The fourth verse, therefore, in the twentieth chapter sets before us the first resurrection, and in it there are three distinct companies of persons embraced. First we have,

I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them (Rev. 20:4).

This is one company. Those of you who are familiar with the book of Daniel will remember, that in the seventh chapter, when the Ancient of days comes, the thrones, as we read there, are cast down. But I believe all critics are agreed that it means the thrones are set, for that period introduces us to the beginning of the establishment of the kingdom — the reign of Christ. Taking it to mean, therefore, that the thrones are set, we find (in Daniel) there is not any person upon them; they are represented as being vacant, just because it was not within Daniel's province to prophesy about us. But you find in the Revelation that they are occupied; there is a company of persons sitting upon them, and they are judging. Who are those people? If you turn to the fourth chapter of the Revelation, you will see a company of people there sitting upon seats, or thrones; they have crowns; they are clothed in white raiment; and are worshipers. This precisely describes those who will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air — those who can sing,

Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father {Rev. 1:5, 6}.

I apprehend then that this first company consists of the heavenly saints — those who are caught up to meet the Lord in the air when He comes. With regard to judgment being given to them, you remember the apostle, in the sixth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, says,

Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? {1 Cor. 6:2}.

And again,

Know ye not that we shall judge angels? {1 Cor. 6:3}.

So you see that those who are translated to meet the Lord in the air are associated with Christ when He comes, not only in His reign, but also in judgment.

After we are translated, we find in the sixth chapter that the seals are opened; and when the fifth seal is opened, we have mention of the

souls under the altar {see Rev. 6:9},

— those who were

slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held {Rev. 6:9}.

These, I doubt not, are the people who will come upon the scene after the saints have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air; for God has not given up the earth. He will have another testimony after we are gone. A remnant of Israel, to which I was referring just now when examining the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, will next be brought out as God's witnesses. They will go forth with the gospel of the kingdom. You will say, How do you know they are Jews? Because the

language of those “souls” who have been martyred, and are under the altar, is,

How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? {Rev. 6:10}

They do not ask the Lord how long before He is coming, but they ask for vengeance upon their enemies. Now no Christian — mark!

— would be warranted in indulging a spirit like that. It would be a wicked thing for him to do so. The Christian is commanded to follow Christ, — to love His enemies. But it was quite consistent for a righteous Jew (and so it will be by-and-by) to deal in righteousness in this way,

An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth {Matt. 5:38},

as referred to by our Lord. These martyred people are evidently in this spirit, and therefore on Jewish ground. White robes are given them, and they are told to rest for a season, till their brethren also shall be killed as they were, because “the man of sin” is coming upon the scene, when many more will be slaughtered. We read then in this fourth verse of the twentieth chapter,

And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God (Rev. 20:4).

This is precisely what we have in the sixth chapter with reference to the souls under the altar,

and I have sought to show that these come upon the scene after we are gone, and that though they lose all their expected blessings in the earth, God in His mercy will give them a place in the reign with Christ.

This, however, leads me to another point, which may be a difficulty to some. The inspired writer says,

I saw the souls of them, &c.

He speaks of them as “souls.” But the subsequent language clears up any difficulty on this point. We are told that they

lived and reigned {Rev. 20:4};

that is, they “lived again,” giving us quite the idea of their having bodies given to them — living again, and reigning with Christ, as persons. But this is not all. There is another company in this resurrection, and the reference to them in the fourth verse of the twentieth of Revelation commences after those we have just considered. It should be read in this way —

And those which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived [or lived again] and reigned with Christ a thousand years (Rev. 20:4).

But I should be anticipating the subject of the next lecture if I were now to dwell upon this passage. Suffice it to say that this third company consists of those who will be slaughtered under the oppression and diabolical wickedness of “the man of sin” on account of their faithfulness to God.

They will lose everything on the earth in fidelity to the living and true God, and they too will have a place in the first resurrection. They will live again, and reign with Christ a thousand years. After this we have a passage intervening — a parenthesis — which says,

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished;

and then we have,

This is the first resurrection {Rev. 20:5}.

So that this includes those who shall have died in the faith of Jesus up to the time of His appearing. It embraces all saints who will be with Christ when He comes in flaming fire taking vengeance. The Lord Jesus will not come with His saints till the man of sin is in the full tide of popularity, and Satanic power, and wickedness; for that consummation of diabolical iniquity upon the earth will bring the Lord personally from heaven to hurl this monster of impiety alive into the lake of fire for ever.

We have thus considered the Scripture definition of
the first resurrection.

We marvel not that it is added,

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection {Rev. 20:6}.

There is not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation who will not be there. I do not mean those who so unmeaningly use the common expression, "Of course I believe in the Savior." But what I mean is, that there is not a self-condemned sinner who has believed with the heart on the Son of God, who died on the cross to save sinners, but will be there. And for this reason. He has received God's gift of eternal life now, and that life is Christ; and where Christ is there he must be; for Christ is his life. Therefore,

when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, Then shall we also appear with Him in glory {see Col. 3:4}.

Hence,

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.

To be associated with Christ in the reign for a thousand years is the point that is spoken of here; but we know from other Scriptures that we are to be

for ever with the Lord {see 1 Thess. 4:17}.

Only think of that! For ever like the Lord! for ever with the Lord! No more sorrow, not another tear! Nothing but unclouded joy! Uninterrupted peace, and rest, and blessing, for ever and ever! So much for the first resurrection.

In the fifth verse we read,

The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished (Rev. 20:5).

The eleventh and following verses give us the details of the last resurrection. We read,

I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works (Rev. 20:11, 12).

This is what our Lord calls the resurrection of damnation, or judgment. Every dead sinner will be there — those who have died without Christ, who were dead in trespasses and sins. These are the dead, small and great. Those who have received Christ as their Savior will have been raised before. But you find here the dead without exception. I cannot see that there is a single saved person standing before our Lord in this resurrection of judgment: they are called the dead. They have died without Christ, and therefore they will all be judged, and judged too according to their works.

It is a grand and glorious truth of Scripture, that the true believer will not be judged about salvation. This is plainly taught in the ninth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. In the two last verses we read,

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many (Heb. 9:27, 28).

We thus see that Christ took our sins, and consequently death and judgment, upon Himself; so that what is set before those who are in Christ is not judgment but glory.

Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation {Heb. 9:28}.

There is no question now as to the believer's security. We know that he is already saved. Yes, as much as he can be, except his body. He has the present possession of eternal life. He has the divine nature. He has Christ in him. He has received the gift of the Holy Ghost. He is one with Christ in heavenly places, seated in Christ; but he has not the redemption of the body. Therefore what the believer looks for is (thank God) not to be judged; but he looks for Christ to come and give him the redemption of the body. Was not Christ judged for him? Did not Christ die in his stead? Was not the untold suffering of Christ unto death, when hanging on that tree, God's judgment and condemnation of sin? Were not his iniquities laid upon Christ, that they might never be brought to light again? And does not God say,

Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more {Heb. 8:12}?

How can there be, then, another question about them? God never even brings them to remembrance. They are gone — judged, put away by the death of Christ. A person who understood what the death of the Son of God upon the cross was would never dream about being judged for his sins. If Christ's sacrifice were clearly apprehended, such a thought would never enter his mind. Who was it that hung there? Was He not the spotless Son of the Father, in truth and love; who knew no sin; who was in all points tempted like we are, yet without sin? Was He not a Lamb without spot or blemish, who had nothing against Him personally for which He could be judged? Was He not indeed the beloved Son, in whom the Father was well pleased? And just because of this, was He not a suited person for a sacrifice for sin — a fit substitute for sinners?

Blessed be God, He once and for ever settled salvation for us on Calvary; settled it through that one sacrifice for sins which was once offered — the substitute for the sinner that believes. Therefore our sins have been judged, and the wrath of God has spent itself upon Jesus for them — upon Jesus His beloved Son, that we might be saved from all our guilt, from all our iniquity, our secret sins, open sins — yea more, from ourselves. Jesus Christ was condemned and put to death on the cross for it all. He who knew no sin was made sin for us. And God raised Him up again on the third day, as One

not possible to be holden of death {see Acts 2:24}

— in the infinite glory, perfection, and spotlessness of His blessed person — because the whole question of sin and condemnation as to the believer had been once and for ever met, for ever judicially and righteously settled. I say therefore that it brings in question the whole value of the atoning work of Christ, for a believer to suppose that he is going to be judged for his sins. I entreat you to banish such a thought from your minds. I beseech you to consider how it dishonors the Lord, how it takes away from the glory of that divine work which He has wrought for us, and how it tarnishes the brightness of that blessed truth expressed by

It is finished {John 19:30},

when Jesus bowed His head in death. Think also how it refuses the truth of the living God, who says,

Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more {Heb. 8:12}.

Consider too how it sets aside the testimony of the Holy Ghost —

As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation {Heb. 9:27, 28}.

It is for Christ that you, dear believers, are called to look, with death and judgment behind you. Look back on the cross then, dear friends, and see your sins completely judged and blotted out, and the whole question of condemnation once and for ever settled. Look up to the throne of heaven, and see how God, instead of turning away and hiding His face from His blessed Son, as He did upon the cross, has since crowned Him with glory and honor, and looks upon Him with ineffable delight, as the one in whom He finds perfect satisfaction, and changeless rest.

Beloved, think of these things, I beseech you. We know that the unbeliever is to be judged. It is certain too that he will be judged according to his works. Who can bear that? It is also quite certain that there is not a single unbeliever in this room, if he goes on in his sins, rejecting Christ, no matter what he professes, or what his position may be, but must go to judgment, and appear before the great white throne. Whether “small” or “great,” if he trusted not in Christ, he must stand before Him when the books will be opened. The resurrection of damnation — the resurrection of judgment — must take place. The body may have mouldered to dust in the grave, so that no human eye may be able to trace a particle of it, worms may have fed upon it, still He who by His word raised up the stinking Lazarus from the tomb, saying,

Lazarus, come forth {John 11:43}!

will raise up that person, whoever he may be, out of the grave; because the purpose of God is that the works of the devil may be destroyed by the Lord Jesus Christ, and that death be swallowed up in victory. Not only is God the God of all grace, but He is the God of truth, the God of holiness, the righteous God; a just God, and no respecter of persons. He hates sin. Every sinner who has continued in unbelief must come up at the resurrection of judgment. And oh, beloved friends, do you see where you are hurrying? How can you bear to think of that awful time? Some of you may have been scoffing, and saying,

Where is the promise of His coming? {2 Pet. 3:4}

We are not surprised to hear of people scoffing. We are not surprised at hearing persons say, "What do these people mean by preaching the coming of the Lord?" It is not uncommon to hear scoffing. What saith the Scripture?

There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, [that is, doing their own wills,] and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation {2 Pet. 3:3, 4}.

But I trust if there are any such here to-night, that God in His mercy will meet with them, as He met with a dear woman many years ago. "They tell me," she said, "that these people are preaching about the Lord coming on the earth again." She doubtless thought it was all nonsense. She said, "I will go and hear them." Accordingly she went. The testimony that night was to the value of the blood of the Lamb, as to the perfect peace and security it gave. It was pointed out that when Christ came those sheltered beneath that blood would be caught up to meet Him in the air. That night God blessed His word to her soul, so that instead of scoffing, from that time she loved and served Christ, and delighted to think of His coming. And I do trust that these lectures may not only be helpful and profitable to the dear children of God, in leading them to examine more carefully what the Scripture says with regard to these things, but that any who come into this Hall unsaved may hear the sweet voice of Jesus, believe on Him, and obtain eternal salvation.

Dear friends, you see you cannot escape the resurrection of judgment, if you reject Christ. If you still grasp the world, if you still refuse salvation through the Savior's precious blood, you must appear before the great white throne and be judged. But may God in His infinite mercy so touch your precious souls, that you may be led to enquire from this moment whether you will be in the resurrection of life, or in the resurrection of damnation or judgment.

Some time ago I was asked to visit a schoolmistress who had been a professor of Christianity for many years. She said, "I wanted to tell you that I was much struck the other night with the two resurrections. I thought over the subject when I came home, and asked myself the question, In which of these resurrections shall I be found? And," added she, "I was forced to conclude that being such a wicked sinner I must be in the resurrection of damnation; and I have been very unhappy ever since." And so she continued, until she was enabled to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as her Savior. When God, by the power of His blessed Spirit, brought her to look to Jesus and trust in Him, she found peace. Then she could rest upon the precious assurance, that

God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life {John 3:16}.

We soon heard that she had peace with God; and some of us walked with her as a Christian for several years, until she was called to fall asleep in Jesus. When the Lord comes, and we are caught up to meet Him in the air, we expect to find her in the first resurrection. May God bless His own word and lead you, dear souls, to examine the Scriptures, and see whether the things you have heard tonight are according to the unalterable word of God!

Let me, in conclusion, say one word to the dear children of God. In the first epistle of John we read,

Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things {1 John 2:20};

and in a subsequent verse it is stated,

Ye need not that any man teach you {1 John 2:27}.

I have a reason for putting these Scriptures before you. Since these lectures were commenced a person said to me, "We need to have a certain class of gifted persons to explain the Scriptures to others, in order to have the true meaning of them." But this Scripture shows that we need no such thing; so that, supposing you never had another teacher, you have the all-sufficiency of the word of God, and the all-sufficiency of the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in you. The Lord has certainly gifted some as teachers, and He uses them; but you are not absolutely dependent on them.

Ye need not that any man teach you.

Believing that teachers are absolutely needed is where many dear children of God go wrong, and why they make no more progress in divine things. They depend upon their minister, or their teacher; upon this man's commentary, or that man's book. I am thankful to be taught anything of God through any person or channel He pleases. Observe, through, but not from, any person. The distinction is obvious. If God sends a teacher, let us thank Him; if He speaks to us through any one, let us receive the teaching from God. But having His Spirit, the unction of the Holy One, we are told that we do not need any man to teach us. That is, we are not absolutely dependent on man — "any man"; for if we were shut up in a prison, or did not see another face, as we have the Bible and the Holy Ghost, we

have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things.

We do not, therefore, positively need any man to teach us. But because dear Christians do not see this, they look so much to what men say, and try to satisfy themselves with the thoughts, opinions, and writings of good men. They say, "This is a good commentary; we can depend upon it"; or, "He is a very popular writer, and is very safe." Because, I say, they look so much to what men say, and rely upon such things, they get more or less away from communion with God, and the teaching of the Holy Ghost, and do not make real progress in divine truths. Do not mistake me. I am most thankful for all preachers and teachers that the Lord sends, and glad to hear them when I have the opportunity; but when I hear, I feel I ought to judge by the word of God how far what is advanced is according to God's mind. We can do this, because we have

an unction from the Holy One

to

know all things;

and having this, I repeat, we are not put into the place of being absolutely dependent upon any man to teach us. Our responsibility is to the Lord. He has given us His word. He has given us too the Holy Ghost; and those will be intelligent and devoted Christians who can look above men's heads — who look straight up to the blessed Lord, and, opening His written word before Him, can from their hearts thank Him for it; and, relying upon the teaching of the Holy Ghost, expect from Him an understanding to understand the Scriptures. I have never yet seen one who has taken this humble and child-like ground who has not received much blessing from the Lord.

Lecture 5: the Man of Sin, and His Complete Overthrow

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 2:1-14).

In these lectures, beloved friends, we have hitherto been occupied with subjects showing forth the grace, the power, and the glory of God. But we must remember that, although God has been working in the world from the first, Satan has been working in the world too; so that while the prophetic page points out plainly what God's purposes are with regard to those who are His, we have also dark shadows, calculated to give deep sorrow of heart, set forth in the prophecies of Scripture as to man's future. It is one of these dark pictures of divine truth that we are about to consider this evening —

the man of sin {see 2 Thess. 2:3 — the Antichrist},

as the apostle calls him in the passage I have read. And perhaps you will be surprised when I tell you that this subject is spread over a considerable portion of the Bible. So extensive is it that I have no thought to-night of setting before you more than a few general characteristics and circumstances concerning this masterpiece of Satan's iniquity. I shall, therefore, content myself with referring only to a few of the Scriptures which might be quoted in the consideration of this subject.

The importance of the subject, beloved friends, holding as it does such a place in prophetic writings, is plainly set before us by the apostle Peter. In the latter part of the first chapter of his second epistle he says,

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn {2 Pet. 1:19}.

So that this and every other part of inspired prophetic instruction is presented to us as a lamp with which God Himself has furnished us, that we may walk well-pleasing in His sight in passing through this present evil world. Many parts of the Old Testament Scriptures call attention to this wicked one; and in the New Testament we find that our Lord Himself, in His ministry, again and again referred in the most solemn way to this same person. In the fifth chapter of John's gospel we find Him saying,

I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not. If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive (John 5:43).

After the Lord had been virtually rejected by the nation of Israel, as we find in the twelfth chapter of Matthew's gospel, He speaks prophetically of the Jewish nation in connection with this lawless one. He says,

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none (Matt. 12:43).

That unclean spirit is doubtless the spirit of idolatry, which in the days of the Lord had left the nation of Israel. But it found no rest. By-and-by it will return again, in association with other evil spirits.

Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he and taketh with himself seven other spirits [a sevenfold spirit of diabolical iniquity, that is to be impersonated in the man of sin] more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation {Matt. 12:44, 45}.

Nothing can be plainer from these words, than that our Lord here spoke prophetically of the last state of Israel as a nation, when its iniquity shall be full. There is another passage, in the twenty-fourth of Matthew, to which I will just refer. In answering the question of the disciples, when He would come again to Israel, among other things He says,

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, {the image of the first beast of Revelation} spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains {Matt. 24:15, 16}.

Now if you look at the end of the ninth chapter of the book of Daniel, you will see that the prophet refers to the same person whom our Lord here calls attention to in His relation to the temple, which will have been rebuilt before that. These references of our Lord's plainly teach the importance of the subject.

The portion of Scripture that I read in Thessalonians shows us that this subject formed a part of the ministry of the apostle Paul in going from city to city. He was not long in Thessalonica; for we find from the Acts that his visit there was short; and although the persons who received the truth were only then converted by his personal ministry, yet he says in writing to them,

Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you I told you these things? {2 Thess. 2:5}.

We know also, from the seventeenth chapter of the Acts and the seventh verse, that what stirred up the persecution there was not only preaching that Christ was the Savior of sinners, but that He was coming to reign as the only and rightful Potentate. The adversaries said,

These all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another King, one Jesus {Acts 17:7}.

We find the apostle, in writing his second epistle to the Thessalonians, under the direction and inspiration of the Holy Ghost, occupies a considerable part of it in setting forth the truth as to the characteristics, ways, and overthrow of “the man of sin.”

If you pass on to the first and second epistles of John, you will find that he again and again speaks of this wicked one; and in the book of Revelation, which is a book of results, and looks at things in their ripened condition, you will find a more ample account of the actings and influence of this diabolical working than in any other part of Scripture. From these considerations, therefore, it seems to me to be unquestionable that God has made it an important subject for the consideration of His dear children.

With regard to this fruit of Satan's power, he is called in the extract from the epistle to the Thessalonians we have read,

the man of sin, the son of perdition {2 Thess. 2:3},

the wicked [or lawless] one {see 2 Thess. 2:8}.

He is called by various names in the Old Testament Scriptures. For instance, he is called in the book of Psalms

the oppressor {Psa. 72:4},

and many other names. He is called by Isaiah “the king.” There is a verse in Isaiah to which I must call attention, because he is there seen in connection with his destruction. It is the last verse of the thirtieth chapter?

For Tophet, is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood: the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it (Isa. 30:33).

He is called also by the prophet Daniel

the king {Dan. 11:36},

a vile person {Dan. 11:21 — actually, this is a foreshadow of the final king of the North},

&c. He is called by the apostle John

Antichrist {1 John 2:18};

and in the book of Revelation this Satanic system is brought before us in its full development under the names of the beast {another beast, Rev. 13:11-18} and

false prophet {Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10}.

The question may be asked, What are the characteristics of the man of sin? In reply to which, let me first observe that the account we have is not simply a description of a series of principles, but of a person manifesting human practical action in various ways. He is called

the man of sin {see 2 Thess. 2:3},

because he is sin personified. The context shows us that he is man unbridled, unrestrained in will and pride, and that, under the mighty energy of Satan, he is carrying out the principles of a false, unregenerated, alienated heart — a heart allowed to manifest to the full its enmity against God. He is described also by the apostle John in his first and second epistles. In the second chapter of his first epistle we read,

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us {1 John 2:18}.

Be sure to notice here that these many antichrists were once in association with those who were connected with Christ —

they went out from us.

I call attention to this, because you find in the second chapter of the second epistle to Thessalonians, the apostasy and the man of sin are associated together, and you also see them connected together here by the Holy Ghost through the apostle John. In the first epistle of John we have also the expression —

He is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son (1 John 2:22).

And further,

Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world (1 John 4:3).

In John's second epistle we read,

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh: this is a deceiver and an Antichrist (2 John 7).

Now here we have the moral, or rather immoral, qualities of the person. He subverts the very foundations of Christianity; he denies the Father and the Son; he denies that Jesus Christ has come in flesh; he is thoroughly and openly a rejecter of the foundation truths of Christianity; he is a setter aside of the person of Christ Himself. Moreover, in the second chapter of the second epistle to the Thessalonians, this man of sin, this son of perdition, is spoken of as one

who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God (2 Thess. 2:4).

He does not simply deny Christ, but he opposes God. He denies the only true God; he exalts himself above every God; that is, above the gods of the heathen, as well as above the only true God, the God of Israel. He takes his place in the temple (for at that time the temple at Jerusalem will be built), sitting there to be worshiped; and, as we shall see by-and-by when he is revealed, all the world will be taken up with him and worship him. Thus the Scriptures give us clear instruction as to the characteristics of the “man of sin.”

The question now comes, Who can this person be? I am aware that a great many believe that he must be the pope of Rome, but it seems to me to be utterly impossible to reconcile that opinion with the Scriptures we have read. It is convenient for Protestants to throw the whole thing upon the pope, little thinking that they themselves may be deeply impregnated with what has been rightly called “the popery of Protestantism.” If any one said that the system of popery accorded with what we find in the seventeenth chapter of the Revelation, where we have the description of “the harlot,” with whom the kings of the earth and the people committed spiritual fornication, it would be true enough. We read there of multitudes of all nations who are astray in their affections and desires while professing the name of Christ, whose hearts are set upon other objects whilst retaining the outward profession of His name; I say, then, if that was what some contended for as applicable to popery, we should have difficulty in conceding to the assertion that popery has a large place in the religious Babylon of the chapter in Revelation to which I have alluded. But I could not be acting faithfully if I said that that description of the principles there set forth was limited to popery. Doubtless, Popery does take the lead, but I believe it has more or less diffused itself throughout the whole of Christendom.

I will try to give a few reasons to show why it cannot be the pope of Rome that is here referred to under the title of “the man of sin.” In the first place, as we have seen, Scripture tells us that the man of sin opposes and denies the living and true God, not giving God a place, saying that he himself is God. Secondly, he denies the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ came in the flesh, says that he is the Messiah, the Christ, and that he is the person to whose coming the Scriptures refer. Without saying one thing in favour of popery, but believing it to be entirely contrary to the mind of God, yet justice would forbid that I should say that the pope himself shows that he is God, or that he opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that he is seated in the temple of God, which marks Jerusalem as its locality, forbidding worship to any God but himself; nor can it be said that he openly and avowedly denies the Father and the Son, and the fact that Jesus Christ has come in flesh. Why, the very motto of the pope of Rome is that he is “God’s vicar on the earth.” It is, doubtless, because there is so much terrible evil associated with the system of popery that Christians have been led somewhat hastily, and without weighing the Scriptures, to associate it with that system of harlotry that we find spoken of in the Revelation as being

drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus {Rev. 17:6}.

But popery and the beast are two distinct lines of truth, as thirteenth and seventeenth of Revelation show. And I believe Satan has helped to foster this wrong conclusion, in order that he might the more quietly and gradually work out this mystery of iniquity, of which we are told in one place that it

doth already work {2 Thess. 2:7},

and in another, that

even now are there many antichrists {1 John 2:18}.

The eyes of many have been closed to the terrible system which Satan has at work round about us; and certainly, if Christians were aware of it, they would see the importance of clinging to the Lord Jesus, feeling that under His care only could they be safe from the many and dangerous snares which are laid to entrap them. Satan is actively and successfully bringing in a flood of infidelity. Then, again, this person who is spoken of as “the man of sin” is to continue his open career a limited time only — for forty-two months. You will also find at the close of the seventeenth chapter of Revelation that the harlot is destroyed by the kings and beast, and their kingdom given to the beast.

And the ten horns which thou sawest upon [or rather, “and”] the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled (Rev. 17:16, 17).

This shows that the system of popery will be set aside by the kings of the earth. After bearing the burden of this unchaste woman for a long time, the kings and nations grow weary of her, cast her off, hate her flesh, rob her of her earthly riches and glory, and then give their allegiance to the beast. So popery really will have to give way and make room for “the man of sin” — “the beast.”

But we must pass on to notice another point. There is something spoken of as restraining, keeping down, and hindering the full development of this great mystery of iniquity. We have the apostle telling us in the sixth verse,

And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way; and then shall that Wicked [or that lawless one] be revealed {2 Thess. 2:6}.

Observe, here, the mystery of iniquity began to work in the apostle's day. John, as we have seen, tells us that the persons who were doing the work of the Antichrist had been in professed fellowship with the saints of God. The evil has been going on from that hour until now. But there is some power that is hindering its full and open revelation. Now, what is that power? It seems very evident that it can be but one. Remember that the agents in this mystery of iniquity are man and Satan; and they would not put on the restraining influence, that is very clear. Then we know that God is here, dwelling by His Spirit in the body of Christ — that is, the Church. Are we sufficiently alive to this fact? People read the Old Testament Scriptures, and are delighted when they find that the glory of Jehovah filled the temple; but they little think that the presence of God by His Spirit is dwelling now in the spiritual temple — the Church, the body of Christ — composed, not of bricks and mortar, but of living stones, born again of the Holy Ghost, and cemented together by the blood of Jesus. Such is declared in the second chapter of Ephesians, where we are spoken of as being builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit {Eph. 2:22}.

God's presence, then, is here. God has a dwelling now on earth; it is His Church, composed of His own people, who are

builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

We have two things here: regenerated people — that is one thing; and the Holy Ghost indwelling these regenerated people as the Church of God — that is another thing. The Church is God's house, God's habitation; and the point was so solemnly understood in apostolic times, that when a person was put outside the Church in discipline, he was delivered over to Satan. The world is Satan's place. The Church is filled with the presence of God by His Spirit; the world lieth in the wicked one, who

walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour {see 1 Pet. 5:8}.

It seems to me that the great restraining influence is what one sees put in action every day. If a man came into this town with some rampant infidel doctrine, something that attacked fundamental truths of Scripture, — I ask, who would rise up against him? Who would resist the innovation on the truth? Would not the saints of God? What is the power that would prompt them? Would it not be the Spirit of God, who dwells in them? This is the restraining power to which I allude. The Spirit-taught soul can see the mystery working round about on almost every hand; but it dare not come out openly until the Church is gone. When the hoped-for coming of Christ, the longed-for moment arrives, when the Lord will descend into the air with a shout and voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and His saints are caught up to meet Him, then we find from the twelfth chapter of the Revelation that Satan, who has now access into the heavenlies to accuse the brethren, will be driven out, and will come down upon this earth with great power, knowing that it will be but for a short time. Then, with his mighty influence and energy, he will invest this being with the powers of the infernal regions. But, thank God, we shall not be here then; and this is a very important point to notice. If you turn to the thirteenth chapter of the Revelation for a moment, you will find that when this wicked one is blaspheming, that he not only blasphemes God, but he blasphemes also

the dwellers in heaven {see Rev. 13:6}.

Who are the dwellers in heaven? They are the saints who have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air, who in the previous chapter are called on to rejoice because Satan is cast out of heaven. It is rather a common expression in the book of Revelation. The dwellers in heaven are set in contrast with "the dwellers on earth." Young believers were acquainted with these truths in the apostle's days. Therefore, the apostle wrote to those early Christians at Thessalonica, taking it for granted that they were aware of this. He says,

Now ye know what withholdeth, &c. {2 Thess. 2:6}.

You must not suppose it requires old Christians to enter into these things. I am persuaded that young Christians often enter into them with a great deal more simplicity and earnestness than old Christians. I have seen many young Christians who have entered into the truths of the coming of the Lord, and His judgments and glories, with the greatest readiness of mind and spiritual intelligence; whereas old Christians, from wrong thoughts which they have obtained from bad teaching, have found it very difficult to unlearn and overcome long-cherished opinions and prejudices. It is happy for any to be ready to bow to God's word. It is well to remember, that however many difficulties some find in their way, it does not alter what is said regarding these things in the unalterable word of God. But to return to our subject. When the saints, then, are gone

— when those who are Christ's have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air — when that which withholdeth is removed, we are told,

then shall that wicked [or lawless one] be revealed {2 Thess. 2:8}.

Then he will openly appear, but not before.

In the book of Daniel we have instruction as to the working and development of this mystery of iniquity {2 Thess. 2:7}.

In the seventh chapter we have, first, the four empires of the times of the Gentiles {Luke 21:24}

under the similitude of wild beasts, and the fourth or Roman empire is largely described. We have its characteristics in its unity under the form of a fourth beast, dreadful, and terrible, and strong exceedingly. It had great iron teeth; it devoured, &c. We have it also in its separate kingdoms, in its "ten horns." Among them also another little horn was seen, manifesting intelligence,

having eyes as a man {see Dan. 7:8},

and also

speaking great things {Dan. 7:8}.

The explanation is given in the twenty-fourth and following verses:

And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end {Dan. 7:24-26}.

This little horn of the beast is doubtless the ruling power of the ten kingdoms — the fourth beast. The seventeenth of Revelation tells us that the ten kings have one mind, and give their strength and power unto the beast. The power and rule of the whole empire composed then of ten kingdoms is impersonated in this little horn. Observe, too, that he speaks great words against the most High; he blasphemes God; he wears out the saints of the most High; he persecutes and puts to death the saints then on the earth; he will think to

change times and laws, and they [that is, the times and laws, Jewish feasts and ordinances, whatever they may be] shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time {Dan. 7:25}

he will set aside the ordinances, however formal and imperfect they may be, which the Jews in unbelief shall then have set up in acknowledging the God of Abraham. The next verse shows us, however, that his dominion is destroyed. The eleventh verse says, that because of the voice of the great words which this little horn spake, the beast was slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame. Although this little horn shall have the rule of the ten kingdoms concentrated in

himself, nevertheless, both it and him shall be destroyed.

The judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it unto the end {Dan. 7:26}.

In all this we see pretty clearly, not only the apostate termination of the times of the Gentiles, but also that its power will be concentrated in blaspheming God and oppressing the saints then on the earth, the faithful Jews. In the ninth chapter the same instrument of Satan is referred to as the one who shall confirm the covenant with many for one week, and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease, &c. This shows us that it will not be till the midst of the week, or at the end of three and half years, that he will be publicly unmasked, and come out in the grossest form of pride and infidelity. With regard to the expression,

a time and times and the dividing of time {Dan. 7:25},

we shall find that “times” are used for “years,” as, for instance, in the marginal reading of the thirteenth verse of the eleventh chapter. This, too, agrees exactly with the periods of forty-two months, and 1260 days, the time that the beast of the Revelation will continue after he is revealed. In the eleventh chapter we have the wilful king spoken of in the twenty-first and twenty-second verses.

And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honor of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflowed from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant {Dan. 11:21, 22 — this is actually a past precursor to the king of the North}.

Let us also read the thirty-sixth and following verse.

And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all {Dan. 11:36, 37 — this is the Antichrist, king in Jerusalem, the man of sin}.

Without making further remarks on these portions of the book of Daniel, it is evident that they refer to the same period as that we have been reading in the second epistle to the Thessalonians — a period when the Gentile power, which was given by God into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, will be found in direct league with Satan, in open blasphemy and idolatry — a period when the Jews, except a faithful remnant, will fall down and worship a man, who opposes and exalts himself against God — a period too when those who are faithful to the living and true God will have to seal their testimony by their own blood. But all this is more fully brought out in the book of Revelation, to which we will now turn.

As I have said, the Revelation is a book of results — everything is there seen in full bloom. The whole anti-Christian system is there brought out. God and His adversaries there meet. The rightful heir — the Lord Jesus — is there seen. In the thirteenth chapter the mystery of iniquity is fully developed. Two instruments of evil, under direct Satanic power, are brought before us. The first and second verses give us the origin and connections of the first beast.

And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority (Rev. 13:1, 2).

These verses, compared with the former part of the seventh of Daniel, show us that the qualities of the four empires are concentrated in him. His ten horns are also crowned, to show that he is the ruling power of the ten kingdoms. The names of blasphemy upon his heads also signify his antagonism to God. Observe also that the dragon, who, in the twelfth chapter, is said to be

that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world {Rev. 12:9},
inspires the beast.

The dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

So that we must not look at the beast as simply man, but man unbridled and energized by the power and authority of Satan. We know that Satan entered into Judas. We see there a sample of his ways. From that moment he was so set against Christ, that he went out from his presence; and was so bent upon consummating his evil purpose, that Jesus said,

What thou doest, do quickly {John 13:27}.

He betrayed him with a kiss! No marvel then that such diabolical and deceivable ways will be practised by man on the earth by-and-by, when all the malice of Satan, and all the unrestrained enmity of man's heart are combined. We can understand too, I think, why he has such general popularity that

all the world wondered after the beast {Rev. 13:3}.

There may be a rebuff,

one of his heads, as it were, wounded to death {Rev. 13:3};

but he will soon recover. His deadly wound will be healed, and all the world wonder after him. Satan has always been ambitious of being worshipped; and he will have it then. You remember he proposed giving all his power and glory to Jesus, if He would worship him. But the Lord of glory resisted the foul offer. Not so by-and-by. There will be plenty of devil worshipers then. We are told, in the fourth verse,

And they worshipped the dragon, [that is, the devil, as we have seen] which gave power unto the beast (Rev. 14:4).

The beast is worshipped too.

They worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him? {Rev. 14:4}.

Alas! this suits man, to own subjection to one who can show his power in establishing human greatness in this sin-stricken and impenitent world. Man loves to see greatness, glory, and power

in connection with himself as a sinner, and the old creation accredited in its present ruin. The people would gladly have made Jesus king on those terms. They felt how advantageous it would be to themselves to have a king who could work such miracles as to feed thousands on five barley loaves and two fishes; and this purely selfish consideration led them to wish they could have Jesus for a king. But His kingdom was not of this world. Man's mind must be changed, the question of sin and guilt must be righteously settled, before He could take His rightful place as king over all the earth. Satan's way is to ignore, if possible, the question of sin; to exalt himself and man; to oppose God and deny Christ; and when this deep mystery of iniquity, so long at work, is fully ripe, then will be strikingly manifested the awful truth of the words his foul breath uttered in the holy ear of the Son of God, when he showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time,

All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it {Luke 4:6}.

How seriously we should regard the principles so actively at work in our day, of exalting man and making so little of God and of Christ; for we see where they must ere long end.

But the characteristics of this first beast are further described in the fifth and following verses.

And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations (Rev. 13:5-7).

The beast, then, is emphatically a blasphemer. He blasphemes God, and blasphemes the dwellers in heaven; he oppresses and overcomes the saints; and oh, how terrible! he has power given to him; only think of this,

power given to him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

How peculiarly solemn this is! He is, however, only to continue

forty and two months,

or three years and a half. All this very much corresponds with the description given of the "little horn" in the seventh chapter of Daniel. There is, however, a most terrible addition here.

And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8).

This is a little of what is coming upon the earth. This is where many are eagerly rushing. But the power of the great deceiver will be so great, that none shall escape being drawn into the vortex of this diabolical snare, whose names are not written in the book of life. The saints then will have to manifest patience, and to exercise faith; and the Spirit adds a most seasonable word —

If any man have an ear, let him hear {Rev. 13:9}.

How gracious of God, not only to give us such details of things soon coming upon the world, but to exhort us to have a hearing ear, in order that we may now maintain a path of active separation

from all the principles of antichrist that surround us! All this, beloved friends, reads deep, practical lessons to our hearts.

The second beast seen in this chapter, who is also called in the nineteenth chapter

the false prophet {Rev. 19:20},

is leagued with the first in this master-piece of diabolical deception. It is very important to notice that

he exerciseth all [not some, but all] the power of the first beast {Rev. 13:12};

not a wit less in power than the first, to whom Satan gave his power, his seat, and great authority.

And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed (Rev. 11:12).

Observe, he is a false prophet. He has not ten horns, but two horns like a lamb, — outwardly lamb-like, but really Satanic;

he spake as a dragon.

In this way he deceives. There is the entire absence of divine truth. It is a lying agency of Satan's. Jesus said in Matt. 24 that there would be false Christs and false prophets; and men who hearken not to Christ's words, and love not the truth, will fall into this fatal snare. There are three ways in which he will deceive those who dwell on the earth. First, he will do the same thing that Elijah did to prove that the God of Israel is the living God in a time of idolatry and departure from God, — he brought fire down from heaven, you will remember, to consume the sacrifice. Hence, we are told in the thirteenth verse, that

he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men (Rev. 13:13).

Secondly, he will work miracles. We know that our Lord in the fifth of John, thirty-sixth verse, referred to the works that he did in His Father's name as proof that He came forth from God; and Peter, when preaching to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, referred to this same point as a testimony of God's approval. He said,

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know (Acts 2:22).

We read also of this lawless one in the second chapter of the second of Thessalonians, that his coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders {2 Thess. 2:9}.

Thirdly, he will give breath (not life, but breath; see margin) to an image which the people should make, and also cause it to speak. Can we conceive a deeper deception? Can we imagine how any can escape this snare of the fowler untaught and unaided by the Spirit of God? What help will

abstruse reasoning and the refinements of philosophy be then? Why reason must conclude that he is the Messiah, a true prophet of God. Reason must say, he does what Elijah did, he does what Christ did; yea, (though not allowed to give life,) he gives to a carved idol of man's devising breath and speech;

And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give breath unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name (Rev. 13:14-17).

Once more, I ask, beloved friends, is it possible to identify this description with the abominations of popery? Time rolls rapidly on, and soon these prophetic lines will be realities on the earth. Observe, too, the impossibility of neutrality in that day. Some men now try to hide themselves under the plea of "making no profession at all," and pride themselves on it, little thinking that by this they openly refuse allegiance to Christ. But there can be no neutrality in the days of

the man of sin.

None can escape; they must either have

the mark of the beast {Rev. 16:2; 19:20},

or be persecuted or slaughtered with the faithful remnant.

From all that we have seen in these Scriptures as to the characteristics of this Satanic iniquity, we can understand how effective his entry into covenant with the Jews may be, and how easily he may obtain the kingdom by flatteries, before he is openly revealed in the midst of the week, when he will cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease, and the idol will be set up in the holy place

— the abomination of desolation.

But, further, we must remember that God always overrules man's ways, and Satan's too, for the accomplishment of His own counsels and purposes. All this evil therefore is permitted and overruled to carry out God's will. God is in all this sending upon men

strong delusion {2 Thess. 2:11}.

God sent His beloved Son the faithful witness, and men rejected Him; they shall, therefore, in retributive justice, receive a false witness. They refused the truth, they shall now believe a lie. They saw no beauty in the true Christ, they shall wonder after a false one. They would not have Him, in whose mouth was no guile, they shall therefore receive the lie of the deceiver and think it is truth. The fact is, that God has given His truth not to amuse the intellect, but to win the heart; not to exalt man, but for the glory of Christ. It is to be feared that many still trifle with divine truth. They talk about it, raise questions about it, but do not receive it in the love of it. Hence this fearful judgment of God in this terrible delusion. These very miracles of the beast and lying wonders,

under direct inspiration of Satan, will be allowed,

because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved {2 Thess. 2:10}.

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness {2 Thess. 2:11, 12}.

This is a very remarkable expression —

received not the love of the truth.

It is a word for the heart and conscience. It does not say, “because they did not profess to be Christians,” or “because they did not go to the sacrament,” as it is called, or “because they did not know the way of salvation.” No, God searches the heart. Whatever knowledge they had, or profession they made, they had no love of the truth, that they might be saved. It is easy to say, “I have been neglectful, I must turn over a new leaf,” and the like; but that does not do for God. The testimony of His blessed gospel is the ministry of divine, perfect love. It tells us that

God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life {John 3:16}.

And the soul that receives this wondrous love of God in Christ His Son, “receives the truth in love.” It comes to the heart of such as a message of richest mercy, and thus begets love in the heart to God. That it is the most blessed and essential truth of Christianity the apostle John declares, when he says,

We love Him, because He first loved us {1 John 4:19}.

Real, vital Christianity is love. God’s love to the sinner is manifested in the death of His beloved Son; and the soul that really believes on Him for salvation must therefore receive the love of the truth into his heart. Observe, beloved friends, it is “the truth,” not men’s opinions, but God’s word.

Thy word is truth {John 17:17},

said Jesus. This is what men are now rejecting; and God will send this

strong delusion

on account of it. He will permit Satan, through the false Christ, to publish a lie, which they will receive: they will be deceived by the

lying wonders {2 Thess. 2:9}.

Do think, beloved friends, on the vast solemnity of this point. Already its shadow may be stealing quietly on, and the blinding process almost ready to begin. It may be that the hardened conscience and unimpressible heart — alas! so manifest — combine to show that the time is not far distant when the dark curtain will drop and envelop men’s minds, when darkness indeed will cover the earth, and gross darkness the people. As we have seen, the delusion will be overpowering — it will be a snare that shall come upon all the dwellers upon earth. What makes it so very awful, is the fact that God sends it.

God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness {2 Thess. 2:11, 12}.

You see then, beloved friends, what is coming upon men before long, and that too when they are full of wonder and delight at the greatness and power of "the beast." Surely the wise of this world will then be taken in their own craftiness. A few faithful ones will be owning God in this time of open blasphemy and infidelity. Jewish saints we know (but in faithfulness to the God of their fathers) will refuse to fall down and worship the beast. The result will be that some will be put to death; others will escape, or be brought through. God will stand by and sustain them, as He always does those who trust in Him. The three men who were cast into the fiery furnace, because they would not dishonor God by falling down and worshiping the image which Nebuchadnezzar set up, are strikingly typical of this faithful band of Israelites. After we are gone they will be raised up, and their testimony will be suitable for a time when God will be again specially dealing with people on the earth. God has generally had a witness in the world, and He will have it to the end. After the Church is gone the Spirit of God will begin to work in a remnant of Jews, and inspire them with Jewish hopes, according to the fathers and the prophets. They will refuse to pay homage to the false Messiah, and the image set up. Their hope will be that the God of Abraham and of David will soon send the promised Messiah; that God will fulfil His word in setting His king upon the holy hill of Zion. We find in some of the Psalms their earnest cries to Jehovah to deliver them from their persecutors. In the Psa. 79 they cry,

O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps. The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was none to bury them. We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. How long, Lord? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire? Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name. For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling-place {Psa. 79:1-7}.

They are recognized as being on Jewish ground from the imprecatory character of their cries. It was a righteous thing for a Jew to call for vengeance upon his enemies, and it will be again when the Jew comes upon the scene as such. Now a Jew who believes God's testimony about Christ ceases at once to be a Jew; for he is baptized into the body of Christ, he belongs to the Church of God; and a Christian is instructed to bless them that curse him, to recompense to no man evil for evil; he is told to overcome evil with good:

If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink &c. {Rom. 12:20, 21},

But, according to Old Testament Scriptures, the guiding principle was
an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth {Matt. 5:38};

it is no marvel then that we find such cries in the Psalms, that God might be

known among the heathen in our sight by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed {Psa. 79:10}.

In the 80th Psalm, they are seen again crying for salvation. They most touchingly appeal to the

Shepherd of Israel {Psa. 80:1};

they feel the fiery persecution long and wearisome; they are conscious of not being in the place of blessing proper to God's people. They cry,

Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. O Lord God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people? Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink in great measure. Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours; and our enemies laugh among themselves. Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved {Psa. 80:3-7}.

They liken their cruel oppressor to a wild boar out of the wood, or a wild beast, wasting and devouring the vine which God brought out of Egypt. They therefore cry in the 14th and following verses,

Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself. It is burned with fire, it is cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance. Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself. So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts; cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved {Psa. 80 14:19}.

We have here, I believe, those who are referred to in the thirteenth of Revelation, —

Here is the patience and the faith of the saints {Rev. 13:10}.

In standing up for the God of Israel, at a time when infidelity has a world-wide popularity, they will be connected, as we may suppose, with the severest trials of patience and of faith. Some will have to seal their testimony with their blood, and having lost their longed-for inheritance on earth, will have a place given them in heaven. This is why it will be said at that time,

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth {Rev. 14:13}.

Others, like Noah, will be brought through this great tribulation, and then enjoy the blessing on earth which follows. I do not doubt that the 144 thousand seen standing on Mount Zion with the Lamb are the spared saints of this time of trouble. No one can imagine what the severity of this

great tribulation {Matt. 24:21; Rev. 7:14}

will be. Our Lord said it will be

such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be {Matt. 24:21}.

This is enough to show its deep unparalleled oppression and sorrow. Thank God, mercy will even then rejoice against judgment, for many will be saved out of it. Not only a remnant of Israel, which we have been considering, but that countless multitude which John saw of

all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,

in the seventh of Revelation, will come out of the great tribulation, as the 14th verse tells us. What a glorious salvation! They will owe it all of course to the blood of the Lamb, as all who are brought

into blessing before God must; for on no other ground can blessing be secured.

But there is another point I must refer to before concluding this lecture. It is the complete overthrow of this diabolical work. The lawless one is destroyed; not by the Church, but by the personal coming of the Lord. Instead of finding the world converted, the Lord will find it as it was in the days of Noah; and as they knew not until it was too late, —

until the flood came and took them all away {Matt. 24:39},

— so ignorant and unprepared will men be when the Lord is revealed from heaven. Instead of truth prevailing, it will be Satan's lie. Instead of Christianity, it will be infidelity. The beast will be worshiped, and the false prophet be beguiling the people by miracles, especially by having given breath to the image which had been made and placed in the temple. But beside this, as we have seen, the Lord will find a few faithful ones, upon whom He will arise as the

Sun of Righteousness {Mal. 4:2}

with healing in His wings, to establish them in the promised blessings of their own land. But He will come in flaming fire, and with the besom of destruction, upon those who know not God and have obeyed not His gospel.

Before the Lord Jesus comes out of heaven to execute wrath upon the living wicked, this remarkable working of Satan's will have been in operation, so as to bring to a focus, as it were, the people of the habitable world in association with the beast. Satan, no doubt, believes that "union is strength"; but God, who permits everything to work for the furtherance of His own purposes, allows even this, in order that the consummation of wickedness in these last days, may be at once judged, and receive the righteous indignation, and wrath of the Son of man, to whom all judgment is committed.

Not only are we informed that the wide and deep Euphrates will be dried up, so as to facilitate the confederation of the eastern and western powers, but three emissaries of Satan will be sent forth to accomplish a manifested union of the anti-Christian powers. In the sixteenth of Revelation we read,

And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty {Rev. 16:13}.

Thus we see three unclean spirits, spirits of devils, working unobtrusively like frogs, exercising miraculous power, issuing from the mouth of Satan, the beast and the false prophet, and so acting on the kings of the whole habitable world as to centralize its power, and bring about the awful crisis of Armageddon.

This being done, the masterpiece of diabolical iniquity on the earth seems complete. Satan, who has been an imitator all through, now glories in a trinity of evil — the beast, the false prophet, and the image. It comes up as a stench in the nostrils of God. The little remnant of faithful ones on earth have been crying to the God of Abraham for vengeance, with the oft-repeated

How long? {Rev. 6:10}.

Their sighs and groans have been heard in heaven. The time has thus arrived when Jesus should personally come in flaming fire and take vengeance. And this ripened iniquity of human and Satanic abomination will demand the most summary and severe judgment. Jesus will grapple at once with “the beast” and “the false prophet,” and plunge both alive into the lake of fire.

But observe, so inveterate is the enmity against God and hatred to Christ on the part of this son of perdition {2 Thess. 2:3}

and his associates, that the foul climax is reached by their confederating together to go out to meet the KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS and His glorified followers when they come out of heaven. So involved will the kings of the earth and their armies be in this

strong delusion {2 Thess. 2:11},

that they will madly oppose the only Potentate to the last. Alas! alas! for man, when given up to the deception of the great adversary. All this is fully brought out in the nineteenth chapter of the Revelation. Let us read from the eleventh verse to the end.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called the Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING of KINGS, AND LORD of LORDS. And I saw an angel standing in the sun: and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of His mouth and all the fowls were filled with their flesh (Rev. 19:11-21).

This is a pre-millennial scene, or rather, it ushers in the day of the Lord. The first act of Christ's reign appears to be this summary judgment on the living. The heads of this violent outrage are consigned at once to their eternal doom. The others are slain, and will be raised again from the dead, and finally judged at the great white throne. We should have expected, from the portion we read in the Thessalonians, that this judgment would be special on the lawless one and at once, when the Lord came; for it is said,

whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming {2 Thess. 2:8}.

How clear is it, then, that the Antichrist is not to be destroyed by the Church, or overcome by the gospel! To suppose either is a great mistake. No, beloved friends, we are here to witness for Christ, to obey His word, and to follow Him; but that passage we hear so often misapplied,

He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet {1 Cor. 15:25},

has not yet began to have its accomplishment. When the Lord reigns, we shall reign with Him. Now He is preaching the gospel of divine grace to every creature. When He rises up and shuts the door, and comes forth in flaming fire, it will be to reign in righteousness, and judge with equity. Then there will be rejoicing in heaven, as we find in the eleventh of Revelation, saying,

The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever. . . We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned {Rev. 11:15-17}.

I repeat, that now Jesus is ministering, by His servants, the gospel of redeeming grace, saying,

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely {Rev. 22:17}.

Still His arms are wide open to receive and save to the uttermost every sinner that comes to Him. Happy those who now take Jesus at His word, who believe to the saving of their souls. A little while, and everything around us will be turned upside down. The patience and longsuffering of God will reach its utmost limit; the measure of man's iniquity be full. The world will have reached its climax of evil. Now, thank God, grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life; but in a little while Christ will take His great power and reign. Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation. Then men will be judged in righteousness, and ruled with a rod of iron. Well might the prophet enquire,

Who may abide the day of His coming? {Mal. 3:2}.

Who, we may ask, can stand before the omniscient eye of a sin-hating God? If ever there was a time when we should urge sinners to come as you are, and come now! Oh, that the language of some dear souls at this time may be —

“Just as I am, and waiting not

To rid my soul of one dark blot,

To thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,

O Lamb of God, I come.”

May the Lord grant His blessing on our hasty glance at some of the awful realities coming upon men! His word is truth. Jesus said,

Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away {Matt. 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33}.

The subject is solemn, weighty, and important. We have all much to learn about it. My address to-night is little more than a few fragmentary and suggestive remarks. Let us search the Word of God prayerfully on the subject. We shall find it very extensively scattered over the range of Scripture. Like all revealed truth, it is sanctifying to the believer. The reason why God's children do not get more blessing is because men's opinions are looked at so much, instead of God's truth being searched in prayerful dependence on the Holy Ghost. May He bless all His dear saints!

flee from the wrath to come {Matt. 3:7; Luke 3:7},

it is now. If any say, Where? we reply, to the open arms of the Son of God; for He is still able to save all that come unto God by Him. I earnestly beseech you, unsaved ones, to receive Jesus as your Savior at once. Delay not. Now God is saving sinners through Christ; to-morrow may be too late. If any of you say, How must I come to Jesus? I reply, Just as you are, in your sin and guilt and ruin, with all the burden of a guilty conscience; come

Lecture 6: the Kingdom of Heaven

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matt. 4:17).

Our subject to-night, beloved friends, is “the kingdom of heaven.” And when I advert to the fact that the expression occurs in the gospel by Matthew just as many times as there are chapters in that gospel, I need say nothing more to assure you of the importance of the subject.

“The kingdom of heaven” is an expression that occurs only in Matthew, and we must not confound it with “the kingdom of God”; for although sometimes the terms are used interchangeably, yet there is never an alteration from one to the other without the Holy Ghost having a distinct reason for it; while at other times they are used in very different senses. For instance, the kingdom of God in one sense expresses, if I may so say, the largest thought in Scripture. It is God’s kingdom, that which has to do with God — Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In the eternal state the Son will have delivered up the kingdom to God, that God may be all in all. The kingdom of God in this sense is that which a person enters into only by regeneration. Many a false professor belongs to the kingdom of heaven. But Jesus said,

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God {John 3:3}.

And the Holy Ghost by Paul also says, that

flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God {1 Cor. 15:50}.

So that the kingdom of God is sometimes very distinct in Scripture from the kingdom of heaven, which I trust will be made plainer as we consider the various Scriptures on the subject.

Let me also say, that the kingdom of heaven is not the same thing in Scripture as the Church of God. The mistake of confounding these two things is one of the most fruitful sources of error in the present day, and greatly affects the Christian’s walk and conduct. They differ exceedingly in various ways. Let me call attention to a few of those differences. First as to the relationship of Christ. Those who will be in the kingdom of heaven, looked at in its best sense, will have the relationship with Christ of subjects to a King. They will be reigned over and ruled by Him as a perfect King would rule His subjects. The relationship of the believer with Christ now, as being in the Church of God, is the relationship of the bride or body of Christ — membership of His body — union with Christ; so that Christ is never called in Scripture the King of the Church. I am aware that in the fifteenth chapter of Revelation there is an expression

king of saints;

but the margin reads

king of nations {Rev. 15:3};

and this is the true meaning. Christ is Lord in the sense of a husband being the head of the wife; so that our destiny is to reign with Christ, to sit on the throne with Him, to share His glory, to possess the kingdom with Christ. Therefore you see there is an amazing difference as to relationship. Then as to discipline. With regard to the kingdom, when the servants in the parable of the wheat and the tares ask whether they shall root up the tares, the Lord said,

Let both grow together until the harvest {Matt. 13:30}.

In the kingdom-condition of things, the tares are not to be touched until the Lord Himself comes and sends His angels to deal with them; but in the Church of God, holiness is to be the characteristic of the assembly. No fellowship with unbelievers; no communion with that which is evil; but separation from the world.

Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing {2 Cor. 6:17};

put away from among yourselves that wicked person {1 Cor. 5:13};

and such like scriptures, show the mind of Christ as to what should be the discipline of the Church of God. Then again as to hope. The hope proper to the kingdom is, that the period will come when what is evil now upon the face of the earth will be swept away, and that the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea. But the hope proper to the Church of God is that of being caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so to be for ever with Him.

These are some of the points of difference between the principles of the Church of God and the principles of the kingdom; and if I speak of any persons being now, as to their souls, on kingdom ground, I mean such as are seeking to maintain its principles, instead of contending for the distinctive truths of God's assembly. The kingdom of heaven is not defined in Scripture; but if I were to make a suggestion on the point, I should say that the kingdom of heaven consists of persons on the earth taking a place of acknowledging the authority and rule of the Lord in heaven. It may be either true, or mere nominal profession.

In the gospel by Matthew alone, I repeat, we meet with the expression, "The kingdom of heaven"; but before entering upon the subject, it seems to me that it might be helpful to say a few words on some of the leading characteristics of each of the four gospels; for I am persuaded, my beloved friends, that the gospels are less understood by Christians than perhaps any other part of God's word.

The four gospels present to us four distinct aspects of the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh, and each writer was inspired by the Holy Ghost to deal with a special line of truth concerning Him.

Matthew presents Him to us as the Messiah; in Mark we have Him as the perfect servant; in Luke He is peculiarly dwelt on as the Son of man; and John most blessedly unfolds Him as the Son of God.

In Matthew we have, in the first chapter, the genealogy of the Lord traced from Abraham and David, because these are the two roots of the children of Israel, — promise being specially connected with Abraham, and royalty with David. Jesus is here traced from them, and is presented to us in relation to the Jewish people all through this gospel. He is introduced as born king of the Jews. We have the Sermon on the mount more largely brought before us than in any other gospel.

The parables of the kingdom of heaven, of which there are many, are only found here. We have also two remarkable expressions in relation to the crucifixion of Christ. One is the imprecation of the Jewish people —

His blood be on us and on our children {Matt. 27:25};

the other is a quotation from the 22nd Psalm,

He trusted in God: let Him deliver Him {Matt. 27:43},

— bringing into ridicule His trust in God. These things are noticed in this gospel alone. Moreover, the soldiers being bribed with money to tell the lie, that His disciples came by night and stole Him away while they slept, having such special reference to the Jewish people, is recorded only in this gospel. Lastly, in Matthew, the Lord Jesus is set before us as risen from the dead, but not ascended. The evangelist speaks of Him as risen, and standing on the earth, and sending out His servants to disciple the nations. Christ assures them of His presence all the days until the completion of the age.

In Mark we have the elect servant, in whom Jehovah delighted, doing most perseveringly and uninterruptedly the will of Him that sent Him. We find the words “immediately,” “straightway,” and “gospel,” used more than by any other evangelist. We get the looks and feelings of this perfect Servant referred to in a way we have not elsewhere. We find that

He looked round about on them with anger {see Mark 3:5},

— that

He sighed {Mark 7:34},

— and, again, that

He sighed deeply in His spirit {Mark 8:12}.

Connected with the persevering ministry of this blessed One, we are told,

They had no leisure so much as to eat {Mark 6:31};

and again,

They could not so much as eat bread {Mark 3:20}.

He is thus presented in untiring devotedness until He sat down on the right hand of God. He always did those things that pleased Him; it was His meat and drink to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work.

In each of the gospels we have the cross, and circumstances connected with the death of Christ most blessedly unfolded; but each of the evangelists relates the particulars according to the special object which the Spirit of God gave him in writing the gospel.

In Luke we see the perfect Man among men. The first chapter gives us one of the most beautiful pictures that we have in Scripture. We have, on the one side, the portrait of the child, John the Baptist, who was filled with the Holy Ghost from his birth; and on the other, the picture of Him who

was the holy thing, the Son of God. The one is called

the prophet of the Highest {Luke 1:76};

and the other is called

the Son of the Highest {Luke 1:32}.

In the next chapter we have the

swaddling clothes

and

the babe lying in a manger {Luke 2:12}

described, because it is peculiar to the object which Luke had, under the Holy Ghost, of unfolding the glories of the person of Him who was the Man Christ Jesus. Then you remember that the genealogy of Christ is traced, not, as in Matthew, downwards from Abraham and David, but quite the reverse, — from Mary back to Adam and to God. Because He is here presented, not, as in Matthew, as the Seed of Abraham, and the fruit of David's loins, but as the Seed of the woman who was to bruise the serpent's head. We have also, in the course of this beautiful gospel, the child

twelve years old {Luke 2:42}

brought before us, which we have nowhere else. We have also the touching story of the Lord meeting the widow of Nain carrying her only son to the grave, and how his tender heart, moved with sympathy and compassion, raised him from the dead, and delivered him to his mother. We find also in this gospel the charge brought against this blessed Jesus, that He received sinners, and did eat with them. This charge drew from the Lord's gracious heart that grand, sublime, and precious story of grace commonly called the parable of the prodigal son. The touching picture, too, of the rich man and Lazarus is alone found in the gospel by Luke. At the end of this gospel, we find that when the Lord was risen from the dead, in perfect keeping with Luke's object, He is traced as having walked with the two going to Emmaus, that He went into the house to tarry with them, sat down, broke bread, blessed it, and gave it to them. On another occasion He is seen in company with an assembly of the disciples; and when they were terrified, He said unto them,

Why are ye troubled? . . . Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have {Luke 24:38, 39}.

To give further proof of His real humanity in resurrection, He asked them for something to eat; and they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb, and He took, and did eat before them {Luke 24:42, 43}.

And more than that: He showed them from the Scriptures that it behoved Him to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day. Lastly, we see Him leading the disciples out as far as to Bethany, as a man would lead his dearly-loved children or companions, step-by-step, and then He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. Thus strikingly does this beautiful gospel present Jesus the Son of God in His perfect humanity.

The gospel by John is more striking still in its difference. It goes further back than any other part of Scripture — to the Word who in the beginning was with God, and was God. That blessed One is also presented to us as

the Word made flesh {see John 1:14}, the Son of God {John 1:34}, the Lamb of God {John 1:36}, the King of Israel {John 1:49}, the Messiah, the Life {John 11:25, 14:6},

and

the Light {John 8:12}.

He is also set forth as the Life-giver, the Quickener of the dead, the Resurrection, and as the one who will execute all judgment, because He is the Son of man. In this precious gospel, where the business of the evangelist is to speak of Him who came to reveal the Father, we find that when He had been virtually rejected by Israel, He calls His eleven together, and unfolds to them the wondrous depths of blessing of the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters. Then He utters the beautiful prayer of the 17th chapter, the concluding words of which are,

And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them {John 17:26}.

So also at the end of this gospel, we find that the Lord Jesus, when risen from the dead, presents Himself to His disciples as the minister of peace, and again declares the Father. He showed unto them His hands and His side, and said,

Peace be unto you {John 20:21}.

To Mary He said,

Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God {John 20:17}.

In concluding this hasty sketch of the different lines of instruction given in the four gospels, allow me to point out that in their termination Matthew presents Christ to us as the risen man, but still on the earth. I mean, he gives no account of His ascension. Mark sets Him before us as risen, ascended, and sitting on the right hand of God. Luke concludes with an account of Christ risen, ascended, and promising the gift of the Holy Ghost. John's gospel goes a step further still. There we have Christ risen, ascended, breathing on His disciples the Holy Ghost, and giving testimony of His coming again. So much for the distinct lines of teaching that each gospel presents to us. We must remember, that in this, as well as every part of God's Word, there is a fullness of divine teaching which is to us unsearchable. What I have tried to show is, that in each gospel a distinct line of truth is manifest; and I believe that no person can have even a superficial understanding of the four gospels, who does not see that the four evangelists present the Lord to us under the different aspects we have considered.

Enough has been said, I trust, to show why we should expect peculiar instruction in Matthew as to the kingdom. Let us now turn to it. In the first chapter we have Christ traced as the legal heir to the throne of David. Jesus is born of a woman; He is really born

King of the Jews {Matt. 2:2}.

His genealogy is therefore traced from Abraham and David to Joseph, His reputed father, to show the royal line of succession, and that Jesus was legal heir to the throne of David. The whole of the particulars are detailed with striking beauty.

The second chapter shows us the condition, the sinful condition, in which the people of the Jews were; for when Herod and all Jerusalem heard that this child was born in Bethlehem, they were all troubled instead of being filled with joy. But it may be well to ask, Is it not the same thing that troubles people now? Some seem never more troubled than when Christ is solemnly and personally preached to them. They cannot bear being spoken to about the love of Christ. This shows the enmity of the heart. It was exactly the same with Herod, though he had professed to be a worshiper. The enmity so wrought in him, that after a time he issued an edict, by which he thought to include the infant Savior, ordering all the children from two years old and under in the land of Israel to be slain. However, he did not succeed. To fulfil the Scripture Joseph was commanded to take the young child down into Egypt, because it was written,

Out of Egypt have I called my Son {Matt. 2:15}.

Thus God overrules man's wickedness to accomplish His own purposes. If we do not see that, my Christian friends, we shall be at a loss to understand much of the Scriptures. I repeat, that God overrules man's wickedness to carry out His own purposes. Did He not do so at the cross, where man's wickedness in putting to death the Son of His love was overruled to carry out His own blessed purpose of eternal redemption? Did He not overrule too the rejection of Messiah and the kingdom to fulfil His own eternal purposes and counsels as to us?

In the midst of this sinful state of the nation that I have referred to, a person was raised up who lived outside the people as a separated man. He could not sympathize with the sinful nation. He was full of the Holy Ghost. He lived on locusts and wild honey, and was clad with camel's hair. He was the Lord's messenger. In due time he is led by Jehovah to give forth this cry,

Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand {Matt. 3:2}.

This was John the Baptist. Now observe here that God thus publishes, not that the kingdom is come, but that the kingdom was at hand. That is, that God was ready to bring in the kingdom, but that a change must be wrought in the minds of the people before they could have it. He cannot have a kingdom of thieves and murderers, of drunkards and idolaters. No, He could not acknowledge a kingdom of that sort. There must be a thorough change of mind — true repentance, and then He would set up the kingdom. Now what was the effect of John's cry? The effect was that many came to him to be baptized; but John was thrown into prison, and was at last put to death. The people went out to be baptized in crowds. They said, "We want the kingdom"; and that is just what people are about now. They say, "Let us go to glory by all means; but we must have the pleasures of sin too." But God says, "I cannot have you on such terms. You must repent." No one therefore could have the blessing except there be a change of mind. John preached the baptism of repentance. "Repent of your sins, and be baptized." But did they repent? No, they wanted the kingdom as they were. John therefore called them a

generation of vipers {Matt. 3:7}.

And so it is in the present day. You ask people if they are going to glory, and they will answer, "I hope I shall go to glory." But what is the truth? They are hugging their sins; they love the pleasures of sin; they have never repented before God; there has not been a change of mind. John was faithful, and suffered for it.

When Jesus heard that John was cast into prison, He began to preach, saying,

Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand {Matt. 4:17}.

Now what must have been the effect of these words on intelligent Jews? Let us look at some of their Scriptures. In Dan. 2:44 we have,

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

In Dan. 7:13, 14;

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

In Deut. 11:21:

That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth.

Turn also to Isa. 11:1-9:

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of His roots: and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears: but with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Read also the last verse of the last Psalm.

Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord (Psa. 150:6).

I might, if time would permit, multiply quotations of a similar kind to show what an intelligent Jew must have understood when he heard that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. He knew that the kingdom of which the Old Testament prophets prophesied would be a kingdom of blessing — a kingdom of power — a kingdom in which

the knowledge of the Lord should cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea {see Isa. 11:9},

and

when all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest {see Heb. 8:11}.

But observe that the Lord added something to John's testimony. He preached the same words —

Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand {Matt. 4:17},

but He also gave some signs to signify that He was the Messiah. For instance, He cast out devils. We read in the fourth chapter of Matthew:

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And His fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and He healed them {Matt. 4:23, 24}.

This was enough to show them, if they had eyes to see,

that He was the Messiah, and able to set up the kingdom, because we are told in the thirteenth chapter of Zechariah that one characteristic of the promised kingdom,

the day of the Lord,

will be, that He

will cause the unclean spirit to pass out of the land {Zech. 13:2}.

Jesus showed, by casting out devils, that He could cast the unclean spirit out. The presence, too, of evil spirits in Israel showed how unfit the nation was for God.

The fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Matthew give us what is called the Sermon on the mount — a discourse which presents the principles on which Christ could set up His kingdom, and on which He will set it up by-and-by. The very first words that He utters are,

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven {Matt. 5:3}.

Again,

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth {Matt. 5:5}.

It does not say that they shall inherit heaven, but inherit the earth. Then, further on, we read that their righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees — that is, practically. They must not manifest the hypocrisy of being outwardly blameless, while inwardly full of uncleanness. There must be a practical righteousness exceeding that for the kingdom of God; and in the sixth chapter the instruction is followed up by,

Take heed that ye do not your alms [or fast] before men, to be seen of them {Matt. 6:1}.

As to prayer, He gives them a form of prayer fitted for disciples that were on kingdom ground — for disciples who had not, as we have, the Holy Ghost, and the blessed truth of an accomplished redemption. This prayer is commonly called the Lord's Prayer. It was given to disciples, as I have said, who were on kingdom- ground. It was perfect for its kind, and in its suitability to such. There is no mention of the name of Jesus in it. There is no acknowledgment of the Holy Ghost in it. There is no drawing nigh to God through the atoning work of Christ in it. God is acknowledged as their Father in heaven, because they were children by regeneration; and it is asked that His kingdom may come — that is, that it might be set up on earth. But when our Lord concludes His ministry, after His rejection by Israel, you will find, on turning to the sixteenth chapter of John, He says,

Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name {John 16:24};

and insists, both here and in the fourteenth chapter, on the importance and blessedness of asking the Father in His name. He said,

Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full {John 16:24};

and associates all this with the hope of His coming for them, to take them to the Father's house. He instructs them also that He is going to be put to death, and will rise again from the dead — that He will leave the world and go to the Father; and assures them that whatsoever they ask in His name, He will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. In the eighth chapter of Romans we are told also,

We know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered {Rom. 8:26}.

The Holy Ghost, then, is the power of prayer. He leads us to pray in the name of Jesus. The power of prayer is not found in saying over a form of prayer, however truthful it may be. It consists in the Holy Ghost giving utterance to the heart through the name and blood of Jesus, who is now risen and ascended to God's right hand. People find fault with us sometimes that we do not formally use this prayer of the disciples, because they do not see what an amazing change has taken place, and do not understand the difference between being on kingdom-ground and on the ground of the Church of God. Since it was spoken Christ has died, the vail has been rent; Jesus is above, having entered into heaven by His own blood; and the Holy Ghost has come down to dwell in us. We cannot find fault with people taking up some of the sentiments expressed in the prayer. But surely we who are in Christ cannot say,

Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors {Matt. 6:12}.

This was a saying which would be quite consistent for those who were on ground where righteousness ruled; but now, while

grace reigns through righteousness {see Rom. 5:21},

we are to forgive all, whether they forgive us or not. We are to love our enemies, and bless them that curse us; in short, to forgive as God in Christ has forgiven us. We now have God's forgiveness solely on the ground of Christ's atoning work. The perfection of that prayer for the disciples in their

then condition as on kingdom- ground, prior to the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, cannot be disputed. The mistake with Christians is, that they get away from Christ — from the ground of the Church of God — the true grace of God, wherein we stand, and go back to principles of the kingdom. They do not, therefore, get on in their souls, or get clear of the world.

The eighth chapter of Matthew opens with our Lord coming down from the mountain; and it appears that the first thing He sees is a man coming to Him who is a leper. This was remarkable, because it showed the degraded condition into which the nation had sunk. It showed that the nation had so far departed from God that, although in the fourteenth chapter of Leviticus an ordinance had been given for cleansing the leper, there was evidently no care for God's glory about it. It was just a sample of what the nation was. Now mark the ways of Jesus. He stretches out His hand and touches him. Whoever touched a leper before without getting defiled? He does not send him to the ordinance in Leviticus, but says,

Be thou clean {Matt. 8:3};

and when the man becomes clean, which was "immediately," He says, Go to the high priest, and show him that you have been cleansed, and offer the offering according to the law of Moses. Now what ought to have been the result of this most beautiful action of the blessed Lord? Why it ought to have been this, that the priest would have come to Him at once, and said, "You must have come from God. There was never such a thing known before in Israel as a leper cleansed immediately and simply by a word." But instead of this, there seems to have been no response. When the Lord sent this cleansed leper to the priest, it was like knocking at the door of the nation; the same way as a foreigner would knock at the door of this nation, if he sent a message to the prime minister. But the Scripture is silent as to any answer. The next thing consequently is that the Lord meets a Gentile. The case of the miraculous cure of the leper showed Christ's readiness to heal the leprous nation, and His power to bring them into immediate blessing. The miracle that follows shows that, although the Jews rejected the Messiah, there was blessing in His heart ready to flow out to the Gentiles. And let us never forget that the way we get blessing from Christ is through the poor Jews having rejected Him. We are told that when Jesus entered into Capernaum,

there came unto Him a centurion, beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented {Matt. 8:5, 6}.

The answer of Jesus was,

I will come and heal him {Matt. 8:7}.

But the man says, You need not come, but speak the word: your word is quite enough. For I am a centurion, and have soldiers under me:

and I say to his man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it {Matt. 8:9}.

You have therefore only to speak the word, Lord, and my servant will be healed. Well, the Lord did speak the word; the servant was healed; and to those who followed Him Jesus said,

I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel {Matt. 8:10}.

A most important declaration, because the mission of Christ was unto Israel.

He came unto His own, and His own received Him not {John 1:11}.

Matthew writes as if up to the twelfth chapter the Lord's works and ministry were entirely confined to Israel. I might go through the eighth chapter as giving further instruction of the same kind, but I pass on to the next, where we see another very striking case. A further appeal is made to the consciences of those around that Jesus was able to bring in the kingdom of blessing on the earth, of which the prophets had prophesied.

The ninth chapter is introduced by a paralytic man being brought to Jesus. The leper showed the filthy condition of the nation; this palsied man sets forth its helpless condition. His presence elicited a strange sound from Jesus. He said,

Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee {Matt. 9:2}.

What a statement! What gracious, what wonderful words! But the unbelieving people were alarmed. They began to say within themselves,

This man blasphemeth.

Now mark our Lord's reply.

And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith He to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house {Matt. 9:3-6}.

What is the meaning of these words? How is it possible for any one to give an intelligent explanation of them who does not understand in some measure the truth of the kingdom? When the Lord's testimony to Israel as coming to His own is seen, then it becomes simple enough. Here the Lord connects together two things — the healing of disease and the forgiveness of sins. If you turn to the one hundred and third Psalm, you will find there a text that is often used, but perhaps seldom understood. It is the third verse:

Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases (Psa. 103:3).

This is clearly a millennial psalm. It opens with praise to Jehovah for the blessings of the kingdom. Now you see why the Lord connects the two things, — the healing of disease with the forgiveness of sins, — and also in what sense it is used by David in this kingdom psalm. This psalm will not have its accomplishment till the millennium; and then the song of the people of Israel will be,

Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases {Psa. 103:1-3}.

If you turn also to the thirty-third chapter of Isaiah, you will find in the last verse —

The inhabitant shall not say, [speaking of millennial times,] I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity (Isa. 33:24).

Thus the kingdom will be characterized by two things — the forgiveness of sins, and healing of bodily disease. The gospel now preached tells us that the believer's sins are forgiven; that he is reconciled to God, through faith, by the blood of Jesus; that He is a justified man. But the gospel does not touch bodily disease; so that a man having bodily illness when receiving Christ for his Savior may get worse as to health of body, sink, and die, though able fully to rejoice in the forgiveness of sins. How can this teaching of our Lord possibly admit of any other explanation than that the Lord was here appealing to the consciences of the people of Israel? Let us not forget, then, that the kingdom will be characterised by these two things. Jehovah's people will be all taught of God, and blessed by Him soul and body, so that they will heartily sing —

Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.

We are to understand, therefore, by what we find in the beginning of the ninth chapter of Matthew, that our Lord is there presenting Himself to Israel in a still more significant manner, as able to accomplish the two things — the forgiveness of sins and the healing of bodily disease. They ought by these things to have known that He must be the Messiah.

In the tenth chapter, the Lord calls His twelve apostles, and sends them forth to preach. He said to them,

Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead {Matt. 10:5-8}.

Notice here that their commission was limited to Israel. They were not even to enter into a Samaritan city. Connected with this, they were to preach

the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

With this verbal testimony, with a view of making a still stronger appeal, they had to show that Jesus had given to them the power to cleanse lepers, and to raise the dead. In thus sending them out, observe, in the 23rd verse, that our Lord says,

I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come (Matt. 10:23).

We know that their mission was interrupted; they did not go very far with their testimony. The twenty-fourth chapter teaches us that this same ministry touching the kingdom will be resumed after the Church is gone. Christ has gone up into heaven, the Holy Ghost has come down, and is now forming the Church, the body of Christ; and when the body is complete, we shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Then this testimony will go out again, and it will take a larger course. In the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew it is stated that

this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached as a witness in all the world [the civilized world], and then shall the end come (see Matt. 24:14).

Observe, it is

the gospel of the kingdom.

Be careful to distinguish between the gospel of the kingdom, and what Paul calls in the Acts of the Apostles,

the gospel of the grace of God {Acts 20:24}.

In the eleventh chapter of Matthew we have two remarkable statements as to the kingdom of heaven, which, I believe, are often misunderstood. One referring to John the Baptist, where, after it is stated that there was none greater born of women, it is added,

Notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he {Matt. 11:11}.

How do some interpret this? They say that the kingdom of heaven is the Church, and that the least in the Church is greater than John; but this is very unsatisfactory. The kingdom of heaven, as we have seen, is not the Church. In the kingdom there will be such distinctions as least and greatest; but there are no such distinctions in the Church. There are various gifts; but no such idea as least and greatest. We cannot find such words in the writings of the apostles applied to the Church. There are some who have greater faith than others; there are also apostles, prophets, pastors and teachers, and so on; but, I repeat, not least and greatest. The statement, I believe, means, that although John the Baptist had up to that time been the greatest that had been born of a woman, yet in the millennial kingdom the glory will be so marvelous, and the blessing so beyond anything that could have been conceived by man, that the place of privilege John had will be inferior to the least amongst those who will be in the enjoyment of that time of blessing.

The other expression is in the twelfth verse.

From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force (Matt. 11:12).

That is, Christ preached that the kingdom of heaven was at hand; and if a man, whether he were a fisherman, a publican, or any other person, believed the message, he had to press through difficulties, to force his way against persons and prejudices, in order to take kingdom-ground. Everybody being against him, he had to take his place in this relationship to Christ by force. This was the last time, according to Matthew, that Christ mentioned the kingdom, (in the sense of referring to the kingdom which the prophets prophesied would be set up,) before He begins to give the nation up.

The twelfth chapter of Matthew gives us a most remarkable incident in connection with Christ's ministry of the kingdom. We are told that

the Pharisees went out, and held a council against Christ, how they might destroy Him {Matt. 12:14}.

Notwithstanding all His patience and love for His ancient people, they went about to destroy Him. Then you find that Christ pronounces them to be a

generation of vipers {Matt. 12:34},

and

an adulterous generation {Matt. 12:39},

whom the men of Nineveh and the Queen of the South will rise up in judgment to condemn, because He was greater than Jonas and greater than Solomon. He then puts before them the story of the unclean spirit, to show the condition in which they were, and that they would get worse and worse; and when, as we find at the close of the twelfth chapter, some one said unto Him,

Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee {Matt. 12:47},

He asks,

Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? {Matt. 12:48}.

He begins to shake off, if I may so say, the acknowledgment of Jewish relationship, and feels Himself to be the rejected one. He will no longer deal with people because of their Abrahamic relationship; but any would now be blessed who received His word. He had come with the testimony that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and plainly showed in various ways that He was able to set it up; but now He opens His arms wide, and says,

Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother {Matt. 12:50}.

So that He goes out now beyond the limits of Israel. Therefore He goes out of the house, takes the place of a sower of seed by the wayside — sowing the seeds of His truth broadcast, and no longer confines His ministry to Israel. This was a remarkable change. From that time, because of Israel's unbelief, the kingdom of heaven assumes a different character.

We come now to the thirteenth chapter, which presents truths of great practical importance to every Christian. Here we find two remarkable verses, which I will read as a kind of preface to the parables. In answer to the disciples, who asked His reasons for speaking in parables, after He had given the parable of the sower, He said, in the eleventh verse,

Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given (Matt. 13:11).

We have not had the word “mysteries” before in connection with the kingdom of heaven. The testimony of the prophets as to the kingdom had no mystery about it; but it is a result of Christ being rejected by Israel. Therefore you will observe, in the 35th verse, that all this was kept secret till this time. Jesus said,

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world (Matt. 13:35).

We are thus prepared to expect that the Lord would bring out some things in these parables which had been kept secret since the foundation of the world. And so it was. We cannot find anything like them in the Scriptures that came before. Some have not improperly called this peculiar condition of things, the kingdom of heaven in mystery, by way of distinguishing it from the kingdom of heaven of which prophets prophesied. In the kingdom spoken of by the prophets there was to be no devil working; the unclean spirit would be cast out; no unholy people: the sinner was to be accursed, and iniquity not tolerated. But now, in consequence of Christ's rejection by Israel, the kingdom of

heaven has taken this mysterious form, and it is still going on. It refers to every one who professes to acknowledge Christ.

In connection with the instruction given by our Lord on the subject, He sets before us seven parables.

The first parable is that of the sower sowing the seed — the word of God. I will not occupy time with any remarks on that. Strictly speaking this parable does not show us the kingdom, but the new position taken by the Lord, of sowing the good seed everywhere, and the results.

The next parable is that of the wheat and the tares, in which

the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way {Matt. 13:24, 25}.

Observe, that the tares are not judged till the end of the age. It is the kingdom of heaven taking this mysterious form that the prophets never prophesied of, and is going on at the present moment. It commenced with the good seed, causing wheat to spring up; but while the Christians were drowsy and unwatchful the enemy came in, and introduced bad seed — wicked people. We see precisely the same thing in the most solemn and important epistle of Jude. In that epistle we are told that

certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness {Jude 4}.

In this parable we find that the tares continue until the end of the age — until Christ Himself comes in judgment to deal with the kingdom. Jude also, in looking at the same thing, traces this evil working, and shows that it will go on until Christ comes with ten thousand of His saints, taking vengeance upon them. Pause for a moment, my beloved friends. Does this look like the world being converted by the preaching of the gospel? It is positively stated that the tares are the children of the wicked one, that they are mixed with the wheat, and that they are not to be rooted up. It is also declared that they will continue in the field till the Lord comes in judgment and deals with them. Can anything be clearer?

The next parable is that of the mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds. So the work of the Lord was the most insignificant thing in the world as to outward appearance when it began. It consisted of a few people in an upper room, whom nobody cared about. But from this small seed a great tree has grown up — a gigantic thing in the world's eyes. A tree is a symbol of power in the earth. This is what the Lord here prophesied the kingdom of heaven would be — it would lose its separate and spiritual qualities, and become a great thing in the earth. But observe that the tree becomes so large, that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches. The fowls, as we read in a previous parable, are typical of Satan, the wicked one. So that we thus see the devil can now really find a resting- place in that which professes the name of Christ. The fact is manifest to every discerning mind.

Then follows the parable of the leaven, in which, you will remember, we are told that all will eventually be leavened. A woman is represented as introducing leaven into pure flour, and the leaven working in the flour soon affects the whole mass. The question arises, What is the meaning of this parable? Now, I confess that it seems to me astonishing that any Christian man, if he prayerfully read the Bible, should have any question as to this parable showing the quick and sure

working of principles of corruption among professing Christians, till the whole mass becomes influenced by it. In every place where leaven is used in Scripture, it means something bad. This parable, then, shows us the introduction and working of evil among those professedly bearing the name of Christ; it began to work early, and the thing is going on still, and will go on till all is leavened. When Christ comes and removes His saints, what a mass of corruption ostensibly bearing His name will be left behind! It is a matter for deep thankfulness that none of the true, dear children of God can perish. How plainly this parable also shows that the promise of universal blessing on the earth cannot have its fulfilment till after judgment!

Having uttered these four parables, the Lord, we are told in the thirty-sixth verse, goes into a house, and the disciples came unto Him, Saying,

Declare unto us the parable of the tares (Matt. 13:36).

The Lord, therefore, expounds the parable to them. He says,

He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man. The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one {Matt. 13:37, 38}.

I call attention to a point which, although mentioned once before in these lectures, yet it seems to me desirable to refer to it again. It is, Are we sufficiently aware of the fact that it is the business of Satan to make people profess the name of Christ without having Christ in their hearts? It is to be feared that many Christians in mistaken zeal are helping this on. Every now and then you hear it said "We must raise the people." I ask, Raise them to what? How can you raise a dead man? He must have life. He must know Christ, and be in Christ. If you could bring a man into Christ, that would be the only way of really raising him. But it is said we must try to raise him. What is meant is that we must first make a tare of him. We must get him to give up this and that sin, and to profess Christ, go to sacrament, attend to religious ordinances, and all that; and then we may have some hope of making a Christian of him. But this parable does not suppose that a single tare was ever converted unto wheat, but rather that they both go on to the harvest. The tares will then be burned. Therefore the Lord went on to say,

As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world (or age) {Matt. 13:40}.

Now, I need not tell many of you that the word here translated "world," really means "age." The word is not world , which is always translated world, but it is age . In the sentence, "The field is the world," it is world , and means world; but in the sentence, "So shall it be in the end of the world," it is age and means age. Then we are told,

The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire {Matt. 13:41, 42}.

This is not the Lord coming for us; we shall have been caught up to meet Him in the air before that. The subject of our Lord's teaching here is not the Church, or the Christian's hope; the subject is, the kingdom in its present form, and its coming end in judgment. Christ is coming to judge this great thing that bears His name. As Enoch prophesied,

The Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon the ungodly {see Jude 14 and 15}.

Those of whom I have been speaking are some of the ungodly; and Christ will come to execute judgment upon these living wicked, and leave a people for blessing upon the earth. The wicked will be removed, and the blessed ones left.

Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun {Matt. 13:43}.

In this way He will introduce the kingdom of which the prophets prophesied, when in a great measure the will of God will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

The Lord having given to the disciples the explanation they asked for, narrates three other parables — the treasure, the pearl of great price, and the net cast into the sea. He says,

The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field: the which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field {Matt. 13:44}.

The treasure evidently means the redeemed, I believe, more than the Church, — all the redeemed, whether for the heavens or the earth. The treasure was hid in a field, and Christ has bought the field by His redemption work. He did not wear the crown of thorns in vain. That mark of God's curse on the earth for man's sin found a place upon His spotless brow, and the blood of the cross tells us the price even of creation's redemption. He bought the field. And, by-and-by,

instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree; instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree {Isa. 55:13},

to the praise and the glory of His blessed name. He has, then, at the cost of all that He had, bought the field for the sake of the treasure. The world, therefore, belongs to Christ by redemption; it is His by right. He is the Author and Creator of all things, as well as the Savior of the world.

The pearl of great price is doubtless the Church looked at in its unity, not as the mystery. That was not revealed till afterwards. There is a hymn somewhere which begins,

"I've found the pearl of greatest price,"

as if that pearl was Christ. It is unaccountable how some have so interpreted Scripture. There never was a greater mistake, my beloved friends. We have not given anything for Christ. Blessed be His name, it is quite the reverse, — Christ has given everything for us. Do you not see how simple this is? The pearl was loved by Christ when it lay hidden at the bottom of the sea covered with mud and filthiness. But Christ saw it. His heart was set on the Church; but to have it, and bring it back to Himself, He must go down under the waves and billows of God's wrath. And down He went; He sunk as it were to the bottom, and brought up the Church in risen life, and will present it to Himself a glorious Church, a pearl bought indeed at a great price, the price of the Savior's blood. This doubtless refers to the Church; but, I repeat, the mystery of the Church was not known until it was revealed to Paul.

Our Lord also relates another parable—that of the good fish and the bad. There is a difference between his parable and that of the wheat and tares, which I cannot enter into to-night. I may just remark that it also shows (and it is a most important point) that the judgment that will be exercised

by the Lord when He comes in manifested glory will be not to take away the good and leave the bad, but to take away the bad and leave the good. These parables teach us that Christendom is going on to judgment. Christ will take out of His kingdom

them which do iniquity {Matt. 13:41};

He will separate the wicked from among the just. I call attention to this, because these parables do not speak of the Lord coming for us. When the Lord comes for us, the good are taken away, and the bad are left behind for judgment; but when He comes with us in flaming fire for judgment, then He takes the bad away, and leaves the good for blessing on the earth.

Well, dear friends, when Christ has taken away by judgment all the wicked, — put all enemies under His feet, — what will be the result? We shall have the time of predicted blessing, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea. In the twenty-sixth chapter of Isaiah and the ninth verse we are told,

When God's judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness (Isa. 26:9).

What I have been endeavouring to show is, that the kingdom will be set up by the judgment of the Lord being executed upon the wicked. In the next verse the words are,

Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness {Isa. 26:10}.

Now God is showing favour — preaching the forgiveness of sins, and we see that they will not learn righteousness by it; but we know that the time is coming when people will not say,

Know the Lord; for all shall know Him, from the least to the greatest {see Heb. 8:11}.

This state of things will characterize the kingdom, but we are nowhere told that the gospel will fill the world with fruit. To suppose it is surely a mistake, and I may add a terrible hindrance to understanding a great deal of divine truth. The earth is to be filled with blessing; but what saith the Scripture? The answer is plain. In the twenty-seventh of Isaiah we are told that

Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit {Isa. 27:6}.

So we see that restored and blessed Israel will fill the world with fruit; not the Church, — not the gospel, — but Israel. The Lord still further taught His disciples in the fifty-second verse that every one who is instructed in the kingdom of heaven brings out of his treasure things new and old — the new things being the mysteries of this chapter, the old, the things of the kingdom prophesied by prophets.

Thus we see in the teaching of this chapter the real condition of what now bears the name of Christ on the earth. Let us not forget that the field is the world, not the Church; and that both good and bad professing Christ's name — wheat and tares — will continue mingled together till the end of the age. The principles of the Church are not contemplated here; but, in point of time, since Christ uttered these sayings, He has died for sinners, was raised from the dead, has ascended into heaven, has sent down the Holy Ghost to form the Church the body of Christ, and when complete it will be removed before the end of the age. So that between the sowing of the seed and the end of the age there is room for the Church to be formed, and caught up to meet Christ in the

air. The wheat now belongs to the Church of God. A true believer therefore, at this time, is both in the Church and in the kingdom. A mere professor is in the kingdom, and does not belong to the Church. After the Church is gone, an elect Jew will belong to the kingdom, and not to the Church.

The remaining parables in this gospel have for the most part the same termination of blessing and judgment. It is well to notice, however, after all that we have seen of the Lord's patience and rejection, He still goes on in faithful testimony and love to the nation.

In the 14th chapter the Lord, deeply affected by the assassination of His honored servant John, goes into a desert place. This speaks to our hearts. But He still manifests love to the nation of Israel, in feeding the multitude, and thus gives a still further sign of His Messiahship. It is also repeated in the 15th chapter. He feeds thousands on a few loaves and fishes, according to the prophetic words of the 132nd Psalm:

I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread {Psa. 132:15}.

They thus had further testimony as to the presence and power of Him who was able to fulfil the Scripture as to the kingdom, to say nothing of His wondrous grace and compassion in healing all the sick that were brought unto Him. All was, however, unheeded by the people. In the 15th chapter the Lord exposes the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, who were among the leading men at Jerusalem, in having made the word of God of none effect by their tradition, and in honoring God with their lips while their hearts were far from Him; but He accepts and honors the faith of a poor Gentile, who takes the place of a dog before Him. This is very significant, and strongly intimates the Lord's purpose.

The sixteenth chapter is very important in a dispensational sense. The Lord pronounces the Pharisees and Sadducees to be

hypocrites, an adulterous generation,

in the earthly department of the coming kingdom, as well as the heavenly. The universal cry will be —

"For ever be the glory given

To thee, O Lamb of God;

Our every joy, on earth in heaven,

We owe it to thy blood."

Our time, beloved friends, has expired, or we might have pursued our meditations on "the kingdom of heaven" for several chapters further in this precious gospel. Enough, however, has, I trust, been said to call attention to the subject. It is lamentable to think how eagerly principles of Judaism are being embraced by Christians, so as not only to destroy spiritual-mindedness, undermine the truth of the accomplished redemption and all- prevalent priesthood of Christ, but to lower the tone of souls, foster worldliness, and keep in ignorance and bondage dear children of God. We may be sure that no Christian will really live above the world and worldly religiousness, who does not apprehend his union with a rejected, risen, and ascended Christ.

and

left them, and departed {Matt. 16:3, 4}.

Then, on Peter's confession of Him as

the Christ, the Son of the living God {Matt. 16:16},

we have two things brought out for the first time. 1st.

Upon this rock I will build my Church {Matt. 16:18}.

2nd. His sufferings, death, and resurrection. As to the first point, it shows not only how distinct the Church is from the kingdom, but also that, being rejected by Israel, another thing would be built, according to the eternal purpose of God, that had no existence before — the Church. In reference to the second point, not only is it certainly foretold by Christ that the Jews, instead of repenting and having the kingdom, would hate Him more and more until they put Him to death, but also, when the Church is spoken of, we are told,

from that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples that He must go unto Jerusalem . . . suffer . . . be killed, and be raised again the third day {Matt. 16:21}.

The calling of the Church being heavenly, the blessings being spiritual, and her position union with Christ risen, the moment He mentioned the Church, He began to show that He must be rejected and put to death by the Jews, and be raised again from the dead. Before this there is no mention of His death; no one could have gathered from His ministry about the kingdom that He was going to die; for

He came unto His own {John 1:11},

as able to set up the kingdom, and He would have gathered them together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but they would not. God thus permitted wicked and apostate Israel to do their own will in rejecting and killing Jesus, to carry out His own purpose of providing an offering and a sacrifice for sin, that the children of God might be gathered together in one, and that the nation might be righteously and permanently established on the ground of redemption. We therefore find after this a picture of the kingdom in power in the 17th chapter. The two pillars of the nation — Moses and Elias are there in glory with Jesus; and, from another evangelist, we learn that the all-absorbing subject of conversation is the death of Jesus. This will, doubtless, be the case

Lecture 7: the Reign of Christ, and the Eternal State

And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled (Col. 1:20, 21).

Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him (Eph. 1:9, 10).

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea (Rev. 20:5-15; 21:1).

What a blessed thing it is, beloved friends, to know that Christ died for the ungodly! though it is only when the soul has apprehended that fact for its own salvation, that it is in a condition to learn the glories and unfathomable depths of that finished work. Scripture, however, not only gives us general statements, but special statements concerning the sacrificial work of Christ. For instance; we read in the eleventh chapter of John that it was expedient that one man should die for the people, that the whole nation perish not; and

that Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that He should also gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad {John 11:51, 52}.

I refer to this to show that Christ is spoken of as dying for the nation. When the apostle is speaking of the Church of God in the epistle to the Ephesians, he says,

Christ . . . loved the Church, and gave Himself for it {Eph. 5:25}.

And when the thought is presented to us of creation being delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God, we cannot but think of Jesus in humiliation wearing a crown of thorns, — which were set in the earth as a mark of God's curse, — thus showing us that it is through Him alone creation will be brought into its promised blessing. And when, further, we consider the fact that the whole world will yet be filled with blessing, so that every creature shall be blessing and praising God, and

the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea {see Isa. 11:9},

we have the key to it all in the cross of Christ; for He is presented to us in Scripture as the Savior of the world. It is when the world is full of blessing that the text will have its evident application —

The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world {1 John 4:14}.

We shall find, on looking at the Scriptures carefully, that an immense deal of the Old Testament yet remains to be fulfilled. If we only think of the first prophecy in the Bible, where God told Satan that he should bruise the heel of the woman's Seed, and that the Seed would bruise his head, it is clear that it has not had its full accomplishment. But it must be fulfilled. The Seed of the woman shall yet bruise the serpent's head. Some may imagine that this has been done by the work of Christ on the cross. But it is not so; for the apostle in writing to the saints at Rome says,

The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly {Rom. 16:20}.

It was then a prospective thing, and so it is still. We are also told that

your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour {1 Pet. 5:8}.

Perhaps the second prophecy of Scripture was that of Enoch, which we find recorded in Jude:

Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied . . . saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly {Jude 14, 15}.

This has yet to be fulfilled. The third prophecy in Scripture perhaps, in point of date, was uttered by Job in the well-known passage of the nineteenth chapter —

I know that my redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth {Job 19:25}.

This, I need not say, has also to be fulfilled. The next prophetic statements we would notice in the ancient Scriptures are the promises to Abraham. In the twelfth chapter of Genesis we read,

In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed {Gen. 12:3};

and in the eighteenth chapter,

All the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him {Gen. 18:18}.

These promises have yet to be accomplished. God is not blessing nations, as such, by the gospel through the seed of Abraham now. He is blessing people by calling them out of the nations; He is taking

out of the Gentiles a people for His name {see Acts 15:14};

so that when the Lord comes, those who are His will be caught up to meet Him in the air, and the nations, as such, will be left untouched. But in the reign of Christ, which we are now about to consider, we shall see that the nations will own Him, for He will be the Governor among the nations. Zechariah tells us,

many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people {Zech. 2:11}.

Then those of

all the families of the earth {Zech. 14:15}

who will not own Jerusalem as the metropolis of blessing in the earth will receive a special judgment.

The Lord Jesus Christ is coming forth to fulfil the word of God concerning these things. Whether it be the Seed of the woman according to Moses, or to come with ten thousand of His saints according to Enoch, or the Redeemer to stand upon the earth according to Job, or as Abraham's seed, to be the Dispenser of blessing to all nations, Jesus is coming to fulfil all. You will find, in reading the Scriptures carefully, that judgment is always put before us as preceding the period of blessing coming upon the earth. There is no question that

the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea {see Isa. 11:9}.

There is not a doubt that the last Psalm will be fulfilled —

Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord {Psa. 150:6}.

The fifth of Revelation must have its accomplishment, that every creature in heaven and on the earth, and under the earth, shall yet be blessing and praising Him that sits on the throne, and the Lamb. But that to which I want particularly to call attention is, that this period of blessedness is always presented to us in Scripture as preceded by terrible judgments. If we think of the ten kingdoms which are in connection with the Roman earth, we know that judgment will usher in the blessing. We read in the second chapter of Daniel, 34th and 35th verses:

Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth (Dan. 2:34, 35).

Thus we see the whole earth filled with blessing through the terrible judgment of

the stone cut out without hands,

which is evidently Christ.

Israel, too, will be in the deepest trouble and sorrow, as we shall see by-and-by, many of whom will be cut off, before the remnant are brought into their expected blessing through Messiah's coming and deliverance. Look also at Christendom — that which outwardly confesses the name of Christ; the tares are bound in bundles, and cast out of the kingdom, with all iniquity, in order that the promised blessing in the earth may be given. And you will remember, when we were lately considering the fact of the Lord coming out of heaven with all His saints, according to the 19th chapter of Revelation, we saw that His first act will be terrible judgment; He will take the beast and the false prophet, and cast them alive into the lake of fire; and then slay the kings and people, calling on all the birds of the air to feed upon the carcasses of these allies of this master-piece of Satan's iniquity. The Lord having thus, by the brightness of His glorious coming, judged at once in the most summary manner this intolerable iniquity, He will go on to judge and rule until all enemies are put under His feet. As we read in the second of Thessalonians —

The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel {2 Thess. 1:7, 8}.

Jude speaks of Him as

executing judgment on the ungodly {see Jude 15};

and the prophet Malachi, in his last chapter, says,

The day cometh that shall burn as an oven; . . . it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings {Mal. 4:1, 2}.

The sixty-third chapter of Isaiah opens with a picture of the Lord executing His righteous judgments upon living people on the earth:

Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come {Isa. 63:1-4}.

Now observe here, that with the

vengeance

we have also

mighty to save,

and

the year of my redeemed is come,

and

thy people also shall be all righteous {Isa. 60:21}.

— precisely the same as we saw in Malachi, that the Lord's judgment of the wicked will precede the blessing coming upon the earth. The forty-sixth Psalm evidently refers to the same point. It is the utterance of those who have made God their refuge and strength in a time of special trouble. They are sustained by trust in God. Therefore they will not fear, whatever judgments may come upon the earth. They have a secret spring of joy and blessing. They know that there is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered His voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; He burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth {Psa. 46:4-10}.

The blessing will be very great. Satan will be bound. The twentieth chapter of Revelation opens with it in the first and second verses:

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years (Rev. 20:1, 2).

We can easily imagine what an immense difference this will make on the moral condition of the world. The Lord too will be reigning — not only restraining evil, but positively filling the earth with blessing.

We may notice two things in relation to the reign of Christ. First, the judgment of the Lord on His enemies; secondly, the people of Israel brought to know Jesus as their Redeemer, through whom blessing will be extended to the nations. We have already noticed the teaching of Scripture as to the binding of Satan, and the judgment of the living wicked, and may advert to it again by- and-by. We will now, however, look a little at the bright side of the picture.

When the Jews see Jesus, and not before, like Thomas, they will say,

My Lord, and my God {John 20:28}.

Israel will therefore be converted by sight. The sinner now is saved by faith.

Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed {John 20:29}.

It is when the Redeemer comes out of Sion that He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob. When God works again in the hearts of the people of Israel, a nation will be born at once. The Scriptures will then be fulfilled —

Thy children shall be all taught of the Lord {Isa. 54:13},

It will be the

regeneration {Matt. 19:28}

when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, referred to in Matt. 19. Then will the 133rd Psalm be fulfilled:

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: . . . as the dew of Hermon {Psa. 133:1-3}.

Israel will be made willing in the day of Christ's power, and will really be a Christian nation. Those who expect the Jews as a nation to be converted before the personal coming of the Lord will be disappointed. When He comes again in power and great glory, He will put His ancient people in the enjoyment of that which was promised to Abraham and his seed. Not one iota shall fail. Israel shall be established in their land in rich blessing under the true David, and under the anti-typical Solomon. Solomon began his reign by taking vengeance on his enemies, and then brought the people into a higher character of power and glory than they ever knew before; and so the Lord Jesus, a greater than Solomon, shall first, by His great power, put His enemies under His feet, and then arise as the Sun of righteousness, and shine in brightness, and healing, and blessing upon His ancient people.

In giving, beloved friends, a hasty sketch to-night of the millennial reign of Christ, I shall only be able to touch on a few important points. But sure am I that if a soul only apprehend one of these divine truths as revealed in the Scriptures, it will be like taking up a link of a long golden chain, which will guide him from link to link until he is taught more fully the mind of the Lord, and the value of His prophetic word. Remember, beloved friends, I am not speaking fanciful or imaginary things to-night; I am not seeking to amuse the intellect with either poetry or fiction; I am presenting to you the word of the living God. Many in this room have proved the comfort and blessedness of these truths for many years, and our earnest wish is to extend to our beloved fellow Christians the same comfort we have realized, as connected with a proper understanding of these gracious revelations of God in the Scriptures.

From the first chapter of Colossians I read two verses, in which it appears we are taught, first, that Christ has made peace by the blood of His cross, and secondly, that the results of that work on the cross have both a present and a future application. As to its present application, we know that the person who believes is already reconciled to God; but observe that in the 20th verse it is not persons that are spoken of, but things which are to be reconciled. And so in the first chapter of the Ephesians it does not say, "to gather together all believers in one," though, as regards the Church, that would be true; but what the apostle is glorying in here is that God, who has so blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ, has made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself, that He might gather together in one all things (mark, THINGS) in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, — even in Him. When?

In the dispensation of the fullness of times {Eph. 1:10};

that is, I apprehend, when the times for many things will have fully come. Nothing can be more simple. Everything was made by Christ, and for Christ, both Colossians and Hebrews tell us; and when He takes to Himself His great power and reigns, it will be manifest that every department of

the kingdom will be blessed through Christ, and be headed up in Christ.

There are four points to which I would like, as briefly as I can, to call attention in relation to the blessings of the millennial reign of Christ. The first is the position of the Church, and those saints who will reign with Christ. The second the glory, peace, and pre-eminence that Israel as a nation will occupy during the reign. The third, the blessing of the Gentile nations. The fourth, the deliverance of creation.

With regard to the Church of God, I have already, as far as the limits of one address would allow, entered into her coming glory. Her place in the kingdom will be association with Christ Himself, sharing His glory, and still being in holy and happy subjection. When He has brought everything into subjection to Himself, He will deliver up the kingdom to His Father, and God shall be all in all. The place of the Church in the kingdom is not on earth, but in the heavens.

As is the heavenly,

says the apostle,

such are they also that are heavenly {1 Cor. 15:48}.

It requires very little spiritual perception to see that heavenly people are one thing, and earthly people another. We are told that

the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another {1 Cor. 15:40}:

both are spheres of glory, each having a department in the one kingdom — Christ the center, Christ the source, Christ the glory and blessing beaming through all. He reigns over the nation of Israel, we reign with Christ. We have a beautiful little picture of millennial glory in the history of Joseph, as recorded in the 41st chapter of Genesis. Joseph, while separated from his brethren, married a Gentile wife. When exalted from the suffering of deep humiliation into the place of glory, he was enabled to bring his brethren into the fatness of the land of Egypt, and all the Egyptians were called on to

bow the knee {Gen. 41:43}

when Joseph drove through the land. Here we have in Joseph, with his wife by his side, a picture of Christ and the Church; in Joseph's brethren we have the sons of Israel, who had sold him, reconciled to Him, and brought into blessing, as Israel will be by- and-by; and in the Egyptians we have a picture of the nations who will yet bow the knee to Jesus. They will own Christ as the giver of all their blessings, as the Egyptians acknowledged they were indebted to Joseph for all the blessings they then enjoyed.

With regard to Israel, it is almost difficult to know to what part of the old Scriptures to turn first (the references to their future glory being so numerous), to show the peculiar blessedness of their calling and expectation when they inhabit the land under the rule of the true David. But if we turn, in the first place, to the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah, we shall see there one allusion.

Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the

brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. The multitudes of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory. Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows? Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He hath glorified thee. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings: and thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Savior and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended {Isa. 60:1-20}.

Now it is utterly impossible to apply this language to any other than the Jewish nation — in fact, as we have seen, the prophet Isaiah addresses himself directly to them. The first words in this book are,

The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem {Isa. 1:1}.

And when we find other parts of Scripture predicting a time of
and

the day of God {2 Pet. 3:12},

wonderful blessing for this ancient people, we cannot be surprised that the verses to which I have drawn attention should speak of the high character of the blessing and glory which they will enjoy in their own land. The temple will evidently be built prior to this, because, you will remember, the

abomination that the man of sin sets up is in the holy place.

The children of Israel will be brought back to their own land in unbelief. They will attend outwardly to the earthly religiousness which characterizes Israel.

The false Messiah, the man of sin, will introduce himself among them through the power of Satan. The people will be bewitched by him. After some time he will thrust aside the daily sacrifice, and set up an idol — the image that we were lately looking at in the thirteenth chapter of Revelation — in the temple, and people will be compelled to fall down and worship

the man of sin {2 Thess. 2:3}.

The Lord will come and find this condition of things. Independently of judging

the man of sin,

He will bring the third part of His people through this scene of remarkable and unparalleled tribulation. He will cut off two-thirds in judgment, and bring the remaining third into their promised blessing in the land; then, as we find in the latter part of Ezekiel, the land will be afresh marked out, the temple be re-built according to the directions given there, though not on its former site, but at a considerable distance from Jerusalem. Living waters will go out from Jerusalem; they will know Christ to be their King, their true David; and they will realize all those wonderful glories on the earth — glories so marvelous that it seems the terrestrial will be a counterpart of the glories of the celestial, the characteristics of the one being earthly, the characteristics of the other being heavenly. Jesus will

reign before His ancients gloriously {Isa. 24:23},

and Isa. 60 have its accomplishment,

Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee, &c. {Isa. 60:1}.

But with all this wondrous blessing, the condition of things will not be perfect. There will be sin and curse, and consequently death. There will be old age and infirmity. The sixty-fifth chapter of Isaiah tells us that

the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed {Isa. 65:20};

and the prophet Zechariah tells us, in the eighth chapter,

There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age {Zech. 8:4}.

Moreover, the millennial reign of Christ, which is called in the Old Testament the day of the Lord, and called also in the New Testament by the apostle Peter, in his third chapter of the second epistle,

the day of the Lord {2 Pet. 3:10},

will have its morning, its noon, and its evening, and will occupy a thousand years. The apostle, in the twentieth chapter of Revelation, says,

They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years {Rev. 20:4};

and the apostle Peter seems to confirm this when he says,

One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day {2 Pet. 3:8}.

It is evident that the blessings upon mankind will then be so great on the earth, that longevity will again be known; so that

there shall be no more thence an infant of days . . . for the child shall die an hundred years old {Isa. 65:20}.

It does not seem improbable that some may live through the whole of the thousand years. The morning of this millennial age, as we have seen, will be ushered in with darkness, and sorrow, and wailing, — with the putting of enemies under Christ's feet.

Every eye shall see Him, . . . and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him {Rev. 1:7}.

It will be a day that will burn as an oven. But the mid-day will be characterized by peace, and unity, and rest. Fertility and fruitfulness will be marvelously increased. According to the prophet Amos,

The plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God {Amos 9:13-15}.

The prophet Micah also refers to this subject. He says in the fourth chapter and third verse,

He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it. . . . In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted; and I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast off a strong nation: and the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever {Micah 4:3-7}.

The natural sun, too, shall shine with sevenfold light. And no wonder; for if he hid himself, and thus cast such solemn gloom around the cross of the blessed Lord when making atonement for sin, so that "there was darkness over the whole land from the sixth to the ninth hour; when He comes in glory, no wonder, I say, that the sun should shine forth with sevenfold lustre at the exaltation of that blessed Savior who was so humbled on the cross at Calvary. In the thirtieth chapter of Isaiah we find,

Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day when the Lord bindeth up the breach of His people, and healeth the stroke of their wound {Isa. 30:26}.

But more than that, the temple, according to Ezekiel, being rebuilt, certain of the feasts (not all of them, for obvious reasons,) will be again celebrated by the people of Israel. Sacrifices, too, will be offered according to the fifty-first Psalm, and the feast of tabernacles will be especially kept, as we learn from the fourteenth chapter of Zechariah. If we turn for a few moments to this chapter in Zechariah we shall find many interesting points on this subject plainly revealed. In the first place, as to the actual coming, the personal, visible coming of Christ to the earth, we are told in the fourth verse that

He shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives (see Zech. 14:4).

How is it possible for any one, who wishes to prove that the Lord is not coming personally to stand upon the earth again, to explain this text? of what other interpretation does it admit? More than this, there will be a very great earthquake, and this mount Olivet will cleave asunder. Now mark, it is mount Olivet, not mount Zion. We read,

they that trust in the Lord shall be [not as mount Olivet, but] as mount Zion {Psa. 125:1}.

Why? because mount Zion abideth for ever, but mount Olivet will cleave asunder, and there will be a very great valley {Zech. 14:4}.

Moreover, we are told in the sixth verse,

It shall come to pass in that day that the light shall not be clear nor dark; but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light {Zech. 14:6, 7};

that is, the natural light of the sun, to which I was referring just now, will be vastly augmented.

And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them towards the former sea, and half of them towards the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one (Zech. 14:8, 9).

Thus blessing will be dispensed from Jerusalem to all the nations of the earth.

Living waters shall go out.

Or, as we read in Isa. 2,

It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord front Jerusalem {Isa. 2:2, 3}.

Jerusalem will then be the metropolis of spiritual blessing in the earth. And we find also the prophet Zechariah telling us in the twenty-third verse of the eighth chapter, that

ten men shall . . . take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you (Zech. 8:23).

Besides this, we are told in the fourteenth chapter that judgment will be executed on such of the nations as do not thus own Jerusalem.

In the sixteenth verse we have reference to the feast of tabernacles, and are told that the people will go up to Jerusalem from year to year, to keep the feast and worship the King the Lord of hosts. This will be a time of blessing, and of holiness too; for

Thus saith the Lord of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts (Zech. 8:20, 21).

It will be a time of indescribable rejoicing; but, as before noticed, it will not be without rule and judgment.

And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain (Zech. 14:17).

So that if a nation refuse to go up to Jerusalem to pay homage to the Lord of glory, the King over all the earth, rain will be withheld from that country. But we know that Egypt is not watered by rain from heaven, therefore there is to be a special judgment on that people.

And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles {Zech. 14:18, 19}.

It would be no punishment to Egypt to have no rain, because the land there is watered by the overflowing of the Nile; therefore there will be this special judgment on that people, if they do not go up to keep the feast of tabernacles. We see too that the enemies, according to God's promise, will be completely removed out of the land. What Israel failed to do Jesus will accomplish.

And in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts {Zech. 14:21}.

The Lord Himself will be there filling the whole of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel with blessing, which will also be dispensed by Israel to all the nations of the earth. The people of Israel will then have their proper place as head of all the nations of the earth, not as they now are under God's displeasure, humiliation, and judgment.

With regard to the creation, we are told in the eighth chapter of Romans that

the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now {Rom. 8:22}.

There is not an animal upon the earth that is exempt from pain; but we are told in the twenty-first verse that there is to be a different state of things —

Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty [or liberty of the glory] of the children of God (Rom. 8:21).

This is to my mind the key to the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, and other portions which speak of the wonderful blessings of creation that will be connected with the reign of Christ. We are told in

Isaiah, that when the King reigns in righteousness,

the wolf also shall dwell with the Lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea {Isa. 11:6-9}.

This will have a literal accomplishment; so that not only the Church of God, and Israel, and the nations, but creation also will be brought into marvelous blessing. The Lord will be King over all the earth. And not only will He bring every thing into subjection to Himself, and put all enemies under His feet, but the whole earth will be filled with blessing. All the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. All nations will call Him blessed. Well might the psalmist exclaim in anticipation of that day,

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord: for He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth {Psa. 96:11-13}.

The same time is described also in the eighth Psalm:

What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! {Psa. 8:4-9}.

Well may Israel sing then,

Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's {Psa. 103:1-5}.

The 98th Psalm also refers to millennial times.

O sing unto the Lord a new song; for He hath done marvelous things: His right hand, and His holy arm, hath gotten Him the victory. The Lord hath made known His salvation: His righteousness hath He openly shewed in the sight of the heathen (Gentiles). He hath remembered His mercy and His truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise {Psa. 98:1-4}.

In the book of Revelation, too, we find reference to the same period. In the latter part of the fifth chapter we read,

And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever {Rev. 5:13}.

Then, according to the epistles of Colossians and Ephesians, all things, whether things in heaven or things on earth, will be reconciled unto Himself. Then all things will be gathered together in one in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him. So much for the mid-day glory of the millennial reign of Christ. Now for a word as to the shades of evening, the closing part of the thousand years.

At the end, Satan, who has been bound, will be let loose for a little season. The result will be, that after men have experienced the untold blessings of the millennial age, they will again yield to Satan's temptation, and readily fall in with his suggestions. Such is man! Myriads of them will enlist under the banner of the great deceiver, according to the twentieth of Revelation, and encompass the camp of the beloved saints at Jerusalem. You will notice that there will be saints then on the earth. The result of Satan's deception will be, that the Lord, after His reign of a thousand years over the earth, will call down fire from heaven in consuming judgment on those who have been thus led astray,

the number of whom is as the sand of the sea {Rev. 20:8}.

And more than this: He will then take Satan, and cast him into the lake of fire, where he is to be tormented day and night for ever and ever. In this way the first prophecy of Scripture will have its fulfilment. Satan will be bruised for ever under the feet of the Lord Jesus, and, blessed be His name, under our feet too.

There is one thing more, which closes the reign of Christ; it is the judgment of the wicked dead. Every one, from the first person who died in his sins, will then be judged; the dead must then hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth. So particular is the instruction, that they are called

the dead, small and great {Rev. 20:12}.

If they should be at the bottom of the sea, they must come up; wherever they are, in the grasp of death and hell (or hades), they must be delivered up. If they have fallen, and perished in some secret place, without a human eye to see them in the article of death; if they have fallen into a ravine, or perished in the desert, or their burial-place never have been known to man, it matters not; death and hades (the place of departed spirits) must give them up at the command of Jesus. These dead — meaning all unsaved people, dead in trespasses and sins — will be brought up at the resurrection of judgment; they will be judged, each person, small and great, according to their works. They will stand before God. The books will be opened. One book — the book of remembrance, I doubt not — is to show the judged ones at a glance their own history:

I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes {Psa. 50:21}.

Another book will be there, which, I believe, is the Bible. Jesus said,

The word that I speak unto you shall judge you in that day {see John 12:48}.

There will be a third book — the Book of Life — to show them that their names are not written therein, to convict them that they never received Christ for eternal life; for there could not be written in the Book of Life the names of any who are without Christ. Christ is

the life {John 14:6},

and those who are in Christ have their names written in that book. These three witnesses — the book of remembrance, the Bible, and the Lamb's Book of Life — will silence for ever those who stand before that throne; and with deepest anguish and remorse will they hear the Lord's

Depart {Luke 13:27},

and be cast away for ever from His presence; for

whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire {Rev. 20:15}.

Then death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed. The last act in the reign of Christ will be to cast death and hades into the lake of fire. They will no more be wanted. The last enemy is thus destroyed; the victory of Christ is now complete.

On the commencement of the session of the great white throne, we are told, as you will remember, that the heaven and the earth flee away. The awful conflagration mentioned by the apostle Peter will both burn up the earth and all man's works in it. No footprint of sinful man shall remain to mar the new condition of things that will follow. No flesh shall glory in His presence is and ever will be a divine axiom. Heaven and earth in their present state will then literally pass away, but will be followed by a fulfilment of the first verse of the 21st chapter of Revelation.

I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea (Rev. 21:1).

This verse introduces us to the eternal state. The end of things as they now are shows us that God has done everything according to divine righteousness. The salvation of the sinner has been by grace through righteousness, God having accomplished redemption by righteously dealing with Christ, the sinner's Substitute, on the cross. Having then righteously condemned sin in the flesh, it became a righteous thing for God to raise Him up from the dead and give Him glory, and also to raise us up together with Him. Thus

grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord {see Rom. 5:21}.

And in condemning the sinner to eternal burning for his sins, it also is an act of divine righteousness, and is final, and must be for ever. No finite being will ever be able to drink up all the cup of God's infinite hatred to sin. No suffering of the creature could ever satisfy the demands of divine righteousness. The Son of God did that, and He alone could. The judgment of the wicked being according to righteousness, it must be for ever. They must drink the cup of God's unmixed wrath and indignation. They will

therefore be in outer darkness, far from God's holy presence, and be tormented for ever and ever.

After righteous judgment has done its work, as we have seen, there will be

new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness {2 Pet. 3:13}.

Sin will then have for ever passed away, and righteousness will dwell. There will be no imperfection in these new places; no infirmity, nor curse, nor sorrow, nor death shall stain these hallowed regions. We are told in the fourth verse,

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away {Rev. 21:4}.

Satan will have been for ever cast into the pit of eternal misery with all his associates, man for ever blessed, God for ever glorified; all the former things will have for ever passed away, and God have made all things new. It is a remarkable fact, that in the new earth there will be no more sea. Now it seems as if the vast sheets of water rolling between the various kingdoms were often a means of keeping nations peaceable, which would not be so if they were more accessible to each other; to say nothing of the impossibility of animal life being sustained without sea, as we are at present constituted. In the eternal state God will find rest; all will be according to His mind. We are told that the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God {Rev. 21:3}.

The tabernacle of God I take to be the Church; we find her spoken of in the previous verse:

I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband {Rev. 21:2}.

Observe, we do not get the Lamb spoken of here; for it is the eternal state, the kingdom has been delivered up unto the Father, and God is all in all. Neither have we “nations,” which had their origin in Babel’s pride, but it is “men” —

the tabernacle of God is with men.

Thus “men” will enjoy the presence and blessing of God as far as creature capabilities will allow. Not only will every thing like sorrow and death be for ever expunged from the earth, but God will be continually giving forth fresh blessings. Hence the promise,

I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely {Rev. 21:6}.

Thus God will be constantly blessing, and satisfying the desires of His people. All there

“Will, from the rivers of His grace, Drink endless pleasures in.”

But, side by side with this brightest, happiest picture of man in eternal blessing, we have also the misery of the unbeliever. This is again introduced here, as it appears to me, in order that there might be no room for a question as to the perpetuity of their condemnation.

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death {Rev. 21:8}.

Can any thing be more conclusive? Be assured, there is no coming out of that pit. It is impossible; for divine judgment and righteousness have put them there. There is no warrant in Scripture for purgatorial fire. Nor can we imagine that the blessed Lord would have repeated five times within

the compass of a few verses the conclusive statement,

Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched {Mark 9:44, 46, 48},

had He not intended to show the final and eternal doom that awaited the guilty and lost. Intelligent Jews doubtless understood to what He alluded. In Israel's former days of impiety large fires were lighted in the valley of the son of Hinnom, through which they caused their children to pass; as for instance in Manasseh's day. After this abomination was given up, the same pits, say in Josiah's day, were used for throwing offal and other impurities, and there worms might often be seen devouring food. But in our Lord's time it is easy to believe, that not only had the fires been extinguished, but the worms had disappeared. In the eternal scene, however, to which our Lord pointed, the fire would never be put out, nor the worm cease. It is a place

where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

Alas! for the misery that awaits the unbeliever. Can any room be possibly left for a question as to their eternal condemnation? Did not our Lord say,

He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God ABIDETH [think of that word abideth] ON HIM {John 3:36}?

May God in His infinite mercy deal with any unsaved souls in this hall to-night! He still preaches peace through Jesus Christ. The arms of Jesus are wide open to welcome poor sinners. His gracious words are as fresh, as fervent, as attractive as ever —

come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest {Matt. 11:28}.

If any sinner on the face of the earth, however deeply plunged in guilt, desires salvation, that blessed sinner-loving Jesus in glory is still able to save, and still delights in mercy. But when once He has risen up, and has shut to the door, many who are now deaf to His voice of mercy, and refuse His words of grace, will come knocking in bitterest anguish, and find it is too late!

Again, my friends, you have heard to-night of the wrath of God, the judgment, and eternal misery that await the wicked. Some of you know that you are at this moment treading the broad way to everlasting destruction. Let me, then, once more beseech you to accept the Lord Jesus as your Savior, believing God's unerring testimony to His finished work as having made a just atonement for all your sins. Then you will be able joyfully to sing,

"The cross, the cross! oh, that's my gain;

For there it was the Lamb was slain;

'Twas there my Lord was crucified,

'Twas there my Savior for me died."

Then you will be able to serve Christ, and it will be your joy to wait for His return from heaven. Those who are occupied with Christ will not think it a hard thing to walk in separation from what dishonors Him. We must be abiding in Him, if we would live for Him; and the more His personal and moral glories occupy our hearts, the more shall we desire to see His face. He has assured us that He will come again, and come quickly, and that until He come His grace is sufficient for us.

What other response then, beloved friends, to all this mercy becomes us? Can we, do we from our hearts say,

Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly {see Rev. 22:20}?

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