

WRITINGS OF EDWARD DENNETT - VOLUME 1

by Edward Dennett

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by Edward Dennett (Volume 1), compiled for study and devotional reading.

99 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. 00.00. Dennett, Edward - Library
2. 01.00. An Exposition of Second Timothy
3. 01.01. 2 Timothy 1:1-5
4. 01.02. 2 Timothy 1:6-7
5. 01.03. 2 Timothy 1:8-11
6. 01.04. 2 Timothy 1:12-18
7. 01.05. 2 Timothy 2:1-7
8. 01.06. 2 Timothy 2:8-13
9. 01.07. 2 Timothy 2:14-19
10. 01.08. 2 Timothy 2:20-26
11. 01.09. 2 Timothy 3:1-9
12. 01.10. 2 Timothy 3:10-17
13. 01.11. 2 Timothy 4:1-8
14. 01.12. 2 Timothy 4:9-22
15. 02.00. Christ as the Morning Star and the Sun of Righteousness
16. 02.0000. Table of Contents
17. 02.01. The Morning Star
18. 02.02. The Interval Between The Morning Star And The Sun Of Righteousness
19. 02.03. The Sun Of Righteousness. (Malachi 4)
20. 03.00. Daniel the Prophet
21. 03.00.3. Copyright Information
22. 03.00.4. Table of Contents
23. 03.00.5, Preface
24. 03.00.6. Introduction
25. 03.01. Daniel 1
26. 03.02. Daniel 2
27. 03.03. Daniel 3
28. 03.04. Daniel 4
29. 03.05. Daniel 5
30. 03.06. Daniel 6
31. 03.07. Daniel 7
32. 03.08. Daniel 8
33. 03.09. Daniel 9
34. 03.10. Daniel 10
35. 03.11. Daniel 11
36. 03.12. Daniel 12
37. 04.00. Exodus
38. 04.02. Prefatory
39. 04.03. ISRAEL IN EGYPT

40. 04.04. THE BIRTH OF MOSES
41. 04.05. THE COMMISSION OF MOSES
42. 04.06. FIRST MESSAGE TO PHARAOH
43. 04.07. JUDGMENTS UPON EGYPT
44. 04.08. THE PASSOVER LAMB
45. 04.09. GODS CLAIMS
46. 04.10. GOD AS THE DELIVERER OF HIS PEOPLE
47. 04.11. THE SONG OF REDEMPTION
48. 04.12. MARAH AND ELIM
49. 04.13. THE MANNA
50. 04.14. REPHIDIM AND AMALEK
51. 04.15. MILLENNIAL BLESSING
52. 04.16. SINAI.
53. 04.17. JUDGMENTS.
54. 04.18. THE RATIFICATION OF THE COVENANT.
55. 04.19. THE TABERNACLE.
56. 04.20. THE ARK WITH THE MERCY-SEAT.
57. 04.21. THE MERCY-SEAT.
58. 04.22. THE TABLE OF SHOWBREAD.
59. 04.23. THE CANDLESTICK OF PURE GOLD.
60. 04.24. THE CURTAINS OF THE TABERNACLE
61. 04.25. THE FRAMEWORK OF THE TABERNACLE.
62. 04.26. THE BEAUTIFUL VEIL, ETC.
63. 04.27. THE BRAZEN ALTAR.
64. 04.28. THE COURT OF THE TABERNACLE.
65. 04.29. THE PRIESTHOOD.
66. 04.30. THE CONSECRATION OF THE PRIESTS.
67. 04.31. THE CONTINUAL BURNT-OFFERING
68. 04.32. THE ALTAR OF INCENSE.
69. 04.33. THE ATONEMENT MONEY
70. 04.34. THE LAVER.
71. 04.35. THE HOLY ANOINTING OIL AND THE SWEET SPICES.
72. 04.36. QUALIFICATIONS FOR SERVICE
73. 04.37. APOSTASY, MEDIATION, AND RESTORATION.
74. 04.38. DEVOTEDNESS AND OBEDIENCE.
75. 05.00. Ezra
76. 05.00.3. Copyright Information
77. 05.00.4. Introduction
78. 05.01. Ezra 1
79. 05.02. Ezra 2
80. 05.03. Ezra 3
81. 05.04. Ezra 4

- 82.** 05.05. Ezra 5
- 83.** 05.06. Ezra 6
- 84.** 05.07. Ezra 7
- 85.** 05.08. Ezra 8
- 86.** 05.09. Ezra 9
- 87.** 05.10. Ezra 10
- 88.** 06.00. Fundamental Truths of Salvation
- 89.** 06.01. Chapter 1 Soul-Anxiety
- 90.** 06.02. Chapter 2 Man's State Before God
- 91.** 06.03. Chapter 3 The Blood of Christ
- 92.** 06.04. Chapter 4 Ye Must be Born Again
- 93.** 06.05. Chapter 5 Peace With God
- 94.** 06.06. Chapter 6 "What Must I do to be Saved?"
- 95.** 06.07. Chapter 7 Difficulties
- 96.** 06.08. Chapter 8 Deliverance
- 97.** 06.09. Chapter 9 The Indwelling Spirit
- 98.** 06.10. Chapter 10 Standing and Responsibility
- 99.** 06.11. Chapter 11 The Coming of the Lord

00.00. Dennett, Edward - Library

Dennett, Edward - Library

Dennett, Edward - 2Timothy

Dennett, Edward - Christ and the Morningstar and the Sun of Righteousness

Dennett, Edward - Daniel the Prophet

Dennett, Edward - Exodus

Dennett, Edward - Ezra

Dennett, Edward - Fundamental Truths of Salvation

Dennett, Edward - Haggai

Dennett, Edward - Hindrences to Fellowship

Dennett, Edward - Jonah

Dennett, Edward - Jude

Dennett, Edward - Malachi

Dennett, Edward - Nehemiah

Dennett, Edward - Pilgrim Songs

Dennett, Edward - Recovered Truths

Dennett, Edward - Simple Chrisitan Truths

Dennett, Edward - The Apocolypse

Dennett, Edward - The Blessed Hope

Dennett, Edward - The Christian Household

Dennett, Edward - The Glories of Christ as Son of Man

Dennett, Edward - The Name Above Every Name

Dennett, Edward - The Rapture, the Appearing and the Eterrnal State

Dennett, Edward - The Three Marys

Dennett, Edward - Twelve Letters To Young Believers

Dennett, Edward - Unsearchable Riches

Dennett, Edward - Zechariah

S. 1Cor 10.16

S. 1 Kings 21:1-29

S. 1 Thessalonians 2:3-12

S. 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:10

S. 1 Timothy 2:1-7

S. 2 Kings 4:1-7

S. A Spiritual Difficulty

S. All Saints

S. An Expository Jotting — The Objects of Grace.

S. As he is, so are we in this world

S. Baptism Over the Dead

S. Christ as Light and Love

S. Christ is Everything

S. Death and the Resurrection with Christ

S. Departed Leaders

S. Deuteronomy 32:3.

S. Deuteronomy 33:25.

S. Dorcas

S. Emmaus and Jerusalem

S. Empty Vessels

S. Expository Jottings

S. Expository Jottings - What is it to be seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus?

S. Genesis 14:18-20; Hebrews 7:1-3

S. Genesis 4:23-24

S. Genesis 40:14; Genesis 40:23; Luke 23:42-43

S. Gideon's Sevenfold Qualification for Service

S. God's Order

S. God's Way — of Peace; of Rest, Power & Consecration; of Holiness.

S. Hark To the Trump

S. Hebrews 4:12-13

S. Hold that fast which thou hast

S. In Christ

S. Is there a Mercy-Seat for Believers?

S. Isaiah 45:23

S. Isaiah 50:4

S. Isaiah 53:12

S. Judges 5:12

S. Jeremiah 23:9-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10-11

S. Jeremiah.

S. John 2:17

S. John 20:22-23; Acts 2:1-4

S. John 20:8-9.

S. Laodicea

S. Life out of Death

S. Luke 12:35-37

S. Luke 24:49

S. Mark 9:49-50

S. Matthew 26:27; 1 Corinthians 11:25

S. Micah 7:6; Matthew 10:35-36

S. New Creation as Distinguished from Justification.

S. Notes on Naaman.

S. Numbers 1:1-54; Numbers 2:1-34; Numbers 3:1-51; Numbers 4:1-49; Numbers 5:1-31; Numbers 6:1-27.

S. Numbers 6:1-27

S. Numbers 27:1-23; Numbers 36:1-13

S. Our Association with Christ

S. Php 3:10

S. Preface to the Vevay New Testament, 1859

S. Propitiation: What is it, and where made?

S. Psalms 40:7-8; Hebrews 10:7.

S. Psalms 45:1-17; Psalms 46:1-11; Psalms 47:1-9; Psalms 48:1-14; 2 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 2:5; 1 Corinthians 9:27.

S. Psalms 45:7; Hebrews 1:9; Exodus 24:17; Hebrews 12:29.

S. Psalms 69:4; Isaiah 29:9-14; John 17:20-da

S. Psalms 69:8-9; Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 5:7-8.

S. Psalms 84:9-11; Luke 4:5-7; Colossians 1:24.

S. Psalms 110:3

S. Psalms 132:1-18; Psalms 133:1-3; Psalms 134:1-3

S. Redemption

S. Revelation 5:9-10; Romans 2:7; Romans 6:23; 1 Timothy 6:12-19.

S. Revelation 5:12; 2 Corinthians 8:15.

S. Romans 6:6; Zechariah 9:9.

S. Romans 7:1-8; Hebrews 10:22; Genesis 26:1-35; John 12:42-43.

S. Romans 14:5-6; Galatians 4:10-11; Colossians 2:16-17; 2 Timothy 2:20-21; Matthew 28:19; 2 Kings 2:12.

S. Scriptural Holiness

S. Song of Solomon 8:6-7; John 14:16; John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:7; 1 Timothy 3:6-7.

S. Spiritual Sloth and the Means of Restoration

S. Suited Ministry

S. The Blood of Christ

S. The Candlestick of Pure Gold

S. The Conditions of Guidance

S. The Efficacy of the Blood of Christ

S. The Everlasting Arms

S. The House of God

S. The Lamb of God

S. The Lord is at Hand

S. The Lord's Prayer

- S. The Revised Version of the New Testament
- S. The Sin of Miriam and Aaron
- S. The Table of Showbread
- S. The Unveiled Face
- S. The Urgency of Grace
- S. This light bread
- S. Three Addresses on the Lord's Return
- S. Titus 1:5.
- S. Transfiguration
- S. What God is -- God is Love.
- S. What is it to be seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus?
- S. What is our power for walk?
- S. Widows Indeed
- S. Zechariah 3:9; 2 Timothy 2:19; Zechariah 4:7; Matthew 21:21; Php 1:6-10; 2 Timothy 1:12-15.

01.00. An Exposition of Second Timothy

An Exposition of Second Timothy by

Edward Dennett

***** This module is brought to you by www.DoctorDaveT.com For more Bible Study modules that are

conservative

evangelical

Bible believing

Christ honoring

make sure you stop by www.DoctorDaveT.com! We have hundreds of modules easily organized by topics, like these:

Old Testament Exposition (topic modules)

New Testament Exposition (topic modules)

Doctrinal Theology (topic modules)

Commentary Modules

Dictionary Modules

and a whole lot more! Please visit www.DoctorDaveT.com!

Dave

01.01. 2 Timothy 1:1-5

2 Timothy 1:1-5

There is a great and felt difference between the first and second epistles to Timothy. The former contemplates the assembly in its pristine order, with everything regulated by the divine word; the latter deals with the path of the faithful in a time of confusion and departure from the truth. There are two verses which express this difference. In the first, the Apostle writes of the "house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15); whereas in the second, he has to speak of some "Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure," etc. (2 Timothy 2:18-19.) This was now the consolation that, if confusion reigned in the house of God, if vessels to dishonor had become mingled with the vessels to honor, the foundation, laid of God Himself, was immovable. Still it must have been an unspeakable sorrow to the Apostle to behold the outward decay and corruption of Christianity, the almost open departure of the Church from the holy ground on which he, by the grace of God, had been enabled to plant it. In truth it was an exhibition of what has been seen in every age and in every dispensation; namely, the failure of that which had been entrusted to the responsible hands of men. For if Christ, on the one hand, builds the Church, and builds that, as He surely does, which is imperishable and indestructible, He, on the other hand, permits His servants to build also; and many of these as surely build up upon the foundation wood, hay, stubble (1 Corinthians 3:1-23), and thereby the outward form and presentation of the house of God are corrupted. This, as we have said, had already taken place in the days of the Apostle; and in this epistle he not only expresses the feelings of his own heart with respect to this sorrowful state of things, but he is also led to give such directions as avail for the guidance and conduct of exercised souls in the midst of the prevalent disorders.

2 Timothy 1:1-2 contain the address and the greeting. "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." In other epistles he presented himself as a "servant" (Romans 1:1; Php 1:1; Titus 1:1); but here he views himself in his apostolic character, as one sent and commissioned by the Lord Himself, and, as such, having authority which no unfaithfulness on the part of others could nullify. He might be, as indeed he was, forsaken, if not refused, by many; but the authority entrusted to him survived. It is the same now as to gift. Wherever this is found, the privilege and responsibility to use it abide, even though it may not be acknowledged by the saints. The Head of the Church who bestows it counts upon, and holds the person on whom it is bestowed responsible for, its faithful employment. (Compare Matthew 25:14-30.)

He was, moreover, Apostle by the will of God. This, and nothing less than this, was the ground and source of his office. Called by the Lord Himself, he was called by the will of God; and this certainty in his soul was the secret of his courage and devotedness in the Lord's service. (Compare Joshua 1:9.) And if by the will of God, it was "according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus." The truth may be departed from, and the testimony be consequently surrendered, but the life which is

in Christ Jesus—eternal life—is indestructible, as it is also outside of and above all question of failure or corruption. The Apostle therefore takes this ground in this inspired communication to Timothy; for grievous as it must have been to him to see the light of the golden candlestick (Revelation 1:1-20) dimmed if not extinguished, the thought of the immutable character of life, secured in Christ Jesus by the unchangeable promise of God, could not fail to minister powerful consolation to his soul. It is well to keep these two things distinct. As to life and salvation, every believer will be kept through faith by the power of God (see 1 Peter 1:3-5); but the place of testimony, whether corporately or individually, may be, and often is, forfeited through unfaithfulness, or through succumbing to the influences of this present evil age.

"To Timothy, my dearly beloved son," etc., more exactly, "[my] beloved child." In the first epistle, Paul names him, "[my] true child in the faith" (J.N.D. Trans.), thus pointing him out as one that walked in his own footsteps in regard to the truth; here it is the expression of his own heart for the one who, as a son with his father, had served with Paul in the gospel. In truth, the heart of the Apostle clung to Timothy at such a moment of sorrow; and his pouring out his heart in this way became the basis of the appeals and exhortations he was about to address to his beloved child. This is divine in its method, for it is ever God's way to reveal the depth of His affections for the saints before giving to them words of guidance or admonition. (See 1 Corinthians 1:1-31, and Colossians 3:12-17.)

"Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." It has often been noticed that, when writing to assemblies, the Apostle, in his salutation, says grace and peace, but in the epistles to individuals, he says mercy.* The reason is that as individuals we need mercy, because of our weakness and infirmities every step of the road (see Hebrews 4:14-16); whereas the Church is regarded as on the perfect ground of redemption before God, without any consideration of weakness or even failure. It is, as another has written, the perfect grace of God by Christ, the perfect peace of man, and that with God; it was this which he (the Apostle) brought in the gospel and in his heart. These are the true conditions of God's relationship with man, and that of man with God, by the gospel—the ground on which Christianity places man. The grace, as well as the truth, came by, and was perfectly expressed in, Jesus Christ.' "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son"—this is pure and sovereign grace. And the first announcement the Lord made to His assembled disciples, on the evening of the first day of the week, was, "Peace be unto you." In this salutation therefore we find the revelation of the heart of God, and the effect of the finished work of Christ, together with the provision of mercy, secured by the present ministration of Christ on high, for the pathway through this scene while awaiting His return.

2 Timothy 1:4-5. First, in thanking God, the Apostle makes the remarkable statement, "Whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience." He had said the same thing in effect when standing before the sanhedrin (Acts 23:1; see also Acts 24:16); and it is necessary to seize the true import of these words. That his forefathers had been godly persons is manifest, as also that they had been distinguished by a conscientious observance of the law, walking according to the light they had received, being governed by the Word as far as they comprehended it. And this, as we understand, is what Paul here affirms of himself, that while he was in Judaism he maintained a good conscience, did not permit himself any known violations of the law, being even then, as "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Php 3:6). But this has nothing to say as to the state of his heart when a Jew; only he insists that he preserved, until of course the light

flashed into his soul when on his way to Damascus, an upright conscientious course; and also that this characterized his service after his conversion as an apostle. He ever pressed this point as of the utmost importance (see 1 Timothy 1:5; 1 Timothy 1:19; 1 Timothy 3:9; 1 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:15; Hebrews 13:18); and we would do well to remember it, for nothing more exposes the Lord's servant, and Christians indeed generally, to the darts of Satan than a bad conscience. It is to lack the breastplate of righteousness, without which our most vital parts are laid bare to his weapons. The subject of the Apostle's thanksgiving is, "that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day." It is a striking way to put it, one that would not ordinarily be adopted by saints, because perhaps we are less mindful than he was, that we are entirely indebted to the grace of God for power to remember anyone incessantly in prayer. Paul therefore gives thanks that he had been able to bear up Timothy before the Lord—a sure sign, too, it may be added, inasmuch as he penned these words under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that Timothy needed his prayers, and thus that Paul was in communion as to him with the mind of God.

Then follow expressions which reveal the Apostle's fervent affection for his beloved child in the faith; "Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy." 2 Timothy 1:4. Recalling Timothy's affection inflames his own; and while expressing it, consolation is doubtless ministered to his own heart. The occasion of Timothy's tears is not revealed; but it was probably at the time of some separation, bidding him farewell, it may be, when leaving him in captivity, as he departed to his own service. Whenever it might have been, it plainly shows that the affection of Paul was fully reciprocated, and that it was no common tie that knit together the hearts of these two servants of the Lord. It was the recollection of this parting, combined with his own ardent love, that led him to desire to see Timothy that he might be filled with joy; for to him the Apostle could unburden his heart, and be refreshed in the enjoyment of Timothy's love and fellowship. Many a servant, in times of declension, has thus learned the sweetness and encouragement of real heart fellowship concerning the work of the Lord.

Then, putting Timothy in this respect in a similar position to his own in relation to his ancestors, he adds, "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded in thee also." 2 Timothy 1:5. The position is similar, but it is not, as in Paul's case, a good conscience, but "unfeigned faith"; for Timothy had no Jewish ancestry, for his father was a Greek. And hence, though his mother was a Jewess, he was unclean according to the Jewish law. He is thus traced back only to the commencement of the Christian faith in his family, which dated from his grandmother.

It is a beautiful picture, drawn for our instruction; for we learn from this same epistle that Timothy from a child had known (and who can doubt, through the teaching of these pious women, or at least his mother?) the Holy Scriptures. Both the grandmother and mother, as well as Timothy, had embraced the Christian faith; and the Apostle seems to regard this fact as proving the greater reality of "the faith" in Timothy's soul, and as laying him, as will afterward be seen, under all the more solemn obligation of faithfulness to the Lord in this loose and corrupt epoch of the Church. The reflection cannot but be evoked from the mind of every reader, that it is a priceless blessing to have godly parents, and such godly parents as seek to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The judgment seat of Christ alone will reveal how much Timothy was indebted, in the grace of God, to the instructions of his mother Eunice. May such parents ever abound in the Church of God!

01.02. 2 Timothy 1:6-7

2 Timothy 1:6-7 The expression of the Apostle's heart to Timothy, as well as his longing desire to see him, is but preparatory to the appeal contained in 2 Timothy 1:6-8. It is indeed the groundwork on which he builds up his exhortations. He thus drew the heart of Timothy to himself, to prepare him to receive his message. "Wherefore," he says, "I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands." 2 Timothy 1:6. By the light of the first epistle we may understand the whole history of Timothy's gift. In 2 Timothy 1:1-18 we find that he had been pointed out as a chosen vessel of gift by prophecies (of course, in the assembly), and that Paul accordingly committed to him a "charge." 2 Timothy 4:14 further teaches that the bestowment of the gift, "given thee by prophecy," was accompanied by "the laying on of the hands of the presbytery"; and now we learn that it was the Apostle himself, "the presbytery" being associated with him, who was the instrument or channel appointed by the Head of the Church for the actual communication of the gift to Timothy. It is the ascended Christ who, having led captivity captive, gave, and still gives, gifts to men, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. And Timothy was honored, in the sovereign favor of God, in being made a vessel for the blessing of the saints. It is of this he is reminded by the Apostle, and charged at the same time to "stir up" the gift of God.

Previously he had been warned not to "neglect" it (1 Timothy 4:14); now he is more urgently exhorted on the same subject. This points to a common danger. When there is a real action of the Spirit of God among the saints, when His power is demonstrated in edification and restoration, or in conversion, the ministry of the Word is welcomed and appreciated. But in times of coldness, indifference, and apostasy, the saints will not endure sound teaching, but after their own lusts they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they will turn away from the truth (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

Then comes the danger to the servant of the Lord. Seeing that his ministry is no longer received, he is tempted to retire, to lapse into silence, or to resolve with Jeremiah not to speak any more in the Lord's name to the people (Jeremiah 20:9). As knowing the heart and the tendency of Timothy, Paul provides against this snare by urging; him to rouse himself, and to stir up by constant use the gift he had received for the correction and edification of the Lord's people. The greater the confusion and departure from the truth, the greater the need for a real and living ministry; but in order to maintain this, the servant must learn to draw his strength and courage, not from the faces of the people, but from abiding and secret communion with the Lord.

If the Lord, through His Apostle, summons Timothy to more diligent service, He also draws his attention to the source of his power. "For," continues the Apostle, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." 2 Timothy 1:7. The first clause, which might be rendered the spirit of "cowardice," reveals Timothy's especial weakness. He evidently was a man, like Jeremiah, of a timid, shrinking spirit—one who only with difficulty, unless under the sway of the Holy Spirit, could face dangers and opponents. But while the servant of the Lord "must

not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient" (2 Timothy 2:24), he must be also as bold as a lion in the defense of the truth, and in maintaining the honor of his Lord. Timothy is therefore taught that the spirit God gives is not one of fear or cowardice, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

These are three remarkable words, and they require a little examination. First, it is a spirit of power; for if God bestows gift, He gives also the power to exercise it; that is, it should be added, if there is the state of soul for its use.

It is indeed of the last importance to remember the connection between state of soul and the power of the Spirit. The gift may abide even in one who is unfaithful or indifferent; but the power to use it will not be present unless its possessor is walking in dependence upon God, unless he lives in the acknowledgment that power is outside of himself, and in the realization of his own utter weakness. This is the Apostle's point: "God," he says, "bath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power." If therefore the servant, and Timothy was to learn it, is animated with fear or timidity, he should know that this is not the spirit God gives, for His Spirit is one of power.

These two things are to be noted—the source of the power, and the character of the spirit given. Moreover, the spirit is also "of love." The Apostle follows in this the same order as in 1 Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 he speaks of spiritual manifestations in the assembly; and, at the end of the chapter, of workers of miracles, gifts of healing, and speaking with tongues—all of which are connected with displays of power. And then in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, he proceeds to speak of love, teaching that if anyone spoke with the tongues of men and angels, and had not love, he would become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal; for in truth divine power can only be wielded by the Spirit, through a divine nature; for of this it is that love is the expression. The flesh, man's sinful nature, can never be used in the Lord's service; and thus power and love—divine, holy love—can never be dissociated. There will also be, as a consequence of love, a sound mind, or, as it has been translated, "a wise discretion"; for when governed by the Spirit of God, the servant will always exhibit divine wisdom in his work, and be kept in quiet control and subduedness in the presence of God. He will know when to speak and when to be silent, when to be in season and when to be out of season; for he will be maintained in communion with the mind of his Lord.

01.03. 2 Timothy 1:8-11

2 Timothy 1:8-11

Such being the characteristics of the spirit God gives to His servants, the Apostle proceeds to exhortation: "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." 2 Timothy 1:8.

There is, perhaps, an implied contrast in this exhortation; thus, many are becoming ashamed of the testimony (see 2 Timothy 1:15), but be not thou ashamed. And the danger, as before indicated, might have beset Timothy at this moment when almost all were turning aside, and when the elect vessel of the testimony was a poor despised prisoner. It is a remarkable fact that, so early in the history of the Church, as once before indeed at Antioch when Paul withstood Peter to the face, the maintenance of the truth of God depended upon the faithfulness of one man, and he a captive. Courage, and such courage as God alone could give, was requisite at such a crisis, that the spirit of power which alone could enable Timothy to stem the adverse currents that were sweeping by him on every side with such velocity and force. Did he waver at this time in his allegiance to the testimony of the Lord? God only knows; but we may be sure that this fervent, pleading exhortation reached him at the needed moment.

Mark, too, that the vessel of the testimony is identified with the testimony; for the Apostle adds, "nor of me His prisoner." Many profess to hold and to love the truth, while they would fain stand apart from those to whom the testimony is committed. But this can never be, as our passage shows, according to the mind of God; and hence it would have been as displeasing to Him, if Timothy had been ashamed of Paul, as if he had been ashamed of the testimony. Or to put it still more strongly, to have been ashamed of Paul, being what he was, would have been to be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord.

There is however more: not only was he not to be ashamed either of the message or the messenger, but he was also to be fully and openly identified with both. "Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." Another translation will bring out more clearly the Apostle's meaning: "Suffer evil along with the gospel." The gospel is in a way personified, and Timothy is urged to cast in his lot with it fully and entirely, at whatever cost, that the reproaches which might fall upon it might also be borne by him (compare Romans 15:3); and the significant words are added, to encourage him in this course, "according to the power of God," the power which God bestows upon His servants to sustain them in the presence of the adversary, and to maintain His truth in the face of all danger; for no human energy, no steadfastness of purpose, nothing short of divine power, will avail in the conflicts of service in the gospel. The mention of the power of God leads the Apostle back and upward to the source of all the blessing which was flowing out through the gospel; namely, to God's purpose and grace, as the immutable foundation on which God was working, and as the assurance that no efforts of the enemy could frustrate the accomplishment of the thoughts of God. "Who hath saved us," he says, "and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which

was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality [incorruptibility, it should be rendered] to light through the gospel." 2 Timothy 1:9-10.

What a comprehensive statement! What a sweep of vision! -first, back into eternity, and then onward to the time when death will be swallowed up in victory! For what is it the Apostle here brings before us? First, that if God has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, it is not because of anything we are or have done, but according to His own eternal counsels of grace, and grace given to us (let the reader mark the language—"given to us") in Christ Jesus before the world began. Then he points out that the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, was in pursuance of God's purposes, and that by His death and resurrection death has been abolished; and life and incorruptibility, the resurrection of the body, have been brought to light through the glad tidings which were now being proclaimed. As has been written, "It is a counsel of God, formed and established in Christ before the world existed, which has its place in the ways of God, outside and above the world, in union with the Person of His Son, and in order to manifest a people united with Him in glory. Thus it is a grace which was given us in Him before the world was. Hidden in the counsels of God, this purpose of God was manifested in the manifestation of Him in whom it had its accomplishment. It was not merely blessings and dealings of God with regard to men—it was life, eternal life in the soul, and incorruptibility in the body. Thus Paul was an apostle according to the promise of life."

There are several distinct steps in the unfolding or realization of these blessings. After the purpose of God there was the appearing of Christ in this world; there were His death and resurrection, the means of the accomplishment of the divine counsels; there was, together with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, the proclamation of the glorious message of the gospel; then, those who by grace received the message were saved and called with a holy calling, and made to know, at the same time, that all was of grace; and, last, there was the possession of life, eternal life,* along with the prospect of the resurrection of the body-incorruptibility. It was Paul's mission to unfold these things in his preaching, as he says, "Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles." 2 Timothy 1:11; see also 1 Timothy 2:7. The solemnity of the times led the Apostle, it might be said, to magnify his office, to insist upon the fact that he had been divinely appointed as a herald, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles; and, by the grace of God, his life was consecrated to his work, so that no adversities, no hindrances, could daunt his courage or extinguish his zeal; for he was able to say, as we find in another epistle, "To me to live is Christ."

*Strictly speaking, eternal life is generally regarded as future in Paul's epistles, as he presents it in its full results-conformity to Christ in glory.

01.04. 2 Timothy 1:12-18

2 Timothy 1:12-18 In the preceding verse the Apostle explains that he had been appointed (not of man, as he informs the Galatians, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead) as the herald and apostle of the gospel; and now he speaks of the consequences of his mission as to himself, together with his sustainment and consolation: "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." His present sufferings were those resulting from his captivity (2 Timothy 1:8), and from the opposition now everywhere encountered by the gospel, as also from being deserted by so many professed believers, and perhaps teachers (2 Timothy 1:15). And he regards these sufferings as flowing out from the position he occupied in reference to the gospel (2 Timothy 2:9); that is to say, the faithful prosecution of his mission entailed upon him these sorrows and persecutions. Nor could it be otherwise at such a moment, nor indeed at any moment. For wherever a servant of the Lord seeks to serve Him alone, and to cling to His Word in spite of all opposition, against that man will be arrayed all the forces of the enemy. It was so with Paul, so that (as he tells us in the next chapter) he suffered trouble in the work of the gospel as an evildoer, even unto bonds, therein following, if at a distance, the footsteps of his Master, who suffered unto death, and that the death of the cross, because of His fidelity, perfect fidelity, as God's witness on the earth. But if the Apostle was in his service encompassed by suffering, he knew where to turn for comfort and strength. On man's part it was trouble and persecution, but when he looked up, all was assurance and confidence; and hence he could say, "Nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed"; and he could leave himself and his circumstances entirely in His hands. Moreover, man was powerless as to the eternal issue before his soul. He might apparently succeed in hindering the testimony by shutting up the Apostle in prison; he might, as the tool of Satan, drive away many of his companions; he might even be permitted to make a martyr of Paul; but if so, he would have to learn that he had but been yoked to the chariot wheels of God's purposes, and that he had not been able to touch that which was most precious as to Paul, so also to Christ. Man may kill the body, but can do no more; and knowing this, the Apostle was confident that the Lord could and would keep that which he had committed unto Him against that day—the day when all things will be made manifest, when the Lord will come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that have believed. It is to that period the Apostle looks; and meanwhile he was able to trust the Lord, not only for his own salvation and eternal happiness, but also for the recompense of his service. The enemy could do nothing with such a man, because his hopes and joys were outside of the scene through which he moved.

Having given the ground of his own confidence in the midst of his present circumstances, he turns again to exhortation. "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." 2 Timothy 1:13-14. These are very important exhortations, and require careful attention. The form of sound words is rather an outline—an outline of the truth in

the inspired words which Timothy had heard from the Apostle. Elsewhere Paul affirms that his teaching was "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which [in the words which] the Holy Ghost teacheth" (1 Corinthians 2:13). He thus claimed inspiration, not only for the matter, but also for the words in which his apostolic communications were made; and hence it is, as another has said, that we are never sure we have the truth unless we have the very language which contains it. In a day when rationalism and infidelity (both springing from the same root, the latter being but the full development of man's reason) are seeking to pervert the foundations of God's revelation to man in the Scriptures, it is necessary to reassert the truth which the Apostle affirms; for the infallible certainty of the Word of God is the only rock on which the soul can securely repose amid the changing sea of the speculations of man's wandering mind.

It is for this reason that Paul exhorts Timothy to have an outline of Scripture teaching in inspired words, that he might ever be prepared to authoritatively instruct the enquirer, or to confute the adversary. The difference between this that Paul pressed on Timothy and creed lies in this: Timothy's outline was to be in divine words, whereas the creeds of Christendom are expressed in human language; and on this very account they fail, even when "orthodox," to express the full truth of revelation. Timothy's outline was inspired without any human admixture; the creeds are composed by human minds, taking Scripture, as far as their authors understood it, as the basis, and given in the words of man's wisdom.

Paul had taught Timothy, as already said, in divine words; and these words were to be used by him in the way directed, forming a compendium in scriptural language of Christian doctrine, as there were but few New Testament scriptures at that time in existence. Timothy then was to have and to hold fast the form of sound words; but if he was enjoined to do this, the manner in which it was to be done is also given. It was to be "in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." Dissociate even the truth from Christ, and it will become a dead thing; use it apart from faith and love, and it will be a powerless weapon. The Apostle therefore guards his "son" Timothy in his service by reminding him of his need of using nothing but the truth in his conflicts, of holding the truth in the living activities of his soul, and as flowing from and being the expression of the glory of Christ. Faith comes by hearing the Word; but if it is produced by it, in its presentation of a God of grace in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, it leads back to it, not only as the foundation on which it is based, but also as containing the sources of all divine knowledge. Faith, moreover, in attaching itself to its object, Christ, as revealed in the Scriptures, works by love, or rather, apprehending the divine and infinite love unfolded in Christ; love also is immediately begotten in the soul, for we love Him who first loved us. And faith and love are necessarily in Christ Jesus-in Him, for He is the source, Object, and sphere of both alike. (Compare 1 Timothy 1:14.)

If Timothy was to hold fast the objective truth, there was also another thing he was to keep; namely, "that good thing... committed unto thee." In 1 Timothy 1:12 the Apostle had said that he was persuaded that the One whom he had believed was able to keep that which he had committed to Him against that day. Literally, it is "my deposit"; and in 1 Timothy 1:14 the rendering should be "the good deposit keep," etc. If on the one hand we have a "deposit" (all our hopes of glory) with Christ, He on the other hand entrusts His servants with a deposit. The question then is, What is this good deposit? It cannot be eternal life, or salvation; for the keeping of this belongs to Christ Himself, and hence it is probably the truth -the truth as committed to the stewardship of His servants- to be maintained by them in all fidelity while serving in the prospect of that day.

(Compare 1 Timothy 6:13-14.)

Timothy's gift was also a deposit, and that, as we have seen, he was to hold and use in the service of his Master; but the connection here points rather to the interpretation we have given. And, indeed, unless we guard, and carefully guard, the truth in our own souls, we shall never be able to use it rightly in service. It is thus the first thing, in connection with the whole armor of God, that the loins should be girt about with truth (Ephesians 4:1-32). If, therefore, we would be faithful witnesses for Christ in a day of declension, the truth must first have its rightful place over our own hearts and consciences, and must be jealously watched over and guarded if the witness-bearing is to be continued. The Apostle reminds Timothy that the only power for this is the Holy Ghost, and also that he already possessed that power. "Keep," he says, "by the Holy Ghost which dwells in us, the good deposit" (J.N.D. Trans.). It is well to remember that if the Lord send us on any service, or if He set us for the defense of the truth in a day of difficulty, He has given us a power that is equal to all the demands that can be made upon us. We are too often occupied with the sense of our own feebleness, instead of with the power possessed through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle turns again to his own circumstances; but if he does so, it is but to bring out into bright relief the contrast between unfaithfulness and fidelity, as also to teach us how precious the latter is to God. First, we have the dark side: "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes." 2 Timothy 1:15. It was through Paul's preaching that "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10); and thus they were, in no small degree, his debtors. But now, together with the aged and devoted Apostle's being in prison, they had lost their first love; the fervency of their zeal had cooled, and they had become ashamed of God's chosen vessel of the truth. It was not that they were not really Christians, nor, perhaps, that they had become open backsliders, much less apostates; but they were not prepared to suffer from identification with the rejected servant. They had undoubtedly fallen in with the course of this age, and would thus be tempted to regard Paul as an extreme man, as too exclusive, as an enthusiast, as one who imperiled the progress of Christianity by his fanaticism. They thus turned away from him, seeking smoother paths, where the cross would be lighter.

Two names of those who forsook Paul are given-Phygellus and Hermogenes-and the fact that their names are given shows that they were well known, probably leaders among the saints-those, therefore, who would lend a sanction to this unfaithful course. It may be that the teaching of these men had adapted itself to the currents of the moment; for the tendencies of any age always find expression through some who claim the place of teachers. Be this as it may, it was a sad spectacle-public Christianity, that is, the outward form of it in this world, severing itself from the chosen vessel of the truth! On the other hand, there is no grander sight than that of Paul-deserted, alone, in captivity-retaining through grace his confidence in the Lord, and in the truth committed to his charge. If faint, he was still pursuing; and if he were weary in his lonely conflict, his hand still clave to his sword (see 2 Samuel 23:10).

There was one ray of light amid the gloom of the moment, one rill of consolation flowing into the heart of the Apostle from the heart of God, through His servant Onesiphorus. This godly man, so far from being ashamed of Paul or his chain, being in Rome, sought him out very diligently, and rested not until he had found him, and was used of the Lord to minister refreshment to the captive Apostle. Precious privilege vouchsafed to Onesiphorus! Precious also to the weary soul of Paul

were these cups of cold water which Onesiphorus put to his thirsty lips! And the Lord saw this blessed service, and esteemed it as rendered unto Himself. "I was in prison, and ye came unto Me" (Matthew 25:36). The gratitude of the Apostle's heart turned into a prayer for Onesiphorus. "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: but when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well." 2 Timothy 1:16-18. The Apostle's prayer embraces a present and a future blessing. He desires present mercy for the house of Onesiphorus; that is, he prays for the members of Onesiphorus' family, of his household indeed, and also that the Lord would grant Onesiphorus himself to find mercy from "the Lord in that day." "That day" refers to the Lord's appearing (see 2 Timothy 1:12), when He will display His own in glory, and when the recompense, in grace, of each of His servants will likewise be exhibited. Onesiphorus had already been the object of mercy in his salvation; but, as passing through the wilderness, he was "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 1:21). And it is this, mercy in its full fruit and consummation, that Paul prays he may find in that day. The closing statement shows that it was not the first time Onesiphorus had been of service to Paul. In Ephesus too he had ministered in many things to the Apostle, and the Spirit of God has caused it to be recorded here, as it is also recorded in heaven, to teach us that He marks and appreciates the slightest kindness shown to His servants in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

01.05. 2 Timothy 2:1-7

2 Timothy 2:1-7 The connection of this chapter with that which precedes it is both intimate and striking. The Apostle was led to depict his circumstances and his situation in the darkest colors; for in truth nothing could be gloomier to the outward eye than the outlook at that moment. He himself was a prisoner, and "all they which are in Asia" had turned away from him. It was therefore a grave crisis in the history of Christianity, and one in which divine wisdom was required to guide aright the feet of the faithful. What then are the counsels which, at such a time, the Apostle gives to his "son" Timothy? First, he says, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 2:1. It is not what most would have expected. At a time when so many were turning their backs upon God's chosen vessel of the truth, surely some degree of severity, some little sharpness, would be advisable to recall the saints to a sense of their responsibility before God in acknowledging the authority of His servant. Such might have been the thoughts of man; the thoughts of God were of another kind. Timothy was to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus -the grace given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began -that grace of which Christ in His incarnation and death, was and is the expression, and which is stored up in Him (see 2 Corinthians 8:9). This is full of instruction. But how was Timothy to be strong in grace? The word is the same, for example, as that found in Php 4:13, and this will supply the key to its interpretation. It means that he was to be strengthened inwardly by this grace, so that he would be best prepared to stand in an evil day, and to cope with its prevailing evils. There is no weapon we are so often tempted to lay aside as grace; but we learn here that it is in proportion to outward decay, unfaithfulness, and corruption, that we need to be built up, fortified by it, in order to deal effectually with the difficulties of the path. The man of God himself therefore must be continually established in grace, as well as be unflinching in its presentation as the mightiest means, in the power of the Holy Ghost, both to confirm the wavering and to recover the backslider. In the next place, he says, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." 2 Timothy 2:2. This remarkable instruction is very significant. It shows clearly that no further revelation was to be expected, and that the provision contemplated, as a barrier against the inroads of false doctrines and pernicious errors, was the transmission of the truth as it had been received of the Apostle (and certified to be apostolic teaching by many witnesses) to faithful men who should be competent to hand it on unadulterated to others. Not a hint is given of any successors of the apostles, or of any authority whatever in the Church, to whom an appeal might be made to define the truth and to expose false doctrines. The Apostle's confidence is in God and the word of His grace (see Acts 20:32); only he would have Timothy to be diligent in imparting the truth to such as would be thereby qualified to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. The waves of error were already rolling in from every quarter, and the inspired Apostle urges his beloved Timothy to raise up in this manner breakwaters to intercept their force, and to guard the saints from their destructive power. So now our safety is to be found first in building ourselves up on our most holy faith, and then in diligently instructing the saints, that they may know how to discern between truth and error, and thus to detect the artifices of the adversary. The Apostle proceeds to insist upon some necessary

personal qualifications for the work to which Timothy was called: "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth, himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who bath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits." 2 Timothy 2:3-6. Every servant of the Lord should ponder, and ponder again and again in the presence of God, these grave and weighty words-words which will never lose their solemn force as long as laborers are found in the Lord's work. First then the servant must know how to endure hardness*, for such must be expected by every "good soldier of Jesus Christ." None knew this better than he who penned these words, who, after recounting his persecutions and dangers, adds, "In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." 2 Corinthians 11:27. If therefore he exhorted Timothy to take his share in suffering, he had himself trodden the path, and thus does but encourage him to follow in the same steps. And where is the servant, it may be inquired, who does not need this admonition? To shun the cross is a common temptation, and it is only when we are under the power of the constraining love of Christ, with a single eye to His glory, that we are impelled to a joyful identification with the sorrows and sufferings of His interests here upon the earth.

(*Literally it is to suffer affliction, or, as it has been translated, "Take thy share in suffering" (see 2 Timothy 1:8).) The figure employed institutes a comparison. A soldier on service expects to endure "hardness," and so also should the soldiers of Christ. The Apostle therefore adds, that no man that warreth entangles himself with the affairs of this life. He makes arrangements, on the other hand, to lay aside all his business responsibilities that he may be absolutely free from all other claims so as to be at the absolute disposal of his commander. Are the soldiers of Christ to be on any lower level? Are they to seek to serve two masters? Are they to engage only in the conflict when they can spare time from other engagements? Most blessed is it when busy men devote their leisure to the Lord's work, preferring His interests to their own ease and comfort; but the Apostle speaks here of another class of servants who, in the power of the Holy Ghost, disengage themselves from every human claim because they desire to please, to be under the absolute control of, the Captain of their salvation. It will be a sad day for the Church and for the saints when such are no longer found, and a sure sign of the decay of the energy of the Holy Ghost in their midst.

Another figure is next introduced for further instruction. In the olden games and contests, those who strove were bound to observe the rules, if they would obtain the prize. So likewise those who engage in the Lord's conflicts have to remember that they must "strive lawfully," be in subjection to His conditions of service, which must be carried on in conformity to His will and His Word. This is of the utmost importance; for many a right thing is done, even by otherwise good soldiers of Jesus Christ, in a wrong manner or at a wrong moment, whereby the end is defeated. The Lord's servants must wait entirely upon the Lord's will, both for the time and the mode of their warfare, or they will not gain the crown of His approval. Nowhere is this more plainly taught than in the siege of Jericho. To human eyes the manner of conducting it, the method of warfare, was nothing but folly; but it was the Lord's way (and "the foolishness of God is wiser than men"), and the victory was assured. In addition, the husbandman (and this introduces yet another comparison) must first labor before he can partake of the fruits*. Our Lord reminded His disciples of the same principle when He said, "He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he

that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." John 4:36. It is indeed a universal law, that labor must be expended before the harvest can be enjoyed; and it is this which Paul recalled to the mind of Timothy. The tendency of all, and especially of the Lord's servants, is to forget this salutary truth in the intense desire to gather in and feast upon the fruit. It should therefore be remembered, and thereby we should be saved from many disappointments, that now is the time of labor, and that it will be the time of labor until the Lord's return, and hence that our only concern should be to be found diligent and faithful in our service. The time of partaking of the fruit is future, and the knowledge of this will encourage our hearts to persevere in service, and all the more in that our enjoyment of the fruit will be in communion with the Lord. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall, doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Psalms 126:6.

(*The translation of this verse is somewhat difficult, but the con text leaves but little doubt that the sense is as given above.) The Apostle, having placed these things before Timothy, urges them upon his attention: "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." 2 Timothy 2:7. If we take these words as they stand, they contain an exhortation and a prayer, or at least the expression of a strong desire, which directs Timothy at the same time to the Lord as the source of the power to understand divine things. It would seem, however, as stated below, that the better reading is, "The Lord shall give thee understanding in all things." This gives a slightly different, though very important, meaning. While equally reminding Timothy of his dependence on the Lord for power to apprehend His mind, it gives also a connection between considering, or thinking upon, the apostolic communications, and the action of the Lord in opening his mind to understand Paul's inspired words. And this connection always subsists. The more we consider, weigh, meditate upon the Scriptures, the greater will be the activity of the Holy Spirit in unfolding their teachings to our souls. It is indeed when we are occupied with the Word of God in calm and peace, in the presence of God, that the Lord draws near and gives us understanding; and hence this exhortation to Timothy. It is therefore not by the application of the mind, but by the operation of the Holy Spirit, that divine things are entered into and understood- a lesson much needed in a day of mental activity and intellectual research. This exhortation would seem to be a connecting link between verses 6 and 8, and applies therefore to that which precedes as well as to that which follows.

01.06. 2 Timothy 2:8-13

2 Timothy 2:8-13 The transition from a consideration of the needed personal qualifications for the work to which Timothy was called to the motives which would sustain him is in the highest degree significant. In one word, the Apostle sets Timothy down in the presence of the Lord—"Remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel" (I believe this to be a more accurate translation). The difference is important; for, taking them as they stand in the original, it is at once perceived that "Jesus Christ raised from the dead" is the prominent thought, and also more especially connected with the words, "according to my gospel." For it was indeed the gospel of the glory of Christ, "who is the image of God," that was committed to Paul (2 Corinthians 3:4), the gospel that proclaimed that Jesus Christ, the Christ who had been here and was crucified, had been raised from the dead and glorified as man at the right hand of God, having the glory of God displayed in His face. The expression, "of the seed of David," tells us that Christ was true man, and what He was on earth in His presentation to the Jews. In the epistle to the Romans the same two things, if not in the same order, are linked together. Giving them as they really stand, we read, "The gospel of God,... concerning His Son,... which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead," "Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 1:1-4. As to the force of the combination of these two aspects in Timothy—Jesus Christ raised from the dead, and His being of the seed of David—we may give the language of another:

"The truth of the gospel (dogma is not the subject here) was divided into two parts,... the fulfillment of the promises, and the power of God in resurrection. These, in fact, are, as it were, the two pivots of the truth—God faithful to His promises (shown especially in connection with the Jews), and God mighty to produce an entirely new thing by His creative and quickening power as manifested in the resurrection, which also put the seal of God upon the 'Person and work of Christ.'" It was Jesus Christ, therefore, in all this wide-embracing character, as born into this world of the seed of David, but as having been raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, that Timothy was to remember to have ever before his soul, as containing the whole truth of his message, and as supplying him with an all-powerful motive for fidelity and endurance in his work. This was, as we have seen, Paul's gospel; and now we learn once again (see 2 Timothy 1:8-12) that its proclamation entailed persecution. He thus continues: "Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evildoer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound." 2 Timothy 2:9. This was true at the moment of the Apostle's writing, and we have only to read the record of his activity in The Acts to discover, as indeed was testified to him by the Holy Ghost, that bonds and afflictions awaited him in every city. Bearing the precious message of the gospel, the ministry of reconciliation, and, as an ambassador for Christ, as though God did beseech by him, entreating men everywhere to be reconciled to God, not only was his message constantly refused, but he himself was looked upon as a disturber of the world's peace, and, finally, was shut up in prison as a malefactor! So completely, however, did the Apostle lose sight of himself in his concern for the interests of God in the gospel, that he found his consolation in the recollection that, if he were in captivity, the word of God could not be confined. A like

contrast is often found in The Acts. In Acts 12:1-25 Herod puts James the brother of John to death, and "proceeded further to take Peter also." But this very activity of the enemy brought in the interposition of God. Peter is delivered from his captivity, Herod is smitten, and then the significant statement is added, "But the word of God grew and multiplied." Acts 12:24. In such ways, when the enemy deals proudly, God steps in and shows that He is above him.

Paul has even a deeper consolation: "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." 2 Timothy 2:10. It has often been remarked that the Lord Himself might have used these words, and hence only one in the enjoyment of fellowship with the Lord's own heart as to His people could employ such language; for, in truth, the object of the Lord's own sufferings was the salvation of His people. He suffered, as we all know, as no other could, because He made expiation for our sins; but the point of the Apostle's statement is not the character but the object of his sufferings. By the grace of God, therefore, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, he was enabled to suffer all that came upon him, in connection with his testimony, for the elect's sake. He was made willing, nay more; with something of the love of Christ for His people animating his soul, he even desired to endure persecution if so be they might obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with all that was connected with it, even eternal glory. And it should be ever remembered that the same path is opened to every servant of the Lord. If smaller vessels than the Apostle, they may yet have the same desires, aims, and objects; and they will have them just in proportion as the affections of Christ fill their hearts.

Intense love for His people, because they are His people, is one of the most essential qualifications for service; for this will become, in the power of the Holy Ghost, the spring of unwearied devotedness to Christ for their eternal welfare. In 2 Timothy 2:9-10 the Apostle seeks to encourage Timothy in an evil day by a reference to his own path, and by the exhibition of the motives which, through grace, governed his own soul. He now proceeds to remind him of certain divine principles, or of certain infallible consequences resulting both from identification with, and from unfaithfulness to, Christ in His rejection.

"It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us: if we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself." 2 Timothy 2:11-13. The exact significance of "It is a faithful saying," or, literally, "faithful is the word," is not at once perceived. It may be the solemn asseveration of the truth of the following sentences; or it might mean that these truths were current among the saints, and that the Apostle takes them up to apply them to the matter in hand. To Timothy they would, at such a moment, have great force and solemnity. Tempted at least to shrink from the cross involved in his service, nothing could be more seasonable than to be recalled to the truth, that if we have died with Christ, we shall also live with Him.

Now death with Christ lies at the very foundation of our Christian position; but blessed as it is in delivering us from all that would enslave us in this scene, it involves certain responsibilities. The Apostle thus wrote to the Colossians: "If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" Colossians 2:20. Having been associated with Christ in His death involved their acceptance of the place of death in this world. So with Timothy, with us all. If we take the place of being dead, no persecutions, no dangers, could turn us aside from the path of service. It will moreover encourage us always to consider ourselves

dead, and to bear about in the body the dying of Jesus, to remember that our living together with Him is the divine consequence of association with Him in death. For, as the Apostle says elsewhere, "If we have been planted together in [identified with] the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." Romans 6:5.

It is the same with the next statement: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Timothy 2:12). Not that our reigning with Christ is in any way dependent upon our present suffering, but rather it is that suffering here is the appointed path for those who will be associated with Christ in His kingdom. This was shown out in type in the direction that the purple cloth was to be spread upon the altar before it, with its vessels, and was covered with badgers' skins for its transport through the wilderness. In like manner we read that "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." Romans 8:17.

(*The word "for" should be inserted before the last clause; thus, He abideth faithful: for He cannot deny Himself) Being what we are, and the world, the flesh, and the devil being what they are, suffering with Christ is a necessity, and especially in the path of service; but if it is so, He sustains us by the prospect of association with Himself in the glories of the kingdom.

These are encouragements, but there are also warnings. Should we, alas! deny Him (and denying Him here has its full force of absolute apostasy), He will deny us. (See Luke 12:9.) If, moreover, we believe not, the Lord will not fail to accomplish all the purposes of His heart, all the thoughts of His love; for He cannot deny Himself. He is in no way dependent upon our fidelity or service, though He may be pleased to bestow upon us the privilege of being His servants, of laboring in His vineyard.

Daunted by constant opposition, we may be disheartened, fall into despondency, be tempted to think that the light of the testimony is altogether extinguished, and thus come under the power of doubt and unbelief. But the Lord will work on, in spite of all our faithlessness, in the accomplishment of His will, and in His own time will infallibly present the Church to Himself, "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27). The knowledge then that God is faithful, and that He cannot deny Himself, is assuredly a rock on which the feeblest and most timid of His servants may repose in the darkest moments; and it affords also an encouragement to look beyond the confusion and the ruin, to that blessed future when every thought of the heart of God for His Church and for His people will have its perfect and eternal realization in the glory.

01.07. 2 Timothy 2:14-19

2 Timothy 2:14-19 The following exhortations are for Timothy's own guidance as a teacher, and consequently for the instruction of all who, divinely qualified, may seek to edify the people of God. "Of these things," the Apostle says, "put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers." 2 Timothy 2:14. The "these things" will refer to verses 2 Timothy 2:11-13, the divine truths which abide through all changes and all phases of the condition of the Church, inasmuch as they are bound up with the Lord's moral nature, and therefore with the very essence of Christianity. They can therefore never be forgotten without damage, and unless indeed there is an open departure from the faith. It is on this account that Timothy is urged to keep them continually before the minds of the saints; and at the same time he was to charge them to testify earnestly before the Lord that they should avoid all word contentions (logomachy), which, instead of edification, tended to the subversion of the hearers.

Jewish believers were under great temptation to this kind of discussion, for they had been accustomed to hear their rabbis exhibit their argumentative skill in reasonings upon the value even of the letters that composed the words of Scripture. And whenever spiritual life and energy decline, Christian teachers fall also into the snare of entertaining their hearers with ingenious and fanciful interpretations, drawn from historical details, or from types and figures, instead of ministering Christ. Let it then be observed that such discussions are not only "to no profit," but they also actually turn aside those that listen. Alas! when believers, like the Israelites, become weary of the heaven-sent manna, there are always those at hand who will seek to gratify the palate of nature.

It is in contrast to all this that Paul proceeds: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15. There are two things in this exhortation. First, Timothy is to use diligence to commend himself, not to his hearers, but to God. This principle is the safeguard of all who are engaged in public service. As the Apostle says elsewhere, "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10). And again, "As we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts." 1 Thessalonians 2:4. Nothing else will keep the servants of God but to have Him before their souls, for then they will remember in all their service that it is His verdict of approval alone they have to seek. (Compare 2 Corinthians 2:17.)

Second, Timothy is to approve himself to God by being a good workman. It would be possible for a servant to really strive to commend himself to God, and yet, through ignorance of the truth, to be a bad workman. How many godly, devoted men, for example, have had their eyes opened to perceive (and with what sorrow has the discovery been made!) that they had been misleading souls for years! It is not only necessary therefore to be godly, to have a single eye, but there must be also that knowledge of the Lord's mind, as revealed in the Scriptures, which will enable those who are in the place of teachers to rightly divide, to cut in a straight line, the word of truth. Diligence is requisite for this-diligence in the prayerful study of the Word-and it is this which is

really enjoined upon Timothy. Ability to teach is a divine gift; to be a good workman is the result of study, training, and practice, in dependence upon the power of the Holy Ghost.

He was to be occupied with the Word. "But" he is told to "shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some." 2 Timothy 2:16-18. There is no more successful snare of Satan than the seduction of the Lord's servants into foolish controversies. To contend for the truth in a day of departure from it is one of their first responsibilities; but this is a very different thing from turning aside to verbal discussions and "doubtful disputations," or, as the Apostle here expresses it, "empty voices"-words or sounds without significance for the believer. It can never indeed be too often asserted that the best way to refute error is by the statement of the truth; and controversy conducted in this way will edify both speaker and hearers, while profane and vain babblings will only tend to produce more impiety, because they harden both the heart and conscience. Not only so, but their word-that is, the word of those who fall into these babblings-will eat as doth a canker, or, more exactly, spread as a gangrene. A gangrene is an eating sore which, gradually spreading, almost always ends in mortification. No more striking figure to set forth the danger of "vain babblings" could possibly be employed. That Timothy might not be left in doubt as to his meaning, the Apostle cites the illustrative cases of Hymenaeus and Philetus. These had, it would seem, the place of teachers, and had fallen into the grievous error, not of denying the resurrection, but of declaring that it was already past. It may be well to call special attention to this subtle form of false teaching, for there are many believers of the present day who are liable to be betrayed by the speciousness of a seeming super-spirituality. And the teaching of Hymenaeus and Philetus had this pretentious character, for they made the resurrection a spiritual thing:* and it is quite possible that they based their contention on Ephesians 2:1-22, where we read that God has quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up together, etc. But "concerning the truth" they erred (literally, "missed the mark") and the effect was to overthrow the faith of some. "The faith" here is used for the thing believed; and thus these false teachers really turned souls aside from the truth, led them away from what they had previously professed to believe. It is not a question of salvation; but for the time, at least, these misguided ones surrendered the truth, becoming the prey of their deluded leaders. Can anything be more sad than to be used of Satan to lead the Lord's people astray? The Lord Himself said, "Whoso shall offend" (that is, "be a snare to") "one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." Matthew 18:6. Hymenaeus and Philetus-and how many, alas! since their day! -were a snare to some of the Lord's little ones; and the fact is recorded for the admonition and warning of all who have, or take, the place of teachers in the Church of God.

(*In Corinth the resurrection was altogether denied, and Paul met it by affirming the resurrection of Christ as carrying with it the resurrection of His people.) The Apostle turns from the sad effects of heretical doctrine, and finds consolation in that which is firm and indestructible: "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." 2 Timothy 2:19. In the form of this pregnant statement there is doubtless, as we have elsewhere shown, an allusion to Zechariah 3:9; but in this place it is the meaning of it that must occupy our attention. And this is to be sought, first

of all, in the contrast to what the Apostle had just written.

Hymenaeus and Philetus had been instrumental in overturning the foundations of the faith in some of the saints; but, in spite of all that Satan had succeeded in doing by their means, the foundation of God stood, and was immovable. This is no small consolation in a day of confusion and ruin. The enemy may be permitted to wreck the public form of Christianity, and to turn its teachers into advocates of rationalistic or superstitious imaginations; but there still remains for faith this sure foundation of God on which souls may repose, whatever the fury of the storm, in perfect peace. It is not the question here what the foundation is-though there be but one, namely, Christ-but it is rather the fact that there is a foundation of God, which is absolutely beyond the reach and the power of all Satan's artifices. The further significance of this statement is discovered in the twofold seal, or inscription, which the foundation bears. (Compare Zechariah 3:7; Revelation 22:14.) First, "The Lord knoweth them that are His." Time was when men also knew who were the Lord's (see Acts 5:12-14); and the Apostle himself had often sent letters-as, for example, "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse"-assured that his epistle would reach the known company of believers in the place. But now all was changed. All they which were in Asia had turned away from the Apostle; and the profession of Christianity, so widespread, had become so merged in the world and worldly things that it was impossible for the outward eye to distinguish the true saints of God. As in the days of Israel's apostasy under Ahab, Jehovah alone knew the seven thousand that had not bowed the knee to Baal, so now the Lord alone could with unerring certainty recognize His people amid the mass of professors that had crowded into the Church on earth. It is the same now in Christendom. Nations call themselves Christians, and their "temples" and "churches" are filled with so-called worshipers; but, while we may be certain that in the case of large numbers it is nothing but profession, it is a great consolation to remember that the Lord discerns in every place who are His, that not one real saint is unnoticed by His eye. I "know My sheep, and am known of Mine"; and this still holds true for the comfort of those who have heard His voice. There is, however, more: "Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ" (it should be "the Lord") "depart from iniquity." The Lord, on His side, knew, and knows, who are His; and His people, on their side, in the ruin in which they are found, are under the responsibility of departing from iniquity. It belongs to them, if they name the name of the Lord, as being under His authority, to depart from everything, every association, every habit, and practice-which could not be attached to His name.

How different is this teaching from that which is now current, to the effect that in a day of confusion like the present it is impossible to walk in the path of separation from evil! This word of the Apostle's is the answer to all such reasonings, and sets forth, at the same time, the abiding responsibility of every child of God to depart from evil; and we thus learn that any association whatever with iniquity is contrary to the Lord's mind.

01.08. 2 Timothy 2:20-26

2 Timothy 2:20-26 The next thing that comes before us is the state into which Christianity, in its outward form in the world, has fallen: "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." 2 Timothy 2:20-21.

It will be observed that the Apostle does not exactly say that the house of God contains vessels to honor and to dishonor, though this be true when we speak of the house of God as built by man under responsibility, according to its presentation in 1 Corinthians 3:1-23. It is a comparison rather that he uses; and hence he says, "in a great house." At the same time, it must not be forgotten that this is what the house of God on earth has become—a sphere in which believers and mere professors, good and faithful servants and evil servants, have become so mixed that vessels of gold and silver are mingled everywhere with those of wood and earth. When the house of God was formed on the day of Pentecost, it contained only those who were really believers; for the Lord then added "such as should be saved." But very soon, as Jude writes, certain men crept in unawares; and thenceforward that which called itself Christian was a mixed, corrupt thing.

Such was the state of things which had arisen even in Paul's days, and from which the Spirit of God takes occasion to lay down principles for individual guidance, both at that time and in succeeding days, when the confusion and corruption indicated should become more pronounced. We say "principles for individual guidance"; for it is of moment to remark that, to quote the words of another, "Discipline for individual faults is not the subject here, nor the restoration of souls in an assembly that has in part lost its spirituality, but a line of conduct for the individual Christian in respect of that which, in any way, dishonors the Lord." To apply this language indeed to the separate assemblies of the saints would be to falsify the teaching of the Apostle in other scriptures, and to justify the tolerance of almost any and every kind of evil in the midst of the saints. On this account it cannot be too earnestly insisted that the Apostle is dealing with the external form of Christianity, of which the believer himself forms part; "for he calls himself a Christian, and the great house is all that calls itself Christian." In these circumstances, what the Holy Ghost here affirms is the individual responsibility to be in separation from evil, according to what has been seen in the previous verse—"Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ [the Lord] depart from iniquity." In 2 Timothy 2:22, we have the nature of this individual responsibility more precisely described. The Apostle then says, "If a man" (rather "any one") "therefore purge himself from these," etc. The language is very strong; literally it is, "purge out himself from." The word "purge out" is only found in one other place, where it is, "Purge out therefore the old leaven" (1 Corinthians 5:7), which was to be done by the Corinthians in putting "away from among yourselves that wicked person." But here—and it is in the contrast the teaching lies—we are to purge ourselves out from the vessels of dishonor. The Corinthians had to put away evil from their midst, because it was sin in the assembly; we have to separate ourselves from evil (because it is instruction for the individual, and not, as in their case, for the assembly), in order to be approved

for the Lord's service.

Such then is the Lord's mind for His people in a day of confusion and evil. Two questions, however, remain to be answered. The first is, What are the vessels to dishonor? and, second, Has the Apostle the Lord's servants only in view? To take the latter first, it is abundantly clear, we judge, from the words, "If a man [any man] therefore purge himself," that all Christians are contemplated. If this be so, as we cannot doubt it is, the vessels to dishonor will mean not a class, but those, whether Christians or simply professors, who are defiled with evil of any kind, or engaged in anything that dishonors the Lord's name. And let the reader observe, that the responsibility is not to judge the personal state and condition of such vessels, but to purge himself from them, because he is under the obligation as naming the name of the Lord, to depart from iniquity. The consequence of separating from such vessels is, that we shall be vessels unto honor (and this will explain the meaning of the vessels of gold and of silver in the preceding verse), sanctified, set apart, and holy as so set apart, and meet, or serviceable, for the Master's use—prepared unto every good work. This is a solemn word for believers, and never more so than at the present moment. Do any then desire to be used of the Lord? Here is His own qualification for service; and be it remembered that the qualification is within our own reach and attainment, in dependence on Him who reveals it to us, and through the power which He will bestow. Then, when once qualified, it is His to take us up and use us how, where, and when He will; for by it we are "prepared unto every good work."

There is, however, also the positive side of separation; and hence the Apostle adds, "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." 2 Timothy 2:22. This word is more especially addressed to Timothy, but its significance lies in the connection, following as it does upon the verses just considered. All the temptations that appealed to such as were young, or rather the desires to which the temptations were addressed, were to be shunned; and while, on the one hand, he was to "flee" from these, he was, on the other hand, to "pursue" after the things here indicated. Purpose of heart will be needed both for the one and the other; and nothing will beget this save having the heart occupied with Christ, and thus brought into communion with His mind, and, as a consequence, having the single eye. Righteousness, practical righteousness, comes first—that righteousness which is fulfilled in those who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Romans 8:4), and which is displayed in holiness of life and ways. Then faith—that faith which is a fruit of the Spirit, and which distinguished so many of the saints of old, as recorded in Hebrews 11:1-40, and was exhibited in their confidence in God under all circumstances of trial, adversity, and the manifested power of the enemy. Also "charity"—that is, love—which in its essence is the divine nature, and which is described, as it is seen in saints, by the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. And finally, peace—peace as between the saints, as a consequence of enjoyed peace with God in the soul, but which can only be pursued where the graces just named are previously found. (Compare Isaiah 32:17; James 3:17-18.)

Note, moreover, that these things are to be "pursued" in company with those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. It is often contended that separation from evil would, in a day like the present, lead to a path of isolation. This scripture is a complete answer to such a contention; and indeed it is evident that those who recognize their individual responsibility to depart from iniquity, and to follow after righteousness, faith, charity, peace, must find themselves in the same path, and be

drawn together in the same company.

It should also be observed that the believer is expected to distinguish those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart, as well as those who are vessels to dishonor, and that it is as much the Lord's mind for him to be in company with the former, as to purge himself out from the latter. The confusion is undoubted, but, wherever there is a single eye, there will be little difficulty in discerning the Lord's path through it; and it is no small consolation to know that there will never be wanting, even in the darker days yet to come, those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart, or guidance for those who seek to do the Lord's will, to direct to the place where such are to be found.

Once more the Apostle warns Timothy to beware of controversies: "But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing: that they do gender strifes." 2 Timothy 2:23; compare 2 Timothy 2:16. It is, literally, foolish and "undisciplined" questions; and it has been pointed out by another that the word "undisciplined" is often used for a "mind not subject to God, a man following his own mind and will." This will explain the kind of questioning referred to—those which spring from man's own thoughts and reasonings, and which therefore could not fail to produce strifes. The introduction of this last word, "strifes," furnishes the opportunity for a beautiful description of what should be the character and conduct of a true servant. "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." 2 Timothy 2:24-26. The word translated "strive," as that also in the preceding verse rendered "strifes," should be rather "contend," and "contend" in the sense of fighting, coming into conflict in an evil way. While therefore the servant of the Lord must maintain the truth in spite of all opposition, withstand his fellow servant to the face if need be, as Paul did Peter when the truth of grace was in question, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, he must never descend from the platform of the truth, as a positive revelation from God, and as entrusted to him as a witness, to engage in conflict with those who raise foolish and unlearned questions. He, on his part, should come out from the presence of God with the authority of the truth established in his own soul, and thus enabled to proclaim it dogmatically in the midst of all the uncertainties of human contentions, from entering into which he will also carefully guard himself. With a message for all, he ranges himself on the side of none in their conflicts, for he should speak to all alike in the name of the Lord.

Moreover, as to his own spirit, he is to be gentle unto all; undisturbed by the passions which govern men in their party contests; calm, as in the enjoyment of the presence of God; governed in all his thoughts and feelings by that mighty grace of which he has been made the subject, and thus, strengthened through the operation of the Spirit of God, enabled to present the gentleness of Christ to all to whom he is sent, and with whom he may have to deal. He is also to be "apt to teach"; for with questions raised on all sides affecting the Word of God, he should be ever ready to explain and affirm its meaning.

Next, he is to be patient, or rather "forbearing," in the sense of suffering any and everything that may come in the path of service, from the hands of opponents. It still refers to the spirit of the servant, as may be seen from the use of the word in the exhortation, "Forbearing [or bearing

with]one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2). And hence the Apostle proceeds, "In meekness instructing [or setting right] those that oppose themselves"; that is, who oppose themselves to the truth of God. And to sustain the servant in such a spirit, he is ever to remember the possibility of the recovery of opponents. The enemy of today may, in the grace of God, be the friend of tomorrow; and never losing sight of this, he is to go on meekly instructing, and looking to God to give the opposers repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil. The last clause of this verse (2 Timothy 2:26) has occasioned considerable discussion. The point raised is, whether "his will" is God's will or Satan's. If the former, the meaning is, "that they may recover themselves" (or come to their senses) "out of the snare of the devil" (who are taken captive by him) for His will—that is, for the will of God—the object of their recovery being that they might for the future be governed by the will of God. If the latter, it must be taken as it stands, and then it means that these opposers are taken captive by Satan to do his will. Whichever view may be adopted, the solemn teaching of the scripture cannot be resisted, that those who oppose the truth are the instruments as being in the snare of Satan, and that as such they have been taken captive by him as his prey.

Such is the revelation here made—that all who resist the truth of God, who refuse it, however eminent they may be in the world of intellect or science, are nothing more than the poor slaves of Satan, led of, if not inspired by, him, even as the servants of the Lord are led and taught by the Spirit of God.

01.09. 2 Timothy 3:1-9

2 Timothy 3:1-9

Having dealt with the evils that were already prevalent in his own time, the Apostle passes onward to the eve of the close of the dispensation: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." 2 Timothy 3:1. In the first epistle he had spoken of "the latter times" (2 Timothy 4:1); but now he is more precise, and speaks of the end of "the latter times," the closing days of this present interval.

We learn then that perilous (or difficult) times will distinguish the last days. How different is the future of Christianity in this world from the representations of its popular advocates! These love to sketch the gradual conversion of the world by the preaching of the gospel, and the consequent gradual subjection of men and things, human governments and institutions, to an absent Christ and Lord. The inspired revelation here given of the course of Christianity dispels at once this illusion, and convicts its propagators of ignorance of the very scriptures they profess to preach. For what is the truth? In chapter 1, as already seen, all that were in Asia had "turned away" from the Apostle of the Gentiles; in chapter 2 he tells us that the Church had become like a great house, in which were found side by side vessels to honor, and vessels to dishonor; and now he lifts the veil and permits us to see that evil and corruption will increase, and hence that as the end approaches, perilous times, accompanied by the corruption here named, must be expected. The path of Christianity in this world is not therefore like that of the just, shining brighter and brighter unto the perfect day, but it will be one of increasing gloom and darkness; for "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." It is no small consolation to remember that He who has forewarned us of these things is Himself all-sufficient to sustain, and to enable us to walk in His ways in the midst of surrounding and growing dangers.

We have, in the next place, both the cause and the features of the "perilous times." "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." 2 Timothy 3:2-5. It would scarcely be for edification to enter in these pages upon a minute explanation of all these terms; but the reader himself should solemnly weigh them in the presence of God, as he will then be able to compare them with the moral features of the present day. We cannot, however, forbear to add the following striking remarks of another: "If we compare the list of sins and abominations which Paul gives at the beginning of the epistle to the Romans, as characterizing heathen life, and the moral degradation of men during those times of darkness and demon-worship, with the catalog of sins that characterize those who have the form of godliness, we shall find that it is nearly the same, and morally quite the same, only that some of the open sins which mark the man who has no outward restraint are wanting here, the form of godliness precluding them and taking their place. It is a solemn thought, that the same degradation which

existed among heathens is reproduced under Christianity, covering itself with that name, and even assuming the form of godliness. But in fact it is the same nature, the same passions, the same power of the enemy, with but the addition of hypocrisy.* (*Synopsis of the Books of the Bible," by J. N. Darby, vol. 5.)

"From such" Timothy is exhorted to "turn away." If the last days refer to the end of the day of grace, why, it may be inquired, is this direction given to Timothy? The answer is, that these moral features were already beginning to appear; and they will appear with increasing distinctness, while the Lord Jesus tarries, until at last they will culminate in the full blown sins and corruptions here described. When, therefore, the Apostle adds, "from such turn away," he gives a direction which is applicable to every age, and indicates that it is the Lord's mind for His people to be in entire separation from all this moral corruption. Once more, as will be seen, it is the responsibility of the believer to discern the evil, indeed the persons involved in it, and to walk apart from them, whatever their pretensions or forms of godliness. The means of detection are also supplied. "For," the Apostle proceeds, "of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." 2 Timothy 3:6-7. Several things should be noticed in this comprehensive description, a description which covers both the seducers and their followers. First, the manner of their procedure is given. They are of the kind "which creep into houses." It is noteworthy that almost all false teaching, or at least that which claims a superior spirituality, begins in secret, and thus forms a school before it is manifested. Some of the saddest heresies that have ever disturbed the Church of God commenced in this way-either by private visits, or by the circulation of "notes" among a chosen sympathizing few. This method carries with it its own condemnation; for whatever will not bear the light cannot be of God, and whatever is given of Him is for the Church. Second, the prey of these false teachers are "silly women, laden with sins." It is in this last phrase that the explanation of the power of these corrupters of the truth lies. The foolish women are a class who, having many sins on their conscience, and thus made to feel them as a burden, would be peculiarly susceptible to any teaching which promised both relief and liberty; for they were not only burdened with their sins, but they were also led away with "divers lusts," or many and various desires. It is what the flesh ever craves-deliverance from past sins, and indulgence for present gratifications; and inasmuch as these "silly women" hoped to obtain both from this new teaching, they became the willing slaves of their evil instructors. Then, last, we read that such- that is, the silly women-were ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. This again is another characteristic of a false system of doctrine. Those who accept it are always deluded by the prospect of a fuller knowledge, for it is ever surrounded by mystery; and thus they are enslaved at the will of their teachers.

But, it may be urged, the corruptions here named are so unblushing that no sincere souls could ever be deceived and entangled. It should therefore be observed that all these abominations are concealed under a form of godliness, and that it is the Spirit of God who, through the Apostle, drags them here out into the light for our warning and guidance. Under such a cloak these men might outwardly pass, as the Pharisees of old did, for pious and devoted men; for they would be sure to make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, while within they might be full of extortion and excess (see Matthew 23:25). The next two verses give further instruction on the subject. "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds,

reprobate concerning the faith, but they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was." 2 Timothy 3:8-9. Jannes and Jambres were the magicians of Egypt who withstood Moses and Aaron in the presence of Pharaoh. When Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, as the Lord had commanded, and it became a serpent, the magicians "also did in like manner with their enchantments" (Exodus 7:10-11). They thus resisted the truth by imitating the action of the Lord's servants; and it is in this way the truth will be, and is being, opposed in the perilous times. It is precisely in this character of opposition that the danger lies for unwary souls. Thus at the present moment all the false systems of men claim that they present all the characteristic truths of Christianity, or that these truths are only expounded in accordance with modern ideas. Satan is too subtle to commence by denying the truth of God; and hence he seeks first of all to insinuate that which seems like the truth, but which, under the expansion of which it is capable, finally ripens into anti-Christian error. This is why the name of Christ is attached, for example, to many soul-destroying systems, and why men, who really ignore every fundamental truth of Christianity, claim to be Christians. The outward garb then of these resisters of the truth will be Christian in appearance, but the opened eye will detect that it is not the real thing, but an imitation. More than this-for the Holy Ghost exposes their true character-they are men of corrupt minds, and reprobate, tried and found worthless, concerning the faith. Inwardly they were evil men, and, tested by the Christian faith, they were to be rejected.

Great, however, as may be the power of the enemy as thus displayed, there is a limit fixed. It might seem for the moment as if Satan were about to gain, through his servants, a complete victory. But, as we read in the prophet, when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him; so here it is declared that these corrupters "shall proceed no further"; they shall be arrested in their wicked work, and their folly shall be publicly exposed. It was so with Jannes and Jambres. For a long time they withstood Moses; but at length, when God stepped in and created life at the word of Moses, they were baffled, and were constrained to confess that it was "the finger of God." Whatever, therefore, the apparent success of Satan's servants, confidence in God should never be lessened, for the believer may surely count upon Him to vindicate His own truth in His own way and in His own time. This is the consolation of the godly in times of corruption and apostasy; and together with this the assurance may ever be entertained that, though the Church, like Israel, may be sifted by these false teachers, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. The power of the enemy, whatever his malice, is thus only an instrumentality in the hands of God for testing and purifying His people.

01.10. 2 Timothy 3:10-17

2 Timothy 3:10-17 The walk of Paul is a close approximation to that of Christ, and it is on this account that he is often led of the Holy Ghost to refer to himself as an example to others. This is the case here. He has been depicting the moral corruptions that will mark the perilous times of the last days; and then, mindful of the difficulties of those who may desire to be faithful to the Lord, as exemplified in Timothy, he exhibits himself as a pattern to all who may be found in these circumstances: "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me." 2 Timothy 3:10-11.

It is of great importance to observe that "my doctrine," or teaching, comes first. His teaching was the truth committed to his trust; and we thus learn that nothing will preserve the saints in a time of abounding error but the possession of divine truth, and also that a walk according to God-for "manner of life," or conduct, comes next in the list-can only flow out from a knowledge of the truth. (Compare Colossians 1:9-10.) Nothing either edifies or sanctifies but the truth (see John 17:17-19); and it lies therefore at the basis of all steadfastness; and it forms, at the same time, a walk worthy of the Lord. Thereon follows "purpose." He will not say "fidelity," for the Lord alone pronounces judgment upon the faithfulness of. His servants; but he says "purpose," because, through grace, it was the one desire of his heart to follow the Lord in all circumstances and at all costs. (See Php 3:9-11.)

Besides this, he can mention faith, for confidence in God distinguished this devoted servant in all his trials. It was this alone that sustained him amid the corruption that seemed to be flowing in from every quarter; and it was this alone also that enabled him to be "long-suffering" in the midst of all that was taking place, and even toward the adversaries of the truth; to exhibit divine "love" in the presence of the evil, even though the more he loved the less he was loved; and also to be "patient," to endure as knowing, in spite of all appearances, what would be the final issue of the conflict. But there was more to be added. Such teaching and such a life, in the face of the enemy's power, could not escape trials and sorrows; and hence the Apostle recalls to Timothy's mind the "persecutions" and "afflictions" which he had undergone in his service at the places with which Timothy was conversant. (Compare Acts 16:1-2, with Acts 13:1-52; Acts 14:1-28.) If, however, he recounts his sufferings in his service and testimony, it is but to magnify the Lord's faithfulness; for he adds, "But out of them all the Lord delivered me." There might have been persecutions; but while, like the psalmist, he had to say, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous," he could also unite in his testimony, "But the LORD delivereth him out of them all" (Psalms 34:19). The experience of the Apostle was to be no uncommon one; for he says, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Timothy 3:12. It will be perceived that it is not said that all Christians, nor that all who live godly, but it is all that will live godly in Christ Jesus who must be persecuted. Stress is to be laid upon the word "will," for it means that there is a real desire, purpose of heart, even, to live in this manner; and also upon "in Christ Jesus," because it

shows that it is the life in which Christ Himself is both magnified and displayed. Those then whose hearts are set, through divine grace, to follow Christ fully, like Caleb of old, to own no authority but His over the heart and conscience, to have no guide but Himself and His Word, and thus to be apart from all that dishonors His name, cannot, in the difficult times of which the Apostle speaks, escape persecutions. If any who call themselves Christians do avoid the hostility of the world or the enmity of Satan they can only do so at the expense of faithfulness to Christ. May this truly sink deeply into our hearts! In contrast with those who will live in godly in Christ Jesus, and as giving force to what he has just said, as well as to cast Timothy more completely upon the divine safeguards for such a perilous path, the Apostle says, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." 2 Timothy 3:13. These evil men and seducers, it should be well noted, are not men of the world, but those who are inside the professing church, claiming to be Christians, having a form of godliness if they deny the power thereof. This fact once more shows that there is no hope for Christianity, in its public form, in this world-that there is no prospect of its recovery or purification -but that, on the other hand, it will go from bad to worse until, as we learn elsewhere, assuming its final phase of Laodicea, it will be spewed out of the Lord's mouth as 'a, nauseous and abhorrent thing. The power of the enemy is seen in the fact that, while these evil men will deceive, they will themselves be deceived, a foreshadowing of those in the future, after the Church is caught away to be with the Lord, on whom God will send "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." What an immense comfort to remember, while gazing on such a picture, that the Lord will deliver all His faithful ones out of all the afflictions and persecutions which they may have to suffer! In the next place, Paul points Timothy to the source of all guidance and strength for his own path, and he thereby teaches how believers in all ages may be fortified and preserved, both from evil and from the power of the enemy, in a difficult day. "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 3:14-15. This significant instruction demands the most careful attention. It will at once be observed that the apostolic communications are put on a level with the written Word, the Old Testament scriptures, with which Timothy had been acquainted from a child. (See 2 Timothy 1:5) These communications have since been committed to writing, and are now found in the epistles of the New Testament; but at that time they were conveyed to the Church through inspired men, such as the Apostle Paul. And it is of the utmost moment to observe that Paul claims for them divine authority, and can thus exhort his child in the faith to continue in the things he had learned and believed, knowing, as he did, from whom he had learned them; that is, in his case, from the Apostle. And Timothy's safety amid surrounding corruptions was to be found in continuing in what he had already received. As another has said, "Security rests upon the certainty of the immediate origin of the doctrine which he had received; and upon the Scriptures, received as authentic and inspired documents, which announced the will, the acts, the counsels, and even the nature of God. We abide in that which we have learned, because we know from whom we learned it. The principle is simple and very important. We advance in divine knowledge; but, so far as we are taught of God, we never give up for new opinions that Which we have learned from an immediately divine source, knowing that it is so." The Apostle indeed guards Timothy, and all, from two common and pressing dangers: first, from the snare of resting our confidence, of having the foundation of our faith, in anything short of the divine Word; and, second, from being decoyed from off this foundation by pretended

developments, or by the progress of modern thought. We are to abide in that which we have received from the Word of God, and thus to refuse to be carried about with divers and strange doctrines; and for this reason we are to accept nothing short of God's own Word -no human opinions, however venerated, or however commended by the sanctity of their authors- as the basis of our beliefs. The Apostle John in like manner writes to the babes of the family of God: "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning" (1 John 2:24). And there never was a day when this lesson was more needed. Confronted as we are on the one side by a boastful and superstitious religion which grounds its claims, traditions, and practices upon the writings of men, and on the other by a daring infidelity which appeals from the Scriptures to human reasonings, we learn that our only safety lies in cleaving to the sure and infallible Word; and that, resting in it, we shall be impregnable against the attacks both of the one and the other. To continue therefore in what we have learned from the Scriptures is our blessed resource in the perilous times in which our lot is cast.

Coming to details, it will be perceived that the Apostle refers Timothy to two things—the means of preservation from the attacks of the enemy; namely, by continuing in the things he had been certified of by the Apostle; and, second, the certainty and the consequent enjoyment of salvation through the written Word, and faith which is in Christ Jesus. We are always most courageous in the presence of difficulties or enemies when in the personal enjoyment of salvation, and on this account the two things are here combined. (Compare John 20:21; Ephesians 6:17.) The introduction of the Word of God leads the Apostle to state the character and uses of all Scripture. He says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (or, "every good work"). 2 Timothy 3:16-17. All or every scripture is then divinely inspired, given by the operation of the Holy Ghost through human vessels as a revelation of the divine mind (see 2 Peter 1:21), and the Apostle in another place claims this inspiration for the words in which he delivered his message: "Which things also we speak," he says, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which [in those which] the Holy Ghost teacheth" (1 Corinthians 2:13). It is not only therefore that the Scriptures contain, but they also are the truth; and they are thus absolutely infallible and, as such, have attached to them God's authority because they are the expression of His own mind. They are therefore to be received, unquestioningly received, as the voice of the living God to our souls; and thus the only proper attitude to be taken up when they are read is that of Samuel, who said, "Speak, for thy servant heareth." The uses of the Scriptures are next given. First and foremost they are "profitable" for teaching, being, as we have seen, the revelation of God's mind for His people; also for "reproof," or conviction, for, inasmuch as they are the divine standard, the character of our conduct or actions is at once discerned by their application; for "correction," since they not only convict of sin and failure, but they also point out the right path for God's people; for "instruction in righteousness," because they contain precepts and exhortations applicable to all the relationships and responsibilities, whether toward God, one another, or toward men in general, in which the believer can possibly be found. The Word of God is thus the only, and the all-sufficient, source of instruction for His people.

Finally, the object of a true knowledge of the Scriptures is added; it is "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Attention to the extra force of the words

"perfect" and "thoroughly furnished" will guide us into the Apostle's meaning. The former-found only in this place-might be rendered "complete," "suitable," or "exactly fitted"; the latter, used only twice, might be given as "fully equipped." In 2 Timothy 2:1-26, as we have seen, it is said that if a man shall purge himself out from among the vessels to dishonor, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, "prepared unto all good works." If now these two passages are combined, their teaching will be the more clearly seen. The preparation unto every good work then, in 2 Timothy 2:1-26, refers rather to the requisite personal state for service; while that in the scripture before us points out that divine knowledge, and divine knowledge gleaned from the Scriptures is also necessary to make the man of God suitable for service, to furnish or equip him for every good work. In 2 Timothy 2:1-26 we learn that the vessel must be sanctified, and in 2 Timothy 3:1-17 that, so far from being empty, it must be filled with the knowledge of the Word of God, if it would be in a condition to be used in the Master's service. If therefore the man of God would be "complete," he must resort to the Scriptures, and, as Timothy was exhorted in the first epistle, "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all"; for the only weapon that can be used in service and conflict is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

01.11. 2 Timothy 4:1-8

2 Timothy 4:1-8

There is a manifest connection between this section and the close of the preceding chapter. The Apostle had shown how the man of God might be thoroughly furnished, or entirely equipped, for every good work; and he thereon founds an appeal to Timothy to be diligent in his service. He says, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." 2 Timothy 4:1-2.

These are solemn and weighty words, and need to be devoutly weighed in the divine presence, and especially by the Lord's servants; for they set Timothy, and with him the laborer in every age, in full view of his responsibility, while, at the same time, they remind him of the tribunal before which the character of all service will be ultimately tested. It is, in fact, a searching appeal to the conscience; for "the appearing of Christ is always in connection with responsibility; His coming is with the object of calling us to Himself in connection with our privileges. Here it is the first of these two cases; not the assembly, or the Father's house, but God, the appearing, and the kingdom. All that is in relation to responsibility, government, judgment, is gathered together in one point of view.

Coming to details it may be observed that Timothy is charged, first, "before God," the Apostle thereby calling forth a present exercise of conscience (compare 1 Thessalonians 1:3), as he teaches him that all his service is carried on under God's eye. Next, it is, "and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead." As he writes in another place, "We labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of [acceptable to] Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:9-10). All judgment has been committed to His hands, and although no believer will ever be judged for sins, the character of his works and service will be manifested and declared before the tribunal of Christ. To have this before the soul is therefore, on the one hand, a blessed encouragement, and on the other hand, an energetic motive to fidelity. The servant who really waits for his Lord cannot but keep his loins girded and his light burning.

Having supplied Timothy with such an assemblage of motives for perseverance and fidelity, the Apostle indicates the character of his work. He sums it up at the outset in one pregnant exhortation: "Preach the word." This was his one responsibility, whatever the state of things around. Indifference, decay, and corruption were increasing, and would increase; but instead of being disheartened and using this as a reason for inactivity, Timothy was all the more, on this account, to proclaim the Word. He was, as God's watchman, to keep the trumpet of testimony to his lips, and to give forth no uncertain sound, whether men would or would not hear. He was not responsible for the effect of the testimony; he was not to be influenced by signs of blessing or the absence of it. His sole concern was to be faithful, and in order to this he must continue to proclaim the message entrusted to his stewardship. The urgency of the need is shown by the next clause: "Be instant in season, out of season." All times were to be alike to Timothy; his work must never be

intermitted; he must be ever on the watch for an opportunity to fulfill his vocation. To one who had a "burden of the LORD" resting on his soul, no time would be unseasonable; but, like Jeremiah, he would find that the Word was in his heart as a burning fire, and he would be weary with forbearing, and he would not be able to stay (Jeremiah 23:38; Jeremiah 20:9). He was thus bidden by the Apostle to be "instant" (urgent) in season and out of season.

We come next to the special forms of his ministry. Proclaiming the Word in general, but to convict, rebuke, etc., is more specific, pointing out the various needs of souls, especially at such a moment. "Convict" is the same word as "rebuke" in 1 Timothy 5:20, and signifies to convict of sin by demonstration to the conscience. "Rebuke" has here its proper force, as may be seen from its use, for example, in Mark 8:33, where the Lord rebuked Peter. It is a word therefore that would seem to contemplate opponents to the truth, false or Jewish teachers, unless indeed open backsliders be in view, such as were turning grace into licentiousness.

Last, he was to "exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine," or teaching. "Exhort" is a large word, as is shown by its being translated sometimes "comfort," and sometimes "encourage." Here, however, "exhort," as we judge, expresses more nearly the Apostle's idea; for he adds, "with all longsuffering and doctrine" (teaching). There would therefore be much to encounter in apathy, if not in active opposition, in the service of exhortation; but Timothy was to continue in it in spite of all, and to maintain in this path a meek and unruffled spirit-only to be done in the presence of God, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. The reason given for unwearied assiduity in his work is most striking: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." 2 Timothy 4:3-4. It was not therefore in the prospect of large results that Timothy was to proclaim the Word so earnestly and zealously; but he was to use the present moment as knowing that the opportunity was brief for such a ministry, that teachers would speedily arise who would adapt themselves to the desires of the natural heart, men who would please the fancy and flatter the imagination of their hearers, under the pretext too of having discovered new and striking things in the Scriptures.

It should be observed, however, that this species of corruption commences with the hearers. It is they who "will not endure sound doctrine" (teaching), and who "after their own lusts... heap to themselves teachers" to satisfy a diseased and itching ear. This class can be traced all down the path of church history, and the reader will have no difficulty in identifying it at the present moment. Plain scriptural teaching that teaching which merely explains and applies the mind of God as contained in the Scriptures-does not suffice for such hearers, nor the teachers whom the Lord sends, as they prefer to "heap" up, to choose, their own; and, when listening, their heart and conscience are never exposed to the action of that Word which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, for they only bring with them "itching ears." The issue could but be one; they turn away from the truth, and they turn to fables; for these alone could minister to their unhealthy appetites. In contrast with all this, the Apostle, turning again to Timothy, exhorts him: "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy 'ministry.'" 2 Timothy 4:5. To watch is, in this place, rather to be sober-"that sober clearness of mind resulting from exemption from false influences," and which can only be acquired and maintained by walking before God and in communion with His mind. To endure afflictions points to the character of the path of the servant in an evil day (see 2 Timothy 1:7). He was moreover to do

the work of an evangelist. He is thus directed to preach the gospel as well as teach and preach the Word. Apart from the apostles, and cases like Timothy and Titus, the gift of an evangelist would never seem to have been combined with that of a teacher. The only two combined, as may be learned from the fact that one article is prefixed to the two nouns, are pastors and teachers (Ephesians 4:11). Then summing up all together, Timothy is to make full proof of his ministry, or his service, and in the way here shown; that is, by his whole life being devoted in the energy of the Spirit to the work to which he had been called.

Another motive is supplied as an incentive to Timothy's zeal—the prospect of the Apostle's speedy departure. "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." 2 Timothy 4:6-8. "The absence therefore of apostolic ministry, so serious a fact with regard to the assembly's position, makes the duty of the man of God the more urgent.

"As Paul's absence was a motive for working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, so is it also a motive for him who is engaged in the work of the gospel to devote himself more than ever to his ministry, in order to supply as far as possible the lack of apostolic service by earnest care for souls, and by instructing them in the truth that he has learned." For with the apostles passing off the scene, apostolic authority and, it may be added, apostolic inspiration ceased. The Word of God, then completed (see Colossians 1:25, reading "complete" instead of "fulfill"), remained; and it abides for the consolation and guidance of the saints; and as it was Timothy's, so it is every true servant's, responsibility to "preach the word," and that alone, for the instruction and edification of the Church. We are commended to God and to the word of His grace (Acts 20:32). The Apostle, in the expectation of his departure, reviews his course and, as led by the Holy Ghost, he is able to affirm his fidelity. Precious grace of God to His devoted servant, to permit him to write such words with the unerring pen of inspiration! The fight he had fought, or the conflict he had waged, he knew was a good one. It should be noted that he only speaks of the character of the conflict, and not of the manner in which he had carried it on. His course was now ended, and he had kept the faith. Many had departed from it; but he by grace had kept it, maintained the truth, and had indeed transmitted it exactly as he had received it.

He turns, in the next place, to the future, to the prospect that awaited him; and he tells us that there was for him a crown of righteousness. "The crown of righteousness, that is to say, the one bestowed by the righteous Judge, who acknowledged his (Paul's) faithfulness, was laid up and kept for him. It was not till the day of retribution that he would receive it. We see plainly that it is reward for labor and for faithfulness that is here meant. This, or its opposite, characterizes the whole epistle, and not the privileges of grace. The work of the Spirit through us is rewarded by the crown of righteousness, and every one will have a reward according to his labors."* This last sentence affords the key to the next clause. "All them also that love His appearing" describes all believers, but not all will have the same crown. All alike, as subjects of grace, will be conformed to Christ in glory; but there will be differences of rewards, and these will be apportioned by the righteous Judge, and according therefore to His infallible judgment. And hence the Apostle can say, "not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." This too is of grace, for if Paul labored more than the other apostles, it was by the grace of God. And whatever service is

rendered by any, it is only grace that produces and acknowledges it.

What a motive, then, is here furnished to devotedness! The Lord gives power for His service, and then "at that day" He will award the recompense, even for a cup of cold water which has been given in His name. The reader will remember that the appearing is always the goal for the servant, and the expression "that day" is here connected with the same period.

01.12. 2 Timothy 4:9-22

2 Timothy 4:9-22 In this closing section of the epistle, there are several interesting personal references, besides an allusion to the Apostle's appearance before the authorities, not elsewhere recorded. First, however, Paul desires to have Timothy with him: "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me." 2 Timothy 4:9. He longed for the presence of his child in the faith, one to whom he could freely unbosom his mind and thoughts, now that there were but few to attach themselves to the Lord's prisoner. Indeed, he would seem to have been alone, with the exception of Luke (2 Timothy 4:11). Timothy was thus not to delay, but to come before the storms of winter made traveling difficult, if not impossible.

Besides, the Apostle had just been passing through trial; "for," he adds, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world [age], and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia." 2 Timothy 4:10. The two latter, Crescens and Titus, had gone; but they had not, like Demas, forsaken Paul. They had undoubtedly gone on the Lord's service; but Demas had become cold, yielding to the influences of the age; and, caring no longer to be a "partaker of the afflictions of the gospel," or to be identified with God's vessel of testimony, now a poor despised prisoner, he had, under some pretext or other, abandoned the Apostle and departed to Thessalonica. He loved this present age. What an epitaph! For he now passes out of Scripture history, and is no more seen. Once Paul had mentioned him conjointly with others as a fellow laborer; again, he sends a salutation in his name, in conjunction with "Luke, the beloved physician" (Colossians 4:14); and now he has abandoned the testimony. This is not to say that he was not a Christian; but he was one who not only could not endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, but one also whose heart had been decoyed by the world. Alas! how many Demases the Church has seen since that day!

Then, after stating that Luke only remained with him, Paul gives a direction which contains in it a very precious instance of restoring grace: "Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry." 2 Timothy 4:11. It will be remembered that Mark had once departed from Paul and Barnabas, from Pamphylia, "and went not with them to the work," on which account Paul did not think it good to take him with them on a subsequent journey (Acts 15:37-38). After an interval the Apostle wrote that Mark was to be received, that he was now serviceable for ministry. See Colossians 4:10. Mark, once unfaithful, was thus restored. Grace wrought, and it is interesting to trace the stages of his restoration. Like Demas, he is mentioned three times; but what a difference! Mark is recovered, and the Spirit of God records it; Demas becomes a backslider, unfaithful to the testimony, and disappears as such from our view. The next notice relates to a laborer in whom Paul had nothing but cause for gratitude: "And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus." 2 Timothy 4:12. Writing to the saints at Ephesus, he describes Tychicus as "a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord" (see also Colossians 4:7)—no mean verdict, especially when we remember that it is one inspired by the Holy Ghost. And it was a singular mercy to the aged Apostle to have, at this moment, such a servant to send on his behalf to Ephesus. The following verse contains a commission for Timothy, concerning a cloak that the Apostle had left at Troas,

and books and parchments. In captivity these might be useful, and Timothy was to bring them with him. The Apostle then refers to "Alexander the coppersmith," whether the same mentioned in Acts 19:33 cannot now be ascertained. He is here stamped with the unenviable notoriety of having been an uncompromising opponent of the truth, and in particular of the Apostle. He "did me much evil," Paul writes; and he adds, "The Lord reward ["will reward" is the more accurate reading] him according to his works" (2 Timothy 4:14). He thus left him in the hands of his Lord, who one day will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart, when everyone will receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10). But he takes the occasion also to warn Timothy of the true character of this adversary; "for," he says, "he hath, greatly withstood our words" (2 Timothy 4:15). A successful disputant he may have been, and thereby he might have secured the applause of his hearers; but he was a tool of Satan to his own destruction, unless indeed he afterward repented.

We come now to the account of the Apostle's appearance before his earthly judge or judges. "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work; and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." 2 Timothy 4:16-18. The reference is undoubtedly to the trial of Paul and, as we should say, to his first hearing (for it is more accurately rendered, "my first defense"); and we learn that not one was found to accompany him to the court. All men "forsook" him, and the word "forsook" is the same as is used of Demas, showing that these, as well as he, had yielded to the power of the enemy. But if they were wrought upon by their fears, grace was still operative in the heart of Paul, and, raising him above the sense of their unfaithfulness and his own desertion, enabled him to pray that the sin might not be laid to their charge.

How closely had Paul to follow in the steps of his Master! And how manifestly was he led by the same Spirit, whatever the difference in the degree of power! We thus read that, when the Lord suffered Himself to be apprehended, "all the disciples forsook Him, and fled" (Matthew 26:56); and that before His death He prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Blessed correspondence! But how few are prepared for the sufferings of such a privilege!

If, however, he was forsaken of man, yet not of the Lord. And may we not say that it is precisely when any in the Lord's service, and for His name, have to experience the solitariness of the path of a faithful witness, that the Lord comes and manifests Himself in a special way? And thus, at this moment of trial, the Lord stood by Paul and strengthened him—strengthened him inwardly (compare Php 4:13) —so that the effort of the enemy might be turned into an occasion for the proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles that filled the court of trial. The enemy had sought to silence this devoted witness by stirring up the public authorities against him to secure his condemnation; but the Lord came in, and used the opportunity for a testimony through Paul to Satan's instruments and slaves. In this way the machinations of the foe were exposed and defeated. The Apostle tells us, moreover, that he was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. Satan, indeed, had now opened his mouth as a roaring lion against Paul; and if Paul had been unfaithful, Satan would have gained a victory. But the Lord preserved His servant, and he was delivered.*

*It has been much discussed whether the emperor Nero may not be meant by the lion. It seems established that Nero was the emperor at this time; but if so, and if he were the moving cause of Paul's persecution, he was but the instrument of Satan, and Paul would not speak of second causes. We hold, therefore, that Satan is the lion. This deliverance vouchsafed to the Apostle becomes the pledge to him of continual deliverance from every evil work (compare 2 Corinthians 1:9-10), as well as the guarantee that the Lord would preserve him unto His heavenly kingdom; that is, until he departed to be with Christ (for the time of his departure was at hand) in heaven, ere the Lord should return for His saints, and before therefore He should appear with His saints to establish His kingdom on the earth. This will explain the term "heavenly kingdom." The thought of all the blessedness thus in prospect fills the heart of the Apostle with praise; and he breaks forth with the ascription, "To whom be glory forever and ever" (unto the ages of the ages). "Amen" (2 Timothy 4:18).

Having told of his deliverance to the Lord's praise, he concludes the epistle with a few more personal references- "Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus." 2 Timothy 4:19. It will be remembered that the Apostle "abode with them, and wrought: (for by their occupation they were tentmakers)" (Acts 18:2-3). And he terms them elsewhere, "my helpers in Christ Jesus: who have for my life laid down" (or hazarded) "their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles." Romans 16:3-4.

Onesiphorus has already been mentioned in this epistle (2 Timothy 1:16-18). After introducing the name of Erastus (see Acts 19:22; Romans 16:23, but whether the same person is not crown), he says, "Trophimus have I left at Miletum, sick" 2 Timothy 4:20). "We learn here," says another, "that the miraculous power granted to the apostles was exercised in the Lord's service, and not for their private interests, nor as their personal affection might suggest." This should be borne in mind a day when "faith-healing" is being so urgently pressed ignorance of dispensational truth, as well as of the teaching of the scripture concerning the object of miraculous gifts. Timothy is again exhorted to come, and to use diligence come, to the Apostle before winter. The salutations of the other saints-Eubulus, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren-are added. The epistle then concludes with the beautiful benediction, "The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you." 2 Timothy 4:22. What higher blessing could the Apostle desire or his beloved Timothy? The presence of Him who is the Lord Jesus Christ, all that He is as expressed in these names, to be with Timothy's spirit, and also grace. May this same blessing be the portion of the beloved reader!

02.00. Christ as the Morning Star and the Sun of Righteousness

Title Page

Christ as the Morning Star and the Sun of Righteousness

together with a sketch of the interval between the rapture and the appearing of Christ in glory by

Edward Dennett

02.0000. Table of Contents

Table of Contents Chapter 1. The Morning Star Chapter 2. The Interval Between the Morning Star and the Sun of Righteousness Chapter 3. The Sun of Righteousness (Malachi 4:1-6)

02.01. The Morning Star

The Morning Star

Chapter 1 IN this paper we desire to consider, in some little detail, the scriptural instruction upon the Morning Star and the Sun of righteousness. All, we are quite sure, will admit that, inasmuch as the writers of scripture were led by the Holy Ghost to give to our Lord His several titles, not one of them can be without significance. It is therefore of the first importance that we should seek to understand them, and thus to acquire a deeper knowledge of the Lord Himself in the apprehension of the mind of the Spirit. For what is needed to establish our souls is a larger acquaintance with the thoughts of God concerning His beloved Son, and thereby to be brought into fellowship with His own heart. It is only thus indeed that we can occupy our true place in this world as His representatives while awaiting His return. In this first chapter then we propose to adduce the teaching of the scriptures upon THE MORNING STAR.

It is only three times that we find this appellation given to our Lord in scripture — once in 2 Peter 1:1-21, once in Revelation 2:1-29, and again in Revelation 22:1-21. In Peter it is rendered in our translation “day star”; and indeed the word is not the same as that found in Revelation. But the word used by Peter is the proper name of the morning star, and means the “light-bringer,” while that used by John, equally applying to the morning star, indicates rather the time of its appearance in the early morning. Whether one or the other therefore, both alike refer to the same thing, and both alike apply to Christ in the same character. This will be fully seen if we consider the presentation of this symbol in the several scriptures where it is employed.

It may be first pointed out, however, that the symbol could only mean one thing naturally — namely, that the morning star not only precedes, but that it is also the presage or the harbinger of the day. This being so, it is easy to gather the sense of its application to Christ. That is, when used of Him, it must likewise signify that He, as so set forth, is the herald of the day; that just as the watcher during the night is assured when he beholds the morning star that the night is passing away, and that the sun will soon arise and flood the world with its brilliant rays, so when the Morning Star has arisen in our hearts, we have the certain knowledge that “the night is far spent” and “the day is at hand,” that He, in a word, welcomed by us as the Morning Star, will speedily appear as the Sun of righteousness, who will be “as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.” (Psalms 19:5-6) As we pursue our meditations we propose to take the passages in the order in which they occur, for we cannot doubt that there is a divine reason in this order, and consequently a development in the teaching connected with the subject. It will help if the passage from Peter is given in full. He says: “Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the

excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy [or “the prophetic word made surer”]; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts,” etc. (2 Peter 1:15-19) There are several points to be noticed in this striking scripture if the mind of the Spirit is to be apprehended. The first is that the subject which the apostle is desirous of establishing in the souls of these believers to whom he is writing (and also in ours) is that of the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. To certify them of this, he reminds them that he had been an eyewitness of this on the mount of transfiguration, and that he had heard the voice from the excellent glory, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” In one word, he had seen and heard, and this is the qualification of a competent witness. (1 John 1:3) This accords, moreover, with the historical accounts of this event in the gospels. The Lord had said to them on the eve of taking them up with Him into the “holy mount,” “There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom” (Matthew 16:28); and we also read, that the three chosen disciples for this privilege “saw his glory.” (Luke 9:32) Peter was therefore, we repeat, a competent witness of the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the scene in the holy mount was, as the Lord Himself has said, an anticipative display of that glorious event — a sample of what will be manifested when the Lord will come, as Son of man, in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels. (Luke 9:26) The next point to be observed is that the prophetic word, which had told of the coming kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, was made surer, or confirmed (for this is undoubtedly the sense of the apostle’s words), by what was seen when the Lord was transfigured before the eyes of His disciples. No careful reader of the Old Testament could fail to notice the glowing predictions and descriptions of the coming Messiah’s kingdom. Thus, for example, David speaks, “In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.

He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.

Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.” (Psalms 72:7-11; see also Isaiah 9:1-21, Isaiah 10:1-34, Isaiah 11:1-16, Isaiah 12:1-6, Isaiah 25:1-12, Isaiah 26:1-21, Isaiah 27:1-13, Isaiah 51:1-23, Isaiah 52:1-15, Isaiah 53:1-12, Isaiah 54:1-17, Isaiah 55:1-13, Isaiah 56:1-12, Isaiah 57:1-21, Isaiah 58:1-14, Isaiah 59:1-21, Isaiah 60:1-22, Isaiah 61:1-11, Isaiah 62:1-12, and many other passages in the prophets.) Now the purport of Peter’s statement is, as already said, that all these prophecies were confirmed to the three chosen eye-witnesses of the glory of Christ, and to those who received their testimony, by the honour and glory which our Lord received from God the Father, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. The testimony of the prophets was, and is, sufficient as a foundation for faith; but just as God was pleased, out of regard to the weakness of His servant, to add an oath to confirm His promise to Abraham (see Hebrews 6:1-20), so, considering the weakness of Peter, James and John, and the weakness of His people, He allowed them to behold the Lord in His transfigured condition, and to hear the expression of God’s delight in His beloved Son, together with the proclamation that all authority was entrusted to Him, that they might be established in the certainty of the future display of the glory of Christ in His kingdom.

Remark also, that the light of prophecy was, anterior to this, the only guide as to the kingdom in display; and indeed the only light as to it now, unless the day has dawned, and the Morning Star has arisen in our hearts. It is on this account that Peter says that, until this has taken place, we do well to take heed to prophecy as to a light that shineth in a dark place. This brings us at once to the question as to what it is to have the Morning Star arisen in our hearts. In the first place we know on the authority of the Lord Himself that He is the bright and morning star. (Revelation 22:17) This gives us at once the key to the interpretation. It does not therefore mean that this is true of every believer, although it should be so, for it cannot signify less than that Christ has been admitted, yea, welcomed, into the heart, enshrined there in the heart's affections, and that He has been so enthroned in the light of the day of His glory — in the light, that is, of the world to come, or of the display of His kingdom in power.

These statements need to be well weighed as much hangs upon their import. First, however, we should challenge ourselves as to whether we have really thus received Christ into our hearts, whether by grace we have yielded, and continue to yield, to Him the undisputed sway on this throne which He claims, whether we desire our hearts to be a place "Where only Christ is heard to speak, Where Jesus reigns alone." This question answered, it still remains to enquire whether we regard Christ in our hearts in this character, as the pledge and guarantee of the coming day of His glory. If so, the kingdom of His glory is not only certified to us, but it is also established — established in our hearts as the sure precursor of that time when all things will be subjected to His glorious sway. The consequence will be that, while we still rest in undoubted confidence upon every statement of the prophetic writings, we are in a way independent of their light, because the Morning Star has arisen in our hearts, and the day has already dawned. We thus live, for faith is ever the substantiating of things hoped for, in the light of the Lord's coming glory; and in our measure we can say with the Apostle Paul, The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in (or "to") us. A few words may be necessary concerning a common misconception of the arising of the Morning Star. This misconception may be illustrated from two lines of a well known hymn, "In hope we lift our wistful, longing eyes, Waiting to see the Morning Star arise."

It is evident from the language here employed that the rising of the morning star is regarded as taking place objectively, that is, without, outside the soul. And indeed the thought probably is that the Lord descending from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, to fetch His redeemed, whether sleeping or waking, is the rising of the Morning Star. It is never to be forgotten, as already explained, that Christ Himself is the Morning Star, but it cannot be too earnestly insisted upon that in the only scripture which speaks of His arising in this character, the reference is not to the return of Christ for His people, but to His arising in our hearts, and viewed, as so arisen, in the light, and as the guarantee, of the day of His glory. It may also be said with confidence that, until this is true of us of which Peter speaks, there could be no real waiting for the advent of Christ. To look for Him, with eager expectation, is heart work, and hence it is of all importance that we should begin in the experience of our souls with the teaching of Peter on the subject. If we do not, we may believe in the coming of Christ as a sound doctrine, and have the prophetic writings at our finger-ends, while, at the same time, Christ, as in Laodicea, may be vainly seeking for admission into our hearts. There is a divine reason therefore for the way which God has been pleased to present the subject in scripture, an order which cannot be neglected

without spiritual loss and detriment. The apostle concludes this part of his theme with a caution. He warns us that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation, inasmuch as the will of man had nothing to do with its production, for "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." It is not therefore by single statements, as if they were man's sentences, or even by the study of a single book, that the mind of the Spirit in the prophets can be ascertained. It was one Spirit speaking through many channels; and as a consequence the scope of all their writings, for one was chosen to communicate one aspect and one another, must be apprehended before we can embrace the object God had in view. The same thing is seen in the New Testament. There are four gospels to present Christ, and not one of these may be neglected if we would have God's thoughts concerning His Son, the Man Christ Jesus, as He was here in the world. In like manner all that the prophets teach concerning Christ in a future day must be considered if we would understand the divine idea of His coming kingdom in the day of His glory. But, as has been shown, the moment Christ has arisen as the Morning Star in our hearts, the day for us has dawned, and knowing ourselves as the children of the day, we live in the light of its glory, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (Romans 5:2) We will now pass on to the consideration of the second passage in which the same symbol occurs. It is found in the letter to Thyatira and again, for the convenience of the reader, we will give it. in full: "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star." (Revelation 2:26, Revelation 2:28) The reader will observe, in the first place, that these words are not addressed to all the believers in Thyatira, but only to the overcomer. The significance of this will be readily grasped if a few remarks are made upon the general character of Thyatira. The three previous assemblies — Ephesus, Smyrna and Pergamos — represent successive phases of the church which have passed away; but Thyatira, as may be seen from Revelation 2:25, reaches down and continues to the end.

It exists therefore today, and it is consequently of great moment that we should understand her character and heed the instruction contained in this address to the angel. There can be no manner of doubt that Thyatira represents one of the two antagonistic forces against Christianity of which the Apostle Paul speaks in Colossians 2:1-23 — that is, Ritualism, whether exemplified in Romanism or in other so-called "churches." It should be noticed, however, that if Romanism and her allies are bore indicated, they are the product of the teaching of Jezebel. The angel was responsible, and his guilt lay in the fact that he suffered that woman (or his "wife," according to another reading), who called herself a prophetess, "to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols." The doctrines allowed to be held by some in Pergamos had now been formally adopted, and they characterised the assembly. The effect was that the true nature of Christianity was subverted, legal rites were re-enacted, and thus the end of the man in the flesh was refused. And whence came these bitter waters of corruption which spread desolation wherever they flowed? The fount and source of all is seen in Ephesus having left her first love. Well therefore might the wise man lay upon us this injunction: Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

Another thing claims our attention. There is found for the Lord's own refreshment and joy a little oasis in the moral desert of Thyatira. Standing apart from the abounding corruption on every hand, a remnant, like the remnant in Malachi, sought to maintain fidelity to Christ. In so doing they were

slandered by Jezebel and her followers as having commerce with Satan and his iniquities. The Lord saw all this, and He stepped in with special words of encouragement to His poor and afflicted people and sheltered them from the accusations of the enemy. "But unto you I say, the rest in Thyatira,* as many as have not this doctrine [the doctrine of Jezebel], and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak [as they say you have]; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have [already] hold fast till I come." (Revelation 2:24-25.) *The words "and unto" should be omitted, as the Lord is speaking to a faithful remnant. It should read simply, "But unto you I say, the rest in Thyatira." There are therefore four classes plainly distinguished in Thyatira, the angel — composed of elders and teachers — who had failed to maintain the authority of Christ over His people; corrupt Jezebel and her followers; a feeble remnant who were seeking to keep the word of Christ, and thus to maintain separation; and, lastly, those who might be overcomers, though these would come from the godly remnant which has been specified. It is with this last class that we shall now be concerned, as the promises, and especially that of the morning star, are made to those who by the grace of God should win this title of overcomer, and thereby gain the Lord's approbation.

It will be necessary therefore to explain what will constitute an overcomer, and all the more so in that the question is often put, whether all Christians will not inherit these special promises. To put the question thus is to miss its purport. An overcomer then is one, we judge, who, in the midst of the corruptions indicated as existing in the assembly, maintains in the energy of the Spirit faithfulness to the Lord in holiness of walk and conduct. Realising the supremacy of the Lord's claims he seeks at all cost to acquire a Nazarite condition, and he pursues this end whatever the obloquy, reproach or persecution he may have to encounter. It is as the Lord Himself says, "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end." There is therefore, on the one hand, absolute separation from the evils allowed in the assembly; and on the other hand, there is the pressing on, in the power of the Holy Ghost, to keep "the works of Christ," to surrender in fact oneself to Him as the instrument of His will. Such is, we deem, an overcomer, even as the Simeons and Annas were overcomers in their day.

Now it is to such, and to such alone, that these promises are given, and they are given to encourage their hearts, to stimulate their energy and to incite their increasing devotedness in the path of separation on which they had entered. They are given also as a token of the Lord's approbation, and to produce in their hearts the holy purpose to win the victor's crown. In this way all whose hearts are true to the Lord are reminded that His eye is upon them, and that nothing delights Him more than fidelity to Himself in an evil day. Surely then it is not according to His mind that in supineness and indifference we should settle down here with the deceitful thought that all these things will be ours in a future day, and thereby lose the great and present gain of the sunshine of the Lord's favour and blessing. It is quite true that we cannot stem the tide of corruption which has desolated the whole of Christendom; but it is open to us, naming the name of the Lord, to depart from iniquity, and to follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. And to do this is to tread the path of an overcomer.

We may now proceed to consider the special promises with which is associated the gift of the morning star: "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star."

(Revelation 2:26-28.) If we turn for a moment to Psalms 2:1-12, we shall at once understand the nature of the first part of these promises. There we read: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen [nations] for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." (Psalms 2:8-9.) Very clearly the Lord refers to this scripture, and this helps us to comprehend the meaning of His promise to the overcomer. It is really the bestowal of His own power as given to Him of the Father; that is, association with Himself when He comes forth to deal in judgment with the nations of the earth, and to subdue them unto Himself, in connection with the establishment of His kingdom.

Such is the prospect which the Lord holds out to His people to encourage them to hold fast until He should come, and thus to be overcomers. And how strikingly does He thereby reveal the grace and love which He has for His own in that He will share with them His own exaltation and glory, not only before the Father's face (John 17:22-23), but also (as indeed the scripture in John contemplates) in the display of His glory in His kingdom. And the words, "Even as I received of my Father," are to be much observed. It will be remembered that in His temptation in the wilderness, the devil, having shown Him all the kingdoms of the world, said, All this power will I give thee and the glory of them... If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. But He answered, It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve. (Luke 4:5-8) He thus overcame the tempter by maintaining fidelity to Him whose will He had come to do, by refusing everything from the hand of Satan, and receiving only from the Father. The path to His exaltation lay through the cross, and there having glorified God in all that God is, victorious over death and the grave, He has for ever set aside the claim and power of Satan, and has established the rights of God, which He will vindicate in due time when He assumes His power, and asserts His sovereign sway over all the nations of the earth. But for this association with Christ in His glorious reign, the overcomer will have to wait. In the meantime, is he to have nothing? Yea, saith the Lord, during this time of patience I will give him the morning star. That is to be the overcomer's present portion while anticipating the day when the Lord will come forth to put down all rule and all authority and power; for He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. (1 Corinthians 15:24-25) It will be seen therefore that the overcomer possesses two present blessings as his stay and support, while waging conflict with the powers of evil and corruption around and holding fast what he has in expectation of the Lord's return. The first is, the light of the coming sovereignty of our Lord over the kingdoms of this world (see Revelation 11:15), and of his own association with Christ in that day; and, secondly, the gift of the morning star.

It has yet to be inquired, In what way does he possess the morning star? Let it be repeated that Christ Himself is the morning star, and Christ Himself in a certain character; that is, Christ in relation to, and as the pledge of, the day of His glory. The morning star is the herald of the coming day, and when it is seen the watcher knows that the darkness of the night will soon pass away. In like manner the overcomer who has the Morning Star is certified that the day is at hand. The question then returns, How does he possess it? There is only one possible answer, and that is, in his heart. It is there he holds the precious gift, and hence he is superior to all the power of the enemy which besets him around, for his heart is flooded with the light of the day for which he waits. The darkness of the night for him has passed; he lives in the sunlight of the day. (See 1 Thessalonians 5:5) The difference therefore between this scripture and that in Peter is this: in the

latter, when the morning star has arisen in our hearts, the light of prophecy, rendered surer by what took place on the holy mount where the Lord was transfigured, is in a certain way superseded, because we have within us Christ as the Morning Star, the guarantee of all that the prophets predicted. In one word, for those in whose hearts the day has dawned and the morning star has arisen all prophecy concerning the universal kingdom of our Lord has already been fulfilled. In the passage in Revelation the Morning Star is given also in relation to the glory of Christ, but as the present sustenance in conflict, and as the assurance that the overcomer will share with Christ in the exaltation of that day, and in His judgment of, and in His sway over the nations. As the Psalmist sings (and only those who have the gift of the morning star could now join in the song): "Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen [nations], and punishments upon the people [peoples]; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the Lord. [Hallelujah.]" (Psalms 149:5-9) That this in its application refers especially to the earthly people is undoubted, but it is a most vivid illustration of the Lord's promise to the overcomer in Thyatira as far as power over the nations is concerned. And it is as the harbinger and pledge of this that the Lord gives to the overcomer the morning star for present support and enjoyment. The final scripture in which the Morning Star is presented is in the last chapter of the same book — Revelation 22:16. The Lord Himself is the speaker: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, [and] the bright and* morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

*Many authorities omit the conjunction: it would then read, "the bright morning star."

Before entering upon the presentation of Christ, as here given, it will be necessary in order to apprehend its significance to touch upon the context. Twice, in the previous part of the chapter, the Lord announces His speedy return Revelation 22:7; Revelation 22:12); and it is essential for us to understand the period to which He refers. Let it then be distinctly said that the rapture of the saints before the appearing of Christ has no place in this book, unless indeed it is seen representatively in the Man Child who was caught up to God and His throne in Revelation 12:1-17. The church will be rapt away from this scene before the awful judgments, connected with the breaking of the seals, with the trumpets and the vials, are poured forth; for the marriage of the Lamb takes place in heaven before the Lord comes out of heaven, together with the armies which were in heaven, as described in Revelation 19:1-21. There is no doubt whatsoever of this, however ingeniously men may reason to the contrary; but it is of the utmost importance to observe that the coming of Christ in this book, in accordance with its teaching throughout, relates to the appearing in glory of our blessed Lord. Thus in regard to the announcement of His coming quickly in Revelation 22:7, another has said, "Those that keep them" (the sayings of the prophecy of this book) "are those concerned in the book who are warned that Christ will soon be there. No doubt we can all profit by it, but we are not in the scenes it speaks of." And again, Revelation 22:7 was a warning, in form of blessing, to those in the circumstances referred to, to keep the sayings of the book, but this Revelation 22:12 is the record of Christ's coming to the general judgment of the quick." This makes all plain, and if we have entered into it, we shall be the better prepared to consider our

special scripture. There is, however, a remark or two more to be made. It will be noticed that the Lord affirms the solemn statement of His coming by the truth of what He is as the eternally self-existent One: I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Then we have a short parenthesis in which is described the blessedness of those who will have the title to the tree of life and to enter in through the gates into the city; and also the several moral characters or classes are specified who will be forever excluded from that abode of perfection and bliss. The everlasting difference between good and evil (although this will not be finally declared until the session of the great white throne) having been made, the Lord again speaks, "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." A few words must first be said upon the first character given — the root and the offspring of David. Two or three scriptures will unfold this to us. In the prophet Micah we read, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." (Micah 5:2) Here are manifestly the same two aspects as in the words of Christ Himself. Again, in the language of Gabriel, when announcing to Mary the birth of Jesus, he says, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David," etc. (Luke 1:32) And finally, the Lord Himself said to the Pharisees, "What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" (Matthew 22:42-45) The answer to these questions is found in our scripture, as also in Micah and Luke, for in all alike it is abundantly manifest that He who was to be ruler over Israel, He who was to sit upon the throne of His father, David, was also David's Lord. As in our scripture, He was the root, the origin of David, as well as his offspring. Herein lies the mystery of God manifest in flesh, which lies at the basis of redemption, whether for Israel or for Christians. Observe moreover that this presentation of Himself determines the character of His coming in this chapter. It shows beyond a doubt that the Lord has in view the establishment of the kingdom, first over Israel and then over the nations of the earth; and that, in His universal sway, He will make good in His government all that God is. Hence the cry of the Psalmist, "Say among the heathen [nations] that the Lord reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people [peoples] righteously. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness 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 [peoples] with his truth." (Psalms 96:10-13) It is then that the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth from pole to pole, for it will be a time of universal blessing under the sway of the Root and Offspring of David. But it is with Christ as the bright and morning star that we are more especially concerned; only it greatly helps us to comprehend the significance of this emblem when we consider the effects of the introduction of the day of Christ. As also in regard to the promise to the overcomer in Thyatira, the kingdom, at least as contained in the character of the Root and Offspring of David, comes first into view. And it is precisely this fact that definitely fixes the import of the morning star, teaching, as it does, that, as in the natural heavens, so here, it is the presage of the coming glorious day. There is, however, one difference to be noted between the scripture now before us and those already considered. Both in Peter and in Revelation 2 the morning star is

looked upon as a present possession; in the former as the possible possession of all believers, in the latter as a gift to the overcomer. In the scripture before us it is simply the presentation of Christ in this character to the assembly - and to the assembly as the bride. That the bride will and does cherish the Bridegroom in her affections is undoubted, and all the more in that the church is here seen in her normal condition. Still Christ calls attention to Himself under this symbol in this place, we judge, to draw forth the affections of her heart which He knows to be there, to encourage her to maintain the constant attitude of expectancy of His return, and to cheer her heart amidst the increasing darkness and gloom on earth with occupation with Himself in this character, as giving the assurance that very soon the clouds will be all dispersed when He breaks forth through them all as the Sun of righteousness.

It must again be remarked that there is no question here of the rising of the morning star.

Christ has so arisen, and the bride, standing as it were upon the edge of the night, beholds Him, and, while beholding, is entranced with His beauty, as well as convinced, at the same time, that the night is far spent and that the day is at hand when, sharing in His exaltation and throne, He will display her as robed in His own glory and beauty. Two events will, we know, precede this, first, the private presentation of the bride to Himself, "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27), and the public celebration of the marriage of the Lamb in heaven as described in Revelation 19:1-21 : but what is contemplated here, in connection with the coming quickly of Christ, is what is revealed to John by one of the seven angels who said, "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." (Revelation 21:9-11) The subject would be incomplete without a few words upon the effect of the presentation of Christ to the bride. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." How simple! And yet it was the suited response. It could not be otherwise inasmuch as it is the language of the Spirit and the bride. But how the language of both? Because it was produced by the Spirit in the heart of the bride. It was His words, though uttered by herself. (Cp. Romans 8:26-27) The response therefore was the one which the Lord desired to bear, and the only one suited to the moment. And it is much to be observed that it was elicited by the presentation of Himself to the heart of the bride, and if as a consequence her heart overflowed in the one word, "Come," it was the effect of the mighty working of the Spirit. What a lesson to all who seek to minister to God's beloved people? Is it desired to lead them into fuller blessing by awakening in them more fervent affection to Christ? Behold then the Lord's own way. It is to minister Himself in the aspect suited to the need. But for this the one who ministers must himself be in communion with the heart of Christ about His people, and he must be near enough to Him to apprehend His mind for them at that particular moment. Oh! that many such servants may be found labouring amongst the saints of God.

"And let him that heareth say, Come." It is not only the bride therefore who turns upward in the power of the Spirit, as she gazes upon the face of the Bridegroom, and says, with unutterable longing, Come; but the Lord would have every one of His people, wherever he may be, who hears the cry to join in it individually. What could more plainly reveal the Lord's mind for His own, that He would have every saint of God maintaining the expectation of His return. Not one is excepted, and this very fact constitutes a challenge as to our state of soul in view of seeing the Lord face to face;

a prospect, when cherished, which constitutes the one great motive to holiness, as the apostle teaches that every one who looks for Christ and being like Him, will purify himself, even as Christ is pure. (1 John 3:2-3) The circle is now widened. The church is in a sense the depository of grace; and hence the Spirit of God, speaking through her, or through His servants, thinking upon the multitude of needy, thirsty souls scattered throughout the world, remembering that the day of grace will be closed when the Lord does come, utters the yearning appeal, Let him that is athirst come, As the Lord said when He was upon earth, If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink, so now the Spirit repeats the invitation. Oh! that weary souls everywhere, souls who have been attempting to slake their thirst at human cisterns, might have their ears opened to hear this pleading invitation; and as they hear it, may they remember the words of the Lord Himself, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well [fountain] of water springing up into everlasting life."

There is yet more. Every person upon the face of the earth is thought of, for it is added, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Nothing could more fully show that the living water which Christ has secured through His death and resurrection is "towards all," that is, that all that is in the heart of God is for man, and consequently that the gospel is to be proclaimed to all, for God has been pleased to assume the attitude of a Saviour God; and since Christ died for all, He would have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:1-15) Let this gracious invitation therefore be proclaimed throughout the wide world, and with all the more urgency because of the imminence of the Lord's return.

Finally, attention may be called to the fact, often mentioned, that the presentation of the Lord in this twofold way, as the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star, becomes the occasion for the description of the whole circle of the church's affections. She, as the true bride, begins with the Bridegroom; she then thinks of, for indeed she includes, all who are His; next she remembers all anxious and thirsty ones; and lastly she travels out, and thus becomes the interpreter of her Lord's mind, to all men of every country and clime. Let us then seek grace that we may move in no narrower circle. And mark it well, that the bride begins with Christ, and not with souls, however precious they may be. In the same way, if we are to become in any measure the expression of the heart of Christ, we must begin with Himself. If, forgetting this, we commence first with saints or sinners, our hearts will become contracted and narrow, and we shall no longer be the exponents of His blessed heart and will. Give Him the first place in our affections and we shall be His faithful representatives towards all.

02.02. The Interval Between The Morning Star And The Sun Of Righteousness

The Interval Between The Morning Star And The Sun Of Righteousness

Chapter 2

THERE is no interval indicated between the Morning Star and the Sun of righteousness shining forth in His strength. As the beautiful rays of the morning star can be often discerned in the heavens even while the sun is arising above the eastern horizon, so might it have been concluded, from the adoption of these emblems, that the glory of the Sun of righteousness would follow immediately upon the shining of the morning star. But it is not so, for it is apparent that in each of the three cases of the employment of the symbol of the morning star, it is for the comfort and encouragement of the saints of this period, in one word, for the consolation of Christians. But these, as we know from the teaching of scripture, will not be left on the earth at the darkest time of its history, but, as in the promise to Philadelphia, in the words of the Lord Himself, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from ["out of "] the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world [the habitable world], to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Revelation 3:10) Seeing therefore that there is a space of time between these two characters of Christ, we shall all the more intelligently comprehend the whole subject if we consider how this interval of time will be occupied, at least as far as believers are concerned. If now we turn to the first Epistle to the Thessalonians we shall find the most explicit teaching upon this subject. In chapter 1 we are taught that these believers were "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;" and Jesus, the apostle tells them, was their Deliverer from the wrath to come. (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10) Now our view of the latter part of this passage will entirely depend upon our interpretation of the words, "the wrath to come." What is this? Popularly explained, it is hell, the lake of fire, which will be the doom of all whose names are not found in the book of life, at the session of the great white throne. (Revelation 20:15) But when 1 Thessalonians 5:1-28 is examined it will be seen that, true as it is that all who have rejected God's testimony in any age will be cast in the lake of fire, the "wrath to come" does not contemplate this final issue, but means rather the judgments which in a future day will be poured out upon this world — the wrath connected with the coming of the day of the Lord. It is in contrast with this that the apostle says to the Thessalonians, God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. Then, moreover, it is to be remembered that before the day of the Lord the desolating judgments, of which we have the record in Revelation, will be visited upon the habitable world in its apostasy from God. It is from this wrath of God which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, from which Christ is the deliverer of His people.

If now it be inquired as to how, or in what manner He vouchsafes this deliverance, the answer is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14. To correct a misapprehension into which the Thessalonians had fallen, the apostle says, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which

are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Now it is evident that, if God is to bring back His saints with Jesus, they must in some way be with Him before He returns. It is this very thing that Paul, having received a special revelation upon the subject (for he speaks "by the word of the Lord"), proceeds to explain. He says, "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: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17.) The truth then is, that before the day of the Lord, with its attendant judgments, the believers who compose the church of God on earth, together with those who have fallen asleep, will be caught away from the scene, caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and that they in this manner will be delivered from the wrath to come, and obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. So great is the tenderness of our blessed Lord, and so unspeakable His love, that He will not allow the church for which He died to be exposed to the coming wrath, or to that great tribulation which will precede the day of the Lord! Blessed be His name for ever and ever. Amen.

It is, however, alleged, while the foregoing statements are admitted, that if the saints are caught up to meet the Lord in the air as described by the apostle, it is to return immediately with Him when He will break forth through the clouds, which have darkened the earth, as the Sun of righteousness. Can this allegation be accepted? It is impossible, as it allows no room for the three events which in scripture follow upon the rapture of the saints before the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. The first of these is the introduction of the saints into the Father's house. If it be true, as it undoubtedly is, that the character of His coming is not before our Lord's mind in John 14:1-31, it yet cannot be contested that the object of it is very distinctly. And what do we read of this? "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." Nothing short of this, of being with Himself, and to be with Him in the Father's house, could satisfy His own heart; and surely it may be added that nothing less than this could suit the Father to bestow upon the many sons whom He has purposed for glory through the One who had glorified Him on the earth, and finished the work which He had given Him to do. Nay, we may go further back: every believer was given to Christ by the Father, and every one is drawn to Him by the Father. There is therefore full communion between the Father and the Son concerning His people, and doubtless we may see the expression of this in the Lord's message to His own through Mary, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Such is the place which Christ has won for us according to the Father's eternal counsels for the glory of His beloved Son; and hence, if we are now in the realisation of our heavenly relationship and place, in association with Christ, as sons with Him before the Father's face, it could only be to the end that we shall be for ever with Him in the Father's house. What joy then will it be to the Lord Himself to introduce His own into that scene "Where all those deep affections, Which fill the Father's heart, Shall find their satisfaction, Their joy to us impart; Where we His throne surrounding Shall Abba, Father say, Within those many mansions — Prepared for that day." In a still deeper sense He will surely say again, "Here am I and the children which Thou hast given me." The next event will be the

judgment-seat of Christ. There is very distinct evidence that this will take place before the appearing of Christ, for we read in Revelation 19:1-21 that the armies in heaven that followed Christ out of heaven, as there set forth, were “clothed in fine linen, white and clean,” and referring back to Revelation 19:8 we find that the fine linen, clean and white, is the righteousness (“righteousnesses”) of saints. Now this would be impossible before the judgment-seat of Christ, because it is at this tribunal, before which we are all to be manifested (2 Corinthians 5:1-21; 2 Corinthians 10:1-18), that we shall receive the things done in our bodies, according to that we have done, whether good or bad. Christ Himself is our righteousness before God, or we could have no title to be in His presence, but the righteousnesses of the saints could not be known or declared until the things done in our bodies had been reviewed and appraised according to the unerring estimate of Christ Himself. The whole of our past lives, the significance of every act, its motive as well as its object, will be made clear to us — clear as to the source of all, whether our activities sprang from the energy of the flesh or were produced by the Spirit of God, and how much of mixture there had often been in what seemed to be our most devoted service. All this will be manifested to us at that time in the patient grace of our blessed Lord, to us individually, not necessarily to others in public. The effect will be that we shall magnify as never before the grace of our God, that grace which will impute to His people as their own righteousness what that same grace had wrought in and through His people. They will be constrained to acknowledge, as the Apostle Paul has said, that it was not they but the grace of God which was with them, that gave both the privilege and the capacity to do anything in His service; but it will, on the other hand, be the delight of Christ in that day to attribute every good work done, good according to His perfect estimate, to His beloved people. Should any one, however, inquire how it will be possible to endure the exposures which must necessarily be made, however tenderly, in the perfect light of that day, let such an one remember that when we are manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ we are already conformed to His image. We shall therefore be in full communion with His own mind, and as such we shall seal with our hearty “Amens” every condemnation which He may be compelled to pass upon any act of the flesh which we had done. Nay, more, we shall rejoice before Him because the issue of our manifestation before the judgment-seat of Christ will but intensify our conceptions of the grace of our God, and enlarge our thoughts of His eternal love which He has revealed to us in and through His beloved Son.

If now for a moment we consider the object which the judgment-seat of Christ has in view, it will confirm us in the conclusion that it must precede His coming forth as the Sun of righteousness. From the parable in Luke 19:11-27, as well as from other scriptures, we learn that there will be differences in the position of the saints in the kingdom according to the measure of their fidelity in service during the period of the Lord’s absence. This will not be so in eternity, because, as the result of the purpose of God, every redeemed one will be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren. As indeed it is scripturally put in the familiar lines, “Thou gav’st us, in eternal love, To Him, to bring us home to Thee, Suited to Thine own thought above, As sons like Him, with Him to be.” But in the kingdom, in its ordering and government, some, to use the language of the parable, may be over ten cities and others over five, and the place of each will follow upon the faithful diligence exercised in the use of that which had been entrusted to them to “trade” with while waiting for the Lord’s return. In like manner, the Lord said to His disciples, to those who by His grace had continued with Him in His temptations, “And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at

my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (Luke 22:29-30) Now it will be at the judgment-seat of Christ that the service of each will be appraised; it will be then to borrow the language of the parable, that He will reckon with His servants, ascertain how much every one has gained by trading, in order to assign to each his respective place in His kingdom. Other things will be transacted before this solemn tribunal, but we are only concerned at present with that which will form the foundation of the awards in the glorious kingdom of Christ. At least, however, it may be remarked that it will be a great gain to us to live constantly in the prospect of the manifestation of that day, to use diligence that, whether present or absent, we may be acceptable to the Lord. The apostle was enabled to say, We are made manifest unto God; and if we daily walk in the light as God is in the light, it will be true also of us, and in this way we shall anticipate the judgment-seat of Christ, as well as qualify ourselves for the position which the Lord, in His grace, may assign to us when He comes forth to take His rights and to establish His universal dominion. The third, and last thing to take place, as preparatory to the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, is the marriage supper of the Lamb, as recorded in Revelation 19:1-21. With this, however, must be conjoined, as connected with it, an event of which there is, we think, no mention except in Ephesians 5:1-33. We read there of Christ’s presentation to Himself of His bride, “a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” (Ephesians 5:27) The words in italics — to Himself — reveal most fully the character of this event, that it is a private and not a public thing, that it expresses the joy of Christ in claiming His bride as His own, that bride which ravished His heart when He beheld her as the pearl of great price, in all her beauty according to the counsels of God, the church He loved and for which He gave Himself. Her wilderness sojourn will then be over, the days of her widowhood and mourning will be ended, she will have passed through all needful discipline until, through having been sanctified and cleansed with the washing of the water by the word, she has been made morally suitable to Christ. And then it is that He claims her in the joy of His heart, and presents her to Himself arrayed in all the beauty wherewith He has robed her, that she may be His companion for ever. This, we repeat, is a private transaction, and no “stranger” will intermeddle with the joy of Christ in that day. It will be wholly for His own satisfaction and pleasure; for then in very deed, if we may borrow the language, He will bring His bride into the banqueting house, and His banner over her will be love.

After this private presentation of the bride to Himself, there will be the public celebration of the marriage in heaven. We find a full account of this in Revelation 19:1-21, and we give the whole passage: “And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness [“righteousnesses”] of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.” (Revelation 19:5-9.) The connection in which this scripture is found adds greatly to its significance. The great harlot who had corrupted the earth with her fornication, the false bride, had received her judgment from God and had been for ever set aside, adjudged to be, as she was, the murderess of prophets and saints, for in her, says the Spirit of God, was found their blood, “and the blood of

all that were slain upon the earth.” This avenging judgment was the cause of mourning and lamentation (for so far had men departed from the living God) in all classes of the inhabitants of the earth. But in heaven (and nothing could more completely show the antagonism of man to God) it was the occasion of an outburst of universal joy. And wherefore this overflowing gladness which could only find adequate expression in praise and adoration? It sprang from the fact that God, having judged Babylon the great corruptress of the earth, was about to establish His sovereignty throughout the wide world. Nay, viewing this as already effected, the voice of a great multitude filled heaven with their ecstatic thunderings of praise as they cried, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. The heart in which Christ is already enthroned will understand this exultant celebration, as it apprehends that the time had now arrived when God was about to glorify publicly His beloved Son in the face of the universe, when He would exalt even here on earth the One who had once been rejected and crucified, and cause all the nations of the world to own His blessed sway. For then will come to pass the saying written, “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord’s: and he is the governor among the nations.” (Psalms 22:27-28) But, and this is the point in this heavenly scene, He will not be alone in the day of His glory. His bride, the church, who has been identified with Him in the day of His rejection will, out of His great love to her, be displayed in glory with Him in the day of His exaltation. The marriage of the Lamb is the preparation for this, and hence it is in order that the bride may be a companion for her exalted Lord and Bridegroom that she makes herself ready, and is arrayed before all heaven in her garments of fine linen, pure and white. It is this union of the Bridegroom with His bride that elicits the admiring praise of the heavenly hosts; and so privileged are those who behold it that John is commanded to write, “Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.” It will be indeed a scene never more repeated, and the joy of the bride in the consummation of all her longing hopes, in the possession for ever of the Object of her affections, will only be surpassed by the joy of the Bridegroom in taking into union with Himself the bride for whom He had already proved His love to the uttermost when He died upon the cross. And the love He showed there was but the measure of the love He had borne for her through every step of her pilgrim way, and indeed of the love expressed in this scene before all the heavenly hosts in the public celebration of His marriage. It was, and is, and ever will be, an everlasting, infinite and perfect love, a love which passeth knowledge — and language will ever fail to convey its fulness and intensity.

It must, however, be again repeated that the marriage supper of the Lamb is but preparatory to His coming out of heaven, when He will break through the dark clouds of earth as the Sun of righteousness. This will be dealt with in the next chapter; but we still have to call attention, if briefly, to what will follow upon the earth while these events, which have been described, are taking place in heaven. There will scarcely be a single ray of light to illumine the darkness which will enshroud the habitable world on the eve of the Lord’s appearing, that is, during the last halfweek of Daniel’s prophecy. To enter into the detail of what will transpire during these twelve hundred and sixty days, or forty and two months, is beyond the scope of our present purpose; but if the reader should desire to do so, he can study, reminding himself as he reads that it is only through the teaching of the Holy Ghost that the mind of God can be apprehended, Revelation 6:1-17. In this portion of the scriptures he will find a full account of the state of things which will prevail before the Lord returns. We propose simply to sketch the main features of this terrible time, concerning which the Lord Himself said, “Except those days should be shortened, there should no

flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." (Matthew 24:22) The first thing then we may refer to is the revelation of the man of sin, the son of perdition. The Apostle Paul tells us that this event will be consequent upon the departure of the Holy Ghost in the church. He says, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth [hinders or restrains] will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked [one], be revealed." (2 Thessalonians 2:7-8) This is manifestly the Antichrist, for the apostle describes this man of sin as the one "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, showing himself that he is God." (2 Thessalonians 2:4.) It is he of whom John says that he will deny the Father and the Son; and in Revelation 13 we have other details of this incarnation of sin and iniquity, this embodiment of human progress, intellect, and achievement in contrast with, and in opposition to, all that God is as set forth in Christ. And what Paul teaches in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 is, that the only thing which restrains the manifestation of this monster of iniquity at the present moment is the presence of the Holy Ghost on earth in the church. This is for the comfort of the children of God. The signs of apostasy may be visible on every hand, the corruptions of Thyatira through the teaching of Jezebel may abound, and infidelity, owing to a growing Laodiceanism, may rear its head and boast of enlightenment from human sources in its self-complacent lukewarmness and indifference; but the Antichrist cannot appear above the surface until after the church has been rapt away from the scene, "for greater is he that is in you," writes the apostle, "than he that is in the world." It should also be said that before the uprising of Antichrist, as may be seen from Revelation 8:1-13, the first beast, the head of the Roman empire, consisting of the ten federated kingdoms, will have astonished the world by his appearance. And it is through his power that Antichrist will be strengthened and sustained; for we read that Antichrist will exercise "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." (Revelation 13:12 — see also following verses.) We do not, however, pursue this further, but we may point out that the time of "Jacob's trouble" and "the great tribulation" will coincide with this period. The former relates to the terrible ordeal of fiery persecution through which the Jews who are in the land will have to undergo — at least those who will compose the faithful remnant of that day — during the domination of Antichrist in Jerusalem; and the latter refers to a similar, and probably a coincident, period of the exercise of tyrannical oppression and its attendant persecutions which will extend throughout the ten kingdoms of the Roman empire. It is this which the Lord terms, in His message to the angel of Philadelphia, "the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Both alike will probably spring from the edict, after that Antichrist has impiously dared to set up the image of the first beast ("the abomination of desolation") in the temple, that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed, that all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, that is, every subject of the Roman empire should receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads (as a sign of allegiance to the existing blasphemous authorities), 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. (Revelation 13:15-17) It will be a despotism, animated by devilish power as well as untempered by any legal restraints, such as the world has never witnessed, fierce as have been the persecutions of the early centuries of Christianity and of the Middle Ages; and since God never leaves the world without witnesses (Revelation 11:1-19), martyrs will abound amongst those who will be tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection; while others, as in the early

days, will have trial of mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments, and others again will be stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, and slain with the sword. (See Hebrews 11:35-38; Revelation 20:4) The question, however, may be asked, Will not the saints of that day, as now, be under the obligation of obedience to the "powers that be," the existing authorities? The answer is twofold.

Whenever, in the first place, an earthly monarch intrudes his supremacy into God's domain, and commands for himself what is due only to God, as Nebuchadnezzar did, then men are justified in refusing compliance to the monarch's decrees, as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to worship the king's image. But, secondly, during the interval between the rapture of the church and the appearing of Christ, there will be no authority owned of God. The powers of that day will not, as at the present time, be ordained of God. The reason is, as we read in Revelation 13:1-18, that the dragon (Satan) will give to the beast "his power, and his seat, and great authority." (Revelation 13:2.) It will therefore be a time of the unrestrained exercise of Satanic power, except in so far as the judgments of God, falling with increasing violence and intensity upon the scene, may alarm the minds of those who wield the authority. But even so there will be no repentance, only an everdeepening hostility to God and to His people. Altogether there will be, as in the words already cited, such a great tribulation as has not been since the beginning of the world, nor ever shall be. We said in an earlier part of the chapter that the darkness of this day will scarcely be relieved by a single ray of light. There are, however, rays of light discernible by those who have been enlightened by the Spirit, for the curtain has been lifted, and our sketch would not be complete if these were not mentioned. In Revelation 7:1-17 we find a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and they cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb... And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of the ["the" should be inserted] great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, etc. (Revelation 7:9-17.) This immense company is not elsewhere mentioned in the scriptures; but what we learn is that they all are brought through that awful time of trial which will affect the Gentiles during the despotic sway of the head of the revived Roman empire; that, having received the testimony of God for that time, which has reached them in some unrevealed manner, they came under the efficacy of the blood of the Lamb, and maintained holiness of walk and conversation, and that, in the same grace which met them at first, the blessed recompense is bestowed upon them of being before the throne of God, and of serving Him day and night in His temple, and of having God dwelling among them. It is another illustration of the fact that no power of evil can hinder the accomplishment of the purposes of God; that just as the Lord, when on earth, found His sheep and led them out, spite of the opposition of the Jewish authorities, so in this coming day, when Satan to the outward eye will seem to hold the field, and to reign unchecked, every one whose name has been written in the Lamb's book of life from the foundation of the world will be brought out of his hiding place and be made a recipient of God's grace and eternal blessing. Man energised by Satan may do his worst, but he cannot interfere with the counsels of God. We may well therefore take heart in the darkest day as we remember that, whatever the appearance of things, God is silently and surely working, and irresistibly working, towards His goal. Thus He will make the wrath of man to praise Him, while He

will restrain the remainder.

Passing now to Revelation 14:1-20 we are introduced to another company who have been snatched out of the fiery furnace into which they had been cast, like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego of old. It would take us too far to enter minutely upon the subject of this hundred forty and four thousand who were redeemed (“bought”) from the earth. It will therefore suffice to say that these firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb will be saved out of the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, who will be in the land when their cruel adversary, the Antichrist, rages, as against Christ, so also against His people. But not one of this complete typical number 12, 000 x 12, will be found lacking. As when the Lord in the Gospel of John said, “All that the Father hath given to me shall come unto me” — so in that day all the chosen ones will be brought to own and confess the Lamb of God; and every one of this company will have, not the mark of the beast, but the Lamb’s name and His Father’s name [for so it should be read] written upon their foreheads having suffered in their measure, as the Lord Himself suffered in His rejection. Hence they receive this special mark of favour, and moreover they will stand with the Lamb upon Mount Sion as well as follow Him whithersoever He goeth.

It is a great encouragement to be permitted to know these blessed alleviations of the unparalleled sorrows of that day of Satan’s apparent triumph; and to see, we may repeat, how completely God controls, even if He do not manifest Himself, all the powers of evil for the working out of His own ends, whether in judgment upon His enemies or in the salvation of His people. When Israel has learned this lesson, they will be able with full hearts to adopt the language already written for their use: 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.

It may be remarked, finally, that this whole interval will be marked by much seeming progress and prosperity. The arts and sciences, as well as trade and commerce, will flourish in an unexampled manner. If any should hesitate to receive this statement, let them read Isaiah 2:1-22 and Revelation 18:1-24. The reason is twofold: first, the earth will then witness the development of man, and man’s powers in an extraordinary measure; unchecked, and under the inspiration of Satan, man will display what is termed genius in a way never before seen. In one word. the man in the flesh will at that time reach his highest altitude and perfection. Secondly, worshipping the god of this world, as all outside of God’s elect will, Satan will grant them the desires of their hearts. (Compare Luke 4:5-7) Combined with this there will be a pervading sense, under the seductive influences of the evil one, of peace and security. As the apostle writes, “When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.” (1 Thessalonians 5:3) Or as the Lord said, “As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.” (Luke 17:26-27) Not that there will be no forebodings. In all crises of the world’s history there have been in the minds of many some anticipations of impending remarkable occurrences. And of this time the Lord has explicitly said, “There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.” And yet the Lord warns His disciples to take heed to themselves, “lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so

that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.” (Luke 21:25-26; Luke 21:34-35) Such then will be the prevailing state of things after the church has been removed from the scene, and until the sudden revelation of the glory of the Lord when all flesh shall see it together. As Peter teaches, the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. It is at His appearing in this way, as will be seen from the next chapter, that He shines forth in the heavens as the Sun of Righteousness when He will be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds.

02.03. The Sun Of Righteousness. (Malachi 4)

The Sun Of Righteousness. (Malachi 4:1-6)

Chapter 3

IT is only once in scripture that we find this appellation of Christ; but what is signified by it comes out in numberless places, as we hope to see while we pursue our meditations. If, however, this emblem is only once explicitly employed, its meaning, especially when taken in the connection of this scripture, is so apparent that it cannot be mistaken. This will be immediately apprehended if we cite the words of the prophet. In the previous chapter, he describes a God-fearing remnant in the midst of abounding wickedness and corruption. All alike were nominally the people of God, but the mass were, if not actual apostates yet characterised by almost every feature of moral corruption, even while cloaking themselves with the garb of a loud profession. (See Malachi 1:1-14, Malachi 2:1-17, Malachi 3:1-18) In contrast to all this Malachi speaks of those that feared the Lord and spake often to one another, and tells us of the Lord's delight in this faithful residue, and how He would claim them as His own in that day when He made up His jewels, and that, at that time, all should behold the distinction He would make between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not. "For, behold," he proceeds, "the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name" (the remnant of the preceding chapter) "shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall." (Malachi 4:1-2) Now it is abundantly evident from this scripture that, just as the morning star is used in its proper sense as the herald of the dawn, so the Sun of Righteousness is brought in to set forth the introduction of the day, that is the day of Christ's glory consequent upon His appearing. As, however, Malachi is writing to the Jews, he confines the application of the symbol to the earthly people; but just as the sun in the heavens is the centre of the whole solar system, and dispenses light and blessing for all, so the Sun of Righteousness must be the centre of God's universe of blessing which, in accordance with His eternal purposes, He will establish on the ground of the death and resurrection of Christ; for He has made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation ("for the administration") of the fulness of the times He might gather together in one ("head up") all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth. The term all things comprises, indeed means, the universe, and we are thus taught that Christ is the Head and Centre of the whole universe of God, that universe which God even now is engaged in establishing, and which will be the result of His making all things new. (See Revelation 21:5) There is another passage in Ephesians which presents this in another aspect. It says, "Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." (Ephesians 4:9-10) Here we learn two additional things; first, that all the glory that accrues to Christ now, and in the ages to come, is the result of His redemptive work, of His incarnation,

death, resurrection and ascension; and, secondly, that He will fill the universe with His glory.

Under the eye of God all this is already accomplished; to the eye of faith old things have passed away, and all things have become new; but for the actual realisation of it, we have still to wait until the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings, and flood the whole universe with His blessed rays of light and glory.

Before considering what will be effected by the arising of the Sun of righteousness we may call attention to two other scriptures which bear upon the subject. In Isaiah 60:1-22 we read, "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." (Isaiah 60:1-3.) Again, further on in the same chapter, "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." (Isaiah 60:19-20.) It is almost needless to point out that we have here brought before us the same event as described in Malachi as the arising of the Sun of righteousness. The only difference is that Isaiah shows us the effect of His arising on Jerusalem, the earthly bride; and the pathetic statement, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended, tells us most truly that all her wounds will then be healed. The other scripture is connected with the transfiguration of our blessed Lord, concerning which we read, "And his face did shine as the sun" (Matthew 17:1-27), with which the reader may compare the statement in the vision vouchsafed to John, "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." (Revelation 1:16) These are cited as the indubitable proof that it is Christ Himself who is the Sun of righteousness, even as we have also seen in Isaiah, "The Lord shall be thine everlasting light." This is a great thing for our souls, because it fixes our eyes upon the coming glory of the One who, as our Redeemer and Lord, has already enshrined Himself in our hearts. Where this is the case, there can be no subject so attractive and engrossing as His exaltation and glory; and this will be increasingly the case the more we perceive that He is the centre of all the thoughts of God, the One in whom all God's glory is secured, whether in heaven or upon the earth, and that this glory will soon flood the universe. From what has been before us, it has then been abundantly shown that the Lord Himself is the Sun of righteousness, that this title has been given Him in connection with the introduction of the day of His manifestation and glory in this world, and that as such He will shine on with increasing lustre and splendour until before the effulgence of His glory all darkness will be for ever dispelled. But so far it is only as the SUN that we have considered Him; and hence we must also take into account what is added to this, namely, that He is the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

It is indeed this term that determines the character of this heavenly Luminary. What marks the present moment is lawlessness, and this will wax more and more apparent until finally, after the church has been caught away from this scene, it will culminate, in the man of sin, who will defy both God and Christ during the little moment of his continuance. But the Lord will consume this lawless antagonist with the spirit of His mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of His coming; and then together with this He will bring all lawlessness to an end by the establishment of His righteous throne, whose authority will extend throughout the whole universe. This was the prospect that sustained and enchanted the saints of old in their darkest days; it was the subject of

the songs of their prophets; and the psalms are full of the anticipation of the time as they call, for example, upon the floods to clap their hands, and the hills to be joyful together before the Lord, "for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people [peoples] with equity." Or, to give another citation, as we find it in Psalms 45:1-17, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." (Isaiah 45:6-7) If now we understand God's righteousness to be His rights, to secure which it was first necessary to lay the foundation in the death of Christ (Romans 3:21-26), because He must for ever act in consistency with what He is, we shall see that not only will righteousness be the foundation of the throne of Christ, and not only will He judge the world in righteousness, but that He will also establish and maintain the rights of God in every corner of the universe. All lawlessness will therefore be forever abolished, for at length, on the ground of His sacrifice, as the Lamb of God, He will take away for ever the sin of the world, by bringing God into the scene and maintaining His rights. All this blessed work will be preparatory to the new heaven and the new earth wherein righteousness will dwell. He is thus the Sun of righteousness, inasmuch as the establishment of righteousness flows from Him; and this will be readily apprehended if it is understood that light and life and righteousness are bound up together in scripture. (John 1:4; Romans 5:17-21) A further remark may be added to point out that the stability of the universe will depend upon the establishment of righteousness; for nothing could be secure where God had not His rights. It might indeed be said that righteousness is the bond that will unite every creature in heaven and upon earth to the immutable throne of God, and bring every heart into willing subjection to Him who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen. Hence it is that, to borrow the language of the prophet, the work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

If now we pause for a moment to draw a contrast between man's system, the world of which Satan is prince, and that which will prevail, God's system, when once the Sun of righteousness has arisen with healing in His wings, it cannot fail to be instructive. At the same time, it must not be forgotten that God's system of things, of which Christ is the Head, is already established, though it will not be manifested until after the appearing in glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. The moment Christ was exalted and glorified at God's right hand, the immutable foundation of all having been laid in the cross, in the precious blood of Christ wherein God's righteousness was declared, God had established the Head and Centre of that universe of blessing which He had purposed before the foundation of the world. Faith lays hold of this, even as Abraham rejoiced to see the day of Christ and was glad, and already exults amidst its bright and blessed scenes; but we have still to wait for the time when the whole universe will be actually filled with the glory of Christ.

"O love supreme and bright, Good to the feeblest heart, That gives us now as heavenly light What soon shall be our part."

What then are the features of man's system, of that great organisation termed the world? The Apostle John has summed up its unholy principles very briefly; they are the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Pause for one moment and reflect upon what would happen if these three things were suddenly removed, blotted out. Why the world would perish of inanition. Its enterprise, its pleasures, its political conflicts, its wars of conquest, its love of place and power would vanish for ever. If the earth were suddenly to stop in its revolution round the sun it would

bring death and destruction upon every living thing, and in like manner, if the moral elements of the world — objects presented to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life — were taken out of the way the sustenance of the flesh, of the natural man, being what he is, would be for ever gone. Then, to complete the picture, it must also be pointed out that Satan has founded his throne upon the lusts of men, and upon their fear of death, and also that upon the whole scene lies the judgment of God; for it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment — the judgment of the great white throne, and the lake of fire, which is the second death. Could there be, by any possibility, a darker picture? And yet no human hand could paint it dark enough. What a mercy for man that the whole truth may be discovered in the scriptures!

Turning now to the other side, to God's system, His world, what, let us inquire, are its principles. Three may be at once given: they are righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. There are its moral elements in contrast with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. These are, in fact, the moral elements of the kingdom of God at the present moment as described by the Apostle Paul. (Romans 5:1-2; Romans 14:17) Nor can the order in which they are given be changed. Righteousness is, and ever must be, the only basis of peace, whether for the individual soul or for God's government. We thus read, Having made peace by the blood of the cross by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. God declared, as before said, His righteousness in the blood of Christ, and in it He laid the immutable basis of peace for ever. Thereupon, when peace is secured and enjoyed, joy in the Holy Ghost will spring up and, possessing the soul, will continually overflow in praise and adoration. This, we do not forget, may be the present experience of the redeemed; but it cannot be too much insisted upon that every moral or spiritual principle abides, and that consequently what we enjoy now we shall enjoy throughout eternity.

Take another contrast. In Satan's system of things or circle, HATE is the atmosphere. He hates God, Christ, and men alike; and those that are under his dominion hate God, and hate one another. (See Titus 3:3) In God's system of things, of which Christ is Head, love is the law that governs all. Christ loves His people with an undying love, having proved it to the uttermost in His death on the cross; they love Him because He first loved them, and He has enjoined upon them to love one another according to His own standard. Dwelling thus in love we dwell in God and God in us. Is any higher blessedness conceivable? And is it any wonder that the one is denominated by the term darkness, and the other by that of light? And remember, in answering the question, that darkness is always associated with death, as light is with life. As we read in John's Gospel, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." (John 1:4-5) Again, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John 8:12.) Hence it is also that we read in Colossians of believers being made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, and of being delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love. (Colossians 1:12-13) Who could doubt then where bliss and eternal joys are to be found? This contrast might be put in another very simple way. Eternal life will be, during the reign of Christ, in full display, for, as the Psalmist says of Mount Zion in that day, "There the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." But in Satan's dominion darkness, death and judgment will hold undisputed sway. The final, and greatest contrast of all is found in the respective heads and centres of these circles. Satan, as the prince and god of the world, is that of the first circle, and

Christ is the Head, Centre and Sun of the second. All evil is comprised in the first, and he is dominated, as we have seen, in all his activity by enmity to God, to Christ, and to man. The object therefore he has in view is to secure the everlasting misery and destruction of the poor slaves who accept his rule and bondage. All good is centred in Christ, and love to His Father, and to man is the mainspring of that mighty work of redemption wherein He has glorified God in all that God is, and secured eternal blessedness for all who put their trust in Him. Every form of evil is expressed in the former, and all the glory of God is displayed in the face of Jesus Christ.

One other thing may be specified. The basis of Satan's throne is laid in the lusts of men, and the world (the circle of Satan's dominion) will pass away and the lust thereof, and pass away under the eternal judgment of God. In another aspect, it may be said that the foundation of Satan's kingdom is laid in death, and it, as we know, together with hades, is to be cast into the lake of fire, where Satan himself is to have his eternal home. But the foundation of Christ's kingdom has been laid on the other side of death, in resurrection; and hence it is that everything He establishes is on that ground, and is therefore imperishable. As He said to Peter when the latter, as taught of the Father, had confessed Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the living God, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock [the truth of Christ as the Son of the living God — and He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead] I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:1-28) The consequence is that everything, since redemption, whether in Christianity or in the world to come, proceeds upon the principle of resurrection. This is brought out in a most striking way in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In the first chapter we learn that among the many glories that cluster around the Person of the Son of God, He is also the One by whom God made the worlds — that the Son is the Creator. And yet, in the same chapter, we are taught that both the heavens and the earth will perish. The responsible man, Adam, having sinned, defiled the first creation, and thus both he and it had to pass away from under the eye of God in judgment. This creation suited the first man, but it could not be suited to the second Man who is out of heaven, and therefore could not be allowed to continue in existence although the handiwork of the Son. But as we read on in the epistle we discover that everything which Christ has touched in redemption is eternal. It is eternal salvation, eternal redemption, eternal inheritance, and an eternal covenant. The reason is that already given — that all that Christ now builds, all that He touches is on the ground of resurrection, and it is on this account that everything even in the millennium will proceed upon that principle.

If the significance of this contrast is rightly perceived, it will at once be accepted that Christ must displace (as He already has displaced for God) man, and man's scene which is under the rule of Satan. There will be no room for any one in that new system of things which God has established in Christ but Christ Himself. It therefore says that, Christ has ascended up far above all heavens that He might fill all things. But will not all His redeemed be associated with Him in the glories of that scene? Most surely they will be, but every one of these countless myriads will be, according to God's eternal purposes, conformed to the image of His Son. It is therefore all Christ and what is of Christ, and nothing which is not of Christ will, or could, enter the scene.

We speak now of the final issue of the administration committed to His hands, for He must reign, till He hath put all things under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto

Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, THAT GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL. Then for ever will Christ be the Head and Centre of all the redeemed, and the Firstborn among many brethren, Himself expressed in and through all, and His glory filling the whole scent.

“Yet it must be, Thy love had not its rest Were Thy redeemed not with Thee fully blest. That love that gives not as the world, but shares All it possesses with its loved co-heirs. Nor I alone, Thy loved ones all, complete In glory round Thee there shall meet, All like Thee, for Thy glory like Thee, Lord, Object supreme of all, by all adored.”

It will be felt perhaps that we have travelled beyond our immediate subject, and it may be that we have traced, in our meditations, the glories of Christ far beyond the time to which the title of the Sun of righteousness is applicable. This is undoubtedly so, if we confine it to the time of which Malachi speaks; yet we cannot but believe that Christ will be the Sun of His redeemed, of every family named of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, throughout eternity. We now return, however, and will indicate some of the characteristics of Christ as the Sun of righteousness in the world to come. The first we take from Malachi, where the title is found. He says, “But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.” By the expression — with healing in His wings — we understand that all (the promise is specially addressed to the faithful remnant) who come under the influence of Christ in that day will be the subjects of divine healing, and that this will be effected by the communication of a fuller life. There is a remarkable illustration of this given in the prophet Ezekiel. After the vision of the waters which issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward ’ and the description of their ever-increasing volume as they flowed onward in their blessed mission, the angel said to the prophet, “These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and everything shall live whither the river cometh.” (Ezekiel 47:8-9) Thus life and healing are explicitly connected; and we learn moreover from the Book of Revelation that the leaves of the tree of life (and this is Christ risen) will be for the healing of the nations. (Revelation 22:3) When we read therefore that the Sun of righteousness will arise with healing in His wings, what is it but that He will be the source of life for all that are drawn to seek blessing under His protection? And receiving of His abundant life, sickness and disease will be banished, even as Isaiah says, “The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick:” and again, “As the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.” (Isaiah 33:1-24, and Isaiah 45:1-25) This will enable the reader to comprehend a little of the force and beauty of the expression. Nor let it be forgotten that we may even now morally anticipate something of this blessedness. Is it not true that our spiritual weakness and “diseases” are to be traced back to defective spiritual life? Christ came that we might have life, and have it abundantly; and if this abundance of life is not expressed by us, it is because we are not completely under His influence, because some part of our life here is excluded from the rays of His blessed sunshine. Let us listen to His own words, “If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. He that believeth on me,” as the scripture hath said, “out of his belly shall

flow rivers of living water.” If this were but true of us, we should indeed present every mark of spiritual health, and thereby it would be proved that no part of our hearts was shut off from the shining of Christ. Paul thus calls upon the Ephesians to remember the word, “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light” (shine upon thee). And just as we can in this way enjoy now in anticipation this action of Christ, so will those who fear His name in that day enter in large measure into the eternal blessedness of relief from everything which might cause sorrow and distress here, as described of the eternal state in Revelation, “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.” (Revelation 21:4) Moreover, Christ, as the Sun of righteousness, will be the source of light and heat. We name these two features together because of their relation to life. Even a plant cannot live without light and heat, and much less the people of God, whatever the character of the period in which their lot is cast. Hence John says, “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” (1 John 1:5-7) As without light a plant could not appropriate its suited nutriment, and without heat it could not grow, so the Christian must be in the light in order to receive, and he needs warmth if he would daily grow in the likeness of Christ. These two essentials he finds in the company of Christ, and in the enjoyment of His love, that love which, proved to the uttermost in His death, He is ever ready to minister to us when we are walking in the light of His blessed presence. So will it be when He shines forth with undimmed lustre as the Sun of righteousness. As the Psalmist says, speaking of the sun in the heavens, but doubtless with a veiled allusion to Christ, “His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof;” so when Christ shines forth in the day of His glory all nature even will break forth into song, for then it will be that creation itself will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. His light will penetrate into the remotest corners of the earth, scattering all the mists and clouds which have gathered over and darkened the souls of men during their bondage to the evil one, and wherever His light falls the warmth of His rays will be felt, for nothing will be hid from the heat thereof. It is in view of this that the prophet, describing the effect of the arising of the Sun of righteousness upon Jerusalem, says, “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.” In this way men of every clime and nation will be drawn out of their dark hiding-places that they also may share in the blessedness of the light and warmth of that heavenly Luminary which has appeared in the heavens.

It may be permissible to draw one practical lesson of present application. We have spoken of the necessary association of light and heat in the shining forth of the Sun of righteousness, and these two things are always connected in Christ. The snare which besets many of us is to rejoice in the light while we do not admit the heat into our hearts. We do this when we pursue the knowledge of the truth as truth apart from the knowledge of Him who is the truth. This is no uncommon evil, and the consequence is that, priding ourselves upon knowledge, we are, as the apostle speaks, puffed up, and on this very account it is that he proceeds to remind us that it is love, that is, heat, which edifies. So too in another place he exhorts the Ephesian (saints we give another translation) to

hold the truth in love that we may grow up to Him in all things who is the Head, the Christ. (Ephesians 4:15) This is a very distinct illustration of the need of warmth (as in the case of plants) for growth. Whatever the light therefore we may have, it will always be winter in the soul unless we are at the same time nourished and cherished by the love of Christ. The importance of this lesson cannot be unduly magnified, and it is largely to the defect of its apprehension that we may trace our low spiritual condition. The last characteristic to be named, the chief one in fact, but reserved for consideration in the last place, is that of RULE. The natural sun, we read, was created to rule the day; and the Sun of righteousness will rule the day that is coming in the introduction and manifestation of His kingdom. Now, as He sits at God's right hand as Lord, the administration of all God's authority is committed into His hands, even as He said to His disciples, after His resurrection, All power is given unto me in heaven and earth. But it is still the day of grace, and He waits while the gospel is being proclaimed until the moment, ordained of the Father, when, after having descended from heaven to receive His people unto Himself, He will appear and establish His righteous sway of grace throughout the whole world. No one indeed can read the prophetic descriptions of this period in the Old Testament without perceiving that righteousness is the main characteristic of the sovereignty of Christ. As Isaiah has written, "A king shall reign in righteousness" (Isaiah 32:1); and again, "With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth... and righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." (Isaiah 11:4-5) David's testimony (and indeed that of all the prophets) is of like character, "Give the king," he says, "thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness." (Psalms 72:1-3) It could not in truth be otherwise, inasmuch as when Christ comes, He will make good in government all that God is; and hence the first thing will be to lay the foundation of His throne in righteousness. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." (Psalms 45:6-7) His first work therefore, when He comes out as the Sun of righteousness, will be to establish God's rights, whether in the deliverance of His people, or in the destruction of His enemies. This principle has been exemplified in this period of grace. Until God's rights were secured in the cross of Christ, until, that is, His righteousness had been declared in the blood of Christ, God could not, consistently with all that He is, accomplish the purposes of His own heart in the salvation of His redeemed from the hand of the enemy. This will enable the reader to understand that the first thing which Christ will do, on His return, is to assert, and maintain, the rights of God. The whole universe must indeed, according to what God is, be governed upon the principle of righteousness. If only one planet were to wander from its appointed orbit it would bring confusion into the whole of the solar system. So also in God's universe of bliss - every part of it must be dominated by its Centre and Sun, as otherwise there could be neither permanence nor stability of blessing. But when once righteousness has been secured, peace will follow. As Isaiah testifies: the work of righteousness will be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. Again it follows the same order as in the gospel. As Paul teaches — being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is on this account that the Lord is termed the Prince of Peace. In the character of David He will establish His throne in righteousness, and then He will reign in the character of Solomon, as the Prince of Peace — of the increase of whose government and peace, as Isaiah

speaks, there shall be no end. And again, as he assures Jerusalem, in the name of Jehovah, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee... and all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children." (Isaiah 44:10-13) Thus as the true Melchizedek, He will be first, King of Righteousness, and afterwards, King of Peace. Such passages might be multiplied indefinitely, and we read moreover that He who will establish His throne in righteousness will also speak peace to the nations, and thus peace will characterise the sway of the Sun of righteousness throughout the whole world. As the hymn expresses it, "He shall come down like showers Upon the new-mown grass, And joy and hope, like flowers, Spring up where He doth pass. Before Him on the mountains, Shall peace, the herald, go; And righteousness, in fountains, From hill to valley flow." Another feature may be mentioned. Righteousness having been established, and peace following as the work of righteousness, grace will have its unhindered sway from pole to pole.

Hence it is that the Psalmist, in celebrating this period, says, "The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works. All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee.

They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom." (Psalms 145:1-21) The effect of all this will be that, as the Lord said to Moses, the whole earth will be filled with His glory. (See also Habakkuk 2:14) What a chain of ineffable blessing, righteousness, peace, grace, and glory! And what joy will thus be brought to the whole earth when the Sun of righteousness arises with healing in His wings! It is for this glorious day that the weary hearts of men, although they knew not what they needed, have sighed in every age, but there is only One who can introduce it, and this He will do when the glory of the Lord (the display of all that He is) shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. Happy are they upon whose souls the light of this glory has already dawned, those of whom Paul speaks as rejoicing in hope of the glory of God; for then they are able, in their measure, to say with him, The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in (in respect to) us.

All this, blessed as it is, is but the earthly side of the day of Christ's glory. Before, however, we pass to the other side, a few words must be said upon God's delight in the whole scene. When He created the earth and all that is therein, we read that He saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. But His complacency in the works of His own hand was soon disturbed; Adam sinned and blighted the fair world which God had brought into existence, and He could no longer rest. From that day to this God has wrought for His own glory, after the failure of the responsible man, for the accomplishment of His eternal counsels in Christ.

Hence it was that, when the Jews accused the Lord of breaking the Sabbath, He replied, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. For the end of God's purposes we still wait, but God has already glorified the Man of His counsels at His own right hand, and in Him He has established everything, "For all the promises of God in him [in the Son of God, Jesus Christ] are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." (2 Corinthians 1:20) Meanwhile God has given us in the Mount of Transfiguration a glimpse of the glorious kingdom of Christ. And it was then when the face of Christ did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light, while Moses and Elias

appeared in glory and talked with Him concerning His death, the foundation of His accomplishment of the coming glory, that God proclaimed His delight in the words, which the disciples were permitted to hear, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." So will it be when the Sun of righteousness appears and scatters all the mists and clouds which have concealed God from the eyes of men, when He shall have reduced everything to subjection to His sway, God will look down with joy and infinite complacency upon the whole scene. Thus in Zephaniah, although the prophet confines his view to the elect of Israel, we read, "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." (Zephaniah 3:17) Surely also the same thought may be derived from the descent of that great city, the holy Jerusalem, out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. (Revelation 21:10-11) For the glory of God is the expression of all that He is, and this glory can now, without a veil, shine forth unhinderedly for the enlightenment of the earth, so that the nations will walk in the light of it, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory and honour unto it.

We have dwelt somewhat at length upon the earthly side of the glory of that day, for indeed this is more fully revealed than the heavenly side. Still there are several features of this on which we may well meditate with profit to our souls. The first is the obvious one — that Christ Himself will be the centre of all the glory. This must needs be because of what He is, as well as because of what He wrought for the glory of God in His death upon the cross. None but He could bear and maintain the whole of the glory of God in government. We gather, moreover, that He will appear, when He comes, in a threefold circle of glory. He said to His disciples, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels." (Luke 9:26) By His own glory, we understand that which is peculiar to Himself as the Man of God's counsels, that with which He is glorified at the right hand of God; by His Father's glory, that which is essential to Himself as God's beloved Son; and that of the holy angels will be that belonging to them in their high estate and perfection around the throne of God. We read, for example, that, when an angel came down from heaven to announce the fall of Babylon, the whole earth was lightened with his glory. (Revelation 18:1) This will help us, in a little measure, to understand the intensity of the angelic glory, when "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" of these exalted beings will swell the train of the Son of man at His appearing. Such will be the threefold glory of Christ when He comes to establish His dominion throughout the universe.

There will be another glory in that day, for Christ will come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that have believed. Thus, as the apostle speaks in another place, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." (Colossians 3:4) It is of this indeed that the Lord Himself speaks in John 17:1-26, when He says, "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." (John 17:22-23.) On such a theme more could not be said, for we have had no experience of glory. And yet it will further us in our meditations if it be again stated that divine glory is the display of divine perfections, even as the Lord's glory, as the glorified Man, is the manifestation of His moral excellencies or perfections; and in the same way angelic glory will be the revelation of the moral beauty of angels, while that of the redeemed will

consist in their conformity to the image of God's Son that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren.

It must also be remembered that all the glory of which we have spoken is connected, as to display, with the advent of the Sun of righteousness, who will soon burst into view and flood the whole universe with His blessed light and life. It was with some perception of this that a christian poet, addressing Christ in this character, wrote "Shine, till Thy glorious beams shall chase The brooding cloud from every eye!

Till every earthly dwelling-place Shall hail the Day-spring from on high.

Shine on, shine on eternal Sun!

Pour richer floods of life and light; Till that bright Sabbath be begun, That glorious day which knows no night."

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

03.00. Daniel the Prophet

Daniel the Prophet & The Times of the Gentiles by

Edward Dennett

***** This module is brought to you by www.DoctorDaveT.com For more eSword modules that are conservative

evangelical

Bible believing

Christ honoring

make sure you stop by www.DoctorDaveT.com! We have hundreds of modules easily organized by topics, like these:

Old Testament Exposition (topic modules)

New Testament Exposition (topic modules)

Doctrinal Theology (topic modules)

Commentary Modules

Dictionary Modules

and a whole lot more! Please visit www.DoctorDaveT.com!

Dave

03.00.3. Copyright Information

Copyright Information Daniel the Prophet and the times of the Gentiles. by E. Dennett.

Originally copyrighted in 1909, this module is now in the public domain.

03.00.4. Table of Contents

Table of Contents

00.5-Preface 00.6-Introduction

01-Daniel 1

02-Daniel 2

03-Daniel 3

04-Daniel 4

05-Daniel 5

06-Daniel 6

07-Daniel 7

08-Daniel 8

09-Daniel 9 Seventy Weeks {Originally a separate chapter, this module includes it with chapter 9.}

10-Daniel 10

11-Daniel 11

12-Daniel 12

03.00.5, Preface

Preface

IT is in the hope of promoting the knowledge of dispensational truth that this volume is offered to the Christian reader. It does not claim to be more than a concise and simple introduction to the study of the contents of the book of Daniel; and yet enough of detail has been given to enable the reader, if guided and taught of the Holy Spirit, to comprehend the character of "the times of the Gentiles," of which this portion of the inspired volume especially treats. 2 Symptoms of the period spoken of by our blessed Lord are already to be discerned - "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth" (Luke 21:26). It is therefore of the utmost importance to understand the nature of the last days and the course of events on to the appearing of Christ, as revealed in the infallible word of God.

It tends, moreover, to enhance the appreciation of the heavenly calling and of the character of Christianity to be instructed in the purposes which God has formed for the blessing of His earthly people. When the heart is at leisure from itself, through being satisfied with Christ, the Holy Ghost is free to lead it out into all the circle of God's interests, whether as regards the church, His ancient people, or the world. May He Himself teach both the reader and the writer how to hold all the truths He has revealed in their, proper relationships, and in living power in the soul.

CROYDON, February, 1893

03.00.6. Introduction

Introduction

BEFORE entering upon a consideration of the contents of this book, it is needful to call attention, however briefly, to its special and peculiar character. At the very commencement, mention is made of the fact that Nebuchadnezzar had already besieged Jerusalem, and that the Lord had given Jehoiakim king of Judah into Nebuchadnezzar's hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God, etc.; and thereon we read that some of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes, were captives in Babylon. These facts when rightly understood open out to us the significance of the whole book. Until now God's throne had been at Jerusalem; He dwelt between the cherubim; and Israel (we speak of the nation according to the purpose of God) was consequently the centre of God's ways in the government of the whole earth (see Deuteronomy 32:7-9). Israel, as this same scripture tells us, occupied a special position of favour and blessing, "for the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance." Because of their position of blessing and privilege the nation had special responsibilities. This principle is announced by the prophet: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities (Amos 3:2). Their responsibility was according to their light, and because they were Jehovah's people; for as such they were His witnesses (Isaiah 43:8-13), and Jerusalem was His candlestick in the midst of the nations.

When, therefore, Israel became worse than even the surrounding nations, and the king of Judah made the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen (2 Chronicles 33:9), the Lord, after many warnings and much long-suffering (2 Chronicles 36:14-20), executed the judgment which He had threatened, by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, who "burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon" (2 Chronicles 36:19-20). The dominion of the earth was henceforward committed to the king of Babylon (see Daniel 2:37-38), and it is in the midst of this new order of things, as a true remnant and seed preserved of God, that Daniel and his companions are found in the first chapter of our prophet. This position of the remnant in Babylon, subject to the Gentile power and dominion, affords the key for the interpretation of the book. For the visions, vouchsafed to the kings, concern the Gentile powers themselves, in their successive order, development, and, what may be termed, their moral phases, going on to complete apostasy; and those granted, to the prophet deal with the same subject, but, as going down to the end, in the accomplishment of God's purposes concerning His beloved people, more in their bearing upon this issue. The "pleasant land" finally becomes the centre round which all the Gentile activities and designs gather; and the curtain is lifted to reveal the future of the chosen nation, in its pathway, because of its sins and iniquities, and most of all because of its crowning sin in the rejection of Messiah, through unequalled and unheard of sorrow and trouble (Daniel 12:1) on to the enjoyment of its purposed blessing according to the thoughts of God.

All this will be more distinctly seen as we pursue our studies; but it may now be pointed out that the book is divided into two equal parts - Daniel 1:1-21, Daniel 2:1-49, Daniel 3:1-30, Daniel 4:1-37, Daniel 5:1-31, Daniel 6:1-28 forming the first, and Daniel 7:1-28, Daniel 8:1-27, Daniel 9:1-27, Daniel 10:1-21, Daniel 11:1-45, Daniel 12:1-13 the second part. The first part is wholly made up of the visions and actings of the Gentile monarchs and their subordinate authorities. Daniel and his companions appear on the scene as having the mind of God, and as faithful to Him amid all the seduction and opposition by which they were surrounded. Daniel, like Joseph in Egypt, is first brought to the notice of the king as an interpreter of dreams; and also, like Joseph, he is, as a consequence, taken into favour, and exalted to the seat of government. Having obtained from the king the association of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, with himself in his exaltation, they become the objects of the envy and enmity of the princes. The details will be found in their place; but the two things are interwoven, the character of the Gentile powers, and the suffering condition of the remnant and their final deliverance from under the Gentile persecuting dominion. The second part of the book, commencing with Daniel 7:1-28, contains the prophetic visions, with their interpretations, received by Daniel; and they embrace the course, character, and destiny of the Gentile empires, which followed the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. Their various actings are described, especially those of the third and fourth, in relation to the Holy Land and the Jewish people; and we have, moreover, the special revelation made to Daniel of the seventy weeks, as indicative of the period in which God's purposes for His earthly people will be accomplished.

Finally, in the long vista of the future opened up to the prophet, the Gentile governments are displaced by the Son of man to whom there is given "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 (Daniel 7:14). It is in connection with His coming to establish His kingdom that Daniel is told: "At that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Daniel 12:1). At His first coming He was cut off (Daniel 9:26), and had nothing; but though He was rejected and crucified by "His own" people, He yet, according to the counsels of God, died for that nation; and it is on the foundation of that efficacious sacrifice that God, after He has, in His righteous government, punished them for their sins, will act in the future for the restoration of His beloved, but guilty, people. Isaiah can thus cry, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins" (Isaiah 40:1-2). The book of Daniel reaches in prophetic vision to this point; but it does not go beyond. For the establishment and the glory of the kingdom other prophets must be consulted. What we have in Daniel is, as we have already indicated, the course and character of Gentile powers, from the destruction of Jerusalem on to the appearing of Christ, together with the position of the remnant, and the sufferings of the Jewish people, while the Gentiles possess the dominion, until at last God, in His faithfulness in pursuance of His purposes, interposes, and, for His own glory, works for the rescue and blessing of His elect earthly people. This blessed consummation is yet future, and though our calling and portion are heavenly, and our hope is the coming of the Lord to receive us unto Himself, and to introduce us into the Father's house, it is yet of the utmost importance that we should understand the nature of "the times of the Gentiles," and embrace in our thoughts the whole circle of God's revealed interests. It is to aid in this object that we desire to commend to our

readers the earnest study of this part of the inspired volume.

03.01. Daniel 1

Daniel 1:1-21 WHATEVER the state of things on the earth God never leaves Himself without a witness.

He may punish His people on account of their unfaithfulness and their sins, and He may permit them to be carried into captivity, and to be enslaved under the power of their enemies, and yet, in the midst of the darkness by which they are surrounded, He will rekindle the torch of His truth, in testimony to Himself and to His faithfulness, and as encouragement to those who cleave or turn to Him in their sorrows. He will, moreover, cause those whom He has used to chastise His people to know that they are still the objects of His care and love; and that their oppressors, however seemingly exalted and mighty, are subject and accountable to Him.

Daniel 1:1-3 are the introduction to the book, and they explain how it had come to pass that Daniel and his companions are found in connection with the court of the king of Babylon. The reference, as may be easily seen by turning to the historical accounts in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, is to the first siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. In Chronicles, after the mention of the accession of Jehoiakim to the throne, through the instrumentality of Necho, king of Egypt, it says, "Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the Lord to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon" (2 Chronicles 36:6-7). But neither here, nor in Kings, is it mentioned that there were other captives at this time, and it is quite possible that the short introductory statement of our chapter includes, in its purport, the subsequent proceedings of the king of Babylon until Jerusalem was destroyed, and the princes, and the mighty men of valour, together with the mass of the people, had been deported to Babylon (see 2 Kings 24:12-16, 2 Kings 25:1-21). It is therefore the general position which is here defined. The Lord had given Jehoiakim into Nebuchadnezzar's hand, and so completely had He abandoned His house in Jerusalem, that He had permitted the sacred vessels of the temple, profaned as they were by the sins of the kings of Judah, to be carried into the land of Shinar,* to the house of Nebuchadnezzar's god. God's candlestick at Jerusalem was thus for the time removed; and it was judicially removed, because it had ceased to give forth divine light for guidance and blessing amid the moral darkness of this world.

*For the significance of this statement the reader should consult Zechariah 5:5 In the next paragraph (Daniel 1:3-7) the remnant, or its representation, is introduced. After that Hezekiah had received the embassy from the king of Babylon, and, gratified by the attention thus shown to him, had exhibited to them all the treasures of his kingdom, Isaiah was sent to him with this message: "Hear the word of the Lord of hosts: Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon.

... And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon" (Isaiah 39:5-7). The opening verses of our chapter reveal the fulfilment of Isaiah's prediction; but what we desire to call attention to is,

that, in fulfilling His own word in judgment, God remembered mercy, for it is out of these very descendants of Hezekiah that He raised up witnesses for Himself in the midst of Babylon's idolatrous corruptions. In permitting Nebuchadnezzar to carry them away as captives, God was accomplishing His own purpose; but Nebuchadnezzar, having obtained power over them, sought to make them serve his will. The consequence was, that a conflict immediately arose between the thoughts of God and the thoughts of the king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar desired to adorn his palace with those of his captives "in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans" (Daniel 1:4). The world is every ready to make the people of God its servants, and to derive light from their knowledge; but it cannot tolerate them, if they maintain fidelity to their God in obedience to His word, and in a holy separation from evil. The king, therefore, would have these captives to be fed with his own meat, and to drink of his own wine, that, nourished from his resources for three years, they might at the end thereof stand in his presence (Daniel 1:5). He would have them, in one word, to cease being Jews, and to become Chaldeans; and to mingle with their new religion the light they had received from the oracles of God. Such is the origin of philosophy even in Christian times - that philosophy against which Paul earnestly warns us as being "after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

It is in connection with this command of Nebuchadnezzar that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah are brought into prominence (Daniel 1:6). Their very names, when understood, proclaimed to whom they belonged,* and the character of their God: and the prince of the eunuchs, instinctively feeling that such names would not suit his master's court, gave them others, all of which were more or less connected with Babylon's idols (Daniel 1:7).

*Daniel means "God's judge"; Hananiah, "whom Jehovah graciously gave"; Mishael, "who (is) as God"; and Azariah, "whom Jehovah aids." The question now raised for Daniel and his companions was, whether for the sake of the world's favour and advancement, they would yield to the king's command. The answer had already been given: "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself" (Daniel 1:8). As a Jew, obedient to the word of God, it was impossible for Daniel to eat the food of the Gentiles. Both the fat and the blood of those animals which were permitted to be eaten, were forbidden; and it was only of the clean beasts and birds that a Jew was allowed to partake (see Leviticus 7:22-27, Leviticus 11:1-47, Leviticus 22:1-33). Unless, therefore, Daniel and his companions were prepared to surrender their faith, and to renounce the word of their God, they could not accept the royal provision. And there is another instruction - if an application may be made to ourselves. The food of the world, that in which man as man, alienated from God as he is, finds his strength and sustenance, is ever destructive to the spiritual life of the Christian; and if he would be a true Nazarite, and walk in the path of holy separation unto God, he must ever turn aside from the wine, the joys of earth. The apostle thus writes, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). In the attitude of Daniel we have then an example for all believers; and the closer it is followed, the more will they enjoy the conscious favour and blessing of God; and, as morally dead to things here, they will the more fully realize their true portion in Christ, in the place where He is.

We now read, as explanatory of what follows, that “God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs” (Daniel 1:9). Again we are reminded of the similar case of Joseph. Sold into Egypt, and becoming an inmate of Potiphar’s house, “he found grace” in his master’s sight. But, like Daniel, refusing the world’s food and wine, he, unlike Daniel, was cast into prison, where the Lord also “gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.”

“When a man’s ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him”; and hence it was that the prince of the eunuchs, notwithstanding his fear of his lord the king, and the possible danger to his own life. granted through Melzar the request of Daniel, that he and his companions might be tested for ten days with pulse to eat and water to drink, instead of the king’s food and wine. God was with Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, and hence it was that, at the end of the ten days, “their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king’s meat” (Daniel 1:15). God had sustained and prospered His servants in their path of fidelity to His will, in keeping themselves undefiled amid the Babylonish seductions and corruptions by which they were surrounded. Even Melzar could not gainsay that they had flourished on their simple regimen, and henceforward he gave them pulse. The reflection may be permitted, that there are many of the people of God who can walk in the narrow path of devoted discipleship as long as they are in the enjoyment of the fellowship of saints, and in the midst of happy spiritual influences. But it is sometimes seen that such, when transported into a worldly circle, are apt to fall in with the practices and habits of their new society, and thus to lose their distinctness of walk, even if their testimony be not altogether extinguished. It is therefore full of refreshment and encouragement to ponder the spectacle presented by these four children of Judah. Deprived of all the privileges of the temple, the temple itself destroyed, themselves captives at the mercy of a heathen monarch, plied, too, with every sort of alluring temptation, they maintained the Nazarite’s place of true separation through obedience to the word of God. Doubtless it was the faith and energy of Daniel that acted on his companions, and led them to follow him in the path of God’s will; but if so, the others were willing to follow, and all four present a striking proof of the all-sufficiency of God’s grace to sustain His servants in the most unfavourable circumstances that could possibly be imagined. The significant statement follows: “As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams” (Daniel 1:17). “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant.” This principle ever abides; and it is seen in all dispensations. It is first laid down by God Himself in the familiar words, “Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?... For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him” (Genesis 18:17-19). It appears also in the prayer of the apostle Paul for the Colossians, “That ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Colossians 1:9). It is abundantly plain, in other words, that God gave these four “children” knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom because of their separation in heart and life from the defiling evils around. It is indeed ever true, that the nearer we are practically to the Lord, the more fully He communicates to us of His mind; and remark, that it is not only what is generally understood as “His mind, but it is in all learning and wisdom. The students of modern days, even Christian students, are too often betrayed into the thought, that for the acquisition of human “learning and wisdom” they are dependent upon their own industry and power. The consequence is, that the years of their student-life are often marked by spiritual

declension, if not by open backsliding. The example of the four “children” might well teach another lesson.*

*The well-known saying of Luther, although he referred to the Scriptures, might be profitably recalled in this connection, “To have prayed well is to study well.” At the close of the verse Daniel is singled out from his fellows; for we are told, undoubtedly in view of his special work and mission, that he had understanding in all visions and dreams. Thereby, too, we are taught, that in all the circumstances and experiences through which God leads His people, He is forming them as vessels for His service. On the human side it was a calamity that had befallen Daniel; on God’s side, as is plainly revealed, this seeming calamity was but the instrumentality which He had chosen to form Daniel for his mission to carry His testimony into the court of the mighty Gentile monarch - His testimony concerning the powers which He had allowed to supercede His own direct government of the earth through Israel, and through Jerusalem as His, dwelling-place and throne. But it is faith alone that can rise up beyond all secondary causes, connect everything with the hand of God, and at the same time peacefully rest in Him assured of His infinite wisdom and love, and that the issue of all events will be according to His own perfect will. The next three verses (Daniel 1:18-20) give the result before the king of the training to which the four children, as well as the others selected, had been subjected. All alike were brought into the royal presence, and Nebuchadnezzar himself examined the students of his college: he “communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm” (Daniel 1:19-20). They might each have thus adopted the language of the Psalmist. “Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts” (Psalms 119:98-100). Would that the lesson might be laid to heart by all the young Christians of the present day! The chapter closes with the remark, that “Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.” He lived, therefore, to see the fall of the colossal empire of which Nebuchadnezzar was the monarch; he served under Darius the Mede, and witnessed the advent of Cyrus, of whom Isaiah had prophesied more than one hundred and fifty years before (see Isaiah 44:28; Isaiah 45:1-3, etc.) as the one who should be instrumental in the restoration of Jerusalem and the temple. It should, however, be observed that this last verse is only a general statement that Daniel lived to see the accession of Cyrus; for in chapter Daniel 10:1 we find that he received special revelations from God “in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia.” How far he may have survived that date is not mentioned; but the one given makes it certain that he lived to a good old age, exceeding, at any rate, the limits of threescore years and ten.

03.02. Daniel 2

Daniel 2:1-49 IT is evident that the real subject of the first part of this book commences with this chapter.

Daniel 1:1-21 is prefatory and introductory, giving, so to speak, the situation, and displaying a view of the various actors in the following events, together with their relative positions, while behind all God is clearly revealed as working all things after the counsel of His own will. However supreme man may seem to be, as, for instance, Nebuchadnezzar in his dominion, it is always to be remembered that God never surrenders the reins of government. He may control directly or indirectly, but He does control the smallest as well as the greatest events that happen on the earth. It was thus by no chance that Nebuchadnezzar “dreamed dreams” in the second year of his reign, “wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him” (Daniel 2:1). The like thing had happened, it will be recalled, to Pharaoh, and it was used to bring Joseph to the notice and succour of the king, and to be the means, in God’s hand, of constituting him ruler over all the land of Egypt; and he thus became no mean type of the rejection and exaltation of Christ in His earthly glory. In a similar way the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar were the occasion for the introduction of Daniel to the king, and of his exaltation as ruler over the whole province of Babylon. But man must ever come to the end of his own resources before he is made willing to turn to God for aid and direction. The king had ascertained for himself that in all matters of wisdom and understanding the “four children” were ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm; and yet he did not in his perplexity turn to them for help and counsel. For we read, “Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to show the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king.” All the wise men of his realm, men of knowledge and experience, all the philosophers and scientists of the day, were thus assembled to listen to the commands of Nebuchadnezzar. The king’s request was simple: he had forgotten his dream, and he desired them to tell him what it was that he had dreamed, and then to give its interpretation. Pity might be felt for these men of wisdom, in being subjected to such an ordeal, did we not remember that the professors of the occult sciences of that day claimed to be able to reveal secrets, and to penetrate into regions hidden from mortal eyes; and, secondly, that the whole thing was designed of God to bring to nought, in the eyes of this absolute monarch, the wisdom of the wise, to take them in their own craftiness, and thus to pour contempt upon all the pride of man. Their reply was, “Tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation.” An interpretation might easily be given, one which, if it concerned future events, might pass unchallenged, for until the time came for it to be realised no one could say whether it was true or false. The purpose of God, therefore, to expose the vanity of their pretended skill and knowledge, would not then have been accomplished. The king would not be pacified by their answer; and, on being further urged by alternate promises of reward and threatenings, they were driven to confess, “There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king’s matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can show it

before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh" (Daniel 2:10-11). The issue raised was thus decided, and the wise men themselves were compelled, in no dubious language, to own their incompetency to reveal the king's secret, and to declare at the same time that the knowledge required of them lay outside the domain of man altogether, that the "gods" alone possessed it. On the side of man the answer was not so unreasonable; but Nebuchadnezzar, absolute and imperious monarch as he was, would not suffer the contradiction of his wishes; and, enraged, he commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. "And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain (Daniel 2:13).

Man's extremity is God's opportunity. Daniel had not been summoned with the astrologers before the king; but, being included in the public reckoning among the "wise men," he was amenable to the king's decree. This brought him into notice, and into contact with the officer charged with its execution. It was God's purpose to bring His witness, in the person of Daniel, before Nebuchadnezzar; and the king's forgetfulness of his dream, and his anger at the failure of his wise men to tell him what it was, were only the instrumentalities for its accomplishment. On learning from Arioch the cause of the king's anger, and of the decree that had gone forth, "Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would show the king the interpretation" (Daniel 2:16). What, it may be enquired, led Daniel to suppose that this secret would be communicated to him? The answer is, Confidence in God, and the assurance that as His glory was concerned in the matter, as well as the safety of those who had, through His grace, maintained their faith and hope in Him amid all the seductions of the Babylonian court, He would not fail to interpose for their rescue in this hour of peril. It was, in truth, a supreme moment - a moment when all the wisdom of the world had confessed its failure. If, therefore, Daniel could reveal the king's secret, God would be publicly magnified before the whole realm.

Daniel's next step was to go to his house, and make the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon" (Daniel 2:17-18). Counting upon God, Daniel associated his companions with himself in his supplications. It is the first instance of united prayer recorded in Scripture; and the fact that these children of the captivity resorted to it, discovers to us the secret of their holy and separate walk.

Dependence on God in secret is the means of all power in life and testimony, and, it may be added, of courage in the presence of man and of Satan's power. These four, on their knees at such a moment before the God of heaven, present a wondrous spectacle. They were but aliens in a strange land, expatriated for the sins of their nation; and now they were doomed to a speedy death, unless the forgotten dream could be recalled and interpreted. But they knew with whom they had to do, the One who had said in their own Scriptures, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me" (...) and hence they waited and pleaded before Him concerning this secret." Nor was their confidence in vain: God heard their cry, and the secret was revealed unto Daniel in a night vision (Daniel 2:19).

It will be remarked that they pray to the God of heaven. In Israel He was known as the Lord of all the earth (Exodus 8:22; Joshua 3:11; 2 Kings 5:15); for indeed He dwelt, and had His throne, in the midst of His people. But now it was otherwise; for He had removed His throne from Jerusalem, and committed the sovereignty of the earth to Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:37-38); and hence it was

with a true understanding of their own position in relation to God, that the “four children” addressed Him as the God of heaven. The time will come when He will once more resume the title of the God of the earth, and it is His claims as such that will form the subject of testimony on the part of the two witnesses in the book of Revelation.* *The true reading in Revelation 11:4 is “the Lord of the earth.” The heart of Daniel was filled with thanksgiving at the revelation to him of the king’s secret; and the character of his piety, the state of his soul, is seen in that he turned immediately to God with thanksgiving and praise. When blessings are communicated there is often a tendency to fall at once to their enjoyment instead of tracing them back, as Daniel did, to the heart of God.

Daniel 2:19 gives the general fact of his having blessed God; and then we have, in Daniel 2:20-23, the exact words in which his thanksgiving was rendered. First, he ascribes blessing to the name of God for ever and ever. The praise he offers he desires to be eternal, “from eternity to eternity,” as the due of Him who had been pleased to reveal Himself to His people. He then assigns a reason - “Wisdom and might are His.” A simple utterance, but how profound! For if wisdom and might are God’s (compare Revelation 5:12), they are nowhere else to be found, and it is in vain to turn for them to any but God. Next, he ascribes to God universal sovereignty. “He changeth the times and the seasons: He removeth kings, and setteth up kings.” The potentates of the earth may claim to exercise absolute power; and men by the force of arms, or even by political movements, may depose monarchs and establish governments; but neither the power nor the wisdom is theirs - they are but the blind instruments of the divine will. Once recognize with Daniel the sovereignty of God, and, whatever the character of the times in which we live, or the menacing aspect of public affairs, we may rest in perfect peace, knowing, as Nebuchadnezzar had to confess, that God “doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth” (Daniel 4:35). Moreover, Daniel says, “He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding.” This principle is everywhere affirmed, that there must be a state of soul to receive from God. The apostle thus prayed, that the Colossians might be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. In like manner we learn from these words of Daniel, that to be divinely wise, wise after God’s thoughts (and the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom), is the condition of receiving wisdom. To him that hath shall be given, and this is what Daniel confesses, whether in respect of wisdom or understanding. He therefore proceeds, “He revealeth the deep and secret things: He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with Him”; for He is a God of omniscience, and all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do (see Psalms 139:1-24). After this celebration of what God is, in His wisdom, power, and sovereignty, Daniel offers his thanksgivings for the special mercy he had received. And in doing so he passes from the address, “God of heaven,” to the more intimate title, “God of my fathers”; for the God his fathers had known and who had succoured them out of their distresses, is the One who had appeared on his own behalf, and he thanks and praises Him accordingly, and as the One who had now given him “wisdom and might.” It is beautiful to notice, lastly, how he associates his companions with himself. “Thou,” he says, “hast made known unto me now what we desired of Thee: for Thou hast now made known unto us the king’s matter.” Together they had sought the help of their God; and Daniel in full identification with his brethren acknowledges that the answer they had received was God’s response to their united cry. At once “Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him, Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will show unto the king the interpretation” (Daniel 2:24). Arioch complied “in haste” with

Daniel's request; and "the king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?" The answer of Daniel is given in three parts; first, his explanation of the source and the object of the revelation of the secret; secondly, the dream itself; and lastly its interpretation. Daniel commences, in evident communion with the mind of God, by declaring the impotence of human wisdom, in accordance with the words of another prophet, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." Writing thus, as led of the Holy Spirit, the sentence of death upon the wisdom of the world, Daniel proceeds to declare the source of the vision. "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets," and this was Daniel's God, and he delighted to exalt Him in the presence of this absolute and idolatrous king. He then announces the object of the dream in respect of Nebuchadnezzar; it was to make known to him what should be in the latter days (Daniel 2:28-29). Finally, he disclaims any merit for himself; he was nothing but the vessel, of the forgotten dream. God had. His people in view, the faithful remnant to which Daniel belonged, in revealing the dream; and He also purposed that the king should know the thoughts of his heart. Daniel thus kept himself in the background a sure sign of his moral preparedness to bear testimony for God. The nearer we are to God, the more we lose sight of ourselves, and the better we are able to apprehend and to communicate His mind.

After Daniel had explained to the king the source and object of the revelation of his secret, he proceeded to recall the dream and to give the interpretation. The language he employed in describing the dream was as simple as it was grand. "Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible" (Daniel 2:31). The details will come before us in considering the interpretation; but it may be remarked at once that while the image represents the times of the Gentiles, from Nebuchadnezzar's day until the establishment of the kingdom of Christ, it is yet one image, and that the image of a man. It is thus, as has been strikingly observed by another, a representation of "the man of the earth" (see Psalms 10:18), and the man of the earth, it may be added, as expressed in government - in all the various phases, as will afterwards be seen, of his corrupt heart and unbridled will. Man is never, indeed, fully revealed until all restraints are removed and he has the liberty as well as the inclination to gratify his own lusts (see 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12). The image, while a complete image, is yet divided, as to its composition, into four parts the head of fine gold; his breast and arms of silver; his belly and his thighs of brass; and his legs of iron his feet part of iron and part of clay. There is, therefore, deterioration from the head to the feet, as seen in the figurative employment of the different metals. Finally, the image was smitten by a stone "cut out without hands," and all its several parts were "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" (Daniel 2:34-35).

Such was the dream; and the prophet's authentic interpretation follows. The head of gold was Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:38). Of all the kingdoms that are to span the interval between the destruction of Jerusalem and the period of the establishment of the everlasting dominion of the Son of man, that of Babylon is pre-eminent. The reason is here given. Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom was a direct gift from God. As Daniel said, "Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory." This could not be said of any of the

three successive kingdoms. They come upon the scene in a providential manner, as permitted of God, for the government of the earth, and according to His ordering; but their respective heads were in no sense the direct depositaries of power, as was Nebuchadnezzar.

He was nearest God in this external sense, and his responsibility was consequently all the greater. The character of his kingdom, as described by Daniel, was remarkable. Nebuchadnezzar was a king of kings - the supreme monarch, by God's appointment, over all the kings of the earth, for God had given him "a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory" - all of which were wonderful words as setting forth the majesty and excellency of his position and dominion. Nor was his authority confined to men; for "wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath He given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all" (Daniel 2:38). A comparison has sometimes been drawn between the place occupied by Adam as head of this creation, and that here given to the king of Babylon; and it has been well said, "Although more limited, it is a dominion characterized by the same features as that of Adam, It differs in that men are placed under his power; it is more limited, for the sea is not included in his sovereignty, but it reaches to every place where the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven exist."* Taking these various features into consideration, it is easily comprehended that Nebuchadnezzar should be set forth as the head of gold.†

*Synopsis of the Books of the Bible, by J. N. Darby, vol. ii. New edition.

†It must be observed that it is not only Nebuchadnezzar personally that is figured by the head of gold, for the successors of his own line until Belshazzar are included. The next two kingdoms, as denoted by the silver and the brass, are passed over with the slightest mention in the interpretation; but in another part of the book they are plainly stated to be the Medo-Persian and Grecian kingdoms (Daniel 8:20-21). The fourth kingdom is described more at large; and happily there is no difficulty in its identification, as all prophetic expositors agree that it, is that of Rome - the four kingdoms being Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome; and these, as will be seen, are to occupy the whole period of the times of the Gentiles. The features of the fourth kingdom, as delineated by Daniel, must be briefly considered.

Before this is done, however, its duration must be indicated. It continues plainly until the kingdom of Christ is established (Daniel 2:44); and hence, to understand this, other scriptures have to be consulted. Historically, the Roman empire succeeded that of Greece, and, "strong as iron," it broke in pieces and subdued all things. Its might for the time seemed to be irresistible, and it established its dominion throughout the greater part of the then known world. All this is matter of history; but the question arises, If this Roman empire is to be found in existence on the eve of the appearing of Christ, where is it now, and whence is it again to emerge into view? It is in the book of Revelation that the answer to this question is found. That the outward form of this kingdom has disappeared is only too apparent; to human eyes it is, in fact, non-existent. In God's eyes it is, but hidden for the moment, and waiting to spring forth and to astonish the world by its reappearance. The angel thus said to John, in interpreting the "mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns... The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition" (Revelation 17:7-11). And

more precisely still. "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is" (Daniel 2:8). Two things are taught in these scriptures - firstly, that the "beast" is regarded as the continuation of that which formerly existed; and, secondly, that "while of the seven," he reappears after an interval of apparent nonexistence. Now this "beast" represents the head of the revived Roman empire in the last days; and his origin and characteristics, as well as the source of his throne and authority, are depicted in Revelation 13:1-8; and if verse Revelation 13:2 in this scripture be compared with Daniel 7:3-6, it will also be seen that this beast is the successor of the three previous kingdoms, and that as such he combines all their moral features, as portrayed under the symbols of the leopard, the lion, and the bear. The fourth kingdom therefore, the kingdom in power when our blessed Lord was here on the earth, and by whose authority, in the person of Pilate, He was adjudged to be crucified, is that which will once more be established, and which will continue until smitten by the stone "cut out without hands." In verses Daniel 2:41-43 Daniel calls attention to a source of weakness in what was otherwise as "strong as iron": "And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay." We see no reason to doubt a very common interpretation of the clay, that it represents the mingling of popular, democratic forms with absolute government, the combination of absolutism with the popular will, which, as they are incongruous elements, can never be thoroughly welded together, and must, in the very attempt at union, become a source of weakness. A further idea is given in Daniel 2:43, and is thus explained by another: "'The seed of men' is, I think, something outside of that which characterises the proper strength of the kingdom... It appears to me that the Barbaric or Teutonic element is probably here pointed out as added to that which originally constituted the Roman empire."*

*Those who desire to pursue the historical investigation of this statement will find ample accounts of the effect of the irruption of the Goths into Italy, and of the capture of the imperial city, in GIBBON's Roman Empire, and other works. That the ten toes are also symbolical may be gathered from Daniel 7:1-28, and also from Revelation 17:1-18; but as they are not explained here the subject may be left until Daniel 7:1-28 is reached, merely remarking that they set forth the ten kingdoms which, federated together under one imperial head, represent the final form of the Roman empire.

It will now be understood that, under this image, the various forms of the world-power are sketched from the days of Nebuchadnezzar down to the time when the Lord will come, take His sovereignty over the whole earth, and reign for ever and ever. The chart of this world's history, onward to the close, thus lies open before the eye of God. Men may agitate, devise, form and overturn governments, as they think, in their own power, and according to their own will; but prophecy teaches that they can only act within the limits of the divine will for the accomplishment of what has been purposed. We see, moreover, that human governments, whatever the efforts of sincere, though misguided men, must deteriorate until at length, as we, are distinctly told in the

Apocalypse, Satan will be the source and sustainer of the last form of earthly rule. It is well for us, therefore, when, as taught of the Spirit of God, we survey the future, to seek grace to maintain the place of separation outside of all the alarms and confusions of the world, while waiting for the Lord's return.

Passing now to verse Daniel 2:44, we learn that "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"; and this is given, as Daniel expressly says, as the explanation of the stone, cut out of the mountain without hands, smiting the image upon his feet, and breaking them to pieces. The expression, "in the days of these kings," is to be noted, especially as following on verse Daniel 2:43, as giving the fact, elsewhere formally stated, that the last kingdom of the four will be subdivided into ten kingdoms; and this also marks the time when the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will displace, first destroy and then displace, the last form of the Roman empire. This kingdom set up from heaven is the kingdom of Christ (see Daniel 7:1-14); and its first act will be to break the "image" in pieces, and then, when formally established in power by Christ Himself, it will enlarge itself, until it fills the whole earth; and it will have no successor, for it will stand for ever. In concluding his interpretation, Daniel added two things - first, he repeated that the great God had made known to the king what should come to pass hereafter; and, secondly, he assures the king of the certainty both of the dream and of its interpretation. As befitted a divine messenger, he was confident of the truth of his message. It is precisely in this particular that a revelation from God differs from what is of man. All that is outside of the Bible, all that presumes to come into competition with it, and challenges the ears of men, is but a sea, an unformed mass, of opinions and reasonings. How welcome therefore to the soul, wearied in its quest after some stable foundation on which to rest in view of death and eternity, is the immutable basis laid for faith in the infallible Scriptures. Daniel's message concerned time alone (although it reached onward to the close of all God's ways in government on the earth); but knowing the source whence it came, he could authoritatively announce that what he had spoken would be surely fulfilled. And Nebuchadnezzar, idolator though he was, acknowledged, was constrained to acknowledge, the power of the word. He "fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him. The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret" (Daniel 2:46-47). There was no escape for the king from this conclusion. He only had the dream, and having had it, he only could test Daniel's claim for God to reveal secrets; and hence, when his secret was revealed, the conclusion was irresistible that Daniel's God was above all gods. The confession indeed was remarkable, admitting as it did the supremacy of God in heaven and on earth, and also what amounted to His omniscience. Far, however, as it went, neither Nebuchadnezzar's conscience nor heart appears to have been reached. It was but the bowing of his mind to the evidence offered. just as those in the days of our Lord who believed in His name when they saw the miracles which He did (John 2:23). His action, in yielding homage to Daniel and in commanding an oblation to be offered to him, as well as his subsequent conduct, is the proof of this; even though for the moment he proclaimed in the presence of his court the sovereignty of Daniel's God in heaven and on earth.

Lastly, Nebuchadnezzar “made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon” (Daniel 2:48). Like Pharaoh, the king felt that “a man in whom the Spirit of God” was (Genesis 41:38), would be a valuable assistant in government; and he consequently promoted him to great honour. Daniel had neither sought nor asked anything for himself; but now that he was exalted, he “requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.” In such a way, when the sentence of death had gone forth against them, did God rescue His servants, and, working out His own purposes in testimony and blessing, bring them forth in the full light of the day. They were of the captivity of Judah; but now they are made to occupy the most prominent places in Babylon, for the king exalted them above all his courtiers and nobles in the direction of public affairs, while Daniel himself was in a still higher position, for he “sat in the gate of the king.”

03.03. Daniel 3

Daniel 3:1-30 IN Daniel 2:1-49 the image which Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his night-dreams shadowed out, according to Daniel's authoritative interpretation, the whole course of the times of the Gentiles. It is therefore a general picture, but a picture so distinct in its outline, that no one who gives himself earnestly to study the subject can possibly mistake its import. He that runs may read the character of the kingdoms that bridge the space between the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and the appearing of Christ in glory. After this, general outline, our attention is called, by the Spirit of God, to what may be termed the moral characteristics of the Gentile powers, chiefly as displayed in Babylon; but, though displayed, there, the several features are typical or representative of what will be seen throughout the whole duration of the Gentile sovereignty. In other words, we are now permitted to see the use which the Gentiles will make of the power entrusted to them in responsibility. This is abruptly brought before us in the opening verse of this chapter: "Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon" (Daniel 3:1).

Such is man. Nebuchadnezzar had learnt from Daniel, if he had not known before, that the God of heaven had given him his universal kingdom, and he had confessed that Daniel's God was "a God of gods and a Lord of kings," and yet he will use his absolute power to have a god of his own, to assert his own will over the consciences of his subjects throughout his vast dominions, and thus to usurp for himself the place and authority that belonged alone to the God of heaven. That is, he used the power that God gave him to deny God and to put himself in the place of God, although this feature is subsequently expressed in a still more distinct form.

Such conduct would be wholly inexplicable were we not acquainted with the subtle motives that animate and govern the human heart, and did we not remember that we ourselves have often used the blessings vouchsafed of God for our own profit and exaltation. In truth, Nebuchadnezzar might have had strong inducements to the course delineated in this chapter. His empire must have been an immense conglomerate, composed of numberless tongues (see Daniel 2:48) and religions, all of which would tend, politically speaking, to disturb the peace of his realm.* If, therefore, his heterogeneous dominions could be welded together by a common religion, his empire would be consolidated and the welfare of his subjects promoted. Whatever his thoughts, such was the course he adopted, and he made the magnificent image which he determined should serve as the deity for "all the people, the nations, and the languages" that were subject to his authority.†

*The difficulties in the government of India, springing up from the difference of religion, will afford an illustration of this.

†It has often been suggested that the image of his dreams formed the pattern for his idol. It is certainly remarkable that the one followed so closely upon the other, and that, as the head of the one that symbolised his own kingdom was of gold, he should make his idol of gold. There might have been a connection in his mind between the two, but the wonder is, as already seen, that the

impressions made upon his mind by the revelation of his secret, and by the interpretation Daniel gave him, could have been so soon effaced. We all know, however, how transient the deepest feelings are where there is no positive work of the Holy Ghost in the soul. The image erected, all the governing authorities and officials of his realm were summoned to Babylon, to be present at "the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up"; and they were all obedient to the royal command. Assembled "before the image," the decree was proclaimed by an herald - "To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace" (Daniel 3:4-6). The decree would be easily understood: it was simple and brief, and the penalty was plain. Nor was there much, according to human thoughts, required. An act of prostration before the king's idol at the appointed moment, and the whole thing was over. But the decree needs a little examination. It was, as before observed, the intrusion of man's will into God's domain.

Obedience to the powers that be, as may be hereafter more fully explained, is a sacred duty; but obedience to the powers that be can only be rendered within the circle of their own lawful authority. If they step out of this circle, as the rulers in Jerusalem did when they commanded the apostles not to teach or to preach in the name of Jesus, they must be told, as Peter and John answered, "We must obey God rather than men." Absolute monarch, therefore, as Nebuchadnezzar was, he stepped outside of his own domain, and claimed for himself what was due to God alone, when he issued his decree.

Another thing may be remarked. The signal for the worship of the image was the outburst of all kinds of music from the finest band in all the king's dominions. If religious feelings did not exist, they must be produced by the sweet and sensuous sounds of harmony. How subtle the wiles of Satan! for we have really here the history of all religious music. It appeals to nature, and begets natural emotions; but in these the Spirit of God has no part, for they that worship God "must worship Him in spirit and in truth." All these expedients do but deceive souls by their enjoyment of what is natural, and at the same time they both shut out God and conceal the spiritual condition of the professed worshippers.

There was practically entire unanimity in obedience to the king's command. Three only, as far as is recorded, refused to comply with his decree. These were brought to the notice of the king by certain Chaldeans, who "came near, and accused the Jews" (Daniel 3:8). After reciting the king's decree, with the accompanying penalty for disobedience, they proceeded: "There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Daniel 3:12). If the accusation was subtle, and couched in the form most likely to arouse the anger of the king, its motive is very apparent. Jealousy is written plainly upon it. "There are certain Jews" - men of an alien race, belonging to a hostile nation, of those who were brought here as captives, and those whom thou hast promoted over the heads of thine own loyal subjects - it is these who have set themselves up in opposition to thy royal command. Hatred is scarcely less concealed, for, before charging them with refusing to worship the king's image, they say, "They serve not thy gods." The king knew this well from Daniel, and

had, notwithstanding, appointed them to their posts of honour; but the Chaldeans could not brook the servants of the true God being thus exalted, and the opportunity had at length arrived for them to express the enmity of their hearts in the accusation they now made. Happy was it for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that no charge could be brought against them excepting, as afterwards in the case of Daniel, concerning the law of their God. If, however, the manner of the accusation was dictated by jealousy and hatred, it was well calculated to appeal to the conscience of Nebuchadnezzar. The mention of his promotion of the three Jews would, it might be supposed, surely recall to the king's mind that eventful day when Daniel had unfolded his secret and its meaning, together with the confession which Daniel's words had extorted from his lips. But if so, all was forgotten in his "rage and fury" at the men who had dared to disregard his absolute and imperious will. The knowledge which God had communicated to Daniel had, in a certain sense, ministered to the king's desire, whereas now, faithfulness to God crossed his will, and taught him that there were some who believed, and who acted on their belief, that God was, to use the king's own words, "a God of gods, and a Lord of kings." This was insufferable to the insensate and irritated monarch, and he commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego should be brought. "Then they brought these men before the king" (Daniel 3:13).

Morally speaking, it was a most impressive scene. On the one hand there was Nebuchadnezzar, the mightiest monarch the world had ever seen, surrounded with all the pomp and magnificence of his court and realm; and on the other, three men of a despised race, whatever the position they occupied at that moment in the government. And the question about to be raised was this: Who is the master of men's consciences, God or man? Nebuchadnezzar himself raised it. First, he asked them if the accusation were true; and it will be observed that he travels outside his own decree in accepting the additional charge - that they did not serve the king's gods - which the Chaldeans had brought. Next, he gives them a further opportunity of proving their loyalty when the band of music should once more break out in exciting strains. If then "ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace" (Daniel 3:15). Lastly, carried beyond all bounds by his rage, he dared to challenge the interposition of anyone superior to himself, and thereby to assert his own omnipotence; for he added, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" This was in truth a gage of battle, and the conflict now commenced was between Nebuchadnezzar and God. The answer of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, quiet and subdued in tone, is sublime in the confidence in God and in His power which it breathes, and in the calm courage it expresses in their determination to dare all and to endure all rather than be unfaithful to their God. They say, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.* If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Daniel 3:16-18). As wisdom, divine wisdom, was found to be with the remnant in the previous chapter, so now faithfulness, indomitable faithfulness, to God is exhibited. Grace gave to them both the one and the other, for it was God who had taken up His servants to display, through them, His own wisdom and power.

*Some translate, "It is not necessary to answer thee on this subject." But this answer of the three children of Judah to Nebuchadnezzar must be examined to understand its full import. First, then, they declared that they were not careful, or that it was not necessary, to reply to the king in "this

matter,” meaning, undoubtedly, that as the king had defied God, it was He alone who could deal with him, and that they fully counted on His interposition to rebuke his arrogant and profane presumption, and to vindicate His own name and supremacy.

They then proceeded calmly to confess their faith in the power of their God to deliver them should Nebuchadnezzar carry out his threat of casting them into the furnace, and their confidence that He would deliver them out of his hand. They added, moreover, that should He not deliver them, their determination was fixed not to yield to the king’s command. They knew whom they had believed, and that He was able to preserve them from the king’s fury; but if it were His will, they were ready to die as martyrs for His name’s sake. As another has observed, their faith and obedience were as absolute as the will of the king. This attitude of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego defines with exactitude, as already remarked, the true position of the believer in relation to the powers that be. Everywhere in the New Testament submission to these is enjoined, and such is to be the path of the Christian in the midst of political agitations and confusions. He is neither to raise questions, nor to examine the lawfulness of constituted authorities. It is enough for him that they are in power, and he pursues his way in peace as he renders the required obedience. But if these authorities, whether they be emperors, kings, or magistrates, travel outside of their own province, as Nebuchadnezzar did, and seek to substitute their will for the word of God, and to impose that will on the consciences of their subjects - putting themselves, in fact, in the place of God - then, in very faithfulness to God, like these three children of the captivity, and at whatever cost, the believer is bound to disobey. The limit of his obedience to kings is obedience to God in obeying them. The moment he is called upon to disobey God by yielding to a monarch’s demands, he must, if he would retain a good conscience towards God, refuse the demanded subjection, even at the cost of life. Such was the ground taken in this conflict between Nebuchadnezzar and these three subjects of his realm. This was a new thing to this master of the world. Absolute in authority over all the kingdoms of the earth, was he to be flatly and publicly disobeyed by three Jews - members of a nation which he had conquered? Such a thing could not for one moment be tolerated; and hence he was “full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego”; and “he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.” A public example must be made of these rebels to the king’s commands, and a salutary impression produced on all the representatives of the government. In some measure, one can understand the wrath of this arbitrary monarch. He had devised an expedient for securing the unity of the various races of his dominions, and it seemed likely to be successful. Not a hand nor a foot was moved against the project, when suddenly three Jews, and these the special objects of the king’s favour, were brought before him and charged with resisting his commands.* His entire scheme was thus imperilled, and hence the ungovernable passion with which he ordered the rebels to his authority to the cruellest doom that could possibly be devised.

*Many speculations have been offered upon the fact of Daniel’s absence from this scene. That he did not surrender his faith, that he was as faithful as his companions, is attested by his subsequent history. Why he does not appear in this chapter is not revealed. His commands were instantly obeyed, and “because the king’s commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.” What was

human life to this wilful, raging king? But God will teach him by the very contrast, that what is death to His enemies cannot injure those who are under His protection. (Compare Exodus 14:1-31; Mark 16:18.) “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace - and, their confidence in God vindicated, they were not destroyed. The men who had cast them into the furnace were overpowered and killed by the scorching flames; but they themselves though in the midst of the furnace were unharmed. Their God was able to deliver them. There was another thing to fill the mind of the king with astonishment. He “rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God” (Daniel 3:24-25). Two miracles thus amazed the king: the fact of his intended victims being loose and unhurt, and the presence with them of a supernatural Companion, whom he designates as “like the Son of God.”* Not that he understood his own speech; but we may conclude that the Spirit of God, as often in the Scriptures, controlled him, and made him proclaim the truth. Isaiah had said, speaking in the name of Jehovah to Israel, “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee;... When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” (Isaiah 43:2); and this promise was now fulfilled to this believing remnant, as it will be to the remnant of a future day, of which these three children are a type. Jehovah was with His faithful servants in the furnace to sustain, to comfort, and to secure them from harm. Before the very eyes of the king, who had impotently and impiously dared Him to deliver out of his hand, He appears, and shielding His servants from the power of the flames, vindicates their confidence in Him, and their fidelity to His name. Has He not also said to us, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me”? (Hebrews 13:5-6).

*Whether the translation be accepted as it stands, or taken as “Son of the gods,” the significance remains. He owns that some one, more than mortal, is with them in the furnace.

Nebuchadnezzar had provoked the conflict in challenging the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. God came in, and silently exhibited His power before the furious king; and he is conquered! Forgetful of everything else now but the spectacle before his eyes, insensible even to his own public humiliation, he, confessing his defeat, with his whole mien and aspect changed, advanced “to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came forth of the midst of the fire” (Daniel 3:26).

It is to be remarked that it is not said that anyone besides Nebuchadnezzar saw the divine Companion of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. His eyes were for the moment opened to see what was naturally invisible, that he might learn his own folly in entering upon a conflict with the God of heaven. What patience and long-suffering on the part of God, in the presence of the weak profanity of one of His own creatures! Happy is it for man, for us all, that He never allows His purposes to be frustrated by our daring presumption and rebellion. The king’s command was now obeyed, and these “servants of the most high God” came forth; and the truth of their preservation - the miracle wrought - was verified by “the princes, governors, and captains, and the king’s counsellors,” who were “gathered together,” it would seem, to examine the reality of this miraculous preservation; and they “saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor

was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them” (Daniel 3:27). The deliverance was total and complete, for the fire had only been allowed to burn the bonds wherewith they had been bound, at least they were seen, notwithstanding they had been bound, walking in liberty in the company of their Deliverer and Preserver. Overwhelmed by the undeniable character of the evidence offered, and owning his own impotence and defeat before such a God, Nebuchadnezzar said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent His angel, and delivered His servants that trusted in Him, and have changed the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God” (Daniel 3:28). He thus paid honour to God, who had rescued His servants from the king’s wrath, and he justified those who, in fidelity to “their own God,” had refused to worship the image which he himself had set up. He made a decree, moreover, “That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort” (Daniel 3:29).

All the king’s thoughts and projects were thus utterly set at nought. The image he had made had been publicly refused, and as publicly declared to be a false god. Nebuchadnezzar himself was constrained to confess the impotence of himself and of his god, and to proclaim throughout his empire that there was no god like the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. His magnificent assembly had been in vain as far as his own purposes were concerned. Obsequious subjects came from all parts of his dominions to accept and to worship the king’s idol: and lo! even before they dispersed, a trumpet-tongued testimony was raised to the supremacy of the most High God. God vindicated His own name, and the faith of His servants, before all the notabilities of the realm.

One thing more is recorded: “Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon” (Daniel 3:30). The victory vouchsafed was complete; for not only did God frustrate the designs of the king, but also those of the jealous and malignant enemies of His servants. They had thought to compass the destruction of these faithful men; but the issue was their further promotion and exaltation. So far the record is historical; but is it only historical? To suppose so would be to miss the main object of the narrative. The actual facts took place, but these actual facts were chosen to set forth what will take place in the last days. As the first Gentile empire became idolatrous so will also the last, as we may learn from Revelation 13:1-18, and as God’s faithful remnant was the object of enmity and persecution under the king of Babylon, so will it be again under the last head of the Roman empire (see Revelation 12:13-17; Revelation 13:6-8; Revelation 13:15, etc.). But, as we read in this same book, Daniel’s people, however hot the furnace into which they shall at that time be cast, “shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.” Satan may be allowed to rage, and to sift the people of God, but not a hair of their heads can fall without God’s permission. The history therefore of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego is full of encouragement - especially for the Jewish remnant in the last days, but also for the saints of God in every age when surrounded by the fires of persecution, when Satan, as a roaring lion, is seeking whom he may devour. And the lesson is written large: “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

03.04. Daniel 4

Daniel 4:1-37 A SPECIAL character attaches to this chapter from the fact that it contains a communication or letter, written by Nebuchadnezzar himself, and addressed to “all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth.” He had been favoured with many signs from God through Daniel’s interpretation of his dream in Daniel 2:1-49, and in connection with the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the power of the flames in Daniel 3:1-30, and, under the momentary impressions produced, he had confessed Daniel’s God to be a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a Revealer of secrets, and that there was no god that could deliver as the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. His heart, however, was unchanged; but in the narrative before us, which again is both historic and prophetic, we are permitted to see the way in which this idolatrous king is brought at last to “praise and extol and honour the King of Heaven” (Daniel 4:37). Read in its connection, there cannot be a doubt that Nebuchadnezzar really bowed in conscience and heart to the testimony which reached him through the prophet Daniel, and that he thus became a servant of the “Most High.” The proof of this lies in the royal communication to all his subjects. He desires that every person in his dominions should be made acquainted with his “conversion.” The address of the letter has already been noticed; and this is followed by a salutation - “Peace be multiplied unto you” - which in its form is almost apostolic. (Compare 1 Peter 1:2.) In verses Daniel 4:2-3 he concisely states the object he has in addressing his subjects: “I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me”; and then his heart overflows in admiration as he recalls what God had wrought, exclaiming, “How great are His signs! and how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation.” It is a good thing when the soul is constrained to confess what God has wrought by His grace; for, as the apostle teaches, if the heart believes unto righteousness, it is with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. It is due to God that confession should be made, and when made it turns to a testimony for His glory.

Following upon this, he gives his own personal circumstances at the time when this new message from God reached him. “I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace” (Daniel 4:4). He had attained the summit of all human ambition. Monarch of all the kingdoms of the earth, his authority undisputed, prosperous in all his undertakings, with nothing to disturb his tranquillity, whether as touching his public or his private affairs; he was in peace* in his house, and flourishing in his palace. Everything, in a word, went well with this mighty monarch, so that he might have been, if human prosperity could have given it, in the enjoyment of perfect happiness. And he was, it would seem, happy, but without God. It was from this clear sky, with no premonition of coming trouble, that God’s warnings suddenly came to arouse the king and to fill him with apprehensions. “I saw a dream,” he says, “which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head. troubled me” (Daniel 4:5).

*Such is the translation given by some; and this removes perhaps the ambiguity of the words “at rest,” as in connection with his dream and visions they might be thought to mean that he was resting in sleep. The dream did not, as on a former occasion, pass away from his mind; nor did he

understand what he had seen, although he was troubled - troubled as he felt that it contained something of momentous import for him and for his kingdom. He therefore at once issued a decree to bring, in all the wise men of Babylon, that they might make known to him the interpretation of the dream (Daniel 4:6). Having proved their incompetency in Daniel 2:1-49, and having, at the same time, learned that Daniel alone could unravel his mystery, it may seem strange that Daniel was not immediately summoned into the king's presence. There is no affinity between the natural and the spiritual man. Saul was glad to avail himself of David's services both with his harp and with his sword, and yet he hated him. In like manner, Nebuchadnezzar had profited by Daniel's interpretation; but he could not love the one who was the representative before him of the God of heaven. If, therefore, he could do without Daniel, he would; and consequently he first tried his own wise men. Again their impotence was manifested. The wisdom of man is confined to earth; but Nebuchadnezzar's dream came from heaven. The subject was one outside of all the thoughts of men, even though it related to the earth. To understand God's things a man must be instructed of God; and this the wise men of Babylon were not. Foiled in his purpose, the king tells us, "At the last Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god," etc. (Daniel 4:8). The next verse plainly shows that Nebuchadnezzar had not forgotten Daniel's ability as an expounder of secrets, although he could not have known the source of his inspiration, nor that he was God's vessel of the spirit of prophecy. He only sent for him, therefore, from necessity, inasmuch as in all his dominions there was no other who could interpret his dream.

Every particular of the dream was fast rooted in the king's memory, and he proceeded to repeat it to Daniel. It falls into three parts; first, its subject-matter, the tree (Daniel 4:10-12) secondly, the judgment upon the tree (Daniel 4:13-16) and lastly, the object of the judgment executed (Daniel 4:17). As all these particulars are taken up by Daniel, we may pass to his interpretation, after noticing, first, the effect on Daniel of the king's recital. When Nebuchadnezzar had explained to him what he had seen in the visions of his head in his bed (Daniel 4:10), "Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him." The meaning of the dream was unfolded to his soul as he heard it, and as he comprehended its import in its application to the king, filled with amazement, and troubled, he was reluctant, it would appear, to communicate to him the significance of the dream. This was perceived by Nebuchadnezzar, and he said, "Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies" (Daniel 4:19). It may be questioned whether Daniel, in speaking thus, having received from God the interpretation of the dream, maintained the level of his prophetic office as a messenger from God; and it will be observed that in the record of this sentence the name Daniel is dropped. It is for the first and only time Belteshazzar - "not Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar," but simply Belteshazzar - who answered the king.

However this may be, Daniel commenced to give to the king the interpretation of his dream: "The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: it is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth" (Daniel 4:20-22). The figure of a tree to denote men in their earthly greatness is often used in the prophets.

Ezekiel thus says: "Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature; and his top was among the thick boughs... All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations," etc. (Ezekiel 31:3-9). This striking correspondence helps much to understand the symbology of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams, and enables us to perceive how apt an illustration it is of exaltation in the government of the earth, in the far-reaching, wide-spreading, and sheltering protection it affords to all ranks and conditions of men. The beasts of the field and the fowls of heaven are introduced because both alike had been given into his hand (see Daniel 2:38); and hence they, as well as the children of men, are looked upon as subject to, sustained and protected by, his authority. Well therefore might Daniel say to the king, "Thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth." A difference between the head of gold in Daniel 2:1-49, and the tree here, in their respective applications, is to be remarked. Both concern Nebuchadnezzar, as plainly said; but the former includes his dynasty, inasmuch as it is not until his dynasty ends that the second of the four prophetic kingdoms appears. The latter is a symbol of Nebuchadnezzar himself, as is seen by the judgment executed; only, it has to be added, that his degradation is in reality, as may be afterwards explained, typical of the character of the Gentile power in government on to its supersession at the appearing of Christ to establish His kingdom.

Having given the application of the symbol, Daniel continued his interpretation: "And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him; this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king: that they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will. And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule" (Daniel 4:23-26).

Nothing could be more precise than this interpretation, and it is given at length that the reader may perceive how exact in every detail was the fulfilment. It could not be otherwise, inasmuch as it was, through Daniel, a divine exposition of Nebuchadnezzar's vision. It may now be understood why Daniel was tempted, as the judgment impending over the king rose up before him, to say, "The dream be to them that hate thee." It was only the courage which the sense of his mission from God imparted that enabled him thus fearlessly to unroll the scroll of the king's future; and it needed courage for the Jewish captive-prophet to stand before the monarch of the world, and to depict such an overwhelming disaster. Daniel himself would appear to have been moved; for he appealed to the king in words of earnest entreaty, "Wherefore, O king, let my counsel, be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity." Like Paul with Felix, Daniel reasoned with Nebuchadnezzar of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come; but we do not read that the king trembled. The message however had been delivered and the appeal made; and the momentous interview between the prophet and the monarch was ended. In the next place

the history of the fulfilment of Daniel's interpretation is given. "All this," he says, "came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar" (Daniel 4:28); and then we have the circumstances under which the threatened judgment was executed. Twelve months had passed, and there is no record that the king had even been troubled by the warning he had received. The sky was still clear, with not a cloud on the distant horizon. This might be a matter of unspeakable surprise if we did not remember that the spectacle of sinners unmoved on the eve of eternal woe greets our eyes every day. Death must come, and judgment will follow, and yet men are careless and heedless. So with Nebuchadnezzar; and hence it is that we read that "at the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon." And what was the subject of his meditations? His own greatness, power, and majesty. "The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30). All this was the glorification of himself, the full-blown pride of the human heart, begotten of his exaltation and prosperity - the pride that goeth before destruction. The source of his power had been communicated to him (Daniel 2:1-49); but this he had entirely forgotten in attributing all the glory of his kingdom to himself. Surveying the magnificence of his palace and metropolis, with a heart swelling with pride and exultation, he ascribed all to the might of his own power, and declared that it was all for the honour of his own majesty. God was not in all his thoughts, nor even his own false gods; his vision was bounded by himself - himself as the source of all his glory, and himself as the object of all his works. What an insight into the heart of man! We are thus allowed to behold the moral condition of this gigantic tree before it is hewn down according to the divine decree. The similarity between this and the parable of the rich man, whose ground brought forth plentifully, will at once be recalled. As he congratulated himself upon his prosperity, purposed to enlarge his barns, and contemplated years of selfish enjoyment, the judgment went forth, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee" (Luke 12:16-20). In like manner, as Nebuchadnezzar vented the pride of his heart in his foolish boasting, even "while the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, The kingdom is departed from thee"; and then the judgment pronounced by Daniel is repeated by the voice, and immediately executed. For "the same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws." When God speaks it is done, and what He commands ever stands fast. It is now necessary to enquire into the meaning of this judgment; and on examination it will be found that it has a threefold significance - personal, moral, and prophetic. First, then, the personal meaning has to be considered. This lies in the fact that what was inflicted upon Nebuchadnezzar was a direct judgment from God for his personal pride, for what might be termed his self-deification. The pride of man is one of the especial objects of God's hatred; and because of its expression in an extreme form in the king of Babylon, he fell under God's judicial hand. There are those who endeavour to account for his condition in a natural way by terming it a special form of madness. Even so, the question returns, Whence came it? The Biblical narrative supplies the answer - an answer recorded by the king himself - that it came from the hand of God as a just judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar's overweening pride and vainglory. Threatened a year before it was inflicted, and space thus having been given for repentance, he has the very words of Daniel recalled to his mind by a voice from heaven, at the very moment when the punitive stroke was about to descend. Entrusted with the government of the earth, God held him accountable, and punished him

accordingly, and yet in grace, as well as in righteousness, since the object was to teach him "that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will" (Daniel 4:32). The moral significance of what befell Nebuchadnezzar is even, if possible, of more importance. He was driven from men, became as a beast of the earth, for he ate grass as oxen, and in his bodily condition was even worse than the beasts of the field. All this is but expressive of his moral state, and of the character of the power he wielded as dissociated from God. In the language of another: "Power is reduced to the condition of the beasts that know not God, and are devoid of man's understanding. The only true privilege of man, that which ennobles him, is that he can look up to God and acknowledge Him. Without this he looks downward, he cannot suffice to himself, he is degraded... Pride and independence separate man from God; he becomes a beast, devoid of real intelligence." The physical state of this monarch is therefore a moral picture, and one that should often be pondered, inasmuch as it reveals man's condition according to the estimate of God, when he vaunts his own power, seeks his own glory, and asserts his own independence. But it goes further than the king himself; it embraces also the character of his rule, and of his kingdom. If then the first kingdom in man's hand becomes in Daniel 3:1-30 idolatrous, in Daniel 4:1-37 it becomes bestial, bestial in the sense of being devoid of all intelligence as dissevered from God, and as looking downward, and feeding only upon the motives and objects of earth. For when man in his exaltation shuts out God from his thoughts, and makes himself his centre and object, he is morally no better than a beast. As the Psalmist says, "Man that is in honour and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish" (Psalms 49:20).

There is lastly the prophetic aspect. "Seven times" were to pass over the king in his degradation before he should be restored. It does not say "years," though possibly the "times" might be "years," but "times." The expression is vague, while the term "seven" gives it a very precise meaning; that is, a perfect period, a period comprising the whole duration of the times of the Gentiles. We gather, therefore, that all the four kingdoms - and these, it will be remembered, embrace the whole period of Gentile rule - will have the same moral character before God; that the power exercised in them will be apart from God, and will be wielded for self, for man, and for earthly objects, without regard to God's thoughts, or to responsibility to Him from whom the power has been derived. This is a very solemn consideration, and on many accounts. It shows that no improvement in the governments of the earth is to be expected, and therefore that it is worse than useless, to say nothing of inconsistency with his heavenly calling, for the Christian to embark upon the sea of political agitations, in the hope of securing some amelioration in the state of things around. It is not for one moment denied that man's condition in this world may be improved by just and beneficent laws; but the question remains, Will any political changes or legislative enactments alter the moral character either of human governments or of their subjects? Our chapter, with a host of other scriptures, proclaims that the character of the first kingdom will be repeated in its successors; and it will, as we know from the book of Revelation, be seen without any disguise in the final form of the last of the four prophetic kingdoms. If any one should doubt this statement, let him trace the course of human governments from the days of the kingdom of Babylon up to the present time. Let him wade through the histories of conquests, wars, and dynasties, and then let him ask himself if he could name any period when the power of the throne was held from God, and wielded for God. He will undoubtedly discover that some individual monarchs have been pious men; but he will also have to confess that, whatever their piety, they could not change the course or the character of their governments. The powers that be are ordained of God, and therefore the Christian is to

render them all due honour and subjection; but this in no wise militates against the fact that Nebuchadnezzar's condition in its moral aspect, as given in our chapter, depicts the character of the kingdoms which fill up the times of the Gentiles.

Having traced the meanings of Nebuchadnezzar's degradation, we may now consider its effect on himself. The "seven times" may also refer to this effect. The period was divinely appointed, and, as in analogous cases in the typical books, had without doubt regard to the change to be wrought in his soul. His degradation, in other words, was to continue for a perfect period, as indicated by the number seven, until the divinely-intended work in his soul should be accomplished. Hence he says, "And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" (Daniel 4:34-35). The object of God's dealings with him was attained; for the king had now learnt the lesson appointed him, that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will (see Daniel 4:25; Daniel 4:32).

Let us, however, examine his confession more particularly. In the judgment with which he had been visited he was as a beast of the earth; and, as we have pointed out, the characteristic of a beast is that it looks downward, and does not possess the intelligence of man. It is, therefore, most interesting to notice that the moment Nebuchadnezzar lifted up his eyes to heaven his understanding returned. So with the prodigal who had wandered into the far country; his "coming to himself" and his turning to his father's house are connected. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and this statement is illustrated in the experience of the king of Babylon.

Turning upward to the hand that had smitten him, he began to understand, for he learnt for the first time his accountability to God. And remark that the first use he makes of his newly-found understanding is to bless the most High, to praise and honour Him as the eternal God, and as the Sovereign Ruler both in heaven and on earth. This is exceedingly beautiful; and is the sure evidence of what we know as a work of grace in the soul. The character under which he blesses God, "the most High," is also significant. This title is first found in connection with Melchizedek, who is termed the priest of the most High God; and who, blessing Abram on his return from the slaughter of the kings, said, "Blessed be Abram of the most High God, possessor of heaven and earth" (Genesis 14:18-19). This plainly teaches, as also may be gathered from other scriptures, that this is the title which God will assume in the age to come, when He will, in very deed, possess the earth as well as heaven. In addition, therefore, to the significance of the use of the title by Nebuchadnezzar, who owned thereby that God, though He had committed the sovereignty of the earth to him, yet did according to His will on earth as in heaven, there is also a prophetic meaning. We have already called attention to the fact that Nebuchadnezzar's degradation shadowed forth the character of Gentile rule on to the end; and now we learn that it will be through judgment that the nations will be brought to acknowledge God. We thus read in the prophet Zephaniah, "My determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent" (Zephaniah 3:8-9).

Daniel had told the king that the kingdom should be sure unto him; after that he had learnt that the heavens do rule. This prediction was also verified; for he further adds: "At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me" (Daniel 4:36). God thus fulfilled His own word by the mouth of His servant; not one jot or tittle was allowed to fall to the ground; and Nebuchadnezzar joyfully confesses and records the divine faithfulness. And it is no small encouragement in the presence of the pride of power everywhere displayed, and amid all the confusions of earth, to see that God is working through all for the accomplishment of His own purposes, and that in the issue all the Gentiles, as well as His ancient people, will be brought into willing subjection to Christ when He establishes His kingdom, and extends His sway throughout the whole earth. The chapter closes with another note of praise: "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase" (Daniel 4:37). Comparing the Nebuchadnezzar who renders this praise to God with the Nebuchadnezzar who said, as he surveyed the magnificence of his city, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?" etc, we can only exclaim, "What hath God wrought!" He had indeed shown His power to abase the one who was walking in pride; and, more than this, in abasing him He so effectually changed the heart of the monarch that he turned submissively to the hand that had smitten him, and confessed that all God's works are truth, and His ways judgment. He thus justified God, a sure and unmistakable sign of conversion, and as he justified Him his lips were filled with praise and adoration. It is a lovely picture of the ways of God both in judgment and in grace. A word should be added upon the character in which he here confesses God. He now speaks of Him as the King of heaven; and this is also evidence of his having been divinely taught. When Jehovah had His throne in Jerusalem, He was God of the earth as well as of heaven; but when He had abandoned His throne there, and had committed the sovereignty of the world to the Gentile monarch, He would be known as the God of heaven, and it is to Him as such that Daniel bore testimony before the king (Daniel 2:37-44). But while God had now assumed this title, He in no wise surrendered either His claims to the earth, or the present actings of His power in government; for His object in the judicial stroke that fell upon Nebuchadnezzar was, as we have seen, to teach him, "that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will." Nebuchadnezzar had confessed this truth; but ere he concludes the account of God's dealings with himself he proceeds a step further, and owns Him as the King of heaven.

It is exceedingly interesting to trace the various stages in Nebuchadnezzar's history which led up to this conclusion. In Daniel 2:1-49 he confessed to Daniel, "Of a truth it is that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret"; in Daniel 3:1-30 he decreed that no one, under the extreme penalties of the law, should speak against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, owning that there was no other god that could "deliver after this sort"; and, lastly, in our chapter he acknowledges God as the most High, and as the King of heaven. God thus in His mercy subdued the proud heart of this mighty potentate, and humbling him before Him, made him confess His name before all the inhabitants of his vast empire. If a record of judgment, it is yet a story of unbounded grace.

03.05. Daniel 5

Daniel 5:1-31

IT is of all importance to remind ourselves again and again, in reading the chapters that form the first part of this book, that while they are strictly historic they are also prophetic; that while they describe characteristics of the thrones of the Gentiles, to which God entrusted the sovereignty of the earth after the destruction of Jerusalem, these characteristics will reappear in the last days. There are three things, indeed, which especially have this prophetic character: the acts of these various monarchs; the judgments that followed as in the last, and in the present, chapter; and the deliverance of God's people as seen "in Daniel 3:1-30, and again in the person of Daniel, in Daniel 6:1-28. To these may be added the acknowledgement of the true God by the Gentiles after their having been judged, as portrayed in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, and also in that of Darius (Daniel 6:1-28), albeit his confession is elicited rather by the display of God's power in succouring His people, as represented by Daniel, when in the very jaws of destruction.

Coming now, to our chapter, a still worse moral feature of Gentile sovereignty is exhibited.

Idolatry and pride of power - vainglory - had marked Nebuchadnezzar; but Belshazzar is distinguished by the public insolence of daring impiety, venting itself in open wickedness and profanity. The occasion for this outburst of iniquity is described in the first verse: "Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand." It was a night of feasting, revelry, and unbridled licence, when all the evil passions of man's corrupt heart were inflamed and enticed to their gratification. For, mark, it was while Belshazzar "tasted the wine," that he gave the commandment "to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar* had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein" (Daniel 5:2).* The chronology of Nebuchadnezzar's successors cannot be accurately determined, but it seems beyond question that Belshazzar could not have been his son. It is possible that he might have been his grandson, though this is not certain. The term "father," therefore, as is often the case in Scripture, is used in the sense of progenitor, or forefather. Whatever the exact relationship he bore to Nebuchadnezzar, he could not have been very far removed from that monarch, seeing that he was well acquainted with the judgment that had fallen upon him (Daniel 5:22). Was he intoxicated? With the pride of wicked presumption certainly; and this was inflamed by the wine which he drank. Indulgence in wine, in the joy which earth affords, necessarily panders to the heart's worst desires; and the company that surrounded the king reveals that this instance was no exception to the general rule. Had this been, however, but an ordinary revel or debauch, whatever its accompanying licentiousness, no inspired pen would have recorded it; but the crowning sin of it was the direct insult which Belshazzar offered to the God of Israel, the God of heaven. The holy vessels were holy still in God's eyes, however polluted they had been by the sins of His kings and priests, for they had been used in the house where He had put His name for ever, and where His eyes and His heart should be perpetually (1 Kings 9:3). True He had in judgment suffered them to

share in the captivity of His people; but He could not allow them, consistently with all that He was, and with all that He purposed, to be defiled by the Gentile monarch and his profligate associates. Nor was it only that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them; but “they drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.” Gods of all degrees were extolled and their superiority over the God of Israel insultingly vaunted; and in so doing they challenged God publicly and insolently. With such insensate folly and impiety did this foolhardy king dare the interposition of the living and true God. The answer - for it could not be delayed - was at hand; almost before the sounds of their idolatrous chants had died away - “in the same hour came forth fingers of a man’s hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king’s palace and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote (Daniel 5:5). Silently came these mysterious fingers in answer to the king’s challenge, silently they wrote their words of doom amid the noise of revelry and of song, and yet, for an unseen power directed his eyes, the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. And what was the effect of the apparition? Surely fortified by wine, and strong in confidence in the omnipotence of his gods, the king will not be afraid? But even he - wicked as he was - had a conscience, and he knew of the power that had driven even Nebuchadnezzar from his throne, and made him, for a season, like the beasts of the earth; and conscience now, in spite of the king’s surroundings, asserted its office, and “the king’s countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another (Daniel 5:6). What a change! In the midst of his banquet he had dared to insult the God of heaven, and now, at the sight of this mysterious hand, fear and dread possessed his soul, and he trembled from head to foot. He had girded himself to challenge the omnipotent God; and the moment the challenge was accepted, before the blow had been struck, his heart failed him under the awful apprehension of coming judgment. Who can help him at such a moment? Instead of humbling himself before the One against whom he had so grievously sinned, he called to his succour the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers, and by the proffer of munificent rewards hoped they might be able to solve the written words, and thus, as he vainly thought, give him relief. But the wisdom of this world could not unravel God’s secrets nor interpret His writing; and these men of pretended knowledge were as impotent as they had been proved to be in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. “The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.”

Belshazzar was still more troubled, panic-stricken as he had been, and even his courtiers were astonished. But God meant that the king should have the writing explained, only it must be done by His own chosen vessel. The instrument was at hand to bring Daniel to Belshazzar’s notice. “The queen* by reason of the words of the king and his lords came into the banquet house” (Daniel 5:10). She had not taken part in the wild orgies of this eventful night; but the rumour of the apparition that had startled the king and his guests had gone out through the palace and reached her ears. She was fully acquainted with what had taken place in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, as also with the service Daniel had rendered, and with the place to which he had been consequently appointed, and she hastened therefore to the king’s help. “O king,” she said, “live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed: there is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods”; and then, after describing what he had proved himself to be in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, she added, “Let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation” (Daniel 5:10-12).

*This could scarcely have been Belshazzar's wife (see Daniel 5:3); most probably therefore it was the queen-mother, or, as expressed in modern language, the queen-dowager.

Daniel was at once "brought in before the king. And the king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry?" He had known, as before remarked, of the services of Daniel, but he had not cared to know him personally. The impious king had no desire for acquaintance with the servant of God; and had only now sent for him in his extremity for help in the hour of his need.

He then told Daniel, what he had heard of him, and continued: "Now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom" (Daniel 5:14-16).

Daniel was standing before the sovereign of all the kingdoms of the earth, before an absolute monarch, and before one who held the power of life and death over all his subjects (see Daniel 5:19); but Daniel was the servant of the God, who was the source of Belshazzar's brief power; and he, therefore, conscious of his mission, neither feared the king nor was tempted by his offered rewards. In the calm confidence which, through grace, he possessed in Him whose servant he was, he "answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation" (Daniel 5:17). It was a noble preface, befitting the messenger of God to the wicked king; and the reader will not fail to remark the different spirit in which Daniel addressed Belshazzar from that in which he spoke to Nebuchadnezzar. The latter was idolatrous, imperious, and had sought to compel his subjects to worship the idol which he had made; but he had not gone the length of Belshazzar in his profanity. Daniel therefore made a distinction, taught as he undoubtedly was by the Spirit of God, and knowing that the cup of Belshazzar's iniquity was now filled up to the brim. But he will deliver his message, though, first of all, Belshazzar must be made to hear how God had dealt with Nebuchadnezzar in the past, and how that, absolute monarch as he was, and universal as was his dominion, "when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him." Daniel recounted, moreover, the nature of the judgment that was inflicted upon him, and reminded Belshazzar that all this was "till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that He appointeth over it whomsoever He will." Thereon he proceeded to deal with the trembling monarch before him - in severe, but faithful words: "And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified" (Daniel 5:22-23).

If God was about to smite, He will have the grounds of His action explained. It is indeed a striking feature in His ways, especially as recorded in the Old Testament, that before He acts in judgment, He is careful to state the reasons of it, that He may be clear when He speaks, and justified when He judges (see, for example, 2 Chronicles 36:11-21). So here Daniel presented the indictment against the king, showed him that he had slighted all the warnings of the past, had sinned against light and knowledge, and that he had finally lifted up himself against the Lord of heaven, and had

polluted the holy vessels of His house. This shows plainly the meaning of the king's action in commanding these vessels to be brought; that it was no mere wild freak, while under the heat of wine, but a deliberate and studied insult against God. Hence it was that Daniel would have the king to understand, that "the part of the hand" was sent from God to write on the wall in connection with this very act (Daniel 5:24). In such a solemn moment there must be no mistake, and thus he arraigned the king before the tribunal of God before he expounded the writing.*

*As the writing was in the Chaldaic language, it was not that the king's wise men did not understand the words. It was the connection, application, and interpretation that they could not unfold. So many separate words would appear to them, being without the clue, as disjointed and meaningless. The words were four: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN, and we have next Daniel's authoritative interpretation.

Before entering upon it, attention may be drawn to the fact that Daniel does not merely translate the words which had been written, but he gives out the mind of God intended to be conveyed. This could not have been done unless he himself had received a direct communication from God. The words themselves, if rendered according to their meaning, are "numbered," "weighed," and "divided"; but no human ingenuity could have discovered their divine significance, and it is this which Daniel explains. The first word was repeated. The reason for this may be doubtless found in Joseph's words to Pharaoh: "And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass" (Genesis 41:32).

"This," says Daniel, "is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it" (Daniel 5:26). In expounding Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the great image, Daniel had said to him, "Thou art this head of gold," and, inasmuch as Babylon was to be succeeded by the Medo-Persian kingdom, it is evident, as previously remarked, that Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty was included in this term, Belshazzar being its last member. God Himself had committed the sovereignty of the earth to Nebuchadnezzar in responsibility, and He alone determined the duration of his kingdom. When therefore Daniel said to Belshazzar. "God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it," he meant that, according to the divine appointment, the termination of Babylon's sovereignty had arrived; that its days were numbered, and were now ended. The ground of this annunciation is found in the next verse: "TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting" (Daniel 5:27). If God had committed the government of the earth to Nebuchadnezzar and his successors, for the accomplishment of His purposes in His ways with His people, He held them responsible for the way in which they fulfilled their trust. The verdict is now pronounced upon Belshazzar. Nebuchadnezzar had also failed, if not to the same extent; but, under chastisement from God, he had humbled himself, owned Him as the source of his authority, as the omnipotent Ruler in heaven and on earth, and had extolled and honoured Him as the King of heaven. Belshazzar, blind to all the teachings of the past, had more grievously sinned by magnifying his idols above the God in whose hand his breath was, and had thus lifted up himself against the Lord of heaven. His probation was now ended, and Daniel declared to him the result that, as shown by the mysterious word "Tekel," weighed in God's unerring balances, he was found wanting.

Judgment is contained in the next word, PERES,* the public judgment consequent upon Belshazzar's failure in the use of the power entrusted to him in the government of the earth: "Thy

kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.” The long suffering of God towards the “head of gold” was ended; and hence there is no exhortation to repentance, nothing but the announcement of the result of God’s verdict, together with the accompanying judgment.

*Peres is another form of the word Upharsin. The former is the participle passive, and the latter the participle active of the verb P’ras, to divide.

Altogether “this narrative,” as has been well said, “gives us the last character of the iniquity of the sovereign power of the Gentiles, in opposition to the God of Israel, and the judgment which falls in consequence upon the monarchy of which Babylon was the head, and to which Babylon had given its own character.”

Nothing is said as to the effect of this awful interpretation. With the judgment pronounced God had, save the execution of the sentence, done with the man who had arrogantly defied His power. One thing, however, is added, and that is Belshazzar’s last act of royalty. He could not, whatever the attitude of Daniel, allow his public promise of reward to the interpreter to fall to the ground. Men who are false to God are often true to one another in their very selfishness.

Belshazzar therefore commanded, “and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom” (Daniel 5:29). If he believed the interpretation, it is evident that he had no conception of the rapidly approaching execution of the sentence he had heard; but “in that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about three score and two years old” (Daniel 5:30-31). God thus judged the first of the kingdoms of the Gentiles, and this was the monarchy of Babylon. The event was of the highest importance historically, and of no less moment prophetically; for the moral features which marked Belshazzar’s sovereignty will appear in the future Babylon spoken of in Revelation.

There it is seen under two aspects - that of a woman, and that of a city.* The moral character of the former is given in these words: Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth; and we read of the ruler whose throne was derived from Satan, that “he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven” (see Revelation 17:5; Revelation 13:6). Moreover, as to the judgment of Babylon it is said, “Her plagues shall come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine”; and so it will happen, for those who bewail her destruction are represented as saying, “Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come” (Revelation 18:10). This will suffice to show the exactness of the correspondence, and the prophetic nature of these historical narratives. (Compare also Jeremiah 50:35-46; Jeremiah 51:24-64.) *For an explanation of these two aspects see The Visions of John in Patmos. A few words should perhaps be said upon the question of the historical event alluded to when Belshazzar was thus surprised and slain in his capital. Isaiah is thought to refer to the capture of Babylon by Cyrus in Isaiah 45:1-2; and in Isaiah he speaks expressly of her sudden destruction (Isaiah 45:11-15; see also Isaiah 21:1-9). Jeremiah also prophesies with more detail of the surprise and taking of Babylon, and that in connection with the Medes (Jeremiah 51:28-32); and this of the two prophecies would rather point to the event recorded in our chapter. There are those who, in the hopeless confusion of the pretended histories of the past,* seek to establish the identity of Darius with Cyrus; but the Scripture narrative is clear that Darius took the kingdom, and that Cyrus is subsequently found in its possession. And let it not

be forgotten that the importance of the narrative lies in its moral and prophetic instruction; and happy are they who, with unquestioning confidence in the word of God, have their hearts prepared and opened to receive its teaching.

*In proof of this it may be said, that in Smith's Bible Dictionary the articles on Babylon, Cyrus, and Darius are made up mainly of conjecture and of attempts to reconcile the contradictory statements of the ancient records.

03.06. Daniel 6

Daniel 6:1-28 IN this series of historical pictures there are presented, it will be remembered, the moral features which will distinguish, in the last days, the last form of Gentile sovereignty. If Belshazzar, therefore, typified the impiety that dared to lift itself up against the Lord of heaven, Darius sets forth the exaltation of man, and indeed, the substitution of man for God, as an object of worship. This is by no means altered by the fact that he was betrayed into taking this position, or that he himself was a man of an amiable character; for it is still true that he signed the decree, that whosoever should ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of himself, should be cast into the den of lions (Daniel 6:7). It is not what he was in himself, but what he did, that contains the prophetic instruction; and it is quite possible that he, who in a future day will oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, and who will sit in the temple of God, and show himself that he is God (2 Thessalonians 2:4), will possess many features which will extort the admiration and homage of men. When the Lord was upon the earth there was no beauty in Him that men should desire Him; there was nothing in Him to commend Him to the natural man; but, on the other hand, when Antichrist appears on the scene he will be marked by the features which will attract the hearts of men as men. Of the world, the world will love its own; whereas Christ, who was not of the world, was hated by it. It is just because Darius was naturally a man of an admirable character that he was fitted to shadow out in this respect this future ruler in his self exaltation and deification.

Daniel 6:1-3 furnish the groundwork of what follows, the occasion of the actings that issued in the casting of Daniel into the lions' den. On taking possession of the throne of Babylon, Darius reorganized the affairs of the kingdom; and he "set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes... and over these, three presidents, of whom Daniel was first.... Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm" (Daniel 6:1-3). Belshazzar had, on the eve of the capture of his city, proclaimed Daniel as the third ruler in the kingdom; Darius promoted him to the first place under himself, being God's instrument in doing so for the accomplishment of His purposes. Daniel was no unknown man; and he was hated both as a Jew and as a true worshipper of the God of heaven. His exaltation in the government still further provoked the envy and jealousy of the nobles, the princes, and the presidents over whom he had been placed. A man of incorruptible fidelity, and seeking only to commend himself to God, could not be loved by men of corrupt and covetous hearts. They therefore determined in some way or other to compass his deposition or destruction; and first of all they sought to find occasion against him concerning the kingdom - concerning his administration of the government. There are none so eagle-eyed as malicious men; so that nothing - whether in matters of finance or other branches of the affairs of this vast empire - would escape their notice; "but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him" (Daniel 6:4). What a testimony to the probity and uprightness of this servant of God; and it is all the greater because, as we read in the next verse, it was a testimony borne by his enemies, They knew not that Daniel laboured under

the eye of Him who beholds the secrets of the heart, and that it was the joy of his life to walk in the favour and blessing of his God.

Foiled in this direction, with the inventiveness which ever characterizes the evil heart, they chose another ground of attack. They said - "these men" (a term seemingly chosen to express their iniquity) said, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God" (Daniel 6:5). Idolaters as they all were, and having a sovereign who was also an idolater, it was easy, they thought, to entangle Daniel in their net on such a ground. But Darius could scarcely have been ignorant of what had transpired between Daniel and Belshazzar, or of the fact that he was a godly Jew; and this will account for the method adopted by these princes and presidents. They did not proceed to charge Daniel with worshipping his God; in greater subtlety they determined, first, to flatter the king by offering to him the place of absolute supremacy - supremacy over heaven as well as earth - and then to bring Daniel into conflict with, as well as disobedience to, the king. As inspired of Satan, their project was cleverly devised, and they sought immediately to put it into execution. Accordingly they "assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever"; and they then informed his majesty that, after due consultation, they had agreed "to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions" (Daniel 6:7). The only thing wanting to ensure the validity of the decree was the king's signature, and then it could not be changed, "according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not" (Daniel 6:8). The king, flattered probably by the homage and subjection of his nobles in his new dominions, fell at once into the snare they had woven about his feet, and not pausing to consider the awful place which he was accepting, a place belonging to God alone, "signed the writing and the decree" (Daniel 6:9). Nebuchadnezzar had made an image, and had commanded his nobles to be present at its dedication, and to unite in rendering it homage; but Darius himself now took the place of God, and forbade any of his subjects for the space of a whole month, whether in private or in public, to fall down before any "god" but himself. It was the deification of man, which will, as we have pointed out, have its counterpart in the last days, and towards which men are even now proceeding with such rapid steps. The displacement of God by man is seen even in Christendom; what wonder then if, after the church is gone, when the energy of Satan will be unlimited and unhindered, man publicly and avowedly assumes the place of God, even with approbation. Such a consummation is only gradually reached. The steps toward it are silently and unwittingly trodden; for the minds of men are so prepared through teachings which in their fruit must bring in this conclusion, that they will scarcely be astonished when a man who has won their homage by his earthly wisdom and power, declares that he is God. But what of Daniel in the presence of such a decree? Will he yield obedience to it? or will he, like his three companions of the captivity, disregard the king's commandment? Who could doubt what his course would, be - seeing how faithfully he had spoken both to Nebuchadnezzar and to Belshazzar? The fact, moreover, that, within the circle of his responsibility and allegiance to his monarch, he had served so well that even his enemies could not find matter of accusation, affords a guarantee that he, a servant of the God of heaven, will be no less conscientious in that other sphere where God is supreme. Darius - however he had been entrapped - had stepped outside of the circle of his authority, and had, in signing this decree, intruded into God's circle, where man has neither right nor place. If Daniel, therefore, would maintain a good conscience towards God, he had no alternative but to refuse subjection to the decree that had been issued. When therefore

he “knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime” (Daniel 6:10).

What a spectacle! A man of another race, an object of the envy of the Chaldeans, and enjoying his exaltation simply by the king's favour, dares, at all cost, the power of the whole realm, because he would not be unfaithful to his God! And observe that there was no ostentation in the course he pursued. He continued in his usual course; it was “as he did aforetime.” He might have closed his windows and escaped observation, but to have done this, under the circumstances, would have been all one as if he were respecting the king's decree. His windows had ever been open towards Jerusalem, and they must still be kept so. Daniel, thus morning, noon, and evening, - Cried to the Lord “as he did aforetime,” regardless, by the grace of God, of the consequences of his act. There was a reason for his windows being opened towards Jerusalem. At the dedication of the temple Solomon had prayed thus concerning the people, should they be carried away into captivity in the enemy's land, far or near: “If they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives... and pray unto Thee toward their land which Thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which Thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for Thy name, then hear Thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven Thy dwelling-place, and maintain their cause” (1 Kings 8:46-49). Daniel was consequently resting on the sure word of God in thus praying, for the Lord had said to Solomon, “I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me” (1 Kings 9:3).

Daniel was no “secret disciple”; his habits of prayer were known, and accordingly his enemies understood how to discover whether he was, or was not, obedient to the decree. “These men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God” (Daniel 6:11). The term “these men,” as in Daniel 6:5, is again employed (see also Daniel 6:15; Daniel 6:24), doubtless to express the divine estimate of their wicked conduct. But they had gained their point; their wicked device had so far prospered; and, exulting over their success, “they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree” (Daniel 6:12). Had not his majesty, they enquired, signed the decree? The king replied, “The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.” Alas! the king was in the hands of these unscrupulous men. He had accepted their flattery, and now he had become their helpless slave. He himself had unsuspectingly riveted his own chains. Having thus secured the monarch in their toils, they proceeded to unveil the purpose of their malicious hearts; and the very words they used did but betray the depth of their iniquity.

They said before the king, “That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day” (Daniel 6:13). Their personal enmity to Daniel and to his race, together with their envy because of his position, are plainly revealed, as well as the fact that they had but used the king, in their professed desire for his absolute supremacy, as their tool for the accomplishment of Daniel's destruction. The king was in this way brought face to face with the fruit of his own doings, and could no longer conceal from himself the real object of the writing he had signed. How often it is that we are blinded to the nature of our actions until we encounter their irrevocable consequences! So was it with Darius and when he heard the accusation against Daniel, he was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the

sun to deliver him” (Daniel 6:14). His efforts were a testimony to his appreciation of Daniel, and also to the kindness of his own heart; but he was no longer his own master. He himself had declared the immutable character of the laws of the Medes and Persians; and Daniel’s enemies were not slow to take advantage of this admission; for they again “assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed” (Daniel 6:15). They asserted their power; and their language, “Know, O king,” betrayed their purpose to maintain it at all costs; so that Darius did not dare to trifle any longer with the most influential nobles of his realm, for they, through his own folly, had the law on their side. He therefore “commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions” (Daniel 6:16). The deed was consummated, and “these men triumphed over both Daniel and Darius. But there was Another on Daniel’s side on whom his enemies had not counted; and, as will be seen in the following narrative, their short-lived victory was but the prelude to their own defeat and destruction. If God is for His people none can be successfully against them, whatever the appearances for the moment. Even Darius had, in some way or other, the conviction that Daniel would not be allowed to perish. “Thy God,” he said, “whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee” (Daniel 6:16). And yet he was still in the power of his servants, and was compelled to carry out his decree to its bitter end; for after the stone had been “brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den;... the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel” (Daniel 6:17).

Before passing on, a remark may be permitted upon the similarity between the action of Darius and his lords and that of the chief priests and Pharisees, as recorded in Matthew’s gospel.

These had been allowed of God to compass the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, and after His death He was buried in the sepulchre. Not content with the attainment of their object, they obtained leave of Pilate to make “the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.” In both cases man thought to secure his end by making intervention and rescue impossible. But God was not in all his thoughts; and what can man do when he ventures to fight against God? That the heart of Darius was not in what was done has been plainly seen; and now that the deed had been accomplished, notwithstanding his expressed assurance that God would deliver Daniel, he was filled with remorse. He passed the succeeding night fasting, dispensed with his usual music, his sleep went from him, and, rising early in the morning, he went in haste unto the den of lions. All his thoughts were for the time centred on Daniel. “And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice... O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?” God had not forgotten His servant; and though Daniel had been exposed to the full display of Satan’s power,* he was not, and could not be, injured, for he was under the omnipotent protection of the living God. He was therefore able to reply to the king’s question, after the customary loyal address, “My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before Him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt” (Daniel 6:22).

*It was, of course, an actual den of lions into which Daniel had been thrown; but we see no reason for departing from the usual typical significance of the lion in Scripture.

It was thus still true that the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them. It should be noticed, however, Daniel claimed that “innocency” was found in him

before God. The lesson is, that we could not be consciously under God's protection, nor could we claim, or rather expect, His succour, if we had not a good conscience in His sight.

Before the king Daniel was as clear as before God; like the apostle, he had a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards men; and God, later on, stepped in and, vindicating His servant, delivered him, like Paul (2 Timothy 4:17), from the mouth of the lion. The decree having been executed, for the penalty of its infraction as that the offender should be cast into the lions' den, not that he should be killed by the lions, the king was freed from the meshes of his lords. The law had been vindicated, and Daniel had suffered its punishment. Darius could therefore, no one forbidding on the ground of the unchangeable laws of the Medes and Persians, exercise his prerogative, and command that Daniel should be taken up out of the den; and being taken up, "no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God" (Daniel 6:23). The whole secret of his protection and deliverance is here revealed.

Faith, divinely produced in his soul, brought in God, who shielded His servant from the malice of his enemies by subduing and restraining the natural and ravenous instincts of the lions. The apostle, with Daniel in mind, speaking of the prophets, says, "Who through faith... stopped the mouths of lions" (Hebrews 11:33). It was one of the victories of faith that should encourage the people of God to trust in, and to count upon, Him at all times, remembering that while all things are possible with God, all things are also possible to him that believeth; and it is of this wondrous truth that Daniel is here the exemplification. The king's work was not completed with the deliverance of Daniel. Made fully aware, by what had taken place, of the enormity of the iniquity of his presidents and princes, he, in righteous indignation, "commanded, and they brought those men which had, accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den" (Daniel 6:24). "These men" thus fell into the pit which their own hands had digged, and in the snare which they had laid for Daniel were their own feet taken. In this way God testified to His servant, and executed judgment upon His enemies. A profound impression was made upon Darius by the events he had witnessed; and he sent a proclamation throughout the whole of his realm, to the different nations "that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for He is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end" (Daniel 6:25-26). How far he entered into the truth of the words he caused to, be written is not revealed. However this might have been, it was no mean testimony he rendered to God and to His sovereignty. He went much farther than Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 3:1-30. This monarch contented himself with forbidding his subjects, under extreme penalties, to speak anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Darius commanded that in all his dominions men should tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, because He was the living God, and His kingdom was everlasting. In such a marvellous way did God make the wrath of man to praise Him, and the attempt to quench for ever the light of His testimony in Babylon was made the means of kindling it throughout the whole earth. At the commencement of this chapter we saw that Darius, in accepting the place which his counsellors offered him, was a type of the future head of the last form of Gentile sovereignty who will accept divine honours, and have his deification enforced upon his subjects (Revelation 13:8-12). The deliverance of Daniel is also typical. He prefigures the remnant, God's faithful

remnant, who will be found in Jerusalem and in the land during the days of Antichrist's fearful sway.

Through the machinations of their enemies they will be cast, as it were, into the lions' den, surrounded on all sides by the various displays of Satan's power, and their destruction will appear to human eyes to be imminent and certain. But God will Himself protect them, and interposing for their release by the appearing of Christ, will bring upon their enemies the very judgment which they had designed for His people. This situation of the remnant, previous to the appearing of Christ in glory, is often depicted both in the prophets and in the Psalms. A citation from the latter will, make this clear: "My soul," says the Psalmist, speaking as the mouthpiece of the Spirit of Christ in this remnant, "My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword." Then turning upward, he cries, "Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens let Thy glory be above all the earth," knowing that when the glory of God is thus displayed at the appearing of Christ, the time of the remnant's deliverance will have arrived. As indeed he says in a previous verse, "He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. God shall send forth His mercy and His truth." Yet again, in correspondence with the prophetic character of Daniel's deliverance, he says, "They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves" (Psalms 57:1-11). This psalm was written at least five hundred years before the time of Daniel; and yet its resemblance to his experience is so striking as to arrest the attention of any devout reader of the Scriptures. The explanation is, that the circumstances of David, which furnished the occasion for the psalm, as well as those of Daniel, were both alike prophetic of those of the remnant in the last days. And it may be remarked again for the help of the younger students of Scripture, that very few of the narratives of the Bible are simply historical. As histories they are full of interest, and afford moral lessons of great value; but they are also often typical and prophetic. For example, David is a historical personage, and much instruction can be gleaned from his life and conduct, instruction which yields both encouragement and warning. But we have also, in all his rejection and persecution before ascending the throne, to view him as a type of Christ when He came to His own and His own received Him not. So afterwards in the kingdom he presents to us Christ as the King of righteousness, while Solomon, his son, shadows forth the Messiah as King of peace.

David, moreover, as we know on the authority of the apostle Peter (Acts 2:30), was a prophet, and hence it is, as in the Psalm above referred to, that many of his writings are descriptive of the future, whether of the position and state of the remnant or of the blessings and glory of Messiah's reign and kingdom. It greatly enhances our interest in the Scriptures to remember this, and it enables us at the same time to understand their profound character and God's purpose in the special events recorded.

It only remains to point out that Darius's confession of Daniel's God as the living God is also typical, inasmuch as it prefigures the conversion of the Gentiles, consequent upon the interposition of Jehovah for the rescue of His people, and for judgment upon their enemies. In Psalms 18:1-50 we thus read, after a description of Messiah's victory over His foes, "Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; and thou hast made me the head of the heathen [nations]: a people whom I have not known shall serve me. As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me."* And again, "He delivereth me from mine enemies:

yea, Thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: Thou hast delivered me from the violent man. Therefore will I give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, among the heathen [the nations', and sing praises unto Thy name" (Psalms 18:43-44; Psalms 18:48-49). We learn, therefore, as from all the prophetic writings, that the Lord will deliver His people through unsparing judgments, and that, after He has visited His wrath upon their oppressors, He will establish His throne, and that then all kings will fall down before Him, and all nations will serve Him.

*The marginal rendering is more accurate "shall yield to me feigned obedience." Afraid before the display of Messiah's power, and apprehensive of the consequences of rebellion, they will, while still hating Him in their hearts, proffer their allegiance.

03.07. Daniel 7

Daniel 7:1-28 WITH this chapter we enter upon the second part of the book. The first part contains the visions seen by the monarchs, together with their actings and the actings of others in relation to Daniel and his companions; and Daniel is brought upon the scene as the messenger from God, possessing His mind, to expound authoritatively the dreams and visions which Nebuchadnezzar had received. All this we have considered, and now, in this second part, we have the visions, with their interpretations, which were vouchsafed to Daniel himself, communications "which contain not merely general principles, but details relative to God's people and the Gentiles who oppressed them - historical details, though given beforehand prophetically." A difference between these and the ordinary prophetic communications will at once be noted. It is not with Daniel, as with the prophets generally, that the word of the Lord came unto him, or that he spake as moved by the Holy Ghost; but he "had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed," or, as in Daniel 8:1-27, "a vision appeared unto" him. In fact, he was not a messenger to God's people, as, for example, Isaiah and Jeremiah were; but, like John in Patmos, he received revelations of the future for the guidance of God's people in all ages. The visions of Daniel are thus, like those of John, apocalyptic in their nature. The first of these is recorded in this chapter, and it took place "in the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon" (Daniel 7:1). We say the first vision, though, as a matter of fact, three visions are here given, commencing with Daniel 7:2; Daniel 7:7; Daniel 7:13; and besides these the interpretation, in answer to his inquiry, is found in Daniel 7:17-27. The object of the chapter would seem to be the fourth Gentile empire, and its judgment and supersession by the kingdom of the Son of man. The three first empires are introduced, though briefly, and the chapter thus covers, from another point of view, the same ground as the vision of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2:1-49. The three visions are all connected and supplementary; and it will, therefore, conduce to a better understanding of them if they are considered in the order in which they are placed, reserving the interpretation until they have been apprehended in their characteristic outlines. The subject, then, of the first vision was four great beasts: "Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another" (Daniel 7:2-3). The sea, a mass of waters, will mean, as often in Scripture (see Revelation 17:1-15) peoples and nations; and, in the case before us, there is a state of anarchy and confusion, inasmuch as "the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea." The winds are various disturbing influences, ordered of God in a providential way, and in judgment, for the accomplishment of His purposes in the government of the earth. Thus, in Revelation 7:1-17 we have angels holding back the four winds of the earth from their judicial mission until the servants of God should have been sealed in their foreheads. It is the winds of earth there, because the earth was the object of their visitation; whereas in Daniel they are the winds of heaven, as indicating the source whence they were directed to issue. It was then out of the sea, out of the masses of the peoples in a state of agitation, if not of chaotic confusion, that the four beasts were seen to arise. It is not, however, to be supposed that their rise was simultaneous, for if it be that they represent, as scarcely any one doubts, the same four empires as Nebuchadnezzar's image typifies, they appear successively on

the scene; and, indeed, this is indicated by Daniel in Daniel 7:6 (when he says, "After this I beheld, and lo another," etc.), and also in Daniel 7:7. It is but a general statement in Daniel 7:3, but one showing that all these empires came up into view, and obtained their dominions in the same way; that they sprang into existence as universal empires at a time of revolutionary agitation, and were built up upon the ruins of other kingdoms. All alike are portrayed as beasts, differing in this from the symbolism of Nebuchadnezzar's Image. In the image the idea was embodied of the gradual deterioration of the governmental power in the hands of the Gentiles, from Nebuchadnezzar (to whom it was directly committed by God Himself), as the head of gold, down to the iron and clay in the legs and feet.

Here all alike, while differing in their character, and perhaps in degrees of excellency, are seen as beasts to show their moral features, for God being shut out, self, selfish appetites, earthly aims and earthly motives and objects, cruelty and rapacity, characterize all these Gentile kingdoms.

What a revelation, that all the governments of the earth, from the destruction of Jerusalem until the kingdom of Christ, should be morally figured as "beasts!" The first, that is, Babylon, "was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it" (Daniel 7:4). Both these symbols - the lion and the eagle - had been before used of Babylon (Jeremiah 4:7, Jeremiah 49:19-22, compared with Jeremiah 7:30), and they speak of majesty and rapidity - rapidity of march and conquest, both of which especially marked the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar. But the prophet beheld a remarkable change. The wings of the beast were plucked; it lost the swiftness of execution which had distinguished it, thus revealing what the empire became in the hands of Nebuchadnezzar's effeminate successors. Moreover, the beast lost its characteristic attitude, was made to stand up like a man, and received the heart of a man - figures of the state of weakness to which Babylon was ultimately reduced. For if a lion is made to stand up, and its whole nature is changed, it has lost both its power and its grandeur. The second beast was "like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh" (Daniel 7:5). As plainly, if Babylon is designated by the first beast, Persia, or rather the MedoPersian kingdom, is set forth by the second; for we are expressly told in Daniel 5 that this kingdom succeeded that of Babylon, and, in Daniel 8, that it preceded that of Greece (Daniel 7:20-21). The fact, moreover, is well known from history. The symbol of a bear will indicate its ferocious character, and raising itself up on one side calls attention to the fact that, composed at the outset of the two kingdoms of the Medes and Persians, one of these - the latter under Cyrus - obtained the superiority, even if it did not absorb the other. The remaining feature, having three ribs in its mouth between its teeth, and the exhortation, "Arise, devour much flesh," evidently points to the distinguishing feature of this empire, viz, its rapacity - swallowing up, devouring, as it were, kingdom after kingdom.

Greece follows - the Grecian kingdom as formed by the conquests of Alexander. And yet not only as held by him, for "the beast had also four heads"; and hence, just as the single head of gold symbolized Nebuchadnezzar and his dynasty, so the successors of Alexander are seen in these four heads, the dominion of Alexander being finally divided after his death into four kingdoms, ruled over by four of his generals.* The two prominent features, as portrayed by the leopard with the four wings of a fowl on its back, are agility and speed in execution - features which, in a remarkable manner, distinguished Alexander in his wars and conquests. For rapidity and

impetuosity he has probably never been surpassed, and it should be borne in mind that these traits of the Grecian king were depicted about two hundred years before he was born. Like Cyrus, therefore, he was girded for his work, though he knew not the One who had called him into existence.

*Two only of these remained in the issue. The Seleucidae had Syria, and the Ptolemies Egypt. The other two kingdoms, Greece and Thrace, were soon conquered by the Romans. The two former, Syria and Egypt, continued till about 50 B.C. It is in a separate vision that the fourth beast is seen, and the reason is, as has been stated, that it is the fourth kingdom which the Spirit of God has specially in view in this chapter; and on this account the first three beasts are only slightly sketched as introductory, and as, with the fourth, covering the whole period of the times of the Gentiles.

Daniel was, for the same reason, specially arrested by the fourth beast, as may be seen from the striking language he was led to employ. He says: "After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things" (Daniel 7:7-8). That the Roman Empire is here depicted all expositors agree, whatever their differences of opinion as to the period of the application of parts of the description. No other interpretation, indeed, is possible, as it is easily ascertained that the final successor to Alexander's dominion was Rome. We need not now, however, do more than consider a feature or two of Daniel's vision of this empire, seeing that we have an authoritative interpretation at the end of the chapter. The prominent characteristic then is strength, resistless might, striking terror into the hearts of those who beheld its relentless and pitiless cruelties. As another has written, "Strength and rapacity, which spare and respect nothing, appropriating everything, or trampling it under foot without regard to conscience; such are morally the characteristics of the fourth beast."* Remark, too, that it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and the explanation of this may perhaps be found in the book of Revelation, where we read of this same beast that it "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" (Revelation 13:2). That is to say, this beast concentrated in itself all the bestial forms which had distinguished its three predecessors, and moreover received its kingdom, in its final form, directly from the hands of Satan. Nebuchadnezzar had received his dominion from God; the revived Roman empire at the close will accept its power from, and be energised by, Satan. It is the complete apostasy of human government; for not only will it, beast-like, derive its motives from, and seek its objects on, the earth, and, in lust of aggrandizement and the gratification of its own desires and passions, exclude God from all its designs; but, turning completely round, as completely as the children of Israel did when they worshipped the golden calf, it will also become the willing dependant and bond-slave of Satan. Such will be the issue of all the boasted progress and enlightenment and of all the political science of the closing years of the present age. It will be seen, as far as the ruling powers are concerned, in the dethronement of God and in the exaltation of Satan to His seat!

*Synopsis of the Books of the Bible, by J. N. Darby, vol. ii. New edition, revised.

It is also important to observe that in this vision of the fourth empire Daniel sees it as a whole - that is, from its rise until its termination. Leaving further remark upon this till the close of the chapter, it may be simply added that the proof of it lies in the mention of the ten horns and in the appearance of another little horn with remarkable power and characteristics of intelligence and speech, and from the fact that the destruction of this fourth beast is followed by the introduction of the kingdom of the Son of man.

Daniel thus continues the account of what he saw in his night visions: "I beheld till the thrones were cast down,* and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool: His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened" (Daniel 7:9-10). That the Ancient of days is the Eternal God is undoubted; and it is as evident both from Daniel 7:22 and from Rev. 1 that the Son of man is the Ancient of days, the Eternal God. All judgment has been committed to Him because He is the Son of man; and this is plainly declared in the scene before us to be a session of judgment - not the session of judgment of the Great White Throne in Revelation 20:1-15, but a session for the judgment of the living (for He will judge the quick, the living, as well as the dead) preparatory to the establishment of His kingdom (Daniel 7:14). The throne was like the fiery flame, its wheels as burning fire, and a fiery stream came forth from before Him; for fire is ever a symbol in Scripture of the holiness of God as applied in judgment. The myriads of angels also, who serve and wait before Him, point to the same conclusion, even as we read in Matthew, in connection with the judgment of the nations, "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory," etc. (Matthew 25:31). The thrones - not the throne at the end of Daniel 7:9, which is that of the Ancient of days, but the thrones at the beginning of the verse - are those found in Revelation 20:1-15, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them" (Revelation 20:4). These are the thrones occupied by the saints, the armies in heaven that will follow Christ when He comes forth for the judgment of our chapter (Revelation 19:11-21). The apostle could thus write to the Corinthians, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" They will be thus associated with Christ in the judgment of the living, and on this account Daniel beheld thrones in addition to the one like the fiery flame on which the judge Himself sat.†

*Scarcely anyone doubts that these words should be rendered "set" or "placed" instead of "cast down." The Revised Version gives "placed."

†It should be remarked that Daniel saw only the thrones themselves, whereas John saw them occupied by those that followed Christ out of heaven. The occasion of the judgment, as revealed to the prophet, is given in the next verse: "I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame" (Daniel 7:11). The occasion then was "the great words which the horn spake." In Revelation 13:1-18 it is said of the beast; "There was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies... 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 on account of these blasphemies that the Ancient of days came and sat for judgment on His fiery throne. By these daring acts of defiance against God the cup of his iniquity was filled to overflowing, and judgment

swift and sure came upon him; for the beast was slain, and his body consigned to the everlasting flame (compare Revelation 19:19-21).

Then follows the general statement "As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time" (Daniel 7:12). It must not be supposed that this was in direct sequence to that which precedes. All four beasts had been exhibited to Daniel, and now, after having given the judgment of the last, the vision goes back to tell us what had been done, not at this session of judgment, but previously in God's judicial dealings in His providential government with the first three beasts. The dominion and life of the last beast were "taken away" at the same time. Not so with Babylon, Persia, and Greece. Babylon continued to exist long after its subjugation by the Medes and Persians; Persia, shorn of her former glory, remains until the present day; and Greece has been once more, in these last years, constituted a kingdom. The lives of these empires have thus been prolonged for a season and a time; but when the Roman empire, after its resuscitation to the astonishment of all beholders, is finally judged, both it and its head will disappear for ever.

Consequent upon the judgment of the fourth beast, is the vision of the kingdom which will never pass away: "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" (Daniel 7:13-14). The Ancient of days, as already seen, is the Son of man; but in this vision they are distinguished. It is often so in the Psalms. The Messiah is Jehovah; and yet in Psalms 110:1-7 Jehovah speaks to Adonai: "Sit Thou at my right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." It is the mystery of the divine persons.

They are distinguished in Daniel's vision because, as Son of man, our Lord receives everything from God. Hence, after He is brought to the Ancient of days, it says, "There was given Him a dominion," etc. This shows plainly, both: from the title, Son of man, and from the fact that He receives His dominion, that what we have here is His universal kingdom, extending throughout the whole earth, which He will establish after His appearing in glory. It is, in one word, the fulfilment of Psalms 8:1-9, all things being put under His feet. This vision therefore is immediately connected with Daniel 7:11, and the order of events will be, first, the coming of Christ in glory with His saints; then, His judgment of the beast; after that, though not specifically mentioned here, the establishment of His throne in Zion; and, lastly, the rod of Jehovah's strength, will go out from that centre (see Psalms 110:1-7), and subdue all people, nations, and languages, that they may serve Him, who is both the Christ and the Son of man. The man of the earth will thus no more oppress for ever; for he will, in the person of the fourth beast, have been dispossessed and judged; but Christ Himself will rule over all the nations of the earth, and the cry will be, "Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: He shall judge the peoples* righteously" (Psalms 96:10).

*So it should be rendered - not "people," but "peoples."

Some of the features of this glorious kingdom will be seen in the interpretation of the vision; but before entering upon these, the effect on Daniel of what he had seen must be noticed.

He says, "I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me" (Daniel 7:15). It is remarkable that while he had been enabled, through having been divinely taught, to explain Nebuchadnezzar's dreams and visions, he could not understand his own. No man knoweth the things of God but the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:1-16); and therefore unless He is pleased to communicate the meaning of any divine revelation, it could never be ascertained. Daniel consequently was as dependent on God for the interpretation of his own vision as he had been for Nebuchadnezzar's. It should be said, however, that God never sends a message of any sort, apocalyptic or otherwise, without providing means for its understanding.

Both for Nebuchadnezzar and for Belshazzar explanations were at hand, as also for Daniel in this chapter. But why was the prophet "grieved" and "troubled"? As a godly Jew he would look for the coming Messiah, with His reign of peace, prosperity, and blessing; but now the Spirit of God had opened out before his soul the vista of the future; and, mysterious to him as much of it would necessarily be, he could not but, perceive that there was a long pathway of sorrow to be trodden by his people before their longed-for consummation would be reached. He was therefore cast down, and desired of "one of them that stood by" "the truth of all this." Who these standing by were, is not revealed: according to the character of the book they were probably angels. The one addressed responded at once to Daniel's request, and "he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things" (Daniel 7:16).

It will be remarked that there are really two interpretations (a general one in verses Daniel 7:17-18, and then a more specific one in verses Daniel 7:23-27) in reply to Daniel's interrogation concerning the fourth beast. Both of these must be considered. In the general interpretation the angel says, "These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever." This explanation has been largely anticipated, but there are two or three points which demand further notice. The four kings are viewed as representing their several kingdoms, viz, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome; and they will therefore, as has been before said, include their dynasties or successors on to the termination of their respective empires. In Daniel 7:3 these kings, the beasts, are said to come up from the sea, whereas here they are described as arising out of the earth. In the former passage they are viewed on the occasion of their appearance, and of their acquisition of governmental power, ascending their thrones out of the surging waves of the people; in this verse they are seen rather in their origin, "out of the earth," in contrast with Him who will come out of heaven to take His kingly power. These four then span the whole interval from the prophet's day, for Babylon was still in existence, until the coming of Christ in glory. On this account it is added, "But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom," etc, after which there is no other, for they will possess it for ever and ever. Who then, are these "saints of the most High"? The term "most High" is used in verses Daniel 7:22; Daniel 7:25; Daniel 7:27, besides verse Daniel 7:18; but it should be noticed that, excepting in verse Daniel 7:25, where the term is used of God Himself as the title He will be known by in the future, it is in the plural; and that consequently the exact rendering is the saints of the "high places." And it is scarcely questioned that the term "heavenly places" in Ephesians is derived from this expression in Daniel. It need hardly be said, that a far larger meaning as flowing from the truth of that epistle, which unfolds the eternal counsels of God for the glory of His beloved Son, and for the blessing of the saints in Him, is to be attached to these words in Ephesians than in Daniel; but their import in both places is the same in

this respect - that they speak of a heavenly sphere, a sphere outside of this world, to which certain saints belong. Who, then, the question may be repeated, are the saints so described? In the larger and more general sense they comprise, as may easily be gathered from the epistle to the Ephesians, all believers from Pentecost to the coming of Christ, all who are united to Christ by the Holy Ghost, and therefore compose His body. But such an anticipation and revelation of the "mystery" (Ephesians 3:3) could scarcely be expected in the prophet Daniel. While, however, they might be in the mind of the Spirit; for they that suffer with Christ will reign with Him, and hence they must not be excluded by the Christian reader, another class must be sought for, to whom the description will apply. If now we turn for a moment to Revelation 20:1-15, we shall see that there are two classes who are added to the first resurrection, those who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, and those (for so it should be read) who had not worshipped the beast (the fourth beast of our chapter), 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 (Revelation 20:4). During the terrible times of the "little horn's" domination these saints had refused to acknowledge his power, for they owned and worshipped the God of heaven, confessing that His was the kingdom both in heaven and on earth, and that the heavens did rule, and hence they in view of what awaited them and of the special honour to be accorded to them. are also termed "saints of the high places." Though on earth they belonged to heaven, for instead of being preserved for earthly blessings under the reign of their glorious Messiah, the brighter portion awaited them of reigning with Him in the kingdom. And it is to these that special reference is made in our verse, although the general statement may include all the heavenly saints, when it says, that the saints of the high places shall take the kingdom, etc.

Daniel then proceeded to inquire more particularly concerning the fourth beast; and it will be observed that, while he repeats what he had seen, as given in verses Daniel 7:7-8, he adds two things not before mentioned. In verses Daniel 7:21-22 he says, "I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." The explanation of these additions will come in when considering the authoritative interpretation given to Daniel; but attention is now called to them as an illustration of the fact that there are no mere repetitions in Scripture. The connection, or the object, is different, or, as here, the interest is enhanced by a further revelation so that no scripture, which seems the same as another, should ever be lightly passed over. The fact of a seeming repetition should invite all the closer study to receive the fresh light communicated. We pass now to the angelic exposition of the vision of the fourth beast. Having already pointed out in verses Daniel 7:7-8 that the Roman empire is symbolized by the fourth beast, it is only necessary to dwell upon the special characteristics here explained. First, it is said that this kingdom "shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces" (Daniel 7:23). Those who are acquainted with history will confess that a more accurate description of the Roman empire, in its character, progress, and dominion, could not have been conveyed. It was different from all its predecessors in the nature of its government, combining, as it did, the utmost absolutism with democratic forms, mingling thus the iron and the clay of Nebuchadnezzar's image. By its irresistible arms it acquired almost universal dominion, devoured the whole earth, and subdued and broke to pieces nations on every hand. These statements apply to its rise and zenith - especially to the period of the Consuls and the Caesars.

Next, we are told, that “the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise” (Daniel 7:24). This is really the crucial point in the interpretation, for the question arises, inasmuch as Daniel 7:23 refers undoubtedly to the past, whether these ten kings are past or future. There are those who contend entirely for what is termed the historical interpretation, and maintain that the prophecy has thus been fulfilled.* The fatal objection to this theory lies in the fact that this fourth kingdom having been judged, is immediately succeeded and displaced by the kingdom of the Son of man (Daniel 7:13-14; Daniel 7:26-27; compare also Daniel 2:43-44). For what event in the past, it may well be enquired, could answer, even in the smallest degree, to that spoken of in the above scriptures? It is only indeed by spiritualizing the kingdom of the Son of man, and interpreting it as Christianity, that any show of evidence in support of such a theory can be obtained. But even so, what is there in the public course of Christianity that corresponds with the predicted universal dominion of the Son of man, before whom all kings will fall down, and whom all nations will serve? If such an explanation could be accepted, any possible view might be read into the words of Scripture. But this is not the way of the Spirit of God. He speaks clearly and definitely, and when He uses the term the “Son of man,” and describes the extent and glory of His kingdom, and this as following upon the governments of the earth, it may be easily ascertained by the unbiassed student of Scripture that He refers neither to the church nor to Christianity, but to the kingdom which Christ will establish in this world in a future day, when He will return with His saints in glory.

*To cite a representative interpreter of this school, Mr. Elliott says that the ten kings are found in the “Anglo-Saxons, Franks, Allemans, Burgandians, Visigoths, Suevi, Vandals, Heruli, Bayarians, Ostrogoths, ten in all”; and he labours thereon to prove the connection of those ten early barbaric kingdoms with the bishops of Rome as their ecclesiastical and spiritual head; agreeably with the Apocalyptic symbol of the ten horns, sprouting from the Beast’s eighth head.” (Horae Apocalypticæ, vol. iii, pp. 124-134. fourth edition).

Accepting this view all is plain, and we thus understand that in this divine communication received by Daniel, the Roman empire is seen as a whole, from the time of its establishment on to its resuscitation, as explained in Revelation 17:10-13,* and its destruction at the appearing of the Lord. There is, on this account, a large interval of time between Daniel 7:23-24, only it should be remembered that if Daniel 7:23 portrays the Roman empire in its pristine energy and strength, the same features will reappear in its final form; and hence that the portraiture, as is often the case in Scripture, is both historical and prophetic.

*See The Visions of John in Patmos, for a further elucidation of this subject.

These ten kings are then future, and they point to the peculiar form of the last phase of the fourth kingdom, that there will be ten kingdoms in Western Europe confederated under one imperial head. This fact is shadowed out in the ten, toes of the image Nebuchadnezzar, saw, and is plainly stated in the Apocalypse (Revelation 17:12-13). Insisting on this as the mind of the scripture before us, it can well be conceived that in the past there have been adumbrations of this final fulfilment; but the mistake is, to claim these foreshadowings as the fulfilment itself instead of regarding them as finger-posts by the way to indicate the consummation intended. Not only will there be these ten kings, but “another shall rise a 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” (Daniel 7:24-25). This is the little horn of Daniel 7:8; Daniel 7:20-21; but is entirely distinct, as will afterwards be explained, from the little horn in Daniel 8:9. The horn of our chapter is in connection with the Roman empire in the west of Europe, where the ten kings will exercise their sovereignty within the boundaries, speaking generally, of the ancient Roman empire in Europe; † whereas the horn of chapter 8 will have his seat in Syria, and is often mentioned in Scripture as the king of the north.

*Here again the word is in plural, and it should be rendered as in Daniel 7:18, “high places.”

†The reader can easily trace these boundaries in any Scripture atlas, or in most Bibles that contain maps, and he will then perceive the meaning of the term “Western Europe.” Germany, Scandinavia, and European Russia were never within the territory of the empire.

Several particulars of the little horn of our chapter should be noted in order to his identification. First of all he arises after the ten kings, and he is different from these,* though in what respect he is distinguished from them is not stated. Secondly it is said that “he shall subdue three kings,” that is, three out of the ten who are on the scene when he arises. In the next place it is evident that he acquires the power of the whole empire, for it is “his dominion” that is taken away when the judgment sits. Lastly, the very same things are ascribed to him in Daniel 7:25 as are imputed to the first beast of Revelation 13:5-7. The conclusion therefore is irresistible that the little horn is no less a personage than the head of the revived Roman empire in Western Europe in the last days; and this conclusion is still further strengthened by the statement in Revelation 17:1-18, that the ten kings “have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast” (Daniel 7:13). The little horn thus arises after the formation of the ten kingdoms, and having subdued three of these, whether by military prowess or other means, the other seven are led in conjunction with the three subdued kingdoms to unite in one vast confederation, of which the little horn becomes the imperial head. If Revelation 13:1-8, and Rev. 17 are read in this connection, the whole position of the little horn will be more clearly apprehended.†

*The words “the first (Daniel 7:24) are plural, and hence refer to the ten kings.

†If the little horn of this chapter foreshadows the head of the revived Roman empire in the last days, it should be remembered that the Antichrist will be existent at the same time, that he will be associated with the Roman head, will exercise “all the power of the first beast before him,” and will cause “the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the beast whose deadly wound was healed,” as well as induce them to make an image “to” him to be worshipped (Revelation 13:1-18). He will be thus in every way morally identified with the western beast, and hence it is that, as his prophet, he will share in the same doom (Revelation 19:20). His moral character is presented next to us in the words, “And he shall speak great words against the most High” (Daniel 7:25). Not only is his carnal mind, as is the case with every unregenerate man, enmity against God, but in his mad impiety he also dares to take the ground of open defiance. (Compare Revelation 13:5-6.) As a consequence - for he that hates God must also hate His people - he will “wear out the saints of the high places” (he “made war with the saints, and prevailed against them,” Daniel 7:21) in his presumptuous effort to destroy the name of God from off the face of the earth. (See Revelation 13:7, Revelation 14:12-13.) God will thus allow the patience of His earthly people to be tested; for as yet they will not know that Jesus of Nazareth is their promised Messiah. They will cry to the God of their fathers, and turn to Him for succour, as we find in the psalms that treat of this period; but it

is not until the Lord appears from heaven that they will look upon Him whom they had pierced, and have their eyes open to discern, like Thomas, that the once crucified Jesus is their Lord and their God. This enables us to understand why He allows them to fall at this time, for their chastisement and purification, into the hands of their enemy. But though their enemy, as the instrument of Satan, may sift them, not one single grain of wheat shall fall to the ground. This were impossible, for, to cite another illustration, the hairs of their head will all be numbered. The next clause of Daniel 7:25 reveals plainly who these saints are. This little horn will “think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand.” At this period the Jewish temple will have been rebuilt, though in unbelief; and in connection with it the ordinances of the law and the various feasts will have been established. These are the “times and laws” which this king will think to change, that is, to abrogate, because their very existence, whatever the state of the people who observe them, will constitute a testimony to the existence of God, and this will be insupportable to one who desires to occupy for himself the place of God. And he will succeed in their abolition; for they (not the saints, but the times and laws) will be given into his hand.

Antiochus Epiphanes, as he is known in history, and of whom we shall find traces in Daniel 11:1-45, did the same thing, and profaned the temple; and his exploits will be repeated in a still more terrible way, by this little horn at the time of the end. But He who will allow His people to be cast into the burning fiery furnace of persecution, will determine the limit of the power of the enemy: it will only be for a time and times, and the dividing of time, the 1260 days, the forty-two months, the three years and a half of the book of Revelation. Our Lord speaks of the commencement of this period when, citing from Daniel, He says, “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, 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,” etc. (Matthew 24:15; Daniel 12:11; compare Daniel 9:27). At the termination of this allotted period “the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end” (Daniel 7:26). As this session of judgment had been fully revealed to the prophet, the interpretation only gives this passing reference to it. It is a judgment conducted by the Ancient of days from His fiery throne, with all His attendant majesty, accompanied by His myriads of angels (Daniel 7:9-10); and we learn moreover, and this also proves that the Ancient of days is the Son of man, that the saints who come with Christ, the heavenly saints, will be associated with Him in the judgment (Daniel 7:22; compare Psalms 149:6-9) of that day, when God will take public and formal cognizance of the acts and words of this daring enemy. It is for this purpose that the books will be opened (Daniel 7:10), the books that will contain the infallible records of this impious sinner’s deeds, and, the sentence will be passed according to the requirements of the glory of Him who will sit on His holy throne. The execution of the sentence is thus recorded: “And they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end” (Daniel 7:26). Adding to this description what we find in Daniel 7:11, it will be seen what the judgment was on his person, though, strictly speaking, only the “body” of the beast is there spoken of. The “great works which the horn spake” are, however, mentioned as the occasion of the judgment. Turning for a moment to Revelation 19:1-21, we find some supplementary information. In connection with the same judgment, we read that both the beast and the false prophet were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone (Revelation 19:20).

Deprived of his dominion, having, like Belshazzar, been weighed in the balances and found wanting, he suffers with the false prophet the vengeance of eternal fire, and will be cast alive into it. The prayer of David is thus fulfilled: "Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered: let them also that hate Him flee before Him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God"; or, as he says in another place, "Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick [living] into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them" (Psalms 68:1-2; Psalms 55:15).

Judgment having been passed upon the little horn, and his dominion having been taken away, consumed and destroyed unto the end, "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High ["high places"], whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him" (Daniel 7:27). This is the kingdom of the Son of man which, consequent upon the judgment and removal of the last of the four world empires, is established upon earth. In Daniel 7:13-14 we have His investiture. As Son of man, He receives the kingdom from the Ancient of days. Already we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour. In the scene before us all things are given into His hands, to be put in subjection under Him; for He must reign until all enemies are put under His feet. In Daniel 7:27, however, it is "the people of the saints of the high places" who are brought into prominence, and who are said to have the kingdom given to them. Yet it is not apart from Christ, as at the end of the verse it says, "Whose" (i.e. Christ's) "kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him." It is His kingdom, only He is pleased in His grace to associate with Himself "the people of the saints of the high places." Who then are these? As already pointed out in Daniel 7:18, "the saints of the high places" are said to take the kingdom; and in Daniel 7:22 "the saints" possess it, while here it is "the people of the saints of the high places." There is a reason for this term. It means the Jews; and they are thus denominated as being, during the millennial kingdom, connected with, if not dependent upon, the saints of the high places. The latter reign with Christ; through the former Christ will subdue the nations, and exercise His sovereignty over the earth; for "the Lord shall send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion; rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies" (Psalms 110:2. See also Jeremiah 51:19-21; Isaiah 60:10-16).

There are then three classes specified in this chapter. "The saints of the high places," in Daniel 7:22, would seem to be the heavenly saints; in Daniel 7:18 the same term, while not excluding the heavenly saints, refers especially to the saints on earth during the domination of the little horn, who look up to God, and acknowledge Him as the God of heaven, and as the only source of authority, whether in heaven or upon earth. They are regarded on this account as belonging to heaven, and, as we learn from Revelation 20:1-15, will ultimately participate in the first resurrection, and reign with Christ a thousand years. Lastly, the people of the saints of the high places are earthly saints, God's ancient people, who in the mercy and faithfulness of their God, brought through all their trials and sorrows, will at length possess the kingdom and dominion on earth under the reign of their exalted and glorified Messiah. The conclusion of these visions and their interpretation is now reached; but the prophet adds, "As for me, Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me, but I kept the matter in my heart" (Daniel 7:28). If it is an unspeakable honour to be made the depository of divine thoughts, the vessel must suffer, and the more so because the time for their communication had not yet arrived. At this period

Daniel was in the midst of all the splendour and magnificence of the empire of Babylon, whose authority extended to the ends of the earth, and whose stability was unquestioned. But the scroll of the future had been unrolled before his astonished gaze, and he saw in the long vista that stretched far away into the coming centuries, a succession of wars, conflicts, tyrannies, and oppressions before He who had retired from His throne at Jerusalem would interpose, bestow the sovereignty of the earth upon the Subject of all Jewish hopes, and re-establish His beloved people in blessing under Messiah's peaceful and glorious reign. Daniel had indeed seen the visions of God, but they had brought death into his own soul, and thereby he was divinely qualified to be the channel of these divine revelations (compare 2 Corinthians 4:7-18, etc.).

03.08. Daniel 8

Daniel 8:1-27

Two changes mark the commencement of this chapter. From Daniel 2:4 to Daniel 7:28, the language employed is Chaldee; from Daniel 8:1 to Daniel 12:13 is Hebrew. While the Spirit of God was unfolding things connected with the Gentile monarchs and their actings, present and future, together with the character and course of their several kingdoms, He used the tongue of the country in which Daniel dwelt; but the moment He begins to treat of their actings in relation to the land and to the sanctuary, He returns to the sacred language.* Secondly, the scene is changed. Until now Daniel had been in Babylon; here, "in the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar," when the vision of this chapter appeared unto him, he was "at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam," a country adjacent to Persian territory, and which seems afterwards to have become a Persian province. It was here "by the river of Ulai" that Daniel "saw in a vision." "Then," he says, "I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but, one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great." (Daniel 8:2-4). This is a symbolic description of "the kings of Media and Persia † (Daniel 8:20); and it represents the dual character of that empire, composed as it was of Media and Persia (see Daniel 5:28, Daniel 6:8); and the fact, in that the horn that came up last was higher than the other, that the Persian part of the kingdom ultimately gained the ascendancy. Darius the Mede was thus succeeded by Cyrus the Persian; and the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, invincible in its conquests, and doing "according to his will," exhibits this kingdom in the zenith of its power and aggrandizement, and probably during the reign of Cyrus. The rapacity of this empire in its career of victorious conflict was pointed out when considering Daniel 7:5. This was the second of the four Gentile kingdoms, and consequently the successor of Babylon.

*We say "returns," because Daniel 1:1-21, Daniel 2:1-3 is in Hebrew.

†It is said that a ram was used as an emblem of their kingdom by the Persians themselves, and a goat by the Macedonians.

Daniel next relates what he further saw in these words: "And as I was considering, behold, an he-goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes" (Daniel 8:5). The goat sets forth "the king of Grecia," the king being here, as often, the expression of the sovereignty or kingdom; and, consequently, the "notable horn" stands for the Alexander whose martial genius, courage, and victories, have been so largely celebrated in history. The rapidity of his movements, which was a conspicuous feature in his campaigns, is strikingly described in the vision: "An he-goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground." In about ten years he conquered almost all the kingdoms of the then known world. In Daniel 8:6-7, we have the attack of Alexander upon

Persia figuratively described; and yet, though the language is symbolic, a more accurate description of his conquest could not have been conveyed. The goat “came to the ram that had two horns... and ran unto him in the fury of his power.” Again: “And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns” (Daniel 8:6-7). The very words used express a specially hostile feeling on the part of Persia’s assailant; and this was the case, for Greece had never forgotten the invasion of their country by the Persian hordes, and they burned to revenge themselves upon their enemy. No less graphically is the utter powerlessness of Persia in the presence of her foe portrayed: “There was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand” (Daniel 8:7). In fact the duration of the Persian empire had, by God’s appointment, reached its termination; and the kingdom which He had destined to succeed it was now to obtain the supremacy. The battles of Issus and Arbela are among the decisive battles of the world, and they were decisive because God was using Alexander “the Great” to accomplish His purposes in respect of the government of the earth. The object of the mention of Persia and Greece, and of these two only, in this place is well stated in the following words: “The two empires of Persia and Greece, or of the East, which succeeded that of Babylon under which the prophecy was given, are only introduced to point out the countries in which these events are to take place, and to bring them before us in their historical order. The Persian empire is overthrown by the king of Greece, whose empire is afterwards divided into four kingdoms, from one of which a power arises that forms the main subject of the prophecy.”* This last sentence will be explained by the two following verses, “Therefore the he-goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven. And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land” (Daniel 8:8-9). A long stretch of history is compressed into this compendious statement, which contains, however, all the points affecting the prophetic subject of the chapter. First, the fact of the establishment of the Grecian kingdom is given; then the death of Alexander in the midst of his triumphs - when he was strong”; - the subsequent partition of his empire between four of his generals; and finally the rise out of one of these of “a little horn, which waxed exceeding great.”

*Synopsis of the Books of the Bible, by J. N. Darby, vol. ii, (New edition, revised).

Leaving the reader, if he so desire, to pursue the examination of the history, it will suffice to here state, that the four kingdoms, as pointed out in Daniel 7:1-28, into which Alexander’s empire was ultimately divided, were Syria, Egypt, Greece, and Thrace. The two latter soon succumbed to the advancing Roman power; but the two former continued till about 50 B.C. The one out of which the little horn arose was Syria, and for reasons which will appear in the course of the prophecy, this little horn was the king known as Antiochus Epiphanes. It will therefore be seen, if what was said of the little horn of Daniel 7:1-28 be remembered, that the two little horns are entirely distinct; that the one of Daniel 7:1-28, which subdues three kings, and finally wields the whole power of the empire, belongs to the west. It is the dominion of the revived Roman empire which he possesses. The little horn of Daniel 8:1-27 has his seat and throne in Syria, and it is on this account that he becomes such a remarkable foreshadowing of the personage so often mentioned in the prophetic scriptures as the Assyrian, and as the king of the north.* *See, for example, Isaiah 10:24; Isaiah 14:25; Isaiah 31:8; Micah 5:5 Daniel 11:6; Daniel 11:8, etc. This little horn extended his kingdom,

“waxed exceeding great toward the south,” that is, toward Egypt, which is always so denominated as being south of Palestine; “toward the east,” that is, toward Parthia and Armenia, etc.; and “toward the pleasant land,” that is, Palestine. All these again are well-known facts of history, and the various campaigns of this notorious king in these several countries are given in historical records.*

*His actings in respect of the pleasant land are narrated in 1 Maccabees, which, though no part of Sacred Scripture, is judged to be accurate in the main. This remark will not apply to the other books of the Maccabees, except perhaps in measure to the second book.

It is in the next three verses that his doings in respect of the “pleasant land” are found, the doings, indeed, to which our attention is specially directed as of great prophetic importance, “And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them” (Daniel 8:10). The first thing necessary for the understanding of this description is to ascertain the import of the “host of heaven.” That the sun, moon, and stars are indicated by this term is seen in one of the Psalms: “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth” (Psalms 33:6); and it is as plain from the Scriptures that the sun, moon, and stars represent, symbolically, ruling authorities - the sun supreme, the moon derivative, and the stars subordinate authorities. This symbolic significance is drawn from the actual functions assigned to the heavenly luminaries. In Genesis we read, “And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: [He made] the stars also” (Genesis 1:16); and in Psalms 136:1-26 it says, “To Him that made great lights... the sun to rule by day... the moon and stars to rule by night” (Psalms 136:7-9). In accordance with the emblematic meaning thus drawn, we have the sun, moon, and stars introduced in Revelation 12:1, and the stars in Revelation 12:4.* *For an exposition of these Scriptures see The Visions of John in Patmos. The conclusion, therefore, may be safely drawn, that the “host of heaven” in our Scripture is figurative of some ruling authorities. Who then are they? The references in the following verse, point, without doubt, to Jerusalem as the place where they existed at the time indicated; that is, a period after Persia had been conquered by Greece. It is indispensable to bear this in mind, because, as we learn from Ezra and Nehemiah, the temple and the holy city had been rebuilt during the sovereignty of Persia. The temple services were organised at the period spoken of, whatever the state of the people and the corruption into which they had fallen; and provision had been made in measure for their government according to Jewish customs and forms. The “host of heaven” will thus signify those who held the place of authority in the Jewish polity, those who occupied, by whatever means, positions of responsibility in the government of the Jewish people. Stars are employed, it will be remembered, in Revelation 1:1-20, Revelation 2:1-29, Revelation 3:1-22, as emblems of those who have the place of rule in the church, the assembly; and in like manner, the host of heaven designates those to whom rule was entrusted at this epoch in the midst of the Jews.

What we learn then from our scripture is that this little horn, Antiochus Epiphanes (and that he did so is a matter of history), assailed the ruling powers among the Jews, cast down some of different grades, “stamped” upon them, and subjected them to every species of ill-treatment and degradation, even to destruction. The next verse carries us further, and gives us more details; but it should be carefully observed that from the beginning of Daniel 8:11 to the word “transgression” in Daniel 8:12 is an explanatory parenthesis, so that the clause after this word is connected with

the end of Daniel 8:10. This may be readily perceived if it be noticed that in the parenthesis “he” is employed, whereas after it the neuter pronoun “it” is again used (agreeing with “horn”) as found in Daniel 8:9-10. Taking now the parenthesis, we, read, “Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host [i.e, the prince of the host of heaven], and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression” (Daniel 8:11-12). The change from “it” to “he,” which has been pointed out, would seem, it has been suggested, to show that it was the king in person who so acted - the king figured by the little horn - and this suggestion commends itself from the fact that the little horn might be expressive, though in a general way, of the power of the kingdom. We gather then that such was the daring of this king that he ventured openly and avowedly to set himself in opposition to Him who was no less than Jehovah. In profession, at least, the Jewish rulers were God’s servants; and their Prince, the One they waited for, whatever their carnal expectations, was Israel’s God, the One who afterwards appeared in this world as Jehovah-Jesus to save His people from their sins. The next clause is obscure, but most agree that it should be rendered, “and from him [not by him] the daily sacrifice was taken away.” This means that it was taken away from Jehovah, that it was, in fact, suppressed - it does not say by whom, though the context points very plainly to the little horn, the king himself. The beginning of the next verse reveals also that, whatever the wickedness of the agent, he was but an instrument in the hands of God for the chastisement of those who were in the place of His people, for this wicked king was allowed to succeed in his designs against the daily sacrifice “by reason of transgression.” Moreover, “the place of His sanctuary was cast down.” For the time all Jewish rites and sacrifices were abolished, and Zion, the holy mountain, was defiled by the Gentile oppressor.* In addition to this the little horn (for now. the connection with Daniel 8:10 is resumed) “cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered.” Together with the abolition of the daily sacrifices, and the profanation and destruction of the sanctuary, the truth, as Isaiah speaks, was fallen in the streets, “cast down” by the violence of the enemy; and this wicked power practised - practised by subtleties, plans, and schemes - and prospered.†

*See for the history of these particulars 1 Maccabees 1.

†Psalms 79:1-13 may be read as a commentary upon the state of things at this time in Jerusalem. At this point of the vision Daniel “heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (Daniel 8:13-14). Passing by the question for the present (as it must come before us in examining the interpretation), whether this period of time named in the answer of the angel has any prophetic significance, it will be enough now to perceive that it must have had an historical application. The sacrifice was taken away, the place of the sanctuary was defiled, “cast down,” by the personage denominated as the little horn; the temple was cleansed again after a certain time by the Maccabees, and the sacrifices were restored, so that there is no necessary connection between this period and those named of a different duration in Daniel 12:1-13. The prophet was not content with the vision itself, but he “sought for the meaning.” The desire of his heart was approved of God, for He delights in communicating His mind to the seeking soul; and hence no sooner did the prophet wish to know the meaning of the vision than the interpreter was at hand. He

says, "Behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision" (Daniel 8:15-16). Gabriel, obedient to the command he had received, came near where Daniel stood. Afraid in the presence of his angelic visitant, the prophet fell upon his face; but Gabriel "said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision." Daniel, overcome, was in a deep sleep on his face toward the ground; "but he touched me, and set me upright" (Daniel 8:17-18). Gabriel thus imparted understanding and strength to enable him to receive the interpretation of the vision. The title "Son of man" is also given him, the significance of which may be gathered from the following remarks upon the same title as bestowed on Ezekiel. It is "a title that suited the testimony of a God who spoke outside His people, as being no longer in their midst; but, on the contrary, was judging them from the throne of His sovereignty. It is Christ's own title, looked at as rejected and outside of Israel, although He never ceases to think of the blessing of the people in grace. This puts the prophet in connection with the position of Christ Himself."* *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible, vol. ii.

Before proceeding with the explanation of the vision, it will be for profit to again state distinctly the relation of a divine interpretation to the thing interpreted. The interpretation never confines itself to the matter to be explained, but adds whatever may be necessary to bring out the mind of God in the thing communicated. A simple illustration from John 14:1-31 will unfold the principle. When the Lord had spoken of manifesting Himself to the one who had His commandments and kept them, Judas enquired as to how He could manifest Himself to His own, and not to the world. In the answer to this question our Lord goes much beyond (at east in explaining its import) what He had before said. Instead of manifesting Himself, we have "WE (the Father and the Son) will come unto him, and make our abode with him." All this unquestionably lay in His first statement, but it would not have been apprehended unless He had explained it. And in the interpretation of a prophetic vision additions and applications are made in order to bring out its divine meaning - a meaning which otherwise would have been hidden. So is it here. What Daniel saw was fulfilled, historically, in Antiochus Epiphanes during the time of the Maccabees; but we now learn from Gabriel's interpretation that this historical fulfilment was also prophetic of another fulfilment, and hence that the full realization of what is described will be after the rapture of the Church, when the Jews will be once more in their own land.* Thus in the very first words of the angel he says, "At the time of the end shall be the vision"; and again, "Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be" (Daniel 8:17; Daniel 8:19). There is a remarkable proof in the prophet Isaiah, that the period here spoken of refers to the last days a passage in which he speaks of the Assyrian, or the king of the north, of whom "the little horn," Antiochus Epiphanes, is such a striking figure: "Therefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian: he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt. For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger in, their destruction" (Isaiah 10:24-25).

*Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, in a volume of published discourses, called special attention to this prophetic principle, that a fulfilment became, in God's hand, the shadow of a deeper fulfilment. That this scripture applies to the future may be seen from the fact that the apostle Paul so uses the immediate context (Romans 9:28); and this was the important point for Daniel to understand that the vision had to do with the accomplishment, through sorrows and tribulation, of God's purposes

of blessing for His beloved people. It is true that Antiochus had not yet arisen; but with this authentic unfolding of the vision, it would be impossible for any one acquainted with it to suppose, however closely Antiochus might resemble him, that he was the personage here delineated, unless the issue of his advent had been the restoration and blessing of the chosen nation.⁵⁸ Seeing then that the fulfilment of this vision is yet future, the details of the angelic interpretation may now be considered. Since, however, in dealing with the vision itself, many of these have been necessarily anticipated, it will suffice to show their bearing and connection. In Daniel 8:20-23 we have it authoritatively stated that the two kingdoms figured by the ram and the goat (Daniel 8:3-7) are Persia and Greece, and it will be recalled that the introduction of these two kingdoms in this chapter is merely to show the quarter whence the little horn is to arise. Greece succeeds Persia in the world-empire; the notable horn of Greece, Alexander the Great, is broken, and “four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power.” These kingdoms have already been specified; but the angel adds one particular, that they will not be in the power of their predecessor. Then, leaping over the interval from the existence of these four kingdoms to “the time of the end” (Daniel 8:17), for at that period the Assyrian, the king of the north, will have appeared, and will exercise his sovereignty in the same regions as the little horn of Daniel 8:9-10, Gabriel proceeds: “And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up” (Daniel 8:23). This is the personal description of the antagonist of Israel in the last days, the one of whom Isaiah so often speaks as the Assyrian.* Pride and cruelty seem to mark his appearance; and a kind of supernatural wisdom (understanding dark sentences), enabling him to penetrate into the meaning of mysterious forms of speech, will give him ascendancy over the minds of men, and especially over the Jewish mind in alienation from God. In himself he is not to be a powerful king, for if mighty, it will not be “by his own power”; that is, he will be sustained in his realm by a mightier potentate than himself.†

*It may be interesting to recall, in proof that the Assyrian is a future enemy, what has been often noticed, that Assyria historically succumbed to Babylon, whereas prophetically the Assyrian is, after the restoration of Israel to their own land, their last external adversary.

†Two things are often put together in connection with this statement, viz, that the seat of the sovereignty of this king will be in Asiatic Turkey; and, secondly, that Russia, as plainly shown in Ezekiel 38 and 39, will be the final enemy of Israel, after their establishment in the land in blessing under their Messiah. The deduction is then made that the power behind this king of the north will be Russia. It may be so, but where Scripture does not speak positively, a conjecture can only be accepted as a possibility.

Next, the actions of this fierce king are described: “He shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people.” The location of this king, it must not be forgotten, like that of his prototype, will be in Syria, in the north of Palestine, and hence his designation in this book (Daniel 11:1-45) as the king of the north; and thus, being on the borders of, he will wax exceeding great towards the pleasant land, as we learn from Daniel 8:9. This explains the statement of our verse concerning his deadly hostility to the Jews. As another has written, “He will make great havoc, will prosper and practise, destroying the mighty, or a great multitude of persons, and especially ‘the people of the holy ones’; that is, the Jews (Daniel 7:27).

He is subtle, and his craftiness is successful. He will magnify himself in his heart, and will destroy many by means of a false and religious security." Altogether it is a fearful portraiture of one who will be an apt tool of Satan, and yet withal an instrument in the hand of God for the chastisement of the ungodly Jews. He will be a man of resolute will, refined cruelty, one practised in designing craftiness, a master of occult knowledge, and one of such determined purpose that he will allow nothing to stand in the way of the execution of his own selfish designs; for all his object will be his own aggrandizement and exaltation. Such will be one of the powerful enemies of the Jews, after they have been restored to their own land, and have rebuilt the temple, while still in unbelief, before the appearing of their Messiah in glory. But his career of prosperity will be his ruin. Deceived by his own successes and lifted up in heart, he will venture also to "stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand." The fact only is stated that this earthly monarch will dare to be the open antagonist to Him who will soon assert His title as King of kings and Lord of lords, and that in some way, "without hand," he will meet with instant destruction. The same event is probably alluded to in Daniel 11:45, where it says that "he shall come to his end, and none shall help him"; and as the occasion of his being in the "pleasant land," when condign punishment thus overtakes him, is there given with some detail, it will be more suitable to defer further remarks till this passage is reached.

Gabriel finally affirms the truth of the vision which Daniel had received, and commands him to shut it up, "for it shall be for many days." Under the burden of these divine communications Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days (Daniel 8:27). The vessel was strained by the contents, portending so much of sorrow and tribulation, which had been poured into it, and for a time was disabled. "Afterward," he says, "I rose up, and did the king's business" (ever faithful to his earthly master); "and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it." Who were the "none" is not explained, although we may be sure that they were of Daniel's companions in captivity. Even the people of God do not listen willingly to the prophet of coming sorrows, while the prophet of smooth things ever finds a ready ear. Hence it is that a soul who is in the secret of the divine mind must be content to be unappreciated and to walk alone.

03.09. Daniel 9

Daniel 9:1-27

DANIEL appears in a new character in this chapter. Hitherto we have seen him as the recipient in different ways of divine and prophetic communications; we now behold him discovering the mind of God from studying the Scriptures, and as an intercessor for God's chosen people. How long an interval had elapsed between this and the preceding chapters cannot be ascertained, since we know not the duration of Belshazzar's reign. Belshazzar, on account of his impiety, had forfeited his life under the just judgment of God, and "Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes... was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans"; and the events of this chapter took place "in the first year of his reign" (Daniel 9:1-2).

Two things evidently distinguished Daniel: an intense love for the place where God's honour had dwelt; and an undying affection for God's people. He might truly have been the mouthpiece of his fellow-captives in the well-known psalm, the authorship of which is not revealed, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy" (Psalms 137:5-6). It was doubtless this love for Jerusalem that led him to the writings of Jeremiah, to ascertain how long it was to remain in desolation; and he says, giving the result of his study, "I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem" (Daniel 9:2; Jeremiah 25:11; Jeremiah 29:10). The effect of this discovery on Daniel was, in his unquenchable love for his people, to lead him to identify himself with their state, to confess their sins, and to intercede for their forgiveness and restoration; for he well knew that there must first be a work wrought in their souls to qualify them for returning to their own land and to their city. It is only where divine affections for the people of God exist in the heart, as so markedly exemplified both in Moses and in Paul, as well as in Daniel and in Ezra, that there can be power in intercession on their behalf. And may it not be, suggested as present instruction that the urgent need of today is that of intercessors? of holy men and women, who, divinely taught and filled with the Spirit, shall be enabled, like Epaphras, to labour fervently for the saints in prayer? And if we ourselves, through lack of zeal for God's glory, and of love for His people, cannot be intercessors, we may at least pray that such may be raised up throughout the whole church of God in every part of the world.

Before considering Daniel's prayer it may be helpful to observe what has been elsewhere pointed out,* that the intercession of the prophet is one of three links in God's ways for the accomplishment of His purposes in respect of Jerusalem. Jeremiah was commissioned to prophecy of her desolation for seventy years on account of her transgressions; Daniel was stirred up by the Spirit of God to pray for her restoration; and finally Cyrus was raised up "that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled," to issue a proclamation concerning the rebuilding of the Temple (Ezra 1:1-11). God Himself must have the glory of all His work, and He will not permit any of His servants to claim the credit of that which His own power has executed.

*In Ezra; or, Restoration from Babylon.

It will not be necessary to make more than a few brief remarks upon the prayer, as its intention, character, and purport are easily apprehended. It should be noted, however, first of all, that Daniel's own state of soul was in correspondence with his confessions and prayers. He says, "I set my face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes" (Daniel 9:3). It is only as we ourselves are truly humbled before God that we can humble ourselves for His people. Through grace, and the power of the Holy Spirit, we must put ourselves morally into the circumstances of those whose case we desire to present to God. The state of the people required prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes, and the prophet as one of them, understanding their condition, took this ground in the presence of God. The Lord Himself was the perfect example of this, as when seen in the Psalms confessing His people's sins.* Nothing indeed more plainly exhibits the Spirit of Christ than this complete identification with the sorrowful condition of God's people through their sins. It is thus that saints may bear one another's burdens, and fulfil the law of Him who was the great burdenbearer.

See as an example of this Psalms 69:5. The two prominent features of Daniel's supplications are confession and the justification of God in what He had done in His dealings with His people. In the address to God in Daniel 9:4, he lays the basis for justifying God. He says, "O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments." God could not fail in keeping His covenant with His people, and hence the conduct of the people themselves must have been the cause of all the chastisement by which they had been overtaken.

*The reader may observe the change from "Jehovah, my God" in the first line of the verse to "Adonai" in line three. And it is this sinful conduct which Daniel now proceeded to specify. "We," he says, "have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from Thy precepts and from Thy judgments (Daniel 9:5). He offers no palliation of, nor does he seek to extenuate, the enormity of the guilt of his people; but in every variety of expression makes the fullest confession of their manifold transgressions. They had aggravated their sin, moreover, by refusing to listen to the prophets whom God, in His long-suffering and tender mercy, had sent to their kings, their princes, their fathers, and to all the people of the land (Daniel 9:6). The guilt lay alike upon every class. As a consequence, and this Daniel owns, righteousness in His ways with His people, belonged to the Lord, but confusion of face "to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither Thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against Thee" (Daniel 9:7). This particularity of confession, taking nothing for granted as already known in the presence of God, may be well commended to us for imitation. It is an infallible sign of the "true heart," of uprightness of soul before God, and hence of a real work of the Holy Spirit in the heart and conscience. But if confusion of face, as Daniel again confesses (Daniel 9:8), belonged to every class of the people because of their sins, "to the Lord our God," he proceeds to, say, "belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him," though they had not obeyed His voice through the prophets, and though all Israel had transgressed the law of the Lord their God, and had therefore fallen under the curse and penalty of their sins, as had been written in the law of Moses the servant of God (Daniel 9:9-11). Daniel in that one sentence, "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses," had reached the only

foundation on which he could rest in his intercession. Had he known only the law, he could not have hoped to be heard; but he knew the Lord his God also in the measure of grace in which He had been revealed both to Moses (Exodus 34:6-7), to David, and to Solomon in connection with the building of the temple on Mount Zion, which was henceforward to be known as the expression of royal grace (see 1 Chronicles 21:1-30; 2 Chronicles 6:36-39). It was therefore on God as known in grace that the prophet depended; and it is only as grace is known that the heart is enabled to unburden its sins and sorrows in the presence of God.

Daniel will hide nothing, and hence he further says that, while God had only confirmed His words in bringing upon His people so great an evil (and there was never a greater under the whole heaven than that which had been done upon Jerusalem); and while the evil came upon them exactly as written in the law of Moses, "yet," he says, "made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand Thy truth" (Daniel 9:12-13). The result of all this evil conduct is now stated: "Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the Lord our God is righteous in all His works which He doeth: for we obeyed not His voice" (Daniel 9:14). Yet again he mentions another aggravation of their guilt - it was against Him who had redeemed them with a mighty hand out of the land of Egypt, and had gotten Himself renown, that they had sinned and done wickedly (Daniel 9:15). Daniel went thus to the very bottom, and viewed all the sins of his people in the light of God's holiness, justifying God, and owning that the judgment which had overtaken Jerusalem, Judah, Israel, kings, princes, and people, was but their righteous due. It is therefore a pattern confession for all time, whether for saints or for sinners, only remembering that grace is now still further known (see 1 John 2:1-2; 1 John 1:9); but if further known this is an additional incentive for thoroughness and openheartedness in confession.

Having confessed the sins and iniquities of his people, Daniel, in the next place, turns to intercession. The form of it is much to be observed. Daniel had fully owned the righteousness of God in the chastisement of His people, and now he appeals to the Lord according to all His righteousness, to turn away His anger and His fury from His city Jerusalem, His holy mountain; and he further pleads that Jerusalem and Jehovah's people, because of their sins and iniquities, were now "a reproach to all that are about us." The prophet was entitled to plead the Lord's righteousness, for Jehovah had put His NAME in the sanctuary built by Solomon; He had moreover accepted Solomon's prayer at its dedication, and He had thus bound Himself to hear the prayers of His people, when humbled before Him by reason of their sins.* Daniel, therefore, in this plea counted on all that Jehovah was as revealed to Israel, and upon His fidelity to His own word. Nothing gives the soul so much courage as the apprehension of God's righteousness, or so completely sets it at liberty in God's presence. It is very touching also to see the way in which Daniel uses the term, "Thy people." In fact God had written Lo-ammi ("not my people") on Israel, but faith would re-establish the link, and hence it refuses the term of reproach.

*See also Deuteronomy 30:1-20. The sanctuary in all its desolation is next presented and the ground of his prayer and supplications that God would cause His face to shine upon His sanctuary, is, "for the Lord's sake," a ground of appeal which could not be refused. In the following verse (Daniel 9:18) the subject of his petition is "our desolations, and the city which is called by Thy name," and for this he urges yet another plea: "We do not present our supplications before Thee for our righteousnesses, but for Thy great mercies."

These then are the three pleas Daniel urges before the Lord - His righteousness, His own sake, and His mercies; and having laid these out in His presence, he gathers up all his desires and pours them forth in one last earnest entreaty: "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for Thine own sake, O my God; for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name." Here was the secret of his strength; he was concerned most of all for the name of his God, and for His interests in His sanctuary, His city, and His people. He has not one single thing to ask for himself, or even for his companions in captivity; but his whole heart goes out in supplication for the honour of the name of his God, and for the interests of God upon the earth. It is a prayer, therefore, which might well be often studied by those who desire, in any measure, to be in fellowship with God's heart concerning the sorrowful condition of His church in the world.

Before Daniel had ended his supplications the answer to his cries was received - in so far as concerned the revelation of the mind of God touching the subjects of his prayer. He says, "And whilst I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God; yea, whilst I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation" (Daniel 9:20-21). Two remarks may be made before proceeding: first, to remind ourselves anew that God's ear is ever open to the prayers of His people. As John wrote, "If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us," and it was so in this case. Daniel was in the secret of God's mind, and God delighted in His servant's supplications, every word of which ascended up before Him as sweet incense; for, in truth, they were His own desires which had been begotten in His servant's heart. Secondly, it was at the time of the evening oblation that Gabriel arrived and "touched" Daniel. The evening oblation was the perpetual burnt offering - appointed to be presented morning and evening continually. The temple having been destroyed, it could no longer be offered; but Daniel was before God in the virtue of it; that is, he identified himself in spirit with all its sweet fragrance, as constituting his own acceptance, and the efficacy of his prayers (compare 1 Samuel 7:9-10; 2 Kings 3:20). So is it with our prayers now when, through faith and in the power of the Holy Ghost, we rest wholly and entirely upon what Christ is, and upon all the virtue of His sacrifice, before God.

Gabriel came, first of all, to give Daniel "skill and understanding" (Daniel 9:22); and, moreover, told him "at the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision" (Daniel 9:23). The revelation about to be made would need divine intelligence to comprehend it, and this it was that God first imparted, through Gabriel, to His servant. He would have Daniel also know that He had read the desires of his heart, and had, at the beginning of his supplications, given commandment for Gabriel's mission; and in His precious grace, to encourage Daniel's heart, He would also have him informed that he was greatly beloved - beloved, like the disciple whom Jesus loved, as being in the intimacy of the Lord's mind and affections, and thus enabled to receive the impartation of divine secrets. For it is ever true that the nearer we are to the Lord the more fully He can open out His mind to us. Hence Gabriel adds, "Therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision." The qualifications were possessed; divine intelligence and a heart in communion with God; and Daniel, thus endowed through grace, was in a position to comprehend the revelation he was about to receive.

Seventy Weeks

{Module Note: this was originally a separate chapter. To minimize confusion, I've appended it to "09-Daniel 9".} This brings us to the most difficult part of the book, or at least to one made difficult through speculation and controversy, viz, the subject of the SEVENTY WEEKS.

Some preliminary observations will pave the way for its consideration. It is then of the utmost moment to note that the revelation of God's purpose goes a long way beyond the prophet's prayer. Jeremiah had said, "Thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform My good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place" (Jeremiah 29:10; see also Jeremiah 25:11-14). It was these scriptures which Daniel had discovered, and on which he had based his intercession, becoming, as possessing the mind of God, a mediator. Hence it is that, as often observed, he does not go back to God's unconditional covenant with the patriarchs, on the ground of which, in virtue of the death of Christ,. He will finally re-establish His people in the land in blessing under the reign of Christ (see), but only to the revelation God had made of Himself, and to the promises He gave to Moses in Exodus 34:1-35.* What Daniel sought in his supplications was the fulfilment of the promise made through Jeremiah, and, as led of the Spirit of God, he took the appropriate ground for this in the presence of God. But in the communication made through Gabriel, it is revealed to him that God had still larger thoughts of blessing for His people, which would be surely fulfilled at the end of the seventy weeks.

*In Exodus 32:1-35 Moses did go back to the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, when it was a question of God's utterly consuming His people and making of Moses a nation to take their place.

It must also be borne in mind that this revelation entirely concerns the Jewish people and Jerusalem. It is strange indeed that this should need to be insisted upon, considering the language employed; but the tendency is so persistent in some quarters to explain away, by spiritualizing, the scriptures which have in view the future restoration of the chosen nation, that it becomes necessary to affirm and to hold fast their manifest application. Gabriel thus says to Daniel, "Thy people," and "thy holy city." Even a child, if he know but the elements of the New Testament, understands that Christians have no holy city upon earth. And should it be contended that it is the heavenly city, new Jerusalem, which is here indicated, it might well be enquired, When were its walls thrown down, so as to need rebuilding? No, the city prayed for is the city of which Gabriel speaks, as is evident from Daniel 9:25; and consequently Daniel's people are the Jews, and his city is the earthly Jerusalem. Remark also that, though Daniel had said to the Lord, "Thy people" and "Thy city" Jerusalem, Gabriel says to him, "thy people" and "thy city" (compare the intercession of Moses in Exodus 32:1-35, Exodus 33:1-23, Exodus 34:1-35). The link with Jehovah had been broken by Israel's sin, and Loammi (not my people), as before explained, had been pronounced over them; and from that time, until the appearing of Christ and the restoration of His people, the term "my people" is never used.*

*Hence it is never found in Ezra and Nehemiah; but when the Lord once more returns to Zion, He again takes it up (See Zechariah 8:7-8; Zechariah 13:9; Hosea 2:23).

Another thing to determine is the meaning of the expression "weeks" - seventy weeks. From familiarity with the term "weeks," and its common use, it might be supposed that a period of seven days was meant; and there have been expositors who have insisted on this theory. The answer is simple and irrefragable. The date of the commencement of the seventy weeks is laid down with

the utmost precision (Daniel 9:25); and starting from this date, was there, it may well be inquired, if seventy weeks of days are signified, any fulfilment of this prediction within the period named? Nay; has there even yet been the accomplishment of Gabriel's revelation? If not, it is proved beyond all question, for those who believe in the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, that "weeks" in this passage are not weeks of days. The following quotations from one whose intimate acquaintance with the Hebrew language none would question, will be helpful in the understanding of the term. He says: "The word itself is strictly, something divided into, or consisting of, seven parts - a heptad, a hebdomad." Again, "Daniel had made inquiry about seventy years of the captivity in Babylon. The answer speaks also of seventy periods, which in our English translation are called weeks. The word, however, does not necessarily mean seven days, but a period of seven parts; of course, it is much more often used in speaking of a week than anything else, because nothing is so often mentioned as a week which is similarly divided. The Hebrews, however, used a septenary scale as to time, just as habitually as we should reckon by tens; the sabbatical years, the jubilees, all tended to give this thought a permanent place in their minds. The denomination is here to be taken from the subject of Daniel's prayer. He prayed about years, he is answered about periods of seven years; i.e, the recurrence of sabbatical years."* *S. P. Tregelles, LL.D.

Having shown that weeks in this scripture signify periods of seven years, our next inquiry must be concerning the date of their commencement. It is stated by Gabriel to be "from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem" (Daniel 9:25). In the book of Ezra we have a decree by Cyrus, and another by Artaxerxes in the seventh year of his reign; but both of these are concerning the house of God in Jerusalem, and hence neither satisfies the terms mentioned by Gabriel. Passing on however to Nehemiah, we find that, "in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes," he issued letters, in response to Nehemiah's request, commissioning him to go unto Judah, unto the city of his fathers' sepulchres, that he might build it (Nehemiah 2:1-20). Here then is the date referred to by Gabriel, and, as there is no other such "commandment" as to the restoration and building of Jerusalem in any part of scripture, the point of time is fixed and certain.

Another question arises as to whether the year in the world's history of this "commandment" can be ascertained.* Without going into the details of the investigation, which can easily be pursued if desired, it may be stated that the twentieth year of Artaxerxes is believed to coincide, as nearly as possible, with 454 or 455 B.C. The application of this date will be seen in considering the several parts of Gabriel's communication.

*The following fact, borrowed from Dr. Tregelles, may be interesting to some readers.

Archbishop Ussher's chronology is that adopted in our own English Bibles, and it seems that he paid very special attention to the date of Artaxerxes' reign. "About a hundred and fifty years ago" (nearer two hundred now), Dr. Tregelles says, "Bishop Lloyd undertook to affix Archbishop Ussher's dates to our English Bibles; but, in this instance, he made a considerable alteration, and substituted another date of his own, so as to adapt the reign of Artaxerxes to his own theory"!

Taking then Daniel 9:24, we have the statement that seventy weeks (490 years) are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy" (or, the holy of holies). All these expressions look plainly onward to the full reestablishment of Daniel's people and city in blessing. The

transgression will be ended, the transgression for which they have been scattered, Jerusalem having now “received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins,” their iniquity will be pardoned (Isaiah 40:2), everlasting righteousness, God’s righteousness, will be brought in (Isaiah 51:4-8), visions and prophecies will be closed up for ever (see Zechariah 13:1-9), and the holy of holies will once more be set apart, sanctified according to the requirements of the glory of Him who will again dwell there (see Exodus 40:9). In the next verse (Daniel 9:25) the period of seventy weeks is divided: “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.” The seventy weeks are thus divided into three portions - seven weeks, threescore and two weeks, and one week. The first portion undoubtedly comprises the period occupied in rebuilding Jerusalem and the wall, for the end of the verse expressly speaks of the “troublous,” or “strait of,” times during which this was performed. In the book of Nehemiah some account is given of the obstacles and opposition which Nehemiah and his builders had to encounter.

Next we have sixty-two weeks, which reach “unto” the Messiah, the Prince. That is, adding the forty-nine years occupied in the restoration of the city, there would be four hundred and eighty-three years until Christ. It must be carefully observed that the expression is general, that neither the birth of Christ, His anointing for His mission, nor His death is specified. It simply says, “unto” Messiah, the Prince. Some, taking the date of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem as 454 or 455 B.C, calculate that the 483 years, included in the sixty-nine weeks, terminated with the death of Christ.* Had the Messiah been received, the Jewish nation would, as we know, have been at once established in the kingdom; and even had He been received by the nation after the crucifixion, the times of refreshing, as Peter distinctly declares, would have come from the presence of the Lord; and He would have sent Jesus Christ to His people (Acts 3:9-21). But God foreknew all, and hence, after naming the sixty-two weeks, says, “And after† three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, and [marginal rendering] shall have nothing” (Daniel 9:26). It should be noticed that it does not say immediately after, only “after,” leaving room, we cannot doubt, for the half week of the Lord’s ministry.

*This calculation takes, what indeed is now commonly accepted, the year 4 B.C. for the birth of Christ and consequently 29 A.D. for His crucifixion. But nothing whatever is gained by this attempt at numerical accuracy; and we cannot but believe that the expression “unto Messiah the Prince” is indefinite, for the reason that the Messiah, as here foretold, would be rejected by those to whom He came. It may be mentioned that some, holding that the sixty-nine weeks end with the birth of Christ, regard the first half of the seventieth week as fulfilled in the ministry of the Baptist, and its second half in the ministry of our Lord, but that, owing to the rejection of Christ this week is cancelled, and therefore remains to be gone over again. We see no Scriptural ground whatever for this opinion, for in no possible way can the ministry of John be extended to three years and a half. Another view, for which there is much more to be said, is that the Lord’s ministry embraces the first half of the seventieth week, and hence that only the remaining half is yet to be fulfilled. This view will be more properly discussed in connection with Daniel 9:26-27.

†The article should here be inserted, viz, after the sixty-two weeks. Be that however as it may, the facts mentioned are divinely given, and are therefore indisputable, viz, that sixty-two weeks, dating from the restoration of Jerusalem, ran on till Christ; and that “after” the termination of this period,

He, being rejected, was cut off, and had nothing; for the kingdom and its glory were as a consequence postponed, and, together with it, the fulfilment of the last portion of the seventy weeks. This will be more clearly seen as we follow the scripture. In connection then with Messiah's being cut off, it is said: "And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined."* (Daniel 9:26). The most careful attention must be given to the exact words used in this scripture if we are to understand their import, and it may help to their elucidation if we recall one or two facts to our minds. We have seen then, in the earlier chapters, that the fourth kingdom, the successor to that of Greece, which is to complete the times of the Gentiles, is Rome; and we have also seen that this has no earthly successor, that it will, in fact, be displaced by the kingdom of the Son of man; and consequently that, though to outward eyes the Western Roman empire may appear to have passed away for ever, it will, according to the teaching of Scripture, be revived (see Revelation 13:1-18 and Revelation 17:1-18), and will assume the form of ten kingdoms, confederated under one imperial head - the little horn of Daniel 7:1-28, or the first beast of Revelation 13:1-18. Moreover, it was in the time of the fourth empire, as a well-known fact in history, and testified to in the Scriptures, that the Lord Jesus came into this world, and that it was at Rome's tribunal, with Pilate as judge, that He was sentenced to the death of the cross. These facts have a most important bearing upon the statements of our scripture.

*Another translation of the last clause is, "And until the end [there is] war [even] that which is determined for desolations."

Remark then, first, that it does not say that a Prince shall come and destroy the city and the sanctuary, but that the people of the Prince that shall come shall do so. In other words "the prince that shall come" applies to the future, and is indeed, as will be seen in the next verse, the imperial head of the revived Roman empire in the last days. The "people" are identified with him because they are Romans of the same kingdom that is yet to reappear, and of which this prince will be the leader and the chief. What we have then, in, this passage, is the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans after the death of Christ as God's judgment upon the Jews for their rejection and crucifixion of their Messiah. Our Lord Himself often spoke of this sorrowful event, and always connected it with His own rejection (see Matthew 22:7, Luke 19:41-44, etc.). The fearful character of this judgment is pointed out in the closing words of the verse - "The end thereof shall be with a flood, and," adopting the alternative translation given, "until the end," there will be wars for the accomplishment of God's will in the desolations of the holy city; for, as the Lord Himself said, "They [the Jews] shall fall by the edge, of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24; see also Revelation 11:2).

It is now apparent why the last of the seventy weeks is separated from the previous sixtytwo. Within one week (seven years) when Christ came, the seventy weeks spoken of by Gabriel had run their course; and had the Jews but received Jesus of Nazareth as their promised Messiah, He would have at once established His kingdom, and brought in all the blessings spoken of in Daniel 9:24; but they knew not the time of their visitation. As a consequence the course of the seventy weeks has been interrupted, and God does not count time while His ancient people on earth are out of their inheritance, and scattered over the globe. There is therefore a blank, so to speak, in Jewish history, an interval during which the nation, though still watched over, has no recognized

relationship with God.* But blessed be His name, “through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy” (Romans 11:11). For it has pleased God, in the depth of the riches both of His wisdom and of His knowledge, to use this very interval for the unfolding and accomplishment of His eternal counsels in Christ concerning the saints who are to be joint heirs with Christ, and to form His body and His bride. It is precisely this interval, wherein time is not reckoned, which forms the church-period; and when this - the acceptable year of the Lord - is ended, God will again put forth His power for the blessing of the chosen earthly people and then they will sing with overflowing hearts, O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; and gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south” (Psalms 107:1-3).

*The bond between God and Israel is maintained during this period through the faith of the remnant, as exemplified in the first part of this book in Daniel and his companions.

It will be perceived that an immense interval is to be interposed between verses Daniel 9:26 and Daniel 9:27; that verse Daniel 9:26 refers to the death of Christ and God’s judgment upon Jerusalem some thirty years after, while verse Daniel 9:27 passes on to a time after the church-period is closed, when the Jews, though in unbelief, will be again in their own land. Should anyone regard this interpretation as forced, he may be reminded that such instances are common in the prophetic scriptures. Peter, for example, in citing from Psalms 34:1-22, says, “The face of the Lord is against them that do evil,” but he does not add, what is found in the Psalm, “to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth,” for the reason that since God is now acting in grace, while it is ever true that His face is against them that do evil, He will not cut such off from the earth until the kingdom of Christ is established. In other words, the whole of the present period, the day of grace, has to be inserted between the two clauses of the same verse.*

*For another remarkable illustration of the same thing the reader may compare Luke 4:18-19, with the place in Isaiah whence the words are taken. He will discover that the Lord did not cite “And the day of vengeance of our God,” because in fact that day would not come until after the “acceptable year” - that is, the whole period of grace - had run its course.

We may now proceed to consider the opening statement of Daniel 9:27, “And he shall confirm the [rather a] covenant with many [really the many] for one week.” The first thing to be decided in this statement is as to who is the person who makes a covenant with the many. Adopting the English translation, “the covenant,” some have hastily concluded that it is Christ Himself, omitting to notice that the covenant mentioned is only made for seven years. It is now, however, admitted on all hands that the words should be rendered a covenant, and this at once shows that it could not be the Messiah. Indeed the proper antecedent of the pronoun “he” is the prince that shall come; and it is to this personage that the reference is made. What is asserted therefore is, that the future head of the revived Roman empire will make a covenant with “the many,” that is, with the mass or majority of the Jews, who at that time will be again in their own land; for the mention of the sacrifice and the oblation puts it beyond doubt that Jerusalem is in question, and that the temple has been rebuilt. This prince will then enter into an alliance with the Jews, with all of them save the godly remnant, professedly as befriending their cause, and as protecting them from their adversaries. And it should be well observed that the term of this covenant is one week - that is, for

the seventieth week, as we judge, in respect of the unbelieving Jews. Faith may accept the Lord's ministry, when on earth, as the first half of this last week, and go on to the time when the prince breaks his covenant with the Jews for the commencement of the last half; but for unbelief the seventieth week is the week for which this covenant is made. Other scriptures allude to this covenant. We thus read in Isaiah 28:1-29, "Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves," etc. (Isaiah 28:14-15). It would appear therefore that it will be the fear of another adversary, "the overflowing scourge" (who is no less a personage than the Assyrian, or the king of the north), which will drive these "scornful men" into the arms of the imperial head of the Roman empire. It must also be remembered, as will be seen when Daniel 11:1-45 is reached, that the Antichrist will at this time have his seat and sway in Jerusalem, and that he will act as the "prophet," the false prophet to the prince of the empire (Revelation 13:1-18). It will thus be, as led by him, that in fear of their terrible adversary, the Assyrian, they will accept the treaty of alliance proposed by the head of the Roman Empire. At the outset, as we have seen in Isaiah, all will promise well, and the Jews will delude themselves with the thought that they have secured themselves from all possible danger. Shutting God out, they will lean upon the arm of the most powerful monarch of the world. Of whom therefore should they be afraid? But the very one in whom they trust becomes their enemy; for, false to his own covenant, "in the midst of the week" (that is, at the end of three years and a half) "he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease," and more than this, for (we now give what most competent students of Scripture accept as the true sense or rendering of what follows) "on account of the protection* of idols there is a desolator, and until the consummation that is determined there shall be poured [judgment] upon the desolate." Without attempting to unravel the intricacies of this admittedly difficult passage, it may, be affirmed that its general sense is quite plain, inasmuch as there is light from other scriptures to guide us as to it.

*The word translated "protection" is literally "wing" but every reader of the Bible knows that "wing" is continually a symbol of protection. Not only will this Roman prince cause the daily sacrifices to be removed, but in addition to his own image erected by Antichrist which will be endowed with seemingly miraculous powers (Revelation 13:1-18), the Antichrist himself, as we learn from 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17, will as God sit in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God (2 Thessalonians 2:11). The Lord Himself refers to this awful fact in Matthew 24:1-51, where He speaks of the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, as to be set up in the holy place, referring to Daniel 12:11. The situation then will be thus: The Jews at this time will have returned to their own land, and, though in unbelief as to the mass, they will have rebuilt the temple and restored the temple services. Antichrist, according to the Lord's prediction, having come in his own name. will be received as their king; and, under his leadership, when threatened by the power of the Assyrian, they will enter into a covenant, and make a treaty, with the head of the western empire. This prince breaks his covenant, as we have seen, and "in the midst of the week" abolishes the temple services; and, with daring profanity, the Antichrist, as his prophet, causes an image of himself to be erected in the holy of holies, and demands that divine honours should be rendered to himself instead of to Jehovah. We have repeated these facts because that, from this point, the setting up of the abomination of desolation in the holy place, commences the last half of the seventieth prophetic week. This is the beginning of the "time and times and the dividing of

time” of Daniel 7:25, and of the forty-two months, or the 1260 days of the book of Revelation, that is of the three years and a half - the last half of the seventieth week. It is of this, period our blessed Lord speaks in Matthew 24:1-51 as a time of unequalled sorrow, saying, “Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved” (Matthew 24:21-22); for it is during these days that the trumpet judgments, and “the vials of the wrath of God,” of which we read in Revelation, are poured out on the earth. It is to these judgments, as affecting Jerusalem and the Jews, that allusion is made in the verse in Daniel which we are considering.

First, then, it says, according to the amended translation given “On account of the protection of idols there is a desolator.” The desolator here is undoubtedly the “overflowing scourge” of Isaiah 28:1-29; for, as before seen, the Jews are led by antichrist to form a treaty with the head of the Roman empire to protect themselves from their northern adversary; and the “scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem,” boast of their security. But, says the prophet, “your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it” (Isaiah 28:18; see also Isaiah 28:19-22). In fact, God uses the Assyrian as a rod to break the guilty people to pieces, twice guilty - in rejecting Christ and in again accepting idolatry after the house had been swept and garnished.

There is yet more, for “until the consummation that is determined, there shall be poured [judgment] on the desolate.”* Commencing then with the overflowing scourge the Jews will be the objects of unceasing judgment, and Jerusalem will be given up to the fury of her oppressors. As another has said, “the consummation that is determined” is an expression constantly used for the last judgments that shall fall upon the Jews (see Isaiah 10:22; Isaiah 28:22). As these will come before us towards the close of the book, further consideration of them now may be deferred, only remarking that at the close of this night of tribulation their Messiah will appear, and “will destroy in this mountain (Zion) the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it” (Isaiah 25:7-8).

*There has been much discussion as to whether this word “desolate” should not be translated “desolator.” It is admitted that it will bear both meanings, although the former is the more common rendering. Whichever is adopted the sense remains much the same, excepting that, if “desolate” be retained, Jerusalem is signified, whereas if “desolator” be preferred her adversary is indicated. The meaning in either case is that from the time mentioned increasing judgment will be poured out until “the consummation that is determined.”

03.10. Daniel 10

Daniel 10:1-21

IT is apparent to the most casual reader that the last three chapters of this book form, so to speak, but one prophecy. It deals, however, with different eras and personages, traverses many spheres of action, but it does not proceed consecutively; for after reaching down to a certain point, with a historical description of machinations and conflicts between the king of the north and the king of the south, it suddenly passes on to the time of the end, and brings before us the “wilful king,” the Antichrist, together with his wicked doings (Daniel 11:36, etc.), and his conflicts with his adversaries. The last chapter is entirely taken up with the Jews, having especially in view the faithful remnant, the “time of trouble” through which they will pass during the last days of Gentile rule, and their glorious deliverance. The chapter now before us is occupied mainly with the circumstances under which Daniel received these last communications; and with respect to these it has been well observed “that in both cases (Daniel 9:1-27 and Daniel 10:1-21, Daniel 11:1-45, Daniel 12:1-13) the revelation given to Daniel, as to his people, is in reply to his exercises. of heart in intercession or fasting; [whereas] the revelations in Daniel 7:1-28, Daniel 8:1-27, as to the western or eastern destroying powers, are not. They are given when God pleases. These were in the time of Belshazzar; the two former after Babylon was taken.”* The date of the vision is given in Daniel 10:1. It was in the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia, the king who succeeded, it will be remembered, Darius the Mede, during whose reign Daniel was cast into the den of lions. As expressly said, the thing revealed was “true, but the time appointed” (appointed for the fulfilment of all the events, or of the last of them, which had been unfolded in the prophetic vision) “was long; and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision.” If God thus used the prophet as a vessel for the revelation of the future, He also gave him to understand what was revealed.

*Synopsis of the Books of the Bible, by J. N. Darby, vol. ii. New edition. Revised. The circumstances under which the vision was vouchsafed are next given: “In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled” (Daniel 10:2-3). The subject of his sorrow and fasting is not stated; but as we know from the previous chapter that the condition of his people and of the holy city lay heavily upon his heart, we may well conclude that his mourning here was on account of the same thing, and the more certainly in that it led to a revelation of the future deliverance of his people. For our own instruction two observations may be made: First, that he who most completely identifies himself with the sorrows of God’s people is Most in fellowship with the heart of God for them (compare Isaiah 53:4-5); and, secondly, that if we would have the mind of God communicated to us, we must be in a state of soul to receive it. What greater mistake can be made than to suppose that we can enter into God’s secrets without a moral preparedness of heart, or to think that it is possible to understand divine things merely through hearing or reading, or because we have ranged ourselves round certain leaders of God’s people, and enthusiastically upheld their teachings? Humiliation and fasting were Daniel’s means of receiving these revelations; and so now, it is only when we are morally outside of things here -

outside of the gratification of the senses and of the joys of earth, having thoroughly chastened ourselves, through the application of the cross, in the presence of God - that the Spirit of God enlightens the eyes of our hearts to comprehend God's mind and will. These two verses, therefore, may be regarded as most important, containing as they do the means by which Daniel was prepared to hear and to understand the divine voice.

Other particulars concerning time and place are added: "And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel;* then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked," etc. (Daniel 10:4-5). At this date, then, and at this place, the vision of "a certain man" is granted to him, and the various features of his dress and appearance are described. He was clothed in fine linen; his loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz; his body also was like the beryl; his face as the appearance of lightning; his eyes as lamps of fire; his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass; and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude (Daniel 10:5-6).

*This river is only mentioned by name in one other place (Genesis 2:14). It is generally identified, both from geographical and etymological considerations, with the Tigris. If this be correct, Daniel would have to cross it on his journeys to Shushan (Daniel 8:2) from Babylon.

Who, then, was this heavenly visitant? That there are many resemblances to the appearance of the one "like the Son of man," whom John saw in Patmos, is at once perceived; but there are also differences, and there is the absence of some of the most striking characteristics that John records. It is by no means certain, therefore, that this is a divine personage. Indeed, if it is the same speaker throughout this chapter, it could not be, since he speaks of being hindered in his mission by "the prince of Persia" for one and twenty days.* *Some have supposed that it is a divine person in Daniel 10:5-9, and an angel from Daniel 10:10. This seems a little forced, although there are traits in Daniel 10:5-9 that might suggest that it was more than an angel. Nothing, however, depends upon the interpretation, and the question may therefore be left undecided. The effect upon Daniel and his companions, the men that were with him, of whom we read here for the first time,* combines in some particulars the effects produced on Paul's attendants when on his way to Damascus, as the light from heaven, beyond the brightness of the midday sun, shone round about him; and those produced on John when he saw, while at Patmos, the vision of the Son of man. Daniel's companions, like those of Paul, were afraid, and so great was the quaking "that fell upon them that they fled to hide themselves; and Daniel himself, like John, fell down as dead before the celestial messenger. He says, "There remained no strength in me, for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground" (Daniel 10:8-9). It would seem impossible, from many instances in Scripture, for man in nature to hold converse with heavenly beings when surrounded with the majesty and excellency that pertain to their existence; and hence it is necessary to be like Paul, whether in the body or out of the body he knew not, or like John "in the Spirit," rapt outside of his ordinary mode of being, in order to become the recipient of heavenly secrets. Three things were bestowed upon Daniel before the angel proceeded with his communication: First, "an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands." Divine strength was imparted to him. Secondly, he receives the assurance that he was "a man greatly beloved," an object of the divine affections; and, together with this, and indeed in the power of it, he is commanded to understand the words spoken to him, and to stand upright; for, said the angel, "Unto thee am I now sent" (Daniel 10:11).

Then, lastly, he is set at liberty. In response to the command to stand upright, he “stood trembling. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel.” He was thus calmed in the presence of the heavenly messenger, his fears having been dissipated, and so qualified to become the depositary of the angel’s message. The angel then revealed to him that he had come in answer to his prayer: “From the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words” (Daniel 10:12). What gracious encouragement is thus ministered to the intercessors in all ages for the people of God! They may be alone in the midst of the prevailing confusion and corruption; they may even have their names cast out as evil by professing Christians, and by real believers; but their cries are heard by God, and He will sustain them by the assurances of His love, comfort them by the consolations which He alone can minister, and in due time answer their prayers.

*This would seem to point to the conclusion that Daniel was, at this time on a journey, and that the men were his personal attendants.

But, as the angel goes on to inform the prophet, there may be, nay, there will be, antagonistic forces at work to hinder the divine response to the supplications of His servants; and hereby is revealed to us one of the profoundest mysteries of the spiritual world. “The prince of the kingdom of Persia,” the angel informs Daniel, “withstood me one and twenty days” (Daniel 10:13); that is, during the whole time of Daniel’s fasting and prayer. The words of the prophet were heard “from the first day”; and the angel was sent, but this “prince of the kingdom of Persia” in some way or other interposed an obstacle for the period of three weeks. While careful not to go beyond what is written, nor to penetrate into what is not revealed, a few words will be required for the elucidation of this mysterious revelation. In the first place, it must be observed that “the prince of the kingdom of Persia” is an angel; for Michael, termed in the same verse “one of the chief princes,” and in Daniel 12:1-13 “the great prince” in connection with Israel, is known, on the authority of Jude, to be the archangel. If so, inasmuch as this “prince” of Persia is seen here acting in opposition to the mind of God, he is a bad angel, in fact, one of Satan’s princes.. This will help us to understand what we find often mentioned in the New Testament, viz, that there are good principalities and powers (Ephesians 1:21; Colossians 1:16, Colossians 2:10; 1 Peter 3:22), and bad principalities and powers (Romans 8:38; Ephesians 6:12, etc.). It would seem, therefore, that Satan has imitated the kingdom of God,* and formed his gradations of rank and power according to the divine model. Having therefore seen that God had appointed the archangel Michael to watch over the interests of Israel in His providential government, Satan sent one of his angels to care for his interests in Persia, which at this time held the sovereignty of the earth, and consequently to frustrate, wherever possible, the activities of God upon the earth. In how far this mode of operation may continue during the day of grace we are not distinctly informed. We do find, however, that the Lord, during His sojourn on the earth, referred to the angels of little children, that Peter was delivered from prison through the instrumentality of an angel, that angels are “sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation and it is plain from Daniel 12:1-13 that Michael’s office continues to the end. And in regard to evil spirits or angels, we learn from Ephesians that their activities and energy are ceaseless (see Ephesians 2:2; Ephesians 6:12) against the children of God. Moreover Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians says expressly, “Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us” (1 Thessalonians 2:18). We have, therefore, to count, when walking in God’s ways and doing His will, upon the incessant and

malevolent opposition of the Evil One through his emissaries; and it is to our loss when we forget this character of the enemy of God and of our souls, for we forget with it our need of being clothed with the panoply of God, and of constant vigilance against Satan's devices.

*We use the term "kingdom of God" in this place as expressive of the whole sphere of God's authority and rule.

It is an encouragement, however, to learn from this scripture that we are not left to ourselves; for if Satan's prince was seeking to hinder the answer to Daniel's supplications, Michael, one of God's chief princes, came to help His messenger; and he "remained there with the kings of Persia," victorious, through Michael's succour, over the wicked agent who had daringly thrust himself between the command of God and its execution. The next verse (Daniel 10:14) affords the key to the communication about to be made. The angel says, "Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days." Much of what he is about to impart relates, as we shall see, to what took place during the time of the third kingdom, the time of Alexander's successors; but even this is given such prominence because of its typical foreshadowings. The object of the angel's communication was to make the prophet know what should befall his people in the latter days; and unless this is borne in mind it is impossible to read aright these prophetic intimations.

It is from want of attention to such words as these, which open out to us the import of the prophecy, that so many mistakes have been made.

Daniel once again is overcome by the revelations made to him concerning the conflicts in the spiritual world in connection with his people. He set his face toward the ground, and he became dumb (Daniel 10:15). But if the human vessel was too weak in itself to utter the thoughts that arose in his heart, divine help was at hand. "One like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength." Both his strength and his breath, as he proceeds to say, had departed. The vessel, as said before, could scarcely bear the strain of the contents of the vision; and in this way, the Lord would teach His servant his utter weakness, that he might learn that His strength is made perfect in weakness. Hence, as soon as Daniel owned that no more strength remained in him, "there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, and said, O man greatly beloved, fear not, peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong" (Daniel 10:18-19). This is exceedingly beautiful, showing us that the Lord expects nothing from us, except looking to Him, and even for that He will give the power. Strength, the sense of His love, calm, peace, yea, and double strength, are all bestowed on Daniel to qualify him for the service to which he was called. Who, indeed, ever goeth to warfare at his own charges?. No; He who calls, equips, and sustains; and the servant has only to learn how to avail himself of what is provided. The effect on Daniel was immediate; he "was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me" (Daniel 10:19). The last two verses need attentive examination to understand their force and bearing. After the angel had asked, "Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee?" he continued, "and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come. But I will show thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth" (Daniel 10:20-21). If we understand rightly, the last clause means that before the angel goes forth against the prince of Persia, he will

communicate to Daniel his message, the contents, that is, of Daniel 11:1-45, Daniel 12:1-13. This makes all plain. Then, if the prince of Persia signifies a Satanic angel, as already explained, so will also the prince of Grecia, although we are not told for what purpose he will appear on the scene, excepting that we know it must be in hostility to God's people. The reason of the special antagonism of "the prince of Persia" may be easily discerned. Persia was the kingdom in power at this moment, and consequently held the people of God in captivity. As influenced by Satan's prince, apart from natural reasons, Persia would be the enemy of Daniel and his people, whatever the toleration of its rule. It would be interested in retaining them in subjection; and remembering this, one can the better understand the necessity of the conflict of which the angel speaks. Before, however, he departed, he would communicate, by divine direction, the history of the future with its issue in the full accomplishment of God's purposes for His earthly people. And then he adds, "There is none that holdeth with me in these things* but Michael your prince" (Daniel 10:21). Satan was thus even then though it had not yet been demonstrated, the god of the world; and his angels had supreme influence with the various governments that swayed the nations, so that on earth there was not one to stand by and assist this angel in his conflict with Satan's agents, excepting the archangel that cared for, in the way of providential government, the interests of the elect nation.

*Some translate "against them," that is, against the "prince of Persia and the "prince" of Grecia. If the rendering "in these things" be retained, the meaning will be the objects for which the angel was contending.

03.11. Daniel 11

Daniel 11:1-45 AS before observed, Daniel 10:1-21, Daniel 11:1-45, Daniel 12:1-13 form one continuous revelation or prophecy; and it will be seen that the whole of Daniel 10:1-21, together with the first verse of chapter 11 (Daniel 11:1), is introductory, containing the account of the circumstances under which the revelation was made, and the exercises of the prophet which God used to produce his moral fitness to receive these divine unfoldings of the future. Down to the end of Daniel 11:35, it may be repeated, we have a narrative of events which were to take place in connection with the kingdoms into which "Grecia" was divided after the death of Alexander the Great; and these are chosen because they bring before us two monarchs, the king of the North, and the king of the South (so denominated because of the geographical position of their respective territories in relation to the "glorious land"), who are themselves foreshadowings of the adversaries of the Jews in the last days. Their actings, as here described, have now long since passed away; but their prophetic significance remains, or they would have no possible interest for the reader, except in so far as they reveal the divine prescience, as also God's care over His people, even while, as a people, they are unfaithful to Him and to His word. In the first verse a remarkable revelation is made. Every one must be struck, in reading Daniel 6:1-28, with the earnestness of Darius in espousing Daniel's cause, and in seeking his deliverance from the devices of his enemies. The secret of this is now discovered, illustrating the fact that God holds the hearts of all men in His hands, and turns them whithersoever He will in pursuance of His purposes. "Also I," said the angel to Daniel, "in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him." Darius knew it not; but the fact is now made known that there was a divine influence secretly working to confirm him in a certain course, and to strengthen him against those who were plotting against God's witness in the king's court. Well may we learn from this to look away from all secondary causes, and to rest in the assurance that God is silently working towards His proposed end through all the apparent confusion of human designs, and in the face of all the demonstrated power of the enemy. The next three verses (Daniel 11:2-4) give a brief outline of those near events which would form the foundation of the subsequent developments which the Spirit of God was about to trace. First, four kings of Persia were yet to arise; "the fourth shall be far richer than they all." Three of these (the first three) are mentioned in Ezra 4:1-24, Ahasuerus, Artaxerxes, and Darius.* The fourth was the famous Xerxes, who, "by his strength through his riches," stirred up "all against the realm of Grecia." The overwhelming defeat of his motley host, and the subsequent invasion and conquest of his kingdom by Alexander - facts well known to every reader of history, and alluded to in Daniel 8:7 - are here passed over, and Alexander, as a "mighty king," is at once introduced - one "that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will" (Daniel 11:3).

*This is not, it should be remarked, Darius the Mede of Daniel 11:1, but Darius Hystaspes, as he is known in history. Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes are supposed to be the monarchs designated by profane writers, as Cambyses and Smerdis.

We are next told, that “when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those” (Daniel 11:4). The devout believer in the inspired word of God will not need to be told that this is an accurate description in every particular of what took place on the death of Alexander - so accurate, indeed, that the unbeliever can only account for it by maintaining that it was written subsequently to the event! The ingenuity of infidelity to escape the evidence that God has spoken to man in His word, and that the future all lies before his gaze, is simply astounding. The suppositions of unbelief are readily received and circulated as facts; but the verities of the divine record are rejected with contempt. And who is the loser? Surely the man who, in the pride of his fancied self-sufficiency, shuts his eyes against the light. The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not. To return, it is well known (the facts have been before stated) that on the death of this “mighty king,” after various contentions and conflicts, his kingdom was “divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity,” but by four of his generals. Two of these kingdoms soon disappeared; and two remained till about 50 B.C.;* and these are the two under the appellations of the “king of the south” and the “king of the north” that are found in this narrative.† One thing must be borne in mind in following the narrative, and that is that the king of the north and the king of the south do not always designate the same persons. They are titles (like Pharaoh, for example), and thus apply to all the monarchs of the same line. If therefore one king of the north have died, his successor will bear the same designation. This will be readily understood.

*To speak more accurately, the Syrian Kingdom. only continued till 65 B.C, but that of Egypt was not extinguished until 51 B.C.

†These represent the two famous dynasties of the Ptolemies (Egypt), and the Seleucidae (Syria). For a chronological table of the respective monarchs of these dynasties see Elliott's *Horae Apocalypticae*, vol. iv. Fourth edition. The first of these monarchs, to which our attention is directed, is the king of the south - that is Egypt, as seen from Daniel 11:8. He is characterised by strength; but there is another “strong above him,”* and “his dominion shall be a great dominion” (Daniel 11:5).

It is not necessary to discuss the translation; it will suffice to state that in the opinion of most, this sentence applies to the king of the north; and that we have here the founders of their respective dynasties, viz, Ptolemy and Seleucus, two of the four who succeeded to Alexander's kingdom. The monarchs are now in their places, south and north of Palestine; and next we have a record of their relationships and conflicts. It will not be necessary, however, to consider these in all their details: it will suffice to indicate the outline of the occurrences here presented.

*If the reader desire to study the details he can consult the histories of the period, especially 1 Maccabees, the articles in Smith's Bible Dictionary under the headings of Syria, Alexander, Seleucus, Antiochus, Ptolemy, etc.; Josephus, etc.

We read in Daniel 11:6 that “in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement,” etc. This was strictly fulfilled; for on a quarrel having ensued between the immediate successors of the first Greek kings of Syria and Egypt, amity was sought to be restored by the king of Egypt giving his daughter (Berenice) in marriage to the king of the north. But, as it is here said, “she shall not retain

the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times," so it happened; for this queen (Berenice), together with her husband (the king of the north), her son, and her attendants, were murdered; and in this way the devised means of amity became the ground of future dissensions and conflicts.* The next three verses (Daniel 11:7-9) give the description of the avenging of the murder of Berenice by one out of a branch of her "roots," another king of the south, who invaded Syria, entered "into the fortress of the king of the north," and prevailed (Daniel 11:7). In fact his victory was complete, and he extended his conquests as far as Antioch, and eastwards to Babylon, and returned to Egypt in triumph with great spoil of gods and treasures, as recounted in Daniel 11:8. "So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land" (Daniel 11:9).†

*For the authority of these statements see Elliott's *Horae Apocalypticae*, vol. iv. et seq. (4th edition), and Smith's Bible Dictionary, under the title Ptolemy.

†The name of this king of the south was Ptolemy III, known also by the title Euergetes (Benefactor), which he either assumed or received.

It is plain from the context that the term "his sons," in Daniel 11:10, applies to the successors of the king of the north who had been overcome by Ptolemy III.; and in fact the two next kings of the north*1 did attack Egypt with large forces, but were unsuccessful; and the latter of the two suffered a most disastrous defeat, according to the prediction in Daniel 11:11, "the multitude [the army of the king of the north] shall be given into his hand" (into the hand of the king of the south - Egypt). But, as we read in Daniel 11:12, the king of Egypt did not profit by his victory,*2 for his heart was lifted up, and although he cast down many ten thousands, he was not strengthened by it. The reason is given in Daniel 11:13, which tells us that "the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years - with a great army and with much riches" (Daniel 11:13). Many others also shall "stand up against the king of the south"; and in addition to these another class is named, "the robbers of thy people" (that is, of Daniel's people), who are said to "exalt themselves to establish the vision," to verify the divine word, "but they shall fall" (Daniel 11:14).

*1These were, first, Seleucus Ceraunus who only reigned a year or two; and, secondly, his brother and successor, Antiochus the Great.

*2 The battle by which this victory was won is known by the name of Raphia, and the king who won it was Ptolemy Philopator.

All this, it is almost needless to remark, exactly happened; for Antiochus the Great, and Philip III of Macedonia, formed a league, with others, against Egypt, and many of the Jewish insurrectionists and professed patriots, "the robbers of thy people," threw off, at the same time, their allegiance to Egypt. The issue of this combination against the king of the south is stated in the next verse (Daniel 11:15). Antiochus and his allies conquered "the most fenced cities," took possession of the whole of Judea, and decisively defeated the Egyptian army. He did therefore according to his own will, and none was able to stand before him (Daniel 11:16); and thereon it is said, "He shall stand in the glorious land, which by his hand shall be consumed." The glorious land is Palestine, and the allusion is to some action of the king of the north in respect of the Holy Land. It is maintained by

some that the word “consumed” should be “perfected”; and it seems established that the king of the north on this occasion did act as a friend to the Jews, and assisted in the completion or beautifying of the temple. This however is of little moment, but the circumstance serves to call attention to the special object of the narration of the conflicts of these rival sovereigns. They are given in such detail because of their bearing upon the Jews and the glorious land. This will be understood when the geographical position of Palestine in relation to Syria and Egypt is recalled. It lay between them, and consequently formed the highway of approach from either country. The armies of the two hostile countries were therefore, in their mutual invasions, continually marching through the land; and, moreover, Judea was possessed by the monarch who for the moment was victorious.

Palestine was thus largely the battle-field, as constituting the outpost of the territory of both kingdoms. God could not be indifferent to this as affecting the welfare of His poor people who had returned from Babylon; and hence it is that the Spirit of God has caused the account of all these wars to be recorded. It shows us the intensity of God’s love for His people, whatever their state; and teaches us likewise that He regards the movement of nations as affecting their interests. The next section (Daniel 11:17-19) contains the subsequent doings of this king of the north, and the account of his death. First of all he meditated another attack on Egypt; but, changing his mind, he formed an alliance with the king of the south, giving him his daughter to wife, in order to secure his own influence in the Egyptian court. What is meant by “corrupting her” is, that he desired her to act in his own interests rather than in those of her husband; but she, in this respect a true woman, clave to her husband. Having, as he supposed, made all secure in Egypt by the marriage, he proceeded, according to a design that he had formed, to attack “the isles” - the isles of Greece - and took many; and here his career of victory ended. “A prince” appeared on the scene, a Roman commander, for the Roman Republic was in alliance with Greece, and attacked and defeated him in two decisive battles, and compelled him to cede to his victors the western half of his empire, besides imposing upon him the payment of an immense tribute.* In order to obtain the means of paying this tribute the king of the north made an expedition against a rich temple, and was killed while attempting to plunder it; according to the prediction “He shall stumble and fall, and not be found” (Daniel 11:19).

*See Smith’s Bible Dictionary, vol. i. His successor, “a raiser of taxes” (Daniel 11:20), seeking to raise the Roman tribute, plundered the temple at Jerusalem, and, “within few days,” he was destroyed, “neither in anger, nor in battle,” the very man he had employed to despoil the temple being the instrument of his assassination.

We arrive now at the advent of a monarch, yet “a vile person” (Daniel 11:21), who has been specially chosen as the type of the Assyrian, or the king of the north, of the last days. It is for this reason that his career is given with such detail, occupying the whole paragraph contained in Daniel 11:21-25. This “vile person” is known in history as Antiochus Epiphanes, and he commenced his reign about 175 B.C. He was not given “the honour of the kingdom,” for he was not the rightful heir; but “he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries,” and he fulfilled this description to the letter. Having established himself in the kingdom, his various actings are narrated, his successes, deceit, and increasing strength, the enlargement of his territory, and his reckless prodigality (Daniel 11:22-24). Then, like his predecessors, he proceeded on an expedition. against the king of the south, and, aided by treachery in his enemy’s court and camp,

he utterly defeated him.* A treaty would seem to be formed according to Daniel 11:27, both sovereigns, under the mask of friendship, concealing treachery in their hearts - "they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed." Having settled his affairs for the moment with the king of Egypt, he returned to his kingdom "with great riches"; and now his enmity against the "holy covenant," that is against the Jewish religion, the covenant of God with His people, was in some way manifested; "and" it is added, "he shall do [exploits], and return to his own land" (Daniel 11:28). It is said that on his homeward march he attacked Jerusalem, massacred thousands of its inhabitants, and profaned the temple, because of the insurrection of the Jews on a false report of his death.†

*It is said that he made four expeditions against Egypt, in the years B.C. 171, 170, 169, 168, but two only are mentioned in the sacred narrative, unless indeed three are found in Daniel 11:29, and these are evidently chosen because of the consequences in regard to the Jews.

† See In the following verse (Daniel 11:29) we read that "at the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south." By "the time appointed," as we understand, is meant, as stated in Daniel 11:27, the time fixed by God for the termination of the deceitful alliance which this monarch had made with the king of the south. It was not to prosper, and accordingly Antiochus, in defiance of his treaty obligations, returned in hostility towards his ally; "but," as Daniel was told, "it shall not be as the former or as the latter." On these previous occasions he had prospered in his designs; but now another power steps forward (the power that was soon, as the fourth prophetic kingdom, to succeed to that of "Grecia" in the government of the world) and checks his victorious career.

"For the ships of Chittim shall come against him" (Daniel 11:30), the ships of Italy, which is the country designated in Scripture as Chittim, a fleet, in fact, of the Roman republic. Forbidden by the Roman consul to pursue his objects in Egypt, and impotent in the presence of such an enemy, he was compelled to return. His state of mind consequent upon having his prey snatched from his grasp is thus described: "Therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant" (Daniel 11:30).

We have now reached the main object of the foregoing recital of what are now historical facts, related by the angel long before they occurred, demonstrating, it may once more be affirmed, both the presence of God and the character of inspiration. It is the habit of the present day to seek among ancient ruins and antique inscriptions and tablets for confirmation of the Bible records. It seems to be forgotten that God is not dependent on man for the authentication of the revelation He has made, and that if the word of God is not its own witness (see John 3:33) no amount of human evidence will establish it as such in the soul. Besides, the facts adduced, and the translations made from ancient cylinders and monuments assume a very different aspect and importance according to the views of the various interpreters. But accepting the Bible as the veritable word of God, and maintaining therefore its absolute "inerrancy" (to borrow a new theological term) where there is no dispute as to readings or translation, we have an infallible guide, a trustworthy standard of appeal, and thus the certainty that the events predicted must have a real and actual fulfilment, and that the historical facts recorded are given with the most truthful accuracy. It is of all moment, if we would understand the divine records, that we should begin with an undoubting faith in the infallibility of Scripture. From the middle of verse 30 to the end of verse 35 (Daniel 11:30-35) we have the account of the actings of Antiochus in Jerusalem and the glorious land - actings so

diabolical, when estimated according to God, that, as has been observed more than once, he is selected as a type of the powerful enemy of Israel in the last days; and perhaps even more than their last enemy the Assyrian, for he seems to concentrate in himself almost every element of hostility and profanity that will be found in the two beasts of Revelation 13:1-19 as well as in the king of the north.

We are told in the first place that he shall "have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do"; that is, we apprehend, that he acted according to his indignation against the Jews and the holy covenant. Moreover, he had an understanding ("intelligence") with the apostate Jews. The account of his doings may be gleaned from 1, 2 Maccabees, whence it is to be gathered that he resolutely set himself to work to heathenize the Jews, and indeed, like Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 3, to unify his dominions by compelling all his subjects to worship the same false gods. That he largely succeeded among the Jews is seen from this prophetic narrative.

Apostates are specified in verses Daniel 11:30 and Daniel 11:32. In pursuance of his objects the temple would of necessity be in his way, and call forth his deadliest hostility; and Daniel 11:31 describes his conduct in regard to it. It says, "And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily [sacrifice], and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate." (Daniel 11:31). This is referred to in 1 Maccabees in the following words: "The king had sent letters by messengers unto Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, that they should follow the strange laws of the land, and forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the temple; and that they should profane the sabbaths and festival days: and pollute the sanctuary and holy people: set up altars, and groves, and chapels of idols, and sacrifice swine's flesh, and unclean beasts... to the end they might forget the law, and change all the ordinances." And further we read that on "the fifteenth day of the month Casleu, in the hundred forty and fifth year, they set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar"; and that on "the five and twentieth day of the month they did sacrifice upon the idol altar, which was upon the altar of God" (1Ma 1:44-59). From other sources we learn that the worship Antiochus enjoined in the place of that of the God of heaven, Jehovah, was that of Jupiter Olympius.

These facts will enable the reader to understand Daniel 11:30, and the fearful character of the doings, the profanity and wickedness, of this king of the north; and also the sufferings entailed by his conduct upon those of the Jews who remained faithful to their God and to His word.

Some, "such as do wickedly against the covenant," be corrupted by flatteries; but God preserved a faithful remnant, and these knowing their God, were strong, and did exploits, (Daniel 11:32). In the next verse a smaller class are introduced to our notice - "they that understand among the people." Thus there were, we apprehend, three classes of Jews; first, the mass who were corrupted by flatteries; secondly, the faithful remnant, who refused to renounce their observance of the law of their God; and lastly, some among the remnant who, as taught of God, were able to instruct them in the word, and to encourage them in the path of fidelity, whatever the persecution to which they might be subjected. This class is again mentioned in Daniel 12:3, and those who compose it are termed "the Maschilim." It was against this class, those who were publicly identified with God's testimony on the earth, that Satan's enmity was specially directed; and, as a consequence, the angel says, "Yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days" (Daniel 11:33). The reader of Revelation will recall the similar experiences there recorded (see

Revelation 11:1-19, Revelation 12:17; Revelation 13:1-18, Revelation 14:12-13, etc.). But they are not left wholly in the hands of the enemy, for “when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries.” (Daniel 11:34). It could scarcely be otherwise than this, in this prophetic narration, there should be a very distinct allusion to the uprising, and valiant resistance of the Maccabees against the cruelties and profanity of their oppressor. For there was, at least at the commencement of their rebellion, undoubted zeal for God, for His temple and for His law; and the success vouchsafed to them was great. For years they stemmed the tide of the whole power of the king of the north, and maintained, through victory after victory, their just and holy cause. All this is now a matter of history, and it is only recalled here as explanatory of the last clause of Daniel 11:34 - “Many shall cleave to them with flatteries” - for subsequently to the reign of Antiochus, when Syria was torn asunder by faction and intestine discords, the Maccabean leaders were, as often courted as threatened. But the reader may be reminded that while this is history, it is not only history. Antiochus himself, as again and again pointed out, is a typical personage, and many of the events connected with his reign, and especially his actings in Jerusalem, are typical, so that many of these things will be reproduced at the close. Two illustrations of this may be offered. Antiochus caused “the abomination that maketh desolate” to be set up in the temple; in Daniel 12:11 we learn that this act will be repeated in a future day. Consequently our Lord quotes from Daniel 12:1-13 in Matthew 24:1-51 because He is there speaking of what had not yet taken place. If this distinction had been more accurately observed, fewer mistakes would have been made in the interpretation of these prophetic scriptures. Then again take Daniel 11:35, where we read that God will allow “some of them of understanding” to fall to try the faith and “to purge” the remnant, and “to make them white, even to the time of the end,” etc.; the very language used shows that what took place then is given as a sample of a similar thing in the last days. Thus in Revelation 14, after the annunciation of judgment upon those who shall worship the beast and his image, etc, the remnant are described; and it is then the command comes from heaven, “Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord,” etc. (Revelation 14:9-13; compare Revelation 13:5-15). if, therefore, anyone has been tempted to enquire, while reading, this chapter, What advantage is there in these historical details? the answer is, that God has allowed things to be rehearsed, as it were, in preparation for what will be seen in the time of the end. There are very few purely historical events in Scripture for the reason we have given, that the histories recorded are in themselves typical and prophetic. It is an immense thing, an immense help, to the study of the Scriptures, when this principle is understood.*

*It should also be borne in mind that these revelations were for the guidance and comfort of the Jews during the time of these wars between Syria and Egypt, as well as for the instruction of the godly remnant in the last days.

We pass now to another section of the chapter, for there is a break between Daniel 11:35-36.

Up to Daniel 11:35 we have, in prophetic form, a relation of what, though future in Daniel's day, has now long since been accomplished; from Daniel 11:36 we have the account of what is entirely future. The proof of this, it may be at once said, lies in two sentences. In Daniel 11:36 we read that the king shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished; and in Daniel 11:40 we are told that the event there given is “at the time of the end.” It has already been observed, as to the former expression, that it is used in Isaiah of God's last indignation, by means of the Assyrian, against His people in the land before the appearing of Christ. If the reader attentively considers Isaiah

10:20-25, Isaiah 28:16-22, he cannot fail to be convinced of the truth of this interpretation. The latter expression, "the time of the end," may be thought to be more general, because it is also found in Daniel 11:35; but even with regard to the use of it there, the typical significance of what is related must be borne in mind. Another thing will appear as we proceed, viz, the correspondence of the king here described with the 'man of sin,' or the Antichrist of the New Testament. On these grounds we cannot doubt that an immense interval lies between Daniel 11:35-36, and this conclusion will be further strengthened by many of the events found in this closing section of the chapter. The characteristics and doings of "the king" are given with some particularity. First of all it is said "The king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods etc. (Daniel 11:36). The appellation of the "wilful king" is derived from this scripture, expressive of the fact here stated, that his own will is his only law. He will be the incarnation and manifestation of all that is evil in man. Adam in the garden of Eden fell through disobedience, doing his own will instead of God's, and through the desire, at the temptation of Satan, to exalt himself; and these two things will reach their further expression in this wilful king, who will claim, in the height of his presumptuous, folly, to suffice for himself, to be both independent of God and absolute in power.

He will be consequently the perfect contrast, morally, to Christ, who, being in the form of God, did not think it robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, and having taken upon Him the form of a servant, humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. This man will assert his superiority over every god, and will moreover speak marvellous things against the God of gods. This last feature savours of what in Daniel 7:1-28 and in Revelation 13:1-18 is ascribed to the imperial head of the revived Roman empire; but it must be borne in mind that this king - king to the Jews, who will receive him as their Messiah - coming as he will in his own name, acts as the prophet, the false prophet, to this monarch, and exercises all this monarch's power in his presence (Revelation 13:12), and that it is he who will do great wonders, so that he will make fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men in support of his claims. So great will be the unhindered display of Satanic power in this fearful era that men, being under a strong delusion, will believe a lie: that they all might be damned (judged) who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

If we turn for a moment to 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 we shall see that the advent of this "man of sin," this "son of perdition," will not be until after the church has been caught away from the earth at the coming of the Lord. It says plainly, "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 (the Holy Ghost in the church, as we understand the passage) [will let], until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked [one] be revealed," etc. (2 Thessalonians 2:6-7). Earlier in the chapter (2 Thessalonians 2:4) the description of this "man of sin" corresponds most strikingly with what is given in Daniel 11:36. It says, "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, showing himself that he is God." It is impossible to read the two scriptures without coming to the conclusion that they refer to one and the same person, and that both alike treat of him in his relation to the Jews. The apostle John presents him to us in his relation to Christianity, when he writes, "He is the* Antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22).

*The article is in the text, though not given in the Authorized Version.

We also learn that he will prosper till the indignation be accomplished, etc. God will allow him to have his own way for the moment; but when the indignation is accomplished in His chastisement of the guilty nation for the rejection of Christ, at the end of the three years and a half so often spoken of in the Apocalypse, the Lord will appear from heaven and consume this wicked one with the spirit of His mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of His coming (2 Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 19:20).

Following the prophetic narrative, we learn, in the next place, that Antichrist will be an apostate Jew; he will not “regard the God of his fathers,” nor, moreover, “the desire of women, nor regard any god,” for the reason already given, that “he shall magnify himself above all.”

This, we judge, refers to his own state of mind; but as men, speaking generally, must have some kind of religion, he will introduce a god for their acceptance - “the god of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory” (Daniel 11:38-39). Entirely infidel and atheistic himself, he will, in order to satisfy the cravings of the people, promote the worship of an idol - the image, it is to be concluded, that he himself will cause to be made to the beast which had the wound by a sword and did live - the head, that is, of the western Roman Empire in its last revived form.

Concerning this we read in Revelation that “the king” of this chapter in Daniel, the beast in Revelation who “had two horns like a lamb, and spake as a dragon” (for they are one and the same person), “had power to give life (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” (Revelation 13:15).* Endowed as this “wilful king” will be with such Satanic art and power, it is easily understood how readily he will obtain ascendancy over the minds of men, and succeed in subduing them to his will for the execution of his diabolical designs. It is of this period the apostle speaks when he says that God will send upon men, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved, a strong delusion that they should believe a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11).

*To prevent confusion, it must again be recalled that, in addition to the image which Antichrist will make and cause to be worshipped throughout the Roman Empire, he will himself sit as a god in the temple at Jerusalem. The last clause of Daniel 11:39 is not so clear. It reads: “And he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain.” Its purport has been generally taken to signify that he will promote his own followers to places of honour and rule, and apportion the land either for his own personal profit or as rewards for faithful service, devotedness to his interests. The term “the land” settles beyond doubt the sphere of this king’s influence and activity; for it always, as far as we know, describes the land of promise. This in Scripture language is emphatically the land; and consequently it bears out the conclusion arrived at before, that Jerusalem and Palestine is the seat of the wilful king’s power, and thus that he is the Antichrist.

Now that the Antichrist has been portrayed in his moral characteristics, the Spirit of God, through the angel, passes on to describe the actings - mainly of the king of the north, though the king of the south is also mentioned. Two or three introductory observations will aid the reader in the study of this part of our scripture. He will now see, from the fact mentioned in Daniel 11:40, the reason of the detailed accounts of the conflicts between the kings of the north and south in the earlier part of

the chapter. It is simply because of the relationship of these two sovereigns to the Jews and to “the land,” and because of their typical and prophetic character in reference to the end. To understand what took place in these conflicts in the past is the qualification for the understanding of what will take place in the future. With this is connected a very important thing, which is revealed in the prophetic scriptures. The kings of the south and north appear in Daniel 11:40, and it is “at the time of, the end”; Edom, Moab, and Ammon are named in Daniel 11:41 as existing at the same period; and it may be gathered from many other scriptures that when the Jews are once more in their own land, the nations that formerly surrounded them, and were in proximate relationship with them, will re-appear in their old places. “When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people [peoples] according to the number of the children of Israel” (Deuteronomy 32:8). When therefore Israel again occupies its place, the bounds of the peoples will be restored according to their divine and original determination. To perceive this, as revealed in the Scripture, is to possess the key of a large portion of prophecy.*

*It may be interesting to some to state that there are four words used in the Old Testament for people and peoples - one always in the singular, either “the people” or “my people” for Israel; another in the plural to indicate the heathen or nations who are in contrast with Israel as the people of God - Israel is once so designated to mark its guilt in Psalms 43:1; another for the peoples and nations in general on the earth, the various races of mankind; and lastly one for “the nations, viewed, I think, in connection with Israel restored, and taken into relationship with Jehovah.” (See The Synopsis, by J. N. Darby, vol. ii.). To return to our subject, we are told that the wilful king,” will, at the time of the end, be attacked by the king of the south; and that this will bring his adversary, the king of the north, into the field, who will “come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships” (Daniel 11:40). At this period the king of the north, strong, “but not by his own power” (Daniel 8:24), will combine both military and naval forces in his expedition, and will apparently be successful in all his projects. It is not precisely stated what will be the issue of his campaign in Palestine; but we gather from Daniel 8 that he will “destroy the mighty and the holy people” (Daniel 8:24), and here we learn that he “shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.

He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown” (Daniel 11:40-41).

Doubtless this is the overflowing scourge, of which Isaiah speaks, as passing through the land, and treading down the “scornful men” that rule this people which is in Jerusalem” (Isaiah 28:14-22).

Then, as a wonderful confirmation of the truth and unity of all Scripture, we are told, “But these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon” (Daniel 11:41). If we turn to Isaiah 11:1-16 we find the explanation. It says, speaking of the time after both Judah and Israel have been restored, “They shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them” (Isaiah 11:14). God’s judgment upon these three nations is to be executed by Israel; and on this account the Assyrian, the king of the north, will not be permitted to touch them; but they will escape out of his hand.

If however these nations elude his vengeance, he will carry his successes into other countries, and especially into Egypt. "The land of Egypt shall not escape. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps." But it would not be according to the divine purpose that he should go further, or even consolidate his conquests in these southern regions. As the blind instrument of God's will, he may overcome all the forces brought against him, and enrich himself with the treasures of Egypt, and thus be the executor of God's judgment upon that country. But, his work done, he must return, and "tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many" (Daniel 11:44). Evidently news of approaching enemies from the east, the east of Syria, and it may be of domestic foes, as the north points to his own country, will reach him; and he, flushed at the moment with his successes, will start, confident in his own power, and "with great fury," to deal with his foes.

It is as he is marching homewards that he will, as the next verse informs us, "plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas* in the glorious holy mountain" (Daniel 11:45). Like his type, Antiochus Epiphanes, he makes Jerusalem and the land the first object of his hostility on his return from Egypt; and then it is added, "Yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him." Of the circumstances of the termination of his career we are not told; the simple fact is recorded that, in connection with his hostility against the glorious holy mountain, his end is reached, and he dies under the judgment of God. In Daniel 8:1-27 we read that the little horn, who undoubtedly is the king of the north, will "stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand" (Daniel 11:25). If this refer to the same event, as appears probable, we have in both Scriptures the destruction of the prophetic Assyrian by the Lord Himself, and hence he is broken "without hand," that is, without human instrumentality, and moreover, "none shall help him." For, as we learn from Isaiah, "the Lord, the Lord of hosts, shall lop the bough with terror: and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled" (...). Whether this event must be placed before or after the destruction of the beast and of the false prophet can only be determined by a careful study of the prophetic Scriptures. If Zechariah 14:1-21 give the final assault of Jerusalem it must be placed unquestionably after the Lord has cast the beast and Antichrist alive into the lake of fire (see also Micah 5:4-5).

*If this rendering be accepted it will mean the Mediterranean, or Great Sea, and the Dead Sea; but there are those who understand the expression to mean, "between Jerusalem and the Sea."

It may be well to add that the end of the "wilful king," the Antichrist, is not here given - that is found in Revelation 19:1-21 where he is described as the false prophet. Here it is the end of the king of the north, one of the most formidable enemies of the Jews in the last days - during the time of their unequalled sorrows. They will be beset on every hand; for in addition to the Assyrian (the king of the north), there will be the first beast of Revelation 13:1-18 (the imperial head of the western empire) and his ally the Antichrist, as well as the king of the south mentioned in Daniel 11:40 of our chapter. This will enable us to understand the language of the Spirit of Christ in Psalms 118:1-29. "All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them. They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them. They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns for in the name of the Lord I will destroy them (Psalms 118:10-12).

03.12. Daniel 12

Daniel 12:1-13 IN reference to the question discussed at the close of the previous chapter as to whether or not the end of the king of the north in Daniel 11:45 is the final judgment upon the Assyrian, light is thrown upon it by Daniel 12:1. The words, "And at that time shall Michael stand up," will refer to the period of the events described in Daniel 11:36-45, because they are followed by the statement that "there shall be a time of trouble" - the period of unspeakable sorrow for the Jews in the land before the appearing of Christ. Then it is said, "At that time thy people shall be delivered," that is, as we know from other scriptures, at the close of the tribulation, and therefore after the destruction of both Antichrist and the Assyrian. There are three important things contained in this opening verse. The first is the action of Michael. We learned from Daniel 10:21 that this exalted intelligence had a special connection with the Jews in the ordering of God's providential government, and that he was consequently termed by the angel, when speaking to Daniel, "Michael your prince." Now we gather, whatever his special functions up to this period, that, at the moment indicated by the first words of Daniel 12:1, he begins to act in a more energetic way, interposing with power on behalf of the nation entrusted to his care. Have we, any means of discovering what the particular action was, as signified by the words, "At that time shall Michael stand up"? Turning to Revelation 12:1-17 we read, "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon... was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." And thereon there was a loud outburst of joy in heaven because "the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God night and day" (Revelation 12:7-10). This we cannot doubt is the commencement of the activity of the archangel, when he shall stand up for Daniel's people. This conclusion is sustained by the fact that the unparalleled time of trouble follows, and this harmonizes with what we find in Revelation: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." And in the very next verse we read: "And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman [Israel] which brought forth the man child [Christ]." (Revelation 12:12-13) Remark, moreover, as having a distinct bearing on the subject, that the woman is endowed with power to escape from his enmity, and is "nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent"; and also that, when the dragon was foiled in his attempt to destroy the woman he was wroth with her, "and went to make wax with the remnant of her seed which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12:14-17).

If this interpretation be correct, the next clause of the verse is at once understood. It says, "And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time," There are two other remarkable allusions to this same period of sorrow and tribulation. In Jeremiah we read, "For thus saith the Lord; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for

that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; "but he shall be saved out of it" (Jeremiah 30:5-7). And the next verse describes his deliverance by the Lord Himself, just as in Daniel the time of trouble is followed by deliverance. Our Lord has also spoken of this period as follows: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matthew 24:21-22). To prevent all possibility of mistake as to the period of this tribulation, the Lord expressly connects it with the setting up of the "abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet... in the holy place." It will be remembered, from what was said of the seventieth week, when considering Daniel 9:1-27, that this occurrence takes place in the middle of that week. This time of trouble therefore is its last half - the time and times and the dividing of time of Daniel 7:25; the time, times, and an half of Daniel 12:7 of this chapter; and the 1,260 days, or forty-two months of Revelation. Satan is the instigator of the trouble; but his agents, as we learn elsewhere, will be the two great enemies of the faithful remnant among the Jews, the two beasts of Revelation 13:1-18, and their enemy from without, the Assyrian. But while Satan is the prime mover of all the sorrow through which Daniel's people will have to pass, it must be borne in mind that God uses it as His judicial rod to punish His people for their crowning sin in the rejection of their Messiah. Restored to their land, after the captivity in Babylon, Christ came in the fulness of time, and was born in Bethlehem, according to the prediction of their prophets, and His forerunner, John the Baptist, proclaimed His advent; but when He came to His own, His own received Him not; they refused and rejected Him, even going so far as to say, "We have no king but Caesar," and to accept the guilt of His death, crying, "His blood be on us, and on our children." God could not but chastise the guilty nation, and this "time of trouble" is the period during which His rod, whatever the instruments, will fall in successive and ever heavier strokes until "the indignation be accomplished." But in the midst of wrath He will remember mercy, for unless those days should be shortened, as we have seen, there should no flesh be saved, but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened; and hence it is that we read at the close of Daniel 12:1 "And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." The period indicated is, of course, at the close of the "time of trouble." As indeed we gather from other prophets, it will be at the moment when all hope will seem to have departed, just when the jaws of the roaring lion are about to close upon his prey, that the Lord will suddenly appear for the succour and rescue of His poor and afflicted people (see Zechariah 12:1-14, Zechariah 13:1-9, Zechariah 14:1-21; Isaiah 25:1-12, Isaiah 26:1-21, etc.).

It is interesting to note the distinction here made between the mass of the nation and the elect remnant. It is not all who are delivered, but "every one that shall be found written in the book." It is very clear therefore that God has His elect amongst His earthly people, as well as that His heavenly people are the objects of His eternal choice in Christ. They are mentioned, too, in Revelation, where, after the account of the blasphemous conduct of the first beast of Revelation 13:1-18, we read, "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." God therefore from the foundation of the world, not before it as in the case of the heavenly saints (Ephesians 1:4), had chosen this remnant, who should prove their election by refusing to worship the image of the beast (compare 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5); and it is of these the angel says that they shall be delivered. Some indeed may seal their fidelity with martyrdom, but, if so, they will obtain a better deliverance, for they will be reserved for heavenly blessing, participating in the first resurrection; but whether

thus, or whether, like the 144,000 on Mount Zion, they are brought through the time of trouble, all alike will be redeemed from the hand of their enemies through the faithfulness and power of their God.

*This is better rendered "Whose names had not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the slain Lamb." The next verse (Daniel 12:2) is more comprehensive. "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." It should be borne in mind that during the "time of trouble" only two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, are in the land; the remaining ten will be lost, as they are now, among the nations; and it is to these that this verse refers. After the Lord has appeared and succoured the faithful remnant in Judah and Jerusalem (Zechariah 12:1-14), He will establish His throne in Mount Zion, and thereafter He will recover His lost people, as we read in the prophet Ezekiel: "And I will bring you out from the people [peoples], and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered... And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face... And I will purge out from among you the rebels and them that transgress against me.... 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" (Ezekiel 20:33-42).

Now this passage treats entirely of Israel - that is, the ten tribes as distinguished from the Jews (the two tribes); and it will be seen, if it be attentively considered, that it speaks of two classes - one who will be brought back to the land for blessing, and the other who will be judged in the wilderness. It is of these same two classes that Daniel 12:2 speaks. Both alike are regarded as sleeping in the dust of the earth while lost and scattered among the nations; but when the Lord "shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet" to gather "His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:31), all alike will be awakened; some, as we here read, to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. The same contrast is found in the judgment of the living nations, of whom some shall go, away into everlasting punishment, and some into life eternal (Matthew 25:31). This last scripture is important as showing that the saints during the millennium will enjoy eternal life, if not of the same character as that which Christians possess, yet according to the revelation God will make of Himself to His people of that dispensation. It will be the "life for evermore" of which David speaks in Psalms 133:1-3 as characterising millennial blessedness.

Some however may enquire whether this verse (Daniel 12:2) does not rather speak of resurrection.

Two considerations will, we judge, show that it does not; and that the interpretation given is according to the teaching of scripture. In the first place, the figure of "awaking" is constantly employed in a moral sense in the Old Testament (see Isaiah 51:17, Isaiah 52:1, etc.); and even in the New it is used in a most striking way. The apostle, for example, writing to the Ephesians, says, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Ephesians 5:14); and no one could doubt the figurative sense in this passage. Secondly the prophet Ezekiel uses the figure of resurrection plainly in the sense of a national revival. We say "plainly," because the application the prophet himself makes shows, beyond question, what was intended (see Ezekiel 37:1-14).

What we gather therefore is, that God, in some special and extraordinary way, will arouse His scattered people from the lethargy into which they have fallen, and will kindle once more within their hearts the expectation of the fulfilment of the prophetic promises concerning their restoration and blessing under their Messiah. But, together with the re-awakening of their national hopes, God will purge out the rebels from among them, preparatory to their restoration, so that it will be literally true that some will awake to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. The third verse speaks of the class, we apprehend, mentioned in the previous chapter (Daniel 11:33); only here it may be that they are divided into two classes - those who are wise, and those who turn many to righteousness, or, as some prefer to render it, those who instruct the many in righteousness. Adopting this rendering, it will point back to the energetic testimony God raised up in the midst of the Jews during the last half week, when Satan's power was demonstrated without let or hindrance. Even then there will be those, chosen and sustained by God, who, undaunted by the terrors of the times, will courageously maintain the authority of God's word, and unweariedly seek to bring "the many" under its influence and power. In the establishment of the kingdom, whatever their sufferings, or even martyrdom, on account of their testimony, their past service will be recognised, and they will occupy a special place. Those that be wise having possessed God's mind, and having been endowed with divine wisdom, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; they will be conspicuously displayed as in the enjoyment of the special favour of God; and they that instruct the many in righteousness [shall shine] as the stars for ever and ever; they shall be assigned a place of authority and light-giving throughout the duration of the kingdom. (Compare Luke 19:15-19.) The revelation through Daniel's celestial visitant is now completed, and he receives the command: "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end, many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Daniel 12:4). It has often been, noticed, in contrast with this instruction to Daniel, that John, at the close of the book of Revelation, is directed not to seal "the sayings of the prophecy of this book," and the reason given is that "the time is at hand" (Revelation 22:10). This explains the difference between the positions occupied by Daniel and John. The time was not at hand for Daniel, and thus his book was to be sealed to the time of the end. If it be asked how it is that we possess the means for the understanding of that which was to be sealed "to the time of the end," the answer is that this period has arrived for Christians. Paul speaks of the "last days," and John of the "last time" (2 Timothy 3:1; 1 John 2:18). The death of Christ indeed, which took place "in the consummation of the ages," inaugurated the time of the end; and hence for those who are Christians, possessing the Holy Ghost, there is nothing concealed (John 16:13; 1 John 2:20). Through the Spirit of God therefore, "the time of the end" having arrived, Daniel's book is unsealed; and if we fail to apprehend what was communicated, to him, it is either because we are not in the state of soul which gives the opened ear and entire subjection to the divine word (see Isaiah 50:4-5), or because we have not given serious attention to what has been revealed. The statement that many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased, would seem to give the characteristics of the period from the days of Daniel until "the time of the end."

How true it is of the present moment; and until the Lord comes it will be ever more fully exemplified. From Daniel 12:5 we have the conclusion of Daniel's prophetic visions. He is still by the river Hiddekel; and he tells us, "Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the

end of these wonders?” (Daniel 12:5-6). The answer explains the question. The man clothed in fine linen “held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by Him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished” (Daniel 12:7). From the introduction of the familiar period, “time, times, and an half,” that is, the last half week we understand that the question referred to the duration of the “time of trouble” mentioned in Daniel 12:1; and the answer states that it is limited to three years and a half, or 1,260 days. The latter part of the answer states also, that when God has collected His scattered people, having accomplished His purposes in their dispersion,* all these things shall be finished. Two things are thus revealed: that the period of tribulation shall not extend beyond the half-week; and that at the close of it having succoured His people already in the land, God will assemble His outcast people from all the quarters where they have been dispersed. These two things are confirmed by a divine oath - one of the two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, for a comparison of this scripture with Revelation 10:5-7 will surely lead to the conclusion that He who utters this oath is more than man.

*This, as we understand it, is the force of this somewhat difficult sentence.

Daniel heard, and understood not; and then said, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?” He is reminded that “the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end”; and then a further communication is made: “Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand” (Daniel 12:10). It is evident that the reference is still to the “time of trouble” in the last half week; and what we learn is, that the Lord will take up the sorrows and trials of that time and use them as needful discipline for those that wait on Him - His faithful remnant amid the wickedness and apostasy by which they will be surrounded. Whatever their sufferings, therefore, “many shall be purified and made white and tried.” It is on this principle God ever acts, even as the apostle teaches that God chastens us “for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness” (Hebrews 12:10). But if God thus purges His people from their dross, the wicked - the wicked, we apprehend, among the Jews - “shall do wickedly.” They will, under the leadership of Antichrist, sin with a high hand, throw off all restraint, and fall into open and avowed apostasy. The last part of the verse alludes to Daniel 12:8, where Daniel says he understood not; and in it we have a principle of abiding importance. It gives us the indispensable condition of understanding divine things as revealed in God’s word. It says, “None of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.” There may be the plainest of testimonies. but if the heart, alienated from God, be bent upon wickedness, it will not comprehend it. What is purest light to God’s people will be densest darkness to the sinners amongst the nation. The wise only will understand; and let it be for ever remembered that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, that Christ in this present time is the only wisdom of His people. It had been well if this had been remembered, especially now, when the Scriptures of truth are being assailed with persistency, not to say virulence, by men of learning and intellectual power. “The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” And again, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because “they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:11-14). None therefore but the wise, the spiritually wise, can in any dispensation enter into the mind of God, however plainly it may be revealed in His word.

It is on the basis of this principle, in answer to Daniel's question, "O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?" (Daniel 12:8) that the "man clothed in linen" makes further revelations to the prophet. He now tells him in most express language that "from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days" (Daniel 12:11). It is this Scripture our Lord cites in Matthew 24:1-51 so far as the setting up of the abomination of desolation is concerned; and from Daniel 9:27 we have gathered that these things will take place in the middle of the seventieth week; and if so, there will remain only 1,260 days for these prophetic weeks to run their course. But here we have an addition of thirty days. Is it possible to explain the reason of this? Nothing certain can be said; only it is clear, from many references both in this book and in Revelation, that the 1,260 days fix the duration of the "time of trouble," which will be ended by the appearing of Christ. At His coming in glory the beast and the false prophet are taken and cast alive into the lake of fire (Revelation 19:1-21), and He will go forth and fight against the nations that will at that time be besieging Jerusalem. There are several great events therefore to follow the termination of the last half week preparatory to the establishment of Messiah's throne in Zion; and it is possible that this is the reason for the additional thirty days. There is, however, in Daniel 12:12, a further forty-five days, "Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days." From the very form in which this extra period is introduced, it evidently points to the full establishment of blessing in the ordering of the kingdom. We may cite on this point the words of a well-known student of the Scriptures: "I have thought it possible that this computation may arise from this. An intercalary month to the 1,260 days, or three years and a half, and then 45 days, if the years were ecclesiastical years, would bring up to the feast of tabernacles; but I offer no judgment on it. At any rate, the statement is clear that when the sanctuary of God is cleansed in Jerusalem."* If the reader will turn to Leviticus 23:1-44 he will understand, the purport of the remark as to the feast of tabernacles as he will perceive that it is the last of the cycle of feasts - a feast which was intended to celebrate Israel's rest, and possession of the land, after their wanderings in the wilderness; a feast, therefore, which as yet, according to the teaching of Hebrews 3:1-19 and Hebrews 4:1-16, has had no complete fulfilment. It awaits its realisation, according to the thoughts of God, until the true Solomon, after He has, as the true David, executed judgment upon His enemies, shall give rest to His people, when with joy they will draw water out of the wells of salvation (Isaiah 12:3; compare John 7:37).

It is clear, from Daniel 9:24, that the period includes the anointing of the most Holy. If therefore the three years and a half, 1260 days, determine the duration of the time of trouble, there might be a further period for the introduction of the full blessing thus indicated. But Daniel does not enter upon this scene of millennial joy. He is occupied with the times of the Gentiles up to the deliverance of his people. It was reserved for other prophets to speak of the establishment of the kingdom and of the blessings of Messiah's reign.

*It is remarkable how few are the scriptures that treat of the actual blessings of the reign of Christ. Among the Psalms, for example, it is only Psalms 72:1-20 and Psalms 145:1-21 that do so. There are many more that deal with His coming, and with the joy of His people in His reception, but they stop short of the millennial reign itself. Neither does Isaiah, who the most frequently alludes prophetically to the coming glories of Immanuel's rule, go much further. And now with one last word to the prophet the book is ended. Vessel of the divine mind as to the times of the Gentiles,

and the deliverance of his people, his work is done, and he is now bidden to retire from the scene: "Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days" (Daniel 12:13). Rest was to follow on the completion of his labours, and he would have his own special place in the Kingdom at the end of the days. Our Lord Himself said, "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 8:11); and Daniel will share in the glories of that day.

Now one of the spirits of just men made perfect, he will then participate in the first resurrection; and, returning with all the risen saints with Christ in glory, he will stand in his lot, occupy the special place assigned him, in the kingdom of Him, whom he had seen in the night visions as the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven.

04.00. Exodus

Exodus A Simple Exposition by Edward Dennett

04.02. Prefatory

Prefatory THE following chapters are very simple and purely expository. In dealing with the Tabernacle and its sacred vessels, the subject might have been made more attractive if embellished with illustrations. It may be questioned, however, if pictorial representations, though they may have their value in an educational point of view, whether for the young or for the student, do not really hinder rather than aid in the apprehension of spiritual teaching. Now that the veil is rent, and believers have access, in virtue of the precious blood of Christ, into the holiest, into the immediate presence of God, the meaning of the Tabernacle is best understood by looking back upon it through the light of the fulfilment of all in Christ. For He, and He alone, is the key wherewith to unlock these sacred mysteries. In a word, it is Christ who explains the Tabernacle, and not the Tabernacle which explains Christ. The Tabernacle indeed was not a type, but an antitype, and was only "a figure for the time then present," "the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing." (Hebrews 9:8.) It is therefore the earnest hope and prayer of the writer that the perusal of these pages may, by the blessing of God, help the reader to discover more of the beauties and the excellencies of the person of Christ, and to understand more fully the nature and perfection of His work, as well as the blessed place of privilege and grace into which believers have consequently been brought.

E. Dennett LONDON, 1882.

04.03. ISRAEL IN EGYPT

ISRAEL IN EGYPT

Exodus 1:1-22 THE grand subject of the book of Exodus is that of redemption. In Genesis we have creation, and then, after the fall, and the announcement of a Deliverer in the seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15) - the revelation, in fact, of the second Man, of whom Adam was a figure (Romans 5:14), and in whom all God's counsels should be established - "all the great elementary principles which find their development in the history of the relationships of God with man, which is recorded in the following books." The book of Genesis has therefore been aptly termed the seed-plot of the Bible. But in Exodus the subject is one - redemption with its consequences, consequences in grace, and when the people, showing their insensibility to grace, as well as ignorance of their own condition, had put themselves under law, consequences of government. Still the grand result of redemption, the establishment of a people before God, in relationship with Him, is achieved; and this it is that lends such an interest to the book, and makes it so instructive for the Christian reader.

Exodus 1:1-5 contain a brief statement of the names of Jacob's sons who came into Egypt with their father - they and their households, numbering, together with Joseph and his house already in Egypt, seventy souls. The particulars, of which this is a brief summary, are found in Genesis 46:1-34. The immediate occasion of their going down to Egypt was the famine; but by the famine, as by the wickedness of Jacob's sons in selling their brother to the Ishmaelites (Genesis 37:28), God was but accomplishing the fulfilment of His own purposes. Long ere this He had said unto Abram, "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years: and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance" (Genesis 15:13-14). This is the history of the first twelve chapters in Exodus; and it fills us with admiration to reflect that, whatever the actings of men even in wickedness and high-handed rebellion, they are made subservient to the establishment of the divine counsels of grace and love. As Peter indeed said, on the day of Pentecost, concerning Christ, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). Thus even the wrath of man is yoked to the chariot wheels of God's decrees.

There is undoubtedly a reason for the children of Israel being shown to us, at the opening of the book, in Egypt. In Scripture Egypt is a type of the world, and hence Israel in Egypt becomes a figure of man's natural condition. Thus, after the statement that "Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation" (Exodus 1:6), the narrative passes rapidly on to describe their circumstances and condition. First, their increase and, indeed, prosperity are indicated. They "were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them" (Exodus 1:7). They were the children of promise, albeit in Egypt, and as such God's favour was resting upon them. Hence this picture of earthly prosperity. God never forgets His people, although they may forget Him.

Now another figure appears on the scene "a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph" (Exodus 1:8). The statement that he "knew not Joseph" is exceedingly significant. Joseph in Egypt was a type of Christ in His earthly glory and consequently not to know him is characteristic of a moral state. Pharaoh in fact is the god of this world, and as such must of necessity be in antagonism to the Lord's people. Accordingly we read at once of his crafty devices and malicious designs to destroy their prosperity, and to reduce them to helpless and hopeless bondage (Exodus 1:9-12). And what was his motive? "Lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land" (Exodus 1:10). Satan knows, what we are apt to forget, that the world must hate the children of God, and that they, if faithful, must be in antagonism to the world, and hence he in the person of Pharaoh seems to provide for the contingency of war, and to prevent their deliverance. He therefore "set over them taskmasters, to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses."

Note: Not even the site of these cities - although many conjectures are offered - can with any certainty be now identified.

Thereby they are brought under bondage to the world, "and the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour: and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage" (Exodus 1:13-14). The other side of the picture is, "The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew" (Exodus 1:12). This arose from the fact already pointed out, that, whatever their condition, they were the people of promise, embraced in the purposes of God, and as such were watched over, shielded, and blessed; so that Pharaoh, as the god of this world, was powerless to accomplish their destruction. The real question was, as the issue shows, between God and Pharaoh; and the king of Egypt was, in his schemes against the children of Israel, fighting against God. Hence his failure on every side. On the other hand, the condition of the Israelites portrays most strikingly the condition of the sinner - the sinner rather who has been made to feel the iron yoke of his slavery to sin and Satan. As with the prodigal, who falls lower and lower, until he is at the point of death and in utter degradation, before he comes to himself, so here God makes the children of Israel feel the weight of their burdens, and to taste the bitterness of their vile servitude, to awaken in them a desire for deliverance before He commences to act on their behalf. There is such a thing as the sinner being insensible to his degradation, and contented, if not happy, in his alienation from God; but if he is to be saved he must pass through the experience which is foreshadowed by this account of the condition of the Israelites. Until then, he never knows his real state, or desires deliverance. The rest of the chapter (Exodus 1:15-22) is taken up with a description of another attempt to enfeeble, and in time to destroy, the children of Israel. But again there is the activity of another on their behalf. Pharaoh was an absolute king, and none of his subjects dared to oppose his will; but even these feeble women are sustained in their disobedience, because they judged it their first duty to fear God. The mightiest monarch in the world is powerless as against God, and equally so against those who are identified with God and His people. Hence Shiphrah and Puah "did not as the king of Egypt commanded" (Exodus 1:17), and God dealt well with them, and because they feared God, He made them houses (Exodus 1:17-21). "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). We may therefore learn, first, the utter impotence of the enemy to frustrate the purposes of God; secondly, the invincibility of those who are connected with His purposes; thirdly, how the fear of God can lift the feeblest and humblest above the fear of man;

and then, last of all, how grateful to the heart of God is every sign of fidelity to Him in the midst of a scene where Satan reigns, as the god of this world, and oppresses and seeks to destroy His people. But Pharaoh's enmity increases, and he "charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive" (Exodus 1:22). The next chapter will show us how God used this very decree of the king to prepare a deliverer for His people.

04.04. THE BIRTH OF MOSES

THE BIRTH OF MOSES

Exodus 2:1-25 THIS chapter, full of interest, is made more attractive to the spiritual mind by the divine commentary which is given in Hebrews 11:1-40 upon its main incidents. Here it is a simple record of the human side of the actions recorded; there it is rather the divine side, or the estimate which God formed of the deeds of His people. It is only, therefore, by the combination of these two aspects that we can glean the instruction which is thus afforded. As in the case of the birth of our blessed Lord at Bethlehem, so here, little did the parents or the world around understand the significance of the birth of the son of Amram and Jochebed. It is thus that God always works, noiselessly laying the foundation of His purposes, and preparing His instruments until the moment, before determined, arrives for action, and then He makes bare His arm in the display of His presence and power in the face of the world. But we must trace the events of the chapter. "And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived, and bare a son; and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months" (Exodus 2:1-2). How simply beautiful this natural scene! And how well our hearts can enter into the feelings of this Jewish mother! The king had commanded that every son that was born should be cast into the river (Exodus 1:22); but what mother could consent to give up her child to death? All the affections of her heart would revolt from it. But, alas! there was the inexorable decree of this despotic king; and how could she, a poor, feeble woman, and a feeble woman of a despised race, resist the will of an absolute monarch? Turn to the inspired comment in the New Testament: "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment" (Hebrews 11:23). True, they owed allegiance to their earthly sovereign, but they also owed allegiance to the Lord of lords, and trusting in Him they were lifted above all fear of the king's commandment, and concealed their child - the child whom God had given to them - for three months. They counted upon God, and they were not confounded; for He never leaves or forsakes them that put their trust in Him. This is a most blessed action of faith, and in a twofold way. With their eye upon God, they dared to be disobedient to the king's wicked command, and they were fearless of the consequences. Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in a later age, they believed that the God whom they served was able to deliver them out of the king's hand (Daniel 3:16-17). The rulers of this world are powerless in the presence of those who are linked with God by the exercise of faith. The time, however, came when this "proper child" could no longer be hid (Exodus 2:3); showing the increasing vigilance of the enemy of God and His people. But faith is never wanting in resources. We accordingly find that "she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink. And his sister stood afar off to wit what would be done to him" (Exodus 2:3-4). As with Isaac and Samuel, so likewise with Moses, death must be known, at least in figure, by the parents, both for themselves and for their child before he can become an instrument in service for God. It is not a little remarkable, in this connection, that the word here used for ark is not found elsewhere in

the Scriptures, except for the ark in which Noah and his house were brought through the flood. There is another resemblance. The ark of Noah was pitched within and without with pitch. Jochebed daubs this ark with slime and pitch. Noah acted under divine direction, and hence the word there used for pitch means also a ransom (Exodus 30:12; Job 33:24, etc.), shadowing forth the truth that a ransom must be found to deliver from the waters of judgment; but this Hebrew mother used pitch of another kind, and therefore did not know the full truth. Yet she thereby confessed the need of redemption, her faith owned it, and thus her ark of bulrushes, containing its precious freight, floated in safety amid the flags upon this river of death. There may not have been divine intelligence, but there was true faith, and this ever finds a response in the heart of God. Remark, also, that the sister, and not the mother, watches for the issue. This might easily be explained on human grounds, but is there not another solution? The mother believed, and could consequently rest in peace, although the child, dearer to her than life itself, was exposed upon the river. In like manner, Mary, the sister of Lazarus, is not found at the sepulchre in which the Lord of glory lay, because she had entered into the mystery of His death (John 12:7).

We now pass on to consider the action of God in response to the faith of His people. "And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it," etc (Exodus 2:6). It is exceedingly beautiful and instructive to see God thus behind the scene arranging all for His own glory. The daughter of Pharaoh was acting from her own inclination, and for her own pleasure, and knew not that she was an instrument of the divine will. But everything - her going down to the river to bathe, the time of her doing so - all was according to the purpose of God in respect of the child who was to be the deliverer of His people. Accordingly she saw the ark, had it fetched, opened it, and saw the child; "and, behold, the babe wept" (Exodus 2:6). Even the tears of the babe had their object, and they were not shed in vain; they excited the compassion of this royal woman, as she said, comprehending the secret, "This is one of the Hebrews' children" (Exodus 2:6). The sister who had been anxiously watching to see what might become of her baby-brother, receives the word of wisdom at this critical juncture, and said, "Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother" (Exodus 2:7-8). The child Moses, who had been exposed on the river in consequence of the king of Egypt's decree, is thus restored to his mother under the protection of Pharaoh's daughter. And there he remained until he had grown, and then Jochebed "brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water" (Exodus 2:10). His very name shall declare the power of Him who had saved him from death, brought him out of the waters of judgment in His sovereign grace and love. Thus the man of God's choice, the one He had marked out as His chosen instrument for the deliverance of His people, and to become the mediator of His covenant with them, finds shelter under the roof of Pharaoh. During this period he became "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds" (Acts 7:22).

Another epoch of his life is now presented to us. Forty years had passed away before the incident occurred which is described in the eleventh and following verses. "And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that

way, and, when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand. And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known. Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian : and he sat down by a well" (Exodus 2:11-15; see also Acts 7:23). As we read this narrative, it might be supposed that the act of Moses, in killing the Egyptian, was nothing beyond the impulse of a generous heart, feeling the injustice which was done, and interfering to avenge it. But what is the interpretation of this act by the Spirit of God? "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:24-27).

We must, however, carefully guard ourselves from concluding that the Spirit of God endorses all that the narrative records in Exodus. No doubt Moses acted in the energy of the flesh; but though he had not as yet learned his own nothingness and incompetency, he yet desired to act for God; and it is from the epistle to the Hebrews we learn the true character of his actions before God. That there was failure is clear; but it was the failure of a man of faith, whose actions were precious in the sight of God, because he was enabled, in the exercise of faith, to refuse all that might have tempted the natural man, and to identify himself with the interests of God's people. But this passage in his life demands a more particular notice. First, then, it was by faith that he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. What else, indeed, could have led to the renunciation of such a splendid position? Besides, he might have argued, he had been placed in it by a most singular and striking providence. Might it not be therefore that he should occupy it, and use the influence connected with it, on behalf of his downtrodden brethren? Why, he might succeed in securing the whole influence of the court on behalf of his nation; would it not be, then, to fly in the face of Providence, to forsake such a vantage-ground? But Providence, as has been often remarked, is no guide to faith. Faith deals with things not seen, and hence seldom agrees with the conclusions that are drawn from providential events and circumstances. No; the influence of the god of this world (Pharaoh) can never be employed to deliver the Lord's people; and faith can never be sheltered by or identified with it. Faith has God for its object, and must therefore be identified with what belongs to God, and be in antagonism with all that is opposed to God. As another has said, "How many reasons might have induced Moses to remain in the position where he was, and this even under the pretext of being able to do more for the people; but this would have been leaning on the power of Pharaoh, instead of recognizing the bond between the people and God: it might have resulted in a relief which the world would have granted, but not in a deliverance by God, accomplished in His love and in His power. Moses would have been spared much affliction, but lost his true glory; Pharaoh flattered, and his authority over the people of God recognized; and Israel would have remained in captivity, leaning on Pharaoh, instead of recognizing God in the precious and even glorious relationship of His people with Him. God would not have been glorified; yet all human reasoning, and all reasoning connected with providential ways, would have induced Moses to remain in his position; faith made him give it up." And giving it

up, he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God. Identification with them had more attractions for his faithful heart than the pleasures of sin; for faith views everything in the light of God's presence. Yea, he rose still higher; he esteemed the reproach of Christ - the reproach arising from identification with Israel - greater riches than the treasures in Egypt ; for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. Faith thus lives in the future, as well as in the unseen. It is the assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen; and hence it governed, controlled, the heart and path of Moses.

It was faith, then, that actuated him when "he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens" (Exodus 2:11). And even when, stirred by "seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian," he "supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them" (Acts 12:24-25). And so it was to be, but the time had not yet arrived, nor could God yet employ Moses - precious as his faith was in His sight. As Peter had to learn that he could not follow Christ in the energy of nature, whatever the affections of his heart (John 13:36), so Moses had to be taught that no weapon could be employed in the deliverance of Israel save the power of God. When, therefore, he went out the second day, and seeing two Hebrews striving together, sought to reconcile them, he is taunted with killing the Egyptian, and is himself rejected (Exodus 2:13-14). Pharaoh too heard of what he had done, and sought to slay him. He is thus rejected by his brethren, and persecuted by the world. From this point he becomes a type of Christ in his rejection; for he is rejected by the people whom he loved, and becomes in his flight separated from his brethren. "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." He still trod the path of faith, though that path led him into the desert amongst a strange people. But God provided His servant a home, and a wife in one of the daughters of Jethro (Reuel). Zipporah is thus in figure a type of the church, for she is associated with Moses during the time of his rejection by Israel. But the heart of Moses is still with his people, and hence he names his son Gershom; "for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land" (Exodus 2:22). Joseph, on the other hand, names his sons Manasseh - "for God hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house;" and Ephraim - "for God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction." The comparison is most instructive, and shows in what special aspects Joseph and Moses are types of Christ. If Joseph presents us with Christ as raised through death to the right hand of the throne over the Gentiles, and thereon disclosing Himself to, and receiving His brethren, Moses gives us Christ more exclusively as the Redeemer of Israel; and hence, though he marries during the time of his rejection, and is thus in some sort a figure of Christ and the church in this dispensation, his heart is still with the children of Israel, and therefore he is a stranger in a strange land. The last three verses bring before us the condition of the people, and reveal at the same time the faithfulness and compassion of God. They belong rather to the next chapter.

04.05. THE COMMISSION OF MOSES

THE COMMISSION OF MOSES Exodus 3:1-22; Exodus 4:1-31

MOSES was no less than forty years in the wilderness, learning the lessons he needed for his future work, and being qualified to act for God as the deliverer of His people. What a contrast to his former life at the court of Pharaoh. There he was surrounded with all the luxury and refinement of his age; here he is a simple shepherd, keeping the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law. Forty is the number of probation, as seen, for example, in the forty years in the wilderness of the children of Israel ; also in the forty days' temptation of our blessed Lord. It was therefore a time of testing - testing what Moses was, as well as a time for him to prove what God was; and these two things must ever be learnt before we are qualified for service. Hence God always sends His servants into the wilderness before employing them for the accomplishment of His purposes. Nowhere else can we be brought so fully into the presence of God. It is there, alone with Him, that we discover the utter vanity of human resources, and our entire dependence upon Himself. And very blessed is it to be withdrawn from the busy haunts of men, and to be shut in, as it were, with God, to learn in communion with Himself His own thoughts concerning ourselves, concerning His interests and service. Indeed it is a continual necessity for every true servant to be much alone with God; and where this is forgotten, God often brings it about, in the tenderness of His heart, by the disciplinary dealings of His hand. The time at length arrives when God can begin to interfere for His people. But let us recall the connection. In the first chapter the people are seen in their bondage; in the second, Moses is born, and introduced into the house of Pharaoh. Then he casts in his lot with the people of God, and in the warmth of his affection seeks to remedy their wrongs; but, rejected, he flees into the desert. After forty years, being now eighty years old, he is to be sent back into Egypt. The third and fourth chapters contain the account of his mission from God, and of his unwillingness to be thus employed. But before this is reached, there is a short preface at the end of the second chapter - which really belongs to the third as to its connection - which reveals the ground on which God was acting for the redemption of His people. First, it tells us that the king of Egypt died, but his death brought no alleviation of the condition of the children of Israel. On the other hand, they "sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God, by reason of the bondage." They were thus reduced to the lowest extremity. But God was not insensible, for He "heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob: And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them" (Exodus 2:23-25). Their condition touched the heart of God, drew forth His pitying mercies, but the ground on which He acted was His own sovereign grace, as expressed in the covenant He had made with their fathers. It was this same mercy, and His faithfulness to His ward, which both Mary and Zacharias celebrated in their songs of praise in connection with the birth of the Saviour, and of His forerunner John. "He hath holpen His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy; as He spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever." And again, He "hath raised up an horn of salvation for us... to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant; the oath which He sware to our father Abraham," etc. (Luke 1:54-55; Luke 1:68-73). It is

impossible that God should forget His word, and if He delay to accomplish it, it is only for the brighter display of His unchanging grace and love.

Having, then, laid the foundation in these few words, the next scene brings before us the dealings of God with Moses.

"Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed" (Exodus 3:1-2).

It is most interesting to trace the appearances of God to His people, and to note how the manner of each is related to the special circumstances of the case. (See Genesis 12:1-20; Genesis 18:1-33; Genesis 32:1-32; Joshua 5:1-15, etc.) Here it is strikingly significant as connected with the mission on which Moses was about to be sent. There are three parts to the vision thus vouchsafed - the Lord, the flame of fire, and the bush. Observe, first, that it is said the angel of the Lord appeared unto Moses (Exodus 3:2); and then the Lord saw that he turned aside, and God called unto him out of the midst of the bush (Exodus 3:4. Compare Genesis 22:15-16). The angel of the Lord is thus identified with Jehovah, yea, with God Himself; and there is no doubt that in all these appearances of the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament Scriptures, we behold the shadowing forth of the coming incarnation of the Son of God, and hence that, in all these cases, it is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity - God the Son. The flame of fire is a symbol of the holiness of God. This is shown in various ways, especially in the fire on the altar, which consumed the sacrifices; and in the epistle to the Hebrews we have the express statement that "our God is a consuming fire;" i.e. testing everything according to His holiness, and thus consuming everything which does not answer its requirements. The bush was meant to be a figure of Israel. There is nothing more easily consumed by fire than a bush; and it was chosen on this very account to represent the nation of Israel - the nation of Israel in the furnace of Egypt - the fire burning fiercely round about it, and yet not destroying it. It was therefore a consolatory assurance to the heart of Moses - if he could read it aright - that his nation would be preserved however fiercely the fire might burn. In the language of another, "it was meant to be an image of that which was presented to the spirit of Moses - a bush in a desert, burning, but unconsumed. It was no doubt thus that God was about to work in the midst of Israel. Moses and they must know it. They too would be the chosen vessel of His power in their weakness, and this for ever in His mercy. Their God, as ours, would prove Himself a consuming fire. Solemn, but infinite favour! For, on the one hand, as surely as He is a consuming fire, so on the other the bush, weak as it is, and ready to vanish away, nevertheless remains to prove that, whatever may be the siftings and judicial dealings of God, whatever the trials and searchings of man, yet where He reveals Himself in pitifulness, as well as in power (and such it certainly was here), He sustains the object, and uses the trial for nothing but good, no doubt for His own glory, but consequently for the very best interests of those that are, His."

Moses was attracted, as well he might be, by "this great sight," and "he turned aside to see" (Exodus 3:4). Then it was that God called to him out of the bush, and called him by name. But he must be reminded of the holiness of the divine presence. "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5. Compare

Numbers 5:1-3; Joshua 5:15, etc.). This is the first lesson which all who approach God must learn - the recognition of His holiness. True, He is a God of grace, of mercy, and also that He is love; but He is all these because He is a holy God, and He could never have manifested Himself in these blessed characters, had it not been that in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace kissed each other. But unless our feet are unshod - remembering the holiness of Him with whom we have to do - we can never receive the gracious communications of His mind and will. Hence the very next thing we find here is that He reveals Himself to Moses as the "God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6). This revelation was designed to act upon the soul of Moses, and it does - for he is bowed in heart before Him who spake - and he "hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God" (See 1 Kings 19:13). Thereon Jehovah announces the purpose of His manifestation to Moses. "And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters: for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto Me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt " (Exodus 3:7-10). The order of this communication is most instructive. (1) God reveals Himself as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. His own character is the foundation of all His actings. It is exceedingly strengthening to the soul to learn this lesson - that God ever finds His motive within Himself. It is on the ground of what He is, and not on the ground of what we are. (Compare Ephesians 1:3-6; 2 Timothy 1:9-10). (2) The occasion of His action was the condition of His people. "And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows," etc. (Exodus 3:7 seq.) What infinite tenderness! There is not a word to show that the children of Israel had cried to the Lord. They had sighed and cried by reason of their bondage, but it does not appear that their hearts had turned to the Lord. But their misery had touched His heart, He "knew their sorrows, and was come down to deliver them." So "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). (3) His purpose was to deliver them out of Egypt, "and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites" (Exodus 3:8). There is nothing here between Egypt and Canaan. The wilderness does not appear. In like manner, in Romans we read, "Whom He justified, them He also glorified." We thus learn, as has been often remarked, that the wilderness is no part of the purpose of God. It belongs to His ways, and not to His purposes; for it is in the wilderness that the flesh is tested, that we learn what we are as well as what God is. (See Deuteronomy 8:1-20). But as far as God's purposes are concerned, there is nothing between redemption and glory. So in the actual fact, there were only eleven days' journey from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea (Deuteronomy 1:2), but the children of Israel were forty years through their unbelief in accomplishing the distance. (4) Moses is thereon commissioned as their deliverer. The Lord had heard the cry of the people, though not addressed to Himself, and seen their oppression, and therefore He will send Moses unto Pharaoh that he may bring them forth out of Egypt (Exodus

3:9-10).

We now come to a most sad exhibition of failure on the part of Moses. When in Egypt he ran before he was sent; he thought that, in the energy of his own will, he could emancipate his brethren, or at least redress their wrongs. But now, after forty years spent in "the flesh-subduing solitudes" of the desert, he not only is unwilling to be employed upon the magnificent mission with which the Lord would entrust him, but he raises objection after objection until he wearies the tender patience and long-suffering of Jehovah, and His anger is kindled against Moses (Exodus 4:14). But every fresh failure of Moses proves the occasion for the display of greater grace - even though in the event Moses suffered through his whole life from his backwardness in obeying the voice of the Lord. Miserable history of the flesh! Now it is too forward, and now it is too backward. There is only One who was ever found equal to all God's will - who always did the things that pleased Him - and that was the perfect servant, the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us glance at this series of difficulties which Moses raises.

"And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Exodus 3:11).

"Who am I?" It is quite right that we should have the sense of our own utter nothingness; for we surely are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves. But it is also right that we should think much of God. For when He sends it is not a question of what we are, but of what He is - and it is no small thing to be invested with His authority and power. David had learnt this lesson when he advanced against Goliath; for, in reply to his taunts, he said, "I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied" (1 Samuel 17:45). This objection therefore was nothing but distrust. This is distinctly shown out in the answer he received, "CERTAINLY I WILL BE WITH THEE: and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain" (Exodus 3:12). The presence of the Lord was to be both the warrant for his mission and the source of his strength. As the Lord said in after days to Joshua, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage" (Joshua 1:5-6). The Lord knows the need of His servant, and provides for his weakness by giving a token which should reassure him - should the subtlety of his heart lead him into doubt, - so that he might be able to say, "Now I have a proof of my divine mission." Surely this was enough to scatter his hesitation and fear. Listen to his answer:

"And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is His name? what shall I say unto them?" (Exodus 3:13).

God had already revealed Himself to Moses as the God of his fathers - and this might have been enough, but nothing can ever satisfy doubts and fears. And what an incidental glimpse is thus given of the condition of Israel, so as to render the supposition possible that they might not know the name of the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob! God bears in grace with his feeble, hesitant servant, and replies, "I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you" (Exodus 3:14). This is the expression of the essential being of God - His name as the self-existent One; and thereby affirms His eternal being. It was this name the Lord Jesus claimed when He said to the unbelieving Jews, "Before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:58). But this is not all. Having revealed Himself as to His essential existence, He adds, "Thus

shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is My name for ever, and this is My memorial unto all generations" (Exodus 3:15). This is pure grace on the part of God. "I AM, is His own essential name; but as regards His government of, and relationship with, the earth, His name - that by which He is to be remembered to all generations - is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. This gave Israel, now visited and taken up of God under His name, a very peculiar place." It points indeed to their election by the sovereign grace of God, and to their being beloved for their fathers' sake; and at the same time reveals the fact that Israel shall be for ever the centre of God's ways, and the key to His purposes upon the earth. Hence, as long as Israel is under judgment, scattered throughout the world, the period of earthly blessing is still postponed.

It was consequently in this name that God was come down to deliver; for as soon as He assumes it, He graciously allows that the people, whom He has thus brought into relationship with Himself, have a claim upon His mercy and compassion. Hence the detailed instructions which are now given to Moses (Exodus 3:16-22), in which the whole history of God's controversy with Pharaoh is given, with its final issue in the redemption of His people. First, Moses is enjoined to assemble the elders of Israel, that he may announce to them, that the Lord God of their fathers had appeared to him, and communicated to him the purposes of His grace towards them, in bringing them up out of the affliction of Egypt unto a land flowing with milk and honey (Exodus 3:16-17). He is foretold that they would hearken to his voice, and that he and they should no together unto Pharaoh, to ask for permission to go three days' journey into the wilderness, that they might sacrifice unto the Lord their God (Exodus 3:18). He then is forewarned of the stubborn opposition of Pharaoh; but he is likewise told that God would Himself deal with the Egyptian king, and compel him to let them go; and, furthermore, that when they went out they should not go empty, but that they should spoil the Egyptians (Exodus 3:19-22).

Note: As there has been some controversy upon the statement, here and in v.2, that the Israelites were commanded to borrow the valuables of the Egyptians on the eve of their exodus, it may be well to point out that the word has been wrongly translated. There is no idea of "borrowing" in it. It means simply "to ask." The context shows that owing to God's manifest interposition the children of Israel would be in "favour in the sight of the Egyptians;" and being made to feel that they had suffered wrong at their hands, they gladly gave them whatever they desired - it may be as a kind of propitiation - with the full knowledge that they would see the Israelites no more. What they gave was therefore an unconditional gift.

These instructions are important for all time; for they place beyond a doubt the exact foreknowledge of God. He knew with whom He had to deal, the resistance to be met with, and how it was to be overcome. He saw all things from the beginning to the end. How consolatory to our feeble hearts! Not a difficulty or trial can befall us which has not been foreseen by our God, and for which in His grace provision has not been made! Everything has been prearranged in view of our final triumph, and of our victorious exit from this scene, through the display of His redeeming power, to be for ever with the Lord? Surely Moses might now have been contented.

"And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee" (Exodus 4:1). Could unbelief be more presumptuous? The Lord had said, "They shall hearken to thy voice." Moses replies, They will not

believe me." What wonder if the Lord had utterly rejected His servant when he thus dared to contradict Him to His face? But He is slow to anger and of great mercy; and truly this scene is full of beauty as revealing the depths of the tenderness and long-suffering of His patient heart. He will therefore bear with His servant, condescend still more, and give even miraculous signs to strengthen him in his weakness, and to dispel his unbelief. "And the Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And He said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: that they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee" (Exodus 4:2-5). Two more signs are even added. His hand, on putting it into his bosom and taking it out, became "leprous as snow;" and on repeating the act "it was turned again as his other flesh" (Exodus 4:6-7). Then, in case they should not hearken to the first, or to the second sign, a third was added. He was to take water out of the river, and pour it upon the dry ground, and it should become blood upon the dry land (Exodus 4:9). These signs are significant, and especially so, it should be observed, in relation to the matter in hand. A rod in Scripture is the symbol of authority - power. Cast down, it became a serpent. A serpent is the well-known emblem of Satan; and hence it was power become Satanic, and this was exactly what was seen in Egypt in the oppression of the children of Israel. But Moses puts forth his hand, at the word of the Lord, and takes the serpent by the tail, and again it becomes a rod. The power that had thus become Satanic, resumed by God, becomes a rod of chastening or judgment.

Hence this rod, in the hands of Moses, becomes henceforward the rod of God's authority and judicial power. Leprosy is a figure of sin in its defilement, sin in the flesh breaking out and defiling, with its pollutions, the whole man. The second sign therefore presents us with sin and its healing, effected, as we know, only by the death of Christ. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin. Water represents that which refreshes - source of life and refreshment as coming from God; but, as poured out on the earth, become judgment and death. Armed with such signs, Moses might surely return and convince the most hardened doubter. Nay, he is not yet himself convinced; and hence he now replies,

"O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since Thou hast spoken unto Thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Exodus 4:10). This objection shows most conclusively that self was the beam in his eye that obstructed the vision of faith. For was it his eloquence or the Lord's power that would effect the emancipation of Israel? He speaks as if all depended upon the persuasive words of human wisdom, as if his appeal was to be made by human art to the natural man. How common the mistake, even in the Church of God! Hence eloquence is that which even Christians desire - giving it a place beyond the power of God. The pulpits of Christendom are thus filled with men who are not of a slow tongue, and even the saints who in theory know the truth are beguiled and attracted by splendid gifts, and take pleasure in their exercise apart from the truth communicated. How different was the thought of St Paul. "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God." And again, "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Corinthians 2:1; 1 Corinthians 2:4). It is on this account that God often uses the "slow of speech" far more than those who are

eloquent; for there is no temptation in such cases to lean upon the wisdom of men, all beholding that it is the power of God. It is this lesson - a lesson which contains at the same time a withering rebuke - that Jehovah now teaches Moses. "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say" (Exodus 4:11-12). The servant could not require more; but the danger lies in forgetting that the mode in which the Lord may employ us may not bring honour to ourselves. On the contrary, we may be regarded as the apostle was, as weak in bodily presence, and in speech contemptible (2 Corinthians 10:10); but what of this if we are made the vehicles of the power of God? The servant must learn to be nothing that the Lord alone may be exalted. But Moses evidently desired to be something himself, and overwhelmed by the prospect, and, it may also be, borne down by the sense of his incompetency, notwithstanding all the grace and condescension of the Lord, he desires to be excused from so difficult a mission. He therefore says, "O my Lord, send, I pray Thee, by the hand of whom Thou wilt send" (Exodus 4:13). That is, "Send any one, but not me." Five times did he thus raise objections to the Lord's commands, presuming upon His forbearance and long-suffering. But now "the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses; and He said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee; and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God. And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, where with thou shalt do signs" (Exodus 4:14-17). Thus the halting of Moses was overcome, but not until the anger of the Lord was kindled against him on account of his unwillingness to obey His word; but he lost much. Aaron was henceforward to be associated with him, and indeed was to have the most prominent place before man; for he was to be the spokesman of his brother. In tender grace, however, the Lord reserves to His servant Moses the chief place before Him, giving him the honour and privilege of being the medium of communication between Himself and Aaron. Aaron was to be a "mouth" for Moses; Moses was to be to Aaron "instead of God;" i.e. he was to impart to Aaron the message to be delivered. The purposes of God cannot be frustrated; but we may suffer from our obstinacy and disobedience. It was so with Moses. How many times afterwards, during the forty years' sojourn in the wilderness, must he have bewailed the unbelief that led him to refuse the trust which the Lord desired to commit to his hands alone! Finally, the rod of authority is given to Moses - the rod wherewith he was to display the power of God in miraculous signs as an attestation of his mission. This rod plays a most important part throughout the career of Moses, and it is most instructive to trace the occasions of its appearance and use. Here it becomes, as it were, the seal of his mission, as well as the sign of his office; for in very truth he was invested with the authority of God to lead His people out of the land of Egypt.

Moses now returns to seek the permission of Jethro to return into Egypt. God had prepared the way, and hence Jethro consents, saying to Moses, "Go in peace:" (Exodus 4:18). The Lord watches over His servant, notes the feelings of his heart, and even anticipates his fears by saying, "Go, return into Egypt : for all the men are dead which sought thy life." (Compare Matthew 2:20). "And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt : and Moses took the rod of God in his hand" (Exodus 4:19-20). Thereupon the Lord further instructs him, and even reveals to him the character of the final judgment through which He would

compel Pharaoh to let His people go. Even more: He now teaches him the true relationship into which He had by grace taken Israel. For the first time is this revelation made: "Israel is My son, even My firstborn;" and it is this which decides the character of the stroke which should fall upon Egypt. "And I say unto thee, Let My son go, that he may serve Me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn" (Exodus 4:22-23; compare Numbers 8:14-18).

One thing now only remains to qualify Moses for his mission. There must be faithfulness within the circle of his own responsibility before he can be made the channel of divine power. Obedience at home must precede the display of power to the world. This explains the following incident: "And it came to pass, by the way in the inn, that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me. So He let him go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision" (Exodus 4:24-26). Moses had neglected, from what cause we know not - it may be through the influence of his wife - the circumcision of his child; and hence the Lord had a personal controversy with him, which must be settled before he could appear before Pharaoh with divine authority. The Lord thus laid him low, dealt with him, brought his failure to remembrance that he might judge it, and return to the path of obedience. To borrow the language of another: "God was going to put honour on Moses; but there was a dishonour to Him in the house of Moses already. How came it that the sons of Moses were not circumcised? How came it that there lacked that which typifies the mortifying the flesh in those who were nearest to Moses? How came it that God's glory was forgotten in that which ought to have been prominent in a father's heart? It appears that the wife had something to do with the matter.... In fact she at last was obliged to do what she most hated, as she herself said in her son's case. But more than that, it endangered Moses; for God had the controversy with him, not with his wife. Moses was the responsible person, and God held to His order." The words we have ventured to italicise convey a most important principle, and explain fully the ground of God's dealing with Moses. But he received grace to bow before His chastening hand; and most blessed is it where we are enabled to acknowledge with St Paul, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead" (2 Corinthians 1:9). The two parts of Moses' qualification, then, were divine authority and personal condition; and these two ought never to be disjoined. For all who would speak in the name of the Lord, or be employed by Him in any service whatever, it is of the utmost importance that they should remember this. Nothing can compensate for the lack of condition of soul. Herein lies in fact the secret of our feebleness in service. If our ways, or, as in the case of Moses, our houses, are unjudged, the Spirit of God is grieved, and as a consequence we are not used for blessing. It is not enough therefore to have the words of God in our mouth; but we must be walking with their power in our own souls, if we are to speak with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

All is now ready; and accordingly we have a beautiful scene at the end of the chapter - a scene which must have gladdened the heart of Moses, and, with the blessing of God, nerved him for the arduous path on which he had entered. First, however, the Lord sent Aaron "into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which He had commanded him:" (Exodus 4:27-28). The place of their meeting is most significant. It was in the mount of God (Exodus 3:1), i.e. Horeb, that the Lord appeared to Moses; here now Aaron meets him; and it was

in this same place that Moses afterwards received the two tables of stone, with the Ten Commandments written with the finger of God. Leaving this, however, now, it may be remarked - for it contains a most practical lesson - that it is ever most blessed when relatives can meet in the mount of God. Then, as with Moses and Aaron, the conversation will be upon "the words of the Lord," and the meeting will issue in blessing. If, on the other hand, we descend to a lower level, as is too often the case, our communications will be rather concerning ourselves and our own doings, and this will result neither in glory to God nor in profit to ourselves.

Remark, too, that it is from the mount of God they proceed on their mission. Blessed are those servants who go directly from the presence of God to their labours. Coming into Egypt, they "went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel : and Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed: and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that He had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped" (Exodus 4:29-31). The word of the Lord was thus fulfilled. Moses had said, "They will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice." But the people did believe, according to the word of the Lord; and touched by His grace, as they heard how He had visited them, and looked upon their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshipped. True that afterwards, when their difficulties increased, they murmured in their unbelief; but this cannot diminish from the beauty of the picture before us, wherein we see the word of the Lord, in all its freshness and power, reaching the hearts of the elders, and bowing them in adoration in His presence.

04.06. FIRST MESSAGE TO PHARAOH

FIRST MESSAGE TO PHARAOH Exodus 5:1-23; Exodus 6:1-30

THESE two chapters occupy a special place in the narrative. They are really of a prefatory nature, introductory to Jehovah's conflict with Pharaoh by judgments. They are at the same time most instructive as illustrating the ways of God. The message is delivered in grace, the opportunity for obedience is proffered - God waiting in patience and long-suffering before His hand is lifted up in judgment. It is even so with the world at the present time. Now is the time of God's forbearance and grace, during which the message of His mercy is proclaimed far and wide, and whosoever will may hear, believe, and be saved. But this day of grace is hastening on to its close, and the moment the Lord Jesus rises from His seat at the Father's right hand, the door will be shut, and judgments will begin to fall. In like manner these two chapters describe, so to speak, the day of grace for Pharaoh. But while the king of Egypt was a man, he was also, in the position he occupied, as already pointed out, a type of Satan as the god of this world. There is, therefore, further instruction to be gleaned from these chapters in this aspect, and it is this aspect indeed that occupies the prominent place. This will be seen as we proceed.

"And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness and Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go. And they said, The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God; lest He fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword. And the king of Egypt said unto them, Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let (hinder) the people from their works? get you unto your burdens. And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now are many, and we make them rest from their burdens" (Exodus 5:1-5) The question, be it remembered, is that of the redemption of Israel ; and hence it is one in which the people could have no part. God must act for them; and He it is consequently that enters into controversy with Pharaoh. Pharaoh, as the god of this world, Satan, holds the people in bondage. It is God's purpose to deliver them; the message therefore entrusted to Moses is for the ear of the Egyptian king. And what is the object of God in the emancipation of Israel ? "That they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness." It is for His own joy, His own joy in the joy of His redeemed. It is for the satisfaction of His own heart. How marvellous that the joy of God is concerned in our salvation! The delivery of the message brings out the true character of Pharaoh: " Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." He thus places himself in direct and complete antagonism with God. Solemn position! And this antagonism was never lessened, but went on until it ended in the overthrow and destruction of Pharaoh and his legions. A warning lesson, surely; for all who are unreconciled to God, as well as a revelation of the awful corruption of human nature, which can thus impiously confront, and audaciously defy, the power of God. Nor was this the transient expression of an irritated mind. For, in reply to the continued appeal of Moses and Aaron, he charged them with interfering with the work of the people. The god of this world is the incarnation of selfishness, and must therefore hate

God. This was exemplified at Philippi. The moment the preaching and action of the apostle interfered with the gains of the masters of the damsel who was possessed with the spirit of divination, it drew down upon him and his companion their bitterest enmity. So with Pharaoh. The prospect of losing the service of his slaves fills him with anger. The effect was that he increased the tasks of the people, laid upon them heavier burdens, in order to rivet more firmly than ever the fetters of their bondage. It is ever so. But spite of the power and subtlety of Satan, he always defeats himself. Indeed he has no foresight. He cannot see into the future any more than ourselves, and as a consequence he is continually overreaching himself. The people were idle (Pharaoh said), and "therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God" (Exodus 5:8). He desired accordingly that increased work should drive all such thoughts out of their minds. Ah! Satan will compass land and sea to prevent even one of his poor slaves escaping from his service. Hence if a soul is convicted of sin, and begins to yearn after liberty and peace with God, to escape from Egypt and to be saved, Satan will surround that soul with a thousand snares, fascinations, and entanglements. He will seek, just as Pharaoh did with the children of Israel, by increased occupation, by decoying him into a whirl of excitement or activity, to expel all such desires from his mind. If one such should read these pages, let him beware of these subtleties of the evil one, and let him turn resolutely away from all these wiles which are but intended to lure him to destruction; yea, let him, in the consciousness of all his need, and all his helplessness, look away to Him who through death has abrogated the rights of him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, that He might deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Hebrews 2:14-15). Believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, all such will be turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. The officers of Pharaoh were faithful, and mercilessly discharged their merciless duty (Exodus 5:10-14). The iron of oppression entered into the souls of the children of Israel, and in the bitterness of their hearts they "cried unto Pharaoh, saying, Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants?" etc (Exodus 5:15-18). But they cried in vain; for mercy is unknown to Satan, to him whose pleasure is found even in the sorrows of his servants. Disappointed in not finding relief at the hands of Pharaoh, they turned in their anger upon Moses and Aaron, and charged them with being the occasion of increasing the pressure of their servitude. "The Lord look upon you, and judge" (they said), "because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us" (Exodus 5:21). How true this is also in individual experience. In the bitter exercises through which the awakened sinner often passes, when he is overwhelmed by the sense of his guilt, and is made at the same time to feel the heavier weight of Satan's hand, how often he is tempted to wish for the days when he was free from all such conflicts and sorrows, not seeing that they are the pathway to deliverance.

Even Moses bows for the moment before the storm. Yearning, as he doubtless did, for the welfare and redemption of his people, and stung by their reproaches, doubt springs up before this new phase of Pharaoh's policy, and becoming impatient, he said, "Lord, wherefore hast Thou so evil entreated this people? Why is it that Thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast Thou delivered Thy people at all" (Exodus 5:22-23). Moses thus shared in the disappointment and impatience of the people. He had not yet learned to walk by faith and not by sight, nor to rest in the Lord and to wait patiently for Him. But yet even his failure arose from sympathy with the oppressed Israelites; and one of the first qualifications to help others is identification with their condition. So far Moses had fellowship with

the mind of the Lord; and He understood the thoughts of His servant's heart. He therefore commissions him anew, and again declares His purposes of grace and mercy, announcing His immutable fidelity to His covenant. Already He had accomplished two things; He had taught both Moses and the people the character of their oppressor, and the nature of their yoke. He had seemingly shut them up into Pharaoh's hand, and thereby produced in them a conviction of the hopelessness of their condition. This is uniformly His method. He never presents Himself as a Saviour until men know that they are guilty and undone. The Lord Jesus said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." As soon as men are willing to acknowledge themselves lost, then the Saviour stands before their souls. It is so here. The children of Israel are apparently in a worse case than before; they are despairing, and so is Moses. Thereon we have the blessed presentation and announcement of Exodus 6:1-30. The Lord therefore was but bringing His people through necessary discipline in Exodus 5:1-23. He does this for two reasons; to separate His people from the Egyptians, to produce between them an irreparable breach, and to pave the way for the display of His own power, that the children of Israel, indeed, might know that it was His hand alone that could bring them out of the land of Egypt. First, He declares that Pharaoh shall, under His hand, drive them out of his land (Exodus 6:1). Next, we have a revelation of great significance:

"And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am JEHOVAH: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty; but by My name JEHOVAH was I not known to them" (Exodus 6:2-3). This by no means implies that the name Jehovah was not used before; on the contrary, it is often found. But He had never yet taken it in relationship with His servants. Now He formally adopts it as His name of relationship with Israel, and it is only with Israel that it is thus employed. Believers of this dispensation know Him as their God and Father; and hence it would betray ignorance of their true position and relationship, as well as a confusion of dispensations, for them to use the term Jehovah. It is a name reserved for Israel, and consequently it will again be employed when they are brought back to a knowledge of their relationship with God in the millennium. That Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Jesus of the New is another question, but a question of exceeding moment and importance. He was really Jehovah in the midst of Israel, and as such forgave their iniquities and healed their diseases (Psalms 103:3); but He is never Jehovah for Christians. He has deigned to bring them into more intimate relationships; as indeed He revealed to Mary, and to His disciples through her, when 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).

Having now formally entered into relationship with the children of Israel, He recalls the covenant, with its terms, which He had established with their fathers (Exodus 6:4; compare Genesis 17:7-8); and then expressly states that it is in pursuance of His covenant (for He is faithful) that He has "heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage" (Exodus 6:5). It is on this foundation that He will deliver; viz., on what He is for them as Jehovah in the covenant which He made with their fathers, and the message which He now sends is accordingly most complete and comprehensive. It embraces His whole purpose for the nation. It gives, first of all, the name He has taken, Jehovah - "I am Jehovah;" it declares redemption - they shall be emancipated and redeemed, they shall be brought into relationship with Himself, - they shall be His people, and He will be their God; they shall know Him as their Redeemer, as the Lord their

God, which brought them out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and they shall be brought into the land which He had sworn to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and they should possess it for an heritage. And everything is made to depend upon what He is, the whole concluding with the repetition of the announcement, "I am Jehovah." He is thus both the Yea and the Amen, the Alpha and Omega, of their redemption. Surely a message of exceeding beauty. As everything is founded upon, so everything is completed by, what He is in Himself. All that He is therefore guarantees the commencement, and also the accomplishment of the redemption of His people.

Moses carried and delivered the message he had received unto the children of Israel : "but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage" (Exodus 6:9). Thus reduced to utter hopelessness, with their misery darkening all their souls, they are deaf to the gracious voice that proclaimed liberty and blessing. Moses is then sent again to Pharaoh to demand the liberty of the people; but disappointed at the fruitlessness of his mission to the Israelites, he replies, "Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips?" (Exodus 6:12). There is therefore nothing but failure. Pharaoh had rejected the Lord's demand; the children of Israel, stupefied by their heavy yoke, will not hearken to the glad tidings of grace, and Moses is unwilling to proceed; for he recalls his old objection, showing that, while he knew something of his own natural incompetency, he had not yet learnt that his all-sufficiency was to be found in the Lord. It is ever a fatal mistake when we measure the difficulties of service by what we are. The question is what God is; and the difficulties that appear as mountains, looming through the mists of our unbelief, are nothing to Him but the occasion for the display of His omnipotent power. The section ends, as far as appearances are concerned, with utter failure. But the Lord is not affected by human weakness or human resistance; His purposes, flowing from His own heart, and accomplished by His own power, are unchangeable. It is therefore exceedingly beautiful to note the action recorded in Exodus 6:13. "And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, and gave them a charge unto the children of Israel, and unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt." Unmoved by the deafness of His people, the failure of His servant, or the open antagonism of Pharaoh, He calmly proceeds to effect the redemption of His people. It will be observed that from the thirteenth to the thirtieth verse is a parenthesis. It would seem to be introduced for two reasons. It constitutes, in the first place, a new point of departure. Exodus 5:1-23, and the first part of Exodus 6:1-30 are, as we explained, preliminary - a kind of preface. On the one hand, the period embraced in it is a kind of day of grace for Pharaoh, when looked at simply as a man; on the other, it brings to light the real character of the conflict on which Jehovah was about to enter, and reveals the exact position and condition of all the parties concerned - Pharaoh, the children of Israel, and Moses. At the same time, the foundations on which Jehovah was about to act for His people, are laid broad and deep in His own character and covenant. That period now passed, the Lord commences anew, and hence the repetition of the charge to Moses and Aaron, embracing the object and scope of their mission. This gives the opportunity, in the second place, for the introduction of the genealogy of the people to be redeemed. The point of interest for us lies in the parentage of Moses and Aaron. "And Amram took him Jochebed, his father's sister, to wife; and she bare him Aaron and Moses" (Exodus 6:20). "These are that Aaron and Moses, to whom the Lord said, Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt, according to their armies. These are they which spake to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring out the children of Israel from Egypt :

these are that Moses and Aaron" (Exodus 6:26-27). Aaron was thus the elder brother, and it is interesting to notice that pious Amram and Jochebed were blessed in the preservation of both their children spite of the edict of the king. Aaron had in nature priority over Moses; but grace never follows the order of nature. It recognizes all the natural relationships which God has formed, and it can only bring sorrow if not dishonour where this truth is not tenaciously held; but as it is above, and outside nature altogether, it acts in its own sphere and according to its own laws. God therefore, acting according to His own sovereign rights, chose Moses, and not Aaron, though in consequence of the failure of Moses, and from tenderness to his weakness, He afterwards associated his brother with him in his work. But the divine order is, Moses and Aaron, while the natural order, as seen in the genealogy and in Exodus 6:26, is Aaron and Moses. The last three verses simply connect the narrative with Exodus 6:10. For the objection of Moses in Exodus 6:30 is evidently the same as that in Exodus 6:12. And yet there is reason for its repetition. In Exodus 3:1-22 and Exodus 4:1-31 Moses makes five difficulties in reply to the Lord; here in the sixth are two, making seven together. It was therefore the perfect exhibition of the weakness and unbelief of Moses. How it magnifies the grace and goodness of the Lord; for if in His presence man is revealed, it also brings to light what He is in all the perfection of His grace, love, mercy, and truth. Blessed be His name!

04.07. JUDGMENTS UPON EGYPT

JUDGMENTS UPON EGYPT Exodus 7:1-25; Exodus 8:1-32; Exodus 9:1-35; Exodus 10:1-29; Exodus 11:1-10

THESE chapters cannot be divided, as they form one continued narrative - a narrative of awful significance, containing, as it does, the record of the successive judgments which fell, with ever increasing severity, upon Egypt, until God thereby compelled Pharaoh to release the children of Israel from the iron bondage in which they had been held. We have therefore at the commencement a restatement of the mission of Moses and Aaron, of the purpose of Jehovah, and the manner in which He would effect, spite of the opposition of Pharaoh, the redemption of His people.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. Thou shalt speak all that I command thee; and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay My hand upon Egypt, and bring forth Mine armies, and My people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch forth Mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them. And Moses and Aaron did as the Lord commanded them, so did they" (Exodus 7:1-6). The Lord thus communicated to His servants what He intended to do, and how it would be accomplished. He unrolled the scroll of the future before their eyes to prepare them for their task, and to strengthen their faith. In like manner He has revealed to us the course of this world's history, warned us of the impending judgments, with the certain destruction of the world, and all who belong to it, if they heed not the monitions of His word, and the invitations of His grace; and, at the same time, He cheers us also with the sure prospect of redemption by power out of it, when the Lord returns to receive His people unto Himself He thus desired that Moses and Aaron, as He also desires for us, should have fellowship with His own purposes concerning both the world, the god of this world, and his poor, abject slaves. How it strengthens the heart and braces the soul to be filled with the thoughts of God! And what grace on His part to communicate them to us, that we may speak to others with authority and power!

Before we proceed to analyse these chapters there is one point - inasmuch as it often occasions difficulty to the believer, as well as draws forth the attacks of the enemy - that cannot be omitted. It lies in the words, "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart" (Exodus 7:3). The doubt that Satan would suggest in connection with this is, Where was the sin of Pharaoh if his heart was thus hardened? Or, How could God righteously destroy one whom He had hardened to resist Him? If the place in which these words occur had been carefully observed, the difficulty would have vanished. The fact is, the practice is so common of citing single verses of Scripture, apart from their context, that difficulties are created which would be dissipated in a moment, if the context were carefully examined. Be it then noted, that this is not said of Pharaoh until after he had contemptuously

rejected the claims of Jehovah. He had said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go" (Exodus 7:2). He rejected the word of the Lord, placed himself in open antagonism to Him and His people; and now his heart is judicially hardened. And God still acts upon the same principle. We thus read in 2 Thessalonians of some on whom He will send strong delusion that they should believe a lie. But wherefore? Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved (Exodus 2:9-12). Let the warning sink deep into the hearts of any unconverted ones whose eyes may fall upon these pages. There will be a time even for them, if they continue to refuse the gospel of God's grace, when it will be impossible for them to obtain salvation: God has fixed a limit even to His day of grace, even as He did for Pharaoh; and when that limit is overstepped there remains nothing but judgment. "To-day," then, "if ye hear His voice, harden not your hearts" (Hebrews 3:15). There is yet a pause. Moses and Aaron go in unto Pharaoh and present their credentials - attested by a miraculous sign, the sign which the Lord had taught Moses at Horeb. "Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent" (Exodus 7:10). The wise men of Egypt, the magicians, did the same with their rods; but "Aaron's rod swallowed up theft rods" (Exodus 7:12) - the Lord thus vindicating the mission of His servants. As, however, He had foretold, Pharaoh was not convinced; for "He hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said" (Exodus 7:13). Now God Himself appears on the scene, and a succession of terrible judgments falls upon Pharaoh and his land - judgments which will be known while time shall last as "the plagues of Egypt " They are ten in number. First, the waters of the Nile are turned into blood (Exodus 7:14-25); then follow the plagues of frogs (Exodus 8:1-15), of lice (Exodus 8:16-19), of the swarms of flies (Exodus 8:20-32), of the murrain of the cattle (Exodus 9:1-7), of boils (Exodus 9:8-12), of thunder and hail (Exodus 9:18-35), of the locusts (Exodus 10:1-20), of darkness (Exodus 10:21-29), and finally that of the death of the firstborn of man and beast (Exodus 11:1-10, Exodus 12:1-51). The Psalmist recounts them more than once in graphic language when celebrating the mighty works of the Lord in song - describing "how He had wrought His signs in Egypt, and His wonders in the field of Zoan" (73:43; see also Psalms 105:25-36).

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to give a detailed interpretation of these several plagues. Their general object is clear if we remember the character of the controversy which God had with Pharaoh. He dealt thus with Pharaoh as the oppressor of His people, as being in figure the god of this world; and hence His conflict was with Pharaoh and all that wherein Pharaoh trusted. We therefore read that He executed judgment upon the gods of Egypt (Exodus 12:12; Numbers 33:4). It was consequently the brilliant display of God's victorious power in the stronghold of Satan; for if Satan rise in conflict with God, the issue can only end in his utter defeat. First, therefore, the waters of Egypt - specially that of the sacred Nile, source of life and refreshment to Egypt and its people, from the monarch to the humblest of his subjects - are turned into blood, the symbol of death and judgment. As a consequence, "the fish that were in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river: and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt " (Exodus 7:21) Thus the river in which they boastfully gloried as an emblem of God, became an object of distaste and loathing. The plague of frogs followed. The frog was regarded with veneration by the Egyptians, being included by them among their sacred animals. Under the judicial hand of God these now "came up, and covered the land of Egypt," They were - even to come into the house of Pharaoh, into his bedchamber, and upon his bed, and into the house of his servants, and upon his people, and into the ovens and kneading-troughs (Exodus 8:3-6). The

objects of their sacred admiration were thus turned into a pest - beheld with horror and detestation; and for the moment the heart of Pharaoh was so bowed under the affliction that he was constrained to sue for respite (Exodus 8:8). The neat blow was of a different kind - aimed more at the persons of the Egyptians. This was the plague of lice. Both ancient and modern historians testify to the scrupulous cleanliness of the Egyptians. Herodotus (2:37) says that so scrupulous were the priests on this point that they used to shave the hair of their heads and bodies every third day, for fear of harbouring vermin while occupied in their sacred duties.

Note: Cited from Dr. BwTH's Dictionary of the Bible. See Article " Lice," and for other testimonies. This stroke would therefore humble their pride and stain their glory, rendering themselves objects of dislike and disgust. The swarms of flies come next (Exodus 8:20-32). It would seem to be impossible to fix with any precision an exact meaning to the word translated "flies," many contending that "beetles" are indicated. Be this as it may, the plague shows an increasing severity by the effect produced. It is also in connection with this that we find, for the first time, a formal division put between the children of Israel and the Egyptians (Exodus 8:22-23). The Lord in the neat place dealt with the cattle - sending a grievous murrain, so that "all the cattle of Egypt died: but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one" (Exodus 9:6). Pharaoh verified for himself the destruction made (Exodus 9:7); but his heart was still hardened. This blow fell upon one of the sources of Egypt 's wealth and prosperity. Bodily sufferings, both for man and beast, followed - arising from "a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt " (Exodus 9:9). The destruction of the growing crops of the field by hail and thunder formed the neat plague; and this was succeeded by the locusts; and they "went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt " (Exodus 10:14-15). This blow reached the sources of supply for bodily needs. The locusts gone, at the entreaty of the Egyptian king, and he still hardened, there was now "a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings" (Exodus 10:22-23). "In Egypt the sun was worshipped under the title of Re or Ra: the name came conspicuously forward as the title of the kings, Pharaoh, or rather Phra, meaning 'the sun.'"

Note: Wilikinson's Ancient Egyptians (iv.287-289), cited from SMITH'S Dictionary of the Bible under article "Sun." Not only therefore was the source of light and heat eclipsed for the Egyptians; but the god they worshipped was obscured - and his powerlessness demonstrated - a proof, had they but eyes to see, that a mightier than the sun, yea, the Creator of the sun, was dealing with them in judgment. The death of the firstborn was the final blow. But comment upon this may be reserved until the twelfth chapter. Looking, however, at these plagues as a whole, one cannot fail to be struck with their correspondency with those that will be visited upon the world at a later day, during the sway of the antichrist (See Revelation 16:1-14). Pharaoh indeed is no mean adumbration of this last antagonist of God and His Christ. But as God was glorified in His controversy with the one, so will He be in that with the other; for if Pharaoh rushed to his doom, and was whelmed in the waters of the Red Sea, he and all his host, the antichrist, rising to a still greater height of daring

impiety, will, together with the "beast" whose false prophet he had been, be "cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone" (Revelation 19:20). Well then might the Psalmist cry, "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little" (Psalms 2:12). It would be folly, indeed, to be deaf to the lessons which God's controversy with Pharaoh so loudly proclaims. "The carnal mind is enmity against God" (Romans 8:7). Every unconverted one is therefore in open antagonism with God - an enemy of God. What grace on His part to send such repeated messages of grace, such fervent entreaties of love, beseeching, by the gospel, sinners to be reconciled to Him. He has given His only begotten Son to die, and on the foundation of the atonement which He has made for sin by His death, He can righteously save every one that believeth. But if His grace is refused, "how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (Hebrews 2:3). What folly, then, on the sinner's part to rest for a single day in his unsaved condition, knowing not how soon he may be called to a doom as irrevocable as that which fell upon the Egyptian king.

It may be interesting now to trace for a little the opposition of the Egyptian magicians to the wonder-working power of Moses and Aaron in the presence of Pharaoh. The chief of these are mentioned by name in the New Testament. We read, "As Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth" (2 Timothy 3:8). This reference is highly important as showing that a principle of Satan's acting is embodied in the conduct of the magicians. What, then, it may be asked, was its especial character? It was, in one word, IMITATION. Thus when Aaron cast down his rod, and it became a serpent, "they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents" (Exodus 7:11-12). So also when the waters of Egypt were smitten with the rod of God, and they became blood, the magicians "did so with their enchantments" (Exodus 7:22). It was the same in the case of the frogs (Exodus 8:7). Their action was thus an imitation of the action of Moses and Aaron. In Timothy also the men who are said to resist the truth, as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, are described as "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3:5). This is one of Satan's most dangerous subtleties. If he can succeed in open opposition to the truth, he will not conceal himself; but if this door of antagonism is closed, he will transform himself into an angel of light. It was so in St Paul's days; and it is especially the case at the present moment. Professing Christians would scarcely be led away by the open exhibition of Satanic power; but how many are seduced by it because outwardly it is an imitation of the divine. Take one of the grossest examples of this. If Roman Catholicism, with all its vile profanations of the truth, were not dressed up in the outward garb of Christianity, could it by any possibility deceive souls? But claiming to be able to dispense every blessing, which has been secured by the death of Christ, it seduces the souls of men by thousands, and brings them under the complete dominion of its falsehoods and corruptions. It is therefore, as a system, one of Satan's most successful instrumentalities. But there are greater dangers. There is not a single operation of the Spirit of God, nor a single form of His working, that Satan does not imitate. His counterfeits are around us on every hand, within and without. But thanks be to God, He has provided us with sufficient safeguards, and with the means of the detection of every phase of his ensnaring arts. "These things," says St John, "have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him" (1 John 2:26-27). The Spirit and the word of God are sufficient to preserve us from the most dangerous simulations

of the truth that Satan may present to our souls.

More than this, if there is but the steadfast adherence to God and His truth, the workings of Satan will in due time be exposed. Three times did these instruments of his "withstand" Moses. But when the plague of lice was brought in, a question of producing life from the dust of the earth, the magicians were powerless, and compelled to confess that it was "the finger of God" (Exodus 8:18-19). Life belongs to God; He only is its source; and hence here the efforts of Satan are baffled, and we read of no further attempt on the part of his instruments to intercept the force of the divine signs. In the next chapter, indeed, we find that they "could not stand before Moses because of the boils" (Exodus 9:11). They themselves have fallen under the punitive hand of God. We may therefore rest confidently, whatever the present seeming success of the evil one; for "the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Romans 16:20).

It will give a more complete view of this section if the effects of these judicial plagues on Pharaoh's mind are also noticed. A momentary impression was produced by the scourge of the frogs. "Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Entreat the Lord, that He may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord" (Exodus 8:8). Moses responded to this request, and fixed the time for the entreaty, that, in the divine answer to it, Pharaoh might as certainly recognise the hand of the Lord as in the infliction of the judgment. It is beautiful to notice God's tender ways of grace, even with a hardened sinner. If there be but the slightest turning of heart to Him, although He knows that it is not real, there is readiness to hear - a striking testimony to the fact that He willeth not the sinner's death, that indeed He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). The Lord thus heard, and "did according to the word of Moses; and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the villages, and out of the fields" (Exodus 8:13). But what was the consequence? "When Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said" (Exodus 8:15). What a picture of the evil heart of man! Bowed down under the hand of God, alarmed for the consequences, he cries for relief, and promises that if it be granted he will certainly conform himself to the divine commands. The relief is bestowed, and he straightway forgets both his fears and his vows. Many a sinner has thus been brought by sudden sickness down to the door of death, and he has cried aloud for mercy. God heard his prayer, and restored him to health. But instead of devoting himself, as he thought and purposed, to the service of God, he returns to his former course of forgetfulness and sin. The fact is, in all such cases, the conscience has never been really awakened; there has been no sense of guilt before God, no acceptance of His testimony to man's lost and ruined condition, and consequently no recourse to His saving grace as revealed in Christ Jesus as the Saviour; and the vows that were made, were really made as a kind of propitiatory offering to obtain the removal of the hand of God. When relieved, therefore, since there has been no change, no conversion to God, the stream of their lives, diverted for a moment, naturally returns to its former channels. Oh, how many there are of whom this is true! how many of whom it may be said, when they saw that there was respite, they hardened their heart! If these words should meet the eyes of any such, let them sink deep into their hearts; if so be that, awakened to their true condition, they may, while the opportunity still lingers, confess before God that they are guilty, undone sinners, and look alone to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. "Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance. But, after thy

hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath" (as Pharaoh did), "against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Romans 2:4-5). The fourth plague - that of the swarms of flies - seemed to produce a deeper impression. "Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land." This was a most subtle offer, and one that might easily have ensnared Moses and Aaron if they had not known the character and mind of God. Satan has no objection whatever to his servants being religious if they will still continue under his away. They may profess to serve God as much and as loudly as they may, if they will but recognise his authority. If they will but fall down and worship him, as in the temptation presented to our blessed Lord in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-25), he will grant them all the desires of their heart. If they will but remain of the world, the world and its god will love their own. Hence Satan will continually advise - "Serve me and God. Sacrifice to your God, but remain in the land." One word of Scripture will unravel all such specious reasonings: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). Moses, who has true discernment, because he has the mind of God, perceives this, and accordingly replies, "It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God: lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us? We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the Lord our God, as He shall command us" (Exodus 8:26-27). Moses was not deceived; he knew that Christ was, and must be, an object of contempt to the Egyptians ["to the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:23)] and that there must be irreconcilable antagonism between them and His people. "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). Egypt therefore could not be a place for the people of God. Moses thus adds two things: First, they must go three days' journey into the wilderness. The number three is significant in this connection - three days' journey being the distance of death. (Compare Numbers 10:33). They must moreover sacrifice to the Lord their God, as He should command them. Here are truly grand and fundamental principles. Nothing but death - death with Christ - can separate us from Egypt. Hence St Paul says, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world" (Egypt) "is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Egypt) (Galatians 6:14). No outward change or reformation will bring us out of the house of bondage - nothing but the cross - the death of Christ, made ours through faith in His name. Secondly, there must be obedience to the Lord. No other authority must for one moment be allowed or accepted. Obedience is the first duty, and covers the whole ground of the responsibility of the Christian. Hence indeed the necessity of a total break with, separation (by death) from, the world. Had Moses consented to remain in Egypt, he would have acknowledged Pharaoh's government, and this would have been inconsistent with Jehovah's complete and absolute claims. These two principles - separation from the world, and obedience to Christ - should be engraven upon the hearts of the Lord's people. For they are the basis of their true position and responsibility. Everything indeed flows from these two sources. One thing more may be learned from these words of Moses. No service, or so-called service, can be acceptable to God unless according to His word. Worship and service must be governed by the Lord's own mind. It is therefore not what we deem good and pious, not what we may term worship or good works, but what He considers such. The word of God is consequently the test of everything, and must have the supreme place in the heart and conscience of the Christian, and regulate his whole life. All the corruptions of Christendom, all the failure and ruin of

the church, are to be traced back to the neglect of this vital principle. The word of God is the only lamp to our feet, and light to our path (Psalms 119:105). The moment a single human regulation is accepted, whether by the individual or the church, declension and corruption ensue; for another authority is conjoined with that of Christ. It is, as a consequence, our responsibility to test everything around by the word of God. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 2:11 etc).

Pharaoh does not openly reject the demand of Moses; he temporizes, dissembles, to obtain the removal of the stroke. His cry is, "Entreat for me" (Exodus 8:28). Moses assents, but adds the solemn warning, showing that he saw through the king's flimsy veil of hypocrisy, "Let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the Lord" (Exodus 8:29). But the trouble gone, the usual record is made, "And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go" (Exodus 8:32). Thereon followed another judgment; but Pharaoh was impervious to the stroke. At least there was no outward sign of any relenting. This led to a most solemn and, we may say, awful message as a preface to the next infliction - the plague of thunder and hail (Exodus 9:13-19). The king staggered under the blow, and again besought relief. He even confessed that he had sinned, and that the Lord was righteous, etc., and once more promised that he would let the people go, provided there might be no more mighty thunderings and hail (Exodus 9:27-28). The iniquity of Pharaoh is thus brought to light. He sees and avows his guilt, and yet persists in his evil course - his open antagonism to the Lord. For, spite of his confession, no sooner had the Lord answered the entreaty of Moses than he reverted to his hardened ways. But again and again are we reminded that this was no surprise to God. All this happened "as the Lord had spoken by Moses" (Exodus 9:35). He saw the end from the beginning; but He removed His hand at the intercession of Moses on behalf of the Egyptian king. God is never impatient even in the presence of open rebellion. He waits His own time - bearing with the wickedness and impiety of men in long-suffering and grace. If He is thus forbearing, we surely might learn to be so also - turning our eyes to Him, confident that in His own time He will vindicate His righteous government before the eyes of the world. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him" (Psalms 37:7). A new action took place in connection with the threat of the locusts. The servants of Pharaoh, alarmed at the prospect, now interfered. They said unto him, "How long shall this man be a snare unto us? let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?" (Exodus 10:7). At their instance "Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh: and he said unto them, Go, serve the Lord your God: but who are they that shall go?" (Exodus 10:8). This reveals once again the wretched heart of this most wretched king. If compelled, he will relax his grasp, but even then he will retain all that he can. He clings tenaciously to what he possessed, and so tenaciously that he will bargain, if possible, with Moses concerning those who should depart. But "Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go: for we must hold a feast unto the Lord. And he said unto them, Let the Lord be so with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones: look to it; for evil is before you. Not so: go now ye that are men, and serve the Lord; for that ye did desire. And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence" (Exodus 10:9-11). This was surely a cunning wile of Satan - professing willingness to let the men go if they would but leave their little ones behind in Egypt. Thereby he would have falsified the testimony of the Lord's redeemed ones, and retained a most powerful hold upon them through their natural affections. For how could they have done with Egypt as long as their children were there? Satan knew this, and

hence the character of this temptation. And how many Christians there are who are entangled in the snare! Professing to be the Lord's, to have left Egypt, they allow their families to remain still behind. As another has said, "Parents in the wilderness, and their children in Egypt. Terrible anomaly. This would only have been a half deliverance; at once useless to Israel, and dishonouring to Israel's God. This could not be. If the children remained in Egypt, the parents could not possibly be said to have left it, inasmuch as their children were part of themselves. The most that could be said in such a case was, that in part they were serving Jehovah, and in part Pharaoh. But Jehovah could have no part with Pharaoh. He should either have all or nothing. This is a weighty principle for Christian parents.... It is our happy privilege to count on God for our children, and to 'bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.'" (Ephesians 6:4). These admirable and weighty words should be deeply pondered in the presence of God. For nowhere does our testimony so manifestly break down as in our families. Godly parents, whose walk is blameless, are seduced into permitting their children practices which they would not for one moment allow for themselves, and thus to flood their houses with the sights and sounds of Egypt. This all springs from not recognizing, as Moses did, that the children, together with their parents, belong to God, and form His people on the earth; that therefore it would be a denial of this blessed truth to leave them in the place out of which they themselves, by the grace of God, through the death and resurrection of Christ, have been delivered. It cannot therefore be too strongly urged, that the parent's responsibility covers the whole family; that he is bound before God to hold his children as belonging to the Lord, or otherwise he can never train them up in the way they should go, counting upon Him to show that they are manifestly His by the work of His grace and Spirit.

Pharaoh was angered by these demands, and Moses, together with Aaron, is driven from the king's presence. The locusts are thereon called for by the power of God, and "they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened" (Exodus 10:15). Under the pressure of this grievous stroke, Pharaoh once again summoned Moses and Aaron into his presence, confessed his sin against the Lord their God, and against them - besought forgiveness, and asked that they would entreat the Lord their God "that He may take away from me this death only" (Exodus 10:16-17). The Lord heard the intercession of Moses, and the locusts were removed, and cast into the Red Sea ; "there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt " (Exodus 10:19).

Forgetting immediately his terror and his word, darkness was brought over the land of Egypt for three days (Exodus 10:22-23). Once again "Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you. And Moses said, Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt-offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God. Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind : for thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God; and we know not with what we must serve the Lord until we come thither" (Exodus 10:24-26). The question was one of leaving Egypt to serve the Lord. He therefore not only claimed the people as His, but also all their possessions. On this account Moses repudiated Pharaoh's title to anything. To have done otherwise would at once have been the acknowledgment of his authority. Pharaoh was indeed the enemy of the people of God, holding them in captivity in opposition to His will. As such he is treated by Moses in the rejection of his claims. Besides, they were going forth to sacrifice to the Lord their God, and until delivered from Egypt they knew not with what they must serve the Lord. Pharaoh's stipulation therefore could not for a single moment be allowed. There lies in the words of Moses a principle of the first importance

- that God claims all that we have as well as ourselves. Everything must on this account be held at His disposal. He gives, and He demands from us. This was beautifully exemplified in the case of David when providing materials for the temple. "Of Thine own have we given Thee" (1 Chronicles 29:14). We must not, as the people of God, take from the world, even as Abraham refused to be made rich by the king of Sodom (Genesis 14:22-23); neither must we own the world's claims upon what the Lord has given us. Not a hoof must be left behind, or it might be that very hoof the Lord would demand for sacrifice. It is also striking to observe that, according to the words of Moses, the Lord's mind could not be learned in Egypt. They must be redeemed out of it, and be separated, through death and resurrection, unto God before they could be instructed as to the nature of His service. Though Pharaoh thus opposes every demand upon him concerning the Lord's people, we see that he temporizes with his subtleties; for Jehovah's hand is lifted up in judgment, and is falling in its successive strokes upon Pharaoh and his land, so that he would fain escape their power. Now, however, he is roused to a higher pitch of stubbornness, rushing headlong to his doom, spite of grace, warning, and judgment. "The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go. And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more: for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die. And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more" (Exodus 10:27-29). The Lord thereon proceeds to instruct Moses preparatory to their march out of Egypt. "Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt ; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether. Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow" (i.e. "ask;" see footnote 2) "of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold. And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people" (Exodus 8:1-3).

Everything was thus prepared; and Moses accordingly delivers his final message - a message full of solemnity and dignity, suited indeed to the majesty of Him whose messenger he was. The contents of the message will be considered in the next chapter. Moses having ended his mission, "went out from Pharaoh in a great anger" (Exodus 11:8). He was now in full communion with the mind of God, filled as he was with a holy indignation against Pharaoh's sin. (Compare Mark 3:5.) All his timidity has vanished, and he stands before the king calm and fearless, consciously invested with the authority of Jehovah. But as the Lord had foretold, and now repeats, Pharaoh would not yield. "Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you; that My wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt. And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh: and the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go out of his land" (Exodus 11:9-10).

04.08. THE PASSOVER LAMB

THE PASSOVER LAMB

Exodus 12:1-51

Two things contained in the eleventh chapter may be recalled. First, the announcement of the judgment upon the firstborn; and, secondly, the difference made "between the Egyptians and Israel " (Exodus 11:4-7). It is in the passover lamb that the reconciliation of these two things lies. For God now raises the question of sin, and thus necessarily presents Himself in the character of Judge. But the moment He does this, both the Egyptians and the Israelites alike are obnoxious to His judgment, inasmuch as both are sinners in His sight. True it was His purpose to redeem Israel out of Egypt and it is also quite true that in the exercise of His own sovereign rights He can make a difference between the one and the other. But God can never cease to be God, and all His actions must be the expression of what He is in some aspect or character; and hence if He spare Israel - they being equally guilty with the Egyptians, both alike being sinners - while He destroys Egypt, He can only do so in harmony with His own nature. In other words, His righteousness must be as much displayed in the salvation of the one as the destruction of the other. And it is of immense moment to perceive that grace itself can only reign through righteousness (Romans 5:21). Now this is the very problem solved in this chapter - how God could righteously spare Israel when He destroyed the firstborn of Egypt. He appears to both alike as a Judge; and it will be seen that the only ground of the difference made, lay not in any moral superiority of Israel over Egypt, BUT WHOLLY AND SOLELY IN THE BLOOD OF THE PASCHAL LAMB. It was grace that made the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; it was grace too that provided the lamb; but the blood of that lamb - type as it was of the Lamb of God, Christ our Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7) - met every claim which God had upon Israel because of their sins, and hence He could righteously shelter them while the destroyer was carrying death into every household of the Egyptians. It was in the blood of the Lamb that mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace kissed each other. This will be fully seen as we pursue the details of the chapter.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you" (Exodus 12:1-2).

Before God time counts for nothing as long as the sinner is in his sins. Until we are sheltered under the blood of Christ we have not begun to live in His sight. We may have lived thirty, forty, or fifty years; but if we have not been born again, it is all waste time. Waste time? Waste as far as God is concerned; but, oh, how pregnant with results for eternity, should we continue in that condition! Every day of that period has added to our guilt, to the number of our sins, all of which are recorded in the book that will be opened at the judgment of the great white throne, should we pass into eternity unsaved. What a verdict upon the world's strivings and activities, upon the hopes and ambitions of men! They tell us of the nobility of life, speak of deeds of glory and fame, and seek to inspire our youth with the desire to emulate the deeds of those whose names are enrolled in the historic page. God speaks, and by one word dispels the illusion, proclaiming that not yet

have such begun to live. Without life towards Him, however great such may loom in the eyes of men, they are dead, their true history has not yet commenced. So with the Israelites. They have been hitherto the servants of Pharaoh, slaves of Satan; they have not yet commenced to serve the Lord, and hence the month of their redemption was to be the first month of the year to them. From this point their true life's history began.

"Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: and if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls: every man, according to his eating, shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year; ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: and ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts, and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning, ye shall burn with fire.

"And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste; it is the LORD'S passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever. Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread, even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel. And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you. And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this self-same day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt : therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever.

"In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one-and-twentieth day of the month at even. Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land. Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread" (Exodus 12:3-20). In the midst of judgment God remembers mercy. If He will smite the Egyptians, and if He cannot (cannot consistently with the attributes of His character) spare Israel, unless His claims upon them are fully and adequately met, He will Himself, acting from His own heart, in the exercise of His sovereign rights, according to the riches of His grace, provide the lamb whose blood should form the foundation on which He could righteously exempt His people from the stroke, and bring them out of the house of their bondage. Observe it well, that in the matter of our salvation, as in the

redemption of Israel, the question is not what we are, but what God is. It is grounded therefore upon the immutable basis of His own character; and hence as soon as atonement has been made (as will be seen in the progress of this history) all that God is, is pledged for our security.

There are several features in this Scripture demanding distinct and separate notice. First, the lamb. As already pointed out, the whole value of this passover lamb springs from its being a type of Christ. St Paul thus says, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast" (1 Corinthians 5:7-8). We are warranted therefore, on divine authority, in seeing the Lamb of God under the shadow of this interesting type; and it is on this account that every detail of this chapter becomes invested with such exceeding interest. On the tenth day of the month the lamb was to be taken - a male of the first year, and without blemish - and it was to be kept up until the fourteenth day of the same month. This has generally been thought to correspond with the setting apart of the lamb in the counsels of God; i.e. on the tenth day, and the actual sacrifice in time on the fourteenth day. But another suggestion has been made, which is given and commended to the judgment of the reader. The tenth day, according to this, will correspond with the entrance of Christ upon His public ministry, when He was marked out by John the Baptist, in a most striking way, as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Then if the Lord's ministry embraced the term of three years, made up of two whole years and parts of two more, this would, according to Jewish reckoning, be four years, and the time of His death would therefore correspond with the fourteenth day. But why, it may be asked, is the number ten taken for the setting of the lamb apart? Because it is the number of responsibility Godward, and it thereby teaches that ere our blessed Lord was publicly owned as the Lamb of God, He had met every responsibility before God, and was thus proved to be without blemish, qualified by what He was in Himself, to be the sacrifice for sin. He was God's lamb, and it is full of blessed consolation that the lamb was of God's providing. Man could have never known what sacrifice would have been acceptable. Israel would have remained in bondage until this day, had it been left to them to devise a means of satisfying the claims of God on account of their sins. Hence God in His mercy and grace furnished a lamb whose blood would suffice to take away the sin of the world. There can never be therefore any other method of cleansing from sin, any other means of shelter from the just judgment of God: the blood of Christ, inasmuch as it is provided by God, is exclusive of all other methods. The lamb was to be killed on the fourteenth day of the month. "The whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening" (Exodus 12:6). All must be identified with the slain lamb. It was for the whole assembly it was to be killed. As a matter of fact every household had its lamb, for every family must be specifically under its shelter; on the other hand, "the assembly of the congregation" is looked upon as a whole. These two unities were ever preserved in the Jewish economy - that of the assembly, and that of the household. That of the family runs throughout the patriarchal age; and now that God is calling a people out of Egypt for Himself, while He establishes the unity of the whole, that of the household is still preserved. They are combined in the ordinance of the passover - the families apart, and the congregation as a whole. In the next place the sprinkling of the blood is enjoined. The slain lamb would not have ensured the protection of a single household. Had the people rested in the fact that the lamb was killed, the destroyer would have found no bar to his entrance into their houses. There would not have been a house in all their tribes without its dead, equally with those of the Egyptians. No; it was not the death of the lamb, but the sprinkling of the blood, that secured their safety (Exodus 12:7, Exodus 12:13, Exodus 12:23). Let the reader ponder it well. Is there no danger of his resting

in the fact of Christ's death for protection - without a moment's concern whether he is under its blessed efficacy and value before God? The death of Christ will not save a single soul (we do not speak of infants) apart from faith in Himself. It is quite true that He has made a propitiation for sin - a propitiation which has glorified God in every attribute of His character, on the ground of which He can righteously, and with glory to Himself, bestow a full, complete, and an everlasting salvation upon every sinner that approaches Him through faith in its value. For God hath set forth Christ "a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, at this time, His righteousness: that He might be just, and 'the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3:25-26). But there must be the personal identification with the shed blood through faith, or it will have been, as far as such an one is concerned, shed in vain. How then, let it be inquired, did the Israelites come under its protection and value? It was simply and solely through the obedience of faith. They were enjoined to "take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts, and on the upper door-post of the houses," to "take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning" (Exodus 12:7, Exodus 12:22). They thus had nothing whatever to do excepting to believe and obey. It was not theirs to discuss the method provided, its reasonableness or otherwise, or its probable value. Everything depended upon the heed they gave to the word of God. So now God requires nothing from the sinner but faith - faith in His testimony to his own condition and guilt which expose him to judgment, and faith in the provision made for his need through the death of Christ. If an Israelite, from any pretext whatever, had disregarded the divine command, he could not have escaped the destroyer's stroke. In like manner if a sinner now refuses, on any plea, to bow to God's word respecting his condition, and also concerning Christ, nothing can avert the stroke of eternal judgment. But the moment the Israelite, in simple obedience, sprinkled the blood upon his dwelling, he was inviolably secure through that night of terror and death. The moment, too, a sinner believes in Christ, he is everlastingly safe, for he is protected by all the unspeakable value of His precious blood. Then he may sing with exulting confidence -

Though the restless foe accuses,

Sins recounting like a flood;

Every charge our God refuses;

Christ hath answered with His blood."

Remark, also, to emphasize this truth still more, that the safety of the people depended in no degree whatever upon their own moral state, nor upon their own thoughts, feelings, or experiences. The sole question was, whether the blood was or not sprinkled as directed. If it were, they were safe; if it were not, they were exposed to the judgment then passing through the land of Egypt. They might have been timid, fearful, and despondent; they might have spent the whole night in questionings; but still, if the blood was upon their dwellings, they were effectually shielded from the destroyer's stroke, It was the value of the blood, and that alone, which afforded them protection. Again, if they had been the best people in the world, as men speak, they would have perished equally with the vilest of the Egyptians, if without the sprinkled blood. The foundation of their safety, be it repeated, lay alone in the blood of the Passover lamb. It is the same now with

every one in this land. Very soon judgments, far transcending those of Egypt, will descend upon this world, and these will be but the precursors of the last judgment of all before the great white throne, the certain issue of which is the second death (Revelation 20:1-15), and no one will escape these unless sheltered by the blood of Christ. Can the reader, then, wonder if the question is pressed upon him with earnestness, nay, even with affectionate vehemence, Art thou safe through the blood of Christ? Give thyself no rest day or night until this question is settled, until thou knowest, on the foundation of God's immutable word, that thou art as safe as the Israelites were in their sprinkled dwellings on this dark and terrible night.

It should be remarked, moreover, that the sprinkled blood was for the eye of God. As another has observed, "It is not said, When you see it, but, When I see it. The soul of an awakened person often rests, not on its own righteousness, but on the way in which it sees the blood. Now, precious as it is to have the heart deeply impressed with it, this is not the ground of peace. Peace is founded on God's seeing it. He cannot fail to estimate it at its full and perfect value as putting away sin. It is He that abhors and has been offended by sin; He sees the value of the blood as putting it away. It may be said, But must I not have faith in its value? This is faith in its value, seeing that God looks at it as putting away sin; your value for it looks at it as a question of the measure of your feelings. Faith looks at God's thoughts." It would save anxious ones from many weary days and nights of perplexity and anguish if this point were remembered. There is nothing beyond accepting God's own testimony as to the value of the blood. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." All that God is, is against sin, and consequently all that He is, is satisfied with the blood of Christ, or He must still punish sin. His declaration, therefore, that He will spare when He sees the blood, is a distinct testimony to the fact that it has made a full and perfect expiation for sin. If, then, He is satisfied with the blood of Christ, cannot the sinner be also satisfied? And remember that the sinner's unworthiness cannot be pleaded as a bar to its efficacy. If it might, then the blood alone were not sufficient. The moment God's eye rests upon the blood, His whole moral nature is satisfied; and He as righteously spares those who are under its protection and value, as He smites the Egyptians. The question, however, may be preferred, In what way can we now be brought under the efficacy of the blood of Christ? The Israelites were brought under the shelter of the blood of the passover lamb through faith. They received the message, believed its import, sprinkled the blood according to the directions given, and were thus secured against the judgment-stroke. It is simpler now. The glad tidings of redemption through the blood of Christ are proclaimed, the message is received; and immediately it is received, the eye of God beholds the soul under all its efficacy and value. Every one, therefore, who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is delivered from the wrath to come. Peace with God is thus founded upon the blood of Christ. For "the blood signified the moral judgment of God, and the full and entire satisfaction of all that was in His being. God, such as He was, in His justice, His holiness, and His truth, could not touch those who were sheltered by that blood. Was there sin? His love towards His people had found the means of satisfying the requirements of His justice; and at the sight of that blood, which answered everything that was perfect in His being, He passed over it consistently with His justice, and even His truth." Peace with God, therefore, we repeat, is based upon the blood of Christ.

There is yet another thing. The passover lamb, whose blood had been sprinkled upon the dwellings of Israel, was to be eaten, and eaten in a special manner with its accompaniments, and

in a prescribed attitude. Each of these points has its own interest and instruction. "They shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire." It must not be eaten "raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof" (Exodus 12:9). Fire is a symbol of the holiness of God applied in judgment; and hence the lamb on which they fed told, in figure, that Another had borne the fire of judgment, passed through it, on their behalf. "Roast with fire" speaks thus of Christ who bore our sins in His own body on the tree, and was made sin for us, when He was exposed to the full, unsparing, and searching action of fire - God's judgment against sin. If therefore He spared His people, it was only on the ground of Another bearing what was their righteous due. What love then was expressed in delivering up His Son to such a death! Well might the Spirit of God say, He spared not His own Son, when He devoted Him to receive the stroke of the sinner's judgment.

"To us, our God His love commends,

When by our sins undone;

That He might spare His enemies,

He would not spare His Son." And how gratefully must the children of Israel have fed upon this lamb roast with fire. If their eyes were opened they would surely say, "The blood of this victim is screening us from the awful judgment which is falling upon the Egyptians; the flesh we are eating has passed through the fire, to which we otherwise must have been exposed." And the thought, as they expressed it, could not fail to move their hearts to thanksgiving and praise to Him who had in His grace provided such a mode of escape and safety.

Two things were to accompany the eating of the lamb - unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Leaven is a type of evil, and hence the unleavened bread speaks, as on the one hand of the absence of evil, so on the other of purity and holiness. The apostle Paul speaks of the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. This may be entered into more fully when we speak more at large of the feast of unleavened bread associated with the passover (Exodus 12:14-20). It will suffice now to have marked its character. "Bitter herbs" represent the effect of entering into the sufferings of Christ in our behalf; repentance, self-judgment in the presence of God. These two things therefore portray the state of soul in which alone we can truly feed upon the lamb roast with fire. And it is beautiful to notice, how that the One who has borne the righteous judgment of God against their sins now becomes the food of His people. Remark, too, that nothing was to be left until the morning. Should there be any remaining it was to be burnt with fire (Exodus 12:10). The same direction was given afterwards for most of the sacrifices that were to be eaten. (See Leviticus 11:15.) This was a provision undoubtedly against the danger of its being consumed as common food. It could only be eaten in association with the judgment through which it had passed. "The flesh" of Christ cannot be eaten except in the apprehension of His death. So here on the passover night, together with the morning, when the judgment had passed, they might forget the import of the lamb roast with fire; but the direction to burn what was left would recall its character, as well as prevent its degradation to common food. It was only around the passover table that they could properly feed upon the passover lamb. Their attitude was to be in harmony with the position into which they had been brought. "And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste; it is the Lord's passover" (Exodus 12:11). All bespeaks the character to be assumed consequent upon their redemption - for they were about to leave Egypt

for ever to march through the wilderness as pilgrims to their promised inheritance. Their loins were girded - in readiness for service, detached from the scene in which thou had so long been held as captives, so that nothing might detain or impede them when the signal for the journey should be given; their shoes on their feet - prepared, shod for the march. ; their staff in their hand - the sign of their pilgrim character, for they were quitting what had been their home, to become strangers in the wilderness; and they were to eat the passover in haste - for they knew not at what moment the summons might be given, and hence they were to be ready - watching and ready. A true picture of the believer's attitude in this world. Would that we all more entirely answered to it! Again and again are we exhorted to have our loins girded; and to have our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:1-24) is necessary if we would have on the whole armour of God. To maintain indeed the pilgrim character belongs to one of the first lessons of our Christian life, seeing that this is not our rest; and to be in the attitude of waiting for Christ belongs to our expectation of His return. This is true, but it is another thing to ask if these things characterize believers now as they should. What we need is a deeper sense of the character of the scene through which we are passing - that it is a judged scene, that God has already judged it in the death of Christ "Now," said He, "is the judgment of this world." Having the sense of this in our souls, we shall have no temptation to linger in it; but as true pilgrims, with our loins girded about, and our lights burning, we should ourselves be like unto men that wait for their Lord (Luke 12:35-36). The feast of unleavened bread is appointed in connection with the passover (Exodus 12:14-20). It was not kept in the land of Egypt, for on the same night that God smote the firstborn the children of Israel commenced their journey. But the connection is preserved to show its true typical significance. It is the same in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (Revelation 7:1-17; Revelation 8:1-13). Leaven, as before explained, is a type of evil - evil which spreads and assimilates the mass through which it spreads to its own character. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Corinthians 5:6). To eat unleavened bread therefore will signify separation from evil - practical holiness. Mark, too, that the feast was to last for seven days - i.e. a complete period of time. The lesson, then, in its interpretation is that holiness is incumbent upon all who are sheltered by the blood of the Paschal Lamb throughout the entire period of their lives on earth. This is the import of the connection of the feast with the passover. If we are saved by the grace of God through the sprinkled blood of Christ, our wretched hearts might reason we might indulge in sin that grace may abound. "No!" says the Spirit of God, "but as soon as you are under the value of the death of Christ, you are under the responsibility to be separate from evil." God thus looks for an answer in us, in our walk and conversation, to what He is, and to what He has done for us. It was to enforce this truth that the Israelites were enjoined to keep this feast "by an ordinance for ever;" first, indeed, to remind them that God had on this self-same day brought their armies out of the land of Egypt, and then to teach them the obligations under which they were thereby brought to maintain a walk in accordance with their new position. And may we not add that believers of the present day need to have this obligation recalled to their minds? The one thing to be pressed upon the consciences of all now is the responsibility of keeping this feast of unleavened bread. Looseness of walk, evil associations, and worldliness, are ruining on all sides the testimony of God's people. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth" (John 17:16-17). May this prayer of our blessed Lord be more manifestly answered

in the increasing separation and devotedness of His people! From Exodus 12:21-28 the account is given of the assembling of the elders by Moses to receive the directions already considered. The people on hearing the message "bowed the head, and worshipped. And the children of Israel went away, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they" (Exodus 12:27-28). One interesting particular is added. Provision is made to keep the children instructed as to the meaning of the passover (Exodus 12:26-27); and thus from generation to generation the account should be transmitted of the Lord's delivering grace and power when He smote the Egyptians. The Lord having thus marked off His people in His grace, and secured their exemption from judgment through the sprinkled blood, proceeds to smite Egypt as He had declared.

"And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt ; for there was not a house where there was not one dead.

"And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both you and the children of Israel ; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also. And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men. And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading-troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders. And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them [such things as they required]: and they spoiled the Egyptians" (Exodus 12:29-36). The blow, so long threatened, but delayed in long-suffering and mercy, at length fell, and fell with crushing effect upon the whole land; for "the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle." The hearts of all were wrung with anguish under this sore and bitter stroke, darkening every home in the land, "and there was a great cry in Egypt ; for there was not a house where there was not one dead." Pharaoh's stubborn heart was reached, and for the moment bowed before the manifest judgment of God. He "rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians;" and sending for Moses and Aaron, bid them depart. He made no conditions now, but granted all they had claimed, and even sought a blessing at their hands. His people went further, and were urgent to send the children of Israel away; for they said, "We be all dead men." Hence, too, when asked they gave them anything and everything they desired, and thus, according to the word of the Lord, "they spoiled the Egyptians."

"And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot, that were men, beside children. And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle. And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual.

"Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it

came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt : this is that night of the LORD to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations (Exodus 12:37-42).

God thus emancipated His people from the thralldom of Egypt ; and they took the first stage of their journey from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children. But, alas! they were not alone. They were accompanied by a "mixed multitude." This has been the bane of the people of God in every age; source of their weakness, failure, and at times of open apostasy. St Paul warns the believers of his day of this special danger (1 Corinthians 10:1-33); as also St Peter (2 Peter 2:1-22) and Jude 1:1-25. The church at the present moment is likewise afflicted; nay, it would be hardly too much to say that the church in one aspect is composed of this "great mixture." Hence the importance of the apostle's words to Timothy, "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ" (Lord, it should be) "depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, prepared unto every good work" (2 Timothy 2:19-21). Their departure was in haste, for they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual. No! they were cast wholly on God. He had separated them off from the Egyptians, sheltered them by the blood of the Lamb, and now it was His care to lead them forth and to provide them food by the way. Leaven must not be brought out with them.

" Rise, my soul, thy God directs thee,
Stranger hands no more impede;
Pass thou on, His hand protects thee,
Strength that has the captive freed. Is the wilderness before thee,
Desert lands where drought abides?
Heavenly springs shall there restore thee,

Fresh from God's exhaustless tides." For centuries God's eye had been upon this moment (see Genesis 15:13-14); and on the self-same day - the day He had before ordained - His people went forth. They have not as yet crossed the Red Sea ; but in the statement that "all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt," the Spirit of God anticipates their full and perfect deliverance. The blood that sheltered was the foundation of their complete redemption. It is no wonder therefore that it is added that the night of their exodus was to be much observed unto the Lord, and indeed to be held in perpetual remembrance. It was to be observed, remark, unto the Lord, in order to bring continually before their minds the source of that delivering grace and power which had brought them out of Egypt. So now in another way. In the same night in which the Lord Jesus was betrayed He took bread and gave thanks, instituting for His people the precious memorial of His death; so that as often as we eat the bread, and drink the cup, we might show forth the Lord's death until He come. Throughout the whole of our pilgrimage He would have us to remember Him - to remember Him on that "dark, betrayal night," when, as our Passover, He was

sacrificed for us. The chapter concludes with "the ordinance of the passover," which contains mainly two things. First, as to the persons who might partake of it: "There shall no stranger eat thereof: but every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof. A foreigner and an hired servant shall not eat thereof." Again, "All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no un circumcised person shall eat thereof" (Exodus 12:43-45, Exodus 12:47-48). There were then three classes who might keep the passover. (1) The Israelites, (2) Their servants bought with money, and (3) The stranger sojourning with them. But the condition for all these alike was circumcision. None could have a place at the passover table unless they had been circumcised. Only thus could they be brought within the terms of the covenant which God had made with Abraham (see Genesis 17:9-14), and on the ground of which He was now acting in bringing them out of Egypt, and taking them to Himself for a people. Circumcision is a type of death to the flesh, and has its antitype, as to the thing signified, in the death of Christ. Thus St Paul writes to the Colossians, "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead" (Colossians 2:11-12). Unless therefore all these specified classes were brought on to the ground of the covenant, they could not enjoy the privilege of this most blessed feast - a feast which derived all its meaning from the blood-shedding of the Paschal Lamb. It is exceedingly interesting to notice the special provision made for two of these classes. The Israelites, as such, were entitled to the passover, if they were circumcised. But outside of these were two other classes. A hired servant might not, but a servant bought with money might, if circumcised, be at the feast. It should be remembered that this feast possessed essentially a household character. Hence a servant bought with money became, as it were, incorporated with the family, an integral part of the household, and on this account was included. But a hired servant had no such place or standing, and was consequently excluded. In the "stranger sojourning with thee," we may see a promise of grace to the Gentiles, when the middle wall of partition should be broken down, and the gospel be proclaimed to the whole world.

Then, lastly, there is a provision as to the lamb itself. "In one house shall it be eaten: thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof" (Exodus 12:46). Both the meaning of the type, and the unity of the household, or of Israel, if the whole congregation be considered, would have been lost if this injunction had been disregarded. The blood was upon the dwelling, and the passover lamb was only for those under the shelter of the blood - for no other, and thus it must not be carried forth out of the house. The sprinkled blood is an indispensable condition for feeding on the lamb roast with fire. Neither must a bone be broken, because it was a type of Christ. Hence St John says, "These things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken" (John 19:36). It is clear therefore that Christ was before the mind of the Spirit in the paschal lamb; and very blessed is it for us as we read the narrative when we have fellowship with His own thoughts and discern nothing but Christ. May He anoint our eyes ever more fully, that Christ alone may fill the vision of our souls as we read His words!

04.09. GODS CLAIMS

GOD'S CLAIMS

Exodus 13:1-22 THE narrative of the exodus from Egypt is suspended to bring in certain consequences - responsible consequences for the children of Israel - consequences which flowed from their redemption out of the land of Egypt. For although they are still in the land, the teaching of the chapter is founded upon their having been brought out, and is indeed anticipative of their being in Canaan. If God acts in grace for His people, He thereby establishes claims upon them, and it is these claims that are here unfolded. A redeemed people become the property of the Redeemer. We thus read, "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). It is on the same principle that the Lord here speaks unto Moses, saying, "Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine" (Exodus 13:1). But another thing is introduced in this connection. The feast of unleavened bread was enjoined in the last chapter immediately after the sprinkling of the blood. That was to show that the two things - shelter by the blood, and the obligation of a holy life - can never be separated. It is now given again, with instructions for its observance when the Lord should have brought them into the land of the Canaanites, (Exodus 13:5), in connection with the sanctification of the firstborn.

"And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten. This day came ye out, in the month Abib.

"And it shall be, when the Lord shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which He sware unto thy fathers to give thee, a land flowing with milk and honey, that thou shalt keep this service in this month. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to the Lord. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee; neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters. And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt. And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes; that the Lord's law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the Lord brought thee out of Egypt. Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year.

"And it shall be, when the Lord shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as He sware unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee, that thou shalt set apart unto the Lord all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou bast; the males shall be the Lord's. And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem.

"And it shall be, when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage: and it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the Lord slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem. And it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by strength of hand the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt " (Exodus 13:3-16).

Two or three remarks may be added upon the feast of unleavened bread to include the additional particulars here given. It was to be connected for ever with the remembrance of two things. First, with the day of their redemption. "Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exodus 13:3). The Lord would ever have His people remember the day of their deliverance, the day in which they were brought out of darkness into light, out from under the judgment due to their sins into the perfect favour of God in Christ. Secondly, they were not to forget the source of their deliverance. "For by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place" (Exodus 13:3). To Him alone had they been indebted. No other arm could have riven their fetters, smitten their oppressor, protected them from the destroyer, and given them deliverance. He alone could have ransomed them from the hand of the enemy. Thus the Lord Jesus read, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19). It is therefore exceedingly significant to find that, immediately upon these two things being recalled to their minds, it is added, "There shall no leavened bread be eaten." If the Lord acts for His people, it is to redeem them from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works (Titus 2:14). Since He is holy, He looks for holiness in His redeemed, and throughout the complete period (seven days) of their lives. No leaven must be seen in any of their quarters. Not only so; but upon every recurring festival the father was instructed to teach his son the significance of the feast. Responsible for his children, he must carefully explain to them why no leaven could be permitted. It would be inconsistent with the ground of redemption on which he stood. "This is done," he should say, "because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt. And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand," etc. (Exodus 13:8-9); and all this that the Lord's law might be in his mouth. Here is the secret, both of separation from evil and separation unto God. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy word." Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (Psalms 119:9; Psalms 119:11). It is thus that believers now can truly keep the feast of unleavened bread, by heeding and obeying the word of God.

Thereon follow the directions for the sanctification of the firstborn. Devotedness, consecration, must also mark the redeemed, and will be ever a fruit of true separation; and hence the feast of unleavened bread precedes the setting apart of the firstborn. First, we may notice the exception to this general law. "Every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem" (Exodus 13:13). The conjunction of the firstling of an ass with the firstborn of man is most striking, and the more so that both alike were to be redeemed. There is also another thing. The firstling of the ass was to be redeemed with a lamb; the firstborn of Israel were redeemed with

a lamb on the passover night. Add, that the ass was to be destroyed if not redeemed, as the Israelites would surely have been when the Lord smote the Egyptians, and the parallel is complete. What then do we learn by it? That man, as he is born into the world, is classed with the firstling of an ass; that both alike are unclean, and as such doomed to destruction, unless redeemed with a lamb. Can anything be more humbling to the pride of the natural man? Boasting of what he is, and of his intellectual capacities, let him here behold the divine estimate of his condition. A more degrading comparison could not be made, and yet it is a comparison to which every believer readily sets his seal as divinely true. For that was our state by nature - lost and helpless - and we had surely perished if, in the riches of God's grace, we had not been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. On the other hand, how it magnifies the grace of God in condescending to such as we were, in meeting us when in that state, bringing us to Himself, and associating us for ever with the Lamb by whom we have been redeemed! If by nature we could not have fallen lower, by grace we could not have been raised higher; for He has predestinated us "to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29).

It is important to observe the ground on which God claimed the firstborn. It is expressly connected with the destruction of the firstborn in the land of Egypt (Exodus 13:15). As we have seen, Israel was spared on that dreadful night solely on the ground of the sprinkled blood of the slain lamb - on the ground of the death of another. It was therefore on the principle of substitution; and this in fact is the ground of God's claim in this chapter. If God spared the firstborn because of the Paschal Lamb, He thereafter claimed them as His own. It is so now. We belong to Him who has redeemed us, because He took our place, and bore our sins in His own body on the tree. He died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again. (2 Corinthians 5:15). It is well to ask ourselves frequently if we are recognizing His claim - His claim upon us, upon all that we are, and upon all that we have? This truth also the father was to impress upon his son (Exodus 13:14-16); for thereby he would be taught the Lord's claims upon him equally with his father - that both alike, as redeemed ones, owed their service to the Redeemer. It is an immense point gained when the believer looks upon himself and his family as belonging to the Lord. Whether they are individually owning that claim is another matter, and it cannot be pressed too much that there is no salvation apart from individual faith; but it is of great moment that the head of the household should continually remember that he and all his are the Lord's. Only then will he be able, by God's blessing, to bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, to govern them for Him, and as in His sight; and it is only as the children perceive this truth that they will look upon parental rule as expressive of the authority of the Lord. Let believers, therefore, not weary in telling their children of the Lord's claims upon the ground of redemption. The narrative is now resumed.

"And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt. But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt. And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him; for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you. And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a

pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people" (Exodus 13:17-22). The first thing this part of our chapter brings before us is God choosing the way for His people through the wilderness. If He lead His people out into the wilderness, He will undertake for them in every respect; He will expect nothing from them but obedience to His word. Mark, moreover, the tenderness He displayed in choosing their path. He had respect to their weakness and timidity. He "led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt."

Note: Much discussion has been raised upon the statement that the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt (Exodus 13:18) - as if of necessity the word meant, armed as warriors. But this is a mistake. It does not seem to imply more than that they were in regular marching order, as would be necessary in conducting the movements of so large a host.

Beautiful exhibition of His tender compassion - revealing to us how fully He enters into and feels for His people in all their feebleness and fears. True He had other purposes for them; but it is sweet beyond expression to notice that He determined the particular way by which He would lead them out of regard to their condition. " Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust" (Psalms 103:13-14).

After the statement of the manner of their march, mention is made of the bones of Joseph. This is most beautiful. Turning back to the deathbed of Joseph, we read that he "took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence" (Genesis 1:25). In the epistle to the Hebrews God's estimate of this action is recorded. "By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel ; and gave commandment concerning his bones" (Hebrews 11:22). In our chapter we find God's response to His servant's faith. There was surely enough to occupy the mind of Moses on this passover night - in arranging for the departure of so large a multitude. What leisure could he have had to care for the bones of Joseph? But Joseph had taken an oath of the children of Israel in dependence upon God. He believed, and therefore he spoke; and putting his trust in God it was impossible that he could be ashamed. To the natural eye there was little probability indeed - when Joseph was dying - of his people leaving Egypt. But this dying saint rested upon the sure word and promise of God, and therefore with confidence "gave commandment concerning his bones." Years had passed away - nearly four hundred (for the Israelites were in Egypt altogether four hundred and thirty years; Exodus 12:41) - and God did visit His people, and the oath was remembered, so that the bones of the patriarch accompanied them in their exodus. It is surely a noteworthy example of the faithfulness of God, as well as the preciousness in His sight of the faith of His servant. The next verse (Exodus 13:20) records the names of their first camping places. "They took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness." They started from Rameses (Exodus 12:37), then came to Succoth, etc., as here described. These places were all in Egypt, and although much learning and research have been expended upon the subject, their identification has scarcely reached the limits of conjectural probability. What is of more importance is to notice that they were divinely guided on their march. He who selected their path, guided them in it, went before them in the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, in all their wanderings. These gracious symbols of His presence He never took from them as long as they were in the wilderness. This is only an illustration of the truth, that the Lord is ever the guide of His

people. He who leads them out of Egypt may ever be seen before them in the path on which they have entered. He never says, "Go;" but His word is always, "Follow me." He has left us an example that we should follow His steps (1 Peter 2:21). He Himself is the Way, as well as the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). It is quite true that we have not the visible guidance which the children of Israel enjoyed; but it is no less discernible and certain to the spiritual eye. The Word is a lamp to our feet and a light unto our path (Psalms 119:105).

It is interesting to remark that there was no such guidance in Egypt or in the land. This brings out the important truth, that it is only in the wilderness that the indication of a way is needed. And there it is in His tenderness and mercy that the Lord takes the lead of His own - showing them the way in which they should walk - where they should rest, and when they should march, leaving nothing to them, but Himself undertaking all for them, only requiring that their eyes should be kept fixed on their Guide. Happy are the people who are thus led, and who are made willing to follow, who by grace are enabled to say - "Only Thou our Leader be,

And we still will follow Thee."

04.10. GOD AS THE DELIVERER OF HIS PEOPLE

GOD AS THE DELIVERER OF HIS PEOPLE

Exodus 14:1-31 IN Exodus 12:1-51 God appears as a Judge, because when once the question of sin was raised, the holiness of His nature necessitates that He should deal with it - and deal with it righteously. God therefore was there against His people on account of their sin, although means were found, in His gracious provision and according to His direction, to satisfy, through the blood of the Paschal Lamb, His righteous claims. But in this chapter, He who was against the people because of their sin, is now for them because of the blood. His righteousness, His truth, His majesty - yea, all that He was, had been satisfied by the sprinkled blood.

Note: When we say, "a propitiation," it will be understood that we are speaking of the typical value of the blood. Propitiation proper was made by the blood sprinkled on the mercy-seat. (Compare Leviticus 16:14 and Romans 3:25). A propitiation had been made on the ground of which He could undertake the cause of those who had been brought under its value. Consequently He appears here as a Saviour - a Deliverer. Historically there is an interval between these two characters. He was a Judge on the passover night, and a Deliverer at the Red Sea ; and this is the order of apprehension in the case of the majority of awakened souls. When first convicted of sin, when it is really the work of the Spirit of God, God appears to the soul as a Judge because of guilt. But when there is peace of conscience through the apprehension by faith that the blood of Christ has met God's claims, and cleansed from guilt, then the soul perceives that God Himself is on its behalf; and sees the proof of it in His raising the Lord Jesus from the dead. These two stages are clearly marked in Romans 3:1-31; Romans 4:1-25. Thus in Romans 3:1-31 it is faith in the blood, believing in Jesus (Romans 3:25-26); while in Romans 6:1-23 it is faith in God (Romans 3:24). And there is no settled peace until this second stage is reached. But while these two things are separated historically in connection with the children of Israel, and generally in the experience of souls, it must not be forgotten that they are but two parts of one and the same work. The Red Sea, therefore, in this aspect, while it presents more striking effects in the display of God's power, on the one hand in the redemption of His people, and on the other, in the destruction of Pharaoh and his host, is but the consequence of the sprinkled blood on the passover night. The blood was the foundation of all God's subsequent actings for Israel. Hence, while it is quite true that redemption was not known until the Red Sea was crossed, the blood-shedding was a deeper work, because it was that which glorified God concerning the question of the people's sin, and enabled Him, in harmony with every attribute of His character, to work for their complete deliverance. It is only when this distinction between the two things, and, at the same time, their connection, are remembered, that this chapter can be understood. Bearing it in mind, the key to its interpretation will be possessed, and it will be seen that every action it records is in relation to the truth thus explained.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pi-hahimth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon: before it shall

ye encamp by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them: and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord. And they did so" (Exodus 14:1-4). The first thing which the Lord did was to shut up His people, as far as man was concerned, in a perfectly hopeless position. Encamped by the sea, and surrounded by the wilderness, He so placed them that if Pharaoh followed after them, as He purposed he should, that there would be positively no human way of escape. This was done to entice Pharaoh to his destruction, and to reduce the children of Israel to entire dependence upon Himself. Both things were accomplished; for the Egyptians were to know that He was the Lord, and the Israelites were to confess that He was their salvation. This will be brought before us in the narrative.

"And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us? And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him: and he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them. And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel : and the children of Israel went out with an high hand. But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon" (Exodus 14:5-9).

What a revelation of the possibilities of the human heart is seen in the case of Pharaoh! Though the Lord had made bare His arm in successive judgments, and at length had extorted a cry of anguish from every household in the land of Egypt, we yet find the king and also his servants recovering from the blow which had for the moment overwhelmed them with sorrow, repenting of the release of Israel, and daring to follow after to bring them back to their former servitude. They thus pursued them, "all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon." This, as explained, had been arranged of the Lord. To Pharaoh and his people, it would appear utter folly to occupy such a position, and an evidence, it might be, that they were guided by human folly rather than divine wisdom. They march on therefore in full confidence of an easy victory. For what could rescue a nation of fugitives, encumbered with women and children, from their grasp? So also it appeared to the unbelieving children of Israel. They were sheltered by the blood, they were guided by the pillar of cloud, and they surely might have said, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" But sight was stronger than faith. The sea was before them, and Pharaoh and his mighty armies behind. To the natural eye escape was impossible, and captivity or death certain. This was the effect produced on their minds.

"And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt ? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness" (Exodus 14:10-12).

Unbelief marked every word they uttered, and because they were judging according to the sight of their eyes. They were sore afraid; they would die in the wilderness; they had known it would be so, and servitude in Egypt was far better than the death that now awaited them. The mistake they made was in leaving the Lord out of their calculations - as unbelief ever does - and thus making it a question between themselves and the Egyptians. Moses was sustained; his faith was unfaltering, and he could therefore encourage their hearts as well as rebuke their unbelief.

"And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (Exodus 14:13-14). In truth a work was to be wrought that day in which the people could have no part. For there were two things from which they needed to be delivered - Satan's power as represented by Pharaoh and his host, and death and judgment which were shown in figure by the Red Sea. And these two are connected. For through man's sin Satan has acquired rights, and wields death as the just judgment of God. It is quite true that the children of Israel were already sheltered by the blood of the paschal lamb, and that they might therefore have rested in perfect peace. But they knew not the value of that blood. That it had saved them from the stroke of judgment, that their houses escaped when God smote the firstborn of Egypt they knew; but they had not yet learned, that this same blood had secured everything for them, deliverance from their foes, guidance through the wilderness, and even the possession of the promised inheritance. Hence the moment Pharaoh appears on the scene they "were sore afraid," and "cried out unto the Lord." The Lord met them in their weakness and doubt, and reminds them by this message which Moses delivered that the work was His, both to save them from the land of Egypt's king, and from the waves of the Red Sea. They were to cease from their fears, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord; for their enemies should disappear for ever from their eyes, the Lord would fight for them, and they should hold their peace. Blessed truth, that salvation is of the Lord! It is one, however, that we are slow to learn. How many become entangled in the thought that they must do something. But no; He who has provided the Paschal Lamb, whose blood cleanses us from our sin, will do all the rest. Salvation is His own perfect, finished work. To add to it in any way by our own doings or strivings is only to mar its beauty and completeness. Nay, what is there that man can do when Satan and death are in question? Man is helpless in the presence of such foes. He cannot escape, he cannot overcome them, and hence perforce - if he would but learn the lesson - he must stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord. How quieting to the heart of the timid and the anxious! Let them then enter upon the full enjoyment of this precious message, if terrified by Satan's power in the prospect of death: "The Lord shall fight for you and ye shall hold your peace."

Following the record we shall perceive how the Lord verified the words of His servant.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: but lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it; and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen" (Exodus 14:15-18).

There is no inconsistency between the command of Moses, "Stand still," and that now given, "Go forward." They had truly to be reminded that they could do nothing; but faith should have perceived that the work was done, and marched boldly forward through the sea which seemed to bar their advance. Death, and the power of death, had been overcome, the salvation had been completed, and hence they were to go forward. The order and the teaching of the order are beautiful. The Lord completes the work, and by the finished work of salvation a way of escape from Satan's power through death has been opened. Being opened, it is for the believer to walk through it, to go boldly forward in confidence in Him who, having been their Judge, has now become their Saviour. This the Lord proceeds to unfold by the further command addressed to Moses. He will show His power over the sea before the eyes of His people, to pacify their fears, and to assure them of His protection and care. But this must be explained more fully. Together with the command to the children of Israel to go forward, Moses was directed to lift up his rod, and stretch his hand over the sea, and divide it, so that the children of Israel might go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. The Egyptians should be hardened to follow, and to follow for their own destruction, and God would be glorified both in the salvation of His people and the destruction of their foes. Having thus directed Moses, the Lord proceeds to act.

"And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night. And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left.

"And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them: there remained not so much as one of them. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore, And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and His servant Moses" (Exodus 14:19-31). The several points in this miraculous deliverance may now be noted. First, the angel of God removed and went "between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel." God thus interposed between His blood-bought people and their pursuers. For

indeed all that He was, in every attribute of His character, was engaged on their behalf. That panic-stricken multitude might well be scorned by the flower and chivalry of Egypt, but they were under the ægis of Omnipotence, and before they could be reached God Himself must be met and overcome. Oh, what strength and consolation lie in this precious truth, that God Himself undertakes the cause of the feeblest of those who are under the shelter of the blood of Christ! Satan may set all his legions in battle array, and seek to terrify the soul by the display of his power, but his vauntings and threats may alike be disregarded, for the battle is the Lord's. It is therefore not what we are, but what God is. And it should be observed, that He that is for the believer is against the enemy. That which gave light to the children of Israel was a cloud and darkness to Pharaoh and his army. The presence of God terrifies all but those who are cleansed from sin by the precious blood. Hence the camp of Egypt was shut off from Israel, and "the one came not near the other all the night" (Exodus 14:20). How fearless, then, we ought to be, when this truth, God for us, is so plainly revealed. Elisha knew its power when, in answer to the expressed fears of his servant, he said, "Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them;" and then, when in answer to the prophet's prayer the young man's eyes were opened, "he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings 6:15-17). Be it, however, repeated, that the alone foundation of God being for us is the precious blood of Christ. This, then, is the first thing here taught, that God protects His people as against the power of Satan. The second thing to be remarked is, the division of the waters of the Red Sea. Moses was to lift up his rod, and stretch out his hand over the sea. (Exodus 14:16). The rod is a symbol of the authority and power of God; and hence it was before it that the waters retired. The strong east wind was used as an instrumentality, but in connection with the mandate of His power as expressed in the use of the rod. Thus God opened a way through death for His people. As, on the one hand, He shielded them from Satan's power, so, on the other, He through death delivered them from death. This is the typical significance of the Red Sea - death, and also resurrection - inasmuch as the people were brought through to the other side. "As a moral type," therefore, to use the language of another, "the Red Sea is evidently the death and resurrection of Jesus, so far as the real effecting of the work goes, in its own efficacy as deliverance by redemption, and of His people as seen in Him; God acting in it, to bring them through death out of sin and this present world, giving absolute deliverance from them by death, into which Christ had gone, and consequently beyond the possibility of being reached by the enemy." This is beautifully illustrated by two particulars. They "went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground." Wherefore? Because - we speak of the typical teaching - Christ had gone down into death, and exhausted its power. He "death by dying slew," and in death met and vanquished the whole power of Satan.

Through death He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (Hebrews 2:14-15). All the force and power of death were therefore expended upon Christ, and as a consequence believers pass through on dry ground. Then, moreover, we find that "the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left" (Exodus 14:22). Not only had death no power over them, but it became a defence. Thus "the very sea they dreaded, and which appeared to throw them into Pharaoh's hands, becomes the means of their salvation." It was the way of their deliverance from Egypt, and instead of being their enemy had become their friend. How blessedly all this is fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Christ, every believer should know. It is not only that we have been sheltered from judgment through the sprinkled blood, but through the death and resurrection

of Christ, and our death and resurrection in Him, we have been brought out from Egypt, and delivered both from the power of Satan and of death. Already we have passed from death unto life, have been brought completely out of our old condition on to new ground in Christ Jesus. We might still go farther, and point out how this type will be fulfilled in another way. Death, which is the enemy of the sinner, has become the friend of the believer, and will but prove the means of our passage, should we depart before the Lord returns, into His presence.

" The last thing to be noted is the destruction of the Egyptians. In the temerity of their daring presumption they "pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the - sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horse-men." That pillar of fire even did not keep them back, but, in vain confidence in their own strength, they pressed onward, but to a sure and certain doom. "And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily." They were now convinced of the hopelessness of the contest, and would fain have fled; but it was all too late. At the Lord's bidding, once again Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and it returned and covered all Egypt's host, so that "there remained not so much as one of them" (Exodus 14:28). "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do, were drowned" (Hebrews 11:29). The solemn lesson is thus conveyed, that to face the power of death in human confidence is certain destruction. Only the blood-bought people can pass through in safety. All others will surely be overwhelmed; and yet how many a soul dares to meet death and judgment in its own strength. Let all such be warned by the fate of Pharaoh and his army. There can be no escape apart from Christ. He only is the way of safety, because He alone has met and overcome death, is the One who has died, has risen again, and is alive for evermore, and has the keys of hades and death.

Three things conclude the chapter. There is first the repetition of the fact that Israel walked through the sea upon dry land, and found the waters a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. It is the contrast emphasized between the salvation of Israel and the destruction of the Egyptians. There are only then two classes. There could be no other - the lost (the Egyptians) and the saved (the Israelites). The former were swallowed up in death and judgment, while the latter were brought through in safety, because they were covered with the value of the blood of the Lamb. We then read that "the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians" (Exodus 14:30). He had before sheltered them from judgment, but now He saved them from the foe. Satan's power was brought to nought, and they were consequently delivered. The full meaning of this term will appear in the next chapter; but it may be remarked that it is here for the first time that the word "saved" acquires its full significance. Lastly, the effect produced upon the minds - in the souls of the children of Israel - is noted. They "saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and His servant Moses." Such a display of power - destructive on the one hand, and redemptive on the other - had bowed their hearts, and begotten reverent fear in their souls. In Egypt they had no doubt feared the Lord in the sense of dread - dreading Him as a holy Judge; but now it was fear of another kind - fear begotten by the manifestation of His wonder-working power, and which led them to look upon Him as their Lord. It was the fear of an intimate relationship - the fear which would desire to please, and dread above all things to offend. It was the offspring of recognizing the holiness of God in their salvation. This is shown by the fact that they also believed the Lord, and His servant Moses. The testimony of what

and who He was had been unfolded before their eyes. They received it, and now not only had Jehovah chosen them to be His people, but they also by faith recognized and owned Him as their Lord. They also believed Moses - as their divinely-appointed leader. Indeed they were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea (1 Corinthians 10:2). There was therefore both a work wrought for them and in them - and both alike proceeded from the power and grace of God. He who so marvellously brought them out of Egypt and through the Red Sea, produced a response in their hearts to what He was, and what He had done for them. Salvation is never entered into or enjoyed until these two things are united. Thus the work, on the foundation of which God can save sinners, has long been completed; but until it can be said that the sinner believes he is not saved. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation ("the judgment"); but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).

04.11. THE SONG OF REDEMPTION

THE SONG OF REDEMPTION

Exodus 15:1-21 THIS chapter occupies a most important place - both as marking the new position into which the children of Israel were now brought, and as expressive of the feelings - begotten in them undoubtedly by the Holy Spirit - which were suited to it. It is really a song of redemption; and at the same time it is prophetic in its character, embracing as it does the purposes of God with respect to Israel until the millennium - when "the Lord shall reign for ever and ever" (Exodus 15:18). It has therefore a twofold character, applying primarily to Israel, and then, inasmuch as the passage of the Red Sea was pre-eminently typical in its character, also to the position of the believer. Bearing this in mind, its interpretation will be the more easily apprehended.

"Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation;

Note: This translation is more than questionable. The Septuagint, the Vulgate, Luther, and the French version, agree in rendering it, "He is my God, and I will praise (or glorify) Him, my father's God, and I will exalt Him." my father's God, and I will exalt Him. The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is His name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath He cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone. Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of Thine excellency Thou hast overthrown them that rose up against Thee: Thou sentest forth Thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble. And with the blast of Thy nostrils the waters were gathered together: the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with Thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters. Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Thou stretchedst out Thy right hand, the earth swallowed them. Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation. The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestine. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them: all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them: by the greatness of Thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till Thy people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over, which Thou hast purchased. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in; in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever. For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought again the waters of the

sea upon them: but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea" (Exodus 15:1-19). The first thing to be remarked upon this outburst of joy is, that we have no singing mentioned in Scripture, except in connection with redemption. Angels even are never said to sing. At the birth of our blessed Lord "there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:13-14). So in the Revelation John says, "I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Revelation 5:11-12). It is only therefore redeemed ones who can sing, and we learn therefrom the true character of Christian song. It should express the joy of salvation, the accents of praise and gladness produced in the soul by the knowledge of redemption. "Is any merry?" says James, "let him sing psalms" (James 5:13). That is, if any one is overflowing with true joy, joy consequent upon known redemption, joy in the Lord as the Redeemer, it should be expressed in psalms - psalms of praise to God. "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord." It was then, when they knew for the first time what redemption was, that they poured forth the gladness of their hearts in song. And there should be no other, indeed there is no other, song for the Christian. To take another into his lips is to forget his true character as well as the only source of his joy. The song itself may be considered in two aspects - its general subject, and the truths it contains. As to its general subject, it is simply the Lord Himself, and what He has done. But this embraces a great deal. It is the Lord Himself as apprehended and known in redemption. "The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation" (Exodus 15:2). For it is only in redemption that He can be known. Thus, until the cross of Christ He was not, could not be, fully revealed. He was revealed to the children of Israel in the character of the relationship into which they were brought, but it was not until the redemption was accomplished, of which this recorded here was but the type, that He made Himself fully known in all the attributes of His character. But whatever the measure of His manifestation in each succeeding dispensation, He could not be apprehended, even so far, except through redemption, typical or otherwise, and the consequent relationship into which the redeemed were brought. The children of Israel knew Him as Jehovah; we, by grace, know Him as our God and Father, because the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; but whatever the dispensation, He Himself, as so revealed, is ever the subject of song, for it is in Him alone that His people in every age rejoice. As, however, we have remarked, there is another thing, and that is, what He has done, and this is fully brought out in the song of Moses and the children of Israel. There are necessarily two aspects of this - the salvation of His people, and the destruction of their enemies. This is expressed in every variety of phrase, and with all the sublimity of expression which beseemed the majesty of Him who had thus wrought on their behalf. It is not what they had accomplished, but what the Lord has done. It was not their, but His triumph that they celebrated.

They have lost sight of themselves in the presence of such an astounding display of redemptive power. "I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea" (Exodus 15:1). They thus magnify the Lord, for they perceive, as divinely inspired, that the work which He had achieved redounded to His own exaltation and glory. "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power;" and again, "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

(Exodus 15:6, Exodus 15:11). Surely believers of this dispensation might learn from this primal redemptive song, what should be the character of their praise when gathered for worship in the power of the Holy Ghost. As it is the first song of redemption, it contains the principles of praise for all future generations. It deserves, on this account, the prayerful consideration of every believer.

It is, however, when we consider the truths it contains, that we learn its fulness and variety. The first is that they were now redeemed - redemption being, as pointed out, the burden of their song. "The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation." And again, Thou hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed. Until now they were not redeemed, they did not know salvation. They had been perfectly sheltered from the destroyer in Egypt, but they could not be said to be saved until they were brought out of Egypt, and delivered from Pharaoh - from Satan's power. There is the same difference observable now in the experience of souls. There are many who know the forgiveness of their sins through the blood of Christ; but afterwards not knowing themselves - the nature of the flesh still in them - or the power of Satan to harass and disturb - they not only lose their joy consequent upon pardon, but sometimes fall, through the difficulties which surround them on every hand, into a state of despondency and alarm. Brought into the consciousness of their utter inability to do any thing, or to resist the enemy, they are made to cry, as in Romans 7:1-25, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24). It is then they are taught that the Lord Jesus has not only provided cleansing for their sins through His precious blood, but that also, through His death and resurrection, He has brought them out of their old condition, and put them in a new place in Him on the other side of death and judgment. Their eyes are now opened to see that in Him they have been completely delivered from all that was against them, and therefore that Satan has lost his rights over, and consequently has no further claim upon, them. They are thus set free; their evil nature has already been judged, and Satan's power has been vanquished, in the death of Christ, and hence, delivered, their hearts are filled with thanksgiving and praise. That many stop short of this full blessing is only too true, but it is, nevertheless, the portion of every believer. And there never can be full assurance of salvation - firm and solid peace - until this complete deliverance is known. No doubt it must be learned experimentally, but it depends entirely and alone upon what Christ is and has done; and accordingly the whole of this blessing is presented to sinners in the gospel of God's grace. It may be that the soul learns forgiveness of sins first; but it is no less the fact that a full redemption is provided for, and preached to, every one who will receive the message of the gospel. It is of the first importance that this truth should be known; for through ignorance of it, there are thousands who are a prey to doubts and fears, instead of rejoicing in the Lord as the God of their salvation. Souls in such a state have little freedom in prayer, or worship, or service; but when once the truth of redemption dawns upon them, like the children of Israel in the scene before us, they are constrained to give vent to their new-found joy in songs of praise. But there is more. Their position is changed. "Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation." They were brought to God as to the new standing they occupied. In the desert, just indeed entering upon it - this marked their character as pilgrims - they were yet brought unto God's holy habitation. This corresponds with our position as believers in the Lord Jesus. He once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. This is our place as His redeemed. That is, we are brought to God according to all that He is; His whole moral nature, having been completely satisfied in the death of Christ, can now rest in us in perfect complacency. The hymn therefore does but express a scriptural thought, which says - "So near, so very near to God,

I cannot nearer be,

For in the person of His Son

I am as near as He." The place indeed is accorded to us in grace, but none the less in righteousness; so that not only are all the attributes of God's character concerned in bringing us there, but He Himself is also glorified by it. It is an immense thought, and one which, when held in power, imparts both strength and energy to our souls - that we are even now brought to God. The whole distance - measured by the death of Christ on the cross, when He was made sin for us - has been bridged over, and our position of nearness is marked by the place He now occupies as glorified at the right hand of God. In heaven itself we shall not be nearer, as to our position, because it is in Christ. It will not be forgotten that our enjoyment of this truth, indeed even our apprehension of it, will depend upon our practical condition. God looks for a state corresponding with our standing - i.e. our responsibility is measured by our privilege. But until we know our place there cannot be an answering condition. We must first learn that we are brought to God, if we would in any measure walk in accordance with the position. State and walk must ever flow from a known relationship. Unless therefore we are taught the truth of our standing before God, we shall never answer to it in our souls, or in our walk and conversation. The third thing to be observed is, that their present position was the pledge of the fulfilment of all the rest. "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in; in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever" (Exodus 15:17-18). The power God had displayed at the Red Sea was the guarantee; first, that He would accomplish all His purposes respecting Israel; and, secondly, that that power would finally be exhibited in His everlasting reign. Faith, begotten through the knowledge of redemption, lays hold of this - embracing the whole scope of the purposes of God, and looking upon them as if already accomplished. It is so in the epistle to the Romans. "Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Romans 8:30). If indeed the purposes of God could be frustrated, He were not God. There may be enemies in the way - and they may set themselves against the execution of His declared will. But faith says, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Thus Israel could sing, "The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestine. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them: all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them: by the greatness of Thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till Thy people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over, which Thou hast purchased" (Exodus 15:14-16). In like manner, the apostle cries, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" No - nothing, for he is "persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35-39). The efficacy of the blood secures the completion of all God's counsels, brings in all that He is - His majesty, His truth, His mercy, His love, His almighty power - on behalf of His people. It is therefore not presumption, but simplicity of faith, to anticipate the consummation of our redemption. It is not to overlook the character and might of our foes; but, measuring these by what God is, the soul is immediately certified of being more than a conqueror through Him that loved us. It is to derive the

full and blessed consolation of the truth, that God is acting by His own power outside of us, and for His own glory. The legions of Satan - the dukes of Edom, the mighty men of Moab, and the inhabitants of Canaan, may seek to bar the way to the inheritance, but when God arises in His strength on behalf of His blood-besprinkled host, they will be scattered as chaff before the wind. Thus the end is sure from the beginning, and hence our triumphant song of victory may be raised before a single step has been taken in the wilderness path. And the issue will be to the glory of the One who has redeemed us. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever. So we read in the epistle to the Philippians, that it is according to God's purpose and decree, "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Php 2:9-11). What joy it should be to the heart of the believer to contemplate that while we are brought into unspeakable blessing, yet that the result of redemption will be the exaltation of the Redeemer. In this Scripture the reign spoken of has undoubtedly primary application to the earth. It is the everlasting kingdom of Jehovah - the millennial sway of the Messiah, who must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. But in principle it goes further - for He shall reign for ever and ever; and this too will be the fruit of the cross. There He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, and as a consequence He is now, and will be for ever, exalted.

There is another thing demanding our notice. So far, everything that has been considered is connected with the purposes of God. But in the second verse there is an exception. No sooner can they say, "The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation," than they add, "He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation;

Note: It may well be doubted if the Hebrew word is here properly translated. (See the note on the translation of this verse, earlier in this chapter). The comments made upon the English text may, however, stand; for the truth is of all importance. The thought of building a sanctuary came from God, and not from Israel. (See Exodus 25:8) It was His desire to dwell in the midst of His redeemed. my father's God, and I will exalt Him." This is different from The sanctuary which Thy hands have established, in Exodus 15:17. That looks on to the accomplishment of the purposes of God in the establishment of the kingdom and the temple at Jerusalem. But this was to be a present thing: "I will prepare Him an habitation." It is in fact the tabernacle. This will come more properly before us in subsequent chapters; but it may be noted here that this is the first time mention is made of a habitation for the Lord with His people. He had saints before this, but not a people; and until redemption was accomplished He never dwelt on earth. He visited His saints, and appeared to them in many ways, but He never had His dwelling-place in their midst. But as soon as expiation for sin has been made by the blood of the lamb, and His people have been brought forth out of Egypt, saved through death and resurrection, then He inspires their hearts to build Him a habitation.

Note: The thought of building a sanctuary came from God, and not from Israel. (See Exodus 25:8) It was His desire to dwell in the midst of His redeemed.

He led them by the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, as soon as they commenced their exodus; but He could not have a dwelling-place in Egypt, in the territory of the enemy. But when they are brought on to new ground, He can identify Himself with them, dwell in their midst, and be their God, and they His people. It is so also in Christianity. Not until atonement

had been made, and Christ had risen from the dead and ascended up on high, did God form His present habitation on earth through the Spirit. (Acts 2:1-47; Ephesians 2:1-22). It is so with the individual believer. It is not until he is cleansed by the blood of Christ that his body is made a temple of the Holy Ghost. The truth therefore is, that God's dwelling upon earth is founded upon a completed redemption. And what an immense privilege. Although the wilderness was no part of the purpose of God, yet, in His ways with His people, they wandered there forty years. How blessed, then, for these weary pilgrims, looking onward to the inheritance, to have the habitation of God in their midst; a place where they could approach Him, through the appointed priests, with sacrifices and incense; the centre, too, of their encampment. How it would inspire the hearts of the godly with courage to behold that tabernacle, with the cloud resting upon it, the symbol of the divine presence. Hence the agonizing cry of Moses, after the people's failure, "If Thy presence go not, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? Is it not in that Thou goest with us?" (Exodus 33:15-16). Nor should it be forgotten that God has also now His dwelling-place on earth. This truth is, amid the confusions of Christendom, in danger of being ignored. But, spite of our failure, God does dwell in the house which He has formed, and will dwell in it until the return of the Lord. This truth should inspire us also with strength and consolation; for it is no mean privilege to be brought out of the sphere, and from under the power, of Satan into the scene of the presence and the power of God. It is the only place of blessing on earth, and happy are they who have been made sharers of it through the grace of God in the power of the Holy Ghost. This was no common joy which found expression in this song of jubilant praise. It evidently pervaded the whole host; for "Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances" (Exodus 15:20). And Miriam cried, as she led the chorus of their song, "Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea" (Exodus 15:21). It is the first mention of Miriam by name, and it is exceedingly interesting to notice that she was a prophetess. It was she, most probably, who watched over the ark of bulrushes in which her infant brother Moses was laid, and who was the means of his restoration to his mother. Thus she also becomes prominent in Israel, not only from her connection with Moses, but also from her own distinct gift. It is the way of the Lord to bless all connected with the man of His counsels; and at the same time it reveals to us how sacred is the family tie in His sight. But in the scene before us it was her honour and privilege to be the leader and mouthpiece of the joy of the women of Israel. The hearts of all were filled with gladness, and found their utterance in music, dancing, and song. They were redeemed and they knew it on this happy morn; and laden with the joy of their salvation, they tell it out in these accents of gratitude and praise.

04.12. MARAH AND ELIM

MARAH AND ELIM

Exodus 15:22-27 FROM Exodus 15:22-27, Exodus 16:1-36, Exodus 17:1-16, Exodus 18:1-27 is a distinct section of the book. To understand it aright, it must be remembered that as yet Israel was not under law, but under grace; and hence this brief period closes, in figure, with the millennium. The careful reader will find in this statement the key of many of the events recorded. For example, the murmurings recorded in Exodus 15:1-27, Exodus 16:1-36 and Exodus 17:1-16 are borne by the Lord with long-suffering and tenderness, and their needs are ministered to out of the fulness of His unwearied love. But after Sinai, murmurings of the same character are the occasion of judgment, for the simple reason that the people had been, at their own request, put under law. Being therefore under the reign of righteousness, transgressions and rebellion are instantly dealt with according to the requirements of the law which formed the basis of Jehovah's righteous rule; whereas before Sinai, being under the reign of grace, they are borne with, and their sins and iniquities are covered. The wilderness journey of Israel had now to be entered upon. The strains of their song had scarcely died away before they commenced their pilgrim journey.

"So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea ; and they went out into the wilderness of Shur: and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there He made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there He proved them, and said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee. And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters" (Exodus 15:22-27).

This, then, was their first experience: "They went three days in the wilderness, and found no water." The expression - "three days," is always significant in Scripture. Numberless examples may be gleaned from a concordance; and it will be found that very frequently it is associated with death; and so here the three days will mean the distance of death. They had in figure passed through death, and now they must learn it practically. If God in His grace gives us a perfect standing before Him, if He associates us with Christ in His death and resurrection, the object of all His ways with us will be to bring us into practical conformity with our new position. The children of Israel must thus be taught that, as a consequence of deliverance from Egypt, the world had become a desert to them, and that this must be entered into by the acceptance of death. This is the fundamental necessity for every believer. There can be no progress, no real break with the past, until death is accepted, until he reckons himself dead to sin (Romans 6:1-23), dead to the law (Romans 8:1-39), and dead to the world (Galatians 6:1-18). Hence the character of God's

dealings with souls. He will teach them experimentally - as in the case of Israel before us - and thus enable them to apprehend the true character of the path on which they have entered. And what was the first experience of Israel? They found no water. Like the Psalmist, they were in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is (Psalms 63:1-11). No; every spring of earth is dried up for those who have been redeemed from Egypt. There is not a single source of life - nothing that can minister in any way to the life we have received in Christ. And how blessed it is for the soul to apprehend this truth. Starting on our pilgrimage, elated with the joy of salvation, how often are we surprised to find that the sources at which we had drunk before - and drunk with delight - have now run dry. We ought to expect this; but never is the lesson learned until we have gone the three days' journey in the wilderness. It is indeed a startling experience to discover that earth's resources are exhausted; but it is an indispensable requisite if we would know the blessedness of the truth that "all our springs are in Thee."

They passed onward and came to Marah. Here there was water; but they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. This is the further application of the same principle. First, there was no water to drink; and, secondly, when it is found it is so bitter that it could not be drunk. This is the application to the soul of the power of that death by which they have been delivered. The flesh shrinks from it - and would refuse it altogether. But for those who have been delivered from Egypt, and are pilgrims journeying on to the inheritance, it is absolutely necessary. Truly it is Marah - bitterness; and accordingly it troubled the people, and they murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? What a contrast! A few days ago, as with one heart, they sang, with exultant joy, the praises of their Redeemer; and now the song is silent, and discordant murmurs take its place. So is it with the believer - now filled with praise, and immediately after the flesh complains and murmurs because of the trials of the wilderness. But Moses intercedes for them, and the Lord showed him a tree, which, when cast into the waters, made them sweet. This is a beautiful figure of the cross of Christ - which utterly changes the character of the bitter waters. "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." Or, as St Paul cries, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14). Bring the cross into the bitterness of Marah waters, and at once they become sweet to the taste - are welcomed as the means of deliverance and blessing.

Thereon follows a most important principle - a principle ever applicable to the walk of the believer. It is one found throughout the Scriptures, and in every dispensation; viz., that blessing is dependent upon obedience; that is, the blessing of believers (for the children of Israel were now redeemed) is dependent upon their walk. They were to be guarded from the diseases of Egypt, if they would diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord their God, and would do that which was right in His sight, etc. (Exodus 15:26). In the same way our blessed Lord says, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). This principle cannot be too much insisted upon. There are many believers who have known the joy of salvation, and who are yet without the conscious enjoyment of a single blessing. The reason is that they are careless of their walk. They do not study the Word, or "give ear to His commandments," and are consequently walking as seems right in their own eyes. What wonder is it, therefore, that they are cold and indifferent, that they are not in the conscious enjoyment of the love of God - of fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ? No; it

is to the obedient ones that God comes, and delights to come, in the sweetest manifestations of His unchanging love; it is to those who have a conscience about every precept of the Word, and are seeking, in the power of the Spirit, to be found in obedience in every particular, to those whose delight it is to be doing the will of their Lord, and whose one aim it is to be at all times acceptable to Him, that He can draw near and bless according to His own mind and heart. Nothing can compensate for the lack of an obedient walk. All our blessing - as to its apprehension and enjoyment - is made dependent upon it. It is moreover the means of growth, and the condition of communion.

It is on this account that it is immediately added, "And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters." That is, they at once found refreshment, rest, and shade - the wells and the palm trees being, as one has said, "types of those living springs, and of that shelter which had been provided, through instruments chosen of God, for the consolation of His people." How welcome the rest to the already weary pilgrims! and how tender of the Lord to provide such grateful refreshment for His people in the wilderness! As the Shepherd of Israel, He thus led them, as it were, into green pastures, and made them to lie down by the still waters, to comfort and strengthen their hearts.

Note: Doubtless the numbers twelve and seventy are significant. Twelve is administrative perfection in government in man (Israel). Seventy is not so clear. But it will be remembered that the Lord adopted both of these numbers, in the twelve disciples, and in the seventy (Luke 9:1-62; Luke 10:1-42); and thus it would seem to point to the fact that through these He would minister these blessings to Israel.

04.13. THE MANNA

THE MANNA

Exodus 16:1-36 THE enjoyments of Elim were but transient, however blessedly they unfolded the loving, tender care of Jehovah. The children of Israel were pilgrims; and as such it was their vocation to travel and not to rest. The next stage of their journey therefore is immediately recorded.

"And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: and the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full! for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (Exodus 16:1-3). The wilderness of Sin lay "between Elim and Sinai." It occupied therefore, as indeed has already been indicated, a very special place in the history of the children of Israel. Elim would ever remind them of one of their most blessed experiences, and the journey likewise to Sinai would recall to their minds a period distinguished by long-suffering and grace in God's dealings with them; whereas Sinai would be ever engraven on their memories in connection with the majesty and holiness of the law. Up till Sinai, it was what God was for them in His mercy and love; but from that time the ground, by their own action, was changed into what they were for God. This is the difference between grace and law; and hence the peculiar interest attaching to the journey between Elim and Sinai. But whether under grace or law, the flesh remained the same, and took every opportunity of revealing its corrupt and incurable character. Again the whole congregation murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. (Exodus 16:2). They had done so at Pi-hahiroth, when they saw the army of Pharaoh approaching; they repeated their sin at Marah, because the waters were bitter; and now they complain again because of their pilgrim fare. "They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel; but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert" (Psalms 106:13-14). The recollection of Egypt and Egypt's food possessed their hearts, and forgetful of the bitter bondage with which this had been connected, they looked back with longing eyes. How often this is the case with newly-emancipated souls. There must always be hunger in the wilderness; for the flesh can find no gratification for its own desires, or satisfaction in its toils and hardships. It is the place where the flesh must be tested. The Lord "humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know, that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live" (Deuteronomy 8:3). This is the conflict. The flesh craves that which will meet its desires, but if we are delivered from Egypt this cannot be allowed: the flesh must be refused, looked upon as already judged in the death of Christ; and therefore we are debtors not to the flesh, to live after the flesh, for if we live after the flesh we shall die: but if we through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body we shall live (Romans 8:12-13). But the Lord, as we have seen in

Deuteronomy, has His object in suffering us to hunger; it is to wean us from the flesh pots of Egypt, and to attract us to Himself - to teach us that true satisfaction and sustenance can only be found in Himself and His word. The contrast is therefore between the flesh pots of Egypt, and Christ; and very blessed is it when the soul learns that Christ is enough for all its needs. In their unbelief the children of Israel charged Moses with the design of killing them with hunger. But their hunger was intended to create in them another appetite, by which alone their true life could be sustained. The Lord, however, gave them their request, even though He sent leanness into their soul. For, as will be seen, He gave them the quails as well as the manna.

"Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in My law, or no. And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily. And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the Lord hath brought you out from the land of Egypt ; and in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the Lord; for that He heareth your murmurings against the Lord: and what are we, that ye murmur against us? And Moses said, This shall be, when the Lord shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that the Lord heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against Him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord.

"And Moses spake unto Aaron, Say unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, Come near before the Lord; for He hath heard your murmurings. And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel : speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God" (Exodus 16:4-12).

Before we speak of the manna, two or three particulars have to be noted. The first is the grace with which God meets the desires of the people. In Numbers 11:1-35 He also meets their desire under similar circumstances; but "the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague" (Exodus 16:33). Here there is no sign of judgment - only patient and forbearing grace. The difference springs, if we may so describe it, from the dispensation. In Numbers they were under law, and they were dealt with accordingly; here they are under grace - and hence grace reigned spite of their sin. Secondly, their murmurings were the occasion of the display of the glory of the Lord (Exodus 16:10). Thus the display of what man is brings out of the depths of the heart of God the revelation of what He is. It was so in the garden of Eden, and indeed all down the line of His dealings with man. This principle is seen in perfection in the cross - where man was exhibited in all the utter corruption of his evil nature, and God was fully revealed. The light shineth in darkness, even if the darkness comprehends it not; and indeed the glory of the Lord shines out all the brighter because of the darkness of man's iniquity, which becomes the occasion of its display. Mark, moreover, that murmuring against Moses and Aaron was murmuring against the Lord (Exodus 16:8). All sin is really against God. (See Psalms 51:4; Luke 15:18-21.) Hence it is that the Lord says, "I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel " (Exodus 16:12). It is not enough remembered that all our complaints, our expressions of

unbelief, our murmurings, are against the Lord, and come immediately into His ears. How often would our sinful words die away on our lips if this thought were in our minds. If the Lord were visibly before our eyes, we should not dare to utter what we often permit ourselves now to say in the hastiness of our unbelief. And yet we are really before Him, His eyes are upon us, and He hears our every word.

Note: See, for an example of this, John 20:26-27.

Lastly, remark the difference between the quails and the manna. The quails have no special teaching connected with them, whereas it will be seen that the manna is a very striking type of the Lord Jesus. The quails therefore were given to satisfy the desires of the people, but brought no blessing. It is in connection with these, indeed, that the Psalmist says, "He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul." God may hear the cry of His people, even in their unbelief, and grant them their desires - but for discipline rather than for present blessing. Thus many a believer, forgetting his true portion in Christ, has desired the things of this world, the flesh pots of Egypt, and he has been allowed to attain his object, but the consequence has been barrenness of soul - and such barrenness of soul, that he has only been restored through the disciplinary trials of the Lord's loving hand. If we turn back in heart to Egypt, and are permitted to gratify our desires, it can only lead to sorrow in days to come. As, for example, St Paul writes to Timothy, "They that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:9-10). This is only one form of turning back to Egypt, but the principle is applicable to every object which the flesh can desire. The account of the actual bestowment of the quails and the manna is now given.

"And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp; and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat. This is the thing which the Lord hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating; an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons: take ye every man for them which are in his tents. And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack : they gathered every man according to his eating. And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning. Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them. And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted" (Exodus 16:13-21).

It will be observed, and the significance of the fact has been indicated, that there is the barest mention of the quails, but a full description of the manna. It is with the manna therefore that we are specially concerned. When the dew was gone up, "behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto

them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat" (Exodus 16:14-15). This then is the meaning of the manna: the bread which God gave the Israelites to eat in the wilderness. It is consequently the proper wilderness food for the Lord's people. Hence when the Jews said to our Lord, "Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat," He replied, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world" (John 6:32-33. Read especially from John 6:48-58). The manna then, it is clear, is a type of Christ - of Christ as He was in this world - as the One who came down from heaven, and who as such becomes the food of His people while passing through the wilderness. It must be especially noted that until we have life by feeding on His death - eating His flesh and drinking His blood (John 6:53-54) - we cannot feed upon Him as the manna. Having received life, then we are told, "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by" (because of) "the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by" (because of) "Me" (John 6:57).

Leaving the reader, however, to study for himself this most significant Scripture, it will suffice now to recall the two points named; first, that the manna of our chapter sets forth Christ; and secondly, that Christ in this character is the food of His people while in the desert. There is a difference between the children of Israel and believers of this dispensation. The former could only be in one place at a time, for we have here an actual historical narrative. The latter - Christians - are in two: their place is in the heavenlies in Christ (see Ephesians 2:1-22); and in their actual circumstances they are pilgrims in the wilderness. As being in the heavenlies, a glorified Christ - typified by the old corn of the land - is our sustenance; but in wilderness circumstances it is what Christ was here, Christ as the manna, that meets our need. And amid the weariness and the toil of our pilgrim path, how blessed and how sustaining it is to feed upon the grace, the tenderness, and the sympathy of a humbled Christ. How our hearts rejoice to remember that He has passed through the same circumstances; that He therefore knows our needs, and delights to minister to them for our sustainment and blessing. It is for such a purpose that the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews says, "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" (Hebrews 12:3). As one has said, speaking on this subject, "For instance, something may make me impatient during the day; well, then, Christ is my patience, and thus He is the manna to sustain me in patience. He is the source of grace, not merely the example which I am to copy;" and it is thus as the source of grace, sympathy, and strength to us in the wilderness that Christ is the manna of our souls.

There are some practical directions concerning the gathering of the manna which are of the utmost importance. First, they were to gather it every man according to his eating (Exodus 16:16-18). As a consequence he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack. The appetite governed the amount collected. How strikingly true this is of the believer! We all have as much of Christ as we desire - no more, and no less. If our desires are large, if we open our mouth wide, He will fill it. We cannot desire too much, nor be disappointed when we desire. On the other hand, if we are but feebly conscious of our need, a little only of Christ will be supplied. The measure therefore in which we feed upon Christ, as our wilderness food, depends entirely upon our felt spiritual need - upon our appetite. Secondly, it could not be stored for future use. No man was to leave of it until the morning; but some disobeyed this injunction, only, however, to find that what they had thus left had become corrupt. No; the food collected to-day cannot sustain us on the

morrow. It is only in a present exercise of soul that we can feed upon Christ. Much damage has accrued to souls from forgetting this principle. They have had a rich repast of manna, and they have attempted to feed upon it for days; but it has always issued in disappointment and loss instead of blessing. God only gives the portion of a day in its day (see margin of Exodus 16:4), and no more. Thirdly, it was to be collected early, for when the sun waxed hot it melted. No time, indeed, is so precious to the believer for gathering the manna, as the first moments of the day when in quiet he is alone with the Lord. He has not yet entered upon the experiences of the day, and he knows not what may be the precise character of his path; but he knows that he will need the sustaining manna. Let him therefore be diligent in the early morning, and let his hand not be slack to gather, and to gather as much as he may need; for even should he seek it afterwards, he will find that it has all disappeared before the glare and the heat of the day. How many a failure may be traced back to neglect on this point! A trial comes - unexpectedly comes, and the soul breaks down. But why? Because the manna was not collected before the sun was hot. All should lay this to heart, and be on the watch against the artifices of Satan to divert our minds from this one necessary thing. Let all diligence be employed that, whatever the emergency throughout the day, there may be no lack of manna. In connection with the manna the Sabbath is also given.

"And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord: bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you, to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. And Moses said, Eat that to-day, for to-day is a sabbath unto the Lord: to-day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none.

"And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep My commandments and My laws? See, for that the Lord hath given you the sabbath, therefore He giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days: abide ye every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day" (Exodus 16:22-30).

We read in Genesis 2:1-25 that "God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made" (Genesis 2:3). This fixes the meaning of the sabbath or the seventh day; for it should be carefully observed that it is the seventh and no other day, showing clearly that it is God's rest. This meaning is asserted most distinctly also in the epistle to the Hebrews. (See Hebrews 4:1-11.) The sabbath therefore is a type of God's rest, and as given to man expresses the desire of God's heart that he should share with Him in His rest. It is found here for the first time. There is not a trace of it through all the patriarchal age, or during the sojourn of the children of Israel in Egypt, but, as found in this chapter in connection with the manna, it has a most blessed significance. But a few remarks must be made before this is explained. The object God had in view in its institution has been indicated; but, as is abundantly clear, man in consequence of sin never possessed the thing signified. Nay, more, God Himself could not rest because of sin. Hence, when our blessed Lord was accused of breaking the sabbath, He replied, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). God could not rest in the presence of sin, and of the dishonour done to Him by it, and as a consequence man could not

share it with Him. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews develops this latter point. He shows that the children of Israel were shut out from it because of their unbelief and hardness of heart, that Joshua did not give them rest, that in David's time it was spoken of as yet future, and he argues that "there remaineth therefore a rest (a keeping of the sabbath) to the people of God" (Hebrews 3:1-19; Hebrews 4:1-16). The question arises then, How is it to be possessed? The answer is found in our chapter. The manna, as we have seen, pre-figures Christ, and consequently the connection teaches that it is Christ, and Christ only, who can lead us into the rest of God. He is the only way. The apostle thus says, "We which have believed do enter into rest" (Hebrews 4:3); that is, it belongs to those who believe in Christ to enter into rest - not by any means, as some have taught, that the rest is a present thing. The context shows distinctly that it is a future blessing. There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God. That believers may have rest of conscience and rest of heart in Christ is most blessedly true; but God's rest will not be reached until we enter upon that eternal scene in which all things are made new, when 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 (Revelation 21:1-7).

There are two circumstances connected with the institution of the sabbath in this place which demand a brief notice. The first is the double provision of manna on the sixth day, that the people might rest in their tents on the seventh. If collected thus on any other day in self-will, it became worthless and corrupt; but when done in obedience in view of the sabbath it remained sound and good. The truth taught, however, is that when sharing in God's rest, in His grace, throughout eternity, Christ will be still our food; nay, it might be said that our enjoyment of that rest will consist in feasting with God upon the once humbled Christ. Nothing less will satisfy His own heart than that we should have full fellowship with Himself concerning His beloved Son. There is perhaps another thought. It is that whatever we acquire of Christ here becomes our eternal possession and delight. Gather as much manna as we may, two omers instead of one; if it is kept for the rest that remaineth, it will be a source of strength and joy throughout eternity. The second thing is that some of the people, spite of the injunction they had received, went out on the seventh day to gather manna, but they found none (v.27). Whatever the exhibitions of grace man's heart remained the same. Disobedience is native to his corrupt nature, and displays itself alike, whether under law or grace. The Lord rebuked through Moses the conduct of His people, though He bore with them in His long-suffering and tender mercy. Taking the sabbath, as has been explained, as a type of God's rest, and therefore, since sin has come in, as yet future, it will be at once seen that there is a distinct typical teaching connected with there being no manna on the sabbath. The time for the manna will then be for ever past. Christ will never more be apprehended in that character; for the wilderness circumstances of His people will then have for ever passed away. The store they collected while in the desert may still be enjoyed; but there will be no more to be gathered. The same lesson, in one aspect, may be seen in the direction given by Moses at the commandment of the Lord.

"And Moses said, This is the thing which the Lord commandeth, Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt. And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations. As the Lord commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept. And the children of Israel

did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited: they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan. Now an omer is the tenth part of an ephah" (Exodus 16:33-36).

There is doubtless an allusion to this in the promise to the overcomer in the church at Pergamos: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna," etc. (Revelation 2:17). Thus Christ in His humiliation is never to be forgotten, but always to be remembered, and gratefully to be fed upon throughout eternity by His people.

"There on the hidden bread

Of Christ - once humbled here

God's treasured store - for ever fed,

His love my soul shall cheer."

Hence an omer full of manna was laid up before the Lord, before the Testimony, to be kept for their generations. For forty years, during the whole of their wanderings in the desert, until they came to a land inhabited, this was their daily food; they did eat manna until they came into the borders of the land of Canaan.

04.14. REPHIDIM AND AMALEK

REPHIDIM AND AMALEK

Exodus 17:1-16

ONCE again the children of Israel move forward and meet with other difficulties. But "all these things happened unto them for ensamples" (types): "and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Corinthians 10:11). There is, therefore, a special interest attaching to all their wilderness sorrows and experiences.

"And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide you with me? wherefore do ye tempt the Lord? And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go: behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb: and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us, or not?" (v.1-7). As in the case of the manna, so with the smitten rock, the people's sin was the occasion for this display of power and grace. In Rephidim there was "no water for the people to drink." And what did the people do? Were they not encouraged, by their past experiences of God's faithfulness and tender care, to turn to Him in the confidence that He would interpose on their behalf? Were not the quails and the manna fresh in their recollection of the evidence of the all-sufficiency of Jehovah to meet their every need? Had they not learnt that the Lord was their shepherd, and that therefore they should not want? All this, indeed, might have been expected; and, were we ignorant of the human heart, of the character of the flesh, it might have been expected as the natural results of what they had seen of the wonderful works of the Lord. But so far from this being the case, they chode with Moses, and said, "Give us water that we may drink." In their sinful murmurings and unbelief, they looked upon Moses as the author of all their misery, and were almost ready to kill him in their anger. An observation or two may be made upon the character of their sin, before the gracious provision accorded to their need is considered. The people chode with Moses; but in reality, as Moses said, they tempted the Lord (Exodus 17:2); saying, by their acts, "Is the Lord among us, or not?" (Exodus 17:7). Moses was their appointed leader, and was, therefore, for the people Jehovah's representative. To chide with him was thus to chide with the Lord; and to complain of their privations was in fact to doubt, if not to deny, the Lord's presence. For had they believed that He was among them, every murmur would have been

hushed, and they would have rested in the assurance that He who had brought them out of Egypt, parted for them the waters of the Red Sea, delivered them from the hand of Pharaoh, and guided them in all their journeys by the pillar of fire by night, and the pillar of cloud by day, would in His own time hear their cry, and supply their need. It shows the very solemn nature of the sin of murmuring and complaints, because of the trials of the wilderness, and teaches us, at the same time, that the essence of all such is doubting whether the Lord is with us. Hence the antidote to all such tendencies, to these common snares of Satan, by which he so often entangles the feet of the Lord's people, and robs them of their peace and joy, even when he does not compass their fall, is a firm, unwavering hold upon the truth that the Lord is among us, that He leads His people like a flock - through every stage of their wilderness journey. How beautiful, in contrast with the conduct of Israel, is the perfect attitude of our blessed Lord. When tempted by Satan in the wilderness, He in immovable dependence, repelled his every suggestion with the simple word of God.

Moses cried unto the Lord, and the Lord heard his prayer, and, spite of the people's sin, "He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places like a river. For He remembered His holy promise, and Abraham His servant" (Psalms 105:41-42).

Thus grace still prevailed, and satisfied the needs of the people. But it is in the typical instruction of this incident that the chief interest lies. Even as the manna, the rock also speaks of Christ. St Paul thus says, "They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4). But the Rock was smitten before the waters flowed. Moses was directed to take the rod - the rod wherewith he had smitten the river - and there with Jehovah standing before him on the rock in Horeb, he was to smite the rock, "and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink." The rod has been explained to mean a symbol of God's power, and in smiting it will therefore set forth the exercise of His judicial power. We behold then, in this smiting of the rock, the stroke of His judgment falling upon Christ on the cross. The smitten rock is a crucified Christ. It was the people's sin, remark, that led to the smiting of the rock - a striking exemplification of the truth that "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." Surely this is a sight both for sinners and saints. Sinners may behold Christ on the cross bearing the judgment of sin, and learn, if they will but ponder it, what sin is in the eyes of a holy God; and as they learn this lesson, let them also be warned of their coming doom if they continue in impenitence and unbelief. For if God spared not His own Son, when dealing with the question of sin, that Son, who was the delight of His heart, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, how can they expect to escape? Saints, moreover, cannot too often look back to the cross. And how will their hearts be touched, humbled, melted, as by grace they are enabled to say, "His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24). Throughout eternity they will never forget that their sins necessitated that death; while they will never cease to remember that God was glorified by it in every attribute of His character, and hence that it is the everlasting and immutable foundation of all their blessing. It is indeed a most solemn, as well as precious, truth, that the Rock must needs be smitten before the people could drink. Inasmuch as sin was in question - sin which had dishonoured God before the whole universe - all that God was demanded it for His own glory; and inasmuch as the people would have perished without water, their needs demanded it that they might live. But God only could provide it, and hence in the directions to Moses another beautiful unfolding of the grace of His heart is exhibited. The Rock was smitten, and "the waters gushed out." Not before - this was impossible; for because of sin God was, as it

were, restrained. His mercies and compassions, His grace and His love, were pent up within Himself. But immediately that atonement was accomplished, whereby the claims of His holiness were for ever satisfied, the flood-gates of His heart were opened to pour forth streams of grace and life throughout the world. Hence we read in Matthew, that as soon as the Lord Jesus had yielded up the ghost, "the veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom:" (Matthew 27:50-51). God was now free in righteousness to come out in grace to a sinful world with offers of salvation, and man - the believer - was free to enter boldly into His immediate presence. The way had been revealed by which man could righteously stand before the full light of the holiness of the very throne of God. The water which flowed from the Rock is an emblem of the Holy Spirit as the power of life. This is clear from the gospel of John. Our blessed Lord thus said to the woman of Samaria, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). In John 7:1-53 He uses the same figure, and John adds, "This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39). Two things are indeed clear from this passage - first, that the "living water" is a type of the Holy Ghost; and secondly, that this "living water," the Holy Ghost, could not be received until Jesus was glorified. In other words, the Rock must first be smitten, as already seen, before the waters could flow out to quench the thirst of men.

There is one lesson of great practical importance that cannot be overlooked. There is nothing that can satisfy the undying needs of man but the Holy Ghost as the power of life - everlasting life; and this blessing can only be received through a crucified and risen Christ. Hence He cried to the Jews, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37). And the proclamation still goes forth, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). May every one who reads these lines have this truth impressed upon his soul in the power of the Holy Ghost!

Thus the Lord met the murmurings of His people by grace, and gave them water to drink; but the names - Massah and Meribah, given - to the place - remained as the monument of their sin.

Immediately after the waters being fetched out of the rock comes conflict with Amalek. The connection of the incidents is most instructive as illustrating the ways and the truth of God. The manna is Christ come down from heaven; the smitten Rock is Christ crucified, the living water is an emblem of the Holy Ghost; and now together with the reception of the Spirit comes conflict. It must be so; for "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: that ye should not do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:17). Hence the order of these typical events. What then, it may be enquired, is symbolized by Amalek? It is often stated that it is the flesh; but this is only part of the truth. As to Amalek; his real character is readily apprehended from his origin. (See Genesis 36:12.) But the point to be discerned here is, that Amalek sets himself in open antagonism to the people of God, and seeks to hinder their progress, and even to destroy them from off the face of the earth. It is therefore the power of Satan - acting through the flesh it may be - that thus challenges the onward march of the children of Israel. And the subtlety of Satan in the time chosen for the attack is plainly apparent. It was just after the people had sinned, at a time, therefore, when an enemy might have supposed that they were under the displeasure of God. This is ever his method. But if God be for His people, He will suffer no foe to accomplish their destruction. The people indeed if left to themselves might easily have been scattered; but He who had brought them through the waters of the Red Sea will not

now leave them to perish. The Lord was their banner, and thus their defence was sure. Let us then notice how the defeat of Amalek was accomplished.

"Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur, went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon: and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side: and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword" (Exodus 17:8-13).

First, then, we find that Joshua, at the commandment of Moses, places himself at the head of chosen men for the battle. Joshua represents Christ, in the energy of the Spirit, leading His redeemed to the conflict. What a consolation! If Satan marshals his forces to assail the Lord's people, Christ, on the other hand, leads out His chosen men to meet the foe. The battle therefore is the Lord's. This is illustrated again and again throughout the history of Israel ; and it is as true in principle of the conflicts of believers of this dispensation. This, if apprehended, would calm our minds in the presence of the sorest difficulties. It would help us to cease from man, and to count upon the Lord. It would enable us to estimate at their proper value the restless activity and the schemes of men, and to look for deliverance alone to the Lord as the Leader of His people. In a word, we should then remember that there can be no successful defence offered to our foes but in the power of the Spirit of God.

There is yet another thing. If Joshua leads his warriors in the plain, Moses - with Aaron and Hur - go up to the top of the hill; and the fight below depends upon the uplifting of the hands of Moses above. Moses, as thus seen, is a figure of Christ above in the value of His intercession. While He leads His people in the power of the Spirit below, He maintains their cause by His intercession in the presence of God; and secures for them mercy and grace for seasonable succour. They have therefore no strength for conflict apart from His priestly intercession; and the energy of the Spirit as leading them onward is in relation to this intercession. St Paul indicates this truth when he says, "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword" (or, we may add, Amalek)?... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us" (Romans 8:34-37). The Lord Himself taught His disciples the connection between His work above, and the Spirit's action in them below, when He said, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you" (John 16:7). Hence, too, He terms the Holy Ghost "another Comforter" (John 14:16); and the apostle John applies to our blessed Lord the same title (i.e. Advocate, but really the same word Paraclete; 1John 2:1). But no one man could be a perfect type of Christ. The hands of Moses were heavy, so that they were sustained by Aaron and Hur. This, however, only brings out more fully the truth of the intercession of Christ. Aaron, though not yet formally set apart, represents the priesthood, and Hur, if the significance of the name may guide us, typifies light or purity. Together therefore it will mean the priestly intercession of Christ maintained in holiness before God; and hence an intercession, since it is based upon all that Christ is and has done, which is ever

effectual and prevailing. The lesson should be well observed. The battle below depended not upon the strength of the warriors, nor even upon the Holy Spirit, but upon the enduring and efficacious intercession of Christ. For when Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. Hence the necessity of dependence. Apart from it, we may be ready for the conflict; the cause may be a just one, but our failure will be sure and inevitable. But with it, having Christ on high on our behalf, and Christ in the energy of the Spirit as our Leader, "when the wicked, even our enemies and our foes, come against us, they will stumble and fall." Then no foe can stand before the Lord's people.

Amalek was thus discomfited with the edge of the sword. But such a victory - revelation of the source of their strength, and the unchanging character of the enemy - was not to be forgotten. It was to be recorded as a memorial.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi: for he said, Because the Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation" (Exodus 17:14-16).

Two things were combined in this memorial - the record of their deliverance from Amalek, and the pledge of his final overthrow. Every display of the Lord's power on behalf of His people bears this double character. If He step in and vindicate them from the assaults of their enemies, He, by that same act, assures them of His continual protection and care. Every interposition therefore of His between them and their foes should be rehearsed in their ears, and written on their hearts, both as the memorial of the past, and as the guarantee of His immutable defence. Hence when the Psalmist celebrates a past deliverance, he exclaims, "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident" (Psalms 27:3). In the same confidence Moses built an altar. By it he gratefully owned the divine hand, as well as expressed that the praise of the victory belonged to the Lord. It is precisely here that so many fail. The Lord vouchsafes help and deliverance, but they forget to build their altars. Driven into the Lord's presence in their straits, they too often neglect to praise Him when relieved from their pressure. Not so with Moses. By building the altar he declared before the whole of Israel, It is the Lord who has fought for us and secured the victory. This is proclaimed by the title he affixed to it - "The Lord our banner." He therefore it was who led our hosts, and He it is who will lead our hosts; for His controversy with Amalek will never cease. As long as He has a people on the earth, so long will Satan seek to encompass their overthrow. We need to remember this, but with all the prospect it involves, our hearts will be confident, if we can but grasp in power the truth of Jehovah-nissi. The battle is the Lord's, we fight under His colours, and hence - whatever the stubborn persistence of the foe - the victory is assured.

04.15. MILLENNIAL BLESSING

MILLENNIAL BLESSING

Exodus 18:1-27 THIS chapter brings to a close the dispensation of grace in Israel's history. From Egypt to Sinai all was pure grace. At Sinai they put themselves under law. Hence the special character of Exodus 18:1-27. The manna, as explained, presented Christ in incarnation, the smitten Rock His death, the streams that flowed from it the gift of the Spirit; and now, following the dispensation of the Spirit, we find in figure the blessing of Jew and Gentile, and the establishment of governmental order in Israel. Indeed, the Church, the Jew, and the Gentile, are all typically delineated. This will be perceived if the several points of the following Scripture are indicated:

"When Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel His people, and that the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt, then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back, and her two sons; of which the name of the one was Gershom; for he said, I have been an alien in a strange land: and the name of the other was Eliezer; For the God of my father, said he, was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh. And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife unto Moses into the wilderness, where he encamped at the mount of God: and he said unto Moses, I thy father-in-law Jethro am come unto thee, and thy wife, and her two sons with her.

"And Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and did obeisance, and kissed him and they asked each other of their welfare: and they came into the tent. And Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done unto Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, and all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and how the Lord delivered them. And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel, whom He had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians. And Jethro said, Blessed be the Lord, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh; who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly He was above them. And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt-offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God" (Exodus 18:1-12).

Jethro, the priest of Midian, the father-in-law of Moses, now appears. He had heard of all that God had wrought for His people, and thereon brought Zipporah and her two sons to Moses. The very names of the children explain the typical character of the whole scene. The first is Gershom; "for he said, I have been an alien" or a pilgrim "in a strange land:" It is reminiscent therefore of the weary days of Israel's absence from their own land when they were scattered as strangers throughout the world. (See 1 Peter 1:1) The name of the second is Eliezer; "For the God of my father was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh." This undoubtedly recalled the past; but it is also a prophecy of the future, and therefore, interpreted typically, speaks of the final deliverance of Israel, preparatory to their introduction into blessing under the reign of Messiah. The two names thus mark two distinct periods in God's dealings with Israel: the first covers the

whole time that will elapse between their being carried away captive into Babylon; while the second points to that momentous hour in which the Lord will suddenly appear and snatch His people from the very jaws of the enemy, when He shall go forth and fight against those nations who will be gathered against Jerusalem to battle (Zechariah 14:1-21). But the sorrows of their dispersion, as well as their deliverance from the sword of Pharaoh, are looked upon in this scene as past, and they are now in possession, in figure, of their long-delayed and long-looked-for blessing. The Church is seen in Zipporah. She was the Gentile wife of Moses, and as such prefigures the Church. All thus is in keeping with the millennial character of the picture; for when Israel is restored, and rejoices in the happy sway of Emmanuel, the Church will have her part in the gladness of that day, associated as she will be in the glories of the reign of the thousand years. It will be a day of unspeakable joy to Him who came of the seed of David, according to the flesh, and every pulse of His joy will awaken a response in the heart of her who will occupy the position of the Lamb's wife. He therefore, and she together with Him, whatever her lesser measure, will have fellowship in gladness over the day of Israel's espousals.

Next we have the Gentiles, as symbolized by Jethro's blessing, and confessing Jehovah's name. And observe how this is produced. Moses, the Jew, declares to Jethro all that the Lord had done unto Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, and the travail that had come upon them by the way, and how the Lord delivered them." This relation bows the heart of Jethro, and he rejoices because of the deliverance of Israel, praises the Lord for it, and confesses His absolute supremacy. We thus read in the Psalms, "Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; Thou hast made me the head of the heathen" (Gentiles): "a people whom I have not known shall serve me. As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me" (Psalms 18:43-44).

Jethro then unites in worship with Aaron, and the elders of Israel, together with Moses, before God. Moses is here the king, and hence he with Israel, and the Gentiles (Jethro) eat bread before God. It is the union of Israel and the Gentiles in worship. It is the scene predicted by the prophet: "And 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 from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:2-3). In the remainder of the chapter the establishment of judgment and government is recorded:

"And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening. And when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even? And Moses said unto his father-in-law, Because the people come unto me to enquire of God: when they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another; and I do make them know the statutes of God, and His laws. And Moses' father-in-law said unto him, The thing that thou doest is not good. Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. Harken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to Godward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God: and thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein

they must walk, and the work that they must do. Moreover, thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness: and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens: and let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee. If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace. So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father-in-law, and did all that he had said. And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves.

"And Moses let his father-in-law depart; and he went his way into his own land" (Exodus 18:13-27).

Two things have to be carefully distinguished - the failure of Moses, and the thing symbolized by the appointment of the rulers over the people. To take the latter first, it is evident that this arrangement for judging the people emblematically portrays the order in government which the Messiah will set up when He assumes His kingdom. As the Psalmist speaks, "He shall judge Thy people with righteousness, and Thy poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness" (Psalms 72:2-3). Hence it is that this section closes with this account. But while this is divinely intended, the failure of Moses in listening to Jethro must not be concealed. Indeed, if it were, some most valuable instruction would thereby be lost. The first mistake he made was in listening to Jethro on such a matter. The Lord had given him his office; and it was to Him he should have had recourse on every subject that concerned His people. The pleas Jethro advanced were indeed specious and subtle. They were grounded upon his anxiety for the welfare of his son-in-law. "Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone." If Moses would but do as he advised, then he said, "So shall it be easier for thyself," etc.; and again, "Then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall go to their place in peace." It was not therefore concern for God, but for Moses, that actuated Jethro. But the arguments he advanced were those most calculated to influence the natural man. Who is there, even among the Lord's servants, that does not at times feel the weight of his responsibility, and who would not rejoice at the prospect of its being lessened? There is indeed no more seductive temptation presented at such a moment than that of the need of a little care for one's self and one's comfort. But, dangerous as it is, and as it was in the case of Moses, if he had remembered the source of his office, as well as his strength, he would not have yielded to it. For if his work in judging the people were of the Lord, and for the Lord, His grace would be all-sufficient for His servant. He taught Moses this lesson, as we find in the book of Numbers, when Moses complained to the Lord, and in the very words that Jethro had instilled into his mind, "I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me" (Numbers 11:14). The Lord heard his complaint, and directed him to associate seventy men with himself to aid him in his work, saying, "I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone" (Numbers 11:17). Though, therefore, the Lord granted him his desire, there was no additional supply of strength for the government of Israel, but Moses was now called upon to share with the seventy the Spirit which he before possessed. According to man, the

counsel of Jethro was wise and prudent, evincing much sagacity in human affairs; but according to God, its acceptance was characterized by doubt and unbelief. In reality it left God out of the calculation, and made the health of Moses its chief aim, losing sight altogether of the fact that it was not Moses, but the Lord through Moses, who bore the burden of the people; and hence that it was not a question of the strength of Moses, but of his resources in God. How apt are all to lose sight of this important truth - that in any service, if occupied in it for the Lord, the difficulties in it should be measured, not by what we are, but what He is. We are never sent to warfare at our own charges, but every true servant is sustained by the all-sufficiency of God. Moses might be despondent in the presence of such a task, and Paul might almost faint under the pressure of the thorn in the flesh, but to both one and the other the divine word is spoken, if the ear be but opened to hear, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

Several valuable instructions may be deduced from this narrative. First, it is always exceedingly dangerous to listen to the advice of a relative in the things of God. When our blessed Lord, together with His disciples, was exceedingly occupied with His ministry, "so that they could not so much as eat bread," His friends or relatives "went out to lay hold on Him: for they said, He is beside Himself." They thought not of the claims of God, and could not understand anything of that zeal which was consuming Him in the service which He came to fulfil. Relatives look through the medium of their claims, or their natural affection, and hence the eye, not being single, cannot judge aright in the presence of God. It no doubt called for much self-sacrifice and loss of ease and comfort for Zipporah, and Moses, too, in the work to which he was called. It was nevertheless no small honour and privilege to be thus engaged; and had he been fully alive to it, he would have resolutely closed his ears to the seductive voice of the tempter in the person of Jethro.

Secondly, we gather that when once a word of distrust or complaint is admitted into our hearts, it is not very easily dispelled. As we have seen from Numbers 11:1-35, Moses uses the very words in his complaint that were suggested by Jethro. It is exactly here that Satan is so successful. There may be but a half unformed thought, an insinuation, in our minds, and immediately he comes and puts it into words, and presents it to our souls. For example, feeling weary in service, and it may be despondent through weariness, how often will Satan suggest that we are doing too much, going beyond our strength; and if we accept the temptation the thought may hamper us for years, even if it does not find expression in murmurs before God; We need therefore to be very watchful over our hearts as not ignorant of the devices of the enemy.

Lastly, it lies on the surface that man's order by no means represents the mind of God. To human eyes the governmental system advised by Jethro was very orderly and beautiful, and far more likely to secure the administration of justice among the people. Man always thinks he can improve upon the order of God. This has been the secret of the ruin of the church. Instead of adhering to the Scriptures, which reveal the divine mind, man has brought in ideas, plans, and systems of his own; and hence the manifold divisions and sects which characterize the outward form of Christianity. The safety of the Lord's people lies in steadfastly cleaving to the word of God; and in the refusal therefore of all counsel and advice which may be given apart from it by man.

Jethro had done his work, and, by the permission of Moses, he went his way into his own land (Exodus 18:27). What a contrast with Moses and the children of Israel ! They were going God's way and to His land; and, as a consequence, were pilgrims passing through the wilderness; but

Jethro went his (not God's) way, and into his own (not God's) land. Instead, therefore, of being a pilgrim, he had a settled home, where he kept no sabbath, but found his own rest.

See, for an example of this, John 20:26-27.

04.16. SINAI.

SINAI.

Exodus 19:1-25; Exodus 20:1-26 A NEW dispensation is inaugurated in these chapters. Up to the close of Exodus 18:1-27, as before indicated, grace reigned, and hence characterized all God's dealings with His people; but from this point they were put, with their own consent, under the rigid requirements of law. Sinai is the expression of this dispensation, and is thus associated with it for all time. The apostle contrasts it with Zion as the seat of royal grace, when he says, in writing to the Hebrews, "Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard, entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more. . . . But ye are come unto mount Zion." (Hebrews 12:18-22.) He shows that Sinai had then passed away, and had been succeeded by another dispensation the expression of which was mount Zion. It is with the former that our chapters deal. The time and place are both distinctly marked. "In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai. For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount." (Exodus 19:1-2) The Lord thus fulfilled the word which He gave to Moses: "Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain." (Exodus 3:12.) They were to hold a feast unto the Lord (see Exodus 5:1; Exodus 10:9); and they might have done so had they but known themselves, and also Jehovah's heart. But they were about to be tested in a new way. Grace had already searched them, and discovered nothing but disobedience, rebellion, and sin; and now they were to be tried by law. This has been the object of God in all His dispensations — to test, and thereby to reveal, what man is; but blessed be His name, if He has disclosed the incurable corruption of our nature, He has revealed at the same time what He is — each revelation of Himself being according to the character of the relationship into which He entered with His people. Thereby He taught that, if man were completely ruined and lost, help and salvation were to be found in Him, and in Him alone. The giving of the law from mount Sinai has, on this account, a peculiar importance and interest. All its circumstances therefore are worthy of our attention.

"And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

"And Moses came, and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, All that

the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the Lord." (Exodus 19:3-9)

There are two things in the message which the Lord commissioned Moses to carry to the people. First, He reminds them of what He had done for them and in a way which should have taught them their own utter impotence, and that all their resources were in God. "Ye have seen," He says, "what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself." He had delivered them from Pharaoh, destroyed him and his armies; He had borne His people by His might, had brought them to Himself, and given them a place of nearness and relationship. He had done everything for them, and He appeals to their own knowledge in proof of it; and such an appeal was calculated to touch their hearts with gratitude, as it recalled to their minds the source of all the blessing which they now enjoyed. Then, secondly, He makes a proposal. "Now, therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine," etc. The bearing of this proposal must be distinctly marked. God had redeemed Israel by His own power: in pursuance of His purposes of grace and love He had made them His own people, and He had engaged to bring them to a land flowing with milk and honey (Exodus 3:7-8); and all this was founded upon the pure grace of His own heart, and was governed by no conditions whatsoever from the people. He reminds them of this in pointing them back to the work He had wrought on their behalf. But now to test them He says, "I will make your position and blessing dependent on your obedience. Hitherto I have done everything for you; but now I propose to make the continuance of My favour contingent upon your own works. Are you willing to promise absolute obedience to My word and covenant on these terms?" This in substance was the proposition Moses was charged to carry to the children of Israel. And Moses faithfully fulfilled his mission. He "called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him." (Exodus 19:7) Surely such a message would produce deep exercises of heart. It might be expected, at least, that they would need time to consider it in all its significance. They could not have forgotten that already, even in the short three months that had elapsed since they crossed the Red Sea, they had sinned again and again; that every fresh difficulty had but witnessed their failure and sin. If therefore they had gone over their past experience, they would have seen that if they accepted these new terms everything would be lost. They would surely say one to the other, "We have disobeyed time after time, and we fear that the same thing might happen again, and then we forfeit all. No; we must throw ourselves unreservedly upon that same grace which has saved, led, and preserved us in our journey through the wilderness. If grace does not still reign we are a lost people." So far from this, however, they instantly accept the proposed condition, and said, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." Their past experiences had gone for nothing. They thus betrayed the most utter ignorance, both of the character of God, and of their own hearts. It was in fact a most fatal mistake. Instead of clinging with tenacity, because of their own felt impotence, to what God was for them, which is grace, they foolishly offered to make everything depend upon what they could be for God, which is the principle of law. It is ever the same. Man in his folly and blindness ever seeks to obtain blessing upon the ground of his own works, and rejects a salvation which is offered to him in pure grace; for he is unwilling to be nothing, and grace makes everything, of God, and nothing of man. Hence it is that grace wounds the pride and self-importance of the sinner, and thereby provokes the

resistance of his depraved heart.

Moses carried back the message of the people, and the Lord prepares to establish His new relationship with His people on the ground of law. First of all, He puts Moses in the place of a mediator. "Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever." He gives him a position that the people should be compelled to acknowledge. After this, directions for the people are given in connection with the promulgation of the code by which they were to be governed, and which sets forth the standard of God's requirements. Everything commanded betokened the change of dispensation. Before they had to do with a God of grace; now they have to do with a God of righteousness. This necessitated distance on the part of God (for He had to do with sinners), and separation and cleansing on the part of the people. The first was signified by the "thick cloud," in which He said He would come to Moses, and the second by the various prescriptions for the people.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai. And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: there shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.

"And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes. And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives." (Exodus 19:10-15) The people were thus to be "sanctified" for two days. The meaning to be attached to this term is always determined by the connection in which it is found. Here it will signify the separation of the people — setting them apart unto God on the ground of their promised obedience. This would doubtless involve their separation externally from everything unsuited to the presence of a holy God. They were likewise to wash their clothes. Everything, it will be remarked, has now to be done from their side. Moses was to sanctify them and they were to wash their clothes; for the moment they undertook to obey, as the condition of blessing, they in reality accepted the responsibility of fitting themselves for God's presence. No doubt they acquired thus a kind of ceremonial qualification to meet with God., but the very distance at which they were kept, proved at once how inadequate were their efforts. They might wash their clothes never so scrupulously, and make them so clean that no human eye could detect defilement, but the question for their consciences, if they had but understood, was, Could they so cleanse themselves as to be able to bear the inspection of a holy God? Let Job answer the question. "If," says he, "I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt Thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." (Job 9:30-31.) The Lord Himself has answered it for us. Speaking to Israel, by the prophet, He says, "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before Me." (Jeremiah 2:22.) MAN CANNOT CLEANSE HIMSELF FOR GOD. This is the lesson of the whole Scripture.

Why, then, it will be replied, did the Lord give this commandment to Israel? For the same reason that He gave them the law to prove what was in their hearts, to bring out fully to view what was lurking there, to expose indeed the corruption of their nature, and thereby to teach them their

ruined and guilty condition. In measure they learnt the futility of their own efforts; for spite of all their "sanctifying" and "washing" they could not draw near to God, and they were terrified at His voice. It is so oftentimes in the experience of sinners. Awakened to some sense of their condition, they begin to try to improve themselves, to purify their own hearts, and to qualify themselves in this way for the favour of God. But they soon discover that the only effect of all their efforts is to bring to light their own sin and vileness. Or if they succeed in weaving a robe of self-righteousness, and in thus concealing for a time their deformities, the moment they are brought into the presence of God, the robe itself appears in the light of His holiness as nothing but filthy rags. Man indeed is utterly helpless, and until he learns this he can never understand that the only way to cleanse his robes from every spot and stain — so white as to satisfy even the requirements of God's holiness — is in the blood of the Lamb. (See Revelation 1:5, Revelation 7:14.) The people were then sanctified, and they washed their clothes, and fasted in preparation for "the third day." The third day is often significant and typical; and so here it would seem to speak in figure of death. It was, then, on the morning of the third day that the Lord descended upon mount Sinai, with all the accompaniments of His awful and terrible majesty. There were thunders and lightnings — expressive of judicial power, the necessary attitude of God in His holiness, when coming into contact with sinners. There was also a thick cloud upon the mount (see Exodus 19:9) setting forth His distance and concealment. As the Psalmist says, "Clouds and darkness are round about Him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne." (Psalms 97:2.) Moreover the voice of the trumpet, both the herald of the approach of God, and the summons for the assembling of the people, was exceeding loud. Every possible solemnity surrounded the divine steps, and all the people that were in the camp, spite of the preparations they had undergone, trembled. If they had confidence in themselves before, it must now have been rudely shaken, if not dispelled; for if prepared to meet God, why should they fear? Was it not He who had borne them on eagles' wings, and brought them to Himself whom they were to meet? Was He not their Saviour and Lord? Why then did they tremble at the signs of His presence? Because they in their folly had undertaken to meet Him on the ground of what they were in themselves, of their own doings, instead of casting themselves on His mercy, His grace, and love. Fatal mistake! and now they were made to feel it. But their word was irrevocable, and they cannot yet be released from its obligations. Moses therefore brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." (Exodus 19:17-18) As we read in the Psalms, "The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel." (Psalms 68:8.) Fire was thus the characteristic of the Lord's presence upon Sinai — fire and smoke, fire being the symbol of His holiness, but of His holiness in the aspect of judgment against sin. "Our God is a consuming fire." Hence meeting with Israel on the ground of law, fire was the most significant expression of the fact that righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne. Moses therefore speaks of the "fiery law" that went forth from God's right hand, fiery because being "holy, and just, and good," it could only judge and consume those who did not answer to its requirements. It is of this effect that he speaks when he says, "We are consumed by Thine anger, and by Thy wrath are we troubled." (Psalms 90:7.)

Moses spake to God when the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, and God answered him by a voice. He was then called up to the mount, and what was the nature of the first

communication he received? Already bounds had been set round about the mount; for the place whereon God stood was holy ground, and the penalty of death was attached to any one, man or beast, who should even touch the mount. But even this was not enough. "Go down" said the Lord unto Moses, "charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish." (Exodus 19:21) All alike, priests and people, were to be kept at a distance, Moses and Aaron excepted — lest the Lord should break forth upon them (Exodus 19:25)

All these details are most solemnly interesting, as showing man's utter incapacity to stand on his own merits before God, and as teaching at the same time, that if the sinner ventures on such a foundation to come into contact with Him it can only be to his own destruction. God moreover apart from atonement, cannot meet the sinner on the ground of righteousness without destroying him. When will men learn that there is, and must be for ever, the most irreconcilable antagonism between holiness and sin; that God must be against the sinner, unless the claims of His holiness are met; and that these claims can never be met except in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ? In this light it is a touching scene. God in all the awful majesty of His holiness upon Sinai; the people in all their distance and guilt, trembling at what they saw and heard, shut off from the mount, but brought out of the camp to meet with God, and to receive the requirements of His righteous law which they had undertaken to obey.

"And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain. Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed it.

"Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's." (Exodus 20:1-17.)

There are several points in connection with the giving of the law which demand distinct and especial attention. The first is the nature of the law itself. The commandments are ten in number, and they are based upon, or rather flow out from, the relationship into which God had entered with His people in redemption. "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Looking at the commandments together it will be seen that the first four relate to God, and the last six to man; i.e. they define responsibility towards God and towards man. Hence they were summed up by our blessed Lord, in answer to the question, Which

is the great commandment in the law? as follows: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matthew 22:35-40; see Deuteronomy 10:12; and Leviticus 19:18.) Love to God — perfect love to God, perfect according to their capacity — and love to their neighbour, according to the standard of self-love, were thus enjoined upon Israel. But remark that in the details of the commandments the characteristic is prohibition. "Thou shalt not" — if we except the fourth, and even in that "keeping the sabbath" means the abstinence from all work — is the essence of the whole. This fact has an important bearing upon the second point to be considered — the object of the law. These ten commandments were the standard of God's requirements from Israel. They had voluntarily undertaken obedience to His voice, and to keep His covenant as the condition of blessing. In response to this the Lord revealed through Moses what He required. A standard therefore was erected by which it could be easily ascertained, even by themselves, whether or not they were obedient to God's word. By these commandments therefore He came to prove them, that His fear might be before their faces that they might not sin. (v. 20.) But He knew what was in their hearts, though they might be ignorant, and hence the giving of the law really had for its object the bringing to light what was in His people's hearts. This accounts for the prohibitive form of the commandment. For why should it be said, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet, unless the tendency to all these forms of sins was found within them? The apostle Paul explains this in Romans 7:1-25. "I had not known sin," he says, "but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law, sin was dead." (Romans 7:7-8) The lust was in the heart before the law came, but not being forbidden he could not know it as lust; but immediately the commandment said, Thou shalt not lust, it sprang into the light, and the opposition of the heart to God was made manifest. The law therefore entered, as the apostle elsewhere says, that the offence might abound (Romans 5:20); i.e. to make the offences known. They were committed before; but they were not seen as offences until they were forbidden. Then their nature could no longer be concealed, and all might understand that they were transgressions of the law of God. This point is of the utmost importance, inasmuch as it is contended even now, although the gospel of the grace of God is fully revealed and widely proclaimed, that obedience to the law is the way of life. How many thousands indeed are deluded by this fatal snare. Let such ponder the words of the apostle, "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." (Galatians 3:21.) True it was said, Ye shall keep my statutes, and my judgments; which if a man do, he shall live in them (Leviticus 18:5); but how could sinners, by nature and by practice, keep the commandments of God? Hear indeed the Holy Spirit's own reasoning, through Paul, upon this matter: "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them." (Galatians 3:10-12.) This removes every difficulty, and places beyond a doubt the true object of the law, which was, as we have said, to erect a standard of God's requirements, and so to convict man of sin. The law entered that the offence might abound. And the law can be very blessedly used now for the same purpose. If a man, strong in the confidence of his

self-righteousness, be encountered, he can be probed and tested by it: he can be asked if he loves God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself, and thereby the deceitful character of his own works be exposed.

If this point is understood, and if there be simple subjection to the word of God, there will be no difficulty in apprehending that the law is not given as a full revelation of the mind and heart of God. The way in which it is often spoken of would lead souls to suppose that there could not be a further and fuller revelation. But if so, where, as another has asked, shall we find His mercy, His compassion and love? No; "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good;" for it is a revelation of God, as every word and act of His must necessarily be, but to maintain that it is a full and perfect revelation is to ignore the need of atonement, to be blind to the true character of the person and work of our blessed Lord and Saviour — to forget, in a word, the difference between Sinai and Calvary. Until the cross, it was impossible that God could perfectly reveal Himself. But immediately that the work wrought there was completed, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom — to signify that God was now free — free in righteousness — to come out in grace to the sinner, and that the sinner, who believed His testimony to the efficacy of the blood of Christ, was free to go into the immediate presence of God. The law unfolds His righteous character, and consequently His requirements from Israel; but God Himself still dwelt in the thick darkness — unrevealed.

One other point demands a passing notice. Granting that the law is not the means of life, it is sometimes said, Yet is it not the rule of Christian conduct? Look at it well, and then ask if this is possible. Take for example the prohibitions as to one's neighbour. Would God be satisfied with a Christian who abstained from the sins there specified? Nay, would a Christian be satisfied himself that, in abstaining from these things he answered to God's mind as to his walk? Suppose now, that he even did love his neighbour as himself, would this rise to the height of the example of Christ? What does the apostle John say? Hereby perceive we love, because He laid down His life for us. That is, the true expression of love is seen in the death of Christ for us. Hence the apostle adds, "And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (1 John 3:16.) To do this would surely be loving the brethren better than ourselves — going therefore marvellously beyond the scope of law. The truth is, as Paul has taught us, we are "dead to the law by the body of Christ; that we should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." (Romans 7:4.) The law was a rule for Israel; but Christ, and Christ alone, is the standard of the believer. "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." (1 John 2:6.) It is therefore an infinitely higher standard, involving far greater responsibility, than that of the law. This contention, indeed, that we are still under the law, notwithstanding the statement, "Ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14), springs from ignorance of what redemption is. When it is seen that believers are brought through the death and resurrection of Christ out of their old condition, and have a new place and standing altogether; that they are not in the flesh but in the Spirit (Romans 8:9), it is easily perceived that they belong to a sphere into which the law cannot enter; and that as Christ is the only object of their souls, so the expression of Christ in their walk and conversation, as they pass through this scene, is their only responsibility. We commend these points to the careful attention of every child of God. The effect of the giving of the law is now seen. As in the previous chapter, the people are filled with terror, and "they removed, and stood afar off." (Exodus 20:18) They might have thus

learned that sinners cannot stand in the presence of God. "And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die." (Exodus 20:19) A sad confession of what they were, and a significant indication of what would come of their promised obedience. Ah! if the sinner would but learn the lesson, that if God speaks with him when in his sins he must die! For holiness and sin cannot co-exist, and if brought into contact, apart from atonement, there could be but one result. These trembling children of Israel, therefore, do but express the simple truth. God had drawn near in His holiness, and they shrink abashed from His presence, lest they should die; and thereby they proclaimed that they were sinners in their guilt, and as such unable to listen to His voice. Moses thereon exhorted them not to fear, telling them that God was come to prove them, and that His fear might be before their faces that they should not sin. The way indeed was plainly marked for them in the ten commandments, and it would soon be seen if they would walk in it or not. The position is now clearly shown. The people are at a distance, actually and morally. God was in the thick darkness, significant of the fact that He must remain concealed as long as He was on the ground of law. Moses occupies, in the election and grace of God, the place of mediator. He thus can draw near to the thick darkness where God was. He is thus a type of the "one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5.) The chapter concludes with directions concerning worship. For as soon as the formal relationship is established between God and His people, though on the ground of law, provision for worship must be made. Three things need only be noticed in this connection. First, that God could not be approached except through sacrifices. Secondly, He could come and bless them in all places where He would record His name — notwithstanding what they were, on the ground of the sweet savour of their offerings.* Thirdly, the character of the altar is specified. It might be an altar of earth. If of stone, it must not be of hewn stone, "for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it. Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto Mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon." (Exodus 20:24-26) Man's work and man's order are prohibited. Thus in worship everything must be according to God; and if there be but the introduction of a single thing for beauty, or convenience, it is polluted, and man's nakedness is discovered. How jealous, therefore, Christians should be against the admission of anything in worship which is not stamped with the authority of the word of God.

*The sin-offering was not yet prescribed. These, therefore, were all sweet savour offerings.

04.17. JUDGMENTS.

JUDGMENTS.

Exodus 21:1-36, Exodus 22:1-31, Exodus 23:1-33 IN this section are contained the various "judgments" or statutes which God gave to govern His people in their various relationships. It will scarcely be necessary to expound these minutely, though the significance and bearing of each class may be indicated. They afford a striking view of the care of God for all that concerned the walk and ways of His people; and if penalties are attached to the breach of these different laws, it is only in accord with the dispensation which had now been established. The first relates to the Hebrew servant.

"If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master have given him a wife, and she have born him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door-post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever." (Exodus 21:2-6)

We have in this Hebrew servant a beautiful and expressive type of Christ. The point to be observed is, that having served six years, he should "go out free for nothing." But if his master should have given him a wife during the time of his servitude, and sons and daughters were born to him, then his wife and children should belong to his master, but he should go out by himself; and the only way by which he could retain his wife and family was by becoming a servant for ever. The typical application of this to Christ is most interesting. He took the form of a servant (Php 2:1-30); He came to do God's will (Hebrews 10:1-39); not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. (John 6:38.) He served perfectly His full allotted period, and might therefore have gone out free. As He said to Peter, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Matthew 26:53-54.) There was no necessity, as far as He was concerned, that He should go to the cross; no necessity whatever, excepting from the constraint of His own heart, and from His desire to accomplish the glory of God, and to obtain His bride, the pearl of great price. Why, then, did He permit Himself to be nailed to that shameful cross? to be led as a lamb to the slaughter? He was free before God and man. None could convince Him of sin. He stood absolutely free; and hence we ask again, Why did He "not go out free"? Because, we reply, He loved His Master, His wife, and His children, and therefore would become a servant for ever. His "Master" had the supreme place in His soul, and He burned with a holy desire to glorify Him on the earth, and to finish the work which He gave Him to do; He loved His wife — the Church — and gave Himself for it; and He was bound by the same ties of immutable affection to His children — His own, considered individually — and therefore He would not go out free, but presented Himself to His Master that He might serve Him for ever. His ear was thus bored — sign of service

(compare Psalms 40:6 with Hebrews 10:5) — in token of His abiding position. He will consequently never cease to be the Servant. He serves His people now at the right hand of God (see John 13:1-38); and He will serve them in the glory itself. He Himself says, "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." (Luke 12:37) This picture therefore combines the lowly service of Christ on earth with the service He carries on, now that He is glorified, at the right hand of God, and will for ever carry on for His people throughout eternity. It reveals at the same time the matchless grace and the unfathomable love of His heart, which thus led Him to take and to retain this position. And how wondrous it is that His affection should associate the Church with His "Master." "I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free." Blessed Lord, Thou hast thus linked Thine own, through the might of Thy love, with Thy God and Thyself for ever! The next paragraph contains directions as to a maidservant that has been sold by her father.

"And if a man sell his daughter to be a maidservant, she shall not go out as the menservants do. If she please not her master, who hath betrothed her to himself, then shall he let her be redeemed: to sell her unto a strange nation he shall have no power, seeing he hath dealt deceitfully with her. And if he have betrothed her unto his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters. If he take him another wife; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish. And if he do not these three unto her, then shall she go out free without money." (Exodus 21:7-11)

Though she might "not go out as the menservants do," yet God in His tenderness carefully guarded her rights in the position occupied. The tendency is only too often apparent to treat those who are entirely subject and dependent according to changing moods and caprice. This was not to be. If her master changed his mind, and she became evil in his eyes (see margin), she should have the option of redemption. She must not be degraded in her service, nor could he sell her to a strange nation. By his deceitful dealing he had forfeited rights which otherwise he would have possessed. Whether betrothed to his son, or to himself, her rights were carefully maintained; and if these were neglected, in case he took another wife, then she should be absolutely free. Thus, in His compassionate love, the Lord surrounds His weak and defenceless ones with laws to secure for them equitable and considerate treatment.

Offences, to which the penalty of death is attached, are next introduced.

"He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death. And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee. But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from Mine altar, that he may die. And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death. And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death. And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death." (Exodus 12:12-17) The case of murder is first dealt with. This is no new enactment. To Noah God had said, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man." (Genesis 9:6.) At the hand of every man's brother would He require the life of man. Man therefore was made his brother's keeper, and God protected him whom He had made in His own image by the most solemn penalty which He could exact; for life belongs to Him, and hence he could not suffer another to trench upon His prerogative. Thus when Cain slew his brother Abel, the

Lord said unto him, "What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto Me from the ground." (Genesis 4:10.) For wilful murder there was no release from the penalty, even though the murderer might have fled for protection to God's altar. (See 1 Kings 2:28-32.) He must die. There is no countenance in the word of God for the modern philanthropic movement for the abolition of capital punishment. It substitutes indeed human ideas in the place of God's primeval law. In fact, it exalts man over God. The directions given by our Lord, in the "sermon on the mount" (Matthew 5:38-48), apply only to the relationships of the fellow-subjects of His kingdom, and not to those existing between man and man, and in no way therefore set aside the precept given to Noah. An exception is made. "If a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee." (Compare Deuteronomy 19:4-5; indeed the whole chapter.) If we apply these statutes to the action of the Jewish nation against Christ, remembering how they did "lie in wait," and that they at length succeeded by bribery and artifice in securing His apprehension and condemnation, it might seem as if there were for them no possible escape. But our Lord Himself prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34); so that God in grace, if they repent, on the ground of this intercession, will impute ignorance to them, and appoint them a city of refuge for escape and safety. Hence Peter, when preaching to them, said, "I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." (Acts 3:17.) Grace thus can relieve from the penalty of the law, on the ground of the atonement for sin that was wrought out by the death of Christ.

Both smiting and cursing father or mother (Exodus 21:15, Exodus 21:17) incurred the same penalty. Thus God established by the holy sanctions of His law parental authority; and demanded for it the reverential regard of children. Disobedience to parents is given as one sign of the perilous times of the last days (2 Timothy 3:2), fully showing the value in the eyes of God of the subjection of children to their parents. For, indeed, it is God's authority they represent, and hence is absolute in its character when used for God, demanding implicit and unconditional obedience. (See Deuteronomy 21:18-21; Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20.) Hence the gravity of the sins here specified. But if smiting and cursing earthly parents deserve death, how much greater the sin of open-handed rebellion against God

Man-stealing, and man-selling, slavery in fact, as still practised in many parts of the world, had also the penalty of death. (Exodus 21:16) Man may be a sinner, and yet, notwithstanding God's claims upon him, claims too which must be met ere he can be delivered, he is of such value in the sight of God, that his liberty must be sacredly respected by his fellow-man. How marvellous that, with such a scripture, slavery in its worse forms — stealing, selling, and holding men as mere chattels — could be upheld, even within the recollection of the present generation, by professed followers of Christ! In the next paragraph are found offences against the person with their specified penalties.

"And if men strive together, and one smite another with a stone, or with his fist, and he die not, but keepeth his bed: if he rise again, and walk abroad upon his staff, then shall he that smote him be quit: only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall cause him to be thoroughly healed. And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall be surely punished. Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished for he is his money. If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow; he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him;

and he shall pay as the judges determine. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. And if a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, that it perish; he shall let him go free for his eye's sake. And if he smite out his manservant's tooth, or his maidservant's tooth; he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake." (Exodus 21:18-27)

Two things only need be noted, leaving the details for the reader himself. The first is, that all these enactments reveal the tenderness of God in protecting the bodies of His people — and specially of those occupying a subject position. The second is, that we find here the true character of law. Grace is absent. It is eye for an eye, and tooth for a tooth, etc. Our blessed Lord especially cites these provisions to point out their contrast with grace. He says, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." (Matthew 5:38-39.) On the ground of law an exact equivalent is demanded — no more, and no less; but grace can remit every claim; for dealt with in grace ourselves, our whole debt remitted, we must act on the same principle in our relationships with one another. Be it, however, never forgotten, that the foundation of grace itself is laid deep in righteousness, and hence it reigns through righteousness (Romans 5:21), having thus been established upon an everlasting and immutable basis. The responsibility of the owner for the acts of his cattle is then laid down.

"If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die; then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit: but if the ox were wont to push with his horn in time past, and it hath been testified to his owner, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and his owner also shall be put to death. If there be laid on him a sum of money, then he shall give, for the ransom of his life, whatsoever is laid upon him. Whether he have gored a son, or have gored a daughter, according to this judgment shall it be done unto him. If the ox shall push a manservant or a maidservant; he shall give unto their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned. And if a man shall open a pit, or if a man shall dig a pit, and not cover it, and an ox or an ass fall therein; the owner of the pit shall make it good, and give money unto the owner of them; and the dead beast shall be his. And if one man's ox hurt another's, that he die, then they shall sell the live ox, and divide the money of it; and the dead ox also they shall divide. Or if it be known that the ox hath used to push in time past, and his owner hath not kept him in; he shall surely pay ox for ox; and the dead shall be his own." (Exodus 21:28-36)

It will suffice again to indicate that the same principle of righteous equivalent also obtains in these directions. Even the death of the owner, as well as the ox, is enjoined if there had been a guilty knowledge of the propensity of the animal, and he had made no provision to guard against it. (Exodus 21:29) How vividly it brings before our minds the truth taught by our blessed Lord, that even the hairs of our heads are all numbered. Everything is provided for, and every relationship, with their various breaches, adjusted in harmony with the righteous government under which Israel was now placed. There is one particular that should not be unnoticed. The manservant, or the maidservant, was priced at thirty shekels of silver. It is to this the prophet Zechariah refers: "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver." (Zechariah 11:12.) It is Christ who is thus set forth who was betrayed for thirty pieces of silver. (Matthew 26:15.) Such was man's estimate of the value of God manifest

in flesh, of the only begotten of the Father! In the next place (Exodus 22:1-31), we have the law of restitution in cases of theft.

"If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep. If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him. If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him; for he should make full restitution: if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep, he shall restore double. If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall put in his beast, and shall feed in another man's field; of the best of his own field, and of the best of his own vineyard, shall he make restitution. If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field, be consumed therewith, he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution. If a man shall deliver unto his neighbour money or stuff to keep, and it be stolen out of the man's house; if the thief be found, let him pay double. If the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall be brought unto the judges, to see whether he have put his hand unto his neighbour's goods. For all manner of trespass, whether it be for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, or for any manner of lost thing, which another challengeth to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the judges; and whom the judges shall condemn, he shall pay double unto his neighbour. If a man deliver unto his neighbour an ass, or an ox, or a sheep, or any beast, to keep; and it die, or be hurt, or driven away, no man seeing it: then shall an oath of the Lord be between them both, that he hath not put his hand unto his neighbour's goods; and the owner of it shall accept thereof, and he shall not make it good. And if it be stolen from him, he shall make restitution unto the owner thereof. If it be torn in pieces, then let him bring it for witness, and he shall not make good that which was torn. And if a man borrow ought of his neighbour and it be hurt, or die, the owner thereof being not with it, he shall surely make it good. But if the owner thereof be with it, he shall not make it good: if it be an hired thing, it came for his hire." (Exodus 22:1-15)

Zachaeus refers, without doubt, to this provision of the law (Exodus 22:1) when he said to the Lord, "If I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." (Luke 19:8.) As in the previous chapter we saw how God guarded the life and the persons of His people, we perceive in this how He protected their property, and made all who disregarded His law answerable to Himself. But the question for our souls is, If robbing a fellow-man is thus condemned, how can the sin be met of robbing God? How can those who are already sinners make restitution to Him? It is impossible; and if left to ourselves we must for ever have remained under the consequences of our trespasses. But we read in the Psalms of One who said, "Then I restored that which I took not away." (Psalms 69:4.) He was the trespass-offering as well as the sin and burnt-offerings. He has therefore made full and adequate restitution (we can say, if we believe) for all our trespasses. There is not a single breach which could be laid to our charge Which He, in His wondrous grace and mercy, has not repaired. This brings before us a very blessed aspect of His death. In the chapter the offender had himself to make restitution. We could not do this, and had there been no substitute for us — no one to restore to God that which He had not, but which we had, taken away, we must have for ever been answerable to His claims — for ever answerable, but having nothing to pay. The more therefore we remember this, the more shall we magnify the grace of Him who of His own will answered to God for us, so that He can righteously acquit us from every claim, yea, and as righteously bring us into the unclouded light

and joy of His own presence. Blessed be for ever His most holy name!

We now pass to injunctions of another kind. The first of these refers to carnal desire. (Exodus 22:16) The guilt is supposed here to attach mainly to the man — not, however, excepting the woman from her share. But man cannot lightly sin, and act as if he had not sinned, especially in the way here mentioned. Hence he incurred the obligation of endowing her to be his wife. The principle is laid down by Paul. "Know ye not," he says, "that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith He, shall be one flesh." (1 Corinthians 6:16.) For the same reason our blessed Lord taught, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." (Matthew 19:9.) What a comment upon human laws which permit divorces upon other grounds — to the utter neglect of the wisdom of God, and which at the same time betray the most complete ignorance of the fundamental relationships between man and woman. While therefore we are bound to obey the powers that be, when they are not in conflict with the authority of God, the law of the land cannot be the guide of the conscience of the believer or of the church.

"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." (Exodus 22:18) The essential idea of a witch was commerce with spirits, which finds its counterpart in the spiritualism of the present day. Hence in Leviticus she is described as "a woman that hath a familiar spirit." (Leviticus 20:27.) The witch of Endor is the exemplification of her kind; for we read that Saul went to her and said, "I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring him up whom I shall name unto thee." (1 Samuel 28:8.) This is the very thing that spiritualists profess to do — to bring the inquirer into communion with departed spirits. Like Saul, unable to obtain communications from God, they seek information concerning things unknown and unseen through the agency of spirits. It is in fact a turning from God to Satan. The whole system, whether in Israel or our own day, is Satanic. A witch therefore was to be destroyed; and this shows the utter antagonism of her vocation to God; and the spiritualism now in vogue is no less hateful, and, if persisted in, no less destructive to souls.

Two sins are then named to which is attached the penalty of death. The first is that of the flesh — and of the flesh in its most horrible and revolting form. The second is idolatry. God could not suffer the acknowledgement among His own people of any god beside Himself. It would be a denial of His own claims and authority, and the subversion of the very foundations of His relationship with His people; and on their part it would be the denial of His true character, and the rejection of His absolute sway. The worship of the true God, and of false gods, could not therefore co-exist. The apostle thus says, "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." (1 Corinthians 10:20-21.) The acceptance of false gods amounts to a rejection of the true God. Hence, on the other side, when the Thessalonians were converted, it is said of them, "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God," etc. (1 Thessalonians 1:9.) Tenderness and compassion are then inculcated in several cases.

"Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto Me, I will surely hear their cry; and My wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless. If thou lend money to any of My

people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury. If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: for that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto Me, that I will hear; for I am gracious." (Exodus 22:21-27) The stranger comes first, and the remembrance of what they had been in the land of Egypt was to govern their conduct toward such. They had been in bitterness of soul through hard bondage when under the iron yoke of Pharaoh, and they could therefore enter into the feelings of those who were strangers in a strange land. The helpless are next commended to their hearts; and of all the helpless ones that appeal to our compassion, surely the widow and the fatherless have the first claim. God thus surrounds them here with the powerful defence of His own arm. If any should afflict them, they should be killed and their wives and children should become widows and orphans. Throughout the whole of Scripture these two classes are ever indicated as the special object of God's care, and hence should be objects of our compassionate concern. James accordingly says, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James 1:27.) The two following directions concern the poor — the first, to save him from extortion as well as to prevent the rich from making gain of his poverty; and the second, to secure him from destitution and nakedness. These laws, spite of the fact that the children of Israel were now governed from Sinai, permit us to see into the depths of the heart of God. What inexpressible tenderness in the provision that a pledged garment should be given up "by that the sun goeth down: for that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto Me, that I will hear; for I am gracious." The heart of God must be expressed by His people, and He is touched by the sight of one who has nothing to cover his body when he lies down to sleep!

Respect for constituted authorities is also enjoined: "Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people." (Exodus 22:28) The term "gods" evidently is here used of authorities, or judges, as in margin. (See John 10:34-35.) The apostle Paul cites this scripture when before Ananias and the sanhedrin. (Acts 23:5.) It corresponds with the exhortations in various epistles. (Romans 13:1-14; 1 Timothy 2:2; 1 Peter 2:13-17.) The path of God's people is thus, as far as regards kings, governors, and magistrates, extremely simple. To all authority, of whatever form, they owe respect and obedience as long as it does not clash with what is due to God. They are put in this place of subjection by the Lord Himself. The firstfruits and the firstborn are to be offered to God. (Exodus 22:29-30; see Exodus 13:12-13.) They were thus to acknowledge both their dependence and the source of their blessing, and to avow that they themselves belonged to the Lord. It was God who would give the ripe fruits and the "liquors," and in token of this He required an offering to Himself. The firstborn of their children He likewise claimed, but on the ground, as explained in Exodus 13:1-22, of the destruction of the firstborn of Egypt on the night of the Passover, and their own redemption through the blood of the Paschal lamb. In fine, they were to "be holy men unto" the Lord, apart from evil, and separated unto God; for He who had made them His own was holy, and He would have them suited to Himself. On this account they were not to defile themselves with unclean food, flesh polluted by unclean animals, and fit only for dogs. A holy people must be holy in their ways, as beseems a holy God. Subjects of another kind are introduced in the next chapter (Exodus 23:1-33).

"Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil: neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment. Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause. If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee, lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him; thou shalt surely help with him. Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause. Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked. And thou shalt take no gift; for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous." (Exodus 23:1-8.)

Sins of the tongue begin this section. The first relates to raising or receiving (see margin) a false report. How much mischief has been thus perpetrated, and even in the church of God! There are few who would not be horrified at the thought of raising a false report. Such a sin would be condemned by all upright minds; not even a man of the world would extenuate its guilt. But, as the margin indicates, the word has a wider meaning, and will include also the receiving of a false report. Many who would shun the first sin fall into the snare of the second. A report is heard, and is apparently true, and is circulated, whereas had any trouble been taken to verify it, its falsehood might have been detected. Christians, above all, should be careful as to this, refusing every report to another's discredit, unless vouched for by unimpeachable testimony. The responsibility is thus cast upon the hearer, as well as the repeater, of reports. If this were remembered many a slander would be nipped in the bud, many a tale-bearer unveiled, and many a breach of fellowship avoided. The antidote is found in that charity which "thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beateth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." (1 Corinthians 13:5-7.) Then false testimony is condemned — a sin known by the modern name of perjury. This injunction, as well as that in the next verse, and in Exodus 23:3 and Exodus 23:5, would seem connected with the administration of justice. Nothing escapes the eyes of a righteous God, no evil tendency or influence, and hence He makes provision for the conduct of His people in every circumstance of their lives. It is difficult to be alone in opposition to a multitude, though the cause may be just. With the Lord before the soul it becomes simple. On the other hand, a poor man is not to be countenanced in his cause; i.e. when it is unjust, nor when it is just shall his judgment be "wrested." (Exodus 23:6) Some are liable to influences from the rich, and some from the poor, especially in a day of democracy and contempt of lawful authority. But the heart must be free from both, and it will be free if in obedience to the word of God. Interspersed with these commands, a special direction is given concerning the ox or the ass of an enemy. The anger of the heart must not be exhibited against an enemy's cattle, nor must help be refused to the cattle of another on account of their owner's enmity; "but if thou see his ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again; and wilt thou not, in so doing, heap coals of fire upon his head?" So, too, if an ass overburdened be met with, "though his owner hate thee, thou shalt surely help him." The compassions of God flow out to His dumb creatures, and His people should in all things be a reflex of Himself.

Truth and righteousness are also enjoined. (Exodus 23:7) The ground given is most noteworthy — "For I will not justify the wicked." God is righteous in all His ways in government, of unerring discrimination, and does not permit man to "find anything after Him." But, as the Psalmist confesses, He will be justified when He speaks, and clear when He judges. The wicked therefore

can never escape His condemnation. But in grace He has revealed a way by which He can justify the ungodly. (Romans 5:1-21) Under law this was impossible. "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe." (Romans 3:21-22.) On this ground He can be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. (Exodus 23:26) A warning is added against the acceptance of gifts. The question, be it remembered, is still one of judgment between man and man, or the discernment of truth from falsehood. To receive a gift in such a case would blind the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. It might shut out God from the soul, and thereby prevent a single eye. The ninth verse is a repetition of the injunction contained in Exodus 22:21. This shows its importance in the eyes of God, and it is added here with emphasis, "Ye know the heart of a stranger." The children of Israel were thus qualified by their own experience to sympathize with strangers (compare Hebrews 4:15; also Hebrews 2:18); and the recollection of their own past sorrow was to mould their conduct towards those who were in the same circumstances.

Divers ordinances follow concerning the land and the feasts, etc.

"And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof: but the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave, the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard. Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest; that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid and the stranger may be refreshed. And in all things that I have said unto you, be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.

"Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto Me in the year. Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt; and none shall appear before Me empty;) and the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord God. Thou shalt not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of My sacrifice remain until the morning. The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk." (Exodus 23:10-19) The land was to enjoy her sabbaths, in perpetual token that it belonged to the Lord. Hence it, as well as man, must share God's rest. Here, however, the poor and the beasts of the field are prominent. There was consideration both for the one and the other — both alike, whatever the distance between, being creatures of God. The children of Israel were thus reminded that they were but tenants, and that, as holding their land as well as their vineyards and oliveyards from the Lord, even the poor and the beasts of the field must be considered, since they were the objects of His care. The sabbath for man comes next. The feasts in full are found in Leviticus 23:1-44; and there, as here, the sabbath comes first. But in this chapter three only are mentioned in addition to the sabbath — the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of harvest, and the feast of ingathering, i.e. the passover, Pentecost, and the feast of tabernacles. The feasts in full, as given in Leviticus, symbolize the whole cycle of God's ways with Israel. On this account the sabbath takes precedence, because the end and results of all God's ways with them (as indeed with believers of this dispensation) is to bring them

into the enjoyment of His rest. Having, then, revealed His object, the methods by which this is to be accomplished, or His successive means to this end, are typically unfolded. But though only three are found in this chapter, they are very significant. Unleavened bread is the first;* next we have that of the firstfruits, symbolical of Christ in resurrection, as is seen more fully in Leviticus; then the feast of ingathering, type of the harvest of souls, of which the resurrection of Christ was the pledge, and of which Pentecost was the blessed commencement. We thus read, "Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's, at His coming." (1 Corinthians 15:23.) Primarily, the application in this scripture would be to Israel, but, interpreted broadly, the ingathering here spoken of will include the saints of this, as well as of the millennial dispensation — in a word, the vast multitude of the redeemed of every age and dispensation. Three times in the year they were thus to keep a feast unto the Lord, and on these occasions all their males were to appear before the Lord God. This was the central thought of the feast, the gathering of the people around Himself on the foundation which He Himself had established — on the foundation, in fact, of redemption. They were accordingly, as a redeemed people gathered around Jehovah, to be circumspect concerning all that He had said unto them; and they were not even to mention the name of other gods, nor let it be heard out of their mouth. (Exodus 23:13) They belonged, as a redeemed and a sanctified people, alone and entirely to the Lord.

*The meaning of this has been expounded in connection with Exodus 13:1-22.

Leavened bread is once again forbidden in connection with the blood of the sacrifice; for inasmuch as the sacrifices pointed to Christ, leaven, as an emblem of evil, would have falsified their typical teaching. Christ cannot be associated with evil. Hence the leaven was absolutely prohibited. Nor was the fat of the sacrifice to remain until the morning. (Compare Exodus 12:10.) The full explanation of this will be found in the directions concerning the peace-offering. (Leviticus 3:1-17) "The fat that covereth the inwards, and all the fat that is upon the inwards, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the flanks, and the caul above the liver, with the kidneys, it shall he take away. And Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar upon the burnt sacrifice, which is upon the wood that is on the fire: it is an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord." (Exodus 23:3-5) The fat therefore was God's portion. (See also Leviticus 4:8-10.) It must, on this account, not be neglected — be left over until the morning, but offered immediately. God must have His part before His people had theirs. This is the secret of all blessing — giving the Lord the supreme place, thinking first of what is due to Him, and losing sight of all else until this is rendered. The first of the firstfruits of their land was to be brought into the house of the Lord their God. In Deuteronomy 26:1-19 will be found a beautiful description of this obligation, together with the manner in which it was to be discharged. It is an inspired exposition of this injunction. Lastly, we have a most remarkable prohibition. (Exodus 23:19) Three times it is found in the Scriptures. (Exodus 34:26; Deuteronomy 14:21.) God will have His people tenderly careful, guarding them from the violation of any single instinct of nature. The milk of the mother was the food, the sustenance of the kid, and hence this must not be used to seethe it as food for others. Some have seen a spiritual teaching in this enactment. That analogies might be profitably drawn is undoubtedly true; but this would be more suited to private study than for public exposition. This section concludes with the provision God had made for their guidance to the place He had prepared, together with warnings as to their conduct, and a statement of the manner in which they should be put into complete possession of the land.

"Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him, and obey His voice, provoke Him not: for He will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in Him. But if thou shalt indeed obey His voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off. Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works; but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images. And ye shall serve the Lord your God, and He shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee.

"There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil. I will send My fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come; and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee. And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee. I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land. And I will set thy bounds from the Red Sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee. Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against Me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee." (Exodus 23:20-33) An angel was to go before them for guidance and safe conduct. He is often referred to in this connection. (Exodus 14:19, Exodus 33:2; Numbers 20:16, etc.) The prophet Isaiah terms Him the angel of His (Jehovah's) presence. (63: g.) Who then was this angel? It is evident, both from this scripture and chapter 14, as well as from others, that divine attributes are attributed to Him. It is said for example here, "My name is in Him." So in Exodus 14:1-31, after being spoken of as an angel, He is identified with Jehovah. (Exodus 23:24 with Exodus 23:19) It is the case also in Genesis 22:1-24, in connection with the sacrifice of Isaac. (Genesis 22:15-16) That He is divine is therefore clear; and the inference is thus justifiable (one that has been drawn by godly students of the Word in all ages) that in this angel we have no other than the Second Person of the Trinity, God the Son, Jehovah, and that as such, in His manifold appearings, we may perceive foreshadowings of His incarnation. It is He who has ever been the leader of His people; and it is He who here takes His place at the head of the children of Israel to keep them in the way, and to bring them unto the place which God had prepared. As Isaiah speaks, "The angel of His presence saved them: in His love and His pity He redeemed them: and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old."

Hence the solemn warning addressed to Israel. They were to beware of Him, obey His voice, and provoke Him not. He was holy, and inasmuch as His people had placed themselves under law, He could not pardon their transgressions. "My name" — expression of all that God was in His relationship with Israel — "is in Him," and hence He would act in righteousness, on the basis of the law which had been given as the standard of their conduct. On the other hand, obedience was made the condition of His complete identification with their cause. Their enemies would in that case be His enemies, and He would cut them off.

It will be seen that all these instructions contemplate the land rather than the wilderness. This must be borne in mind. Two things are added in this connection on which all their blessing would

depend — separation from evil, and serving the Lord their God. (Exodus 23:24-25) These conditions of blessing are unalterable. They are as true now as they were with Israel. The Thessalonians are thus described as having turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. (1 Thessalonians 1:9.) Where God indeed is in question, there can be no complicity with evil. He claims all that we are and have, and when this claim is recognized, He can bless us according to the desires of His own heart. So here the blessings follow — earthly blessings because they were an earthly people, but blessings of this character without stint or limit. Mark, moreover, that God loses sight of nothing that affects His people. He tells them that He will not expel their enemies in one year, "lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee." (Exodus 23:29) He would lead them on — and bless them as they might be able to bear it. But, in due time they should possess the full extent of their territory — "from the Red Sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river" (Exodus 23:31) — a promise, alas! which was lost and never realized, excepting for a brief period during the reigns of David and Solomon (1 Chronicles 18:1-17; 2 Chronicles 9:26), owing to the unfaithfulness of Israel. Even in Solomon's reign, indeed, it was only partially accomplished; for there were still left of the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites (2 Chronicles 8:7-8) who had not been expelled. It remains, therefore, to be fulfilled in all its extent and blessing under the sway of Him of whom David and Solomon were but shadows and types. What Israel lost under responsibility will then be fulfilled in grace and power.

Finally, absolute separation is once more enjoined. There must be no covenant with the people of the land or their gods; nor should they suffer them to dwell in the land. If so, they would be surely made to sin against the Lord. There can be no alliance between the people of God and His enemies. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." Would that this truth in all its power were graven upon the hearts and memories of all who bear the name of Christ!

04.18. THE RATIFICATION OF THE COVENANT.

THE RATIFICATION OF THE COVENANT.

Exodus 24:1-18 THE covenant having been now unfolded and explained the ground of Jehovah's future relationship with Israel its solemn ratification is recorded in this chapter. As preparatory to this, Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, were summoned to come up unto the Lord. (Exodus 24:1.) But not all could draw nigh. "Worship ye afar off. And Moses alone shall come near the Lord; but they shall not come nigh, neither shall the people go up with him." (Exodus 24:2) The position of the mediator is clearly marked — a position of the highest honour and privilege, conferred upon Moses by the Lord in His grace. Moses was no more deserving of access to God than his companions. It was grace alone that endowed him with this special place. All is significant of the dispensation — presenting a perfect contrast with the position of believers since the death of Christ. Now it is no more said, "worship ye afar off," but "let us draw near." (Hebrews 10:22.) The blood of Christ has such efficacy that it cleanses the believer from all sin, so that he has no more conscience of sins, he is perfected for ever through the one offering of Christ, and hence, the veil being rent in testimony to the fact that God has been glorified in the death of Christ, he has liberty of access into the holiest of all. There he can worship God in spirit and in truth; there he can joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the reconciliation (Romans 5:11); for he is without spot before the all-searching eye of a holy God, and can stand in holy boldness before the very throne of His holiness. What a contrast between law and grace! Law, indeed, "having shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect" (Hebrews 10:1); but in grace, through the one sacrifice of Christ, our sins and iniquities are remembered no more (Hebrews 10:17,) we have through Christ access by one Spirit unto the Father. (Ephesians 2:18.) In some sort therefore Moses, in the place he enjoyed, was a type of the believer. There was, however, this immense difference. He drew near to Jehovah, we have access unto the Father, we worship God, God in all that He is being now fully revealed, and revealed as our God and Father, because the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The occurrence of the names of Nadab and Abihu cannot fail to arrest attention. They were both sons of Aaron, and with their father were selected for this singular privilege. But neither light nor privilege can ensure salvation, nor, if believers, a holy, obedient walk. Both afterwards met with a terrible end. They "offered strange fire before the Lord, which He commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them; and they died before the Lord." (Leviticus 10:1-2.) After this scene in our chapter, they were consecrated to the priesthood, and it was while in the performance of their duty in this office, or rather because of their failure in it, that they fell under the judgment of God. Let the warning sink deep into our hearts, that office and special privileges are alike powerless to save; and also the lesson, that God cannot accept anything in our worship which is not rendered in obedience to Him. The offering must be of His own providing, and the heart must be in subjection to His will.

Moses, in the next place, descended to the people, and told them "all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do." (Exodus 24:3) Notwithstanding the terror of their hearts at the signs of the Lord's presence and majesty upon Sinai, they remained in total ignorance of their own powerlessness to meet His holy claims. Foolish people! It might have been supposed that ere this their eyes would have been opened; but in truth, we repeat, they were ignorant both of themselves and of God. Hence once again they express themselves as willing to promise obedience as the condition of blessing. God had spoken, and they had assented, and now the agreement must be confirmed and ratified.

"And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." (Exodus 24:4-8)

There is but one altar if there are twelve pillars — one altar because it was for God, twelve pillars because all the twelve tribes must be represented in the sacrifices to be offered. The priesthood not yet being appointed, ((young men" do the priestly work of the day. They were probably the firstborn, whom the Lord, as we have seen in Exodus 13:1-22, claimed specially for Himself. Afterwards indeed the tribe of Levi was exchanged for these, and appointed for the Lord's service. Thus it is said, "And thou shalt bring the Levites before the Lord: and the children. of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites: and Aaron shall offer the Levites before the Lord for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the Lord." (Numbers 8:10-11; also Numbers 3:40-41.) Until the substitution of the Levites for the firstborn, "the young men" occupied the place of service in connection with the altar. There were only, it will be remarked, burnt-offerings and peace-offerings — for the reason before given, that until the question of sin was formally raised by the law sin-offerings have no place. The offerings were for God (though the offerers as well as the priest had their share in the peace-offerings, in communion with God — Leviticus 3:1-17); but the special significance of the rites of this day is to be found in the sprinkling of the blood. Half was sprinkled upon the altar. Then, having read the book of the covenant in the audience of all the people, they again said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. Moses thereon took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning these words. (Exodus 24:7-8) Before explaining the meaning of this solemn act, the passage from the Hebrews referring to it, as giving fuller details, may be cited. "For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament" (covenant) "which God hath enjoined unto you." (Exodus 9:19-20.) Here we find the interesting particular, not given in Moses, that the book was sprinkled as well as the people. There were thus three sprinklings — upon the altar, upon the book, and upon the people. The first enquiry must be as to the signification of the blood. It cannot be atonement, because the people and the book are

sprinkled equally with the altar; nor, for the same reason, could it be cleansing. The life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11), and consequently the blood, the shedding of it, will represent death, and death, when connected with sacrifice, as the penalty of sin. Here therefore the sprinkling of the blood signifies death as the penal sanction of the law. The people promised obedience, and then they, as well as the book, were sprinkled to teach that death would be the penalty of transgression. Such was the solemn position into which, by their own consent, they had been brought. They undertook to obey under the penalty of death. Well therefore might the apostle say, "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse." (Galatians 3:10.) It is the same now in principle with all who accept the ground of law as the way of life, all who are trusting to their own works as the condition of blessing. They know it not, but thereby they are really binding upon their shoulders the curse of the law, like the Israelites in this scene, and accepting the condition of death as the penalty of disobedience. The people therefore were sprinkled with blood upon having promised obedience. It may further help us to compare the expressions found in Peter's epistle, which doubtless refer in part to this transaction. Writing "to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" — i.e. to the Jewish Christians among the dispersion of these regions — he describes them as "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus." (1 Peter 1:2.) This order is very significant, though it has occasioned difficulty owing to the fact that the allusion to the Jewish nation has been missed. As a nation they had been elected by the sovereign call of God, sanctified by fleshly rites — separated from the rest of the nations (see Ephesians 2:14), and set apart to God (Exodus 19:10), sanctified, moreover, unto obedience — this was the object proposed, and, as we have seen, accepted by the people; and then they were sprinkled with the blood, the covenant of God with them being thus sealed with the solemn sanction of death. The terms therefore exactly correspond; but how great the difference in their meaning! Believers are elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, He "having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." Ephesians 1:5.) They were not therefore, like Israel, the objects simply of an earthly election, and for earthly blessing, but the objects of an eternal choice — to be brought into the enjoyment of the intimate relationship of children, in a place of perfect nearness, accepted in the Beloved. They have been sanctified, not by external and carnal rites and ordinances, but by the operation of the Spirit of God in the new birth, in virtue of which they are absolutely set apart to God — no longer of the world, even as Christ is not of the world; and they have been sanctified unto the obedience of Jesus Christ* — i.e. to obey as Christ obeyed, His walk being the normal rule, the standard for every believer (1 John 2:6); and they have been sanctified moreover, not to the sprinkling of blood, which testified of death for every transgression, but to that which speaks of atonement having been completed, and the perfect cleansing of every soul who is found under its value. — Peter thus draws a perfect contrast, and the contrast is that which is found between law and grace. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John 1:17.)

*Both these terms, obedience and sprinkling, belong without doubt to Jesus Christ; i.e. it is the obedience of Jesus Christ, as well as the blood of Jesus Christ. The covenant ratified, "Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel," go up; and they saw the God of Israel: and there was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in its clearness. And upon the nobles of Israel He laid not His hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink. (Exodus 24:9-11) Moses alone was permitted to draw near before

the covenant was established, but now the representatives of the people have this special grace accorded to them; and they draw near in safety. Two things in this scene are marked. They saw the God of Israel. God displayed Himself in the majesty of His holiness to their gaze. The paved work of a sapphire stone (see Ezekiel 1:26; Ezekiel 10:1), and the additional description, "as it were the body of heaven in its clearness," speak of heavenly splendour and purity. God therefore revealed Himself to these chosen witnesses according to the character of the economy which had now been established. Moreover they did eat and drink. It was in virtue of the blood that they were admitted to this singular privilege, for privilege it was to see the God of Israel and enter into relationship with Him, albeit the very character of the revelation vouchsafed told of distance rather than nearness. Still as men in the flesh they ate and drank in the presence of God, and, as another has remarked, "continued their terrestrial life." They saw God and did not die. For the covenant was only now inaugurated, and failure not having yet come in, God could thus on that foundation permit their access to Him as the God of Israel.

Moses is once again separated from Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the elders. He resumes his mediatorial place — to receive the tables of stone, etc., which God had written — the lively oracles, as they are described by Stephen. (Acts 7:38.) For this purpose Moses is called up to the Lord in the mount. (Exodus 24:12) Leaving the elders, and appointing Aaron and Hur in charge, he goes up, and for forty days and forty nights he was alone with God. During this time the glory of the Lord was displayed, and 91 abode upon mount Sinai and the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel." (Exodus 24:15-18) This was not the glory of His grace, but the glory of His holiness, as is seen by the symbol of devouring fire — the glory of the Lord in His relationship with Israel on the basis of law. (Compare 2 Corinthians 3:1-18) It was a glory therefore that no sinner could dare approach, for holiness and sin cannot be brought together; but now, through the grace of God, on the ground of accomplished atonement, believers can not only draw near, and be at home in the glory, but with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 3:18.) We approach boldly, and with delight gaze upon the glory, because every ray we behold in the face of Christ glorified is a proof of the fact that our sins are put away, and that redemption is accomplished.

04.19. THE TABERNACLE.

THE TABERNACLE.

Exodus 25:1-9 WITH this chapter we enter upon a new subject — that of the Tabernacle. It is not finished until the close of Exodus 30:1-38. But this again is divided into three parts. In the first place, in the directions for the construction of the Tabernacle and its vessels and furniture, those vessels are described which manifest God. This part reaches to Exodus 27:19. Secondly, the dress and the consecration of the priests are given, in Exodus 28:1-43; Exodus 29:1-46. Then, lastly, the vessels of approach — i.e. those that were necessary for drawing near to God, are detailed in Exodus 30:1-38. It will be observed that some of those which manifested God — some part of His glory — are also used for approach; but if the chief design of each is remembered, confusion will be prevented, and the arrangement easily understood. Opportunity will be found, as the several parts of the Tabernacle pass under review, of indicating the meaning of each more precisely. In the mean time, the division given may help the reader to enter with more intelligence upon the study of this section of the book.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take My offering. And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim-wood, oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense, onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate. And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it." (Exodus 25:1-9)

There are three things in these directions to be noticed. The first is their object — which is making a sanctuary. "Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." The primary idea of the Tabernacle therefore is, that it was the dwelling-place of God. As remarked upon Exodus 15:2, God never dwelt on earth with His people until after the Red Sea was crossed — until redemption in figure was accomplished. He visited Adam in the garden, appeared to and communicated with the patriarchs; but until He had redeemed His people out of Egypt, nothing is said of making a sanctuary in which He might dwell. The Tabernacle was thus a proof of redemption, and the sign that God had brought a redeemed people into relationship with Himself, He being the Centre round whom they were gathered. Such is God's thought in redemption. He will not only, according to His own purposes, save His people, but also, according to His own heart, He desires to have them in a place of nearness, gathered around Himself — Himself their God, and they His people. We know in result how imperfectly, through the people's failure under responsibility, the desires of His heart were realized. Still He had His sanctuary in their midst, both in the wilderness and during the kingdom in the Christian dispensation His people themselves form His house; in the millennium He will have another material sanctuary at Jerusalem; and finally, in the eternal state, the holy city, new Jerusalem, will come down from God out of heaven, and form upon the new earth the

tabernacle of God with men. (Revelation 21:2-3.) Then the counsels of God's heart will be displayed in their consummated perfection, and, inasmuch as the former things, with all the sorrows connected with them through man's sin, will have passed away, there will be nothing to hinder the full, perfect, and blessed enjoyment arising out of the unhindered flow of God's heart to His people, and their hearts to Him, and from His perfect manifestation, and their perfect worship and service. But the type of all this is found in this sanctuary, which Israel was instructed to make that God might dwell among them. The tabernacle may, however, be viewed in another way. The house in which God dwelt must be of necessity the scene of the revelation of His glory. Hence, as will be seen when considering it in detail, every single part of it is fraught with some manifestation of Himself. As another writes, "The glories in every way of Christ the Mediator are presented in the tabernacle, not precisely, as yet, the unity of His people, considered as His body, but in every manner in which the ways and the perfections of God are manifested through Him, whether in the full extent of the creation, in His people, or in His person. The scene of the manifestation of the glory of God, His house, His domain, in which He displays His being (in so far as it can be seen), the ways of His grace, and His glory, and His relationship through Christ with us — poor and feeble creatures, but who draw nigh unto Him — are unfolded to us in it, but still with a veil over His presence, and with God not the Father." On this account the spiritual mind traces with delight the typical teaching of the minutiae of this sanctuary, learning therefrom the various measures and methods in which God has revealed Himself, and that they are only to be understood when the key of every secret they contain is possessed in the person of Christ. Remembering this will check on the one hand all flights of the imagination, and invest on the other our meditations with a new interest, inasmuch as Christ Himself will ever be before the soul.

There is yet a third aspect of the tabernacle. It is a figure of the heavens themselves. There were the court, the holy place, and the holy of holies. The priest thus passed through the first and second into the third heavens — the scene of the special presence of God. Paul speaks of being "caught up to the third heaven." There is an allusion to this significance of the tabernacle in the epistle to the Hebrews — "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into" (literally, through) "the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." (Hebrews 4:14.) Christ is looked at in this scripture as having passed, like the Jewish high priest on the day of atonement, through the court, the holy place, into the holy of holies (all of which are symbolical of the heavens), into the presence of God. In this connection it may be mentioned, and this is the second point, that the tabernacle was made after the pattern shown to Moses in the mount (Exodus 25:9, Exodus 25:40, etc.), and was therefore the type of heavenly things. This teaching is developed in the epistle to the Hebrews. We there read of Christ as "a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Hebrews 8:2); and again it is said, "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these" (the blood of animal sacrifices); "but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." (Hebrews 9:23-24.) It is easily understood therefore that the tabernacle was the scene of priestly ministrations; for since it was God's dwelling-place, it was also the place of the sinner's approach to God (or rather of the approach of a people brought into relationship with Himself) in the person of the priest. As a matter of fact, the high priest only entered once a year into the holy of holies (see Leviticus 16:1-34); but this was in consequence of the failure of the priesthood, and in no way marred its original design.

All this, indeed, together with the veil, and the exclusion of all but the priests from the holy place, will but teach, even by the contrast, the fuller and more blessed privileges which believers of the present dispensation enjoy. They have liberty of access at all times into the holiest of all, the veil being rent, inasmuch as they are perfected for ever, having no more conscience of sins, through the one offering of Christ (Hebrews 10:1-39), and they draw near, not to Jehovah, but to their God and Father in Christ Jesus. The last point referred to is the invitation addressed to the people to bring offerings of materials of which the tabernacle was to be composed. It is a bright exhibition of grace on the part of God thus associating the people with Himself in His desire to have a sanctuary to dwell in their midst. Hence it was only of willing hearts that the offerings were to be taken. This is exceedingly beautiful. God first produced the willingness, and then ascribed to them the offering they rendered. He counted upon the fellowship of the people, expecting a response to the expressed desires of His heart. The people did respond, as will be seen later on in the book, and so fully that proclamation had to be made to stay the offerings. A fine example of this was seen also in David in regard to the temple: "He sware unto the Lord, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob; surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob." (Psalms 132:2-5.) If in lesser measure than characterized the king of Israel, yet the required offerings flowed out in abundance from willing hearts, hearts made willing by the grace of God, which thus enjoyed the privilege of contributing materials which, when made up according to the directions given, would form Jehovah's dwelling-place, and which separately would be employed as an emblem, and a manifestation of some ray of His glory. The typical significance of the several materials offered will be explained in connection with their special place in the tabernacle. It will suffice now to say that they all point to Christ.

04.20. THE ARK WITH THE MERCY-SEAT.

THE ARK WITH THE MERCY-SEAT.

Exodus 25:10-22 THE ark and the mercy-seat are in one sense two distinct things, though in another they form a complete whole. They are described as distinct and separate, and it will thus be best to follow, in our exposition, the order of Scripture:

"And they shall make an ark of shittim-wood two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold; within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about. And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in the four corners thereof; and two rings shall be in the one side of it, and two rings in the other side of it. And thou shalt make staves of shittim-wood, and overlay them with gold. And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them. The staves shall be in the rings of the ark; they shall not be taken from it. And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee. And thou shalt make a mercy-seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy-seat. And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end; even of the mercy-seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy-seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy-seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel." (Exodus 25:10-22)

There are several things to be considered in connection with the typical significance of the ark. It was on the one hand a manifestation of God in Christ, and on the other the place of His throne and government in Israel.

First, then, the ark may be viewed as a figure of the person of Christ. This is seen from its composition. It was made of shittim-wood, overlaid with pure gold. The shittim was a kind of acacia, a wood said by some to be imperishable. Be this as it may, it is a type of what is human; and if a wood, as some affirm, that would not rot, incorruptible, it was a most suitable emblem of the humanity of our Lord. The gold is always a symbol of what is divine. The structure of the ark, therefore, figures the union of the two natures in the person of Christ. He was "very God, and very man." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Thereafter we read, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." (John 1:1-14.) He was thus God and man, God manifest in flesh. The contents of the ark are also significant in this connection: "And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee." (Exodus 25:16)

That is, the two tables of stone, with the ten commandments written thereon, were deposited in the ark, and hence it is frequently termed the ark of the covenant (Numbers 10:33; Deuteronomy 31:26, etc.), because it contained the law on which the covenant was founded. But it points in a marked way to Christ. Speaking thus in the Spirit in the Psalms, He says, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy Law is within My heart." (Psalms 40:7-8.) The testimony in the ark, therefore, exhibits the law of God in the heart of Christ; setting forth, first, that as born into this world, being of the seed of David according to the flesh, He was "made under the law" (Galatians 4:4); and secondly, that He obeyed it perfectly. The law within the heart, indeed, brings before us the perfection of His obedience — the fact that God found in Him, and in Him alone, truth in the inward parts, a full and complete answer to all the requirements of His holiness, so that he could ever rest in Him with perfect complacency, and, as He beheld Him always doing the things that pleased Him, expressing the delight of His own heart in the words, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17.) The rings and the staves (vv. 19 — 15) have also a voice. The object of these was "that the ark may be borne with them." (Exodus 25:14) This shows that God's people were pilgrims in the wilderness, journeying on to the place which God had prepared for them. But the time would come when the inheritance should be possessed, and when the temple, suited in magnificence to the glory of the king of Israel, should be built. The staves, which in the desert were no to be taken from the rings of the ark (Exodus 25:15), should then be withdrawn (2 Chronicles 5:9), because, the pilgrimage past, the ark would, with the people, have entered into its rest. (Psalms 132:8.) The staves therefore in the rings speak of Christ, with His pilgrim host, as being Himself with them in wilderness circumstances. It is Christ in this world, Christ in all His own perfectness as man — Christ, in a word in all that He was as the revealer of God; for in truth, He was the perfect presentation of God to man. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him." (Matthew 11:27.)

Secondly, the ark, with the mercy-seat and its cherubim formed God's throne on earth, in the midst of Israel. "The ark of the covenant," says one, "was the throne where God manifested Himself, if any could go in in righteousness (not, I think, separate from holiness, or taking merely duty as the measure of what was accepted), and as the seat of His sovereignty over every living man — the God of the whole earth. The law — the testimony of what He required of men — was to be placed there. Over it was the mercy-seat, which covered it in, which formed the throne, as the cherubim (formed of the same piece), which were its supporters, did its sides." God is thus spoken of in the Scriptures as dwelling between the cherubim. The cherubim are perhaps symbols of God's attributes; and hence the throne of God is sustained by all that He is. For this reason they are throughout the Old Testament connected with judicial power, because since God had to do with sinners His throne was ever judicial in its aspect. God may thus be viewed as sitting on His righteous throne between the cherubim. If it be asked, Why then, since Israel continually broke His law, were they not instantly destroyed? the answer is found (though we are anticipating the truth of the mercy-seat) in the attitude of the cherubim. As executors of the judicial power of God, they would necessarily demand the exaction of the penalty of transgression. But "their faces shall look one to another; towards the mercy-seat shall the faces of the cherubim be" (Exodus 25:20) They thus saw the sprinkled blood on the mercy-seat, the blood that was annually put upon it on the great day of atonement (Leviticus 16:1-34), whereby the claims of the throne were adequately met, and itself rendered favourable to the transgressor. Otherwise God, governing in

righteousness, must have visited destruction upon His people.

It was also the place where God met and communed with Moses. (Exodus 25:22) The meeting-place of Jehovah with His people was at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. (Exodus 29:42-43.) Moses alone (save the high priest exceptionally on the day of atonement) enjoyed the privilege of meeting God, and receiving communications from Him at the mercy-seat. He was, owned in grace as the mediator. All believers now enjoy this privilege in virtue of the efficacy of accomplished redemption. But of all Israel, Moses alone was free to go on all occasions into the very presence-chamber of God. It was there God spake with him (see Numbers 7:89), and entrusted him with His commandments for the guidance of the children of Israel. It is only there that God's voice can be heard, and His mind apprehended; and whoever would become increasingly acquainted with His will must be found continually in retirement from the world, and even from believers, shut in alone with God.

If now we turn to the book of Numbers, we shall find the directions for the transport of the ark through the wilderness. "And when the camp setteth forward, Aaron shall come, and his sons, and they shall take down the covering veil, and cover the ark of the testimony with it; and shall put thereon the covering of badgers' skins, and shall spread over it a cloth wholly of blue, and shall put in the staves thereof." (Numbers 4:5-6.) The veil, as will be explained in its place, is an emblem of the humanity of Christ — His flesh. (Hebrews 10:20.) We have then, first, the ark; i.e. Christ, covered with the veil of His humanity. Next, came the badgers' skins, expressive of that holy vigilance by which He absolutely protected Himself from evil, as is seen, for example, in the scripture, "By the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." (Psalms 17:4.) Then came the cloth wholly of blue — symbol of what is heavenly. "The badger's skin was inside in this case, because Christ kept His perfection absolutely free of all evil, and so the heavenly came out manifestly." It is Christ therefore in the wilderness, and while passing through it He was ever characterized by that which is heavenly. As such, be it ever remembered, He is our example. "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked."

04.21. THE MERCY-SEAT.

THE MERCY-SEAT. The mercy-seat, while forming the lid, and thus completing the structure of the ark, is in another sense complete in itself, and as such, from its importance, deserving special notice. It was placed "above upon the ark" (Exodus 25:21), and was therefore in the holy of holies — the scene of the special manifestation of God, and indeed, as explained, the basis of His throne. God dwells there between the cherubim. It differed from the ark in that no shittim-wood entered into its composition. It was made of pure gold, as also were the two cherubim, which were formed out of the same piece as the mercy-seat. Gold is the emblem of what is divine — of divine righteousness. If then it is considered for a moment in connection with the testimony in the ark, there is the combination of human and divine righteousness, the testimony pointing to the law — human righteousness — which was in the heart of Christ (Psalms 40:1-17), and the gold to God's righteousness, which is displayed also in Him. The mercy-seat is therefore in a peculiar manner a type of Christ. The apostle indeed applies the term directly to Him. He says, "Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth a propitiation" (a mercy-seat, literally), "through faith in His blood," etc. (Romans 3:24-25.) This allusion will be at once understood if reference is made to the action of the priest on the great day of atonement. After putting the incense upon the fire before the Lord, it is said, And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy-seat eastward; and before the mercy-seat shall he sprinkle of the blood seven times. (Leviticus 16:14.) So also he did with the blood of the goat of the sin-offering for the people. Two questions will elicit the meaning of this act. First, Why was the blood sprinkled on and before the mercy-seat? To make propitiation for the sins of the people. Being sinners they could not stand of themselves in the presence of a holy God. The blood therefore was carried in by divine direction, and sprinkled, in the manner described, on the mercy-seat to make propitiation for the people's sins; and also before the mercy-seat, but here seven times, that when the priest approached he might find a perfect testimony to the efficacy of the work. Once, as is often said, was enough for the eye of God, but in grace He vouchsafed that it should be sprinkled seven times, as a complete assurance for the eye and heart of man. What, then, secondly, did it accomplish? It accomplished atonement, satisfied all God's holy claims as against the people — yea, if we think of the blood of Christ, glorified Him fully in all that He is, and glorified Him for ever concerning the question of sin, so that He who was against us because of our guilt, is now for us because of the blood. The mercy-seat therefore speaks pre-eminently of Christ; for, as John speaks, "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." (1 John 2:2.) The sins of believers are gone, and gone for ever; and such is the value of the propitiation made that God can now righteously send out in His grace the gospel to the whole world, and beseech sinners to be reconciled to Him. (2 Corinthians 5:20.) Christ, we repeat, is figured by the mercy-seat; and hence we learn that God is now only approached through Him, as in the wilderness He could only be approached at the mercy-seat. But, blessed be His name, whoever does now approach to Him through Christ will find the perfect testimony to the value of His atoning work in God's presence. But observe it well, that the blood is the only ground of access. He is set forth a propitiation through faith in His blood. Believing

therefore in the value of His blood, according to God's testimony concerning it, whoever comes may come boldly, nothing doubting, in the full confidence that the way is thus opened for the guiltiest and the vilest into the immediate presence of God. For "Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." (Hebrews 9:11-12.) The cherubim formed part of the mercy-seat. These, as already said, are symbols of the divine attributes, and, as such, of judicial power. But since God has been glorified by the blood on the mercy-seat, all His attributes are in harmony, and all are exercised on behalf of believers. In the cross mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other; and therefore justice is satisfied, the claims of righteousness met, so that the cherubim are favourable to the dispensation of mercy to all who approach trusting in the value of the blood. Blessed truth! All that God is, is against sin, and now all that God is, is for the believer. The blood upon the mercy-seat has wrought this mighty change.

04.22. THE TABLE OF SHOWBREAD.

THE TABLE OF SHOWBREAD.

Exodus 25:23-30 THE ark, with the mercy-seat and the cherubim, was the sole occupant of the holy of holies. Nothing else was to be found in the immediate dwelling-place of God. But passing from without through the veil (supposing for a moment the erection of the tabernacle) the holy place is entered — the scene of the customary service of the priest. There were three vessels here — the table of showbread, the candlestick of pure gold, and the altar of incense — though the last is not yet described. It is the first of these in order as here given — the table of showbread — that we have now to consider.

"Thou shalt also make a table of shittim-wood: two cubits shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, and make thereto a crown of gold round about. And thou shalt make unto it a border of an handbreadth round about, and thou shalt make a golden crown to the border thereof round about. And thou shalt make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that are on the four feet thereof. Over against the border shall the rings be for places of the staves to bear the table. And thou shalt make the staves of shittim-wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be borne with them. And thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and spoons thereof, and covers thereof, and bowls thereof, to cover withal; of pure gold shalt thou make them. And thou shalt set upon the table showbread before Me alway." (Exodus 25:23-30) The composition of the table is the same as that of the ark. It was made of shittim-wood, and overlaid with pure gold. (Exodus 25:23-25) The meaning, therefore will be the same — the shittim-wood presenting that which is human, and the gold that which is divine. It is then Christ, Christ in His human and divine natures as combined in His one person. This indeed is the beauty of everything connected with the tabernacle. It is Christ everywhere, Christ in Himself or in some of His varied perfections and glories. The bread on the table. It is in the book of Leviticus that we find the particulars of the loaves — "And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake. And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the Lord. And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the Lord. Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the Lord continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. And it shall be Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it is most holy unto Him of the offerings of the Lord made by fire by a perpetual statute." (Leviticus 24:5-9.)

(1) The loaves or cakes were made of fine flour. This at once points to the meat-offering which, in like manner, was made of fine flour, with the addition of oil and frankincense. (See Leviticus 2:1-16) No leaven is mentioned, whereas in the two wave loaves (Leviticus 23:17) leaven is expressly specified — for the obvious reason that, in this case, the loaves represent the church, and therefore leaven — emblem of evil — is found in them. But the fine flour is a type of the humanity of Christ, and hence the loaves of the showbread are without leaven, He being holy,

harmless, undefiled, absolutely without sin.

(2) The loaves were baked. They set forth therefore Christ as having been exposed to the action of fire — the judgment of God's holiness by which He was searched and tested when upon the cross, and found to answer, and to answer perfectly, its every claim.

(3) They were twelve in number — six in a row. So on the shoulders of the high priest, there were the names of six tribes on the one, and the names of six tribes on the other. The loaves equally point to the twelve tribes of Israel. The number twelve signifies administrative perfection of government in man, and thus there were twelve tribes, twelve apostles, twelve gates, and twelve foundations in the holy city, new Jerusalem. (See for an illustration of this meaning Matthew 19:28.) The twelve loaves may then be taken to represent Israel in its twelve tribes; and this will give us, in connection with the significance of the number twelve, God revealed in Christ in association with Israel (for Christ was of the seed of David, and heir to his throne — Luke 1:32) in perfection of government. This will be displayed according to the predictions of the prophets (e.g. Psalms 72:1-20) in the millennium. But the loaves were on the table, and hence, on the other hand, Israel is seen in association with Christ before God.

(4) Another thing should be noticed. "And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the Lord." (Leviticus 24:7.) The frankincense typifies the sweet fragrance of Christ to God. Observe therefore that Israel in its twelve tribes is ever presented before God, covered with all the fragrance of Christ, and maintained there through all the night of their unbelief in virtue of what He is, and of what He has done — the sure promise of their future restoration and blessing. Hence the loaves were to be set in order "before the Lord continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant." (Leviticus 24:8.) They may be unfaithful, as they have been, but God cannot deny Himself; He abideth faithful, and as a consequence, though they have been scattered throughout the world because of their unbelief, He will yet perform His counsels of mercy and truth, and gather them from the four corners of the earth, and reinstate them in their own land in fulness of blessing — blessing which will be established in and secured by Him who is symbolized by the showbread table. An illustration of this may be gathered from the border of the table: "And thou shalt make unto it a border of an handbreadth round about, and thou shalt make a golden crown to the border thereof round about." (Exodus 25:25) It is very clear that the object of this border was to maintain the loaves in their position; and if the ornamental crown of gold be taken as an emblem of the divine glory of Christ, the lesson taught will be, that Israel is secured in its position through Christ before God by all that He is as divine.; nay, that His divine glory is concerned in their maintenance in it, as well as in preserving them. for all the blessing which He Himself has secured, and on which they will therefore one day surely enter. But there is more than Israel's position in this symbol. It embraces in principle that of every believer. There in the holy place, ever before the eye of God, covered with the grateful fragrance of the frankincense, he is seen in Christ. It is indeed the perfect presentation of the believer to God. In other words, it is our acceptance in the Beloved.

We may now consider the bread as food for the priests: "And it shall be Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it is most holy unto Him of the offerings of the Lord made by fire by a perpetual statute." (Leviticus 24:9.) Feeding indicates identification and communion with

the thing fed upon. This is expressly brought out by the apostle Paul in his teaching concerning the Lord's table. "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread, one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Corinthians 10:16-17.) It was the same with the priests. For example, they ate also of the sin-offering in certain cases (Leviticus 6:26), and thereby identified themselves with it. Feeding therefore upon the showbread is a symbol of the fact that Christ, as the Priest, ever identifies Himself with Israel before God. It was only to be eaten, it will be remarked, in the holy place. It is, then, Christ, in communion with the thoughts of God, identifying Himself with the twelve tribes in the exercise of His priesthood. This brings before us a very blessed aspect of truth. That He is the High Priest of this dispensation all admit; but it is not sufficiently borne in mind that, notwithstanding Israel's unbelief, He identifies Himself with them before God in His priestly office, and that He will come out of the holiest, into which He has entered, as Melchizedek and be a Priest upon His throne over a willing people. "The Lord shall send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion: rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: Thou hast the dew of Thy youth. The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." (Psalms 110:2-4.)

Then we have the provision for the journey: "And thou shalt make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that are on the four feet thereof. Over against the border shall the rings be for places of the staves to bear the table. And thou shalt make the staves of shittim-wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be borne with them." (Exodus 25:26-28) The children of Israel were pilgrims in the wilderness, and hence the tabernacle and all its furniture were made for them. in this character, and accompanied them in all their wanderings. Christ is ever with His people; and the very rings and staves, equally with the table itself, composed of gold and shittim-wood, point to Him as the God-man. But it is in the book of Numbers that the details for the transport of the table, when on the march, are given. "And upon the table of showbread they shall spread a cloth of blue, and put thereon the dishes, and the spoons, and the bowls, and covers to cover withal: and the continual bread shall be thereon: and they shall spread upon them a cloth of scarlet, and cover the same with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put in the staves thereof." (Numbers 4:7-8.) The inner covering, it will be observed, is a cloth of blue — symbol of what is heavenly; next, a cloth of scarlet — scarlet being an emblem of human glory or Jewish royalty; and outside came the covering of badgers' skins — a type of protection from evil as a consequence of holy watchfulness. Regarding the whole, the table with its showbread as Christ in association with Israel, to be hereafter displayed in perfection of administrative government, the meaning of this arrangement will be apparent. The cloth of blue was immediately upon the gold; i.e. the heavenly character of Christ was in intimate association with what He was as divine. The scarlet next — royalty, or human glory, because being in the wilderness the time for its manifestation had not yet arrived. That will be connected with the kingdom at His appearing. The badgers' skins are therefore outside, as concealing His human or royal glory, and as expressive of that holy vigilance which guarded Him on every hand from evil while in wilderness circumstances.

All the vessels connected with the table were made of gold (Exodus 25:29), all significant of that which was divine, as befitted the service of the One who was really God manifest in flesh, and who will be confessed in the future day of Israel's blessing as their Lord and their God. It will thus be seen that every detail, as well the whole table, speaks of Christ. May our eyes be opened to

perceive every aspect of His person and work as presented to us by the Spirit of God!

04.23. THE CANDLESTICK OF PURE GOLD.

THE CANDLESTICK OF PURE GOLD.

Exodus 25:31-40

AFTER the table of showbread follows the candlestick. The altar of incense, though belonging to the holy place, is omitted here, because it was a vessel of approach, rather than of display; and, as already pointed out, everything connected with the manifestation of God is given before that which was needed to come into His presence is described. Unless this distinction is borne in mind, instead of order and method, all will seem to be confusion.

"And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold; of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same. And six branches shall come out of the sides of it: three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side: three bowls made like unto almonds, with a knop and a flower in one branch; and three bowls made like almonds in the other branch, with a knop and a flower; so in the six branches that come out of the candlestick. And in the candlestick shall be four bowls made like unto almonds, with their knops and their flowers. And there shall be a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, according to the six branches that proceed out of the candlestick. Their knops and their branches shall be of the same; all of it shall be one beaten work of pure gold. And thou shalt make the seven lamps thereof: and they shall light the lamps thereof, that they may give light over against it. And the tongs thereof, and the snuff-dishes thereof, shall be of pure gold. Of a talent of pure gold shall he make it, with all these vessels. And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount." (Exodus 25:31-40)

First of all, we have the form of the candlestick. If the description be carefully read, it will be seen that the candlestick had seven branches; i.e. a central shaft with three branches springing out from either side. (See Exodus 25:31-32, also Exodus 37:17-18.) There were, therefore, seven lamps upon the one candlestick. The number seven also plays an important part in its ornamentation. There were "three bowls made like unto almonds" in each of the six branches (Exodus 25:33), and "four bowls made like unto almonds" in the candlestick (Exodus 25:34); i.e. in the central stem from which the branches sprung. The number seven is thus a marked characteristic. The next thing for consideration is the material of which it was made, and the character of its light. As in the mercy-seat, so in the candlestick, there was nothing but pure gold. (Exodus 25:31) No shittim-wood is found in its structure, and hence nothing human is prefigured by it. All is divine. From Exodus 27:1-21 we gather that the light was fed by "pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always." (Exodus 25:20) Oil in Scripture is ever a symbol of the Holy Ghost. The apostle thus says of believers, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One" (1 John 2:20); and Paul speaks of our having been anointed." (2 Corinthians 1:21.) Putting therefore these three things together in their typical meanings — the number seven, the gold, and the oil — the result is

that the significance of the candlestick is, — Divine light in its perfection in the power of the Spirit. It is God giving the light of the Holy Ghost, and this is displayed in its sevenfold perfection. In addressing the Church in Sardis, the Lord speaks as having "the seven Spirits of God "; i.e. the Spirit in His perfection (as indicated by the number seven) and energy (Revelation 3:1); and we read also of "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God." (Revelation 4:5.)

What, then, it may now be inquired, was the purpose of the candlestick? This would seem to have been twofold. First, it was set in the holy place "over against the table." (Exodus 26:35; Exodus 40:24.) It thus stood opposite to, and threw its light upon, the table of showbread. This therefore it may be inferred was the object in its being thus placed. Now the table of showbread symbolizes, as explained in the last chapter, the manifestation of God in man (Christ) in perfection of administrative government; and the twelve loaves on the table represent Israel, and also in principle believers of this dispensation, in association with Christ before God. The light of the candlestick shining, then, upon the table is the Holy Ghost bearing testimony to the future display of administrative perfection in Christ, when He shall have taken His power, and shall reign from the river unto the ends of the earth; likewise to Israel's (as well as the believer's) true place in connection with Christ before God. These truths may be obscured or forgotten on earth, but there in the holy place before the eye of God they are fully displayed, and exhibited by the perfect light of the Spirit. But secondly, the light was for the illumination of the candlestick itself. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron, and say unto him, When thou lightest the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick. And Aaron did so; he lighted the lamps thereof over against the candlestick, as the Lord commanded Moses." (Numbers 8:1-3.) That is, giving out the light of the Holy Ghost, reveals the beauties of (or beautifies) the vessel through which it is displayed. A perfect illustration of this is seen in the transfiguration of our blessed Lord, when, as we read, "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." (Matthew 17:2.) It was ever so throughout the whole of His blessed pathway for those whose eyes were opened (see John 1:4; John 2:11); but on the mount His beauty was manifestly displayed. So also in the case of Stephen. We read that he was "a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost," and that "all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." (Acts 6:5; Acts 6:15.) It is so with every believer in the measure in which the light of the Holy Spirit — Christ, indeed, shines out through his walk and conversation. But it may be further asked, What answers on earth to the perfect light of the Spirit as symbolized by the seven-branched candlestick in the holy place? Christ when here answered to it perfectly. He was thus the light of men, the light of the world, etc. (John 1:4; John 8:12.) Never for one moment was the light of the Spirit obscured in Him; it shone purely and steadily, illuminating the darkness through which He passed with its blessed, life-giving radiance throughout the whole of His life. He was a perfect vessel. After His departure from this scene, and His ascension, the church was constituted the light-bearer. (Revelation 1:20.) That is her character, however grievous her failure — a failure which will finally issue in her utter rejection as the vessel of testimony upon earth. (See Revelation 3:16.) The individual believer answers to it also in the measure in which he presents Christ in his walk and ways. Paul thus writes to the Philippians, "Do all things without murmurings and disputings; that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation (generation), among whom ye shine as lights in the world." (Php 2:14-15.)

It is also interesting to observe how the light was maintained. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Command the children of Israel, that they bring unto thee pure oil olive, beaten for the light to cause the lamps to burn continually. Without the veil, of the testimony, in the tabernacle of the congregation, shall Aaron order it from the evening unto the morning, before the Lord continually: it shall be a statute for ever in your generations. He shall order the lamps upon the pure candlestick before the Lord continually." (Leviticus 24:1-4; also Exodus 27:20-21.) First, the children of Israel were to bring the pure oil olive. This will point to the responsibility of God's people on earth, the vessel in which it was to be displayed — Israel then, now the church. Aaron was to order the lamps. By this is taught that the light of the Spirit, in its display, can only be maintained by the priestly care and intercession of Christ. He alone could use "the tongs thereof, and the snuff-dishes thereof," for both alike were made of pure gold. (Exodus 25:38) Every ray of light that shines out below, whether through the church or the individual believer, is but the answer to His priestly work. In this connection, it may be remarked that the oil olive was to be "beaten" for the light (Exodus 27:20), and that the candlestick itself was to be made of "beaten" work. This may point to the fact that the intercession of Christ is grounded upon the efficacy of His work on the cross, the term "beaten" shadowing forth the sufferings of Him, by whose stripes we are healed.

Lastly, notice the duration of the light. It was to be "from the evening unto the morning." The lamp is for the night; and all through the night of Israel's unbelief, until the day dawn, and the shadows flee away, the golden candlestick is to be ordered before the Lord. The testimony to their true place is maintained all through the weary years of the darkness of their unbelief by the intercession of Him whom they have rejected and crucified. But at last He Himself shall be for them "as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." (2 Samuel 23:4.) The hope of the Christian is more immediate; for "the night is far spent and the day is at hand." But while waiting, may our lamps — fed with the true oil, and ordered before the Lord continually — shine out ever more brightly until the Lord's return!

04.24. THE CURTAINS OF THE TABERNACLE

THE CURTAINS OF THE TABERNACLE

Exodus 26:1-14 THE last chapter closes with an injunction to obedience. Man's thought or design must have no place in God's house. There His authority must be upheld and acknowledged as supreme. This is a principle of the last importance; and is accordingly asserted again and again in the course of these communications. Having then reminded Moses that the pattern shown him in the mount must be ever kept in view, the Lord proceeds to instruct him concerning the composition, size, etc., of the curtains which were to form the tabernacle, the tent, and their coverings.

"Moreover, thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: with cherubim of cunning work shalt thou make them. The length of one curtain shall be eight and twenty cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits: and every one of the curtains shall have one measure. The five curtains shall be coupled together one to another; and other five curtains shall be coupled one to another. And thou shalt make loops of blue upon the edge of the one curtain, from the selvedge in the coupling; and likewise shalt thou make in the uttermost edge of another curtain, in the coupling of the second. Fifty loops shalt thou make in the one curtain, and fifty loops shalt thou make in the edge of the curtain that is in the coupling of the second; that the loops may take hold one of another. And thou shalt make fifty taches of gold, and couple the curtains together with the taches; and it shall be one tabernacle.

"And thou shalt make curtains of goats' hair, to be a covering upon the tabernacle: eleven curtains shalt thou make. The length of one curtain shall be thirty cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits: and the eleven curtains shall be all of one measure. And thou shalt couple five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves, and shalt double the sixth curtain in the forefront of the tabernacle. And thou shalt make fifty loops on the edge of the one curtain that is outmost in the coupling, and fifty loops in the edge of the curtain which coupleth the second. And thou shalt make fifty taches of brass, and put the taches into the loops, and couple the tent together, that it may be one. And the remnant that remaineth of the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that remaineth, shall hang over the backside of the tabernacle. And a cubit on the one side, and a cubit on the other side, of that which remaineth in the length of the curtains of the tent, it shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle on this side and on that side, to cover it. And thou shalt make a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering above of badgers' skins." (Exodus 26:1-14)

There are, it will be seen, four sets of curtains. The first is termed the tabernacle (Exodus 26:1-6); the second — those made of goats' hair — is named the tent (Exodus 26:11-12); and the remaining two are called simply "coverings." Three terms (and it is so also in the original) are applied to the four sets of curtains; viz., "the tabernacle" to the innermost of all, "the tent" to the second, and "coverings" to the outermost two — those made of rams' skins dyed red, and those made of badgers' skins.

Following the order of the scripture, the inner set — the tabernacle — may be first considered. These are made of four materials — fine twined linen, blue, purple, and scarlet. Besides this, there were cherubim embroidered (see margin) upon them. It is in these materials that their typical teaching lies. The fine twined linen is a symbol of spotless purity. The priests were on this account clothed with it (Exodus 28:39-43); and on the great day of atonement Aaron was dressed in this material (Leviticus 16:4) that he might typify the absolute purity of the nature of the One of whom he was but the shadow. In the New Testament the fine linen is spoken of as the righteousnesses of saints. (Revelation 19:8.) The blue is always a symbol of what is heavenly — the very colour pointing unmistakably to this significance. The purple is emblematic of Gentile royalty. The gospel of John, for example, records that when the soldiers, with coarse brutality, were mocking the claims of Jesus to be the King, they put on Him a purple robe. (John 19:2.) The scarlet sets forth human glory, and it may be at the same time, Jewish royalty. David thus speaks of Saul having clothed the daughters of Israel in scarlet with other delights (2 Samuel 1:24) — as expressive of the dignity he had put upon them; and in Matthew's gospel, where Christ is specially presented as the Messiah, He is said to have been clothed by the soldiers in scarlet, ere they bent their mocking knee before Him, and cried, "Hail, King of the Jews!" (Matthew 27:28-29.) Applying all this to Christ the significance is most striking. It gives Christ in the absolute purity of His nature, Christ in His heavenly character, Christ as King of Israel (and, as King of Israel, invested with all human glory), and, last of all, Christ as reigning also over the Gentiles. The last two features coalesce, because when Christ shall sit upon the throne of His father David, it will be the period of His world-sovereignty, when all kings shall fall down before Him, and all nations shall serve Him. (Psalms 72:11.) It is therefore Christ as He was as Man in this world, and Christ as He will be in the future display of His glory in this world, as Son of David, and as Son of man. But there is another thing. Cherubim were embroidered on these curtains. Cherubim have been explained to signify judicial authority. This gives an additional representation of Christ — of Christ as having authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man. (John 5:27.) It is thus a full display of what Christ was essentially as Man, and of His glories and dignities connected with the earth. Blessed were those who, admitted in the exercise of their priestly office within the precincts of the holy place, had the privilege of gazing upon these varied displays of the excellencies and glories of the Christ of God! The dimensions of the curtains are not without meaning. The length of one curtain shall be eight and twenty cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits: and every one of the curtains shall have one measure." (Exodus 26:2) Now $28 = 7 \times 4$; and consequently the length is seven times four; and the breadth, being also four cubits, divides the length into seven; i.e. $28 / 4$ gives 7. Seven and four are thus characteristic. Seven is the perfect number, being absolutely indivisible excepting by itself, and the highest prime number; and four is that of completeness on earth — as seen, for example, in the four corners of the earth, four winds, four-square, four gospels, etc. The dimensions of the curtains will then betoken perfection displayed in completeness on earth; and such a meaning could only be applied to the life of our blessed Lord. The curtains of the tabernacle consequently speak of the complete unfolding of His perfections as Man when passing through this scene.

We have, next, their arrangement and number. Five curtains were "coupled together one to another," so that there were two sets of five — as there were ten in number. Ten is the number of responsibility towards God, as, for example, in the ten commandments (see also Exodus 30:13, etc.), and five is responsibility towards man. (See Genesis 47:24; Numbers 5:7, etc.) We are thus

taught that Christ as Man met the whole of His responsibility both towards God and towards man, that He loved God with all His heart, and His neighbour as Himself — going as to this, we know, even infinitely beyond. And He was the only One by whom these responsibilities were fully and perfectly discharged.

Then the couplings have likewise a voice. There were fifty loops of blue and fifty taches of gold, by which the curtains were connected. Remembering that blue is the heavenly colour, and that the gold is divine, and that the two numbers of ten and five, which have just been explained, enter into the composition of the fifty, we learn that the heavenly and divine character of our blessed Lord secured the perfect adjustment of His twofold responsibility as Man towards God and man; or that they were perfectly united by His divine and heavenly energy. These meanings, the reader is cautioned, are suggestions, but suggestions which are worthy of devout consideration in the light of Scripture, and which, if examined in the presence of God, cannot fail both to be interesting and profitable.

(2) The curtains of goats' hair. These came next to, immediately above, those which are denominated the Tabernacle, and formed the tent. This covering points also to Christ — "to His positive purity, or rather to that severity of separation from the evil that was around Him, which gave Him the character of prophet — severity, not in His ways towards poor sinners, but in separation from sinners, the uncompromisingness, as to Himself, which kept Him apart and gave Him His moral authority, the moral cloth of hair which distinguished the prophet." In confirmation of this interpretation, Zechariah says, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment (margin, a garment of hair) to deceive," etc. (13: 4; compare Matthew 3:4.) The dimensions of these differ from the curtains of the tabernacle of the same width, they were two cubits longer — thirty cubits instead of twenty-eight — and there was one more curtain. While unable to suggest any typical value to the numbers, the reason of their larger size is yet evident. They were to extend beyond, on all sides, so as completely to protect the tabernacle curtains. "And the remnant that remaineth of the curtains of the tent e. the goats' hair curtains), the half curtain hat remaineth, shall hang over the backside of the tabernacle. And a cubit on the one side, and a cubit on the other side, of that which remaineth in the length of the curtains of the tent, it shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle on this side and on that side, to cover it. (Exodus 26:12, Exodus 26:10) The meaning will be, then, that Christ in all that He was, as symbolized by the inner curtains, was guarded by that perfect separation from evil which sprang from His positive and absolute purity. He could therefore challenge His adversaries with the words, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" (John 8:46.) Yea, He could say to His own, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." (John 14:30.) So complete was His moral separation from all evil that He could even touch the leper and not be defiled. The couplings of the curtains were of brass instead of gold. The colour of the loops is not mentioned. Brass in this connection would seem to signify divine righteousness, not, as seen in the gold, according to what God is in Himself, but as testing man in responsibility. This will be shown more fully when the brazen altar comes to be considered. The aptness of this significance in connection with goats' hair curtains will be at once apprehended. It brings before us Christ as morally separate from sinners, but tested by divine righteousness in His path all through His earthly sojourn — and tested, it need scarcely be added, only with the result of discovering that He answered perfectly its every claim.

(3) Above the "tent" — i.e. the goats' hair curtains — were two coverings; first, one of rams' skins dyed red, and next, another of badgers' skins. The ram was chosen as the consecration offering in connection with the setting apart of the priests to their office. It is called "the ram of the consecration." (Exodus 29:27.) Dyed red will point very evidently to death. The meaning therefore is entire consecration, devotedness unto death; and where was that ever seen in its perfection except in the One who humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross? The badgers' skins are an emblem of that holy vigilance exhibited in His walk and ways, which preserved Him from all evil. Jerusalem is said to have been "shod with badgers' skins," the provision the Lord had made to protect her from evil in her walk. The vigilance so symbolized is often expressed in the Psalms: "By the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer;" and again, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee." The coverings therefore likewise proclaim the perfectness of the One whom they typify. At the same time it must not be forgotten, that the features they portray ought to be seen in every believer. For in all that Christ was in His walk through the world He is our example. If therefore we admire the perfections and excellencies that were displayed in Him, we should remember that He is set before us as the standard of our responsibility.

"My Saviour, keep my spirit stayed
Hard following after Thee;

Till I, in robes of white arrayed,
Thy face in glory see."

If for a moment the Tabernacle is supposed to be complete, it will be seen that the badgers' skins only met the outward gaze. But the priest who enjoyed the privilege of entering the holy place, saw the full beauty of the fine twined linen, the blue, the purple, and the scarlet, and of the embroidered cherubim. It was Christ without and it was Christ within; but it was Christ without as seen by the natural eye — discovering no beauty that man should desire Him; and it was Christ within as seen by the eye opened by the Spirit of God; Christ therefore as the chiefest among ten thousand, and as the altogether lovely.

04.25. THE FRAMEWORK OF THE TABERNACLE.

THE FRAMEWORK OF THE TABERNACLE.

Exodus 26:15-30.

THERE are several distinct things comprised in this section. First, the framework of the Tabernacle, with its foundations, is described.

"And thou shalt make boards for the tabernacle of shittim-wood standing up. Ten cubits shall be the length of a board, and a cubit and a half shall be the breadth of one board. Two tenons shall there be in one board, set in order one against another: thus shalt thou make for all the boards of the tabernacle. And thou shalt make the boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards on the south side southward. And thou shalt make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for his two tenons, and two sockets under another board for his two tenons. And for the second side of the tabernacle on the north side there shall be twenty boards, and their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board. And for the sides of the tabernacle westward thou shalt make six boards. And two boards shalt thou make for the corners of the tabernacle in the two sides. And they shall be coupled together beneath, and they shall be coupled together above the head of it unto one ring: thus shall it be for them both; they shall be for the two corners. And they shall be eight boards, and their sockets of silver, sixteen sockets; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board.

"And thou shalt make bars of shittim-wood; five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the side of the tabernacle, for the two sides westward. And the middle bar in the midst of the boards shall reach from end to end. And thou shalt overlay the boards with gold, and make their rings of gold for places for the bars: and thou shalt overlay the bars with gold. And thou shalt rear up the tabernacle according to the fashion thereof which was showed thee in the mount." (Exodus 26:15-30)

Attending carefully to the particulars given, it will be seen that the number of the boards constituting the tabernacle, was forty-eight. There were twenty for the south side (Exodus 26:18); twenty for the north side (Exodus 26:20); six for the sides of the tabernacle westward (Exodus 26:22); and two for the corners of the tabernacle in the two sides (Exodus 26:23) — making the total of forty-eight. Then observe that each of these boards had two tenons (Exodus 26:17); and each tenon had for its base, or foundation, a socket of silver. (Exodus 26:19, Exodus 26:25) In addition there were four sockets of silver underneath the pillars for the beautiful veil (Exodus 26:32); so that there were one hundred sockets of silver underneath and supporting the framework of the Tabernacle.

(1) Beginning then at the foundation, the typical teaching of the sockets of silver may be first considered. Leaving, however, their full exposition until the subject is reached in Exodus 30:1-38, it will suffice now to indicate its outlines. We find, then, that when the people were numbered,

every man was to give half a shekel of silver as a ransom for his soul unto the Lord, that the rich should give the same as the poor, and the poor the same as the rich; and that this "atonement" money was appointed for the service of the tabernacle. (Exodus 30:11-16.) In another scripture, it is stated that the sum thus given amounted to one hundred talents, and one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five shekels; and that the hundred talents were used for the sockets of the boards, etc., and the rest for hooks for the pillars, etc. (Exodus 38:28.) It is thus evident that the silver sockets, being made up of the ransom money, are a figure of atonement, of the blood of Christ, which He gave as a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:28.) It is in allusion to this, and to Numbers 31:49-54, that Peter writes to Jewish believers, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold." (1 Peter 1:18.) The blessed truth is therefore taught that God's dwelling-place is founded upon redemption, the redemption which has been effected through the precious blood of Christ. But God's dwelling-place is now composed of believers, and hence the church as such, and every individual believer as forming part of the church (for every Israelite of the required age was represented in the atonement money), are placed before God upon the sure and efficacious foundation of accomplished atonement. The ground of the standing of every believer is the precious blood of Christ, and hence he appears before God in all its unspeakable and infinite value.

Now, as explained, there were one hundred of these sockets — i.e. ten times ten. Ten is the number of responsibility towards God. The blood of Christ therefore, as represented by the silver, has met the highest expression of our responsibility God-ward, — has made an atonement adequate — fully adequate — to all God's claims, and thereby cleared us completely and for ever. Well might the soul, in the perception of this perfect work, joyfully exclaim —

"On Christ the solid Rock I stand, All other ground is sinking sand."

(2) The boards; and first as to their material, form, and length. They were made of the same materials as the ark, and the table of showbread — of shittim-wood, overlaid with gold (Exodus 26:15, Exodus 26:29) They therefore refer primarily to Christ; but also, as will be seen, to the believer. Each board had two tenons — which fitted in their respective sockets of silver. Two in Scripture is the number of adequate testimony: as, for example, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established." (2 Corinthians 13:1; Deuteronomy 19:15.) Each board contains therefore in itself an adequate testimony to the value and completeness of the atonement on which it rests. (Compare 1 John 5:6.) The length of each was ten cubits. (Exodus 26:16) This again points to responsibility God-wards — in this case applicable to believers. Having a standing before God on the ground of redemption, responsibility is never to be forgotten. The standing indeed is the measure of it; and accordingly each board was ten cubits in length.

Together, as we have seen, they were forty-eight in number — i.e. twelve times four. Twelve is administrative perfection; and four is completeness on earth. The whole number therefore will be administrative perfection displayed in all its completeness in Christ, or, if the boards are taken in connection with the divine dwelling-place, through the house of God. The former will be witnessed during the millennium; and, in one aspect, the latter too, as Christ will not reign apart from the church. The two numbers, twelve and four, are thus characteristic of the holy city, the New Jerusalem. It may be, that the Pentecostal church at Jerusalem, organized under the twelve apostles, was a passing shadow of this administrative perfection.

One thing more is noticeable — the provision made for their security when standing in their silver sockets. There were five bars of shittim-wood on either side, running through rings of gold (Exodus 26:26-29); and the boards were, in addition, coupled at the corners by rings (Exodus 26:24) The ring is a symbol of security — there being no end to it; and consequently, since the bars were to strengthen and secure the framework, the two together may well signify eternal security. And this both the church and the individual believer enjoy. Concerning the former, the Lord Himself said, "Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18); and of the latter, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." (John 10:27-28.) The boards completed, they are then to be set in their places. And remark that, once again, Moses is admonished to do everything according to the pattern he had been shown in the mount. It was to be truly an "example and shadow of heavenly things," and consequently there was no room for human thoughts or imaginations. Obedience was the part of Moses, and faithfulness in the execution of the heavenly design. So now fidelity to the word of God, obedience to every part of it, is what God requires from believers in connection with His church. Once admit human regulations, human authority, and the church ceases, in so far, to be a true witness for God. This is the third time that this injunction has been given — showing the importance of obedience in the eyes of God.

04.26. THE BEAUTIFUL VEIL, ETC.

THE BEAUTIFUL VEIL, ETC.

Exodus 26:31-37. THE framework of the Tabernacle, considered in the last chapter, comprised the Tabernacle proper; i.e. the holy place, and the most holy. Outside of this, as will be seen in due course, there was the court of the Tabernacle, completing the threefold division. But inside the framework there were only these two — the holy place and the holy of holies. So far, however, this division has not been shown; but provision is now made for it in the direction given in the following scripture concerning the veil.

"And thou shalt make a veil, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made: and thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim-wood overlaid with gold: their hooks shall be of gold, upon the four sockets of silver.

"And thou shalt hang up the veil, under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the veil, the ark of the testimony: and the veil, shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy. And thou shalt put the mercy-seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy place. And thou shalt set the table without the veil, and the candlestick over against the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south: and thou shalt put the table on the north side. And thou shalt make an hanging for the door of the tent, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework. And thou shalt make for the hanging five pillars of shittim-wood, and overlay them with gold, and their hooks shall be of gold and thou shalt cast five sockets of brass for them." (Exodus 26:31-37)

(1) There are several distinct points in the description of the veil to be considered. As to its materials, it will be perceived that they correspond in every particular with those of the curtains forming the Tabernacle. (Exodus 26:1-37.) As in these, therefore, so in the veil, it is Christ who is presented — Christ in what He is as to His nature and character, Christ in what He will be as Son of man and Son of David in the future glories of His millennial reign, and Christ, moreover, as Son of man invested with supreme judicial power. There is one difference to be noted. In the curtains of the Tabernacle the fine twined linen comes first; here the blue has the precedence, and the fine twined linen comes last. The reason is that the curtains display Christ in connection with the earth, and hence the absolute purity of His nature is the first thing declared; whereas the veil shows Christ rather in connection with heaven, and consequently the blue — His heavenly character — is prominent. The interpretation of the veil is found in the epistle to the Hebrews: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." (Hebrews 10:19-20.) From this two things may be gathered. First, that just as the veil in the Tabernacle concealed the scene of the immediate presence and manifestation of God, so the flesh of Christ, Christ in incarnation, concealed from the natural eye the presence-chamber of God. He was God manifest in flesh; but His flesh, at the same time, was calculated to blind the eyes of men to this astounding fact. The second is, that just as the veil was the only way into the most holy place, so Christ is the only way

to God. He thus said to Thomas, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." (John 14:6.) The supports of the veil were threefold. There were, first, the pillars, then the hooks, and lastly, the sockets of silver. (Exodus 26:32) The pillars were of shittim-wood, overlaid with gold — as seen in the boards, etc. This symbolizes, as shown more than once, the person of Christ in His two natures, human and divine — as the God-man. The lesson then is — inasmuch as the veil was supported by these pillars — that everything in redemption depends upon the person of Christ. If He had not been man, He could not have died for our sins; and if He had been only man, His sacrifice could not have availed for all His people. But being God and man He could make propitiation for the sins of His people and for the whole world. (1 John 2:2.) The whole value of His work flows from His person; and hence the importance of holding fast the true Scriptural teaching on this point, and of guarding this most blessed doctrine on every hand. If the truth of the person of Christ could be undermined, the whole fabric and structure of redemption would be endangered. Hence the care and, it may be added, the delight of the Spirit of God to testify to it in every shape and form, in figure and type, as well as in distinct words. The hooks were of gold. Gold is divine righteousness. If then, as shown, everything in redemption depends upon the person of Christ, it is equally true, as seen in the fact that the veil was suspended upon these hooks of gold, that everything likewise depends upon the display of God's righteousness in Christ. Or it might be affirmed more directly still, that Christ holds the place of the way to God in divine righteousness. For since He glorified God on the earth, and finished the work which He gave Him to do, God's righteousness was seen in raising Him from the dead, and setting Him at His own right hand. All that God is, is concerned, and righteously concerned, in placing and sustaining Him in the position He thus occupies. The sockets were of silver — figure of the blood of atonement. This carries us down to the foundation of all — the work which Christ wrought out on the cross. These two things — the blood and the veil — are conjoined in the passage already cited from the Hebrews. God will never have it forgotten that the cross is the foundation of everything, of the blessing both of the church and of Israel, as well as of the reconciliation of all things. And the delight of His own heart in what Christ is and has done, is sufficiently revealed in the fact, that every minute thing in connection with His sanctuary points to the one or the other — all alike revealing, if in different aspects, Christ and His work. The position of the veil is most important. "And thou shalt hang up the veil, under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the veil, the ark of the testimony: and the veil, shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy." (Exodus 26:33) It thus shut off, as before explained, the holiest of all, in which the ark of the testimony — the throne of God on earth — was placed, so that none might enter there, save Aaron once a year on the great day of atonement. (Leviticus 16:1-34) And what, it may be asked, was the meaning of this? The answer may be given in the words of Scripture: "The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing." (Hebrews 9:8.) If then, on the one hand, as we have seen, the veil, as a figure of Christ, teaches the blessed truth that it is through Christ alone that access can be obtained to God, the veil in itself, on the other hand, speaks of distance and concealment. God indeed could not fully reveal Himself, could not righteously go out to the sinner, or bring the sinner in to Himself, until the question of sin should be taken up and settled once and for ever. This Christ did, and, as a consequence, immediately that He gave up the ghost, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. (Matthew 27:1-66) The veil therefore in the Tabernacle showed that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest, and

by that, not only proved that the question of sin was not yet dealt with, but also that the people were sinners, and as such unfit for the presence of God. Both gifts and sacrifices were offered on their behalf, but these could not make them that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience, or they would have possessed an indefeasible title to enter the holiest. No; it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins; and hence, with guilt bound upon their consciences, they dared not come into the presence of a holy God; and He (be it said with all reverence) could not go out to them, for God in His holiness is a consuming fire. The existence of the veil therefore reveals the contrast between the position of Israel and that of believers. Israel was shut out, never had access into the holiest; Moses, owned in grace as the mediator, and Aaron as the high priest, once a year, were alone permitted to enter. But now every believer enjoys this precious privilege. (See Hebrews 10:19-22.) The veil is rent; for "Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." (Hebrews 9:11-12.) Inside the rent veil is therefore our only place of worship; and we can enter with all boldness, because Christ by one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Nor should another contrast be forgotten. Even when Aaron did enter the holiest, he was not in the presence of God as the believer now is. God was only revealed then as Jehovah; but now believers know Him as their God and Father. Hence the apostle says, "Through Him (Christ) we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Ephesians 2:18 see also John 20:17.) While therefore we are filled with admiration at the wisdom of God, as seen in the depicted glories and adumbrations of Christ in the Tabernacle, we are constrained to bow before Him with adoring praise as we learn, by contrast, the grace that has brought us into the full enjoyment of all here typified, and of even larger blessings than these.

(2) The arrangement of the holy furniture follows. (Exodus 26:33-35) It will be needful to remember once again that the altar of incense is not yet described, because it is a symbol of approach (and hence belongs to the last division of this section). The articles given are all symbols of display. Leaving on this account, for the present, any detailed exposition, a brief notice may be given of the arrangement in this scripture. The ark, first of all, was to be put into the holiest, and the mercy-seat upon the ark of the testimony — with "the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat." Nothing else was found in the most holy place, because, as before explained, it was the scene of the presence and manifestation of God. There, dwelling between the cherubim, He was approached with the incense from off the golden altar, and with the blood of the sacrifices on the day of atonement; and there Moses stood to receive communications for the people. The beautiful veil shut it off from the holy place. It was therefore the inner compartment of the Tabernacle. Outside the veil, in the holy place, the table of showbread and the candlestick were arranged; the former on the north, and the table on the south side. To borrow the language of another, "Outside the veil were the table with its twelve loaves and the golden candlestick. Twelve is administrative perfection in man; seven, spiritual completeness, whether in good or evil. The two are found outside the veil, inside which was the most immediate manifestation of God, the Supreme, but who hid Himself, as it were, in darkness. Here was light and nourishment; God in power in union with humanity; and God giving the light of the Holy Ghost. Therefore it is that we have twelve apostles attached to the Lord in the flesh, and seven churches for Him who has the seven Spirits of God. The twelve tribes were, for the time being, what answered externally to this manifestation. It is

found in the new Jerusalem. The primary idea is the manifestation of God in man and by the Spirit." And these two truths are connected — shown to be connected by the relative positions of the table and the candlestick; the light of the candlestick indeed ever testifying to the truth embodied in the table of showbread

(3) The last thing connected with this part of the subject is the "hanging for the door of the tent." This "hanging" shut off the court of the Tabernacle from the holy place, and formed the doorway into it. It occupied the same position in reference to the holy place, as the beautiful veil did in respect of the holy of holies. When therefore the priests came from the court (not yet described), they passed through this "hanging" into the holy place to accomplish their service. Its materials correspond with those of the beautiful veil. But there is one important difference. There were no cherubim embroidered on the "hanging." Otherwise it was the same; and hence the typical teaching of the one will apply to the other. What, then, is the significance of the omission of the cherubim? These, it will be remembered, set forth the Son of Man in His judicial character. The "hanging," then, equally with the veil, is a figure of Christ — with His judicial character carefully excluded. The reason is obvious. In the "hanging" He is presented in grace, to those that were without, as the way into the position and privileges of priests, as the way into the presence of God in this character. The pillars are also made of the same material, as well as the hooks; and point likewise to the person of Christ, and to divine righteousness, as accomplished and displayed in Him at the right hand of God. But there are five pillars instead of four. This may arise from what has been already stated — that the "hanging" is Christ in presentation to the world in race, and thus brings with it the thought of responsibility man-wards. The sockets were of brass instead of silver. Brass, as ever, is divine righteousness testing man in responsibility. This will be more fully explained in the next chapter; but it is easily understood that Christ presented in grace, is Christ presented to, and hence a test of, responsible man. The moment, however, the question of his sins is settled, not only before God, but also for his own conscience, Christ is become for him the way into God's presence. Thereafter everything is socketed in silver, for he stands now upon accomplished atonement; in Christ he has redemption through His blood.

Everything still portrays Christ. It may be, and undoubtedly is, difficult to interpret some of the minute details; if, however, Christ is before the soul, some ray of His glory will soon be discovered. Let there but be patience and conscious dependence, combined with watchfulness against the activity of the mind, and the Spirit of God will delight to unfold these shadows to the souls of His people.

04.27. THE BRAZEN ALTAR.

THE BRAZEN ALTAR.

Exodus 27:1-8

PASSING outwards from the holy place, the first thing met, when the Tabernacle and all its arrangements were duly ordered, was the laver. But this is omitted here for the same reason that the altar of incense was not described in the last chapter. It was a symbol of approach, and not of display; and consequently the brazen altar is next given. This, as will be seen, had a peculiar character. It was a manifestation of God, and, at the same time, was the meeting-place between Him and the sinner. It is in this aspect the boundary of His display; i.e. He does not go out in manifestation beyond this limit; for, meeting the sinner here, the sinner (i.e. the priest acting on his behalf), when everything is prepared, has the liberty from this point of passing in, and would thenceforward need the symbols of approach.

"And thou shalt make an altar of shittim-wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare; and the height thereof shall be three cubits. And thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof; his horns shall be of the same: and thou shalt overlay it with brass. And thou shalt make his pans to receive his ashes, and his shovels, and his basons, and his fleshhooks, and his firepans: all the vessels thereof thou shalt make of brass. And thou shalt make for it a grate of network of brass; and upon the net shalt thou make four brasen rings in the four corners thereof. And thou shalt put it under the compass of the altar beneath, that the net may be even to the midst of the altar. And thou shalt make staves for the altar, staves of shittim-wood, and overlay them with brass. And the staves shall be put into the rings, and the staves shall be upon the two sides of the altar, to bear it. Hollow with boards shalt thou make it; as it was showed thee in the mount, so shall they make it." (Exodus 27:1-8)

Before entering upon the uses of the altar, it will be necessary to explain its typical meaning. The shittim-wood is found here equally with the ark, the table, etc. But it was overlaid with brass instead of gold. Brass, indeed, is its characteristic. Now brass is divine righteousness, not like that symbolised by the gold according to what He is in Himself, suited, that is, to the divine nature, but as testing man in responsibility. It has always allied with it, on this account, a certain judicial aspect, inasmuch as, meeting man in responsibility, it of necessity judges him because he is a sinner. The altar as a whole, then, is God manifested in righteousness. Hence it formed the meeting-place between God and the sinner; for as long as the sinner is in his sins, God can only meet him on that ground, where he is as under responsibility. The altar consequently was the first thing that met the sinner's eyes when coming up out of the world into the court of the Tabernacle. But then it was an altar — and as such was a symbol of the cross of Christ. When the sinner therefore came to the altar, when he came believing in the efficacy of the sacrifice, though the altar tested him in responsibility, he found that all his sins were gone, and that he could stand before God in all the sweet savour of the sacrifice which had been consumed there. Its very position displays this character. It was just outside of the world, and just inside the court. So when Christ

was rejected, He was cast out of the world — lifted up above it, when nailed to the shameful tree. But there on the cross, as on the altar in figure, He met and bore the whole of man's responsibility "went down under all God's holy judgment against sin, and so abundantly answered to every claim of His glory, that the fire fed gratefully upon the sacrifice, which, totally consumed upon the altar, went up as a sweet savour of acceptance to God. It was the burnt-offering, and not the sin-offering which was placed upon the brazen altar. The sin-offering was burnt without the camp. The brazen altar teaches rather what God found — His part — in the death of Christ; and it is not until we have learnt this truth that we can draw near with holy boldness into His presence.*

*It should never be forgotten that while the burnt-offering sets forth God's part in the death of Christ, it was yet accepted for the offerer to make atonement for him. (Leviticus 1:4.)

If we consider now the uses of the altar, further instruction upon this point will be gleaned. It was pre-eminently, as just stated, the altar of burnt-offering (Leviticus 1:1-17) Besides this, parts of the meat-offering, of the peace-offering, and indeed of the sin-offering, were also burnt upon "the altar of burnt-offering." (See Leviticus 2:2; Leviticus 3:5; Leviticus 4:10) Without entering at this time into the specific characteristics of these several sacrifices, it will be enough to say that they shadow forth different aspects of the death of Christ; and it is therefore in the combination of all, that we learn the infinite value, and the unspeakable preciousness of that one sacrifice which they typify. The brazen altar tells therefore of Christ, of that one sacrifice of Christ when He through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God. When the sinner (an Israelite) therefore brought a sacrifice, he owned by that very act that he could not of himself meet God's righteous claims, that he was a sinner, and as such had forfeited his life; and hence it was that he brought another life to be offered up in his stead. Coming thus, he identified himself with the sacrifice, as shown by putting his hand upon its head. (Leviticus 1:4, etc.) If he brought a sin-offering, the fat only of the inwards, etc., of which was burnt upon this altar (see Leviticus 3:1-17), when he put his hand upon its head, his guilt was transferred (in figure) to the offering, and it was consequently burnt as an unclean thing — charged with the offerer's sins — outside the camp. If it were a burnt-offering, by the same act of laying his hand upon the head of the victim he became transferred, as it were, into, completely identified with, all the acceptance of the sacrifice. Two things were thus effected. On the one hand, his sins were put out of God's sight; on the other, he was brought before God in all the acceptance of Christ. Thus, if the altar tested man in righteousness, it revealed the grace that had provided a perfect sacrifice on his behalf; so that God could meet him in grace and love, as well as in righteousness, and give him a title to stand in perfect acceptance in His holy presence. The very size of the altar illustrates this truth. It was five cubits square. It was responsibility man-wards completely displayed and met in the cross of Christ.

How abundant then the encouragement which God gives to the sinner! The claims of His throne, His government, have been met by the altar; for the blood has been sprinkled upon it, and the sacrifice has been consumed. He can therefore receive in grace and in righteousness every one that in faith approaches the altar; and it is to announce these glad tidings that the gospel is sent forth into every land. The cross of Christ is the meeting-place now between God and the sinner. It is on the foundation of what was accomplished there that He can be just and the Justifier of every one that believeth in Jesus. There is no other ground on which He can bring the sinner into His presence. If the Israelite rejected the brazen altar, he shut himself out for ever from the mercy of God; and, in like manner, whoever rejects the cross of Christ, shuts himself out for ever from the

hope of salvation. The horns of the altar may also be considered. There were four — one on each corner. (Exodus 27:2) In certain cases the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled upon these, as, for example, in the sin-offering for the ruler or for one of the common people. (Leviticus 4:25; Leviticus 4:30, etc.) The horn is a symbol of strength. When therefore the blood was sprinkled upon the horns, the whole strength of the altar (and it was displayed in all its completeness) which had been against, is now exercised on behalf of the sinner. The horns of the altar became thus a place of refuge, an inviolable sanctuary, for all who were rightfully under their protection on the ground of the sprinkled blood. Joab sought this protection when he fled from Solomon (1 Kings 2:28); but inasmuch as he had no claim upon it, for he was a murderer, he was slain. This is like the sinner who, in his extremity, would fain claim the benefits of the death of Christ to escape the judgment, though he is still alienated in heart from Him. But wherever there is trust in the value of the sacrifice which has been offered to God upon the altar, there is no power in earth or hell that can touch the soul that rests under its shelter and protection.

"The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose, I will not, I will not, desert to its foes; That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake, I'll never, no never, no never forsake."

It will be interesting to look for a moment at the provision for the journey detailed in Numbers 4:1-49 : "And they shall take away the ashes from the altar, and spread a purple cloth thereon: and they shall put upon it all the vessels thereof, wherewith they minister about it, even the censers, and the fleshhooks, and the shovels, and the Mangers, all the vessels of the altar; and they shall spread upon it a covering of badgers' skins, and put to the staves of it." (Exodus 27:13-14) The purple cloth was put immediately upon the altar. Purple is royalty, and this makes the interpretation evident. It is the sufferings of Christ — as seen in the altar, — and the glories that should follow, as shown by the purple. The cross first, and then the crown. But the altar was in the wilderness, and hence the badgers' skins were without, covering up the purple. The time for the assumption of the royal glory of Christ had not yet arrived. In the meantime the badgers' skins — emblem of that holy vigilance which guarded Him from evil while passing on through the wilderness in rejection, and while waiting for the time of His kingdom, were alone seen. The vessels of the altar were all made of brass, in harmony with its characteristic feature. The staves wherewith the altar was to be borne were of shittim-wood and brass, as the altar itself. Finally, Moses is again reminded that the pattern shown him in the mount must be his guide. The wisdom of God alone could devise the altar which was to embody so many blessed truths. A king Ahaz, enamoured by the beauty of the Syrian altar, may reject the altar of God (2 Kings 16:1-20); but it was the ruin of him and of all Israel. (2 Chronicles 28:23.) So now men may refuse the preaching of the cross of Christ, finding in it, according to their thoughts, either a stumbling-block or foolishness, and choose an altar for their worship which meets their own aesthetic tastes, and which will not therefore offend the prejudices of the natural man; but, as in the case of Ahaz, it can only end in their everlasting ruin. God only can prescribe the suited way and method of access to Himself.

04.28. THE COURT OF THE TABERNACLE.

THE COURT OF THE TABERNACLE.

Exodus 27:9-19 THE brazen altar having been prescribed, the court of the Tabernacle follows. This, it will be remembered, was the open space surrounding the Tabernacle, enclosed by hangings of fine twined linen, as detailed in this scripture. It formed the third division — when considered as a part of, or rather as connected with, the Tabernacle proper. In this, as shown before, there were the holy of holies, the innermost compartment; then, passing outward, the holy place; and then the court which is here given. This is also a manifestation of God — teaching how that Christ is ever before the mind of the Spirit in every part of the sanctuary; and that Christ is thus the only key to unlock its mysteries.

"And thou shalt make the court of the tabernacle for the south side southward there shall be hangings for the court of fine twined linen of an hundred cubits long for one side: and the twenty pillars thereof and their twenty sockets shall be of brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets shall be of silver. And likewise for the north side in length there shall be hangings of an hundred cubits long and his twenty pillars and their twenty sockets of brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets of silver. And for the breadth of the court on the west side shall be hangings of fifty cubits; their pillars ten, and their sockets ten. And the breadth of the court on the east side eastward shall be fifty cubits. The hangings of one side of the gate shall be fifteen cubits: their pillars three, and their sockets three. And on the other side shall be hangings fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three. And for the crate of the court shall be an hanging of twenty cubits, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework; and their pillars shall be four, and their sockets four. All the pillars round about the court shall be filleted with silver; their hooks shall be of silver, and their sockets of brass. The length of the court shall be an hundred cubits and the breadth fifty every where, and the height five cubits of fine twined linen, and their sockets of brass. All the vessels of the tabernacle in all the service thereof, and all the pins thereof, and all the pins of the court, shall be of brass." (Exodus 27:9-19)

It appears from this description that the court of the Tabernacle was one hundred cubits long, and fifty cubits broad. (Exodus 27:9-13) It was made as follows: first, there were twenty pillars on each of the two sides, north and south (Exodus 27:10-11), and ten pillars at each of the two ends, east and west — the pillars on the east side, the side of entrance, being made up of three on each side of the entrance, and four for the hanging of the gate of the court. (Exodus 27:12-16) Altogether there were sixty pillars. On these pillars — or, to speak exactly, on fifty-six of them — excluding the four which were for the hanging of the gate — were suspended the fine twined linen which formed the court. Of this there were one hundred cubits on each side, fifty cubits at the west end, and thirty on the east (Exodus 27:9-15) — altogether two hundred and eighty cubits. The gateway, at the east end, was composed of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework — the same in every respect as the hanging for the entrance into the holy place — and was twenty cubits in length. The sockets of the pillars were all of brass, and the hooks and

the fillets for the hanging were of silver. (Exodus 27:17) The typical teaching of these things will be perceived to spring from their twofold symbolical presentation of Christ and of the believer. The fine twined linen is an emblem, as shown more than once, of the spotless purity of Christ, of the positive purity of His nature. Here it may be seen in another way. The measurement of these hangings of fine twined linen was two hundred and eighty cubits. In the curtains of the Tabernacle (Exodus 26:1-2) there were also two hundred and eighty cubits — there being ten curtains, and each curtain being twenty-eight cubits in length. The measurements of these two were therefore equal. The curtains of the Tabernacle present Christ, Christ in His nature and character, and Christ in His future glories and judicial authority; but as so presented He was for the eye of God, and for the eye of the priest. As such He could not be seen from without, only from within. The fine twined linen hangings present Christ also, but not so much to those within as to those without. They could be seen by all in the camp. It is therefore the presentation of Christ to the world, Christ in the purity of His nature. He could thus challenge His adversaries to convict Him of sin; Pilate had to confess again and again that there was no fault in Him; and the Jewish authorities, though they sought with eagle-eyed malice, failed to establish, or even to produce, a single proof of failure. Not a single speck could be detected upon the fine twined linen of His holy life, His life of practical righteousness which flowed from the purity of His being.

There is another thing. These hangings were five cubits high (v. 18); and their lengths at the two sides one hundred cubits, and at the two ends fifty and thirty cubits. These latter numbers can all be divided by ten and five. Accepting then the power of these numbers as responsibility towards God, and responsibility towards man, it follows that the spotless purity of His life sprang from His perfectly meeting this twofold responsibility. He loved God with all His heart, and His neighbour as, yea, more than, Himself. To those therefore whose eyes were opened these curtains proclaimed the coming of One who should perfectly answer in His life and walk to every claim of God. The pillars, their sockets, fillets, etc. The material of the pillars is not stated. It might seem, at first sight, from the tenth verse, as if they were of brass; but on comparing Exodus 38:10, it is most probable that the brass refers alone to the sockets. It might be inferred from analogy that they were of shittim-wood overlaid with brass; but where Scripture is silent human inferences are, even if permissible, uncertain. Two things, however, are mentioned. They were socketed in brass, and capped with silver. (Exodus 38:17.) Brass is divine righteousness testing man in responsibility. Hence, indeed, brass is characteristic of the outside, as gold is of the inside, of the Tabernacle. Man's responsibility must be tested and met before he can be brought into God's presence. Christ in presenting Himself to the world, as symbolized by the line twined linen hangings, stands upon the ground of having met every claim of divine righteousness. This is the foundation of His character as Saviour. Silver speaks of redemption. The pillars were capped with it, and the curtains were suspended upon it. So Christ displays the efficacy of His work. It is His crown of glory even at the right hand of God. If therefore He searches the sinner by the sockets of brass, He declares to him at the same time the value of the blood as shown by the silver. Brass testing man discovers his need, and as soon as the need is known, the silver is there to meet it. The pillars were fifty-six in number — excluding those for the gateway — on which the hangings were suspended. Fifty-six are seven times eight. Seven is the perfect number; and eight is that of resurrection. The practical righteousness of Christ, perfectly displayed in His earthly life, is sealed as it were by His resurrection. He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (Romans 1:4.) The hanging for the gate of

the court is the same as the curtain forming the entrance into the holy place, and, as in that, adumbrates Christ in all that He is in connection with the earth, His heavenly character, His royal glories as Son of man and as Son of David, and His spotless purity. Once again there are no cherubim, and this is because He is here the Door, the Way, as presented to the world; for we are told that God sent not His Son to judge the world (that was not His mission then), but that the world through Him might be saved. (John 3:17.) There are now no cherubim and a flaming sword to keep the way of the tree of life, for that flaming sword has descended upon that holy victim which was offered up to God on Calvary, and thus having satisfied, and that for ever, the claims of God's holiness, He can now present Himself in all the attractions of His person and grace to the world, as the way, the truth, and the life. There, before the eyes of all, this hanging for the gate was displayed, and while every colour told of Christ, all together, in their harmony and beauty, united in the proclamation, "By Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." It may be observed also that Christ is the way into the holy place, and into the holy of holies as well as into the court. "He is the only doorway," one has remarked, "into the varied fields of glory which are yet to be displayed, whether on earth, in heaven, or the heaven of heavens." But there is yet another aspect of the court of the Tabernacle. If, on the one hand, it presents Christ, it gives, on the other, and because it is Christ, the standard of the believer's responsibility. No lower one can be raised or accepted; for He has left us an example that we should walk in His steps. The measurements, considered in this aspect also, are significant. The curtains of the Tabernacle were, as stated, two hundred and eighty cubits. These display Christ before the eye of God. But as He is, so are we in this world. (1 John 4:17.) They are therefore the curtains of privilege — revealing, as they do, our perfect acceptance before God. The fine twined linen hangings were also two hundred and eighty cubits, and inasmuch as they display the practical righteousness of the life of Christ, His blameless walk, His spotless purity, they are the curtains of responsibility. In the Revelation it is said that the fine linen is the righteousnesses of saints. (Revelation 19:8.) The responsibility of the saint is measured by his privilege, by what he is before God. There is another thought. Our responsibility to walk as Christ walked (1 John 2:6) is our responsibility to God. But these curtains were five cubits high. Five, it will be recalled, is the number of responsibility towards man; and thereby it may be learned that we are responsible to man as well as to God — responsible to present Christ in our walk and conversation. The pillars may also point to the believer. Socketed in brass, grounded in divine righteousness, whose claims have been met, and with the value of redemption, as typified by the silver upon our heads, are prerequisites for such a display of Christ. There were also pins and cords. (Exodus 27:19; Exodus 35:18.) These were for stability — to keep the pillars with the fine twined linen hangings in their place. Interpreting this of the believer, it will teach that the source of his strength is not in himself, that he needs a power from without if he is to maintain the exhibition of practical righteousness before the world; and, indeed, the wider truth, that, though he is given a standing on the ground of divine righteousness, and is under the value of redemption, he could not maintain the position for a single moment if left to his own resources. The pins and cords therefore reveal that the believer is "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1:5.) All is of God; all that the believer is, has, and enjoys, is the gift of His grace. His position as well as his responsibility can only be maintained in dependence on the Lord. All these pins, equally with the vessels of the Tabernacle in all the service thereof, and all the pins thereof, were of brass. (Exodus 27:19) Thus everything outside the holy place and the holy of holies, was characterized by divine righteousness, but divine

righteousness testing man in responsibility because it was the meeting-place between God and the people. (See Exodus 29:42.) Since, however, man cannot of himself meet its claims, the righteousness of God is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe. While therefore he is saved by grace, he stands, as so saved, upon the immovable foundation of divine righteousness before God. For grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:21.)

04.29. THE PRIESTHOOD.

THE PRIESTHOOD.

Exodus 28:1-43

BEFORE entering upon this subject, it may be well to recall the point at which we have arrived. With the exception of the altar of incense and the laver, the tabernacle, with its sacred vessels, is now complete. Beginning with the ark of the covenant, the table of showbread and the candlestick were then described. The tabernacle (the beautiful curtains), the tent (the curtains of goats' hair), and the coverings of rams' skins dyed red, and of badgers' skins followed. Next came the boards of the tabernacle, and their erection, and the division between the holy of holies and the holy place by the veil, and the "hanging for the door of the tent;" i.e. the entrance from without into the holy place. The sacred vessels were then arranged: the ark, with the mercy-seat and its "cherubim of glory," was put into the holiest, and the table and the candlestick occupied the holy place. In the next place, the brazen altar was prescribed, and lastly, the court of the tabernacle. So far, everything given is a manifestation of God, or, as it is often termed, a symbol of display; i.e. it reveals in type or figure something of God in Christ. It is God, so to speak, coming out to His people. Thenceforward the order is reversed. It is not now the question of God coming out, but of going in to God. All that follows therefore concerns access into His presence; and consequently all the vessels that have been omitted are symbols of approach; i.e. vessels needed for drawing nigh to God. But before these are entered upon there is a break, and the appointment and consecration of the priesthood are detailed. The reason is, that there must be the designated persons for approach before the vessels could be used. There is therefore a divine order in this seeming confusion. God has come out in type and figure to His people; then He indicates those who are to be set apart for His service in the sanctuary — those who are to enjoy the special privilege of access to Him; and lastly, the vessels etc., are given, which they would need in their holy employment in the house of God. This arrangement will also help us to understand the introduction of the commandment concerning the provision for the oil for the candlestick at the end of Exodus 27:1-21. The oil, as has already been explained, is a type of the Holy Ghost. The children of Israel are enjoined through Moses to bring the oil, and thus are formally linked (in figure) with, and so represented in, the light of the candlestick which was to be ordered by Aaron and his sons from evening to morning before the Lord. In other words, the people are defined (though this truth will be more definitely stated when we come to the atonement money) for whom the priests are to act before the priests are appointed. It will thus be seen that every detail, and the position of every verse, as well as the order of the subjects, are stamped with divine wisdom and significance. All being thus arranged, the priests are to be set apart for their holy office.

"And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto Me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons." (Exodus 28:1)

Two or three preliminary remarks will conduce to our understanding of this subject. The necessity for the appointment of priests lay in the fact that the people were sinners, and as such, inasmuch as there was no provision as yet for cleansing them from the guilt of sin, had no title to come into God's presence. Man as he is cannot, dares not, come before God. The object of the priestly office was, therefore, to minister unto God (Exodus 28:1); but to minister unto God on behalf of the people. (Hebrews 5:1-2.) In this dispensation there is no such thing as some of God's people acting as priests on behalf of others in this special way. All believers are now priests (see 1 Peter 2:5; 1 Peter 2:9); all alike enjoy liberty of access into the holiest of all. (Hebrews 10:1-39) Aaron therefore is a type of Christ — a type of Christ when he is alone; but when he is associated with his sons, he with them is a type of the Church as the priestly family; but the Church, at the same time, in association with Christ. This distinction will appear most clearly in the next chapter. It is of the first importance to be clear upon this subject, because, through ignorance or indifference to the truth, thousands of professed believers have gone, and thousands more are going, back to Jewish ground, on which they accept the existence of a special order of men who claim to possess, like Aaron and his sons, the particular privilege of going to God on behalf of their fellow-men. The assertion of such a claim is to attack the very foundation of Christianity, inasmuch as it denies the perpetual efficacy of the one offering of Christ. Aaron then, be it remembered, is a type of Christ; but if he is seen together with his sons, then the privileges of the Church, in association with Christ as the priestly family, are presented. The choice of Aaron and his sons was of pure grace. An essential qualification for the office was divine appointment (Hebrews 5:4); but Aaron was not chosen on the ground of any merit in himself; he was simply in this matter the object of divine and sovereign favour. He had no claim whatever upon God for such an honour; but God gave it to him in the exercise of His sovereign prerogative. The chapter contains two things — the priestly dress, and the priestly office. The two are intermingled, but the dress comes first for consideration.

"And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, for glory and for beauty. And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister unto Me in the priest's office. And these are the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a broidered coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. And they shall take gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen. And they shall make the ephod of gold, of blue, and of purple, of scarlet, and fine twined linen, with cunning work. It shall have the two shoulder pieces thereof joined at the two edges thereof; and so it shall be joined together. And the curious girdle of the ephod, which is upon it, shall be of the same, according to the work thereof; even of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen." (Exodus 28:2-8)

There were six holy garments in all (Exodus 28:4), or, if we add the plate of pure gold put on the mitre (Exodus 28:36), seven, these constituting the garments for glory and for beauty. The ephod comes first, because it was pre-eminently the priestly garment. Without it the priest could not be in the full exercise of his office. It was made of the four materials — blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen, which have so frequently been considered, with the addition of gold. (Exodus 28:5) The gold is mentioned first, and signifies that which is divine. If, however, we take the gold as an emblem of divine righteousness, it will signify that this is the ground on which Christ, as Priest, exercises His office; that His intercession is according to it before God, and therefore of necessity

prevalent. In the remaining four materials there are the heavenly character of Christ (blue), His glories as Son of man and Son of David (purple and scarlet), and His spotless purity (fine twined linen), as holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. Two things are thereby taught. First, that Christ acts for us as Priest in all that He is as divine and human, as the God-man. The whole value of His person enters into the exercise of His office — the gold speaking of what He is as divine, and the varied colours of His perfections and dignities as man. The apostle combines these two things in the epistle to the Hebrews: "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God," etc. (Hebrews 4:14) He is Jesus, and He is the Son of God. It is this most precious truth that is displayed in type in the materials of the ephod. How it enlarges our conceptions of the value of His work for us as Priest to remember what He is in Himself, and that we are thus upheld in His intercession by all that He is as Jesus, and as the Son of God! Secondly, these materials reveal the character of His priesthood. There are royal glories portrayed as well as His essential nature and character. He will indeed be a Priest on His throne. (Zechariah 6:13.) Now He exercises His office on behalf of believers after the Aaronic pattern on the great day of atonement inside the veil; but the full expression of His priestly office for Israel will be seen in His Melchizedek character. (Psalms 110:1-7; Hebrews 7:1-28) The ephod of Aaron spoke of these coming glories, which will be displayed when Christ will be both King of righteousness and King of peace. Strictly speaking therefore, the dress is emblematical of Christ as Priest for Israel, though Aaron never went in to the holiest. in the character it exhibited; for failure came in through Nadab and Abihu, and, as a consequence, he was forbidden to go into God's presence, except once a year, and then not in the garments for glory and beauty. (Leviticus 10:1-20; Leviticus 16:1-34) But Christ will take up all that these garments typified, and then will be seen, for the first time, God's thought of the priesthood for His people fully accomplished. The girdle of the ephod, was embroidered with the same materials as the ephod itself. It is therefore to the significance of the girdle itself that our attention is directed. In Scripture it is constantly typical of service. One beautiful example of this is found in Luke — in the words of our blessed Lord Himself. He says, "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself. and. make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." (Luke 12:37.) The girdle of the ephod will, then, signify the service of Christ as the Priest, the service He renders to us before God in this capacity. A Servant — the perfect Servant — ever delighting when in this world to do His Father's will, He in His love and grace, though He be glorified, remains a Servant still. He is gone into heaven to appear in the presence of God for us. (Hebrews 9:24.) It is in this character He maintains unwearied intercession on our behalf, whereby He secures for us those continual ministrations of mercy and grace — mercy for our weakness, and grace for our succour when we are tempted — which we need as a people passing through the desert. It is most consoling to raise our eyes, and behold Christ invested with His priestly girdle, for thereby we are assured that He will save us all the way through, bring us through the wilderness in safety, and introduce us into the rest of God, because He ever lives to make intercession for us. And how it reveals to us the depths of His own heart! Moses complained to the Lord that the burden of Israel — the burden of leading them in their wanderings — was too heavy for him. But the Lord Jesus, as our great High Priest, is never weary, notwithstanding the continual failures and unbelief, and the going back in heart to Egypt, of His people. He is ever unwearied and unresting in His service, because His love is inexhaustible. Blessed be His name!

We have next the onyx stones and breastplate.

"And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel: six of their names on one stone, and the other six names of the rest on the other stone, according to their birth. With the work of an engraver in stone, like the engravings of a signet, shalt thou engrave the two stones with the names of the children of Israel: thou shalt make them to be set in ouches of gold. And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulders of the ephod for stones of memorial unto the children of Israel: and Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial. And thou shalt make ouches of gold; and two chains of pure gold at the ends; of wreathen work shalt thou make them, and fasten the wreathen chains to the ouches. And thou shalt make the breastplate of judgment with cunning work; after the work of the ephod thou shalt make it; of gold, of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine twined linen, shalt thou make it. Foursquare it shall be, being doubled; a span shall be the length thereof, and a span shall be the breadth thereof. And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, even four rows of stones: the first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: this shall be the first row. And the second row shall be an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. And the third row a figure, an agate, and an amethyst. And the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper; they shall be set in gold in their inclosings. And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet; every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes. And thou shalt make upon the breastplate chains at the ends of wreathen work of pure gold. And thou shalt make upon the breastplate two rings of gold, and shalt put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate. And thou shalt put the two wreathen chains of gold in the two rings which are on the ends of the breastplate. And the other two ends of the two wreathen chains thou shalt fasten in the two ouches, and put them on the shoulderpieces of the ephod before it. And thou shalt make two rings of gold, and thou shalt put them upon the two ends of the breastplate, in the border thereof, which is in the side of the ephod inward. And two other rings of gold thou shalt make, and shalt put them on the two sides of the ephod underneath, toward the forepart thereof, over against the other coupling thereof, above the curious girdle of the ephod. And they shall bind the breastplate by the rings thereof unto the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it may be above the curious girdle of the ephod, and that the breastplate be not loosed from the ephod. And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually. And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before the Lord: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually." (Exodus 28:9-30)

First, there are the two onyx stones, with the names of the children of Israel, six tribes on each, engraven thereon, set in ouches of gold, and put upon the shoulders of the ephod, etc. That this description relates in figure to the exercise of the priestly office is clear from the statement that "Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial." The onyx stones were gems — precious stones, figurative of the excellencies of Christ, and combining this with the fact that they were set in gold will give us two things; first, that the names of His people appear upon the shoulders of the Priest in all His beauty and excellency, and, as symbolized by the gold, set in divine righteousness. The shoulder is the emblem of strength. (See Isaiah 9:6; Isaiah 22:22, etc.) Christ therefore, as here portrayed, upholds His people in the presence of God

in all His omnipotent strength; and He has the title to do so, seeing that they are set upon His shoulders in divine righteousness and invested with all the radiancy of His own beauty. What a comfort to us in the consciousness of our utter feebleness! He who upholdeth all things by the word of His power maintains us before God; and, as He bears us up in His presence, God beholds us as having an undeniable claim to be upon the shoulders, and sees us encompassed by all the excellency, of the High Priest. Our memorial is thus before Him continually; for Christ cannot be in the presence of God without our names being seen upon His shoulders. Remark also that the ouches in which the onyx stones were set were fastened by two wreathen chains of gold, binding them on His shoulders in divine righteousness. The breastplate follows. Its materials corresponded with those of the ephod. (Exodus 28:15) It was four-square in shape, and there were set in it four rows of precious stones; and on these stones likewise were engraven the names of the children of Israel according to their twelve tribes, etc. The typical teaching will then be of the same character — noting, however, the differences between the shoulders and the breast. (1) Aaron then bore the names of the children of Israel on his heart, as well as on his shoulders. The breast is symbolic of the affections. It teaches therefore that if Christ upholds His people before God, on the one hand, by everlasting strength, He bears them also, on the other, on His heart in everlasting love. Everlasting strength and everlasting love unite in the presentation of believers before God by the Priest. On the heart of Christ! And who shall sound its depths? If we think of power, we remember His words, "No one can pluck them out of My hand." If our thought is of love, we are reminded of the apostle's challenge, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" And these two — strength and love — and these two as united in Christ — are engaged in presenting us before God. He has bound us upon His shoulders — bearing our weight — with His own almighty strength, and He has fastened us upon His heart with His own deathless and unfathomable love. This will help us to comprehend a little of the efficacy of His intercession, based as it is upon the efficacy of His sacrifice, on our behalf.

(2) The names of the children of Israel were graven upon the precious stones. The scene of the exercise of the priesthood, according to the thought of God, and actually so in the case of Christ, if not in that of Aaron, was immediately in God's presence — before the full blaze of the holiness of His throne. Now the action of light upon precious stones has the effect of bringing out their varied and manifold beauties. Hence, as was remarked in connection with the onyx stones, the names of God's people, as borne upon the heart of the priest, shine out in all the sparkling lustre and beauty of the stones on which they are engraven. This symbolizes the fact that believers are before God in all the acceptance of Christ. When God looks upon the great High Priest, He beholds His people upon His heart, as well as upon His shoulders, adorned with all the beauty of the One on whom His eye ever rests with perfect delight. Or, looking at it from another aspect, it might be said that Christ presents His people to God, in the exercise of His priesthood, as Himself. He thus establishes in His intercession His own claims upon God on their behalf. And with what joy does He so present them before God! For they are those for whom He has died, and whom He has cleansed with His own most precious blood, those whom He has made the objects of His own love, and whom finally He will bring to be for ever with Him; and He pleads for them before God according to all the strength of these ties, according, as before observed, to all the claims which He Himself, on account of the work He accomplished on the cross, has upon the heart of God.

(3) The breastplate was fastened by wreathen chains of gold, and "a lace of blue," and rings of gold to the ephod. We gather, then, that the breastplate cannot be detached from the ephod. It is bound up inseparably with the priestly office of Christ. It is fastened to the ephod — the priestly garment — by chains of gold, in divine righteousness, divine righteousness as suited to the nature of God, by all that Christ is therefore as divine. It is also an eternal connection as typified by the rings — the ring being without end, and hence, as seen when considering the framework of the tabernacle, an emblem of eternity. As Priest, Christ can never fail us. If He has once undertaken our cause, He will never lay it down. Surely this truth will strengthen our hearts in times of trial or weakness. We may be despondent, but if we look up we may rejoice in the thought that our place upon the heart and shoulders of Christ can never be lost. There are seasons when many believers feel as if they could not get into the presence, or obtain the ear, of God — doubtless through failure, or coldness of heart, or spiritual feebleness. These things are not to be excused; but surely it would prove an antidote to Satan's temptations at such periods to remember, that if we cannot pray ourselves, Christ never fails to bear us up in His prevailing intercession, and that we are bound inseparably upon His heart and upon His shoulders. Nay, it would soon dispel our gloom and coldness of heart, because it would lead us to look away from ourselves, and to expect all from Him, and from His continual ministry for us in the presence of God. As another has said, "He presents us, as that which He has on His heart, to God. He cannot be before Him without doing so; and whatever claim the desire and wish of Christ's heart has to draw out the favour of God, operates in drawing out that favour on us. The light and favour of the sanctuary — God as dwelling there — cannot shine out on Him without shining on us, and that as an object presented by Him for it."

(4) Aaron bore the judgment of the people in connection with Urim and Thummim. These were put in the breastplate of judgment. (Exodus 28:29-30) Urim and Thummim probably mean "lights" and "perfections." "These we need to get blessing, Stood we before God, such as we are, we must draw down judgment, or lose the effect of this light and perfection of God, remaining without. But, Christ bearing our judgment according to these, our presentation to God is according to the perfection of God Himself — our judgment borne; but then our position, guidance, light, and spiritual intelligence are according to this same divine light and perfection. For the high priest inquired and had answers from God according to the Urim and Thummim. This is a blessed privilege." All these things indeed do but teach how perfectly Christ as the Priest acts and cares for His people. The robe of the ephod is next described.

"And thou shalt make the robe of the ephod all of blue. And there shall be an hole in the top of it, in the midst thereof: it shall have a binding of woven work round about the hole of it, as it were the hole of an habergeon, that it be not rent. And beneath, upon the hem of it, thou shalt make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, round about the hem thereof; and bells of gold between them round about: a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about. And it shall be upon Aaron to minister; and his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the Lord, and when he cometh out, that he die not." (Exodus 28:31-35) The robe of the ephod was all of blue — indicative of what is heavenly, adumbrating the heavenly character of the Priest, and it may be, at the same time, the scene of the exercise of His functions, or rather, that His character was suited to the place. He is thus spoken of in the Hebrews not only as holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, but

also as made higher than the heavens. (Hebrews 7:26.) Care was to be taken that "it be not rent" (Exodus 28:32), for what is heavenly in character must needs be indivisible in its perfection. At the bottom of the robe there were to be pomegranates of blue, of purple, and of scarlet, and bells of gold in alternation; and the object is stated that it shall be upon Aaron to minister: and his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the Lord, and when he cometh out, that he die not. (Exodus 28:35) The symbolic significance of these two things is plainly marked; it is the fruits and testimony of the Spirit. And hence "going in" and "coming out" mark two distinct periods. Speaking now of Christ, of whom Aaron was but the figure, He went in when He ascended up on high, and the sound was heard on the day of Pentecost in the testimony which the Spirit of God then raised by the mouth of the apostles. There were also fruits connected with that testimony — fruits of the Spirit in the walk and life of those who were converted through the instrumentality of the testimony. (See Acts 2:1-47) The same thing will take place when He comes out, and both alike flow from Christ in His heavenly character. Peter links together the two periods. He cried to the multitude, who had come together in amazement at the witness of the Spirit, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams," etc. (Acts 2:16-17.) What was passing before their astonished eyes was but a sample of that, though of different character, which should be witnessed when the Priest comes out with blessing for Israel. It is in this last connection that the meaning of the colours of the pomegranates may be apprehended. The fruits of the Spirit are heavenly in character, and consequently "blue" is the first colour. But they are also "purple" and "scarlet," because they will be then associated with the kingdom-glories of Christ; yea, with the glories which He will inherit both as Son of man and as Son of David. The two periods — going in, and coming out — may thus answer to the early and the latter rain, at least in association with Israel. (See Hosea 6:1-3.) Then there is the plate of gold.

"And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre, upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord." (Exodus 28:36-38) This is the gracious provision which God has made for the imperfections and defilements of our services and worship. He can only accept that which is suited to His own nature. Everything offered to Him, therefore, must be stamped with holiness. This being so, if left to ourselves, notwithstanding that we are cleansed and brought into relationship with Him, and having a title of approach, our offerings never could be accepted. But He has met our need. Christ, as the Priest, bears the iniquity of our holy things; and He is holiness to the Lord, so that our worship, as presented through Him, is acceptable to God. Blessed consolation, for without this provision we were shut out from God's presence! Hence the apostle speaks not only of the blood and the rent veil, but also of the High Priest over the house of God. (Hebrews 10:1-39) The direction as to the coat of fine linen follows.

"And thou shalt embroider the coat of fine linen, and thou shalt make the mitre of fine linen, and thou shalt make the girdle of needlework." (Exodus 28:39) The fine linen, as ever, is a type of personal, and, as applied to Christ, of absolute personal, purity; and its being embroidered tells

that, as such, He was adorned with every grace. All the garments alike therefore speak of Christ; although, be it remembered, they were the shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things. This caution is ever needed when considering types and figures. It should be also again stated that these garments for glory and beauty were never worn inside the veil. This fact makes them the more applicable to our position; for had Aaron enjoyed access, as thus arrayed, into the holy of holies, it would have been the sign of the full acceptance of the people whom he represented. We are accepted in the Beloved; and Christ, as glorified, ministers in the true sanctuary as the High Priest of His people, and consequently He puts us into the enjoyment of all the blessings here prefigured. This may be gathered from the epistle to the Hebrews, and explains to us how it is that Christ is there presented in every way as a contrast with that which, in the old dispensation, had fore-shadowed Him, whether in His person, His office, or His work. The arraying of Aaron's sons together with himself (Exodus 28:40-43) is more properly connected with the subject of the next chapter, the consecration of the priests.

04.30. THE CONSECRATION OF THE PRIESTS.

THE CONSECRATION OF THE PRIESTS.

Exodus 29:1-35

HAVING given the details concerning the priestly robes, the Lord instructs Moses, in the next place, as to the ceremonies to be observed at the consecration of the priests. For the moment the first three verses may be passed over, as the particulars of the general directions upon the subject of the sacrifices to be offered are found further on in the chapter.

"And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water. And thou shalt take the garments, and put upon Aaron the coat, and the robe of the ephod, and the ephod, and the breastplate, and gird him with the curious girdle of the ephod. And thou shalt put the mitre upon his head, and put the holy crown upon the mitre. Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him. And thou shalt bring his sons, and put coats upon them. And thou shalt gird them with girdles, Aaron and his sons, and put the bonnets on them: and the priest's office shall be theirs for a perpetual statute: and thou shalt consecrate Aaron and his sons." (Exodus 29:4-9) The first part of the process was washing them with water, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. (Exodus 29:4) This action is most significant, as water is a symbol of the word of God, as for example in John 3:5; Ephesians 5:26, etc. Emblematically therefore this was the new birth, or sanctification by the Word, being thereby set apart for the service of God. Our Lord thus prayed: "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." (John 17:19) Aaron was washed with water — if he be considered by himself — to make him in figure a type of the absolute purity of Christ. Christ was personally without spot; Aaron is rendered so typically by the application of the Word, through the sanctification of the Spirit, as it is termed by Peter. (1 Peter 1:2.) If Aaron is taken in association with his sons, the washing proclaims in type the truth that only those who are born again, separated unto God by the application of the Word to their souls, can occupy the place of priests, and enjoy the privilege of "ministering" in the holiest. Priests cannot be made by man, and the pretence of doing so is utterly to ignore the plainest and most fundamental teaching of the Scriptures. Priests can only be made by God, and every one who is born again, cleansed by the precious blood of Christ, and indwelt by the Holy Ghost, is a priest. To arrogate the claim therefore of ordaining priests — and to do so apart even from the question of their condition before God — is to intrude into a region which borders upon profanity, as well as to deny the rights and privileges of all the people of God.

Aaron is now separated from his sons for the next action; he is robed and anointed alone. First, the priestly garments, described in the last chapter, are put upon him — the garments for glory and beauty. Thereon he is anointed with oil which is poured upon his head. It has already been explained, and must be here recalled to understand this action, that when Aaron is alone he stands before us as a type of Christ; but that when he is in company with his sons, the Church is shadowed forth as the priestly family. This gives the meaning of his being anointed with oil

immediately after being arrayed in the sacerdotal robes. Afterwards it will be seen that he, together with his sons, is sprinkled with blood before the anointing oil. It is as a figure of Christ that he is anointed without blood. For Aaron's great Antitype being absolutely holy needed not the blood, and hence it is recorded that, on His entering upon His mission to Israel, He was anointed by the Holy Ghost at His baptism. (Matthew 3:1-17; Acts 10:38.) He received the Holy Spirit, was anointed, on the ground of His absolute holiness, whereas His people (as will be seen) are sealed and anointed on the ground of their perfect cleansing by His precious blood. Aaron being anointed by himself without blood is a type of Christ — Christ in His full character as Priest, the Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Aaron and His sons present the Church as the priestly family, but as associated with Christ. First, as in the case of Aaron alone, they are all robed. These garments are not the same as those described in detail in Exodus 28:1-43, but those briefly indicated at the close. They are said to be coats, girdles, and bonnets, and were of fine linen, and embroidered, and said also to be "for glory and for beauty." (Exodus 28:39-40; Exodus 29:9.) The fine linen embroidered shows forth the purity of the nature of Christ adorned with every grace. The robing of Aaron's sons is really the putting on of Christ; and this, in fact, brings them into association with Him; for the Church possesses nothing apart from Christ. If believers, for example, are brought into the position of priests, and the enjoyment of priestly privileges, it is in virtue of their connection with Him. He is the Priest, and He it is who makes them priests. (See Revelation 1:5-6.) Everything flows from Him. Thus, when Aaron is put into company with his sons, it is not so much that he becomes merged into the priestly family, but rather to teach that all the blessings and privileges of the priestly family are derived from Christ. But in order to this they must first be invested with robes for glory and for beauty — robes which adorn them with the glory and beauty of Christ. The next step was the sacrifice of the sin-offering. Aaron and his sons were encompassed with infirmity, were sinful men, and needed to offer for themselves, as well as for the sins of the people. They must be brought, consequently, under the typical value of the blood before they could enter upon their sacred office and minister in the sanctuary. Hence the following direction:

"And thou shalt cause a bullock to be brought before the tabernacle of the congregation: and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the bullock. And thou shalt kill the bullock before the Lord, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And thou shalt take of the blood of the bullock, and put it upon the horns of the altar with thy finger, and pour all the blood beside the bottom of the altar. And thou shalt take all the fat that covereth the inwards, and the caul that is above the liver, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, and burn them upon the altar. But the flesh of the bullock, and his skin, and his dung, shalt thou burn with fire without the camp: it is a sin-offering." (Exodus 29:10-14) The sin-offering is a type of Christ bearing the sins of His people. Remark then, first, that Aaron and his sons put their hands upon the head of the bullock. This action signified the identification of the offerers with the victim to be offered. (Compare Leviticus 4:4, etc.) After the laying on of their hands, therefore, the bullock which was about to be slain stood before God as the representative of Aaron and his sons in their sins. Their guilt was symbolically transferred, imputed to the victim, which is now looked upon as bearing their sins. Hence by the act they owned their guilt, their desert of death, and their need of a substitute. In the next place the bullock was to be killed before the Lord. As charged with the sins of Aaron and his sons, the stroke of justice fell upon the appointed victim, thereby proclaiming that death

was the penalty of sin. If they at all entered into the meaning of what was being enacted, how solemn this transaction must have appeared in their eyes! They must have had a glimpse of the real character of sin before God when the bullock was brought, and when, after silently laying their hands upon its head, it could not be spared, but must die. It is a shadow, if only a shadow, of the cross — of the death of the Lord Jesus, whose soul was made an offering for sin. And it is as we stand there in spirit, and hear His cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" that we are made to comprehend the awful nature of sin — its hatefulness to God, inasmuch as it necessitated the death of His only begotten Son. Believers, as they look back upon that solemn scene, can say, "His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree;" and at the same time learn something of the doom from which, by the grace of God, they have been delivered. Surely it was grace, and grace alone, that provided the sacrifice; and it was love, deathless, unquenchable love, on the part of Him who suffered Himself to be led as a lamb to the slaughter that He might redeem us to God.

After the victim was slain the blood was sprinkled. It was put upon the horns of the altar, and the rest was poured out beside the bottom of the altar. (Exodus 29:12) The blood was thus wholly for God. The life is in it (Leviticus 17:11), and this action consequently signified that the life of the victim was offered up to God instead of that of Aaron and his sons. This was done on the principle of substitution — God in grace accepting the death of the sin-offering in the place of that of those for whom it was offered. Further, the fat that covered the inwards, and the caul, etc., were burnt upon the altar. The fat was prohibited to the children of Israel equally with the blood. It is an emblem of inward energy, force of will, etc. It is burnt upon the altar because the sin-offering was a type of Christ, and thus teaches that, while He was charged with the sins of His people, God found in Him, even as in the case of the burnt-offering, that which completely answered to His own mind — truth in the inward parts. His infinite acceptability to God was never more fully proved than when He bowed His head under the sins of His people. In grace He took our place; but in thus accepting the stroke of judgment that was our due, every thought of His heart, every movement of His will, every energy of His soul, were perfect before God. It was indeed in His death on the cross that He proved His obedience to the uttermost, that He showed that the glory of God was so completely the one motive of His giving Himself up to death, that not even the waves and billows of judgment could turn Him aside. Lastly, the flesh of the bullock, and his skin, and his dung, were burnt without the camp. It was a sin-offering, and as such must be cast out and consumed, inasmuch as it was looked upon as under the imputation of the guilt of Aaron and his sons. It was thus altogether a type of Christ — of Christ as suffering without the gate, rejected of men, forsaken by God, because He, in His grace and love, suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. This process completed, Aaron and his sons were now under all the efficacy and value of the sin-offering. The burnt-offering follows the sin-offering.

"Thou shalt also take one ram; and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the ram. And thou shalt slay the ram, and thou shalt take his blood, and sprinkle it round about upon the altar. And thou shalt cut the ram in pieces, and wash the inwards of him, and his legs, and put them unto his pieces, and unto his head. And thou shalt burn the whole ram upon the altar: it is a burnt-offering unto the Lord: it is a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the Lord." (Exodus 29:15-18) As in the case of the sin-offering, Aaron and his sons put their hands upon the head of the burnt-offering; but instead of the transference or the imputation of their guilt, they themselves

are transferred, so to speak, so as to become identified with the ram about to be slain. In other words, while the actions are similar the effects are contrasted. The victim in the sin-offering is looked upon, after the laying on of hands, as laden with the guilt of those for whom it was about to be offered as a sacrifice; whereas in the burnt-offering Aaron and his sons are regarded by the same act as invested with all the acceptability of the sacrifice. Their sins were transferred in the first instance, and in the second their standing was changed on to the ground of the value of the offering. The ram was then slain, and the blood sprinkled round about upon the altar; the life was presented to God. This was not all; but the whole ram, having been cut in pieces, and its inwards having been washed, to make it a more fitting type of the spotlessness of Christ, was burnt upon the altar. "It is a burnt-offering unto the Lord: it is a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the Lord." In the sin-offering the flesh of the bullock, etc., were burnt with fire without the camp but the whole ram of the burnt-offering was consumed upon the altar because the whole was acceptable to God. The burnt-offering is a type of the perfect devotedness of Christ unto death; and in this aspect it is not looked upon as bearing sins, but as wholly consecrated to the will and glory of God. As such, therefore, Christ on the cross, under the action of the holy fire — tested, that is, by the searching judgment of God's holiness, was entirely a sweet savour to God. As bearing sins, God hid His face from Him; but as obedient unto the death of the cross, when through the Eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God, He furnished a new motive for love to the Father's heart. "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again." (John 10:17.) In this aspect "He was in the place of sin, and God glorified as no creation, no sinlessness could. All was a sweet savour in that place, and according to what God was as to it in righteousness and love." The difference between the two offerings is shown by the words used. The word "burn" in the burnt-offering is not the same as that used in connection with the sin-offering, but the one employed for burning incense. This of itself denotes the infinite fragrance and acceptance of Christ as the burnt-offering. But the point in our scripture is, that it was offered for Aaron and his sons; and accordingly as soon as it was consumed upon the altar they were brought also under all its efficacy. Their sins were cleared away by the sin-offering, but now they stand before God in all the positive acceptance and savour of the burnt-offering — both of these results being gained for the believer by the death of Christ, for these offerings do but present the varying aspects of His one sacrifice.

These offerings were in a measure preparatory, relating rather to their personal fitness. The ram of consecration is now added. Speaking generally, this sacrifice has the character of a peace-offering (see Leviticus 3:1-17), and represents another aspect of the death of Christ — its value for us, the obligations under which we are brought and the communion with God, with the Priest, and with the whole Church into which we are introduced. But here it has special relation to the office of Aaron and his sons, as will be seen from the scripture.

"And thou shalt take the other ram, and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the ram. Then shalt thou kill the ram, and take of his blood, and put it upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron, and upon the tip of the right ear of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood upon the altar round about. And thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him: and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him. Also thou

shalt take of the ram the fat and the rump, and the fat that covereth the inwards, and the caul above the liver, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, and the right shoulder; for it is a ram of consecration. And one loaf of bread, and one cake of oiled bread, and one wafer out of the basket of the unleavened bread that is before the Lord: and thou shalt put all in the hands of Aaron, and in the hands of his sons; and shalt wave them for a wave-offering before the Lord. And thou shalt receive them of their hands, and burn them upon the altar for a burnt-offering, for a sweet savour before the Lord: it is an offering made by fire unto the Lord. And thou shalt take the breast of the ram of Aaron's consecration, and wave it for a wave-offering before the Lord: and it shall be thy part. And thou shalt sanctify the breast of the wave-offering, and the shoulder of the heave-offering, which is waved, and which is heaved up, of the ram of the consecration, even of that which is for Aaron, and of that which is for his sons: and it shall be Aaron's and his sons' by a statute for ever from the children of Israel; for it is an heave-offering: and it shall be an heave-offering from the children of Israel of the sacrifice of their peace-offerings, even their heave-offering unto the Lord.

"And the holy garments of Aaron shall be his sons' after him, to be anointed therein, and to be consecrated in them. And that son that is priest in his stead shall put them on seven days, when he cometh into the tabernacle of the congregation, to minister in the holy place.

"And thou shalt take the ram of the consecration, and seethe his flesh in the holy place. And Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram, and the bread that is in the basket, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And they shall eat those things wherewith the atonement was made, to consecrate and to sanctify them: but a stranger shall not eat thereof, because they are holy. And if ought of the flesh of the consecrations, or of the bread, remain unto the morning, then thou shalt burn the remainder with fire: it shall not be eaten, because it is holy. And thus shalt thou do unto Aaron, and to his sons, according to all things which I have commanded thee: seven days shalt thou consecrate them." (Exodus 29:19-35) As in the two preceding offerings, so here, the hands of Aaron and his sons are laid upon the head of the ram of consecration, and thereby they are identified with its value before God. Thereon two distinct actions in respect of the blood are given. First, after the ram was killed, the blood was put upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron and of his sons, on the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot; and it was sprinkled at the same time upon the altar round about. They were thus brought under the value of the atoning blood; for the blood that was offered to God on their behalf, brought them also under His claims, so that henceforward they were not their own, but bought with a price. These several parts of their bodies were therefore sprinkled to signify, that from this moment they were to hearken alone, act alone, and walk alone, for the Lord as those who were redeemed by the precious blood. It is so, too, with believers of this dispensation. Inasmuch as they are redeemed. they belong to the Redeemer, and, set at liberty from the bondage and power of Satan, they enjoy the precious privilege of living unto Him who has died for them, and risen again. Their ears, hands, and feet are all to be used for Him, in His service. After this, a second thing was directed. Both they and their garments were to be sprinkled with the blood upon the altar, and with the anointing oil. (Exodus 29:21) They are thus set apart by the blood, and by the unction of the Holy Ghost. "And it is important to remark here that the seal of the Holy Ghost follows on the sprinkling with blood, not on the washing with the water. That was needed. We must be regenerate; but it is not that cleansing which puts us by itself in a state God can seal; the blood of Christ does. We are

thereby perfectly cleansed as white as snow, and the Spirit comes as the witness of God's estimate of the value of that blood-shedding. Hence, too, all were sprinkled with Aaron. The blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, have set us in association with Christ, where He is according to the acceptableness of that perfect sacrifice (it was the ram of consecration), and the presence, liberty, and power of the Holy Ghost." The cross and Pentecost are in fact connected — the efficacy of the blood, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, and both are here enjoyed — at least in figure.* These three steps lead to the Christian position. Washing with water comes first, then cleansing with blood, and lastly the unction of the Holy Ghost. "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." (Romans 8:9.)

*Compare the law for cleansing of the leper in Leviticus 14:1-57, remembering that there it is a question of cleansing from sins, and not, as here, of consecration to the priesthood. In the next place, parts of the ram of consecration (Exodus 29:22), "and one loaf of bread, and one cake of oiled bread, and one wafer," etc., were put in the hands of Aaron and his sons to be waved for a wave-offering before the Lord. The loaf, the "oiled bread" (Exodus 29:2 compared with Leviticus 2:1-16) was a meat-offering, representing Christ in the perfection of His humanity, or rather the holiness of His life in devotedness to God, the entire consecration of every faculty of His soul to the will and glory of God. Taken then in connection with the parts of the ram, their hands were, in fact, filled with Christ, with Christ in all that He was in life, and all that He was in death to God. Now the meaning of the word, which is translated in this chapter "consecrate," as may be seen from the margin, is "to fill the hand." This gives us the scriptural signification of consecration. The general thought is, that it lies in our yielding something to God, and hence the soul is thrown back upon itself to seek for strength to devote itself and all its energies to God's service; and, indeed, with this view, it is often called upon to attain it by a solemn act of self-surrender. Scripture reveals a better way. It lies, as seen in this chapter, in being filled with Christ. It is Christ possessing, absorbing, and controlling our souls. It requires no effort therefore on our part, though indeed it requires the maintenance of constant self-judgment, the abiding refusal of the flesh in every shape and form. For Christ is willing yea, desires, to possess us wholly, and if the Spirit be ungrieved, He will dwell in our hearts by faith; and as then He becomes the alone object of our lives, so He alone will be expressed in our walk and conversation. This is consecration according to God — as prefigured by filling the hands of Aaron and his sons.

Having waved the contents of their hands before the Lord, Moses received them, and burnt them upon the altar for a burnt-offering, for a sweet savour before the Lord: it is an offering made by fire unto the Lord. This teaches us both what is acceptable to God in worship, and consequently what is true priestly work. It is the presentation of Christ — the Christ who has passed through the holy fire of judgment, as made sin for us on the cross — it is this which ascends up as a sweet savour to God. This, indeed, is having fellowship with God concerning, the death of His Son; our souls entering, by the Spirit, both into what He is, and into the character of His death, and presenting Him and His work, as thus apprehended, before the eye of God. We delight in presenting, and He delights in receiving. And, blessed be His name, He first fills our hands, and He alone can first fill our hands, with that which He delights to accept. This, then, is our work as priests, our privilege as worshippers, ever to present Christ before God. It will therefore be easily understood, that the flesh can have no part in such work, that, in fact, worship can only be by and in the power of, the Holy Spirit.

Finally, there are diverse instructions concerning eating different parts of the ram of consecration. Moses was to have his part — the breast — after it had been waved for a wave-offering before the Lord. (Exodus 29:26) Aaron and his sons had their part. (Exodus 29:27-28, Exodus 29:31-32) Thus God, and Christ as Priest, and the whole Church, as symbolized by Aaron and his sons, feed alike upon the offered sacrifice. It was the fellowship of God, of Christ, and His people — all having their part — in accomplished atonement. We also learn that Christ alone is the food of His people. Brought under the full value of His sacrifice whereby they are consecrated and sanctified, He becomes their sustenance and strength. (Exodus 29:33) Two prohibitions are added. First, no stranger should eat of this priestly food. It must be confined to those who are hallowed for the office of priests. Secondly, the flesh of the consecrations must be eaten the same day. (Exodus 29:34) Priestly food must be eaten in connection with the altar. In like manner you cannot feed upon Christ if you dissociate Him from the cross. It is as offered to God, and glorified by Him because of the work He accomplished, that He is our food, and is fed upon in fellowship with God.

Seven days these ceremonies were to be repeated; and seven days the altar was to be sanctified. (Exodus 29:36-37) The priests must have a perfect consecration, and the altar at which they were to serve must be perfectly sanctified. The consecration and the sanctification alike must be according to the perfection of the requirements of a holy God.

04.31. THE CONTINUAL BURNT-OFFERING

THE CONTINUAL BURNT-OFFERING Exodus 29:38-46.

FOLLOWING upon the consecration of the priests, we have directions for the continual burnt-offering — continual because it was to be offered morning by morning, and evening by evening, throughout the generations of the children of Israel. It was, in fact, a perpetual daily sacrifice.

"Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year, day by day continually. The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning, and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even: and with the one lamb a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil; and the fourth part of an hin of wine for a drink-offering. And the other lamb thou shalt offer at even, and shalt do thereto according to the meat-offering of the morning, and according to the drink-offering thereof, for a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the Lord. This shall be a continual burnt-offering throughout your generations, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, before the Lord; where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee. And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory. And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to Me in the priest's office. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the Lord their God." (Exodus 29:38-46)

There are, it will be observed, three things in this scripture; viz., the burnt-offering and its accompaniments; the meeting-place between God and His people; and Jehovah dwelling among them, and being their God. The burnt-offering was composed of two lambs of the first year, one to be offered in the morning, and the other in the evening. It was never to cease being offered. (See Numbers 28:3; Numbers 28:6; Numbers 28:10, etc.; Ezra 3:5.) Its meaning, as explained in the last chapter — i.e. as an emblem of the sacrifice of Christ in this character — is His devotedness unto death, wherein He, in the place of sin and for God's glory, proved His obedience to the uttermost, even to being made sin for His people. All therefore was consumed upon the altar, and went up as a sweet savour unto the Lord (see Leviticus 1:1-17); and this sweet savour set forth the acceptability of His death to God, yea, the infinite delight which God found in the death of Christ in obedience to His will. Inasmuch, therefore, as the offering before us was perpetual, God laid a foundation thereby on which Israel could stand and be accepted in all its fragrance and savour. It thus becomes no mean type of the position of the believer, revealing the ground of his acceptance in the Beloved; for just as the sweet savour of the continual burnt-offering ever ascended to God on behalf of Israel, so Christ in all His acceptability is ever before His eyes on behalf of His own. We can therefore say, "As He is, so are we in this world;" for we are in the divine presence in all the savour of His sacrifice, and in all the acceptance of His person. The accompaniments of the burnt-offering were two; first, "a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of an bin of beaten oil;" and, secondly, "the fourth part of an hin of wine." The first was a meat, and the second a

drink-offering. The meat-offering, as was pointed out in connection with the consecration of the priests, is an emblem of the devotedness of Christ in life, His entire consecration to the will and glory of God. The fine flour was mingled with oil (see also Leviticus 2:1-16), to shadow forth the mysterious truth that Christ as to His humanity was begotten of the Holy Ghost. It represented consequently the perfection of His life below — His life of perfect obedience, every energy of His soul flowing out in this channel, finding it His meat to do His Father's will, and to finish His work. Israel was consequently before God in all the value and acceptance of His life and death — of all that He was to God, whether considered in the perfect consecration of His life, or in the highest expression of the perfection of His obedience as displayed when He was made sin on the cross. The drink-offering was composed of wine. Wine is a symbol of joy — "it cheereth God and man;" and since it is here offered to God, it speaks of His joy, His joy in the sacrifice presented. But it was offered by His people, by the priest on their behalf. It expressed on this account also their communion with the joy of God in the perfectness of the life, and the devotedness unto death, of His only begotten Son. Such is the heart of God. He would bring us into fellowship with Himself, have us feast on His own delights, that the joy of His own heart, flowing out, and filling also ours, might overflow in praise and adoration. Hence John says, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:3.) The next point is the meeting-place of God with His people. Moses was permitted in grace to meet Jehovah at the mercy-seat (Exodus 25:22; Numbers 12:8); but the people could not pass beyond the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. It was here that the burnt-offering was presented on the brazen altar; and hence this was the meeting-place, on the ground of the sacrifice, between God and Israel. There could be no other possible place; just as now Christ forms the only meeting-place between God and the sinner. It is most important to see this truth — especially for those that are unsaved — that apart from Christ there can be no drawing nigh to God. "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6.) Mark well, moreover, that God cannot be approached except on the ground of the sacrifice of Christ. This is the truth foreshadowed in connection with the burnt-offering. If the cross, Christ crucified, be ignored, no relationships can be had with God, excepting those that may exist between a guilty sinner and a holy Judge. But the moment the sinner is led to take his stand upon "the sweet savour" of the sacrifice to God, upon the efficacy of what Christ accomplished by His death, God can meet with him in grace and love.

There is a further thing — the consequence of coming to meet and dwell with His people. God will sanctify the tabernacle by His glory; He will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar; and He will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons to minister unto Him in the priest's office. (Exodus 29:43-44) In virtue of the sacrifice He claimed everything, and set all apart to Himself. The tabernacle, the altar, and the priests are alike sanctified — claimed as belonging to and for the service of, Jehovah. The expression "by My glory," as applied to the tabernacle, is remarkable. There only in all the earth, in the holy of holies, was His glory manifested — in the bright cloud, the Shekinah, which was the symbol of His presence. Being thus displayed, it separated the tabernacle off from every other thing on the face of the earth, made it a holy place, sanctified it. But more. His glory being there became the standard of everything presented. The question — looked at in its higher aspects, in the light of the truth now possessed — for all who approached, and for everything that was offered, was accordingly that of suitability to God's glory. Hence we read in the epistle to the Romans that "all have sinned and come short of His glory," showing that unless we answer to its claims, could even stand before the immediate display of His glory, we are guilty

sinners. It goes still further. The Tabernacle itself was on earth, and in the midst of God's earthly people. As sanctified by His glory, therefore, it became also prophetic — prophetic of the day when the whole earth will be filled with His glory. It was thus a bright promise of millennial blessing. This leads on to the third thing — God dwelling in the midst of His people. This was the declared object of the erection of a sanctuary (Exodus 25:8). and the end of His dwelling with them was that they might be brought into relationship with, and know Him as the God of redemption, as the One who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. The ground indeed of His dwelling in their midst was accomplished redemption. Thus, as has been already said, He never dwelt with Adam, Noah, Abraham, or the patriarchs, however intimate the intercourse with Him which they were permitted to enjoy. Nor did He, nor could He, dwell with Israel while in the land of Egypt; but after He had brought them out of the house of their bondage, and across the Red Sea, He then desired to have His sanctuary in their midst. The sweet savour of the sacrifice — emblem of the acceptability of the sacrifice of Christ to God — made it possible for Him thus to surround Himself with those whom He had redeemed. But there is more than even dwelling with them: there is also relationship. "I will be their God." It is not, be it remarked, what they shall be to Him, though they were His people by His grace, but what He will be to them. "Their God" — words fraught with unspeakable blessings; for when God undertakes to become the God of His people, deigns to enter into relationship with them, He assures them that everything they need, whether for guidance, sustenance, defence, succour — yea, everything, is secured for them by what He is to them as their God. It was in view of the blessing of such a wondrous relationship that the Psalmist exclaimed, "Happy is that people, whose God is the Lord." (Psalms 144:15.) As, however, we have seen, if He dwelt among them it was that they might know Him — and know Him through redemption. This was the desire of His heart, and in pursuance of it He had visited them in Egypt, smitten Pharaoh and his land and people with judgments, brought them out with a high hand and an outstretched arm, brought them unto Himself, and now directed that His tabernacle should be erected. He would have His joy in the happiness and joy of His redeemed — in surrounding Himself with a happy, rejoicing people. Such was His thought, however little they entered into it; but a thought which, if postponed, will one day find its full and perfect embodiment. The Tabernacle in the wilderness, indeed, surrounded by the tribes of Israel, is a figure of the eternal state. The purpose which God expresses here was repeated (Leviticus 26:12) and reaffirmed as to the millennium. (Ezekiel 37:27-28.) But these were but shadows of the full blessing that God designed for His people, and could not be more because of what they were; and hence it is not until the eternal state is reached that it is realized in perfection. Even now God dwells upon the earth, for the church is His habitation through the Spirit; and every believer, who has received the Spirit of adoption, is a temple of the Holy Ghost. But when all God's purposes in Christ are accomplished, the redeemed of this dispensation will, as the new Jerusalem, form the eternal tabernacle and dwelling-place of God. (Revelation 21:1-27) "But who that glorious blaze Of living light shall tell! Where all His brightness God displays And the Lamb's glories dwell.

God and the Lamb shall there The light and temple be, And radiant hosts for ever share, The unveiled mystery."

04.32. THE ALTAR OF INCENSE.

THE ALTAR OF INCENSE.

Exodus 30:1-10 THE place which the altar of incense occupies in the directions which Moses received is most instructive. Up to the end of Exodus 27:1-21 everything is arranged in respect of the manifestation of God — the symbols of display, as they are sometimes termed. Thereon it becomes the question of approaching God; and hence the next thing is the appointment and the consecration of the priests — these only having the privilege of entering the sanctuary. But before proceeding further, the perpetual burnt-offering is given, as considered in the last chapter; for until the people are before God in all the acceptance of its sweet savour, and God Himself is dwelling in their midst, sanctifying the tabernacle by His glory, and setting all apart for Himself, there could be no drawing nigh — no access into His presence. In other words, there could be no worship apart from the savour of the sacrifice, and the presence of Jehovah. Everything thus being prepared, the symbols of approach follow — i.e. those sacred vessels that were used in connection with coming into God's presence; and the first of these is the golden altar — or the altar of incense.

"And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon; of shittim-wood shalt thou make it. A cubit shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof; foursquare shall it be: and two cubits shall be the height thereof: the horns thereof shall be of the same. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, the top thereof, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns thereof: and thou shalt make unto it a crown of gold round about. And two golden rings shalt thou make to it under the crown of it, by the two corners thereof. upon the two sides of it shalt thou make it.; and they shall be for places for the staves to bear it withal. And thou shalt make the staves of shittim-wood, and overlay them with gold. And thou shalt put it before the veil that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy-seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee. And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it; a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations. Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat-offering; neither shall ye pour drink-offering thereon. And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sinoffering of atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it is most holy unto the Lord." (Exodus 30:1-10)

It was made of the two materials which characterized the ark, the table of showbread, etc. — shittim-wood and gold. (Exodus 30:1-5) The altar itself therefore — apart from its use — was a figure of the person of Christ — Christ as both God and man, God manifest in flesh. Connected with the altar this is significant — teaching, as it does, that there is no access to God but through Christ, that He indeed is the foundation both of our approach and worship. The priest (the worshipper) at the altar saw nothing but the gold, and God saw only the gold — that which was suited to Him, suited to His own nature. The remembrance of this gives boldness when bowing in His presence. It is indeed a wondrous mercy that Christ is before the eye of God, and before the

eye of the worshipper — Himself the meeting place between God and His people, as well as the foundation of His people's acceptance. The position of this altar is given in the sixth verse. It was to be put before the veil that is by the ark of the testimony. The brazen altar, as has been pointed out, was outside, in the court of the tabernacle — the first thing — that met the eye of one coming out of the camp to the entrance of the court. The lesson was, that the question of sin must be settled before admission could be obtained. The altar of incense was inside — in the holy place — and none but the priests have access to it. There was in fact the laver between; but this is not yet mentioned, because the value of the sacrifice on the brazen altar brings at once (in figure) to the golden altar. The brazen altar tested man in responsibility; and the claims of God's righteousness having been met by the sacrifice, He could introduce the believer into His own immediate presence — give him priestly privileges, and consequently access, in the person of the priest, to the altar of incense. Once the claims of the brazen altar met, nothing could shut out the worshipper from the golden altar. His title was perfect. This is seen in the epistle to the Hebrews. The blood that was shed on the cross gives boldness of access into the holiest. (See Hebrews 10:1-39) There is, therefore, the most intimate connection between the two altars. The use of the altar may now be considered. Aaron was to burn sweet incense (incense of spices) thereon morning and evening when he dressed the lamps. (Exodus 30:7-8) The materials of which the incense was composed are named in Exodus 30:34. It is there called a perfume. Remark that it was burnt on the altar. It was the action of fire that brought out its sweet fragrance; and the fire used for this purpose was taken from off the brazen altar. (See Leviticus 16:12-13.) The same fire therefore that consumed the sacrifice brought out the fragrance of the incense. This explains its significance. The fire is a type of the searching judgment of God — of His holiness as applied in judgment, and it was through this that our blessed Lord passed when upon the cross. But the only effect of the action of the holy fire upon Him was to bring out a "cloud" of sweet perfume. The incense typifies this — the fragrance of Christ to God; and inasmuch as it was to be a perpetual incense (Exodus 30:8), it shows that this fragrance is ever ascending before the throne. If the efficacy of His work is presented in the savour of the sacrifice, the acceptability of His person is denoted by the incense. The two things are distinguished on the day of atonement. Aaron went in with incense into the holy of holies before he sprinkled the blood upon and before the mercy-seat. So Christ Himself entered with His own blood; but, if it may be so said, where all is inseparably connected, He Himself takes the precedence even of His blood. It is indeed what He is in Himself that gives the blood its unspeakable preciousness. But what, it may be inquired, is the meaning of this action on the part of Aaron? First, Aaron is a type of Christ, and a type of Christ at the altar in the holy place. He is thus, in burning the incense, a figure of the prevailing intercession of Christ. Aaron, be it remembered, goes into the holy place in all the virtue of the sacrifice which has been consumed upon the brazen altar. The incense moreover that he burns with the holy fire is always acceptable to God. Hence it teaches that the intercession of Christ ascends to God acceptably through the efficacy of what He is, and what He has done. It cannot therefore fail. And as this incense was perpetual, so He ever liveth to make intercession for us; and on this account He is able to save His people to the uttermost — all the way through — even to the end of their wilderness journey. What comfort this assurance gives to His people encompassed by the infirmities, difficulties, and trials of their desert path! Secondly, Aaron at the altar of incense is a figure of the believer, inasmuch as all believers are priests. This aspect is exceedingly instructive; for thus regarding the burning of the incense it is a type of worship. First, then, it should be observed again, that Aaron (and the

believer as presented by him) is before the golden altar in all the sweet savour of the burnt-offering. For it is through the virtue of this sacrifice that access into the holy place is enjoyed. This is of great importance. It teaches that there can be really no worship until we know what it is to be brought into God's presence in all the acceptance of Christ — not only knowing that our sins are cleared away, but also apprehending that we are before God in all the acceptability of Christ Himself — in all His inexpressible fragrance. Secondly, it is Christ, in all that He is to God, which is presented to God in worship — not our own feelings, not our own thoughts, but that which delights the heart of God, and that is Christ Himself, Christ as the One who has glorified Him on the earth, and finished the work which He gave Him to do. Thirdly, we gather that the essence of all worship lies in communion with God in all that Christ is, and in all that He has done. For when we worship by the Holy Spirit, we present to God that in which He delights, and we delight in that which we present, and thus our thoughts, feelings, and affections are in unison with those of God Himself. Then worship — adoration of the highest character — is the result. Such is our priestly work at the altar — the perpetual presentation of the merits of Christ; and if we intercede there, our intercession also is according to the value of Christ. Hence He could say, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you." (John 16:23.)

There is a connection, it will be observed, between the incense and the lamps. Aaron is directed to burn the incense when he dresseth the lamps morning and evening. The lamps, as explained when speaking of the candlestick, are the manifestation of God in the power of the Spirit. This was seen in perfection in Him who was the light of the world, and should be displayed likewise both in the Church and in the believer. But the point here is, that the light was maintained by priestly care. Aaron dressed the lamps. It is so now. The manifestation of God in the power of the Spirit is ever dependent upon the priestly action of Christ; and the burning of the incense — intercession or worship — will always be in proportion to the display of the Spirit's power. These three things indeed, are inseparable — the priestly care of Christ, the manifestation of God in the power of the Spirit, and the worship of His people. In other words, if believers are not shining as lights in the world, they cannot burn incense at the golden altar, they are powerless for worship. Walk and worship are related; for if the believer is not in the presence of God in his ways throughout the week, he will not know what it is to be inside the rent veil when gathered around the Lord at His table to announce His death. Or, still to put another aspect, there will be no worship except as the result of the manifestation of God in the power of the Spirit. Hence the lamps must be dressed when the incense is burnt.

Warnings follow as to the use of the altar; and if Leviticus 10:1 be combined with this scripture, there are three things forbidden to be used upon this altar. First, there must be no strange incense. The incense offered must be divinely compounded, and no other could be accepted. If for a moment this be taken literally, what awful presumption is witnessed in many "churches" in Christendom in this day! Base imitations of this holy compound — the penalty of making which was death (see Exodus 30:38) — are used in public services by those who claim to be priests, and for the worship of God. Even a Jew would regard it as abomination, and yet professing Christians can endorse its use! Surely an evidence both of the corruption of Christianity, as well as the power of Satan. Looking at it as an emblem, we are taught that nothing but the fragrance of Christ is acceptable to God in worship. Everything offered apart from Christ is "strange," and cannot be accepted. Secondly, no burnt sacrifice, no meat-offering, and no drink-offering, must be offered

upon this altar. This would be to confound the golden with the brazen altar, and consequently to forget our true priestly position. It would be the same mistake now, if, when gathered for worship, we took our place at the cross, instead of inside the rent veil. This is an error into which many souls unwittingly fall. The consequence is, they never know the joy of being brought to God in virtue of the work of Christ, and hence they cannot occupy their true priestly position. Lastly, the scripture from Leviticus forbids the use of strange fire. It must be God's fire — fire kindled from heaven, from before the Lord (Leviticus 9:24), and no other. Applying this to believers, the lesson is, that they can only worship by the Spirit of God. Natural fervour and natural emotions, however produced, would in this sense be "strange" fire. It was for this reason, doubtless, that the priests were forbidden to drink wine or strong drink when they entered into the tabernacle. The effects of wine simulate those produced by the Spirit of God. (See Acts 2:13-15.) The fire, equally with the incense, must be divine to be acceptable upon the golden altar — a lesson which Christians of this day would surely do well to lay to heart when the attempt is made on every hand, by sights and sounds, to work on the natural man, and to aid him in the worship of God. May they learn that all such things are really abominations in the sight of God!

Once a year atonement was to be made upon the horns of the altar with the blood of the sin-offering of atonements. (Exodus 30:10) The account of this is found in Leviticus 16:1-34. The reason of it was the imperfection of the priesthood. The true place of the priest was before the golden altar; and being what he was, he defiled the very place of his approach to God (compare Leviticus 4:7); and hence the need of the continual application of the blood of atonement. This is instructive from its typical contrast. One sacrifice now avails for ever. Christ has perfected for ever by His one offering them that are sanctified; and consequently without interruption they enjoy perpetual access even into the holiest of all.

Finally, a remark may be made upon the provision for the carrying of the altar through the wilderness. The staves and the rings are given here, and need no observation, as they are of the same material as the altar. But in Numbers 4:11 we find that there were two coverings: first, a cloth of blue, and secondly, outside, the badgers' skins. The blue — emblematic of what is heavenly — the heavenly character, as flowing from priestly intercession, and indeed as connected with the priestly position — was concealed. It was for the eye of God alone. Then came the badgers' skins — signifying that holy vigilance by which Christ guarded Himself from evil. This is outside, because it is a question of passing through the wilderness where evil abounds. It teaches therefore that if the heavenly character is to be maintained, there must be unwearied watchfulness, and incessant diligence to guard ourselves — through the use of the Word — from the contaminations and pollutions which beset us on every hand.

04.33. THE ATONEMENT MONEY

THE ATONEMENT MONEY

Exodus 30:11-16 THE atonement money has been already referred to when treating of the sockets of silver under the boards of the Tabernacle. At first sight, the introduction of the subject in this place seems peculiar; but in truth it is another mark of the perfection of the design of the Spirit of God. The priests have been appointed and consecrated; the golden altar, with the manner of its service, has been described; but before Aaron can approach to burn incense, there must be a redeemed people on whose behalf he must act. For the very essence of the priesthood is that they were appointed on behalf of others. Hence, as soon as the golden altar has been given, the people are identified with the Tabernacle as represented by the atonement money. Every detail of the order of the subjects is therefore divinely arranged.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel, after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them when thou numberest them. This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs:) an half shekel shall be the offering of the Lord. Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the Lord. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls. And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls." (Exodus 30:11-16)

Two things appear in the first verse of this direction — the occasion, and the object of the atonement money. The occasion was — "when thou numberest the people." When they were numbered each man was brought, as it were individually before God; and this was the precise moment chosen to remind them of their condition, and of their consequent need of redemption. As long as sin is not dealt with, if God is brought into contact with men as such, He must from the very holiness of His nature take cognizance of their guilt. Hence this gracious provision. Its typical significance is simply the truth which is found in every page of Scripture; viz., that all men need a ransom for their souls. The object is "that there be no plague." For, as has been remarked, if God notices the sinner in his sins, it must be for judgment, unless he is under the protection of atonement. A striking illustration of this is found in the reign of David. The king was tempted, being proud of the strength of his armies, to have his people numbered. "Go," said he to Joab, "and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people." But he neglected the ordinance as to every man giving a ransom for his soul, and "the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel, from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people, from Dan even to Beersheba, seventy thousand men." (2 Samuel 24:1-25) This was the more remarkable from the fact that David confessed his sin immediately after the people were numbered; but though the Lord dealt

with him in tender grace and compassion, and gave him the choice of the nature of the punishment, judgment could not in righteousness be avoided. The Lord's claims must be acknowledged. Every one of the people that was numbered was amenable to His righteous judgment, and this was to be acknowledged by the ransom money. The sum to be given was half a shekel of silver (See Exodus 38:25-28), after the shekel of the sanctuary — i.e., as explained, ten gerahs. Ten is the number of responsibility God-wards; and the lesson consequently is that man's responsibility to God as a sinner must be met. Now silver is a figure of the blood of Christ — i.e. the silver of the ransom money. Peter alludes to this when he says, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Peter 1:18-19) It will be observed that he speaks of gold as well as silver. There is a special reason for this. On one occasion, after a striking deliverance or preservation of the people from the perils of war, so that when they were numbered it was found that there was not one lacking, gold instead of silver was offered for the ransom money. (Numbers 31:49-54.) The apostle, therefore, combines the two in contrast with, or as a type of, the blood of Christ. Our Lord Himself speaks of giving His life (and the life is in the blood) as a ransom for many. The half shekel of silver was thus a plain figure of the blood of Christ; and hence we learn that it is that precious blood alone that can meet our responsibility to God as sinners, and make atonement for our souls. It is in Christ that we have redemption — through His blood, and in no other way. This is a familiar truth, so familiar that it has become, as it were, a household word. But is there no danger of losing its significance through its very familiarity? Besides, it is against this most blessed and precious truth that all Satan's art and subtlety and malice are directed. Hence it has come to pass that many, even of the professed teachers of Christianity, have either rejected it, or are occupied in insinuating doubts concerning it. It needs to be proclaimed therefore, and repeatedly proclaimed, with increasing earnestness. But it will never be received, unless it is first understood that man both by his nature and his practice needs redemption, that he is a lost, guilty sinner, and that he cannot redeem himself, that, as the Psalmist says, "none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." If this be first accepted, then it may be received that there is no atonement for the soul excepting by the precious blood of Christ; that without the shedding of blood there is no remission; and that it is only by the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, that all sin can be cleansed away.

Another thing demands special notice. Every man, whether rich or poor, was of precisely the same value before God. "The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less." (Exodus 30:15) When the question of sin is raised there is no difference between man and man in the sight of God. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Some may have gone further in outward iniquity, in open crimes; but as to state before God, all — the outwardly moral as well as the immoral, the rich as well as the poor — are sinners under condemnation. Wealth, position, attainments, or even moral character, are of no avail before God. All alike have sinned, for there is none that doeth righteousness, no, not one, and all alike need the redemption that is to be found through the blood of Christ alone. Man's heart rebels against this; but the question is, whether it is the truth of God. (See Romans 1:1-32, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-31)

Arising out of this truth, every man had to give for himself. They shall give every man a ransom for their souls. In this matter the rich could not give for the poor, but every man for himself was to be brought into distinct and personal relationship with God as to his ransom or redemption. Unless

the money of each one numbered was represented in the silver sockets, he could not be regarded as redeemed. It is so now. Every one must have a personal interest in the blood of Christ or he cannot be saved. The prayers of another will not of themselves save him, unless he is thereby, in the grace of God, led to know for himself Christ as the Redeemer. It is my own guilt, my own sins, that need to be cleansed away, and hence, unless I am under the value of the blood of Christ for myself, I am still exposed to the just judgment of a holy God. Let the reader weigh this matter, and weigh it solemnly in the presence of God, and let him not cease to weigh it until he has ascertained whether he has a claim, through faith, upon the efficacy of the precious blood of Christ. It must be a personal transaction, a personal dealing with God, and a personal interest in the blood. Then, and then only, can redemption, through the blood of Christ, be known and enjoyed. The last thing noticed is the use made of the atonement money. (Exodus 30:16) It was appointed for the service of the tabernacle. In fact, as already seen, it went to make the sockets of silver which formed the foundation of the sanctuary. The house of God was founded upon redemption, and the ransomed people were identified thus with it — every one of them being represented by the money which had been given, and represented therefore in all the value of that which the silver typified. The object indeed was, "that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls." The silver therefore on which the tabernacle rested testified, on behalf of the children of Israel, that atonement had been made for their souls. They might but feebly enter into this blessed fact for themselves; but the memorial was ever before the Lord, and the question then, as now, is rather, Does He look upon us as redeemed? Has He accepted our redemption price? For if He is satisfied, we also may surely rest in peace.

Thus in grace God linked the people with the tabernacle in which He Himself would dwell, and into which the priests should enter on their behalf. They might not be permitted themselves to enter, but they were all represented in the atonement money, and had therefore their memorial ever before the Lord.

04.34. THE LAVER.

THE LAVER.

Exodus 30:17-21 THE laver is the last of the sacred vessels enumerated. Together with this, the Tabernacle and its arrangements are completed. It was placed outside, in the court of the Tabernacle, between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar; i.e. between the brazen altar which was inside the entrance into the court, and the entrance into the holy place. Thus, passing the altar of burnt-offering — on their way into the Tabernacle — the priests would encounter the laver on the road. The reason of this will be shown as we proceed.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat. When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not: or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the Lord: so they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations." (Exodus 30:17-21)

It will be observed that nothing is said as to the shape of the laver. All the illustrations that are given of it in works on the Tabernacle are without authority — in fact, they are purely imaginary. There is, without doubt, a divine reason for the concealment both of the shape and size, as it is the thing typified, rather than the vessel itself, to which the Spirit of God would direct our minds. The silence of Scripture is as instructive as its speech, and it is the happy privilege of the believer to bow to the one equally with the other. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." (Deuteronomy 29:29.)

It was made entirely of brass — both the laver and its foot. The significance of this material has been frequently explained, but may again be recalled. It is divine righteousness testing man in responsibility, and consequently testing man in the place where he is. Brass on this account is always found outside of the Tabernacle, while gold, which is divine righteousness as suited to the nature of God, is found within — in the holy place, as well as in the holy of holies. But testing man, it of necessity condemns him because he is a sinner; and hence it will be found to have associated with it a certain judicial aspect. There is another element to be specified. The laver was made out of a special character of brass, out of the brazen mirrors (see margin) used by the women who assembled at the door of the Tabernacle of the congregation (Exodus 38:8) — out of the very articles that revealed, in figure, their natural condition, and thereby showed their need of cleansing.* If the brass therefore revealed and judged the condition of those it tested, the water was there to cleanse and purify. For the water is a symbol of the Word. It is so used in John 3:5, compared with James 1:18 and 1 Peter 1:23-25. It is also found in Ephesians 5:26 — in the special sense of the water of the laver.

*See, for an instructive illustration of this truth, James 1:24-25. But this will be seen more fully as we consider the use of the laver. It was for Aaron and his sons to wash their hands and their feet thereat. "When they go into the Tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not," etc. It was an imperative, as well as a perpetual, obligation upon the priests to wash their hands and their feet on the occasions specified. Now, before explaining the character of this washing, it will clear the way, and aid the reader, to make a few preliminary remarks. Remark then, first, that the washing of the bodies of the priests, as at their consecration, is never repeated. It is the hands and feet only that are repeatedly to be washed in the laver. The reason of this is obvious. Washing the whole body is a figure of being born again, and this cannot be repeated. Our Lord taught this truth in John 13:1-38. In reply to Peter He said, "He that is washed" (literally, bathed; i.e. washed all over) "needeth not save to wash" (another word) "his feet, but is clean every whit." The feet, or, as in the case of the priests, the hands and the feet might be defiled and need to be cleansed again and again, but the body never, for that was cleansed once and for all in water at the new birth. Observe, secondly, that it is water and not blood in the laver. It has often been attempted to deduce from this ordinance for the priests, that the believer needs the repeated application of the blood of Christ. Such a thought is not only alien from the whole teaching of Scripture, but it also tends to undermine the efficacy of the one sacrifice of Christ. Yea, it impugns the completion of atonement, and consequently the title of Christ to an abiding seat at the right hand of God. The blood of Christ has to do with guilt, and the moment the sinner comes under its value before God he is cleansed for ever; for by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. The one object of the Spirit of God in Hebrews 9:1-28; Hebrews 10:1-39 is to enforce this precious and momentous truth. That it has been lost sight of in the whole of Christendom is only too true; but the guide of the believer is not to be found in the current teachings of men, but in the immutable word of God. Whoever therefore will read the two chapters indicated — and read them with a sincere desire to understand their teaching — will at once perceive that there is never a question of the imputation of guilt to the believer, but that he is entitled to rejoice in having no more conscience of sins, if he has been once cleansed by the precious blood of Christ.

What then, it may be distinctly asked, was the nature of the cleansing at the laver? It was confined, as pointed out, to the hands and the feet. Comparing this with John 13:1-38, a difference will be observed. In the case of the disciples, the feet only were washed; in the case of Aaron and his sons, it was their hands and their feet. The difference springs from the character of the dispensations. The hands are indicated for the priests, as well as the feet, because with them work was in question: they were under law. But with the disciples the feet only are washed — because, though done before the Lord had left them, it was an action typical of the present position of believers — with whom it is no question of work, but one of walk. Let it then be repeated that the priests were never rewashed, or re-sprinkled with blood. They are looked upon as born again in figure, and as abidingly under the value of the blood. But thereafter comes the question of defilements in their service and walk. Now if there had been no provision for these, they would have been debarred from their priestly functions in the sanctuary; for how could they have gone in before God with defiled hands and feet — into the presence of Him of whom it is said, "Holiness becometh Thine house"? Hence this gracious provision of the water — symbol of the Word — that, ere they entered into the holy place, they might cleanse their hands and feet from the defilements which they had contracted.

Bearing in mind, then, the difference of the dispensations (as shown by the inclusion of the hands), the teaching of the laver corresponds entirely with that of John 13:1-38. That is, it is a question of cleansing from defilements. We find thus our Lord seated with His disciples, and it is said, "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." (John 13:1.) This statement is significant on two accounts; first, as showing that it was a dealing with those who belonged to Him; and secondly, as revealing the motive of the ministry which He was about to perform, that indeed it flowed from His unchanging heart of love. "During supper" (not "supper being ended the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself." (John 13:2-4) The meaning of this action was — that as He could not continue longer with them, for He was going to God, He would show them how they might have part with Him in the place to which He was going. They had been washed (John 13:10); but in their passage through the world their feet would be defiled, and thereby, unless, as in the case of the priests, provision were made for their cleansing, they would be unable to have part with Him (John 13:8) — they would be unable to enjoy communion either with the Father, or His Son Jesus Christ. Hence He reveals to them, by this symbolic act of washing their feet, how He by His ministry on their behalf would remove the defilements they might contract. There are three points in the act to be noticed. First, having laid aside His garments — emblematic of His departure from this world — He took a towel and girded Himself — an act expressive of His service on behalf of His own. Then, secondly, He poured water into a basin. Water is also here a symbol of the Word. Lastly, He began to wash His disciples' feet — i.e. to apply the Word so as to effect their cleansing. Bearing this in mind, we shall easily understand what answers to this in Christ's present ministry for His people — the truth really set forth by the laver. The apostle John says, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," etc. (1 John 2:1-29 : 1.) The context shows that this is stated of those who have eternal life and are brought into fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. It is also clear that there is no necessity that such should sin. "These things write I unto you, that ye sin not;" and then he adds, "If any man sin." The advocacy of Christ with the Father is therefore for believers — and a provision for sin after conversion — God's means of removing the defilements thus incurred. If, then, a believer sins (there is never any question of the imputation of guilt, but) his communion is interrupted; and this can never more be enjoyed until the sin is removed — forgiven. As soon as he sins, Christ as the Advocate undertakes his cause, intercedes for him. An illustration of this is found in Luke. "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but

I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." (Luke 22:31-32.) It is so now — as soon as, not before, the sin is committed Christ intercedes; and the answer to His intercession is the application of the word through the Holy Ghost, sooner or later, to the conscience. An illustration of this point also is found in the same gospel. After Peter had denied His Lord as he had been forewarned, there was no sense of his sin, not even when he heard the cock crow, until the Lord looked upon him. (Luke 22:61.) This reached his conscience, broke his heart, as we may say, so that he went out and wept bitterly. In like manner, when the believer falls into sin, he would never repent if it were not for the intercession of the Advocate; and, as a matter of fact, he does not repent until, in response to the prayer of the Advocate, the word, like the look upon Peter, used by the Holy Spirit, reaches the conscience and lays bare the character of his sin before God. Then he is at once

bowed in the place of self-judgment, and confesses his sin. This leads to the next and final stage. Confessing his sin, he finds that God "is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9); and, his soul restored, he is able once more to enter the tabernacle, or, in other words, to enjoy again fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. This truth — the truth really of the laver — is of all importance for the believer. It is essential, in the first place, to know that we are cleansed once and for ever as to guilt. But learning this, it is equally essential to understand that if sins after conversion are unconfessed and unjudged, we are shut out from communion with God, disqualified for priestly service and Worship; and not only so, but that if we remain in this state, sooner or later God will deal with us, in answer to the intercession of Christ, to bring our sins to remembrance. The advocacy of Christ therefore meets the need of the believer — being, as it is, God's gracious provision for our sins — for the removal of our defilements, so that we may be free to go in, without let or hindrance, into His immediate presence for worship and praise. One thing more may be added. Aaron and his sons were always to wash at the laver when they entered into the tabernacle. This may teach us our need of continual self-judgment. How often are we hindered in prayer, worship, and service from neglect of this. There has been some failure, and we have not recalled it, or carried it into God's presence for confession and humiliation; and hence, even if unwittingly, we have been entering the tabernacle with defiled feet. As a consequence we have been made to realize our coldness and constraint, our inability to occupy our priestly position. May we never therefore forget the use of the laver — our constant need of having our feet washed by the loving ministry of our Advocate with the Father!

04.35. THE HOLY ANOINTING OIL AND THE SWEET SPICES.

THE HOLY ANOINTING OIL AND THE SWEET SPICES.

Exodus 30:22-38 THE Tabernacle, with its sacred symbols, has now been completely detailed. Two things only are wanting — the anointing oil and the sweet spices.

"Moreover, the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take thou also unto thee principal spices, of pure myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet cinnamon half so much, even two hundred and fifty shekels, and of sweet calamus two hundred and fifty shekels, and of cassia five hundred shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, and of oil olive an hin: and thou shalt make it an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary: it shall be an holy anointing oil. And thou shalt anoint the tabernacle of the congregation therewith, and the ark of the testimony, and the table and all his vessels, and the candlestick and his vessels, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt-offering with all his vessels, and the laver and his foot. And thou shalt sanctify them, that they may be most holy: whatsoever toucheth them shall be holy. And thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister unto Me in the priest's office. And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, This shall be an holy anointing oil unto Me throughout your generations. Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured; neither shall ye make any other like it, after the composition of it: it is holy, and it shall be holy unto you. Whosoever compoundeth any like it, or whosoever putteth any of it upon a stranger, shall even be cut off from his people.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum; these sweet spices, with pure frankincense: of each shall there be a like weight: and thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy: and thou shalt beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with thee: it shall be unto you most holy. And as for the perfume which thou shalt make, ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be unto thee holy for the Lord. Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people." (Exodus 30:22-38) The oil of holy ointment is given first. It was compounded, according to divine direction, from myrrh, cinnamon, sweet calamus, and cassia in their several proportions, mixed with an hin of olive oil. (Exodus 30:23-24) The Psalmist, speaking of the Messiah, says, "All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia;" and in the preceding verse he says, "God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy Fellows." (Psalms 40:7-8.) This will help us to understand the typical meaning of the holy anointing oil. The spices, then, speak of the graces of Christ. His very garments smell of these sweet perfumes. But they were mingled with oil, and oil, as has been frequently stated, is a figure of the Holy Ghost. Combining, then, these two things together, we learn that the graces of Christ — the moral fragrance of His excellencies — were expressed in the power of the Holy Ghost. This holy anointing oil was used to anoint the tabernacle, the ark, and all the sacred vessels, the priests, etc. (Exodus 30:26-30) First, the tabernacle, etc., were anointed. This is of great significance. For

looking at the tabernacle as the house of God, the scene of His manifestation, and the place of priestly service and worship, the fact that everything was anointed with the holy oil teaches that everything connected with the house of God, its regulation and service, all the priestly work carried on in it (see 1 Peter 2:5), must be ordered in the power of the Holy Ghost, and that when so ordered it will be expressive of the sweet fragrance of Christ to God. For indeed it is in the power of the Spirit that God reveals Himself, and it is in the power of the Holy Ghost alone that worship and service can be rendered. If therefore everything connected with the house of God were arranged even according to His own word, and yet the holy anointing oil — the power of the Holy Spirit — were lacking, it could not be acceptable to Him. Notice also the effect — everything is sanctified, becomes through the anointing "most holy," so that whatever touches anything on which the oil has been put should likewise be deemed holy. (Exodus 30:29) This is the effect of the action of the Spirit of God. Whatever His power rests upon is set apart for God, and everything that comes under His action, even by contact, is also claimed as holy. The whole sphere of His action is sanctified. (See 1 Corinthians 7:14.)

Aaron and his sons were also anointed. The significance of this has been explained in the consecration of the priests. But there is a special reason for its being introduced here in connection with the tabernacle. It is to point out — to emphasize — that the essential qualification for priestly service is the anointing and power of the Holy Ghost. Every other qualification may be possessed — born again, robed, and under the value of the blood; but if there be not, in addition to these things, the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the priestly position cannot be truly occupied. Even our blessed Lord Himself is said to have been anointed with the Holy Ghost, and with power (Acts 10:38), and all who are His must be so likewise if they would enjoy the privileges into which they have been introduced. The lesson is needful in a day of incessant activity, and of legal service on every hand. Let it then be ever remembered that, though children of God, we can neither worship nor serve apart from the present power and action of the Holy Spirit. (See John 4:24; Php 3:3.)

There are two warnings. First, "Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured." (Exodus 30:32) This teaches that the Spirit of God cannot rest upon or dwell in the natural man. It is in direct violation of this truth that in ecclesiastical ordination unconverted men are professedly endowed with the gift of the Holy Ghost. The anointing is never received until after the new birth and known forgiveness of sins. When we are justified by faith, and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, we are both anointed and sealed. (See Romans 5:1-5; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22.) Secondly, no imitation of this anointing oil was to be made under the penalty of death. (Exodus 30:33) It is thus a heinous sin to imitate the action of the Spirit. Ananias and Sapphira did this when they professed to devote the whole proceeds of the property they had sold to the Lord's service. (Acts 5:1-42) The same penalty, observe, was attached to putting it upon a stranger, upon those who had no title to it. God is holy, and He jealously guards His sovereign rights, and cannot but visit any infringement of them with punishment. If He seems now to pass by such sins unnoticed, it is owing to the character of the present dispensation — being one of grace; but the sins themselves are no less in His sight. The sweet spices were also made into a perfume by divine direction, and will mean, as in the former case, the graces, the moral fragrance of Christ to God. It appears from Exodus 25:6 compared with Exodus 35:8, that these spices formed the sweet incense which was burnt upon the golden altar, as also indeed from the direction that it should be put "before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with thee." (Exodus 30:36) This being the case,

there is the additional thought that the graces of Christ were brought out through the action of the holy fire; that His exposure to the judgment of God's holiness (fire) upon the cross, as there made sin, did but bring out all that was most precious and fragrant to God. He was indeed never more precious in His eyes, His perfections were never more fully displayed, than when He proved His obedience to the uttermost in the very place of sin. Hence He could say, "Therefore doth My Father love me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again." It was for God's glory that He passed through the fire of judgment, and in doing so all the "sweet spices" of His moral graces and the perfection of His entire devotedness were brought out, and ascended up as a sweet savour to God. On this account — because of the preciousness of its typical significance — it was to be beaten very small (for the more it was beaten the more was its fragrance emitted), and put before the testimony of the tabernacle of the congregation, where Jehovah met with Moses. Moses as the mediator would thus be before God in all the acceptability of this holy perfume; and hence God could meet him in grace, and communicate to him His mind and will for His people.

There is also in connection with this a warning with a penalty. None was to be made like it. This perfume was "most holy," "holy for the Lord." Whosoever therefore should make any like it, to smell thereto, should be cut off from his people. (Exodus 30:38) Counterfeits of the graces of Christ, and finding satisfaction in these, are both an abomination before God. Just as we have seen that the Lord guards against any imitation of the action or the power of the Holy Spirit, so here He also warns against any imitation of the fragrance and preciousness of Christ. Man can neither do the one or the other — whatever his pretences. But such is the subtlety of our hearts that we often deceive ourselves, as well as others, into the acceptance of the sweetnesses of nature, its grace and amiability, as the work of the Holy Ghost, as resemblances to Christ. There can be no likeness to Christ except as the result of the work of the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit, as we have seen, is the gift of God. It would be, therefore, hypocrisy of the worst stamp to present knowingly to others any natural qualities, any human graces, the effect of training or cultivation, as the product of the Holy Ghost. Nothing can please God, and nothing should please us, which has not been wrought out by His Spirit for the glory of Christ.

04.36. QUALIFICATIONS FOR SERVICE

QUALIFICATIONS FOR SERVICE

Exodus 31:1-18

ALL the details of the Tabernacle have now been given. One thing only remains — the provision for the execution of the various commands which Moses had received * Both alike proceed from the Lord; for all must be of grace.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship. And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise-hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee: the tabernacle of the congregation, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy-seat that is thereupon, and all the furniture of the tabernacle, and the table and his furniture, and the pure candlestick with all his furniture, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt-offering with all his furniture, and the laver and his foot, and the cloths of service, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office, and the anointing oil, and sweet incense for the holy place: according to all that I have commanded thee shall they do." (Exodus 31:1-11)

We learn then from this scripture two things. First, that God alone can designate His servants for their work; and secondly, that He alone can qualify them for the service to which they are called. Both these points deserve special attention. It will be remarked that both Bezaleel and Aholiab are divinely named. They were distinguished by name, and called. This principle runs through all dispensations. The apostle adduces it when speaking of the priesthood of Christ. He says, "So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made an high priest; but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, today have I begotten Thee. As He saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." (Hebrews 5:5-6.) In like manner he speaks of himself as "an apostle by the will of God." (1 Corinthians 1:1; 2 Corinthians 1:1, etc.) This is a point of great moment; for it were worse than presumption to intrude into the things of God uncalled and unsent. It is true that God does not call His servants by name in this dispensation — at least since the days of the apostle Paul; but every servant should look to be divinely certified as to his work, to be undoubtingly assured that he is doing, whatever he may be engaged in, the divine will. Such a conviction is the source both of confidence and courage. The Lord thus speaks to Joshua, "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." (Joshua 1:9.) The essence of all service, indeed, lies in obedience; for if I am not doing God's will it is not service. The Lord Himself characterizes the whole of His life of service as obedience: "I came down from heaven," He says, "not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." (John 6:38.) It should therefore be our

first concern to ascertain whether we have been sent by the Lord, whether we have been called to our work and service, like Bezaleel and Aholiab; and if we are found sitting at the feet of the Lord, His mind in this respect will soon be revealed. But the second thing is, that called by name they were filled with the Spirit of God, and made dependent on the Lord for wisdom and understanding, to execute the work entrusted to their care. Man's wisdom is of no avail in the service of God. "The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." The apostle Paul says, If any man thinks himself to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise. It is on this account that intellectual men — men who lean to their own understanding — exhibit oftentimes nothing but folly when dealing with divine things. But it is the servants of God who have the most need to remember this truth. How often are they tempted to bring their own reason, or understanding, to bear upon the Scriptures, or upon the difficulties in the church of God — to their own confusion. If, however, it were remembered that there can be no understanding or wisdom apart from God — none whatever, excepting as received of Him, they would be kept in constant dependence — the only condition of its reception. It would produce waiting on God rather than activity — activity surely when the word for action has been given — but waiting in order to obtain the needful wisdom for the service required. Another thing may be added. The proof of divine wisdom in service is that the thing done is according to the word of God. "According to all that I have commanded thee shall they do." The word therefore is both the guide of the servant and the test of his service — the proof of its being done with divine wisdom according to the divine mind. No discretion whatever was left to Bezaleel and Aholiab. There was no classification of the articles to be made, or of the materials to be wrought, into things essential and non-essential. There is not the slightest trace of a single thing being left to their own thoughts or imagination. On the other hand, nothing was left to their own wisdom. Everything was to be done according to the commands given to Moses. It was not open to Bezaleel to work after one, and Aholiab after another pattern. Both alike were bound in the most minute detail by specific directions from God. This fact needs to be emphasized in a day when even Christians are contending for liberty to do every man according to that which is right in his own eyes. The various sects of Christendom, with their manifold ecclesiastical polities, show that they have been formed by no Bezaleels and Aholiabs, but rather by those who have received no divine commission, and endowed with no spirit of wisdom and understanding. For they will not bear the test of the word of God, and on this account have to be rejected by all who have heard the word, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (1 Samuel 15:22.) It is then in this direction that any recovery must begin, where all is in ruin, and where everything is stamped with declension and departure from the word of God. We must begin by refusing everything that will not stand the divine test, and then we must seek, spite of our weakness and confusion, to order everything according to the mind and will of God.

Once more the sabbath is enjoined.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore, for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day,

he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed." (Exodus 31:12-17) As one has said, "The sabbath is always found whenever there is any principle whatever of relationship established between the people and God: it is the result proposed in every relation between God and His people, that they enter into His rest." The meaning of the sabbath has been expounded before, but its continual injunction as revealing the heart of God cannot be overlooked. He knew what His people were, and how they would always fail under responsibility, so that, in this sense, He was never disappointed in the result. On the other hand, the annexation of the sabbath to every relationship between Himself and the people shows how earnestly (if such human language may be employed) He longed that His people should enter into the consummation of His purposes for them, and have the enjoyment of blessed fellowship with Himself in sharing His rest. The rest of God is what the sabbath signifies, and this was the goal God proposed to His people. That they never entered into it we know, and it is fully stated in Hebrews 4:1-16; but His purposes never fail, and hence what is lost under responsibility will be established according to His own counsels of grace. There remaineth therefore a rest (a sabbath-keeping) for the people of God; and all who believe will enter into that rest — the object and result of all the counsels and ways of God with respect to His people. We therefore of this dispensation are, even as the children of Israel, pilgrims in the wilderness, journeying on to the rest of which God has spoken; but under the leadership of the Captain of our salvation, we cannot fail of its possession. The chapter, and this section of the book, concludes by the record of the giving the two tables of testimony. "And He gave unto Moses, when He had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God." (Exodus 31:18) It is necessary to recall that all the instructions from Exodus 24:1-18 to this point were given in the mount. Moses had been alone with the Lord. The Lord had been "communing with him" concerning the revelation of His mind for the people. Having ended, He gave him the two tables of stone, containing the terms of the covenant which He had made with His people. Moses has described this elsewhere. He says, "The Lord delivered unto me two tables of stone, written with the finger of God: and on them was written according to all the words which the Lord spake with you in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, in the day of the assembly. And it came to pass, at the end of forty days and forty nights, that the Lord gave me the two tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant." (Deuteronomy 9:10-11) It appears therefore that the contents of the two tables were the ten "words," or commandments, spoken in Exodus 20:1-26, but now written by the finger of God — the commandments which Israel undertook to keep as the condition of blessing. They abandoned the ground of grace on which they had been put after they had crossed the Red Sea, and of themselves, and for themselves, on God's proposal, undertook the responsibility of obedience. Moses had been forty days and forty nights in the mount, during which he neither ate nor drank (see Deuteronomy 9:9), being as it were in a state above nature, in order to be able to become the channel of God's communications for His people. The flesh must not intrude, must indeed be set aside, and in some sort nature also, if we would hear the voice of God. The reader will not fail to remember the case of Elijah (1 Kings 19:8), and also that of our blessed Lord — both of whom, like Moses, fasted forty days and forty nights. But as has been remarked by another, "The Lord Jesus must in all things have the pre-eminence. Moses, naturally far off, is separated from his natural state in order to draw near unto God. Christ

was naturally near, and more than near; He separated Himself from nature to meet the adversary on behalf of man." This contrast is most significant, and shows plainly that the most devoted of the servants of God can be no more than a shadow of (typifying even by contrast) the excellency of Christ. (Compare also the case of the apostle John in Revelation 1:10.)

04.37. APOSTASY, MEDIATION, AND RESTORATION.

APOSTASY, MEDIATION, AND RESTORATION.

Exodus 32:1-35, Exodus 33:1-23, Exodus 34:1-35 THE Lord had been occupied with the blessing of His people, giving instructions for the erection of His sanctuary that He might dwell in their midst. Moses was on high to receive these communications of His grace. The Lord was "communing" with His servant concerning the establishment of the precious things connected with the relationship on which He had entered in grace with Israel. But even while He was thus engaged, sin and even apostasy are witnessed in the camp at the foot of Sinai. Above, all is light and blessing; below, all is darkness and evil.

"And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt-offerings, and brought peace-offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play." (Exodus 32:1-6)

There is a striking resemblance, in one aspect, between this scene and that witnessed at the foot of the mount of transfiguration. In both alike Satan holds full sway. In the one before us it is the nation who have fallen under his power, in the other it is the child whom he has possessed; but the child again is a type of the Jewish nation of a later day. The absence of Christ on high (shown in figure also by Moses on Sinai) is the opportunity seized by Satan — under God's permission — for the display of his wicked power, and man (Israel) in the evil of his heart becomes his wretched slave. But it should be observed that Satan, whatever his activity, can never forestall God. He may seek to thwart, and he may appear to succeed in postponing the accomplishment of, but he can never frustrate, the purposes of God. Thus, in the scene before us, the Lord had made an end of communing with Moses (Exodus 31:18), and had arranged everything according to His will, before the people fell into sin. It is so throughout the whole of the Scriptures. Satan, having no foresight, is always a day behind; so that if he seem to gain a momentary success, it is only to expose himself in the end to a more crushing defeat. This fact should encourage the hearts of believers while waiting for the moment, which will come "shortly," when the God of peace shall bruise Satan under their feet. The act of the people is no less than open apostasy. Its several features may be briefly indicated. First, they forgot and abandoned the Lord. Secondly, they attributed their deliverance from Egypt to Moses: they described him as "the man that brought us out of Egypt."

Finally, they fell into idolatry. They wanted visible gods — testifying against themselves that they were "children in whom was no faith." Aaron fell with them — apparently without a struggle. The man who had been designated to the priestly office, the one who was to enjoy the privilege of entering into the holy of holies to minister before the Lord, became the instrument, if not the leader, of their wicked rebellion. Priest and people alike accept the evil inspiration of Satan, and worship the gods which their own hands had made; and they cried, as they worshipped, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Another thing should be remarked, Aaron seeks to conceal the shame of their idolatry by putting the Lord's name upon it. Having built an altar, he made proclamation, and said, "Tomorrow is a feast to JEHOVAH." This is just what an apostate Christendom has done. Having set up their idols, they call it the worship of the Lord; and thereby souls are deluded into acceptance of that which is really an abomination before God. What was this golden calf? It was, Aaron would have said, but a symbol of Jehovah. So Romanists and Ritualists argue, and they thus dignify their idolatry with the name of Christ and Christianity. This scene therefore — picture on the one hand, it may be, of the last state of the Jews, which will be worse than the first, is no less instructive, on the other, for the present day. In fact, Israel rejected Jehovah, and His servant Moses. They became apostate, and apostasy is the only word which expresses the true condition of modern Christendom, which, while owning the name, really rejects the authority of Christ at the right hand of God.

It was no wonder that the wrath of the Lord waxed hot against His people.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people: now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them and that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation." (Exodus 32:7-10)

Israel had indeed exposed themselves to the righteous judgment of God. They had voluntarily promised obedience to God's law as the condition of blessing; and the covenant had been sealed by the sprinkling of blood — emblem of death — as the penalty of its breach. This penalty they had now incurred. God no longer therefore treats them as His people. They had rejected Him, and had spoken of Moses as the man who had brought them up out of Egypt; and the Lord takes them on their own ground. Hence He says to Moses, "Thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves," etc. (Exodus 32:7) Then, after describing their sin, He announced His solemn judgment: "I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people: now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation." (Exodus 32:9-10) Thus Israel, if dealt with according to the righteous requirements of the law which they had accepted, and to which they had promised obedience as the condition of blessing, were lost beyond recovery, and would perish through their own wilful sin and apostasy. The announcement which the Lord had made evoked from the heart of Moses an intercession of unparalleled beauty and force. The Lord had said, "I will make of thee a great nation." but in his magnificent love for his people, losing sight of himself, and utterly disregarding what might be termed his own interests, he thinks only of the Lord's glory, and the misery of Israel. Through grace he was enabled to take up the true place of a mediator; and he

pours out his whole soul in his pleading intercession. The character of his appeal is most noteworthy. He does not for one moment extenuate the sin of the people — this he could not do: nor does he entreat for mercy, for there was no room for mercy in the covenant of Sinai. What he does therefore is to throw himself upon God — and upon what His glory necessitated in connection with the people He had redeemed. First, he urges the dishonour that would be done to His name among the Egyptians, if Israel should be destroyed. He reminds Jehovah of the link established with His people through redemption. God had said to Moses, "thy" people; but Moses pleads that they are "His" people. He will not accept the breaking of the link, but cries, "Lord, why doth Thy wrath wax hot against Thy people, which Thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did He bring them out?" etc. (Exodus 32:11-12) Spite of their shameful apostasy, the plea of Moses was that they were still God's people, and that His glory was concerned in sparing them — lest the enemy should boast over their destruction, and thereby over the Lord Himself. In itself it was a plea of irresistible force. Joshua uses one of a like character when the Israelites were smitten before Ai. He says, "The Canaanites, and all the inhabitants of the land, shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?" (Joshua 7:9.) In both cases it was faith taking hold of God, identifying itself with His own glory, and claiming on that ground the response to its desires — a plea that God can never refuse. But Moses has another. In the energy of his intercession — fruit surely of the action of the Spirit of God — he goes back to the absolute and unconditional promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, reminding the Lord of the two immutable things in which it was impossible for Him to lie. (Hebrews 6:18.) A more beautiful example of prevailing intercession is not found in the Scriptures. Indeed, in the emergency which had arisen, everything depended on the mediator, and in His grace God had provided one who could stand in the breach, and plead his people's cause — not on the ground of what they were, for by their sin they were exposed to the righteous indignation of a holy God — but on the ground of what God was, and on that of His counsels revealed and confirmed to the patriarchs, both by oath and promise. The Lord heard and "repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people." What encouragement to faith! If ever there was an occasion when it seemed impossible that prayer should be heard it was this; but the faith of Moses rose above all difficulties, and grasping the hand of Jehovah, claimed His help; and, inasmuch as He could not deny Himself, the prayer of Moses was granted. Surely the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

"And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides: on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp. And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome; but the noise of them that sing do I hear. And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it. And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them? And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set

on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it of. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf." (Exodus 32:15-24) The covenant of Sinai had been broken — broken irretrievably. Still Moses took the two tables of stone with him, as he turned from the presence of the Lord to go down to the camp; and the Spirit of God takes occasion from this circumstance to call attention to its divine and perfect character. "The tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables." (Exodus 32:16) All was divine — divine in its origin, and divine in its execution. But these divine tables of the law never reached the camp. It was impossible. The people had made a complete breach between themselves and God; and there could be therefore no further question of obedience on the ground of pure law. They might be objects of mercy in response to intercession, but as open transgressors they had broken the covenant which they had so readily accepted, and had now become idolators. Joshua thought it was a noise of war he had heard in the camp; but Moses, who had been so long in the presence of God, was more quick to discern the true character of the sounds that reached their ears. "And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount." Remark, how completely Moses had fellowship with the Lord's own mind concerning His people. The Lord's anger had waxed hot against them, and though Moses as mediator had pleaded with Him on this account, yet his own anger waxed hot when he descended and saw the golden calf. If, therefore, he broke the tables of the law, it was only the expression of the necessity which had arisen on account of what the people had done with the covenant, and the act, at the same time, was in entire conformity with the mind of God. To quote the language of another, "His exercised ear, quick to discern how matters stood with the people, hears their light and profane joy. Soon after he sees the golden calf, which had even preceded the tabernacle of God in the camp, and he breaks the tables at the foot of the mount; and, zealous on high for the people towards God because of His glory, he is below on earth zealous for God because of that same glory. For faith does more than see that God is glorious (every reasonable person would own that); it connects the glory of God and His people, and hence counts on God to bless them in every state of things, as in the interest of His glory, and insists on holiness in them at all cost, in conformity with that glory, that it may not be blasphemed in those who are identified with it." These are true and weighty words, and should sink deep into the hearts of the Lord's people in a day like this — when the "camp" of professing Christianity presents an appearance not unlike that which Moses beheld when he came down from the mount; and they should be much pondered over by those of the Lord's servants who have it laid upon them to act for Him in any difficulties, and indeed by all who would be truly identified with the interests of Christ, in the church. For unless we are first zealous before God on behalf of His people, we cannot be zealous for His glory when dealing with His people below.

Moses in the next place deals with Aaron — charges him with bringing so great a sin upon the people. An additional circumstance, which may help us to understand this, is found in Deuteronomy. There Moses says, "And the Lord was very angry with Aaron, to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron also the same time." (Deuteronomy 9:20.) He is undoubtedly looked upon as the responsible head of the people during the absence of Moses, hence the special guilt with which he is charged; and it is evident from the narrative that he was not slow to fall in with the

people's desires. As with Israel so with Aaron — both are spared through the intercession of Moses from the governmental consequences of their sin, but the guilt of the sin as toward God remained. This distinction must be carefully borne in mind, or the judgment afterward executed might seem inconsistent with the statement that "the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people." The nation would have been destroyed but for the intercession of Moses, as the result of God's government on the basis of the law of Sinai. Delivered from this consequence, God was still free to deal with them — as we find, at the close of the chapter, that "the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made." Aaron is distinguished in these words; for, occupying the position he did, he is regarded as specially criminal. His answer to Moses reveals the heart of a convicted sinner. As Adam threw the blame upon Eve, and Eve upon the serpent, so Aaron shelters himself behind the people. It was true that they were "set on mischief;" but his sin lay in helping them to their object. He should have died rather than have yielded to their desires. His weakness — often exhibited, spite of the favour and grace of the Lord — was his shame and guilt.

Moses, seeing that the people were naked (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies), turns from the excuses of his brother, and burning with a holy zeal for the Lord, stood in the gate of the camp, and cried, "Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me." It was no time for concealment of the evil or for compromise. When there is open apostasy there can be no neutrality. Neutrality when the question is between God and Satan is itself apostasy. He that is not with the Lord, at such a time, is against Him. And mark, moreover, that this cry is raised in the midst of those who were the Lord's professing people. They were all Israelites. But now there must be a separation, and the challenge of Moses, "Who is on the Lord's side?" makes all manifest. He became the Lord's centre; and hence to gather to Him was to be for, to refuse his call was to be against, the Lord. What was the effect of his summons? Why that of all the tribes of Israel, Levi only was found faithful. "The sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him." Theirs was the distinguished honour — through the grace of God — of being on the Lord's side when the whole camp was in utter rebellion. How precious the fidelity of Levi must have been in the eyes of the Lord. It would seem indeed from Deuteronomy that the Lord claimed them for the special service of the Tabernacle in connection with their conduct at this time. Moses says, "At that time the Lord separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord, to minister unto Him, and to bless in His name, unto this day. Wherefore Levi hath no part nor inheritance with his brethren: the Lord is his inheritance, according as the Lord thy God promised him." (Deuteronomy 10:8-9.) It was indeed no common fidelity; for no sooner had they responded to the call of Moses than they were commanded, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves today to the Lord, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that He may bestow upon you a blessing this day." (Exodus 32:27-28)

Thus Levi alone responded to the divine call, separating themselves from their idolatrous brethren, and unhesitatingly taking part with God against the iniquity of His people. It was a searching trial — a trial which demanded that Levi should put aside every claim of the flesh, yea, that he should,

in the words of Moses, say to "his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed Thy word, and kept Thy covenant." (Deuteronomy 33:9.) It was obedience at all costs to the divine call, and hence complete separation from the evil into which Israel had fallen. God often tests His people in the same way; and whenever confusion and declension have begun, the only path for the godly is that which is marked out by the course of Levi — that of full-hearted, unquestioning obedience. Such a path must be painful — involving for those who take it the surrender of some of the most intimate associations of their lives, and breaking many a tie of nature — of kindred and relationship; but it is the only path of blessing. Well may all challenge their hearts, and inquire, if in this evil day they are found apart from all that dishonours the Lord's name in subjection to His word.

Moses on the next day returned to the Lord in the mount.

"And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin. And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold; yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin —; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written. And the lord said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book. Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, Mine angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them." (Exodus 32:30-34)

First, he charges the people with their sin, and then, in his love for the people, proposes to go on their behalf into the Lord's presence, saying, "Peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin." The contrast between Moses and the Lord Jesus in this respect has been beautifully drawn by another. He says, "What a contrast do we here remark, in passing, with the work of our precious Saviour! He, coming down from above — from His dwelling-place in the glory of the Father — to do His will; and, while keeping the law (instead of destroying the tables, the signs of this covenant, the requirements of which man was unable to meet), He Himself bears the penalty of its infringement; and having accomplished the atonement before returning above, instead of going up with a cheerless 'peradventure' in His mouth, which the holiness of God instantly nullified, He ascends with the sign of the accomplishment of the atonement, and of the confirmation of the new covenant with His precious blood, the value of which was anything but doubtful to that God before whom He presented it." True, Moses was a mediator, but as such it is in the contrast rather that he typifies Christ in this character. But he returned, confessed his people's sin, and pleaded in the intensity of his affection for their forgiveness. Even more — he could not go farther — he added, "If not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written." So fully had he identified himself with the people — source of all strength in intercession when produced by the Spirit of God — that if they were unforgiven he desired to perish with them. It was the overflowing of his intense love for guilty Israel, as in the not dissimilar case of the apostle Paul, who said, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." (Romans 9:3.) God did not accede to the request of His servant, for he had no accomplished atonement on which to take his stand, nor had he wherewith to make atonement — the only basis on which a holy God could righteously forgive His people. But his intercession prevailed so far as to secure the people from the governmental consequences of their sin — their destruction as the penalty of their transgression. While however they were spared in the

long-suffering of the Lord, He put them back individually under responsibility with the words, "Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book." (Exodus 32:33) Thereon He commanded Moses to go, and to lead the people to the place He had promised, saying, "Mine angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them. And the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made." It is not now Jehovah dwelling in their midst, but an angel to go before them, and the people still under just judgment because of their sin. This change, producing a new action and intercession on the part of Moses, is developed as to its consequences in the next chapter.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swore unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it., and I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite: unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people; lest I consume thee in the way. And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned; and no man did put on him his ornaments. For the Lord had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiff-necked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee. And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by the mount Horeb." (Exodus 33:1-6)

Several points in this statement should be noticed, as indicative of the position which the people now occupied. In the first place, the Lord did not yet take back the people into that relationship with Himself which they had forfeited through their transgression. They had rejected Him, and He keeps them as it were on that footing. He thus still says to Moses, "Thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt." Secondly, He promises them the land notwithstanding; this had been secured by the first intercession of Moses, when he appealed to the absolute and unconditional promises made to the patriarchs. (Exodus 32:13) But, thirdly, He announces that He will not go up in their midst: "For," said He, "thou art a stiff-necked people; lest I consume thee in the way." A holy God, to speak after the manner of men, knew not how He could now dwell in the midst of a nation of transgressors. Lastly, He threatens judgment, and commands the people to strip off their ornaments that He might know what to do with them. God weighs, as it were, the condition of His poor people, and pauses before He smites, seeing that they mourned — humbled by their sin — at the tidings they had received. It is a striking if solemn, scene — the people stripped of their adornments, awaiting the judgment pronounced in bitterness and sorrow of heart; and the Lord pausing before the blow is struck. But He who pronounced judgment upon the people for their sins, provided a way for their escape through a new action on the part of Moses. First of all, he pitched the tabernacle outside the camp.

"And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp. And it came to pass, when Moses went out unto the tabernacle, that all the people rose up, and stood every man at his tent door, and looked after Moses, until he was gone into the tabernacle. And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and [the Lord] talked with Moses. And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at

the tabernacle door: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door. And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle." (Exodus 33:7-11)

It does not appear that Moses, in pitching the tabernacle* outside the camp, was acting under any direct commandment from the Lord. It was rather spiritual discernment, entering into both the character of God and the state of the people. Taught of God, he feels that Jehovah could no longer dwell in the midst of a camp which had been defiled by the presence of the golden calf. He therefore made a place outside, afar off from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of the congregation. This was a totally different thing from what the Lord had said unto Moses: "Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." They were no longer to be the Lord's people — grouped round about Himself as their centre; but He being outside, "every one who sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp." It thus became an individual thing; and the true worshippers were in the place of separation — they took the ground of separation from the camp which had acknowledged a false god. This gives a principle of the utmost value and importance. For it must be remembered that Israel professedly were the Lord's people; but their condition had become such that the Lord could no longer be in their midst. So it was in a later day, as we gather from the epistle to the Hebrews; and hence the exhortation which is there given, "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." (Hebrews 13:13.) Whenever the Lord's name is dishonoured, and His authority is rejected, and another authority is substituted, there is no resource for the godly but to go outside of all that answers to the camp, if they would worship God in spirit and in truth. And it should be carefully remarked that, as in the case of Moses, the need for such separation is a matter of spiritual discernment. There are times and seasons — and those who have a single eye will not fail to apprehend them — when it becomes a high and holy privilege, as in the case of Levi at the end of the previous chapter, to take part with the Lord against His people, at least in testimony against their ways; and, as in the case of Moses, to take a place outside of all the declension, rejection of the Lord's authority, and idolatrous practices of His people. In taking such a step there must undoubtedly be the authority of the word of God — the only light to our feet in the darkness around, as it is our only resource in the evil day. But the application of the word to any given state of things must be a matter of spiritual wisdom and discernment through the Spirit of God.

*The reader will understand that this was not the Tabernacle, the pattern and details of which had been prescribed to Moses in the mount, but a tent which was now to be a tabernacle — a meeting-place between God and those who sought Him, pitched to meet the present need outside the camp in consequence of the people's sin. The tabernacle having been pitched, Moses, in the sight of all the people, went out and entered into it; and, as he entered, the Lord immediately endorsed his act of faith, for the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and He talked with Moses. (Exodus 33:9) Being in separation from the camp, the Lord revealed Himself as He had not done before, and so strikingly that the people "rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door. And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." This was a totally new thing, altogether different from the sublime communications of Sinai. It was an intimacy of approach and communion which Moses had never before enjoyed. The Lord Himself alludes to this as the distinguishing privilege of His servant, when vindicating him

from the aspersions of Aaron and Miriam. (Numbers 12:5-8.) This fact is full of consolation — teaching as it does that, though ruin, and even apostasy, may characterize the professing people of God, a way into His presence may still be found by those who can enter into His mind, and are enabled by His grace to take a place outside of the corruptions by which they are surrounded; and that the Lord will reveal Himself to such, in response to their faith and faithfulness, in a most special and gracious way. The fact is, identified with the corruptions of an apostate people, we of necessity share their condition and even judgment; but apart according to the mind of the Lord, the barrier to the manifestation of Himself is removed. We are on a different footing — on the footing of individual faith and individual condition of soul. But then it must be remembered, that all who so act will find themselves together gathered individually around a new centre. The act of Moses indeed is, in some sort, the anticipation of that word, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20.) And this assurance is the resource of the godly in this day of confusion and corruption, as the tabernacle of the congregation without the camp was that of those who sought the Lord in the midst of Israel's idolatry; and those who, in simplicity and faith, have recourse to it will receive, as Moses did, special manifestations of the Lord's favour and presence. The act of Moses having been accepted, he returned to the camp — now the recognised mediator; but Joshua, type of Christ in spirit, as the leader of His people, remains in the tabernacle. Thereon Moses as mediator commences his intercession. He accepts the place into which the Lord had put him — as the one appointed to conduct the people to the promised inheritance. (Exodus 33:1) He takes this ground as the basis of his plea.

"And Moses said unto the Lord, See, Thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and Thou hast not let me know whom Thou wilt send with me. Yet Thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in My sight. Now therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found grace in Thy sight, show me now Thy way, that I may know Thee, that I may find grace in Thy sight; and consider that this nation is Thy people." (Exodus 33:12-13)

He makes supplication in the first place for himself. He desires first to know whom the Lord would send with him. God had said that He would send an angel (Exodus 33:2); but Moses would know more; and he pleads for this knowledge on the ground that the Lord had said to him, "I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in My sight." Furthermore, he would know God's way, that he might know Him, that he might find grace in His sight. And then he brings the people before God. As everything now depended on Moses, as mediator, he presents his own cause first; and then he introduces the people. "Consider," he touchingly prays, "that this nation is Thy people." All this is exceedingly beautiful, as it is also full of interest and instruction. It was not enough for Moses that he had been divinely appointed to lead Israel, and that an angel should go before him in the path, but he desired to know, not his but God's way through the wilderness, that he might also know Him. He could not be satisfied short of knowing God and God's way — if he were to lead up the people. This is what every believer needs, and there is nothing beyond while in the wilderness. The Lord graciously accepted the prayer of His servant. He said, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." This was a full response to the cry of the mediator, and all that he needed to carry him and the people through their desert path. This comforted and emboldened his heart — and he replied, "If Thy presence go not, carry us not up hence." (Exodus 33:15) Now he identifies himself with the people. This is no mean adumbration of the heart of Christ — this intense love of Moses for Israel, linking them with himself in his place of favour

before God. And not only so, but, rising higher, he now links them again with God. We have remarked that God took Israel on their own ground, and since they had rejected Him, He had said to Moses, "thy" people. But now — now that Moses, acting as mediator, has gained the ear of God, he says again "Thy" people. "For wherein," he proceeds, "shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? is it not in that Thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth." (Exodus 33:16) He thus claims, as it were, as proof of divine favour — restoration of favour — God's own presence with His people. It could not be otherwise known; and the fact of His presence would separate them off from all other people. It is the same in principle during this dispensation. The presence of the Holy Ghost on earth, building His people into an habitation for God, separates from all else, and so completely, that there are but the two spheres — sphere of the presence and action of the Holy Ghost, and sphere of the action and power of Satan.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in My sight, and I know thee by name." (Exodus 33:17) The success of the mediation of Moses was thus complete, complete for the restoration of the people. They are once again the Lord's people — to be put under a new covenant, as will be seen in the next chapter, a covenant of law indeed, but law mingled with grace, according to the character of God as now revealed. The effect on Moses of the divine favour is remarkable. Every successive display of grace does but elicit larger desires; and Moses therefore now longs for himself that he may see God's glory.

"And he said, I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory." (Exodus 33:18)

Such is ever the action of grace upon the soul. The more we know of God, the more we desire to know. But this very petition of Moses affords a contrast with the place of the believer. Now we behold with unveiled face the glory of the Lord; here Moses prays that he may see it. The holy longing, however, which he thus expresses, shows the effect of intimacy with God, and the consequent energetic action on the soul of the Holy Ghost.

"And He said, I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. And He said, Thou canst not see My face; for there shall no man see Me, and live. And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass, while My glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand while I pass by: and I will take away Mine hand, and thou shalt see My back parts; but My face shall not be seen." (Exodus 33:19-23.) The Lord hears, and grants as far as was possible for Moses to receive, the request he had made. He would make all His goodness pass before him, and proclaim the name of Jehovah. Then He lays down the principle of His sovereignty, on which He must act in order to spare Israel; for had He dealt with them on the basis of righteous law, the whole nation must have perished. It is this very scripture that the apostle Paul cites to enforce the same truth — that Israel was spared on the one hand, and Pharaoh destroyed on the other, in the exercise of God's sovereign rights. His object is to reconcile the bestowal of grace on the Gentiles with the special promises made to Israel, and he thus leads them back to their sin in connection with the golden calf, to remind them that they were at that time equally indebted to the sovereign grace of God as were now the Gentiles — that, both the one, therefore, and the other, were alike the objects of sovereign mercy and grace. This word of the Lord to

Moses is the fountain-head — so to speak — of this truth, though God had acted on the principle all down the line of Israel's history. (See Romans 9:7-13.) It is affirmed now as the foundation on which, in answer to the intercession of Moses, He could spare the people. But notwithstanding this favour accorded to Moses — this privilege of beholding the goodness of the Lord and bearing His name, he could not behold His face and live. The Lord would put him "in a clift of the rock" while He passed by. "And I will take away Mine hand, and thou shalt see My back parts; but My face shall not be seen." No, God was not yet fully revealed; the work was not accomplished through the efficacy of which God could bring the sinner into His immediate presence, and without a cloud between. Distinguished therefore as was the place which Moses occupied, the humblest believer of this dispensation is brought nearer to God. The Christian may behold all the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; but Moses must be hidden in a "clift of the rock" — type, it may be, of the believer in Christ — while that glory passed by. As another has said, "He will hide him while He passes by, and Moses shall see His back parts. We cannot meet God on His way as independent of Him. After He has passed by, one sees all the beauty of His ways." This is exemplified in the next chapter — on the re-establishment of the covenant with Israel.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first; and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest. And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to Me in the top of the mount. And no man shall come up with thee, neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount; neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mount. And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first: and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone. And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." (Exodus 34:1-7.)

Moses presented himself in obedience to the divine command, with the two tables of stone, to receive again the law under which Israel was to be placed. Sinai is therefore once more the scene of his interview with the Lord. The Lord, faithful to His promise, descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. Name in Scripture, in connection at least with God, is expressive of nature; and hence here it is significant of what God was as JEHOVAH. It is essential to remember that it is not the Father, but Jehovah in His relationship with Israel, who is thus revealed. It is therefore not a complete revelation of God. This could not be until after the cross; but it is the name of Jehovah — expression of what God was in this character — that is proclaimed. "It is not at all the name of His relationship with the sinner for his justification, but with Israel for His government. Mercy, holiness, and patience mark His ways with them, but He does not clear the guilty." The reader must study for himself this unfolding of what God was to Israel — each word employed being in this aspect the declaration of His immutable character. Mercy and truth are seen in combination, though it was not until the cross that they met together, and were harmonized in their activities, when also righteousness and peace kissed each other. Goodness and grace are also here, as well as long-suffering; but there is also holiness, and hence, while

keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, Jehovah would by no means clear the guilty. There was indeed a heart of love for His people, but this heart of love was pent up, if it may be so expressed, until atonement should have been completed, when God could righteously justify the ungodly. But whoever traces down the line of God's dealings with Israel, from this moment until their expulsion from the land, and indeed until the cross, will find every one of these attributes in constant exercise. All that God is, as here declared, is revealed in His ways with His ancient people. The proclamation of His name is, in fact, the summary of His government from Sinai until the death of Christ. But while admitting to the full the wondrous character of the revelation thus made to. Moses, let it be again observed that it is not that which Christians now enjoy. If it is compared with the words of our blessed Lord, "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), the immensity of the difference cannot fail to be apprehended. The difference is between what God was as Jehovah to Israel, and what God is as the Father to His children.

One other remark should be made. Satan had come in, and for the moment seemed as if he had succeeded in frustrating the purposes of God with respect to His people. But Satan is never so completely defeated as in his apparent victories. This is nowhere so fully illustrated as in the cross; but the same thing is perceived in connection with the golden calf. This was Satan's work; but the failure of Israel becomes the occasion, through the mediation of Moses, which God in His grace had provided, of the fuller revelation of God, and of His mingling grace with law. The activity of Satan does but work out the purposes of God, and his wrath is made to praise Him against whom all his malice and enmity are directed.

We may now consider the effect on Moses of the proclamation of the name of Jehovah.

"And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped. And he said, I now I have found grace in Thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray Thee, go among us; for it is a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for Thine inheritance." (Exodus 34:8-9) The first effect is personal. It bows Moses to the ground in worship before the Lord. Every revelation of God to the heart of His people produces this result. This is remarkably illustrated in the experience of the patriarchs. Such records as this are common: "And the Lord appeared unto Abram . . . and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him." (Genesis 12:7.) So with Moses. Overwhelmed by the revelation made in grace to his soul, he is constrained to worship. But he immediately takes up his position of mediator. Made to feel his own acceptance by the favour into which he had been brought, and his acceptance, too, as mediator for Israel, he commences his intercession; and he prays that the Lord would go among them, and for the very reason that had led the Lord to say He would not dwell in their midst. (Cp. Exodus 34:3) Moreover, he besought the forgiveness of their sin; and that He would take them for His inheritance. It is exceedingly beautiful to note, now that Moses has obtained the full place of an accepted mediator, how entirely he identifies himself with those whose cause he pleads. He says, "among us;" "our iniquity and our sin, and take us for Thine inheritance." This is a principle of the highest importance. It was exemplified perfectly in Him of whom Moses was but a type. And it will apply to every kind of intercession for the people of God. Indeed, whenever any of the Lord's servants have occupied the place of intercessors, this feature has been distinctly marked. (See Daniel 9:1-27; Nehemiah 1:1-11, etc.) So now. We can never have power with God on behalf of others, unless by grace we are enabled to enter into the condition of, and identify ourselves with,

those whom we would bear on our hearts before the Lord. Moses was enabled to do this, and his prayer was accepted, and, in response, the Lord established a new covenant with the people.

"And He said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the Lord; for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee. Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite. Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee: but ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves: for thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God: lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice: and thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods. Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.

"The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, as I commanded thee, in the time of the month Abib: for in the month Abib thou camest out from Egypt. All that openeth the matrix is Mine; and every firstling among thy cattle, whether ox or sheep, that is male. But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb: and if thou redeem him not, then shalt thou break his neck. All the firstborn of thy sons thou shalt redeem. And none shall appear before Me empty. Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest. And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end. Thrice in the year shall all your men-children appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel. For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year. Thou shalt not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leaven; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the passover be left unto the morning. The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring unto the house of the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk. And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel. And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments." Exodus 34:10-28) The terms of this covenant are not new, though they are newly enjoined. Almost every one of them has been already under consideration. (See Exodus 13:1-22 and Exodus 23:1-33) A brief notice of their character will therefore suffice. The foundation of all is laid in what God would do for His people. (Exodus 34:10) Thereon He commands complete separation from the nations around, after they should have been put into possession of the land — separation from the people themselves, from their ways, and from their worship. They must worship the Lord alone; for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. (Exodus 34:11-16) But if, on the one hand, there must be separation from evil, there must be, on the other, separation to God. Hence the least of unleavened bread should be kept.* Seven days — a complete period, typical of their whole lives, they were to eat unleavened bread — the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Corinthians 5:8.) They should, moreover, recognize God's claims both upon themselves and upon their cattle. "All that openeth the matrix is mine." (Exodus 34:19) Thereon follows a remarkable provision — that both the

firstling of an ass, and the firstborn of their sons, should be redeemed. Man in nature is thus associated with the unclean (see Exodus 13:13) — teaching both his lost condition as born into this world, and his need of redemption, as well as his doom if unredeemed. The sabbath, the feasts of Pentecost and of Tabernacles, are again commanded — with the provision that three times in the year "all your men-children appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel."†

*See Exodus 13:1-22 for the exposition of this feast.

†These statutes have been considered in Exodus 23:14-19.

"After the tenor of these words," the Lord made a covenant with Moses and with Israel. (Exodus 34:27) The words "with thee" are significant. It shows how that the place of Israel had been made dependent upon the mediator, and indicates consequently the position into which Moses had been brought. For the second time he had been forty days and forty nights — in a state above nature — in the presence of God. He did neither eat bread, nor drink water. God thus sustained His servant in His own presence, and enabled him to listen to His voice and receive His words. In fine, he received once again two tables of testimony on which God had written the ten commandments, and descending from the mount, returned to the people.

Such was the covenant into which God in grace entered with His people after their failure and apostasy. "It is important to remark that Israel never entered the land under the Sinai covenant, that is, under simple law (for all this passed under mount Sinai); it had been immediately broken. It is under the mediation of Moses that they were able to find the way of entering into it. However, they are placed again under the law, but the government of patience and grace is added to it." Israel had indeed forfeited everything, and become amenable to destruction, through the sin of the golden calf. They had lost thereby all title to blessing or the inheritance. The mediation of Moses availed, for governmental forgiveness, to restore them to their position as the people of God, and to secure for them the possession of the land. Moreover, God proclaimed the name of Jehovah — the revelation of His character in relation with Israel — and thereafter put them back under law. Israel therefore was never actually under the covenant of Sinai. It was broken before its terms — written on the tables of stone — reached the camp. The terms of the second covenant are indeed the same, but these were mingled with the grace and goodness and long-suffering which had been proclaimed in the name of Jehovah. In fact Israel, after their sin, were saved by grace through the intercession of Moses; and then they are put back under the law, with the additional elements named. Their position thenceforward was not unlike that of those believers who, not knowing the new place into which they are brought through the death and resurrection of Christ, put themselves under the law as the rule of their conduct and life. What wonder, then, if the path of both alike is marked by continual failure and transgression? This section closes with a striking account of the effect on Moses of being in the presence of God on the mount.

"And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone: and they were afraid to come nigh him. And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them. And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him in mount Sinai. And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a

veil on his face. But when Moses went in before the Lord, to speak with Him, he took the veil off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded. And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the veil upon his face again, until he went in to speak with Him." (Exodus 34:29-35)

There are three things in this description to be considered. First, the fact that the skin of the face of Moses shone as the consequence of being in the mount with God. brought, into the immediate presence of the glory of Jehovah, his face caught, and retained, some of the beams of that glory — though he "wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him." The contrast with our Lord on the mount of transfiguration cannot fail to be noted. He "was transfigured before them; and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." (Matthew 17:2.) But this was the outshining of His own glory — a glory which transfused and irradiated His whole body before the eyes of the disciples, so that He appeared to them as a Being of light. The glory that shone from the face of Moses was but external, the reflection of that of Jehovah, the effect of his communion with God. Moses, absorbed in the communications he was receiving, and in contemplation of the One whose words he heard, knew not that his face had become irradiated with light. No; the believer never knows the outward effect of his being alone with God. Others may see — they cannot fail to see; but he himself will be unconscious that he is reflecting the light of Him in whose presence he has been. For indeed it is ever true —

"The more Thy glory strikes mine eye, The humbler I shall lie." But Aaron and all the children of Israel beheld the glory shining from the face of Moses; and this brings us to the second point; viz., the effect it produced on them. They were afraid to come nigh him; and hence, while Moses was talking with them, giving them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him in mount Sinai, he put a veil upon his face. It is this incident which the apostle Paul adduces to show the contrast between "the ministration of death," and "the ministration of the Spirit;" or "the ministration of condemnation," and "the ministration of righteousness;" i.e. between the dispensation of law, and the dispensation of grace. The face of Moses, it should be remarked, did not shine when he came down from Sinai the first time; not until his return from his successful mediation on behalf of the people on account of their sin. Why, then, were they afraid to come near him? Because the very glory that shone on his face searched their hearts and consciences — being what they were, sinners, and unable of themselves to meet even the smallest requirement of the covenant which had now been inaugurated. It was of necessity a "ministration" of condemnation and death, for it required a righteousness from them which they could not render, and, inasmuch as they must fail in rendering it, would pronounce their condemnation, and bring them under the penalty of transgression, which was death. The glory which they thus beheld upon the face of Moses was the expression to them of the holiness of God — that holiness which sought from them conformity to its own standards — and which would vindicate the breaches of that covenant which had now been established. They were therefore afraid, because they knew in their inmost souls that they could not stand before Him from whose presence Moses had come. But in the "ministration" of righteousness and of the Spirit all is changed. This requires no righteousness from man, but reveals God's righteousness as a divine gift in Christ to every believer, and seals its bestowal by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Instead therefore of fearing, we rejoice as we behold the glory in the face of Jesus Christ at the right hand of God; for every ray of that glory speaks of accomplished atonement, and of the complete putting away of our sins if we are believers. For He who was

delivered for our offences has been raised again for our justification; He who Himself bare our sins in His own body on the tree, has been raised by God Himself, and exalted at His own right hand. God has glorified Him in Himself. That is, He has come in, and raised up the One that bore our sins, went down into death under them, and in token of His satisfaction with His work, He has put Him in the glory, so that the glory of God now shines forth in the face of Jesus Christ. It is this fact that gives confidence to our souls, enables us to draw near in peace, because the very glory that we behold is the evidence to us that all that was against us is cleared away. Hence, instead of putting a veil on His face, as Moses did, because the children of Israel were afraid to draw nigh, He is at God's right hand with unveiled face, and we delightedly contemplate the glory that is there displayed, and as we gaze we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 3:1-18; 2 Corinthians 4:1-18) The effect therefore on the children of Israel of the glory in the face of Moses forms a perfect contrast to that produced upon the believer as he beholds the glory of the Lord. It is quite true that Israel was no longer under pure law, that goodness and grace had now been mingled with it; but this very fact would make their sin the more heinous if they broke the covenant a second time. In that case, it would not only be sin against righteousness, but also against the goodness and grace which had spared them, and restored them to relationship with God. This enhances, instead of diminishing the contrast, and should lead out our hearts in adoring gratitude in that we are brought into such a place — a place where we behold, with unveiled face, the glory of the Lord — knowing by the very fact of the glory we behold that our sins are gone from the sight of God for ever. The last action must also be noted. When Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him he took the veil off, until he came out. (v. 34.) He unveils his face to speak to the Lord, while he covers his face to speak to the people. In this respect he becomes rather a type of the present position of the believer, to which reference has already been made. Moses was brought into the very presence of God without a veil, even as the believer is set down in the light as He is in the light. There is still the difference already noted. However intimate the access Moses enjoyed, it was as Jehovah that God spake with him; but the believer is before God according to all that God is, according to that full and perfect revelation of Himself which He has made in Christ as our God and Father. While, moreover, Moses was permitted thus to come before Jehovah to commune with Him, the believer is brought into God's presence as his abiding position. He is ever before God in Christ.

04.38. DEVOTEDNESS AND OBEDIENCE.

DEVOTEDNESS AND OBEDIENCE.

Exodus 35:1-35, Exodus 36:1-38, Exodus 37:1-29, Exodus 38:1-31, Exodus 39:1-43, Exodus 40:1-38

WE have now reached the concluding section of the book. Exodus 32:1-35, Exodus 33:1-23, Exodus 34:1-35 are parenthetical. The beginning of Exodus 35:1-35 is consequently a continuation of Exodus 31:1-18; but if a continuation, it is only of God's grace. Had He dealt with Israel for their sin, according to the terms of the covenant into which they had voluntarily entered, their history as a nation, and the narrative of God's dealings with them, would have terminated after Exodus 31:1-18. But we have seen how, notwithstanding their grievous fall, they were spared through the Lord's tender mercy at the mediation and intercession of Moses, and were brought back again into relationship with Himself as His people. Having therefore propounded the terms of His second covenant, He is free in grace to continue His presence with them, and hence we find, in these closing chapters, the actual execution of the commands Moses had received in the mount concerning the erection of the Tabernacle. But, as preparatory to this, the Sabbath is again enjoined.

"And Moses gathered all the congregation of the children of Israel together, and said unto them, These are the words which the Lord hath commanded, that ye should do them. Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death. Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the Sabbath day." (Exodus 35:1-3.) The Lord, as has been stated before, always reminds the people of the end and object of all His ways with them; viz., entering into His rest. This was the end proposed, however impossible it became for them to attain it because of their unbelief. Hence the Sabbath is found again in this place, as it always is whenever any new relationship is formed between God and the people. It becomes thus a kind of preface to the account of the construction of the sanctuary.

Moses thereon makes proclamation of the Lord's desire to receive an offering from His people — an offering of the several materials needed for the making of the Tabernacle. (Exodus 35:5-19) God would have His people to enter into His own thoughts and desires for their blessing, and He permits them in His grace and mercy to bring these materials as an offering. He directs what they should bring, although everything they possessed was His own gift (see 1 Chronicles 29:14), and then He would reckon it as their offering. It is ever so. Believers cannot do a single good thing of themselves. Every good work is the product of the Spirit of God, and prepared before of God (Ephesians 2:10), and yet when done, God in His grace calls it theirs, and clothes them with the fine linen which is the righteousnesses of saints. The willingness of God to receive from His people is thus proclaimed. The grace of God in this particular touched and opened their hearts; "and they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service,

and for the holy garments." (Exodus 35:21) And again we read, "The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman; whose heart made them willing to bring, for all manner of work which the Lord had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses." (Exodus 35:29.) There are principles involved in these statements which are applicable to all dispensations. The apostle Paul enforces the same when he says, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7; read the whole chapter.) It is therefore of the first importance to remember that everything offered to God must proceed from hearts made willing by His Spirit, that it must be spontaneous, not the result of persuasion or of external pressure, but from the heart. The church of God would have been in a very different state today if this had been remembered. What has wrought more ruin than the many worldly schemes for raising money? and what more humbling than the fact that solicitations of all kinds are used to induce the Lord's people to offer their gifts? Moses was content with announcing that the Lord was willing to receive, and he left this gracious communication to produce its suited effect upon the hearts of the children of Israel. He needed not to do more; and if saints now were in the current of God's thoughts they would imitate the example of Moses, and would shun the very thought of obtaining even the smallest gift, except it were presented willingly, and from the heart, as the effect of the working of the Spirit of God. And let it be remarked, that there was no lack; for in the next chapter we find that the wise men who wrought came to Moses and said, "The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the Lord commanded to make. And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much." (Exodus 36:5-7.) If the first Pentecostal days be excepted, there has probably never been seen anything answering, to this even in the history of the church. The chronic complaint now is concerning the insufficiency of means to carry on the Lord's work. But it cannot be too often recalled — first, that the church of God is never held responsible to obtain means; secondly, that if the Lord gives work to do, He Himself will lay it upon the hearts of His people to contribute what is necessary; thirdly, that we are travelling off the ground of dependence, and acting according, to our own thoughts, if we undertake anything for which the needful provision has not already been made; and lastly, that gifts procured by human means can seldom be used for blessing.

Moreover if liberality was the fruit of the action of the Spirit of God, so also was wisdom. Liberality provided the necessary materials, and wisdom used them according to the divine mind. The Lord filled Bezaleel with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; and He also put in his heart that he may teach, both he and Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. (Exodus 35:31-35.) The workmen were the gift of God, and the wisdom and understanding needed for their work proceeded also from Him through the action of His Spirit; and He also endowed them with the capacity to teach others; and there were thus associated with them "every wise-hearted man in whom the Lord put wisdom and understanding, to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the Lord had commanded." (Exodus 36:1.) We may surely behold in these workers the pattern of all true servants in every dispensation. They themselves called of God, as was pointed out in Exodus 31:1-18, all their activity was the fruit of the Spirit of God. They were not sufficient of themselves to think anything as of themselves, but their sufficiency was of God. (2 Corinthians 3:5.) Human skill,

human wisdom or inventions, would but have marred the perfection of the divine design; and hence the workmen were to be but vessels — vessels for the display of divine wisdom and understanding and teaching. Well is it for the workman when he remembers that, like Bezaleel and Aholiab, he is but a vessel; for then it is that the Lord can use him to His own glory in the execution of His own mind and will.

Passing on to Exodus 39:1-43, we learn that all the work was done as the Lord had commanded Moses. The essence of all service is obedience, and the test of everything done is its conformity or otherwise with the revealed mind of God. The Lord had given certain directions to Moses, and had instructed His servants for the work; and, as a consequence, the only question concerning their work, when completed, was, Did it correspond in every particular with the pattern given? The Spirit of God has answered this question, affirming in this chapter no less than ten times, that the work was executed as the Lord commanded Moses. (Exodus 39:1, Exodus 39:5, Exodus 39:7, Exodus 39:21, Exodus 39:26, Exodus 39:29, Exodus 39:31-32, Exodus 39:42-43) They therefore met their responsibility towards God, and accordingly received His approval and commendation in this repeated and significant statement: that all their work was characterized by obedience. This affords the important principle that everything which claims to be of God must submit to be tested by God's word. The same principle is affirmed by our blessed Lord in His message to the seven churches. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." (Revelation 2:11, etc.) And there was never more need than in this day for its application. It cannot be conceived that Moses would have accepted, much less the Lord, any single thing, however innocent, or even beautiful, in itself, that did not correspond with the pattern showed him in the mount. Why then should it be expected now, that believers should accept and endorse anything in connection with the church of God which does not answer to the Scriptures? No; everything must be unsparingly rejected, however enshrined in the affections, or commended by its hoar antiquity, which does not bear the stamp and the sanction of the word of God. For is it for one moment to be supposed that the Lord is less jealous concerning His church — the church which He loved, and for which He gave Himself — than concerning the Tabernacle? Or that He permits man's wisdom, and man's order, to be introduced in the one when He so entirely excluded it from the other? The supposition is monstrous. Let it never be forgotten therefore that the Lord measures everything, and hence that it is also our responsibility to measure everything, by His own word. In the last chapter we have the actual erection of the Tabernacle, and the Lord taking possession of it as His dwelling-place in the midst of Israel. There are several points to be indicated. It will be observed, in the first place, that the Tabernacle was to be set up on the anniversary of their departure from Egypt (Exodus 12:2) — on the first day of the first month. (Exodus 40:2.) As their deliverance from the house of their bondage constituted the commencement of their spiritual history, so the dwelling of Jehovah in their midst formed morally a new period of time. The two things are brought together in Christianity. When the soul is brought out from under condemnation, and apprehends peace with God, the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ, God seals it by the gift of His indwelling Spirit. The commencement of spiritual life — spiritual life known and enjoyed — and becoming a temple of the Holy Ghost coincide. The order enjoined in the arrangement of the sacred vessels differs both from that found in the directions given in the mount, and from that of their construction. The ark of the testimony, after the setting up of the Tabernacle, is first put into its place — that which specially distinguished the Tabernacle as God's sanctuary, seeing that the ark was His throne on the earth. Then the ark was covered with the veil; i.e. shut off from view.

This formed the holy of holies. The table of showbread, was next brought into the holy place — the next compartment to the most holy — and the bread was set in order upon it; afterwards, the candlestick of pure gold was put into its place, and the lamps lighted before the Lord; then, the altar of gold, the altar of incense, was put "before the veil," before the ark of the testimony, and incense was burnt thereon; and finally, the hanging was set up at the door of the Tabernacle. This completed the arrangement of the holy place. The altar of burnt-offering came next before the door of the Tabernacle of the tent of the congregation — and the burnt-offering and the meat-offering were offered upon it; then the laver was brought and set between the tent of the congregation and the altar, and water put therein, and Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet thereat, etc. (Exodus 40:30-31) Thereupon the court round about the Tabernacle and the altar were reared up, and the hanging of the court-gate put in its place — and this completed the Tabernacle with all its arrangements. Moreover the Tabernacle was to be anointed with the anointing oil, and all that was therein, and hallowed with all the vessels thereof. It was to be holy. So also with the altar of burnt-offering — with all its vessels — that the altar might be sanctified. It was to be an altar most holy. The laver and its foot were also to be anointed to be sanctified. Lastly, Aaron and his sons were to be consecrated and robed, that they might minister unto the Lord in the priest's office; "for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations." (Exodus 40:9-15) As in the case of Bezaleel and Aholiab, together with their co-workers, so with Moses, the Spirit of God set His seal of commendation upon the manner in which he performed the work entrusted to him. And what is the meed of praise which He bestows? It is that everything was done in obedience — "as the Lord commanded Moses." Eight times it is repeated that everything was done according to the instructions he had received. (Exodus 40:16, Exodus 40:19, Exodus 40:21, Exodus 40:23, Exodus 40:25, Exodus 40:27, Exodus 40:29, Exodus 40:32) Again, therefore, we learn the value of obedience in the eyes of the Lord. As Samuel said to Saul, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." As indeed our blessed Lord Himself said, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." (John 14:1-31) If obedience be wanting, whatever there may be of real devotedness and zeal, no service offered can be acceptable to God. And it is precisely here that so many Christians fail. There never was a time of greater energy and activity, nor when larger crowds gather together professedly for worship; but when these things are measured by the test which is supplied in the words, "as the Lord commanded Moses," then it is discovered that man's will, and not the Lord's, is often the paramount spring of all. Observe, again, what has been enforced more than once, that this commendation is given to Moses by the Spirit concerning his action in respect of God's house. The church is now the house of God — the habitation of God through the Spirit. Ephesians 2:22.) If therefore it was above all necessary that Moses should strictly and carefully carry out the instructions he had received concerning the Tabernacle, it is equally important that the word of God should be our only guide in all matters affecting the church. We find accordingly that, in the message which the risen Lord sent to the church at Philadelphia, the fact that they had kept His word was a special ground of His approval. (Revelation 3:8.) No higher praise could be bestowed. "So Moses finished the work" — finished all in obedience to the word of the Lord.

Finally, the Lord takes possession of the sanctuary which had been made that He might dwell among them. The connection is most significant. "So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the

glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." (Exodus 40:34-35) It was not only Jehovah's public endorsement of the work which had been executed, but it was also His taking possession of His house in the sight of all Israel; for the cloud, the symbol of His presence, covered the tent of the congregation without, and His glory filled the Tabernacle within. It was so — in a still more striking way — when the temple was built. "It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, For He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God." (2 Chronicles 5:13-14.) Both alike are surely typical of that Pentecostal scene recorded in the Acts: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:1-4.) Here the two things are combined. The house of God was formed and filled by the descent of the Holy Ghost. In both cases, however, it was God taking possession of the house already made for Him; for from this time all the believers, who together composed the habitation of God through the Spirit, became also severally His temple, because indwelt by the Holy Ghost. We have already spoken on the significance of God's dwelling-place on earth (Exodus 25:8); and we then pointed out that His house in every dispensation points onward to the eternal state when the tabernacle of God will be with men, and His glory will fill the whole scene. (Revelation 21:1-27)

Moreover, the cloud of Jehovah's presence became also the guide of His people through the wilderness. "The cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys." (Exodus 40:38; see also Numbers 9:1-23) They needed only therefore to keep their eyes upon the cloud; for "when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys: but if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up." (Exodus 40:36-37) The Lord thus undertook for His people. He had visited them in their affliction in Egypt; He had brought them out with a high hand and an outstretched arm; and had led them forth through the Red Sea into the wilderness. But He Himself would lead them "by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." "Happy," we might also exclaim, "is that people that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord." For surely there was nothing now wanting to the blessing of Israel. Jehovah was in their midst. The cloud of His presence rested upon, and His glory filled, the Tabernacle. It was indeed a brief period of unmingled blessing — the accomplishment of God's own desires in surrounding Himself with His redeemed people. How soon this bright and beautiful scene was marred is related in other books; but the very fact that Exodus thus ends is prophetic of the time when "the tabernacle of God" shall be "with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, their God. 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." (Revelation 21:3-4.) by Edward Dennett

05.00. Ezra

Ezra or, Restoration from Babylon.

(Fourth Edition, 1912, Morrish.) by

E. Dennett

***** This module is brought to you by www.DoctorDaveT.com For more eSword modules that are

conservative

evangelical

Bible believing

Christ honoring

make sure you stop by www.DoctorDaveT.com! We have hundreds of modules easily organized by topics, like these:

Old Testament Exposition (topic modules)

New Testament Exposition (topic modules)

Doctrinal Theology (topic modules)

Commentary Modules

Dictionary Modules

and a whole lot more! Please visit www.DoctorDaveT.com!

Dave

05.00.3. Copyright Information

Copyright Information The information for this module goes all the way back to the 1886, according to Amazon.com. The text for this module comes from www.stempublishing.com. This module is public domain.

05.00.4. Introduction

Introduction THE book of Ezra marks an important epoch in God's dealings with His people Israel. Although seventy years had elapsed, it is yet the continuation of 2 Chronicles; for time does not count with the Jews when in exile from the land of promise. They had lost everything by their sins and apostasy, and God had sent Nebuchadnezzar to chastise them, to destroy His own house which His people had profaned and polluted, to carry them away captive to Babylon, and "to fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths." (2 Chronicles 36:21.)

Nothing could be sadder than the record of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the termination of the kingdom as entrusted in responsibility to the hands of man, except indeed the still more fearful accounts of the siege and capture of Jerusalem by Titus soon after the commencement of the Christian era. The long-suffering of God had been tested in every possible way. In His patient grace He had borne with the high-handed rebellion of His people; He had lingered with a yearning heart, like the Saviour when He was upon earth, over the city which was the expression of royal grace; He had sent to them by His messengers, "rising up betimes and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling-place; but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy. Therefore He brought upon them the king of the Chaldees," etc. The sword of His justice thus fell upon His guilty people; for their sins had exceeded those even of the Amorites whom God had driven out before them. (See 2 Kings 21:11) God's throne on earth was henceforward transferred to Babylon, and the times of the Gentiles — which still continue, and will do so until Christ Himself shall establish His throne, the throne of His father David (see Luke 1:32-33; Luke 21:24) — commenced. Lo-Ammi (not my people)* was in this way written upon the chosen race, and they entered upon the sorrowful experience of captivity and banishment under the judicial dealings of the hand of their God.

*It is on this account that God never, in these post-captivity books, whatever His care over them, addresses the Jews as His people. But now, when the book of Ezra begins, the seventy years of their exile, which had been foretold by Jeremiah, had been completed, and Ezra relates the actings of God in connection therewith for the accomplishment of His own sure and faithful word; and it is the character of these which explains the attitude of God towards His people during the times of the Gentiles, and also, to some extent, the peculiarity of this portion of the Scriptures, as well as Nehemiah and Esther. In these books God is no longer seen actively interposing in the affairs of His people, but He works, as it were, behind the scenes, and at the same time, recognizing the new order which He Himself has established, He uses the Gentile monarchs, into whose hands He had committed the sceptre of the earth, for the execution of His purposes.

Bearing these principles in mind we shall be the better able to enter intelligently upon the study of this book. The book divides itself into two parts. The first six chapters give the account of the return of the captives who responded to the proclamation of Cyrus, and of the building of the

temple; the last four of the mission of Ezra himself.

05.01. Ezra 1

Ezra 1:1-11

THERE are two things in this chapter — the proclamation of Cyrus, and the response to it on the part of the people, together with an account of the number of "the vessels of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods" (Ezra 1:7), and which Cyrus now restored to those of the captivity who were about to return to Jerusalem. The first verse draws back the curtain, and reveals the source of the power which was acting then, and through all the subsequent events of this book, for the fulfilment of Jehovah's purposes. It runs, "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he might make a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing," etc.

Let us pause for a moment to point out how the Lord — whatever the outward appearances — holds the hearts of all men in His hands, and turneth them whithersoever He will; how He uses men of all degrees as the instruments of the counsels of His will. The very mention of Cyrus carries us a step further back. "Who," says the prophet Isaiah, speaking in the name of Jehovah, "raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him," etc.? (Isaiah 41:2.) And again, "That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid." (Isaiah 44:28.) This prophecy was uttered long before the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and at least a hundred years before Jeremiah was called to his prophetic work, and thus shows that the eye and heart of God are perpetually upon His people, and upon their interests, and that the public events of the world, the rise and fall of monarchies, the advent of mighty conquerors, are but the instruments of His power, by which He works on through the governments of the world to fulfil His own purposes in relation to His earthly people. How calmly therefore the children of God may rest amid political confusions and strife! In this way God had designated by the mouth of Isaiah, two hundred years before the event narrated in our chapter, His chosen vessel for the restoration of His people, and for the erection of His house at Jerusalem. A century passed away, and Jeremiah prophesied during the closing days of the kingdom, alternately warning and beseeching his people — warning them of the certainty of the approaching judgments, and beseeching them to repent and to humble themselves before the God whose wrath they had provoked by their wickedness and folly. It was in the course of his work that he said, "This whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord," etc. (Jeremiah 25:11-12.) Also, "For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place." (Jeremiah 29:10) First, then, Cyrus is designated long years before he was born into this world, and after another period had elapsed Jeremiah, while announcing the approaching captivity of the people, proclaims the exact duration of their exile. But there is yet another instrument, not

appearing indeed in this chapter, whom God was pleased to associate with Himself in carrying out His purposes of grace and blessing towards His people.

Turning to the book of Daniel we read, "In the first year of his reign" (that of Darius) "I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes," etc. (Daniel 9:2-3.) God had spoken the word concerning, and provided the instruments for, the restoration of His people; and yet what do we find? That one of the captives, whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away to Babylon, the prophet Daniel, had discovered, not by any special revelation. but by patient study of the writings of Jeremiah, that God had fixed the period of seventy years for "the desolations of Jerusalem."

Thereon, grounding himself upon this infallible word, he gave himself to prayer and fasting, humbling himself before God, confessing the sins of his people, and making supplication for the fulfilment of His own word. "O Lord," he said, "according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake." (Daniel 9:16-17.) Thus Daniel, identifying himself with the state of his people, and in communion with the mind of God, had the unspeakable privilege of becoming an intercessor for Israel, and for the fulfilment of the promises of God. His prayer was heard (Daniel 9:21-27); and we thereby learn that God in His grace permits His people to enter into His own thoughts, and to be associated with Himself in the accomplishment of His counsels for His own glory.

All therefore was now ready; the preparatory work had all been accomplished. In accordance with Isaiah's prediction "the righteous man from the east" had been called to the sovereignty of the Gentiles; and it is through him that the appointed deliverance must come. The next action is therefore recorded — "the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia," and the following proclamation is the result:

"Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He hath charged me to build Him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people?, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem." (Ezra 1:2-4.)

Three things are here announced; viz., the commission which Cyrus himself had received as to the Lord's house; his royal permission to any of the Jews to return to Jerusalem for the purpose of building the temple; and lastly, his invitation to those Jews who should remain in his dominions, to have fellowship with those who should depart by freewill offerings towards the object they had in view. The rest of the chapter is taken up with an account of the effect produced by the proclamation. We say "the effect of the proclamation," but the reader will not fail to notice that it was He who had stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, who "raised" the spirit of those who offered

themselves for the holy work in prospect. Two or three particulars only need to be observed. It is of importance, first of all, to point out that the chief of the fathers who offered themselves for the work were of the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin. There were also Levites, but they did not count as a tribe, for Levi had "no part nor inheritance with his brethren: the Lord is his inheritance," etc. (See Deuteronomy 10:8-9.) It is plain indeed from this and other scriptures that, though there may have been individuals from other tribes, there were but these two tribes restored. It was only therefore to Judah and Benjamin that Christ, when born into this world, was afterwards presented for acceptance; and owing to their having rejected Him, it is they, and they only of the twelve tribes, who will pass through the terrible trouble, "such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time; no, nor ever shall be," which will be consequent upon the advent and power of the antichrist in Jerusalem. For the same reason, the ten tribes will not be collected and restored until after the appearing of the Lord for the salvation of the remnant in the land. (See Zechariah 14:1-21, Ezekiel 20:33-44, Ezekiel 34:1-31, and Jeremiah 31:6-14.) In the next place, God wrought in the hearts of the neighbours of those who devoted themselves to the work of the Lord's house, for they "offered willingly," according to the terms of the proclamation, of their substance, helping, them with vessels of silver and gold, etc. Lastly, Cyrus himself showed his interest in the work, in evidence that his heart also had been touched by divine power, by restoring the vessels of the temple which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods (See Daniel 5:1-4); and these he numbered unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah. (Ezra 1:6-9)

We have thus, in Ezra 1:1-11, all the signs of a genuine work of God. Concurrence of heart and object is produced in all concerned, whether in Cyrus, without whose permission the captives could not have returned; in the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, who were needed for the actual work of building; or in those who remained, who, in having fellowship with their brethren by their freewill offerings, contributed towards the necessary expenses. There were no preliminary meetings to arrange and to come to an agreement, but the union of heart and purpose was produced alone by the action of the Lord on the hearts of all alike. This distinguishes a divine from a human work, and is the sure proof of a real action of the Spirit of God. Every needed instrument therefore comes forward at the right moment, for the work is of God, and it must be accomplished.

Ezra 1:9-10 contain the number of the sacred vessels which Sheshbazzar received from Cyrus, and brought up from Babylon to Jerusalem.

05.02. Ezra 2

Ezra 2:1-70

WE have in this chapter a register of "the children of the province that went up out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city." (Ezra 2:1) There are several interesting particulars to be noticed in the record; and the first is, that the fact of its existence shows how precious to God was the response which His grace had produced in the hearts of His people, however feebly they may have entered into His thoughts in regard to His house. On this account He has caused this list to be preserved, in evidence that He beholds with joy the smallest fruits of His Spirit's work, and that the very names of His people are known and proclaimed as an encouragement to all to walk in His ways, to be identified with His interests, and to maintain fidelity in times of corruption and apostasy. (Compare Luke 12:8 and Revelation 3:5.) In Ezra 2:2 the names of the leaders are given, and then the people are classified according to their family descent.

Examining this catalogue a little more closely, a fourfold division will be found. Down to the end of Ezra 2:42, those who were undoubtedly of Israel, of Judah, Benjamin, or of Levi (among the last both singers and porters), are described. Then follow two other classes, the Nethinim, and the servants of Solomon, concerning whom a few words will be necessary.

(1) The Nethinim. (Ezra 2:43-58.) The question is raised whether these were of Jewish descent. The word would seem to mean "those that are given;" and it has been concluded that they, from the place in which their names occur in the chapter (see also 1 Chronicles 9:2), were of another race, but had been given originally to the Levites for their service, even as the Levites — only these by divine command, and in the place of the first-born of Israel (see Numbers 8:1-26) — had been given to Aaron for the Lord's service in His tabernacle. And traces of such are found in two scriptures. In Numbers we read, respecting the spoil taken from the Midianites, "Of the children of Israel's half, Moses took one portion of fifty, both of man and of beast, and gave them unto the Levites, which kept the charge of the tabernacle of the Lord; as the Lord commanded Moses." (Numbers 31:47.) We also find that Joshua said to the Gibeonites, "There shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God." (Joshua 9:23. Compare Ezra 8:20.) It is here, therefore, that we probably find the origin of the Nethinim — those who were spared from the just judgment of God; and if reduced to servile bondage, it was bondage in His mercy in connection with His house, whereby the very curse that rested on them (see Joshua 9:23) was turned into a blessing. For what do we find? That instead of being destroyed with the sword of the Lord's host, they were rescued, and now, after the lapse of centuries, they are found in honourable association with the Lord's people, and with a heart too for the Lord's house, inasmuch as they returned from Babylon with their fellow-captives at this special moment. They are surely thus no mean foreshadowing of the objects of grace even in this dispensation.

(2) Solomon's servants. Of these the information is less distinct. But we read that Solomon levied "a tribute of bond-service unto this day" of the children of the Amorites, etc., that were left in the land, whom the children of Israel also were not able utterly to destroy (1 Kings 9:19-21); and it might have been the descendants of these who received the designation of "Solomon's servants." However this might have been, the lesson already drawn is again significant, that the least connection with the Lord's people and the Lord's things becomes a means of blessing — if not always, as it surely does not, of spiritual, yet almost ever of temporal blessing, even though it may be sometimes limited, through sin and unbelief, to length of days and earthly comfort. But with "the servants of Solomon," as with the Nethinim, there must have been more than this; for through grace they had returned, of their own desire, to aid in building the house of God at Jerusalem. The number of these two classes was three hundred and ninety-two.

We have, in the next place, two other classes occupying a peculiar and, in a sense, a most mournful position. There were some — the children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred fifty and two — who could not show their father's house and their seed, whether they were of Israel; and besides these, of the children of the priests. the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai, etc. — "these sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood." (Ezra 2:59-62.) In the land of their exile the same care as to title and qualification had not been exercised. Babylon represents the corruption to which God's people are in bondage through their sins, and hence the period of their captivity was a time of carelessness, a time indeed when they were suffering under the hand of their God, but still a time of confusion and disorder; and necessarily so, inasmuch as they were without the temple, without sacrifices, and without Jehovah's presence. But now, that, through the mercy of their God, there had been a recovery — a partial recovery, it is true, but one that contained within itself a distinct action of the Spirit of God — and now that Jehovah's house was once more to become their centre, they were properly exercised concerning the title of all who had returned from Babylon.

If any could not show their genealogy they, had no claim to take part in the work to which they had been called; and in the case of the priests the consequence was still more grave. These — if they could not find their register — were, as polluted, put from the priesthood. They were not told that they were not priests; the ground taken was that their claim was not proven. It might be at a future time; and hence "the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim." When that time arrived, the priest, who should be once more endowed with divine intelligence and discernment through the light and perfection of God (Urim and Thummim), might adjudge them to be truly priests; but meanwhile their claim was forfeited. Grace could restore what was lost under law; only for this they must patiently wait. A precisely similar thing in principle was seen during the past century. It is not too much to say that; at its commencement, the Church of God in this land was completely under the domination of the world-power. The life of God's people was sustained through the ministry of a few faithful men here and there, and through the study of the word of God; but the Church as a whole was enslaved, and had been enslaved, in Babylonish captivity. Soon after a recovery took place. God wrought in the hearts of many in different places, producing great exercises of soul; and a movement was initiated, which resulted in the deliverance of numbers in many parts of the country. The charter of their deliverance from captivity was the word of God. To it they turned day

and night, and there they found both light and life. By it they judged themselves and their ways, by it they discovered the true character of their past bondage, and from it they obtained also guidance for the future. Listening to its teachings, they once again spread the Lord's table in all its simplicity. They learned that the Holy Ghost dwelt in the house of God, and that the Lord had promised to come quickly to receive His people to Himself. Thereon they were immediately confronted with the difficulty found in this chapter — the difficulty of title and qualification to break bread at the Lord's table. In the past every good citizen might do so, and all such were often exhorted to come. No one who claimed to be a Christian was ever denied, while very many, whose lives contradicted their profession, were received without question. Could such practices be continued?

Then the answer was found, that only such as could "show their father's house." or could find "their register," had the scriptural qualification for a place at the table of the Lord. In other words, unless we have peace with God, unless we know that we are children of God through the possession of the Spirit of adoption, and can thus show our Father's house, and trace our genealogy, we have not the divine title required. Profession is not enough. In a day like this, a day of restoration from captivity, there must be the ability to verify our profession from the sure word of God; for, as the apostle says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Corinthians 10:16-17.) But it is objected; Do you not constitute yourselves judges of others? By no means. As indeed the governor said in effect to the priests in this chapter, who were put away, "You may be really priests, only you cannot produce your title. It must be left over therefore until a priest arises with the Urim and Thummim — one who can judge according to God." So now the burden of proof lies upon the one who desires to come to the Lord's table, and to be thus identified with His people. If he fail to produce it, he is not excluded by those who have to do with him, but by his inability to declare his genealogy, and if he be really a member of the body of Christ, his title, albeit all is of grace, will be fully acknowledged in a future day by the Lord Himself. It is needful that this scriptural principle should be both understood and enforced. The question of the priests goes still further. These, as we have seen, were put out from their office, the functions of which were to minister before the Lord, and to teach the people (see Exodus 28:1-43; Leviticus 10:9-11; Deuteronomy 10:8; Malachi 2:5-7); and they were also forbidden, owing to their inability to find their register, to eat of the holy things. (Compare on this subject Leviticus 22:1-16.) What a solemn commentary upon the practices that have obtained for centuries in Christendom! Forgetful or ignorant of the truth that all true believers, and no other, are priests (1 Peter 2:1-25), they have devised a way of making priests — of filling their "holy" offices by a human ordination. And such, when thus appointed, arrogate to themselves the exclusive right of approach to God, as well as that of interpreting the Scriptures. It is a small thing to say that these practices are a denial of Christianity — they are worse; for they set aside the efficacy of the work of Christ, and deny His authority, as well as ignore the sovereign action of the Holy Ghost. God alone makes priests, and every one who is washed with water (born again) is brought under the value of the one sacrifice of Christ, is sprinkled with His precious blood, as also with the anointing oil (the unction of the Holy Spirit), is set apart by Him for this office. (Read Exodus 29:1-46; Hebrews 10:1-39) Such, and such alone, can find their register among those that are reckoned by genealogy, "and have liberty of access into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh" (Hebrews 10:19-20); where, by the grace of God,

they are permitted to feast on the holy things — the various aspects of Christ as symbolized by these — in communion with God in His own presence. The number of the whole congregation, we are now told, was forty and two thousand three hundred and sixty. Besides these were their servants and maids, amounting to seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven; and among them two hundred singing men and singing women. There were also seven hundred thirty and six horses, two hundred forty and five mules, four hundred thirty and five camels, and six thousand seven hundred and twenty asses. (Ezra 2:65-67.)

Such was the large company or caravan that travelled from Babylon to Judah and Jerusalem, with their hearts set upon the holy enterprise to which they had been divinely called. But a narrower inspection of the elements of which this multitude was composed will discover the sure precursors of decline and decay. What had these pilgrims to do, for example, with singing men and singing women? Their land was desolate, their sanctuary had been consumed with fire, and was lying waste, and they themselves were but a feeble remnant just emancipated from the yoke of captivity. Surely it was no time for mirth and song! (Compare Psalms 137:1-9) Alas! every action of the Spirit of God, producing a revival in the hearts of His people, is speedily limited by man, and by his own thoughts and desires. Even the first response to His mighty power gathers with those who are really under His influence those also who will corrupt the movement and ensure its outward failure. How remarkably this is exemplified in the book of judges, and has been so in every age of the Church!

Arrived at their destination, we read that some of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God to set it up in its place. They gave after their ability unto the treasure of the work threescore and one thousand drams of gold, and five thousand pounds of silver, and one hundred priests' garments. (Ezra 2:68-69.)

It is interesting to notice the form of the statement — "When they came to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem," showing that the house, whatever its outward condition, and razed to the ground as it had been, still existed before the eye of God. Thus, though there were three different houses until the time of the Lord, it was always the same house in the mind of God. Haggai, on this account, says, as it should be rendered, "The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former." (Haggai 2:1-23) There is undoubtedly another reason for this form of words in Ezra. God would seem to have used the desolations of His sanctuary to touch the hearts of these chief of the fathers. When they came to Jehovah's house — when they saw, as it were, its condition — they were moved, and they "offered freely" of their substance; and, as the Spirit of God is careful to notice, thus setting the seal of His approval upon the act, "they gave after their ability." In this they are surely examples for all time for those of the Lord's people who have the privilege of ministering to the Lord, whether in having fellowship with His necessitous saints, or with the needs of His service. The chapter closes with the statement, "So the priests, and the Levites, and some of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, dwelt in their cities." (Ezra 2:70.) It is open to the spiritual reader to question whether this record — especially when read in the light of what took place afterward, as related in Haggai 1:1-15 — is not symptomatic of the decay of their first energy, whether it does not reveal the tendency to think of themselves and their own houses before the interests of the Lord's house. Solomon spent thirteen years in building his own house, while he occupied but seven upon the temple; and knowing what man is, it is not surprising if the restored remnant began by first minding their own things. But if so, the next chapter will show that

the word of God was still energetic in their souls, to the praise of Him who had redeemed them from captivity, and associated them with Himself in the thoughts of His heart towards Jerusalem, and towards His temple.

05.03. Ezra 3

Ezra 3:1-13 AT the close of the last chapter we have seen that "all Israel" — the remnant in fact, but taking the place of the nation before God — dwelt in their cities. The commencement of this chapter opens out another remarkable action of the Spirit of God. "And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem." (Ezra 3:1) In the book of Numbers we read, "In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work; it is a day of blowing the trumpets unto you." (Numbers 29:1) This feast of trumpets prefigured the restoration of Israel in the last days; and it was therefore with a true spiritual perception that the people assembled themselves in Jerusalem at this time — a perception which, combined with their perfect unity, showed that both they and their leaders had been taught of God, and were under the power of His word. (Compare Acts 2:1)

It is but seldom in the history of God's people that such oneness has been displayed, because it can only be produced, not by any general agreement, but by the common subjection of all alike to the power of the Spirit through the truth. Twice only has it been seen in the history of the Church (see Acts 2:1-47, Acts 4:1-37), and now it will never more be displayed on earth in the Church at large, though it might perhaps be exhibited in small companies of the saints. But here, as at Pentecost, the whole congregation were as one man — one will dominating all, and gathering them with irresistible power to one common centre; for they were all with one accord in one place in the city on which the mind and heart of God were at that time set.

Having thus assembled, there "stood up Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt-offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God. And they set the altar upon its bases; for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries; and they offered burnt-offerings thereon unto the Lord, even burnt-offerings morning and evening." (Ezra 3:2-3.) The governor, Zerubbabel, and the priest, Jeshua, (aided by their respective "brethren"), united in this blessed work, the combination of the two foreshadowing Him who will be a priest on His throne, the true Melchizedek. (See Zechariah 6:9-15.)

One of their motives in the erection of the altar would seem to have been their felt need of the protection of their God, and faith discerned that this protection would be ensured on the ground of the efficacy of the sacrifices. And what could be more beautiful than this exhibition of confidence in God? They were but a feeble remnant, having no outward means of defence, and surrounded by enemies of every kind; but their very weakness and peril had taught them the precious lesson, that God was their refuge and strength. The setting up of the altar was therefore their first object; and as soon as the sweet savour of the burnt-offerings ascended up to God, all that He was, as then revealed, was engaged on their behalf.

It will be moreover observed that their burnt-offerings were presented morning and evening. This was called, at its original institution, the "continual burnt-offering" (see Exodus 29:38-46), in virtue

of which God had been able to dwell in the midst of His people. And if His presence was no longer in their midst, if He dwelt no longer between the cherubim overshadowing the mercy-seat, the efficacy of the burnt-offering remained; and as long as faith brought this, and presented it to God morning and evening, the people were as surely under the protection of Jehovah as before; as safe as, indeed far safer than, when Jerusalem in her glory was surrounded by her fortified walls and bulwarks. They might have therefore adopted the language of one of their psalms: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." (Psalms 46:1-3.) The altar having been duly ordered, they kept the feast of tabernacles, as it is written (see Leviticus 23:33-36), and offered the daily burnt-offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required. The feast of tabernacles was a figure of millennial joy. (Leviticus 23:40.) Israel was to rejoice before the Lord their God seven days. To human eyes looking at their desolate condition it might have seemed a mockery for these poor returned captives to be keeping a joyful feast. But faith is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," and thus brings the future into present realization. Moreover, when the soul once stands before God in all the acceptance of Christ, as prefigured by the burnt-offering, it has already the certainty of every promised blessing as secured in Him. It was thus open to the believing Israelites, who stood around the altar which they had erected amid the ruins of the temple, and as they saw the smoke of the burnt-offerings ascend up to heaven, to look onward to the time when all God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would be fulfilled, and when the ransomed of the Lord would return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; when they would obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing should flee away.

They also, we are told, "offered the continual burnt-offering, both of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of the Lord that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a freewill-offering unto the Lord." (Ezra 3:5.) And it will be remarked that the striking feature of all their proceedings was, that they ordered everything now according to the word of God. (Ezra 3:2; Ezra 3:4.) Whatever they may have practised in Babylon, whatever had been their traditional rites and customs, all these had been left behind in the scene of their captivity; and now, delivered and brought back, nothing could satisfy them short of the authority of the written Word.

We might therefore characterize the proceedings narrated in this passage as the restoration of scriptural worship. This contains a principle of immense importance, and one that has found an illustration within the memory of some who are still living. There was a movement some fifty or sixty years ago, as already pointed out in a previous chapter, corresponding largely, as to its spiritual features, with this deliverance from Babylon; and the first object of the saints at that time, as with this remnant, was the restoration of the altar (using this term as a symbol of worship), and the ordering of the assembly in all its meetings according to the written Word. Customs, traditions, observances, all rites and ceremonies, were now tested by the recorded apostolic practices, and such as could not stand the proof were abandoned. It was but a remnant also that were brought out of bondage; but they had light and life in their dwellings and in their gatherings, because "as one man" they sought to give the Lord Jesus Christ His rightful place of pre-eminence as Son over His own house. In truth, God owned this movement in a remarkable manner, using it to recall believers, in every part of the land, to the authority of the written Word, to the knowledge of the

fulness of His grace in redemption, to their priestly place and privileges, to the truth of the presence of the Holy Spirit, and to the expectation of the Lord's return. And if the spiritual power of that day has not been maintained, its influence is still felt; and it is not too much to say that the whole church of God is indebted to it, through the sovereign grace and appointment of God, for the exhibition and preservation of the full-orbed truths of Christianity.

Before that time Christianity, in the hands of its public advocates. had degenerated into a mere code of morals, and the consequence was Socinianism and widespread infidelity; whereas since that day, whatever the increasing power of evil, and the rapid development of the signs of the coming apostasy, there has never been wanting a full testimony to the truth of God, and to His Christ as glorified at His right hand. All this proclaims to us, as with a trumpet voice, that the path of obedience to the written Word, in the power of the Spirit, is both the path of recovery from error, the secret of all blessing, and the true method of arresting spiritual decline.

Ezra 3:1-5 are a delightful record, and might well be studied in connection with the first days of the Church after Pentecost. (Acts 2:1-47, Acts 3:1-26, Acts 4:1-37) In both places alike individual, as well as collective or corporate, spiritual energy is manifested. Thus it was not only the new moons and the set feasts that are noticed as having been observed, but it is added, "And every one that willingly offered a freewill-offering unto the Lord." (Ezra 3:5.) When God's Spirit is acting in power, He fills the hearts of many of His people to overflowing, and the vessel, not being able to contain the blessing, runs over in thanksgiving and praise to God. This is the secret both of devotedness and worship.

Ezra 3:6-7 close up this period, preparatory to the introduction of another. "From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord. But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid. They gave money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters; and meat, and drink, and oil, unto them of Zidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa, according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia." (Ezra 3:6-7.) The record of the commencement of offering burnt-offerings the first day of the seventh month is made with evident delight. It was grateful to the heart of God to behold the return of His people to Himself, acknowledging His claims, and the only ground of their acceptance. It shows us how particularly He observes the actions of His own, and that He takes pleasure in their approach and worship. Producing these fruits by His grace in their hearts, with the same grace He puts them to their account. (Compare Ephesians 2:10, and 2 Corinthians 5:10)

Then follows, as we judge, a note of sadness — "But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid." The people had responded largely to the grace and goodness of Jehovah, in their restoration, they had rejoiced to place themselves under His protection, and had ordered His worship according as it was written in the law of Moses the man of God. But at present they went no farther. Instead of entering into God's thoughts respecting His house, they rested in the blessings into which they had now been brought. Their spiritual energy had in measure expended itself in their first efforts, and their temptation was now to pause before going farther. Such has ever been the history of all real revivals in the church of God. Take, for example, that mighty work of God, of which Luther was the instrument. At the outset the authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures was the battle-axe with which he waged war upon the corruptions and idolatries of Rome, and God wrought with him and granted a remarkable deliverance. But what followed?

Luther, and his followers alike, rested in and feasted upon the fruits of their first victories, and the Reformation subsided into a system of State churches and creeds, out of which all vitality soon departed. (See Revelation 3:1-3.) They failed to go on in communion with the mind of God — they laboured for their own objects rather than His, and the consequence was that blight and decay soon showed themselves; the movement was arrested; and now, today, the very truths which were then recovered are fast fading away (if they have not already gone) from the very places which were the scene of the conflict.

We learn therefore that the safety of God's people lies in their rising to the height of their calling. He calls us to fellowship with Himself, and with His Son Jesus Christ. If, forgetting this, we are satisfied with the enjoyment of our blessings, and lose sight of God's desires for us, feebleness and decline will soon mark us, whether as individuals or as companies of believers. If, on the other hand, God's objects are ours, if our minds are set upon what is before Him, He will ever lead us on into fuller intelligence of His purposes of grace, as well as of His ways, and into larger blessedness. He delights in our happiness, and He would ever increase this by associating us in His grace with His own objects and aims.

If, however, the children of Israel did not prosecute the work of the Lord with all diligence, they were not unmindful of the purpose of their restoration; for, as we have seen, they began to make provision for the materials wherewith to build the temple. (Ezra 3:7.) To understand the circumstances of the remnant in contrast with the glory of the kingdom when Solomon's temple was built, 1 Kings 5:1-18, and 1 Chronicles 28:1-21, 1 Chronicles 29:1-30, should be read. Together with this, it should be remembered that Jehovah, was the same, and that His resources were as available, through the exercise of faith, for this feeble remnant as for David and Solomon in all their power and splendour. True, they were outwardly dependent upon the grant of a Gentile monarch for permission to build, and for the means to secure the necessary materials; but it was God's work on which they were engaged, and, counting upon Him, He would enable them to prosecute it to a successful issue. When believers work with God, their apparent difficulties and obstacles become the servants of faith to bring, God in, before whom crooked things are made straight, and rough places plain. In this section the account is given of the actual laying of the foundation of the temple. An interval of at least seven months must be placed between Ezra 3:7 and Ezra 3:8. How it was spent is not revealed. The ostensible ground of the pause, before commencing the work of building, would seem, from the connection, to be waiting for the "cedar trees." However this might have been, "In the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the remnant of their brethren the priests and the Levites and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem; and appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to set forward the work of the house of the Lord." (Ezra 3:8.)

Three things are to be noted in this statement. Whatever the state of the people at large, Zerubbabel and Jeshua the governor and the priest, are foremost in the Lord's work. Officially at the head, they retain the spiritual lead of the people. Happy is it for the people of God in every age, when their leaders are in the secret of the Lord's mind, when they can call upon the people to follow them in His service. It is not always so: indeed, not infrequently the first action of the Spirit of God is in the midst of His people, and then the nominal leaders are set aside, or constrained to follow to preserve their place.

Secondly, the governor and the priest know how to associate the people with themselves in their sacred enterprise. This is the sure mark of spiritual power on their part, as well as a testimony to the fact that God was working with them. Thus far there were no schisms, but all were banded together by the Holy Spirit for one common object. Lastly, we find that the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, were commissioned to set forward the work of the house of the Lord. This was evidently a recurrence to the scriptural order, arising out of a divine intelligence as to the nature of the work on which they were engaged. (See Numbers 4:1-49; 1 Chronicles 23:24.) The maintenance of God's order in the work of His house is of the first importance, for it is in fact subjection to His will as expressed in His word. To man's thoughts some other method might have seemed preferable; but the only question for the Lord's servants was, and is, What has He directed? From not perceiving this, there has been perpetual conflict in the church of God between man's will and the Lord's; and, alas! the consequence has been that man and man's thoughts have almost universally usurped the place of Christ and His word. The Levites through grace readily entered upon their labours. There were but seventy-four. (See Ezra 2:40.)* In the wilderness, comprising only those who were "from thirty years old and upward, even unto fifty years old," they numbered "eight thousand and five hundred and eighty." (Numbers 4:46-48.) When the Lord therefore opened the door of deliverance for them from their Babylonish captivity, very few had cared to avail themselves of it; they had found a home, alas! in the land of their exile, and had forgotten Jerusalem, and ceased to remember Zion. The more precious to the Lord was the fidelity of these seventy-four, and with His presence and blessing they were enough for His service as overseers of the workmen in the house of God. Grace too had wrought in their hearts, for they stood "together," or, as the margin reads, "as one" in their office. This was true fellowship, and sprang from the fact that they were in communion with the mind of God concerning His house. His objects were theirs, and hence they were not hampered by divided counsels; but "as one" they set forward the workmen. Blessed augury for the success of their enterprise, as well as the evident fruit of the action of the Spirit of God!

*The children of Asaph, and the children of the porters (Ezra 2:41-42), were also Levites. Altogether, therefore, they numbered three hundred and forty-one; but only these seventy-four were available for this special work. The next two verses describe the celebration of the laying of the foundation. "And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel. And they sang together by course, in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid." (Ezra 3:10-11) It was a day of great joy and gladness; and as they had gone back to the word, "as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God," for directions concerning the altar, the sacrifices, and the feasts, so they have recourse to "the ordinance of David king of Israel," for guidance in their service of praise. (Compare 2 Chronicles 5:12-13.) In the wilderness indeed we do not read of songs of joy; they had sung the song of redemption on the banks of the Red Sea, but even that soon died away on their lips, and was succeeded by the murmurs which were begotten by, the hardships and perils of their pilgrim journey. But when in the land the ark had found a resting-place, if but for a time, in Zion, David "appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, and to record, and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel." Also Asaph and others were to play upon psalteries and harps,

Asaph himself was to make a sound with cymbals, while certain priests were to blow with trumpets. "On that day David delivered first the psalm, to thank the Lord, into the hand of Asaph and his brethren," in which the words occur, "O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever." (1 Chronicles 16:1-43) Few and feeble therefore as were the children of Israel who gathered this day on mount Moriah, they were scrupulously exact in obedience to the Word. Engaged on the Lord's work, they discerned rightly that in it human thoughts and human wisdom had no place. The Lord and the Lord alone must prescribe the method of His house.

Three classes are distinguished in this joyful celebration: there were the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the sons of Asaph with cymbals; and there were outside of these the people who answered the praise they heard with a great shout, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. None but priests were permitted to blow with the sacred trumpets (see Numbers 10:1-36), for it needs to be in the holy place, in the presence of God, in communion with His mind, to discern when to sound the notes of testimony and praise. So likewise only the sons of Asaph — Levites, "according to the king's order" — must use the sacred cymbals. (1 Chronicles 25:6.) us duly arranged, "they sang together by course, in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord," and the burden of their song was, "Jehovah is good, for His mercy endureth for ever toward Israel." But there were tears of sorrow mingled with their notes of praise; for the next verse tells us of many of the priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, those who had seen Solomon's temple in all its glory and splendour, and as they contrasted it with the house they were now commencing, they wept with a loud voice, while the others shouted aloud for joy. And truly the tears of the one and the gladness of the other befitted the circumstances of the day; for those who had seen the glory of the kingdom and the visible cloud of the presence of Jehovah, in the first temple, and who were now spectators of the desolations of Jerusalem, and felt their present impoverished condition, and their feebleness in attempting to build anew the house of the Lord, it was but natural, whatever their gratitude, that grief should predominate. For those, on the other hand, who remembered only their captivity in Babylon, with its deprivation of both altar and temple, it could be nothing but unmingled gratitude and praise. And who can doubt that both the tears and the gladness were alike acceptable to the Lord, inasmuch as both, might equally have been the fruit of the working of His grace in their hearts? Indeed, might not a parallel be found in our own times? When the Lord brought some of His people out of their Babylonish captivity, in the present century, and they entered anew upon the possession of their priestly privileges of access and worship; when they marked out again from the Word the true ground of the church, and sought in whatever feebleness to occupy it, their hearts, under the power of the Holy Ghost, would of necessity overflow in thanksgiving and praise. Now delivered from sacerdotal assumptions and claims, from the corruptions of the church and of Christianity, and filled with gratitude to Him who in His grace had opened their eyes, smitten off their fetters, and brought them into this wealthy place, they could but "shout aloud for joy." On the other hand, when the ancient men, who were more deeply instructed in the Word, and who had often pondered the beauty and order of the church in Pentecostal days, compared it with their own feeble efforts to conform themselves according to the directions of the Scriptures, and when they reflected how many of their brethren had been left behind in bondage, sorrow was as appropriate as joy. There could not but be the blending of the two, so that, as in the case of the children of Israel, there might have been a difficulty in discerning "the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people."

Altogether the celebration of laying the foundation of the temple is a beautiful scene. The reader, however, will remark that, in accordance with the nature of the book and the position of the people, the record is wholly taken up with what the people did and felt. God is not visibly in the scene, though it is apparent that all is being done for and to Him. In a word, His people are acting in faith, and faith only could bring Him in, and that of necessity was an individual thing. But we are not left without witness of God's thoughts of His people on this day. If we turn to the book of Zechariah, we shall find that He was watching His people, and interested in their doings. As yet God had not begun to speak by prophecy to His restored people, either by Haggai or by Zechariah; but, when He, some years later, stirred them up and encouraged their hearts by this means, He refers to the laying of the foundation of the temple. Zechariah thus speaks: "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you. For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth." (Zechariah 4:8-10.)

We thus learn how precious to God was the commencement of His house. His heart was set upon it, and He ever rejoices when His people understand His thoughts, and, with intelligence of His mind, seek to be found in the path of His will. Zerubbabel had laid the foundation, and he also should finish it; and this should be a sign to the people that the Lord had sent His servant. It might be a day of small things, as measured by the outward eye; but it was a day which contained within itself the promise of the restoration of the kingdom in glory, under the sway of the promised Messiah (see Zechariah 6:12-13), and it was the privilege of faith to link itself, in this day of small things, with the full accomplishment of the purposes of God towards His people.

Moreover, the eyes of the Lord — "those seven," His perfect intelligence and cognizance of all things, for they are the eyes of the Lord which run to and fro through the whole earth — should rejoice, and see the plummet in the hands of Zerubbabel; i.e., when His house should be completed. In the previous chapter these seven eyes are upon the foundation-stone. "Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant, THE BRANCH. For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree." (Zechariah 3:8-10) This scripture reveals to us the full significance in the thoughts of God of the laying of the foundation of His house by the remnant in Jerusalem. It was the assurance of the introduction of Christ, the Branch, who should secure to His people the promised blessing. So looked at, it is God that was doing all, if His people were the instruments. He laid the foundation-stone (compare Isaiah 28:16), though it were by the hands of Zerubbabel. It was His work, inasmuch as it was the fulfilment of His counsels. His eyes were upon the stone — that stone of grace and blessing; for indeed it was "a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation" — and He Himself would engrave the graving; that is, He would unfold and declare all its divine import; and then He would remove the iniquity of the land in one day. For truly it was through His death and resurrection that Christ would become the Saviour of His people from their sins, and thus the foundation-stone on which His people should be built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual

sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:4-5), and on which His people Israel should also rest, and trusting in which they should never be confounded. The consequence therefore should be full earthly blessing, every man calling his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree.

Combining the above scriptures with the narrative in Ezra will enable the reader to view the proceedings of that day with a double interest. If in Ezra the Spirit of God would associate us with the thoughts and feelings of the people in connection with their work, in Zechariah He draws us into fellowship with the thoughts of God. The people, it may be, saw but little beyond the promise of the restoration of the temple and its services; but God, with whom a thousand years are as one day, beheld in that day of small things the commencement of His work of grace and power, in virtue of which He would accomplish all His counsel — through the advent, death, appearing, and reign of His anointed — His King, whom He would one day establish on His holy hill of Zion.

05.04. Ezra 4

Ezra 4:1-24 NO sooner had the foundation of the temple been laid than adversaries appeared on the scene. It was so also in New Testament times; for wherever the apostle went, laying the foundation of the assembly, the activity of the enemy was excited. Hence his warning, "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 3:10-11) But as with Paul, so also with Zerubbabel and Jeshua the enemy assumed the guise of friendship. Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the Lord God of Israel, then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither." (Ezra 4:1-2.) The reader is not left in doubt for a single moment as to the character of these would-be helpers of God's people in their work. The Holy Spirit tells us plainly that they were "the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin," although the words of peace were upon their lips; for He knew their hearts, their aims and ends. And indeed they betray themselves in the very words they use. It is ever so; for the mere professor cannot understand the things of God. They say, "We do sacrifice unto Him" (God) "since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither." They revealed in this way their true origin; they were, by their own confession, not the children of Abraham, but Assyrians, and had therefore no claim to be of the children of Israel. These were, in fact, the fathers of the Samaritans (see 2 Kings 17:24-41) who continued down to the very end of the Jewish economy, to seek to intrude themselves into the place of privilege and blessing. It was on this account, and because of the strife thereby engendered, that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. We may learn for ourselves from this incident the source of one of the gravest dangers in the work of the Lord. The kisses of an enemy are both deceitful and dangerous, though it seems so ungracious to refuse the proffered help of professed friends. The Church to her loss has not only forgotten this truth, but has also sought on system the aid of the world in her work. She has thus become both corrupt and corrupting, illustrating anew the old proverb, "The corruption of the best thing is the worst corruption."

Zerubbabel, Jeshua and their fellow-builders, were endowed with divine perception, and hence alive to the wile of the foe. They replied to this seductive offer, "Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us." (Ezra 4:3.) It may seem to some that these leaders of the people were taking up a narrow and exclusive position, and in fact they were; but in so doing they had the Lord's mind, and were resting on a divine principle which still abides; viz., that only the Lord's people can be engaged in the work of His house. Others may call themselves builders, and profess a desire to help on His work, but they can only build in wood, hay, or stubble; and the apostle has uttered the solemn warning voice for all ages, "If any man defile" (corrupt) "the temple of God, him shall God destroy." (1 Corinthians 3:17.) No possible straits or difficulties, no

circumstances whatever, can justify the alliance of the Church with the world, the acceptance of the world's favour or assistance in the holy work of the Lord. Not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world, it is to deny both our character and that of the world itself, if we break down the everlasting distinction between ourselves and it, which has been revealed in the cross of Christ. (See Galatians 6:14; John 15:18-21.) The true nature of the offer these adversaries of Judah and Benjamin had made is seen by the effect produced by its refusal. For what do we read? "Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building; and hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even unto the reign of Darius king of Persia." (Ezra 4:4-5.) Thus failing in their object of corrupting the work on which the children of the captivity were engaged, they now throw off the mask of friendship, and seek to hinder by open hostility. Such is Satan's method of proceeding in every age. He and his servants will often transform themselves into angels of light and ministers of righteousness, because it is easier to deceive than to deter the saints; but the moment his presence and activity are detected and exposed, his rage is unbounded. How could he seek to advance the building of God's house? The foundation is Christ; "and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" (2 Corinthians 6:1-18) But, alas! Satan in the case before us gained a temporary advantage; for through his machinations, working on the fears and the unbelief of the people, he succeeded in stopping the building of the temple, even until the reign of Darius, king of Persia.

It will be perceived that these two verses (Ezra 4:4-5) are a summary of the activity of the foes of Israel during the reigns of Cyrus, Ahasuerus, and Artaxerxes; and that therefore Ezra 4:24 is connected with Ezra 4:5, the intervening passage being a parenthesis which gives an account of the way in which the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin succeeded in their designs. Moreover it would seem, from a careful comparison of the prophecies of Haggai with this chapter, that the children of Israel ceased to build long before the prohibition was obtained; for it is evident from Haggai 2:15, that they had made but little, if any, progress after the foundation was completed. Fear of their adversaries was stronger than their faith in God; and consequently losing heart, and thinking only of themselves and their own selfish interests, they began to build their own houses, and to say, "The time is not come that the Lord's house should be built." (Haggai 1:1-15) It is true that they were but a feeble remnant, and that their enemies were numerous and active; but they might have read, in one of their own Psalms, "When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple." (Psalms 27:2-4.) But, alas! our own hearts understand but too well both the weakness and the fear of these poor captives, and how easily we are disheartened by a demonstration of the enemy's power when we forget that, if God be for us, none can succeed in their designs against us, when, in other words, we walk by sight and not by faith. The failure of God's people in this chapter is therefore but the failure of His servants in all ages. From Ezra 4:6-23, as already pointed out, we have the particulars of the way in which the adversaries of God's people secured a royal decree in their favour, and against the building of the temple. Their attempt in the reign of Ahasuerus seems to have failed (Ezra 4:6), but nothing daunted they persevered with their object in the reign of his successor, Artaxerxes, and then their efforts were rewarded.*

*This is scarcely the place to discuss the question as to who were Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes. There is great difficulty in identifying them now with the monarchs of profane history. Probably the first was Xerxes, and the second Artaxerxes Longimanus. The reader may consult on the subject any good Bible Dictionary.

There are several points of instruction to be noted in the record of their proceedings. The first is the union of all the various races of the land "against Jerusalem." "Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions; the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Susanchites, the Dehavites, and the Elamites, and the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnapper brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria" (Ezra 4:9-10) — all these were banded together to frustrate the work of the Lord in the building of His house. The carnal mind is enmity against God, and there is therefore no difficulty, when God and His testimony are in question, in securing unity of aim and purpose amongst His enemies. Differ as they may amongst themselves, and even hating one another, they have but one mind when God appears on the scene. This was remarkably illustrated in the case of our blessed Lord, when the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers took counsel together against Jehovah, and against His Anointed. (Psalms 2:1-12) Even Herod and Pilate, who before had been at enmity between themselves, were made friends together by their common contempt of Christ.

It was in this way that Satan was proved to be the god of the world, for he succeeded in uniting the highest and the lowest against the Son of God, and marshalling all together — Romans and Jews, the civil, the ecclesiastical, and the military authorities, as well as the common people — he led on his army, animated by his own mind and spirit, to cut off Christ out of the land of the living. Once more in the world's history he will prove his power over the hearts of sinful men, but then to his own, and, alas! also to their everlasting destruction. (See Revelation 19:1-21, Revelation 20:1-15) So in Ezra 4:1-24, Satan, though concealed, is the active agent in stirring up these various peoples in their action against the work of the remnant. This is seen in the next point to be noticed. In the letter addressed to the king they say, "Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and bad city, and have set up the walls thereof, and joined the foundations." (Ezra 4:12.) This statement betrays the speech of the "accuser of the brethren;" for it was false, and proceeded therefore from Satan, for "when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it." So far indeed from having set up the walls and joined the foundations of the city, they had barely laid the foundation of the temple. And the reader will perceive that, though these "adversaries of Judah and Benjamin" had professed a desire to help in building the temple, on the ground that they also sacrificed to the God of Israel, they omit all reference in their accusation to the temple, and speak only of the city. Their reason was obvious. The proclamation of Cyrus was concerning the temple. If therefore they accused the Jews of building the city, they gave a colour to the charges of rebellion and treasonable practices which they insinuated; and from the king's answer it is clear that they had not miscalculated. (Ezra 4:19-20.)

Another point not to be passed over is, that the sin of Israel in the past bears bitter fruit for these children of the captivity. Their last king, Zedekiah, had "sworn by God" to be faithful to Nebuchadnezzar; but he broke his oath, and rebelled against the king of Babylon, and thus procured the destruction of Jerusalem, as well as incurred the judgment of God. (See 2 Chronicles

36:13; Ezekiel 17:12-16.) There was truth therefore in the accusation that Jerusalem had been a rebellious city; so that while the remnant themselves were under the favour and protection of God, and no one could harm them as long as they went forward in confidence in Him, they now suffered, in His government in this world, the consequence of the sins of their fathers. It is still to be emphasized that these adversaries could have had no power as against the people of God, if the people themselves had not lost faith in God and heart for their work. The apostle wrote, "A great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" (1 Corinthians 16:9); but not one of his opponents could have hindered his work, because he was counting on Him who "openeth, and no man shutteth." So had it been with the remnant but for their own sloth and unbelief; for, as already pointed out, they ceased, it would seem from their work before the prohibition was obtained. The two motives urged on the king were provision against future danger, and the possibility of loss of revenue. Thus appealed to, and the statements made concerning the character of the city in past days having been verified by the records in the royal archives, he wrote, "Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until another commandment shall be given from me. Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings?" (Ezra 4:17-22.) The adversaries were thus successful, and having received the letter, went up with all speed, armed with royal authority, and effectually provided against any attempt to continue the work of building Jehovah's house. They made them cease," it says, "by force and power." The chapter then closes with the statement, Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia." (Ezra 4:24.) This last verse, however, connects itself with Ezra 4:5, and gives the result of the enemy's opposition, of which Ezra 4:4-5 contain a general summary. The parenthesis gives the details of the way in which Artaxerxes was prevailed upon to issue his decree. Altogether it is a sad chapter — the account of the activity of Satan. The only bright gleam in it is the faithfulness of the leaders of Israel in refusing the alliance of the world. The rest of the chapter is darkness. God does not appear in it; and, looked at with human eyes, it would seem as if the enemy had completely conquered. While, however, God does not interpose, He is no uninterested spectator of what is taking place. Whatever His people are, He abides faithful; and we shall see that, though He will have His people thoroughly tested, He only waits for the proper moment to raise up a power which the enemy will not be able to withstand, and with which He will arouse His servants from their slumbers, and urge them onward in the prosecution of the object for which they had been brought back from Babylon.

05.05. Ezra 5

Ezra 5:1-17 IN Ezra 4:1-24 we saw how the people were turned aside from their work by the activity of Satan. In the first two verses of this chapter we have the record of God's intervention, by His prophets, on His people's behalf, in order to overthrow the enemy's designs. The reader will recall the special position of these restored captives. Though brought back, in the mercy of God, to their own land, they could not have Jehovah's visible presence in their midst, as in the days of the kingdom; for He had transferred the sovereignty of the earth to the Gentiles. Fire no longer came down from heaven to consume their sacrifices, and the priests were without the sacred Urim and Thummim. (Ezra 2:63.) God therefore was now purely the object of faith, and the godly had to endure as seeing Him who was invisible. On this very account it was that God came in, not by any act of power to confound the adversary, but by the word of prophecy to reach the conscience of His people, and to stir them up to confidence in Himself; and thereby to strengthen them for the conflict which their labours would involve, as well as to assure them that as long as they trusted in Him the utmost efforts of their enemies would be in vain. And herein we learn the true function of the prophet. As another has said, "Prophecy supposes that the people of God are in a bad condition, even when they are still acknowledged and prophecy addressed to them. There is no need of addressing powerful testimony to a people who are walking happily in the ways of the Lord, nor of sustaining the faith of a tried remnant by hopes founded on the unchangeable faithfulness of God, when all are enjoying in perfect peace the fruits of His present goodness — attached, as a consequence, to the faithfulness of the people. The proof of this simple and easily-understood principle is found in each of the prophets."

It should, moreover, be pointed out, that the prophet was raised up as the medium for communication with the people of God when the responsible head or heads of the people had failed. Thus when the priesthood had failed under Eli, Samuel was God's chosen vessel for His messages to His people, and his ministry continued through the reign of Saul, or at least until David was anointed king. This explains the fact that the greatest of the prophets appeared on the scene at the darkest periods of the history of Israel, as, for example, Elijah and Elisha. So in our chapter Zerubbabel, the governor, and Jeshua the high priest, were the responsible heads of the captivity; but, worn out by the harassing attacks of their adversaries, they had also succumbed with the people, and had with them ceased to build the house of the Lord. God therefore now sent prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, and they "prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them." (Ezra 5:1.) As a matter of fact Haggai (as may be seen by a comparison of the dates of their respective prophecies) received his first message from Jehovah, two months before Zechariah was employed, and it is worthy of notice as indicative of their failure that his first errand was to Zerubbabel and Jeshua (See Haggai 1:1) It is of the utmost importance (as shown in our exposition of Haggai) that the messages of the prophets should be read in connection with Ezra; for it is in these that the true condition of the people is discovered. It is evident that it was not only the fear of the enemy that led them to desist from their work, but that also their own hearts were settling down upon their own ease and

comfort. They found time to build their own houses while saying, "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." (Haggai 1:1-5.) Alas! how often is it the case that the people of God, forgetting that their citizenship is in heaven, and that therefore they are pilgrims, bend their efforts to build houses for themselves in a scene of death and judgment. So the children of the captivity, untouched by the sight of the desolations of Jehovah's house, lying waste as it was, turned aside to erect "ceiled houses" for themselves. But God was not indifferent to the state of His house, if they were, and He "blew upon" all the increase of the field because of His house that lay waste, while they were running every man to his own house, (Haggai 1:6-9)

It was to this state of things that Haggai was sent to call attention; and his words were clothed with such energy and power, that in a little more than three weeks the chiefs of the people, and the people themselves, were aroused from their selfish apathy, and they obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him; and the people did fear before the Lord. (Compare Haggai 1:1 with Haggai 1:12-15.) It would seem, then, that Ezra 5:1 of our chapter is a general statement of the work of the prophets, and that in Ezra 5:2 we have, in fact, the effect of Haggai's first message; or it may be also the general effect of the prophetic work amongst the people. "Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them." This last expression will refer to the continuous work of the prophets during the progress of the building, by which Jehovah, encouraged His people to persevere in their labours, unfolding before them the glory of the future in connection with the advent of Messiah and the establishment of His kingdom. The people builded, and the prophets prophesied, both alike filling their appointed places, and both alike fulfilling their task in fellowship with the mind of God. If the prophets spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:21.), it was Jehovah, who stirred up the spirit of the builders (Haggai 1:14); and hence all alike laboured in the power of the Spirit, and all occupied the places assigned to them by the sovereign action of the grace of God. The reader should again be reminded that the people did not wait for the renewal of their commission to build from the Gentile authorities. No doubt they were in subjection to the powers that were ordained of God, and that a decree had been obtained forbidding them to build; but God Himself had spoken, and if, therefore, they were to render to Caesar the things that were Caesar's, they were also to render to God the things that were God's. When God condescends to speak, His claims are supreme, paramount to every consideration, whatever may be the consequences entailed. This principle was recognized by the builders of a later day, Peter and John, who, when forbidden to speak or teach in the name of Jesus, replied, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:19-20.) In truth, faith links itself with God Himself, with His objects and His power, and can thus peacefully leave every other question with Him. Hence these children of the captivity obeyed the voice of their God, and went forward with their work, knowing that He held the hearts of all men in His hands, and that He could — as He did in the issue — use even the opposition of their enemies to further the work of His house. The record of the manner in which God manifested that He was above all the proud devices of the adversary is contained in the rest of this, and the following, chapter. First, we have the action of the Gentile governor, with his companions. We read:

"At the same time came to them Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shethar-boznai, and their companions, and said thus unto them, Who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall? Then said we unto them after this manner, What are the names of the men that make this building?" (Ezra 5:3-4.) The governor, in making this enquiry, was undoubtedly within his rights, and acting in the interests of his sovereign, inasmuch as a decree prohibiting the building of the city, if not of the temple, had been issued. He could know nothing of any commandment except that of his own king. The children of this world can never understand the claims of God upon His people, and it always seems folly to them that any should brave the displeasure of an earthly monarch to please One in whom they themselves do not believe.

Ezra 5:4 is somewhat ambiguous. Comparing it with Ezra 5:10, it is evident that the "we" of Ezra 5:4 applies to the enemies of Israel. It was they who asked, "What are the names of the men that make this building?" their object being to report these transgressors of his commandment to the king. It is still Satan working behind the scene; and whenever God acts on the earth through His people, Satan immediately counterworks. This will be the force of the words, "At the same time." (Ezra 5:3.) We do not read of any persecution of the people during the time of which Haggai speaks, when they were building their own houses. But at once, on their resumption of their work upon Jehovah's house, they are met by new wiles — indeed, open opposition. The house of Jehovah, was the testimony for that day, and it is this which Satan always hates. If believers settle down in the world, mind earthly things, become "dwellers on earth" — using this phrase in its moral sense — Satan will let them alone; but the moment, wrought upon by the Spirit of God, they apprehend His mind, and go forth in living testimony, the adversary will seek to turn them aside by any art or device which is likely to accomplish his purpose. We have a striking and perfect illustration of this principle in the life of our blessed Lord. as well as the exhibition of Satan's powerlessness to touch His people as long as they are maintained in dependence and obedience. (See Matthew 4:1-25) On the other hand, if Satan is merciless in his opposition, God is not indifferent to the needs and weaknesses of His servants when engaged in the conflict. We are thus told, immediately after this new effort of the enemy to deter the Jews from their work. "But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to Darius." The eye of God was upon His beloved people, beholding their danger, in order that He might minister the needed courage in the presence of the foe, to give them the consciousness of His presence and shelter, and thus to animate them to perseverance in their work. And indeed it is a wonderful thing for our souls when we in any measure realize that the eye of God is upon us. It produces in us that holy fear which makes us fearless of man, and also gives us the sweet sense of the overshadowing presence and protection of Him who has in His grace bound us to Himself by imperishable ties, while it brings to our lips the victorious challenge of the apostle, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" We are thus enabled to pursue the path of service to which we have been called in calm and peace, though surrounded by powerful enemies, because we are assured of the omnipotent succour of our God. It acts as an incentive both to perseverance and fidelity.

We have, in the next place, the copy of the letter which Tatnai and his companions sent to King Darius, from which fuller details of their visit to Jerusalem may be gathered. A brief analysis of this letter will be both interesting and profitable. They were evidently impressed with the work of the feeble Jews, for they tell the king, "We went into the province of Judea, to the house of the great

God, which is builded with great stones, and timber is laid in the walls, and this work goeth fast on, and prospereth in their hands." (Ezra 5:8.) Unlike the letter given in the former chapter, this gives at least a faithful report of the facts, though the object of both was to stop the progress of the work; while the enemy in this case bears testimony to the diligence and devotedness of the builders. The next two verses (Ezra 5:9-10) are a repetition of Ezra 5:3-4, for the information of the king; and then from Ezra 5:11-16 we have the answer which the elders of the Jews returned to their interrogators. Nothing could be more simple and beautiful than the way in which they give their own history, and that of the temple on the building of which they were engaged. In the very forefront of all they declare themselves as "the servants of the God of heaven and earth." In dealing, with the wiles of Satan there is no weapon more potent than the bold confession of our true character. The beginning of Peter's fall, or rather the first outward step towards it, was his denial that he belonged to Jesus of Nazareth. And how often since that day has it been the precursor of shame and defeat! Blessed was it therefore that these Jews were able to take their stand upon this open confession that they were God's servants: it was blessed for their own souls, the result surely of knowing that the eye of God was upon them, and it was at the same time their complete justification for commencing their work in spite of the king's decree. Moreover, they narrated the cause of the destruction of the house in past days. Their "fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto wrath," and He had given them "into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house, and carried the people away into Babylon." (Ezra 5:11-12.)

What a history! Solomon had built the house, and Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed it, and the cause of all this sorrow was their fathers' sins. And what a tale of long-suffering grace and mercy was included between these two dates; and, alas! what a revelation of the heart of man — under divine culture as it was! In a word, between those two epochs is contained the history of the kingdom under man's responsibility, established in glory and splendour under Solomon as prince of peace (David was the first king, but it was the erection of the temple that marked the establishment of the kingdom) and destroyed in the reign of weak and wicked Zedekiah. (Read 2 Chronicles 36:11-21.) Furthermore, they explain that the work on which they were employed was the result of a decree of Cyrus, in proof of which they told how he had committed to their care the vessels of gold and silver belonging to the temple, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken away. (Ezra 5:13-15.) They added, "Then came the same Sheshbazzar, and laid the foundation of the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and since that time, even until now, hath it been in building, and yet it is not finished." (Ezra 5:16.) If the account, so given by the Jews, were correct, they were entirely justified even in the eyes of man; for it was a well-known characteristic of the laws of the Medes and Persians (and Cyrus was king of Persia) that they could not be changed (Daniel 6:8; Daniel 6:14-15, etc.), and their adversaries were shown to be in error through, ignorance of the law.

Hence the letter now sent concludes with the request, "Now therefore, if it seem good to the king, let there be search made in the king's treasure-house, which is there at Babylon, whether it be so, that a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning this matter." (Ezra 5:17.)

05.06. Ezra 6

Ezra 6:1-22 THE king thus appealed to ordered the search to he made, and the decree of Cyrus was found. (Ezra 6:1-5) The statement of the Jews was thus confirmed in every particular, and even more; for it was now discovered that Cyrus had not only issued his decree for the rebuilding of the temple, but had also ordered "the expenses to be given out of the king's house," as well as directed the restoration of the sacred vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken away.

Acting then upon this decree, Darius commanded Tatnai, Shetharboznai, and their companions to cease to molest the Jews, and to allow them to continue their work in peace. God was manifestly to faith working behind the scenes, and using the power of the enemy for the accomplishment of His own purposes; affording another instance of how He causes all things to work together for good to them that love Him. For not only did Darius, on the interposition of their adversaries, confirm the decree of Cyrus, but he also issued another to the effect that all the necessary provision for the house of God should be made at his expense.

He says, "Moreover, I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews, for the building of this house of God: that, of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expenses be given unto these men, that they be not hindered. And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for the burnt-offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the appointment of the priests which are at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail: that they may offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons." (Ezra 6:8-10) When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him (Proverbs 16:7); and when found, therefore, in the path of His will, he may safely leave his enemies in the Lord's hands. So these elders of the Jews discovered, and they might have learned the lesson often taught in the word of God, and ever needed by His people, "They that be with us are more than they that be with them."

Thus God Himself was the shield of His people while they were engaged in His service; and as long as they were obedient to His word, and counting upon Him for strength and defence, it was not possible for them to be hindered. In this way Satan once more overreached himself, and was used to further the work that he hated; just as the apostle wrote in after centuries, "I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." (Php 1:12.) When Satan succeeded in shutting Paul up in prison, he thought he had gained a victory, even as he did in the most notable case of all, when he urged the Jews to demand the crucifixion of their Messiah; but in both instances his apparent success was a most disastrous defeat. We may well, therefore, whatever the opposition or persecution, go calmly forward, courageous in perseverance, because it is the Lord's work on which we are engaged, and He has said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the ages."

Darius went still further. He added, "Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house, and, being set up, let him be hanged thereon; and

let his house be made a dunghill for this. And the God, that hath caused His name to dwell there, destroy all kings and people that shall put to their hand to alter and to destroy this house of God which is at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed." (Ezra 6:11-12.) The king thus surrounded the Jews with his authority, and guarded them against further molestation by attaching the penalty of death to interference with their work. And from the language employed, it can scarcely be doubted that Darius had himself some knowledge of "the God of heaven," for he speaks of Him as causing "His name to dwell there." Be this as it may, God disposed his heart in favour of His people and of the work of building His house. The effect of the decree was instantaneous, for we read that Tatnai and his companions "did speedily" according to that which Darius had sent, and forthwith all opposition ceased, and the enemies of the work disappeared from the scene. Not only had the opposition to the work of the house of God now ceased; but God, in His care for His people, and in response to their faith, had also turned the heart of the king toward them; so that his royal power had now become their shelter and defence. Hence we read:

"And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo: and they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. And this house was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king." (Ezra 6:14-15.)

Before entering upon the particulars of this statement, we may recall to the minds of our readers a striking parallel from the history of the building of the house of God in the New Testament. In connection with the death of Stephen, there arose "a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles."

Soon after, on the visit of Saul, after his conversion (we say after his conversion, in fact several years had elapsed (see Galatians 1:1-24); but we speak of the order of the narrative), to Jerusalem, opposition was once more aroused, and the Grecians went about to slay Saul; and the brethren sent him forth to Tarsus. (Acts 9:29-30.) The statement follows: "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified (built up); and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." (Acts 9:31.) God had given them rest from persecuting enemies, and they, by His grace, used the opportunity to build themselves up upon their most holy faith. So was it with the elders of the Jews. They builded, and they were encouraged by the comfort of the Holy Ghost as ministered by the prophets.

It is of importance to notice these two classes — the builders and the prophets. As pointed out, when expounding Haggai, these two characters of service can never be confounded. A builder cannot assume the functions of a prophet, nor could a prophet exchange his prophetic mantle for the trowel of the builder. Hence the apostle says, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of the faith; or ministry (service), let us wait on our ministering." (Romans 12:6-7.) A builder is one whose work it is to lay stones upon the foundation; one, that is, who is used of God, by preaching or teaching, to gather souls, to bring them as living stones to the foundation, which is Jesus Christ. (See 1 Corinthians 3:1-23) A prophet is one who both urges the people forward in their work by the

communication of the mind of God, and who also tests everything by His word. A prophet sets the conscience in the presence of God, maintains, therefore, the sense of responsibility, and ministers guidance, rebuke, or exhortation according to the need of the moment, speaking as he is moved by the Holy Ghost — now, of course, through the written Word, but guided of the Spirit to the word suited to the case.

Thus the elders of Israel laboured, and the prophets prophesied; and it is also recorded that "they prospered through the prophesying," etc. The reason is evident. The Holy Spirit was acting in power, first through the prophets, and, secondly, in producing a response to the word of God, as ministered by the prophets, in the hearts of the builders. All through the history of the kingdom the nation prospered when they heeded the voices of their prophets; and, on the other hand, every evil consequence flowed from disregard of these heaven-sent admonitions and warnings. Nor is it different in the church of God. Whenever "the builders" are attentive to the prophets who unfold and apply the mind of God as revealed in His word, they prosper, their work is durable, and they themselves receive blessing. But if they are careless of divine guidance and monition, and work after their own thoughts, they do but corrupt the work upon which they are engaged, and introduce wood, hay, and stubble in the place of gold, silver, and precious stones. Their work may seem greater, and even more prosperous, to the eye of man; but it remains to be tested at a future day, and the Lord alone is the judge of true prosperity of service.

There was now no further interruption, for they continued their work until they, had finished it; and, as the Spirit of God carefully, notes, it was finished "according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment (or decree) of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia." All was done, therefore, in obedience to God, and by the permission of the earthly power to which, by God's appointment, they were in subjection. Blessed privilege for these workmen so to have laboured, and no small honour, it may be added, for these Gentile monarchs thus to be associated with and to be used for the execution of the purposes of God! No doubt — and the lesson ought not to be passed over — the names of the kings are thus mentioned to show, for one reason, the value God attaches to the principle of obedience to constituted authority. The only limit, as before pointed out, is where the "powers that be" intrude their claims into the province in which God is supreme. The moment human authority clashes with the claims of God over the soul it becomes null and void. With this exception (Acts 4:19) the believer has ever to submit to the powers that are ordained of God. (Romans 13:1-14)

Then the date is added on which the house was completed. It was on the third day of the month of Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. That is, there were four years occupied from the recommencement of the building until its completion. (Ezra 4:24.) How many years had passed away since the foundation was laid cannot be exactly ascertained, inasmuch as the length of the reign of the sovereigns between Cyrus and Darius is not given. It could scarcely have been less, and was probably more, than twenty years. With what long-suffering and patience God had borne with the failures of His people. And now that His purpose is accomplished, and the house builded, with what delight He calls our attention to the labours of His people. Although all had been wrought by His grace, in that same grace He reckons to His people that which He Himself had wrought. And so it ever has been, and will be, as the judgment-seat of Christ will abundantly testify. For if any of us receive for the good things we have done in the body, we shall confess to His praise that He Himself was the source and the power of all the good works which

He has been pleased to commend.

Jehovah's house being now completed, we have in the next place the account of the dedication.

"And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy, and offered at the dedication of this house of God an hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin-offering for all Israel, twelve he goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites. in their courses, for the service of God which is at Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses." (Ezra 6:16-18.)

It was but natural that they should rejoice at such a moment, for the house of their God was the expression of all the blessings of the covenant in which they stood. And at length, after weary years of failure, difficulties, disappointments, and sorrow, it stood completed before their eyes. It was for this that they had been brought up out of Babylon, and if any of them had sown in tears they now reaped in joy. But their own feebleness, and the poverty of their circumstances, may be seen by contrasting this dedication with that of Solomon's temple. Then the king offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep, besides sheep and oxen which could not be told nor numbered for multitude, which were sacrificed before the ark. (2 Chronicles 7:5; 2 Chronicles 5:6.) If they had dwelt on this aspect, their joy, as on laying the foundation, might well have been accompanied with lamentation and tears. Faith, however, has to do with unseen things, and it could thus recall to the mind of this feeble remnant that Jehovah, was no less mighty and no less merciful for them than for Solomon. The house might be less glorious, and they themselves but poor subjects of a Gentile monarch; but if God was for them, as He was, the resources available for faith were as unbounded as ever. This truth cannot be too deeply impressed on our minds, that Christ remains the same for His people in a day of difficulty as in a season of prosperity. To be in the power of this raises us, as nothing else can, above our circumstances, and gives us courage to press onward whatever the perils of the path. And faith was in exercise in these children of the captivity; for we find that they offered a sin-offering for all Israel. All Israel was not there — only representatives of two or three tribes; but these few were on the ground of the nation before God, and they understood this, and thus included in their sin-offering all the tribes of Israel. This is surely a significant lesson for the remnant gathered out in these last days to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. They may be but few, and both poor and feeble; but if they enter into the truth of their position, they will include in their hearts and in their prayers all the members of the one body. In spirit they will occupy the ground on which they have been set "with all the saints;" or otherwise they will but add another to the many sects which already divide the Church of God. This becomes easy when faith is in lively exercise; for the faith that on the one hand links itself with God, on the other links itself with all His people.

They were also characterized at this moment by obedience. They regulated the service of the house — the priests and the Levites, "as it is written in the book of Moses." The path of obedience, whether for the individual or for the assembly, is the only path of blessing. At such a time — just when the house of God was completed — it would have appeared folly to them for man to have intruded his thoughts into the house of God. Their only concern was to know what God had said — what He had directed. So was it when the house of God was built at Pentecost, in the apostolic church; and so was it when God graciously permitted the revival of the truth of the Church at the

beginning of last century. But what happened after the departure of the apostles has happened again — as also with the remnant, as will be seen in the closing chapter of Ezra — that is, the word of God as the sole regulator of His house is often displaced by man for his own convenience, or for his own wisdom. No danger is more subtle than the gradual creeping into the assembly of human thoughts and arrangements in substitution for the word of God. In effect, although not so intended, it is the deposition of the Lord from His place of supremacy over His people. There never was a time, therefore, when it was more necessary to remember the words of our risen Lord: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Following upon the dedication of the house, although actually a short interval elapsed, the passover was observed.

"And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month. For the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them were pure, and killed the passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves. And the children of Israel, which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the Lord God of Israel, did eat, and kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the Lord had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel." (Ezra 6:19-22.) The connection is exceedingly beautiful. The house of their God finished, His people celebrate the memorial of their redemption from the land of Egypt, and thus remind themselves, to the praise of Jehovah, of the ground on which they stood, and of the fact that the foundation of all their blessing, of all God's actings in grace towards them, was the blood of the slain Lamb. This, according to the word of Moses, was "a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations." (Exodus 12:42.) Nothing could show more distinctly that these children of the captivity were at this moment in possession of the mind of the Lord than their observance of the passover. Passing by the glories of the kingdom, they travelled upward until they reached the charter of all they possessed, whether in title or in prospect, and there confessed God as the God of their salvation. They thus built on what God was for them on the ground of the blood of the Passover Lamb, and they found in that, as individual souls ever find, a rock which is both immutable and immovable. Their hearts were in this feast; "for," as we read, "the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them were pure." (See Numbers 9:10-14.) They discerned what was due to Him whose feast they kept.

There were others besides themselves who united with them in this observance — those who had "separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the Lord God of Israel." Whether these were of the few Israelites who had been left behind in the land, when their brethren were carried away captive, or whether they were of the heathen, is not mentioned. In Exodus 12:1-51 it is said, "There shall no stranger eat thereof;" but it is added, "When a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it." (See also Numbers 9:14.) They were probably therefore "strangers;"* and if so, they had been attracted to the children of the captivity by witnessing the divine power that was seen in their separation from evil. Alas! we do not read of any more being thus drawn; rather the children of Israel were drawn afterwards to the heathen. It is ever the same with the people of God. When the Spirit of God works in their midst, and when, as a

consequence, they walk, in any measure, according to the nature of their calling, there will always be numbers, constrained by what they behold, seeking their company and fellowship. When, on the other hand, life and power vanish, and are succeeded by coldness and indifference, it is the world that attracts, and not the Church. Hence it is that every movement in the Church of God is most influential at the outset, because then the display of the Spirit's power is more manifest.

*This conclusion may be questioned. The reader will form, after examination, his own judgment.

After the passover, they observed, according to the word of God, the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy. (See Exodus 13:1-22) This feast followed immediately upon the passover, and derives its special significance from it. The apostle has explained this to us. He says, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Corinthians 5:7-8.) That is, the moment we are redeemed God claims us, and He desires us to respond to His claims by holy lives — separation from evil, and separation unto Himself. The feast lasted seven days; i.e., a perfect period — typically, the period of our lives. Thus in the Old as in the New Testament all God's claims upon His people are founded on redemption. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price." This, whatever the change of words, is the unvarying note, and teaches the uniform lesson, everywhere repeated, that since He is holy, we also are to be holy. Leaven must not be found in our dwellings, but we are to keep the feast perpetually with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Nor should these two things be ever disjoined in teaching. If grace — grace unbounded — is displayed in our redemption, grace should be operative in the hearts of the redeemed. If God calls us out of the world, it is not that we should go back to and find our home again in the world. If by His grace we are washed in the precious blood of Christ, He surely looks that we should keep our garments undefiled. If then the memorials of our redemption are sweet to us, if we delight to be found around the Lord's table, to feast upon the emblems of His body and His blood, let us also delight to keep the feast of unleavened bread in testimony to Him who has redeemed us, and for the glory of His blessed name.

It was a time of joy to this poor remnant; for the blessing of God rested upon them, and the heart of the Gentile king was turned towards them. For a season the clouds had disappeared, and they could rest in the sunshine of heavenly and earthly favour.

Here the first part of the book closes; the remaining four chapters are occupied with the mission and work of Ezra.

05.07. Ezra 7

Ezra 7:1-28

WE now enter upon the second part of this book. In the first part, the return of the people from Babylon and the building of the temple are narrated; and in the second we have the personal mission and the work of Ezra. It should again be noticed that the signs of the transference of governmental power in the earth from the Jew to the Gentile are everywhere apparent. Thus the date of Ezra's mission is given as "in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia," and indeed his commission for his work from the king is given at length (Ezra 7:11-26), in proof that God's people were at this time under the authority of the Gentiles, and that God Himself ever recognizes the powers which have their source in His own sovereign appointment.

It may aid the reader if the structure of Ezra 7:1-28 and Ezra 8:1-36 is first briefly indicated. After Ezra's genealogy (Ezra 7:1-5) a short summary is given of the king's permission for him to go, of his journey up to Jerusalem, and of the object of his mission. (Ezra 7:6-10) Then follows the king's letter, conferring upon Ezra authority to act, as well as the necessary powers for the execution of his work. (Ezra 7:11-26.) This chapter closes with Ezra's ascription of praise to God for having inclined the heart of the king to Jehovah's temple, and for having extended mercy to himself before the king, etc. (Ezra 7:27-28.) In Ezra 8:1-14 we have a catalogue of those who voluntarily availed themselves of the royal permission to go up from Babylon with Ezra. All these having been assembled by "the river that runneth to Ahava," Ezra finding that none of the sons of Levi were there, took measures to secure "ministers for the house of our God." (Ezra 8:15-20.) All being thus prepared, two things follow; first, fasting and supplication before God (Ezra 8:21-23); and secondly, the appointment of twelve of the chief of the priests to take charge of the silver, the gold, and the vessels which had been offered for "the house of our God." (Ezra 8:24-30) Lastly, we have the journey, and the arrival at Jerusalem, together with the necessary preparations for the commencement of Ezra's work. (Ezra 8:31-36.)

It will thus be seen that Ezra 7:1-28 and Ezra 8:1-36 should be read together, forming as they do a continuous narrative, of which Ezra 7:1-10 is the preface or introduction. The genealogy of Ezra is traced back to Aaron. (Ezra 7:1-5.) He was one therefore entitled to all the rights and privileges of the priesthood (see Ezra 2:62); and, moreover, he was a ready scribe in the law of his God, and thereby qualified to be the instructor of the people in the statutes of Jehovah, (See Leviticus 10:8-11; Malachi 2:4-7.) He became a priest by birth and consecration; but he only became "a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given," by personal study of the Word. Inherited office therefore, even with the Jews, could not bestow the qualifications for its exercise — these could only come from individual converse with God in the Scriptures; for while by virtue of consecration the priest was entitled by grace to minister before God, he could only minister acceptably when all was done in obedience to the Word, and it was impossible that he could teach unless he himself were acquainted with the mind of God. It was neglect of this second part of their office that led to the failure and corruption of the priesthood; for so completely was the

word of God forgotten in the days of Josiah, that the finding of a copy of the law in the temple became an epoch in his reign.

It is therefore of surpassing interest — like finding a beautiful flower in the midst of a sandy desert — to discover in Ezra one who, while he cherished his priestly descent, found his joy and strength in the law of his God; and in Ezra 7:10 the secret of his attainments is unfolded. He had "prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it." Let the reader ponder this significant and instructive statement — "He had prepared his heart." So the apostle prayed for the Ephesian believers, that "the eyes of their heart" (heart is the right reading) might be enlightened, that they might know what is the hope of His calling, etc. (Ephesians 1:18.) Yes, it is to the heart that the revelations of God are made, even as it was to the heart of the Magdalene that the Lord manifested Himself at the sepulchre, rather than to the intelligence of His disciples. Nor can we attach too much importance to this truth. Preparation of heart (and this also cometh from the Lord) is everything, whether for the study of the Word, for prayer, or for worship. (See 1 Corinthians 8:1-3; Hebrews 10:22; 1 John 3:20-23.)

There is yet another thing. If Ezra prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, it was first and foremost that he might do it. It was not therefore to increase his knowledge, to add to his repute as a teacher; but it was that his heart, life, and ways might be formed by it — that his own walk might be the embodiment of the truth, and thus well-pleasing to the Lord. Then followed teaching, "and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." This order can never be neglected with impunity; for where teaching does not flow out of a heart that is itself subject to the truth, it is not only powerless to influence others. but it will also harden the heart of the teacher himself. This is the secret of many a failure in the Church of God. The saints are ever and anon startled by the sudden departure from the truth, or by the fall, of those who had occupied the place of teachers; but whenever the state of the heart is overlooked, and the activity of mind is permitted upon divine things, the soul is exposed to some of Satan's most subtle temptations. A true teacher should be able in measure, like Paul, to point to his own example, and to say, as he did to the Thessalonians, "Ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake." (See also Acts 20:1-38 and Php 3:1-21)

It is evident, moreover, that Ezra was in communion with the mind of God as to His people. His heart was upon them; for we learn that he had sought permission of the king to go up to Jerusalem, and that "the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him." (Ezra 7:6.) What he desired, therefore, was the welfare, the blessing of his people, the people of his God, but being under subjection to the king, he had to obtain his leave; for the Lord will not have us, even for His own service, slight the authority under which we are placed. If, however, the Lord had put the desire to serve Him in the heart of Ezra, He will influence the king to answer His servant's request.

How good it is to leave ourselves in His hands! We are tempted oftentimes to overleap the barriers which man may place in our path, to force open the doors which the hand of man may have closed; but it is for our comfort and strength to remember that the Lord can make His way plain before our face whenever He wills, and that our part is to quietly wait on Him, ready to go forward when He shall speak the word. The recognition of the hand of God upon him was a characteristic of this devoted servant (see Ezra 7:9; Ezra 8:18; Ezra 8:22; Ezra 8:31, etc.), and it was at once the

source both of his patience and of his courage. The details of the journey, of which we have a short account in Ezra 7:7-9, will occupy us in the next chapter; and hence we may pass at once to the king's letter of authorization to Ezra — a letter which empowered him to act, defined the object of his mission, and provided, through the king's treasurers beyond the river, the means for the execution of his service in connection with the ordering of the house of Jehovah.

First, after the salutation — a salutation which shows that Ezra was a true witness in the midst of the Gentiles — the king decrees that "all they of the people of Israel, and of His priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own freewill to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee." (Ezra 7:13.) Cyrus, as seen in Ezra 1:1-11, had also accorded the same privilege; and now, after the lapse of many years, once again the Spirit of God works, through the king, to deliver His people. But no human constraint was to be exercised: if any man went up, it must be voluntarily; for God would have willing servants. If under constraint, it must be only that of the Holy Spirit. Then, from Ezra 7:14-20, the scope and objects of Ezra's mission are carefully defined even as to its details. He was "sent of the king and his seven counsellors, to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand." (Ezra 7:14.) He was, further, to take charge of the silver and gold which the king and his counsellors had freely offered to the God of Israel, also of that found in the province of Babylon, together with the free-will offering of the people, etc.; and this was to be expended in the purchase of animals, for sacrifice, etc., or as Ezra and his brethren might decide, "after the will of their God." The reader may gather the particulars of Ezra's commission for himself. His attention, however, may be directed to one or two of its instructive features. It cannot fail to be observed that this Gentile monarch refers everything to the will of God, or, to speak more exactly, that he directs that all should be ordered in subjection to that will. It would almost seem, Gentile though he was, that he was in full fellowship with the object of Ezra; and from the confession of Jehovah, as the God of heaven (Ezra 7:21; Ezra 7:23), it is not impossible that grace had visited his heart. Whether this were so or not, he carefully provides for the execution of Ezra's mission in every possible way, and at the same time entrusted Ezra with the government of his people "after the wisdom of God." Finally, penalties were attached to disobedience to the law of God and to the law of the king, rising even to death itself. The lesson lies on the surface that God is sovereign in the choice of His instruments, and that He doeth according to His will among the inhabitants of the earth as in the army of heaven, and that none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou? An illustration of this is found in our chapter in that "Artaxerxes, king of kings," and "Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of God," are yoked together for the execution of God's thoughts for His people and for His house in Jerusalem.

Ezra himself is filled with adoration as he contemplates the wonder-working power of the hand of his God; for having recorded the letter of the king, he breaks out into an ascription of praise: "Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem: and hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes." (Ezra 7:27-28.)

He adds, "And I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me." In this he showed himself to be a true man of faith. he traced everything up to God. He lost sight of himself, and to his soul God was all and in all. It was thus not his request (Ezra 7:6) that induced the king to act, but it was God who put the thing into the king's heart; it was not Ezra's influence that commended him to the king and his

princes, but it was God that extended mercy to him in their presence; it was not in his own power that he assembled the chief men to go up with him, but it was God who strengthened him with His own hand upon him. In all this he is a striking example to every believer; and happy is he who, like Ezra, has learned to live in the presence of God, to look beyond the actions of men to the power that controls them all, and to receive all, favour or persecution, aids or hindrances, from the Lord. That soul has acquired the secret of perfect peace amid the confusion and turmoil of the world, as well as in the presence of Satan's power.

05.08. Ezra 8

Ezra 8:1-36 THE close connection between this and the preceding chapter will be at once perceived. Ezra 7:1-28 closed with the words, "And I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me;" this commences with, "These are now the chief of their fathers, and this is the genealogy of them that went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king." This genealogy reaches to the end of Ezra 8:14, and it shows how precious to God were the very names of those who responded to His call at such a moment. The response itself is the fruit of His grace; but in the exercise of that same grace He is pleased to impute to His people that which He Himself had produced in their hearts. It was a goodly company, numbering over fifteen hundred souls, who were thus gathered to return to the land of their fathers — the land of all their traditions, as well as the land of all their hopes. The first act of Ezra was to assemble them by "the river that runneth to Ahava; and there abode we in tents three days: and I viewed the people and the priests, and found there none of the sons of Levi." (Ezra 8:15) There were two, but only two, priests; viz., Gershom, son of Phinehas, and Daniel, son of Ithamar; but of the Levitical family, outside the priesthood, there was absolutely not one. Well might Ezra have been concerned, for it was a sad symptom of the state into which the people had fallen. The priests alone enjoyed access to the holy place of the house of their God, and the Levites alone were the appointed ministers in all that appertained to its service; and yet when the proclamation was made that they might return and once more resume their privileges, they were untouched and indifferent. They had found a home in the very place where their fathers had hung their harps on the willows, and wept when they remembered Zion. And it is the same with God's people now. The moment they are tempted by the enemy to "mind earthly things," they become careless of their spiritual privileges, and, if not aroused from their lethargy, may even become "enemies of the cross of Christ." No child of God who understands his heavenly calling could be content to dwell in Babylon. Nor was Ezra content to leave the Levites behind. Besides, he knew the needs of the Lord's house, and it pained this devoted servant to find them caring for their own things rather than for the courts of Jehovah. He accordingly took measures to reach their consciences, that they might even yet join him in his mission to Jerusalem. To this end he sent for some of their chief men, among whom were Joiarib and Elnathan, "men of understanding." It is well for the people of God when, in times of decay and corruption, there are still men of understanding to be found. It is by these that God preserves His saints from sinking into still deeper depths, and keeps alive what of faith and hope may still remain. Ezra knew where to put his hand on some of these; and his zeal for the work on which his heart was set is expressed in the commission with which he entrusted them.

He says, "And I sent them with commandment unto Iddo the chief at the place Casiphia, and I told them what they should say unto Iddo, and to his brethren the Nethinims, at the place Casiphia, that they should bring unto us ministers for the house of our God." (Ezra 8:17.) It is said of the Lord Jesus, or rather, speaking in spirit, He Himself said, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (Psalms 69:9; John 2:17); and this was because the glory of the Father was ever His supreme

object. God's name, God's honour, were ever the delight of His soul. And Ezra also, in his measure, desired Jehovah's honour in His house, and was therefore in fellowship with the heart of God Himself. This was the secret of his earnestness in seeking to obtain ministers for the house of our God." And God wrought with him, as he himself confesses; for he says, "By the good hand of our God upon us, they brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel; and Sherebiah, with his sons and his brethren, eighteen; and Hashablah, and with him Jeshaiiah, of the sons of Merari, his brethren and their sons, twenty; also of the Nethinims, whom David and the princes had appointed for the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty Nethinims: all of them were expressed by, name." (Ezra 8:18-20.) There were still less than forty Levites, while there were two hundred and twenty Nethinims.* It is another proof that, amid the carnal ease of Babylon, the national hopes and privileges of the nation had ceased to exert any practical power upon their minds. By the side of the sloth of the Levites, it is beautiful to notice the number of the Nethinims (probably of an alien race) that obeyed the summons of Ezra.

*For an explanation of these, see on Ezra 2:1-70.

It may be in reference to this that it is said, "all of them were expressed by name." God notices their faithfulness, and caused it to be recorded.

All was now ready, as far as collecting the people was concerned; but both Ezra as well as the people needed preparation for the journey which they had undertaken. Hence he says, "Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of Him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way; because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him; but His power and His wrath is against all them that forsake Him. So we fasted and besought our God for this; and He was entreated of us." (Ezra 8:21-23.) The work of God is never lightly to be entered upon; and it was with a true discernment both of the character of the work, and of what was due to His glory who had called him to it, that Ezra proclaimed this fast, that he and the people might afflict themselves before their God. The flesh cannot be used, in any shape and form, in the Lord's service; and it is only when in true separation from all that it might feed upon, and in humiliation in the presence of God, that our motives, aims, and objects are tested and become apparent. Thus amongst those that had gathered around Ezra, some might have been attracted by other things than the welfare of the house of their God. This is always the case in any action of the Holy Spirit. Ezra, therefore, would have all searched by the light of God's holy presence, that they might learn that nothing would avail to protect and guide them in their journey, and nothing could sustain them by the way or in their after service, but the good hand of their God. Thus it was that he and they together fasted, afflicted their souls, and prayed. And the question may well arise whether in this day our service for God is not often too easily taken up; whether it would not conduce to spiritual power and efficacy if, before we embarked upon anything for God, we were more frequently found in this attitude of Ezra and his companions. Far be it from us to insinuate for one moment that the Lord's servants do not thus seek His face before commencing their service. Our question concerns rather collective waiting upon God, with fasting, before work is entered upon in which the saints at large have a common interest. It was understood in the early Church; for we read, "There were in the Church that was at Antioch prophets. . . . As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me now*" Barnabas and Saul for

the work whereunto I have called them." (Acts 13:1-2.) If there were but a revival of such a practice in the power of the Holy Ghost (for to imitate it without the power would be worse than useless), far larger results from service in teaching and ministry might be confidently anticipated.

*This word "now," or some such, should be inserted as a translation of the Greek particle *de*, and as showing the connection between the ministering and fasting, and the command of the Holy Spirit; in fact, the Holy Spirit responded to the prayers of these prophets.

Another reason for this gathering actuated Ezra. He was a man of faith, and he had avowed before the king his confidence in God for protection during his journey, and he would not therefore ask for a military escort. And now, in consistency with his profession, he, together with the people, cast himself on God for guidance, for a "right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance." As every believer knows, it is one thing to express trust in God before a difficulty comes, and another thing to maintain that dependence in the presence of, and when passing through, the difficulty. Ezra was able to do both, and was able to rest in the assurance that the hand of his God would be upon all them that seek Him for good, and that His power and His wrath would be against all them that forsake Him. All this he doubtless told out before the Lord during this fast, and indeed he had pledged the faithfulness of God before a Gentile monarch, so that the name and honour of Jehovah, were concerned in appearing for His servant. Ezra tells us, "So we fasted and besought our God for this; and He was entreated of us." Yea, God delights to respond to the confidence of His people, and to appear for those who testify to what He is for them amid trials and dangers. The reader should remark, that it was no imaginary danger which Ezra had conjured up; for he records afterward to the praise of his God that "He delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way." (Ezra 8:31.) Surely God is the refuge and strength of His people, and a very present help for them in trouble, and they would know it more fully if, like Ezra, they did but learn to count upon Him as all-sufficient in all possible circumstances. When Nehemiah made the same journey some years after, he was accompanied by captains of the army and horsemen. (Nehemiah 2:9.) In him faith was not in such lively exercise, though he had a true heart for the Lord's interests. How much better to trust in the Lord than in a visible arm! and they that wait on Him will, like Ezra, never be ashamed. In the next place Ezra "separated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren," to take charge of the offerings he had received for the house of their God until they should arrive at Jerusalem. (Ezra 8:24-30.) The ground of the choice was, that they were "holy unto the Lord," as also were the vessels. (Ezra 8:28.) As the prophet said, "Ye must be clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." And this we know was according to the divine order; for none but the priests and Levites could touch or carry the holy vessels or furniture of the house of God. (See Numbers 4:1-49)

Out of a blind misconception of this, and of the nature of Christianity, has grown the ecclesiastical custom of setting apart an order of men, the clergy, for ministration in the Church. It is quite true that those who minister in any way from the Lord to His people must needs be set apart for their service; but this must be accomplished, not by the hands of men, but by the sovereign action in grace of God through the power of the Holy Ghost. Under law there was a distinct class of men — the priests and the Levites — but these were divinely appointed and divinely consecrated; but under grace, while there are still distinctions of gifts and services (1 Corinthians 12:1-31), all believers alike are priests, and as such have an indefeasible title to appear in the holiest in the

immediate presence of God.

It was then to the custody of the priests that Ezra committed the holy vessels, and the silver and the gold, which had been given as a free-will offering unto the Lord God of their fathers. And he enjoined them to watch and keep these things "until ye weigh them before the chief of the priests and the Levites, and chief of the fathers of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the Lord." (Ezra 8:29.) The expression "weigh them" contains a principle of importance. It was not that Ezra doubted the fidelity of the priests he had selected; but even as the apostle of a later age, he would "provide for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." (2 Corinthians 8:21.) The people might have had full confidence in the integrity both of Ezra and of the priests; but Ezra would remove all occasion for the enemy's work by having the vessels, and the silver and the gold, weighed when put into the priest's hands, and again weighed when delivered. He thus proved his and their fidelity. And surely this is a godly, a scriptural example to be followed by those who in any way have charge of the offerings of the Lord's people. Such should be careful to render an account of their stewardship, and not wait to be pressed to give it.

Many a difficulty in the Church of God might have been obviated if this practice had been adopted, It may further be noted that on reaching Jerusalem the weighing was done by others than Ezra, "and all the weight was written at that time." (Ezra 8:33-34.) In modern language, the accounts of Ezra were checked and audited, and this was done on the fourth day after the completion of their journey. In Ezra 8:31 we have a short statement (already alluded to) concerning their journey. It simply records the faithfulness of their God in answer to their prayers. "Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go to Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way. And we came to Jerusalem." In Ezra 7:9, it is said that they began to go up upon the first day of the first month, this being the probable date of gathering the people to the river Ahava. (Ezra 8:15.) The actual journey occupied therefore a little less than four months; and Ezra testifies that God safely guided them through all its perils and dangers, and shielded them from all their foes. Truly "the name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." Nor were they unmindful of the Lord after the difficulties of their journey were over; for "the children of those that had been carried away, which were come out of the captivity, offered burnt-offerings unto the God of Israel, twelve bullocks for all Israel, ninety and six rams, seventy and seven lambs, twelve he goats for a sin-offering; all this was a burnt-offering unto the Lord."

It is touching in the extreme to see this feeble remnant, as also was the case at the dedication of the house of God (Ezra 6:17), embrace in their faith the whole of Israel. They were but few in number, but they could accept no narrower ground than that of the twelve tribes, and to this they testified by the number of their offerings. It is the same now, or should be so, with those who are gathered out to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ on the ground of the one body. They also may be few, feeble, and poor; but if they have any intelligence of the wealthy place into which they have been brought, they will refuse any narrower ground than that of all the members of the one body; and if they hold this truth in power, their sacrifices of praise will bear witness to it in the presence of all. Failing to do so, they degenerate, whatever their profession, into the narrowest sectarianism, than which nothing is more abhorrent to the mind of the Lord.

Others may taunt them with their poverty and broken condition; but if they do but, "with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love," endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, maintaining before God the sense of oneness with all the saints, the Lord will abundantly sustain them with His approbation and blessing.

It will be noticed that there were two kinds of sacrifices — burnt-offerings and sin-offerings. From the numbers, it would seem that the twelve he goats, as well as the twelve bullocks, were for all Israel, and that the other offerings were individual, the spontaneous expression of grateful hearts for the mercy of Jehovah, towards them, in bringing them in safety to Jerusalem and to His house.

Having thus put themselves under the efficacy of the sacrifices, and having established their relationships with God on the only possible ground, they proceeded to deliver "the king's commissions unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors on this side the river: and they furthered the people, and the house of God." (Ezra 8:36.) This order is as instructive as beautiful. They first placed themselves under the favour of God, through their offerings, and then they turned to the king's officers. They gave their God their first thoughts and the first place, and they owned thereby that all depended on Him. He answered to His people's confidence by touching the hearts of the lieutenants and governors, and inclining them to favour His people and the object they had in view.

How blessed it is to be wholly dependent on God, and to look to Him alone to further His cause!

05.09. Ezra 9

Ezra 9:1-15

WHOEVER seeks the welfare of God's people must expect a path of trial and sorrow; for, with the affections of God Himself actuating him, the servant will, in his measure, identify himself with their state and condition while labouring for the glory of God in their midst. This was perfectly exemplified in the life of Him who was able to say, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;" and also, in no mean degree, in His servant Paul, who says, in the power of the Holy Ghost, "I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." (2 Timothy 2:10)

It was the experience also of Ezra in the opening of this chapter. Filled with a holy zeal, he had been moved to come up to Jerusalem, that he might "teach in Israel statutes and judgments;" and he finds at the very outset that many of the chosen people had already sunk nearly as low as, if not lower than, the Canaanites, whom God had cast out before them. He says:

"Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass." (Ezra 9:1-2.)

Such is man! Nay, such are the people of God when following the inclination of their own hearts, instead of walking in obedience to His word! Remark, moreover, that when the saints fall into sin, it is often into worse and grosser forms of sin than those committed by the people of the world. It is as if Satan, having gained the advantage over them, would mock at and triumph over them by displaying the most horrible forms of the flesh. In the case before us, it was not only the abominations of the Canaanites, etc. (the former inhabitants of the land), but also those of the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites, into which the children of the captivity had fallen; i.e., into every possible form of corruption. And all this had taken place in so short a time — within a few years of the completion of the temple. Objects of the special grace of God in their deliverance from their Babylonish: captivity, they had turned His grace into lasciviousness.

What forbearance and long-suffering on the part of Him who had restored them once again to the land of their fathers, in that He did not instantly deal with them in judgment! But if His people are ever the same in their backsliding and sins, He is also unchangeable in His mercy and grace. Hence the gifts and calling of God are without repentance; and therein, and therein alone, lies the security of His people. The special sin here mentioned is, that "the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands;" i.e., by inter-marriages. This had been expressly forbidden.* (See Exodus 34:12-16.) It was therefore in wilful disobedience that they had contracted

these shameful alliances with the world; for this is what these marriages typify — the besetting sin of God's people in every age. The apostle James thus says, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be" (is minded to be) "a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4); and the apostle Paul cries, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial?" etc. (2 Corinthians 6:14-15.) For if Jehovah, deigned to say that He was married to Israel (Isaiah 54:1-17; Jeremiah 2:1-37), believers now are said to be married to Christ. (Romans 7:1-25; 2 Corinthians 11:1-33) Whether for the Jew therefore or for the Christian to unite himself with the world is both unfaithfulness and sin, as well as to forget the holy place of separation into which the former had been, and the Christian is called.

*That it was not inter-marriages only may be gathered from the passage above cited from Exodus, as also from Numbers 25:1-18; in fact, all the abominations of the idolatry of the several nations named were connected with these marriages. Nor was this sin confined to any one class of the people. "The hand of the princes and rulers had been chief in this trespass," and the priests and the Levites, as well as the people, are distinctly named. It would seem then that the princes and rulers had first set the example, and that the others had only been too ready to follow. "One sinner destroyeth much good," especially when that one has a place of position and influence. As when a standard-bearer fainteth in the day of battle, the soldiers are often discouraged and so easily defeated, so after Satan has succeeded in entrapping a leader in the Church of God, he often finds it easy work to ensnare many who are less conspicuous. On this account the sin of a ruler or priest under the law needed a larger sacrifice than that of one of the common people. It is therefore a solemn thing — solemn for himself and for the consequences entailed — when a "prince" or "ruler" becomes the leader of God's people into the path of worldliness and idolatry.

Such were the heavy tidings brought to the ears of Ezra soon after his arrival in Jerusalem; and in the next verse we have the effect produced upon this pious and devoted soul. He says, "And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished." (Ezra 9:3) He was thus smitten with a great and unspeakable grief because of the sins of his people, and the secret of the intensity of his sorrow, expressed in all these outward signs of humiliation before God, was that he felt in his inmost soul the dishonour done to Jehovah's holy name.

It is comparatively easy to feel for God's people when they are dishonoured by their sinful conduct in the eyes of the world; but it is only those who are, through, the power of the Holy Ghost, in communion with the mind of God, those who share in His affections for His own, those therefore who first and foremost are filled with zeal for the maintenance of His glory, that can estimate their sin as it affects the holy Name by which they are called, can go down, take up, make the sin their own, and tell it all out before God. Moses, Nehemiah, and Daniel are examples of this in their several measures, as well as Ezra; but all these, with others that might be named, are but feeble foreshadowings of Him who so identified Himself with His people that in confessing their sins He said, "O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee." (Psalms 69:5.) The grief and humiliation of Ezra were used to reach the consciences of others, or rather to attract to him all who in any degree had mourned over the condition of the people; for he tells us, "Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the

transgression of those that had been carried away." (Ezra 9:4.) "To this man," says the Lord, "will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word;" for trembling at God's word is the evidence of a tender conscience, of one walking in the fear of God, and desiring to be found in His ways. Blessed was it therefore that there were still such among the children of the captivity, though it would seem their trembling sprang rather from an apprehension of the consequences of the transgression of their fellows, than from a gracious fear of offending their God.

However this might have been, where had they been, and where their testimony before the arrival of Ezra? But that their hearts were true is shown by their taking their stand at this critical moment with him; and we learn at the same time that we have no power to help our brethren until we distinctly and openly take our stand against the evil by which they have been ensnared. Faithfulness to God is the first qualification for helping others.

Ezra retained his place in the dust — borne down by his inexpressible sorrow — until the evening sacrifice. If on the one hand he was heart-broken on account of the people's sin, on the other he discerned, in the exercise of faith, the only ground of approach to God concerning it. In a word, he laid hold of the efficacy of the sacrifice as the foundation on which he could appear before God to spread out before Him the iniquities of the children of Israel. (Compare 1 Samuel 7:9; 1 Kings 18:36, etc.) The evening sacrifice was a burnt-offering, all of which, consumed on the altar, went up as a sweet savour unto the Lord; and when once Ezra was before Him in the value of this — in all the value typically of what Christ was to God in His death — the success of his intercession was assured. The Lord Himself could on this account say, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." (John 14:13.) It was then, as understanding the value of the sacrifice, that Ezra rose up from his heaviness, and having rent his garment and mantle, he fell upon his knees, and spread out his hands unto the Lord his God, and confessed the sins of his people. Let us examine a little these outpourings of his burdened heart.

Remark, first, how completely he takes the place of the people before God. He says, "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my, God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." (Ezra 9:6.) Not even in spirit does he separate himself from those who had sinned; he and they — indeed, all the people — are one, corporately one before God. It was so in the eyes of God Himself; for when Achan transgressed, He said to Joshua, "Israel hath sinned." Ezra understood this, and was thus qualified to become an intercessor for the people with God; for unless we apprehend our oneness with God's people, that their sin and sorrow are our sin and sorrow, we cannot truly bear them on our hearts before the Lord in the time of their need.

Having thus taken their place, Ezra confessed that nothing but sin had marked them from the days of their fathers, and that all God's judicial dealings with them, in delivering them "into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day," had been on account of their iniquities. He justified God in all His past dealings with His people. And then he owned the grace that had been shown to them from the Lord their God in bringing back a remnant, "and to give us a nail in His holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. For," he adds, "we are [not were, as in our version] bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy

unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem. (Ezra 9:8-9.) The order of Ezra's confessions is most instructive. Having owned the sins of his brethren, and justified God in His ways with His people, he in the next place magnifies the grace which had visited them in their low estate, and had brought them — a remnant — back to the land, and permitted them once again to set up the house of their God. But why does he recite this proof of Jehovah's grace and mercy? It was to show the character of His people's sin; for he proceeds, "And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments;" and then he confesses that they had sinned against both light and grace. He conceals nothing, and extenuates nothing, but spreads all out before God, whilst he owns that if, after all the mercy they had received (Ezra 9:13), they should again break God's commandments, and "join in affinity with the people of these abominations," God might well be angry with them till He had consumed them, "so that there should be no remnant nor escaping." (Ezra 9:14.) He then concludes by once more justifying God, and by taking His part against himself and the people. He says, "O Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous, for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this." (Ezra 9:15.)

There is much in this inspired confession to commend to the attention of the Lord's people. Its main features have already been indicated; but we desire to emphasize the fact that Ezra from first to last justifies God, and lays bare the iniquities of his people. This in itself is not only a proof of the work of the Holy Spirit, but also a promise of blessing. The place of confession is always the place both of restoration and of spiritual power; and hence it is always a sign of a bad condition when that place is rarely taken. Let us then for a moment challenge ourselves. We have more than once pointed out the correspondence between this remnant and that gathered out to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in the present day. Is there no correspondence between the sins of the two? Is it not the fact that we have largely "joined in affinity" with the people of the world? Have we not submitted ourselves to their habits, ways, and customs? Is not worldliness our bane? Are not traces of Egypt to be seen everywhere in the assembly? Do we not think more of riches and, social position than of the fruits of the Spirit?

Moreover, is it not seldom that our sins (we do not mean our individual sins, but the sins of God's people) are really confessed in our meetings? Nay, is there not an unwillingness on our parts to hear our sins spread out before the Lord? If, for example, our departures from the word of God are owned, our setting aside the authority of Christ, our coldness, our unfaithfulness to the Lord and His truth, our want of separation — if these things are told out in our meetings for prayer, is there not often a manifest impatience, a feeling like that expressed in Malachi, "Wherein have we done this or that?" But we cannot too soon learn the lesson that the Lord will have reality; that, if we are blind to it, He sees our condition, and that until we are brought to own it, like Ezra in this scripture, He must from His very love to us deal with us in corrections and chastisements.

It should also be observed that Ezra does not once pray for forgiveness. Nay, with any intelligence of the mind of God, it was impossible that he should do so. When there is known evil in our hearts or in the assembly, our first responsibility is to judge it, not to pray for forgiveness. Thus, when Joshua lay on his face before the Lord, after the defeat of Israel by the men of Ai, the Lord said, "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned," etc. And yet how often does Satan beguile the Lord's people, in a time of manifested evil, by suggesting through one or

another, Let us pray about it. Confess our sins we surely should, but even then only as seeking grace and strength to deal with the evil, and to separate ourselves from it; for if Ezra lay before the Lord in this chapter owning his people's guilt, we shall see him in the next energetic in dealing with the sin he had confessed, and resting not until it had been put away.

05.10. Ezra 10

Ezra 10:1-44 THE Lord used the sorrow of His servant to reach the consciences of His people, who had been guilty of transgressing His commandments; for, in truth, the sorrow of Ezra was no common sorrow. Every indication is given of the intensity of his grief. When he "had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God." By his prayer, his confessions, his tears, and his prostration before God, he had told out his grief for the sins of Israel; and he had done so publicly "before the house of God." It became known therefore to those for whom he had been pleading; and "there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore." (Ezra 10:1.)

It would seem that the tears of the people proceeded either from contrition, or from fear of the consequences of their misdeeds. Ezra was armed with authority (see Ezra 7:25-26), and his zeal for his God was manifested; and they therefore knew that he would proceed to separate them from the evil for which he had humbled himself before God. This would entail upon many of them the most bitter consequences. Though they had acted in self-will, in disobedience, their hearts might have been truly upon the wives they had married, and upon their children. To separate from them might thus involve the rending of the most affectionate ties, a prospect which might well cause them to weep. That this is the explanation of their tears seems plain, from the fact that women and children were found with the congregation that had gathered about Ezra. Alas! how hard it is to retrace the steps of unfaithfulness and sin! And how often the bitter fruits of it remain for the rest of our lives!

There were some, however, who saw the necessity of proceeding at once to act in the matter, at whatever cost, knowing, as they must have done, that Jehovah, could not bless them, or prosper them in the land, as long as they were living in open violation of His commandments. "Shechaniah the son of Jehiel," we read, "one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it." (Ezra 10:2-4.)

Several points in this address of Shechaniah may with profit be noticed. First, it is worthy of attention, as noticed in the last chapter, how the Lord uses the faithful zeal of one to arouse others to the sense of their condition. Before the advent of Ezra, the consciences of all seem to have been deadened. Not even Jeshua or Zerubbabel appear to have been troubled because of the prevailing sin. Ezra was alone, and alone he would be, if necessary, in taking the part of God against the transgression of the people. But it needed courage and a single eye, and both these things Ezra, by grace, possessed. And he had God with him in the part he was taking; and now we see the effect. Shechaniah comes forward on behalf of the people, owns their sin, and accepts the

necessity of subjection to the Word; and besides him there were those who trembled at the commandment of God (those alluded to in Ezra 9:4), who had been drawn to the side of Ezra. In times of evil, the only path of blessing — and even of success, in its divine sense — is the path of fidelity.

Secondly, it may be observed, that both wives and those born of them were to be put away. The wives, not being of Israel, were unclean, and the children, the fruit of the mixed marriages, were also regarded as unclean. This was under law, — but now under grace all this is reversed. Not that a Christian is at liberty to intermarry with the unconverted; but, as the apostle teaches, "the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." (1 Corinthians 7:14.) That is, if either husbands or wives, converted after their marriage, find themselves linked up with the unconverted, the above instruction applies to their case.

Under law, as in the scripture before us, the heathen wife and her children were to be sent away; but under grace the unbelieving wife is sanctified by her husband, and the children are holy. It will be readily understood that the sanctification referred to is of an external character, as well as the holiness of the children. The wives and children were dismissed under the law because they were unclean, and as such could not be admitted into the congregation of Israel; but under grace the unconverted wife is sanctified through the husband, and is thus considered as set apart for God with His people on the earth. So also the children,* they are holy; i.e., separated off from the world through the death and resurrection of Christ, and reckoned therefore on earth as belonging to His people. If this holiness is purely external, and carries no saving power with it, as it surely does not — for salvation is ever connected with the personal exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ — it yet bestows the inestimable privilege of being in the place of blessing, the sphere where the Holy Spirit dwells and acts.

*There is a difference between the sanctified wife or husband and the holiness of the children. That of the former is relative, while that of the latter is absolute.

Grace could not be confined within the narrow limits of the law, even as our Lord taught when He said, "No man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish." (Luke 5:37.) And how precious to us to learn that the heart of God is interested in all who are linked up by natural ties with His people on the earth!

It may also be pointed out that Shechaniah owns the authority of the Word. "Let it be done," he says, "according to the law." The restoration of the authority of the law over the ways, if not over the hearts and consciences, of the people was the object of Ezra's mission (Ezra 7:10), and God had now provided him with a helper in Shechaniah. There is, in truth, no other way of reformation amongst God's people. In the course of time, as may be seen in every dispensation, customs, human maxims, traditions, etc., are adopted to the neglect of the written Word (see Matthew 15:1-39; 1 Timothy 4:1-16 etc.), all of which are the fruitful cause of corruption, both in heart and life as well as in the government of God's house. The only remedy therefore in times of departure is the rigid application of that Word which is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and the refusal of all which it condemns. Thereby also the people themselves are brought into the presence of God and His claims, and are encouraged to hear what "the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Individual consciences are aroused and enlightened, and, acted upon by the Spirit of God, all who tremble at the word of the Lord (Ezra 9:4) are drawn together in the common desire that the Lord's name may be vindicated and His supremacy be restored. Shechaniah's counsel was thus of God, and sprang from a true perception of the cause of Israel's sins, and what was due to Him whose name had been profaned by the transgressions of His people.

Finally, he urges Ezra forward. "Arise," he said; "for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it." How grateful these words must have been to the burdened heart of Ezra! And doubtless he would see in them the interposition of God in answer to his prayers. He had indeed learned the source of all wisdom and strength; and thus he turned to the Lord before he sought to rectify the abuses which were prevalent in the midst of Israel. Hence the Lord went before him, prepared the way and inclined the people to confess and put away their sin.

It is an immense thing to learn, as Ezra had done, that nothing can be accomplished for God by human energy, that it is only as He gives wisdom and strength, discernment and opportunity, that anything can be accomplished.

Ezra redeemed the opportunity which the Lord had thus made for him, and he "made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they should do according to this word. And they swore." (Ezra 10:5.) He thus bound them by a solemn oath to do what they had promised. One cannot but be struck with the spiritual power thus exhibited by one man. The secret of it was, that he was in communion with the mind of God, was standing in faithfulness for God in the midst of common unfaithfulness; and thus God was, and wrought, with His servant. To the outward eye, Ezra was almost alone; but the truth is, it was God and Ezra; and thus it came to pass that the hearts of the people were bowed before him. What a difference it makes when God is brought in! Many a servant might well be daunted when he views the opposition and difficulties by which he is confronted; but the moment he raises his eyes to the Lord, he measures everything by what He is, and immediately the obstacles he deplored become to his faith but occasions for the display of His power in whom he was trusting. Our only concern therefore should be — to see that, like Jonathan, we are working with God. The work, however, was not yet done, and the sorrow of Ezra continued as long as the sin remained; for he felt in his inmost soul the dishonour done to the name of his God. He then, we read, "rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and when he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away." (Ezra 10:6.) Ezra felt the sin of his people according to God, and it was in this way God qualified him to separate His people from their sin. When the Lord came down from the mount, and cast out the demon from the afflicted lad, His disciples asked, "Why could not we cast him out?" The answer was, "Because of your unbelief;" and then, after declaring the efficacy of faith to remove mountains, He added, "Howbeit, this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." And surely we may say that an unclean spirit had entered into Israel at this time, and it was precisely because Ezra had been before God with prayer and fasting that he could be used to cast him out. Yea, is it not the secret of all spiritual power — to be thus alone with God? There is indeed no power without it, and hence the want of it betrays the fact that we have been so little like Ezra in this scripture.

Proclamation was thereon made "throughout Judah and Jerusalem" that all the children of the captivity should come within three days to Jerusalem, under the penalty for disobedience of the forfeiture of their substance and excision from the congregation. (Ezra 10:7-8.) All came, "all the men of Judah and Benjamin," in the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month. It must have been a striking scene, one easily recalled, as here described — "And all the people sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of this matter, and for the great rain." Their bodily discomfort did but add to the sorrow within.

Ezra rose and addressed them. First, he charged them with their sin (Ezra 10:10), and then urged them to confess "unto the Lord God of your fathers, and do His pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives." (Ezra 10:11) His first thought therefore was concerning what was due to Jehovah, but if they confessed to Him they must submit themselves to His will.

Too often the soul deceives itself even by confession — confession without judging the sin. Ezra was too well instructed in the word and in the ways of God to permit this; and hence there must be self-judgment and separation from the evil as well as its confession. The order of the separation too is most instructive — "From the people of the land, and from the strange wives." As marrying the strange wives had been the sin, it might be thought that these would be mentioned first. But what had led to these marriages? Association with the people of the land. This was the root of the mischief, and Ezra thus deals first with it. So in all departures from God, until the root is discovered nothing is gained, and restoration is impossible. The Lord Himself has given a perfect illustration of this in His dealing with Peter. Not until He had asked him three times, "Lovest thou me?" (once, "Lovest thou me more than these?" for confidence in his own love to Christ — a love, as he affirmed, greater than that of the rest — was the cause of his fall) did He effect his restoration. It was on this same principle that Ezra acted when he demanded separation, first of all, from the people of the land. The power of God was still manifestly with His servant. The people assented to his demands, for they had been made to feel that "the fierce wrath of their God" was upon them because of their sins. They answered, "As thou hast said, so must we do." They only pleaded that the work could not be carried out there and then; for they said, "The people are, many, and it is a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without, neither is this a work of one day or two: for we are many that have transgressed in this thing. Let now our rulers of all the congregation stand, and let all them which have taken strange wives in our cities come at appointed times, and with them the elders of every city, and the judges thereof, until the fierce wrath of our God for this matter be turned from us." (Ezra 10:12-14.) The plea and counsel of the people were accepted, and we have in the next place the names of those who were employed about the matter.* (Ezra 10:15) Further we are told that "Ezra the priest, with certain chief of the fathers, after the house of their fathers, and all of them by their names, were separated [i.e., set apart for this work], and sat down in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter. And they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives by the first day of the first month." Thus in two months the work was completed. Thereafter is given a list of the names of those who had transgressed, concerning which there are two or three remarks to be made.

*It is not clear whether those named in Ezra 10:15 were not rather opposing the suggestion of the people. One translation gives, "Stood up against this matter." Certainly Ezra and the chief of the fathers did the work. (Ezra 10:16.)

First, the names of the priests who had fallen into sin are recorded, and these are divided into two classes. In Ezra 10:18 there are "the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren;" and in Ezra 10:20-22 other priests. (See Ezra 2:37-40.) The former were held, it would seem, to be the more culpable, and with reason; for Jeshua had been associated, in the grace of God, with Zerubbabel, as the leaders of His people in building His house. It shows how that all conscience had been lost as to the character of their sin. "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they [the people] should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts;" but in this case the priests had corrupted the people by their evil ways. But now being dealt with "they gave their hands that they would put away their wives; and being guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for their trespass." This, it will be observed, is only said of the kindred of Jeshua. The names of the rest, priests, Levites, singers, porters, and Israel are singly given. This leads to our second observation — that nothing escapes the eye of God. By Him all our actions are weighed and recorded, one day to be produced either to magnify His grace, or (if we include unbelievers) as the ground of righteous judgment. "We must all," says the apostle, "appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10)

Finally, it may be pointed out that while Ezra, as may be seen from Nehemiah (Nehemiah 8:1), continued to labour in the midst of his people, he no longer appears as the prominent figure — as the leader. Together with this chapter his special work was done, and he discerns it. For this great grace is needed. The temptation, when the Lord uses one of His servants for some particular and public service, is to think that he must continue in a foremost place. If he yield to the temptation, it brings sorrow to himself, and failure for the people. The Lord who uses one today, may send another tomorrow; and blessed is that servant who can recognize, as Ezra did, when his special mission is ended, and who is willing, like John the Baptist, to be anything or nothing if so be his Lord may be exalted.

06.00. Fundamental Truths of Salvation

STEM Publishing : Edward Dennett : Fundamental Truths of Salvation Fundamental Truths of Salvation

Edward Dennett

Preface The following pages are designed to meet the need of those who have been awakened and quickened by the Spirit of God; and therefore the writer has sought to explain "the way of salvation" as simply and as clearly as possible. On this account he has not been anxious to avoid repetition, if in this way he could succeed in simplifying his subject. But he has not been satisfied alone with directing the soul to "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world"; but, as the table of contents will show, has added instruction upon some of the fundamental teachings of the Scriptures — such elementary instruction as is needful for babes in Christ. It may occur to some that other subjects might have been included. The writer also thought so; but upon further consideration was led to judge otherwise, especially as there are numbers of books already in existence which deal with more advanced truth. His desire is, that those who read these pages may compare every statement made with the Scriptures; and that while reading they may be enabled by the Spirit of God to "receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save their souls" (James 1:21); and it is his prayer, that the Lord may condescend to use them for His own glory, for without His blessing it will have been written, and will be read, in vain.

E. Dennett, Blackheath, December, 1875.

Contents Chapter 1 Soul-Anxiety Chapter 2 Man's State Before God Chapter 3 The Blood of Christ Chapter 4 Ye Must be Born Again Chapter 5 Peace With God Chapter 6 "What Must I do to be Saved?"

Chapter 7 Difficulties Chapter 8 Deliverance Chapter 9 The Indwelling Spirit Chapter 10 Standing and Responsibility Chapter 11 The Coming of the Lord Chapter 12 The Judgment

06.01. Chapter 1 Soul-Anxiety

Chapter 1 Soul-Anxiety

WE desire in these pages to meet the need of those who have been awakened out of the torpor of spiritual death, and whose chief concern is to know how to obtain peace with God. Their state may be best described as one of soul-anxiety. There are always numbers in this condition, and especially now, when the gospel of the grace of God is so widely preached on every hand. It is not only those who are so wrought upon as to be compelled to cry, "What must we do to be saved?" but there are many others also who, under an outwardly calm and placid demeanour, hide severe distress of soul. The depth and intensity of feeling will vary in different people and under different circumstances. With some it will be anxiety, and nothing more; with others there will be a real distress of mind and heart; while in other cases there will be positive anguish of soul. But whatever the depth of the feeling — be it more or less — if there be any conviction of alienation from or guilt before God; if there be any sorrow for sin, together with even but the faintest desire for pardon and reconciliation with God; if, in other words, there be any bowing before God in the place of self-judgment, there is that real spiritual anxiety of which we speak; for such a state of mind can only be produced by the Spirit of God. The instrumentality employed to bring about this state of soul is, in one form or another, the word of God. This may not be always apparent; for sometimes a hymn, sometimes a simple question from another, sometimes the recollection of a prayer, sometimes the appeal of a preacher of the gospel, may be used as the arrow of conviction; but in all these cases it is really the word of God, embodied in these several forms, which the Holy Spirit wields to awaken the careless soul. His own word is, as far as we know, the only weapon which God uses for this end; for He is pleased "by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21); and hence the apostle says, "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:23-24).

Several illustrations of this may be collected from the Acts of the Apostles. On the day of Pentecost we find Peter presenting, in preaching, Christ crucified, risen, and exalted, and charging his hearers with the sin of rejecting and crucifying Him whom God had raised from the dead. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, men [and] brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:36-37). The apostle Paul was humbled at the feet of the Saviour in a special and extraordinary way; but it was also by the presentation of Christ, though in revelation, and not in the preaching of the word. Take the case also of Felix. We are told that when the apostle reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled; and though the effect in this instance seems to have been but transient, it yet shows us the power of the word of God over the soul. The Philippian jailer might seem at first sight to be an exception to the rule; but there can be little doubt that the supernatural occurrences of that eventful night, when Paul and Silas were in his charge and custody, were but the occasion of his soul-distress — the means of fastening upon

his heart and conscience the gospel message which he must have previously heard. It is often so now. Sudden sickness or danger, bringing an immediate prospect of death, will frequently give effect, under the power of the Spirit, to the previously unheeded and neglected messages and warnings of the gospel; and, filling the souls of men with guilty fears, with apprehensions of God's wrath against them, will constrain them to cry aloud for mercy.

Wherever therefore we see soul-anxiety — that soul-anxiety of which we have spoken — we may be sure that it has been wrought by the Holy Spirit through the word of God. And it is to those that are the subjects of this anxiety that we desire to speak. Beloved reader, are you in this condition of concern for salvation? Have you been convicted of sin, and is it the desire of your soul to know the way of peace with God? If such is your state, beware of turning a deaf ear to the voice of the Spirit of God, of trifling with, or seeking to hush or to drown the convictions which He has wrought. Beware also, we entreat you, of delay. God is striving in grace with you. For you, therefore, it is especially true, that "now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). Beware, too, of healing the wounds of your soul with other remedies than those of the gospel, lest you be led to cry "Peace" when there is no peace. Your case is full of hope. For He who has awakened your desires after salvation sends this message to you, "Be ye reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20); and His own word says, 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). Let me then beseech you, as before God, to read, both carefully and prayerfully, the ensuing pages, that you may learn the way of salvation as revealed in the Scriptures. And may God Himself teach you, and guide you into peace, through believing in Christ!

06.02. Chapter 2 Man's State Before God

Chapter 2 Man's State Before God THE very first thing that anxious souls need to learn is their place and condition before God; i.e., to understand in what light they are regarded by God Himself. For as long as they continue deceived and ignorant of their own condition, so long will they be unwilling to be saved by God's grace. Hence, until they apprehend and receive His testimony about themselves, they will not receive His testimony about His Son. For the gospel is for sinners, and therefore can only be proclaimed to sinners. I would press this point very earnestly upon all who are the subjects of soul anxiety; for many are kept for months, and even years, in doubt and distress, because they search their own hearts, instead of God's word, to ascertain their real condition, and because therefore they never take the place before God which He assigns to them. "The heart is deceitful above all things" (Jeremiah 17:9); but God's word is truth (John 17:17); and hence it is to it alone that we must appeal.

What then is God's testimony concerning you — concerning all men? Be prepared for the worst. It is, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). Again, "There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one," etc. (Romans 3:10-19). Once more, "There is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:22-23). "The Scripture hath concluded all under sin" (Galatians 3:22). Such is the testimony of the Scriptures, according to which all men are sinners before God. Do you accept it as true of yourself?

I do not ask if you assent to it in a general way; for many will do this who will yet seek, by comparison with others, either to excuse themselves or to draw conclusions to their own advantage. The point is this, God places all men on the same footing before Him; He declares that all are sinners; that there is no question with Him of degrees of sinfulness or of guilt, but that there is no difference; that all, whatever their station, character, or repute, are sinners, sinners without excuse, without a single ground of hope in themselves, inasmuch as all lie under the same condemnation; for death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned; for the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Again I ask you, Do you accept this testimony of God as true of yourself? Do you bow in self-judgment before God, acknowledging that you are a sinner under His just judgment against sin?

If you do not, then I entreat you to pause and consider the hopelessness of your case; for the Lord Jesus Himself said, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matthew 9:13). There is therefore no Christ, no Saviour, except for sinners; and hence, as long as you hesitate or refuse to take the lost sinner's place, you are out, side the pale of God's grace and mercy in the gospel. But if you do accept the testimony of the Scriptures as to your state, we can then tell of One who "bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24); "who was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5); of One "whom God hath set forth a

propitiation through faith in His blood" (Romans 3:25); of Him, indeed, who has taken the sinner's place, borne the sinner's judgment, that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish, but have everlasting life (2 Corinthians 5:21; John 3:26). But the whole truth has not yet been told. It is not only that you are sinners, but the Scriptures teach also that all who are unsaved are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). The Lord Jesus thus says that the believer "is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24), showing plainly that the previous condition of the believer was death, spiritual death. The sinner therefore is both under the condemnation of sin, and is dead in sins. It is not meant of course that he has no life at all; for it is very palpable that he has physical life. But what is asserted is, that through sin the sinner is separated from God, cut off from the source of life (for God is the Fountain of life), and consequently that the sinner is in a state of spiritual death, having no life, and no power of life towards God. The whole dealings of God with men, from Israel downwards, do but prove the truth of His word; and hence I have to ask you again, Do you accept this further testimony concerning yourself?

Beloved reader, you will never know the hopelessness of your condition until you subscribe also to this verdict. Men say, "While there is life there is hope." How often have such words sustained the hearts of those who have been watching by the bedside of a sick relative. Hoping against hope, they refused to believe that the end was near, and not until the last beat of the pulse, together with the last breath, would they believe that they stood in the presence of death. So also is it oftentimes with sinners; yea, even with awakened and anxious souls. They may not doubt that they are sinners, and sinners under judgment; but they cannot believe that their case is hopeless, that they have no power of life within themselves, no power of recovery, restoration, and hence they will not take the place of being utterly undone, lost, "dead in trespasses and sins." Ah! thereby they effectually shut themselves out from blessing, and turn back, it may be, to years of weary wanderings and conflicts because they believed their own hearts (and he that trusteth his own heart is a fool — Proverbs 28:26) rather than God. But we should resolutely close our eyes against everything but the testimony of the Scriptures; for it is not what I think, feel, or believe, but what God declares, that determines my condition in His sight. He is the sole Judge; and hence, if He tells the sinner that he is dead in trespasses and sins, it is incumbent upon the sinner to acknowledge that God is true though every man be a liar (Romans 3:4). Do you then now believe that having no life you have no hope? If not, accept God's verdict at once; for as soon as you take the sinner's place, owning the truth of God's word about you, confessing that you are under the just judgment of sin, so soon are you in the place of blessing; the place in which God, in all His infinite grace, can meet you; the place in which you can claim the sinner's Saviour. Bow therefore before God at once, and receive the unspeakable gift of His love — His own Son, as your Saviour, Redeemer, and Lord.

06.03. Chapter 3 The Blood of Christ

Chapter 3 The Blood of Christ

SUPPOSING now that those of whom we speak — 'anxious ones' — have bowed to the judgment of God upon their condition, their immediate concern will be to know by what means they can obtain the pardon of their sins. The blood of Christ is the only way by which the guilt of sin can be removed. "Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). Herein lies the necessity for the death of Christ; the need, in fact, for the whole work of redemption. And hence it is of the first importance that this truth should be rightly understood.

We have already pointed out that death has "passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). Adam first incurred the penalty through his disobedience to God. He had been warned not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; "for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17). Adam disregarded the divine command, and fell under the awful sentence of death — the penalty which God had annexed to disobedience. Thus "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). There is therefore no difference; all alike are sinners; and hence every child of Adam's race is subject to the penalty of sin, which is death. Yea, death already reigns (see Romans 5:13-21) over the whole human family: every individual member of it (saving those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ) being under the righteous judgment of death, because of sin. "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). He "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). Being rich in mercy, He sent His own Son to die, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). Just as when Abraham was about to sacrifice his son, God provided a lamb to be offered up in his stead, that Isaac might be rescued and live (Genesis 22:1-24), so God has provided a Lamb to be offered up in the sinner's room and stead" — the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). This is the secret and meaning, in this aspect, of the death of Christ. He died as the sinner's substitute, bore the sinner's judgment, expiated the sinner's guilt. The marvelous efficacy of the blood of Christ, as meeting the sinner's need, flows from the character of His person and the nature of His death. His blood is the symbol of His death, of His life poured out; for the life is in the blood (see Leviticus 17:10-14), and hence His blood cleanses from sin, because of the value of His death before God in the sinner's place and behalf. God has condescended to teach us this by type and illustration, as well as by direct statement. Look at the Israelites in the land of Egypt on the passover night. God was about to execute judgment upon the land of Egypt; and when once He began to deal in righteousness, Israel was as much amenable to the penalty of sin as the Egyptians. How then spare the former when the latter were to be judged? "I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of

Egypt" (Exodus 12:12-13; also Exodus 12:21-23). The only ground (mark it well) of difference on this night between Israel and Egypt was THE BLOOD. It was not what Israel was in comparison with the Egyptians, but it was the blood that stayed the destroyer's hand — the blood on the outside of their houses; for the Lord had said, When I see the blood, I will pass over you. The blood of the lamb — for the lamb had been slain — cleansed them typically from guilt, so that God could righteously spare Israel while He righteously destroyed Egypt. The same lesson is taught by the great day of atonement, of which we have the record in Leviticus 16:1-34. For Aaron was directed to sprinkle the blood of the bullock, and of the goat of the sin-offerings, both upon the mercy-seat and before the mercy-seat, where God dwelt between the cherubim; "for on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord" (Leviticus 16:30). All these things were but shadows of the efficacy of the blood of Christ. Thus we read: "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7); and again, "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:12-14). Accordingly we are taught, that "the blood of Jesus Christ His (God's) Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

We may, then, now point out distinctly the teaching of Scripture as to the blood of Christ in relation to sin.

1. It is the only means of cleansing from guilt. This is the divinely appointed and the divinely given way. It is therefore exclusive of all other methods. "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God" (Jeremiah 2:22). "If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me" (Job 9:30-31). It is only the blood of Christ which can make the sinner whiter than snow.

2. It is the blood in and by itself alone which possesses this efficacy. There cannot be any addition to it. It is not the blood and something else. Add to it in any way, whether by feelings, prayers, penitence (all of which have their proper place), and you mar its cleansing power.

3. God has provided the blood. It is He who has delivered up His Son to death. This provision for the sinner's need is one therefore entirely of God's grace, and consequently a provision outside of the sinner altogether. God in His infinite mercy, and because He so loved the world, provided the Lamb for the sacrifice; and now the precious blood of that Lamb avails for every one who believes (John 3:16). There is no limit whatever in its application, excepting in the sinner's unbelief. It is provided for all, and everyone may be the subject of its blessed cleansing power through faith.

Beloved reader, you have confessed your need of cleansing, and God has provided that which alone can meet your need. Do you ask, But how am I to obtain the application of the blood to myself? Solely and entirely by the obedience of faith. Let us go back to the Passover night (Exodus 12:1-51). It was not enough that the lamb was slain, and that the blood was in the basin; but the Israelite was directed to sprinkle the blood for himself upon the lintel and the two side-posts of his door. With the bunch of hyssop in his hand, the sign of his humiliation before the righteous judgment of God, he sprinkled the blood, thereby confessing his own desert of death, and his faith

in the blood as the means to avert the stroke of the destroyer, of sheltering him from the wrath of the Righteous Judge. So now. The Lamb has been provided, and slain; His blood has been shed. But the fact of His blood-shedding does not secure your safety. The question is, Are you under the shelter of the blood? Do you again ask, How can this be? By bowing in humiliation, like the Israelite, before the judgment which God has pronounced against sin; that is, by taking the place of a sinner, and by looking to the blood of Christ to secure you from the righteous doom and meed of sin. The moment you do this, the blood of Christ is upon you in all its value, between you and judgment, sheltering you completely and for ever from the consequences of sin; for the blood has met and satisfied all the claims that a holy God had against you. For God hath set forth Christ a propitiation through faith in His blood (Romans 3:25). There is therefore absolutely nothing for you to do; not even have you to gather the hyssop and sprinkle the blood. You have simply to believe the word of God, to look in faith to the blood already shed, as the only means of protection from death and judgment, and God instantly sees you as covered with all its efficacy and value — cleansed from guilt, and whiter than snow. Delay not, then, to seek the protection of the precious blood of Christ. At midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt; and as suddenly and unexpectedly will judgment overtake the rejecter of Christ, for when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, and they shall not escape (1 Thessalonians 5:3). To-day, then, hear the entreating voice of the love of God, which bids you to flee from the wrath to come, and to "behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

06.04. Chapter 4 Ye Must be Born Again

Chapter 4 Ye Must be Born Again When Nicodemus went to our Lord for instruction, he was met instantly by the solemn word, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). It behoves therefore every anxious soul to consider this searching divine word; because we at once learn, that whatever the anxiety of soul — earnest desires, profession of faith — if there has not been wrought this great change, the "new birth," there is no life in the soul, and consequently no salvation. Who was it then to whom the Lord addressed these words? We only learn half the truth when we answer, Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; for, in fact, this tells us nothing beyond his name and official rank, and these things have no weight before God, and no significance for the seeking soul. It is in the connection of the third chapter with the second that we shall find the real answer to our question. We read, "Now when He [Jesus] was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast-day, many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man. But" (as it should be read) "there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews," etc. (John 2:23-25; John 3:1, etc.). There was thus a number of Jews who believed on Jesus when they saw His miracles, and Nicodemus was one of that number. But Jesus did not commit Himself to them because He knew what was in man; because, in fact, their faith was nothing more than a natural conviction, wrought by the evidence of the miracles, of the truth of the claims of Jesus. There was no bowing of heart before God in all this; there was nothing more than a natural or intellectual belief in the name of Christ. When therefore Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, no doubt in quest of something more, and expressed this belief, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him," Jesus answered him at once by stating the necessity of being born again. It was as if He had said, "You may believe in me as a divine teacher, and yet be lost. You must be born again before you can enter into the kingdom of God."

We thus get a most solemn warning, as well as a needed caution. The warning is, "Beware of being satisfied with a profession of belief in Christ." The caution is, "Never forget that everything is useless if you have not been born again. You may be most earnest, most religious, a model of activity, in high repute for sanctity of life, or for works of usefulness, and yet be a lost soul; for unless you are born again, you cannot even see the kingdom of God."

Why then must a man be born again? The answer to this question brings us to a most important part of our subject. We have already shown that all men are sinners; but it is not only that they are sinners, but they have an evil, corrupt, depraved nature; and this incurably corrupt nature is the tree which produces all the evil fruits of sin. The acts of sin reveal the character of the nature; and this nature is totally unfit for God's presence. This is the purport of our Lord's words in this chapter, "That which is born of flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). All therefore that we are as natural men, as children of Adam, is flesh; and in this flesh there dwelleth no good thing (Romans 7:18).

"Are we to understand that all men, without exception, are thus totally corrupt, hopelessly evil?"

"Yes. Such is the verdict of God upon human nature. 'That which is born of flesh is flesh.'"

"But is it possible, for example, that all the noble deeds recorded in history, or all the kind, generous, and beneficent actions which we meet with in daily life, are all these done by those who have a totally depraved nature? Surely there must be a difference — degrees in our natural condition; for how is it possible to class such actions with open and flagrant sins?"

It matters not what may be the outward character of the actions of men, whether such as will elicit the applause or draw down *tim* condemnation of their fellows; for as long as they proceed from men who have not been born again, they are nothing but evil in the sight of God, "for a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes" (Luke 6:43-44). The word of God is most explicit on this question. "The carnal mind" (the mind of the flesh) "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" (Romans 8:7-8). It is thus, as Luther said, not a question of doing, but of being; not a question of the character of actions, but a question of nature, and this nature God declares to be flesh, and the flesh is nothing but evil in His sight, and consequently "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Corinthians 15:50).

Herein therefore lies the necessity of being born again; "That which is born of the flesh is flesh. . . . Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3:6-7). This necessity is universal in its application. It concerns every one born into this world, the dutiful, obedient child as much as the prodigal son; the active, zealous philanthropist as much as the convict in his cell. For the flesh is flesh, and cannot enter the kingdom of God. There must therefore be a new nature and a new life; for if there be not these, whatever a man's moral repute, he will be for ever outside of the kingdom of God.

How then must a man be born again? This, in substance, was the question of Nicodemus. "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" (John 3:4). This question rigidly construed means undoubtedly, How is it possible for a man to be born again? But our Lord, in His answer, does not notice it in this form, but points out the way in which a man is born again. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:5).

(1) Water. Much difficulty has been occasioned by special attempts to wrest the meaning of this symbol. Ritualists of many shades have persistently endeavoured to support their false teaching of baptismal regeneration from this passage. But if we confine ourselves to the Scriptures, we shall find that the difficulty will disappear. Now it is very evident that Nicodemus should have understood what our Lord meant; and if he did not, that he was expected to understand. For when he replied, "How can these things be? Jesus answered and said, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" (John 3:9-10). And if we turn to one of the prophets (with whose writings Nicodemus, as one of Israel's teachers, should have been well acquainted), we shall find a distinct foreshadowing of this teaching of our Lord. Speaking of the future restoration of Israel, the prophet says, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put

within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:25-27). Here we have the same conjunction of the water and the Spirit, and a radical change following upon its application; for nothing less than this can be implied by "a new heart." Not only so, but the water in this passage is used in the most familiar of all senses to the Israelites, in connection with cleansing. With this passage then before us, what, we ask, is the import of the water? Turn to Psalms 119:1-176, and we get this question: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word." We read also in the New Testament of "the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:26); again, "Now ye are clean through" (or because of) "the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3; read also John 13:5-11). The water therefore is a well-known symbol for the word of God. Hence we find the Word constantly associated in other passages with the new birth. "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth" (James 1:18) "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1:23-25). The apostle Paul makes an allusion to the same thing when he says to the Corinthians, "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (1 Corinthians 4:15). The Word of God, preached in the gospel, is the *tint* means of the new birth which our Lord here sets forth under the type of water.

(2) And [of] the Spirit. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth" (John 6:63). "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life" (2 Corinthians 3:6). The Spirit acting in and through the word of God quickens dead souls, and they are born again. The Word cannot do this in and by itself nor does the Spirit of God act alone, but He wields the Word as the instrument, so that by it He may bring souls out of death into life, producing in them both a new nature and a new life. Many illustrations of this might be collected from the Scriptures. Take the most prominent of all — that afforded by the day of Pentecost. The crucifiers of the Lord Jesus were gathered round about Peter and the other apostles. Peter proclaimed the word of God to them, and said, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). At the beginning of the chapter we read of the descent of the Holy Spirit; and it is said of the apostles that "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Peter was therefore speaking in the power of the Spirit, and that same Spirit clothed the word of God with mighty power, and the effect was that a multitude were born again, the change wrought upon them being indicated by the fact that "they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men [and] brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). So it is now when men are born again. It is always through the Word, by the Spirit of God. There is no other way.

(3) We may, however, with our Lord's own teaching before us, define more exactly. In the ninth verse Nicodemus asks, "How can these things be?" Our Lord first of all rebukes, though with all tenderness, both his ignorance (John 3:10) and his unbelief (John 3:11-12), and then proceeds to vouchsafe a full reply to the question he had put. It falls into three parts, and together they reveal the whole mystery which was perplexing the mind of Nicodemus.

(a) The Person of the Son of man. This is the foundation of all in that word of God — the gospel — by which, through the Spirit of God, souls are born again. "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, [even] the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13). We have here the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. He was in heaven, but He "came down from heaven," was born of a woman, and became the Son of man on earth, who yet while He spake to Nicodemus could say of Himself, "Who is in heaven." It is the God-man — true man, and true God, who is here revealed in the Person of the Son of man. And it is this wondrous dignity of the Person of Christ which gives such infinite efficacy to His work; and hence the necessity of guarding with such jealous care the true doctrine of the Person of our Lord, of repudiating, refusing all teachings which seek to degrade either His human or divine natures. For whatever militates against the Person of Christ, militates against the cross, against His atoning sacrifice. The Person of Christ lies at the foundation of, gives its blessed character to, the gospel of the grace of God. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to [give] the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

(b) The Work of Christ. In this we have the second of the divine "musts." "Ye," said our Lord, "must be born again"; and now He says, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so **MUST THE SON OF MAN BE LIFTED UP**: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:14-15). But why must the Son of man be lifted up — crucified? It was a moral necessity; for without the shedding of blood there is no remission (Hebrews 9:22); because, as taking the sinner's place, He must be "wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5); because, inasmuch as we were under the judgment and condemnation of sin, He must die in our stead; for He "bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24). It was, in a word, as the sinner's substitute that He must be "lifted up." The object of His being lifted up is, "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (1 Peter 2:15). He thus becomes the source of life, yea, in resurrection He is the life of every believer (Colossians 3:3-4); for it is in being born again that this life is communicated through the power of the quickening Spirit. But He is the life of those who believe, because of the character of His death, because He was the sinner's substitute on the cross; for it was in death that He expiated, made atonement for our sins, and thereby removed every barrier out of the way between a God of grace and lost sinners. Hence He could say, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25). It is thus life out of death, life in a crucified and risen Saviour, because "through death He destroyed him that had the power of death" (Hebrews 2:14); for if the corn of wheat had not fallen into the ground and died, it must have remained alone; but having died, it brings forth much fruit. (John 12:24).

(c) Faith is the connecting-link between the sinner and Christ, just as the touch was the connecting-link between those who were healed and Christ in the days of His sojourn here. Hence it is, "Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:15-16). This will be at once understood by looking at the comparison which the Lord Himself has made. He compares His own "lifting up" to the serpent lifted up by Moses in the wilderness (Numbers 21:6-9). They were serpents that bit the people of Israel and caused their death; it was a serpent to which they were directed to look and live. It is sin that has caused our death. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin," etc. (Romans 5:12). It is to One who was made sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21) on whom we are commanded to believe in order to live.

This, then, is the present point of importance — the comparison between the looking and believing. We read — "And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived" (Numbers 21:9). Notice, first of all, that it was the bitten Israelite who looked; and secondly, that he looked in the obedience of faith — believing the word of God. Just so is it with Christ lifted up. Whosoever takes the place of a sinner, acknowledging that he is "bitten," hopelessly lost by sin, if he look away in the obedience of faith to Christ, will not perish, but have eternal life. We thus, as in the case of the passover night, see that there is absolutely nothing whatever for the sinner to do; he has simply to believe the record that God has given of His Son, that God has dealt with sin in the death of Christ, and that therefore He proclaims life to every one that believeth. So soon then as the sinner has faith in the Lord Jesus Christ he is born again, he has everlasting life (Galatians 3:26). This is the method of the new birth. The gospel is preached — the word of God — which tells to a guilty race that "God so loved the world, that He gave (delivered up to death) His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The Spirit clothes this message of God's grace with power. It enters the hearts of sinners; they believe, they are quickened, they are born again, they have everlasting life (John 3:16).

Dear reader, Have you been born again? You surely, with this testing word before you, can have no difficulty in answering the question. If you are, your whole soul will go out in thanksgivings to God for the gift of His only begotten Son. If you are not, let me again warn you that it matters not what you are besides — you may be a good son or daughter, a loving husband or wife, a kind father or mother, and yet, not being born again, you are outside the kingdom of God, hopelessly undone and lost. Will you be satisfied in this condition? What had been the consequence if the bitten Israelites had refused to look at the serpent of brass, saying, "We may perhaps recover"? They would have died in their anguish and their sin. And so if you refuse to look to Christ, to believe in Him, there is no other remedy; and, instead of having eternal life, you will for ever perish. But if you bow to this divine necessity of being born again, acknowledging your true condition before God, and look to Christ in simple faith, you will immediately pass from death unto life.

06.05. Chapter 5 Peace With God

Chapter 5 Peace With God

"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). This is the conclusion at which the apostle arrives, after stating the grounds on which God is able to meet the sinner in grace, and to justify every one that believeth in Jesus. The principle involved is so important, and so necessary to be understood, that we propose to state it at length, so that anxious ones may see how carefully God has laid the foundation of peace outside of themselves altogether; that, in a word, they may perceive that the Rock on which it is grounded is Christ alone, and what He has done.

1. Justification is by faith; i.e., on the principle of faith in contrast with the principle of works. Much confusion of mind would be spared if this were remembered; and it is on this contrast that the apostle's whole argument is based. Thus, after depicting the state both of Gentiles and Jews, after proving that both are convicted as sinners, he says, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His [God's] sight" (Romans 3:20). Again, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:28); and then, after citing the example of Abraham's justification — "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" — he tells us, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:3-5). We have therefore the most complete contrast between the law and the gospel. The law had said, "The man that doeth them shall live in them" (Galatians 3:12); but the gospel proclaims that God is the "justifier of every one that believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3:26). It is no more therefore a question of works — of doing on man's part; for God has shown man's complete and utter failure in every position in which he has been placed. The Gentile without law, and the Jew under law, are brought in as sinners; and thus every mouth is stopped, and the whole world is become guilty before God (Romans 3:19). From this very fact, man is entirely precluded from doing anything either to recover himself, or to save himself. He is already under condemnation, lost, and hence works or doings of any kind are utterly without avail. If therefore he is now to be saved, it must be on the principle of faith; "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). He neither has, nor can he obtain by his utmost efforts, any righteousness before God; and accordingly he is shut up to God's righteousness, which is revealed in the gospel from faith to faith (Romans 1:17).

It is of the first importance to apprehend this point; for it is just here that so many souls, like the Jews of old, fail. Thus, in the tenth chapter, we read that "they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Romans 10:3-4). Until therefore souls understand that they cannot "establish their own righteousness," that "their righteousnesses are as filthy rags" before God (Isaiah 64:6), they will never accept the truth, that they can only be justified on the principle of faith, that if they are saved, it must be by God in His grace towards them in Christ Jesus. But once

understood, the gain is immense; for the eye will be immediately taken from self, and directed to Him who is the only Saviour: they will cease from their own doings, and be made willing to submit, on the principle of faith, to the righteousness of God.

2. We may inquire now, What is the object proposed to faith in order to justification? This is very clearly defined in Romans 4:1-25. The apostle, we have seen, describes that Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness; and, furthermore, he details the circumstances and character of his faith, carefully pointing out that it was prior to circumcision, and that the law had nothing to do with the promise which he received (Romans 4:9-16); and then he says, "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:23-25). The object proposed to Abraham's faith was God Himself, in His promise that "he should be the heir of the world" (Romans 4:13); and he "against hope, believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness" (Romans 4:18-22). The object of his faith was thus a God of promise; but the object proposed to our faith is a God of accomplishment; for righteousness will be imputed to us "if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead" (Romans 4:24). God therefore is presented to the sinner in the gospel as One who has intervened in grace, provided redemption in Christ, and as testifying that Christ has been delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification; as therefore a God of salvation, One who requires now nothing from the sinner but faith in Himself — requiring nothing because He has sent His only begotten Son, who took the whole of our responsibilities upon Himself, met in His death every claim which a holy God had against us, settled forever the question of sin, and so glorified God that He is now able, on the foundation of that finished work of redemption, righteously to receive and justify every one that believeth. God has thus in grace, and out of the love of His own heart, provided everything for the sinner — the precious blood of Christ for his cleansing from guilt, a divine righteousness in which he can stand in His own presence — in fact, everything needed to bring the sinner out of his place of distance, guilt, and death, home unto Himself. In the gospel of His grace, He is therefore presented as a Giver, and not as a Receiver, and as the object of faith in His testimony concerning what He has wrought for us in and by His Son. In Romans 3:1-31 the blood of Christ is presented as the object of faith: "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth [to be] a propitiation through faith in His blood" (Romans 3:24-25). The connection here is different. Man — all the world — has been proved to be guilty before God (Romans 3:19). The question therefore is how to meet the claims of God as a Judge; and the answer is found in the blood of Christ, provided by the grace of God, so that the most guilty can come and be justified before Him through faith in the blood of Christ (Romans 3:24-26). But in the passage just considered God comes forth, as already said, as a God of salvation, satisfied with the work of Christ, He having made atonement for sin by His death, and thus presents Himself as the God of grace in redemption, and therefore as the object of the sinner's faith. And how blessedly simple it is! for what does God require from sinners? Only that they should believe in Him, that they should believe His testimony concerning

what has been accomplished on their behalf by the death of His Son; at the same time offering to them, in confirmation of His testimony, the fact of the resurrection of Jesus our Lord from the dead. It is as if He said to us, "If you want a proof that Christ was delivered for your offenses, that He has expiated them by His death, and that all my claims against you have been completely satisfied, behold it in His resurrection. I have raised Him from the dead, set Him down at my right hand in the glory, to convince all that He has finished the work of atonement, and that I have accepted it."

3. Every one who believes in Him is justified. "Being justified by faith"; i.e., we are by faith accounted righteous before God, righteous in Christ; for God "made Him [to be] sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). This is much more than cleansing from guilt, or pardon of sins, because we have in justification a positive righteousness which fits us for the presence of God. The blood of Christ, as we have seen, is the meritorious cause of this, it being on our behalf of such infinite value, having so glorified God in expiating our sins, that He righteously — in righteousness to His Son — receives, pardons, justifies, and brings us into the very place where Christ Himself is. Hence, as the apostle says elsewhere, "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness," etc. (1 Corinthians 1:30). For so completely are we identified with Christ before God, that His place is our place, His acceptance our acceptance; for we are in Him; and accordingly the apostle John can write, "As He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). This will suffice to show the complete character of our justification; and it may aid doubting souls to remember that it is God Himself who justifies the believer. For if He justifies us, if He is so completely satisfied with what has been done for us as to clear us from every charge, and set us down in Christ before Himself, who can condemn us? (Romans 8:33-34). Who can incriminate us? nay, who can lower by one jot or tittle the perfectness of our acceptance? God has spoken; He has declared that we are "justified by faith," and His word abideth for ever.

4. Peace is the portion of the justified. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The words, "we have peace," do not of necessity mean that we enjoy it; for there are doubtless many justified ones before God who know but little of this peace. The meaning is that peace belongs to us, that it is made between our souls and God, that every question between Him and us is so perfectly settled, that He has nothing against us, that peace therefore is our portion. But if it is made, and it belongs to us; what hinders so many souls from entering into its possession? Simply unbelief; they look within to their own state, instead of without to what God has done for them. We can only enjoy this peace as knowing it to be ours; and we can only know it to be ours by believing God's word. But if we believe, and are justified, we have peace, whatever our feelings or experience; and hence we should rest in the enjoyment of it in simple confidence in the word of God. It is of the first importance to know that it is ours; for souls are tossed hither and thither by doubts and fears, because they hesitate to believe in the fullness of the grace of God. They are therefore weak and helpless, the easy prey of the tempter; whereas if they but quietly rested on this sure word of God that they "have peace," that He has made it through the work of Christ, and made it for them, they would be able to sing amid the storm, to present a fearless front in the face of all difficulties, to be undisturbed by the most insidious suggestions of Satan, knowing that as the peace rests upon the cross of Christ, it is both sure and steadfast, inalienable and immutable, a foundation on which they might "build and rest secure" for ever. For the peace of the justified is the result of accomplished redemption, founded on the cross, and proved by the

resurrection of Christ.

It may encourage some to a stronger confidence if we remind them that God is just, as well as the justifier of every one that believes in Jesus (Romans 3:26); i.e., that He is just to the claims which the work of Christ, or rather Christ in His work, has established upon Him. It is therefore what Christ has gained for us; and hence He is our peace (Ephesians 2:14). It should indeed be never forgotten that this peace is not apart from, but in and through Christ; or, consequently, that it is a righteous peace, a peace which God righteously bestows upon and secures to us through our Lord Jesus Christ.

06.06. Chapter 6 "What Must I do to be Saved?"

Chapter 6 "What Must I do to be Saved?"

Having pointed out God's provision for the need of souls, we may now consider the subject from man's point of view. No sooner indeed is he convicted of sin than the question springs up within his heart in one form or another, "What must I do?" It was so on the day of Pentecost, when the Jews were pricked in their heart by the power of the Holy Spirit under the preaching of Peter. "Men and brethren," they said, "what shall we do?" The jailor asked Paul and Silas, "What must I do to be saved" (Acts 16:30). Twice our Lord Himself was asked, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" (Mark 10:17; and Luke 10:25). The question addressed to our Lord by Paul, or rather Saul — "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6) — is different, and need not therefore be considered. The peculiarity of these questions is that the "I" occupies a prominent place, or rather perhaps the thought of doing. It is, What must I do? a sure sign that the questioners have not yet learnt what God is, or their true place before Him.

It is on this very account the more important to answer the question, because it marks in many souls a distinct stage of their history. There are very few indeed who have not asked the same question at some period of their soul-anxiety. We propose therefore to examine some of the examples which we have cited, that we may ascertain the answer given to it in the word of God.

1. We take first the case of the young man (Mark 10:17; Matthew 19:16; Luke 18:18). We read that when Jesus "was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? [there is] none good but one, [that is,] God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto Him, Master, all these things have I observed from my youth" (Matthew tells us that the young man added, "What lack I yet?"). "Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions" (Mark 10:17-22). This case is the more remarkable and instructive from the fact that this young man was so blameless and unexceptionable in conduct and character. He was both sincere and upright, one who could say, what Paul said of himself, that touching the righteousness which was in the law, he was blameless (Php 3:6); for he replied to our Lord's enumeration of the commandments, "All these have I observed from my youth," and added, "What lack I yet?" (See Matthew 19:20). Is not this a picture of many in our own day, young people and others, whose whole lives, morally, as we speak, in their outward expression leave nothing to be desired? Gentle, amiable, and loving; observant, and tenderly observant of their duties as sons or daughters, upright and honourable in all the relationships of life, and diligent also in attendance upon what are termed religious duties, they win the approbation of their whole circle, both of relatives and friends. And what lack they yet? The Lord's answer to this young man is the answer

to our question. What then is its import? First, that man can bring nothing to God, and therefore can DO NOTHING to inherit eternal life. Like Paul, he must learn that his righteousness is as filthy rags, to count the things which were a gain to him as a natural man loss for Christ, that nothing that he is, or has done, is of any merit before God; nay, that his best things must be regarded as worthless and unclean. Secondly, that he must be willing to suffer the loss of all things — self, his own righteousness, and the world — for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. Hence our Lord told the young man to sell all that he had, and give to the poor; and then to "come, take up the cross, and follow me."

Such is the first answer to the question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" You must take the place of having nothing, and being nothing — self, the world, yea, and every thing being nothing — at the feet of Jesus. And let not the solemn warning of this whole incident be forgotten, that moral attainments, and the advantages of position, etc., are to be classed among the greatest hindrances to coming to Christ, because they so often cover up and conceal the soul's real condition before God.

2. The case of the lawyer (Luke 10:1-42). This is in many respects totally different from that just considered; for the lawyer comes tempting Christ, and thus occupying a much lower moral place. Accordingly our Lord connects with it much deeper lessons of man's true condition. "A certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? How readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And He said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?" etc. Then follows the parable of the "good Samaritan" (Luke 10:25-37). Here the Lord takes the lawyer, who was tempting Him, on his own ground; viz. that of the law; and He thus accepts his statement of the requirements of the law, adding the words connected with its promulgation, "This do, and thou shalt live" ("which if a man do, he shall live in them" Leviticus 18:5). But he used the law, according to its divine intention, as a standard of God's requirements from men in the flesh, and so brought in the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20). For His words, "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live" (Romans 3:28), convicted the tempting lawyer of sin; for we read, "He, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?" The Lord had searched him with that word which "is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12) but instead of bowing to it he desired to escape from its application, if not to insinuate the impossible character of the divine requirements. He sought to justify himself, as if a man could be just with God, by alleging that, since he could not carry out the divine command, he could not be expected to do any thing. But the Lord had brought into his mind the knowledge of sin, and then, to teach also the lesson as to who was his neighbour, described the man who fell among thieves, and how he was succoured by a Samaritan.

What then are the special lessons taught by this answer to the question, What must I do to inherit eternal life? It is not only that man can do nothing, but that he is also convicted as a sinner before God; and hence we have man's condition as a sinner pictured out in the parable. It is thus described: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded [him], and departed, leaving [him] half dead" (Luke

10:30). The very place in which the traveller is assailed is significant. He was on his way from Jerusalem, the city of God, to Jericho, the city of curse (Joshua 6:26) — a striking picture of the sinner's journey to destruction. He falls among thieves, who strip, wound, and depart, leaving him half dead; and so he lies helpless and hopeless, at the point of death. Who does not see in this sketch man's condition as a sinner? And what folly it were for one in that condition to ask, What shall I do to inherit eternal life? The question rather is, What can be done to save him? And this is what our Lord would teach the lawyer — the folly of a sinner asking what he can do, and that if he is saved, it must be by the grace and by the doing of another. This latter truth is brought out in the Samaritan. But first a priest and a Levite pass by, and leave the wretched man to his fate, showing the helplessness of law to save the soul. Then the Samaritan comes upon the scene, "And when he saw him, he had compassion [on him], and went to [him], and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee" (Luke 10:33-35). Who then is the Samaritan? Surely none but Christ — Christ, in the compassion of His love, seeking and saving the lost. For He is moved with pity by the wretchedness of the poor, helpless man, binds up his wounds, carries him to a place of safety, cares, undertakes, and provides for him until He returns. We learn therefore from the whole scene —

(1) that man is a sinner;

(2) that as a sinner he is both helpless and lost;

(3) that therefore he can do nothing; and (4) that if he is to be saved, it can only be through Christ, and what He has done.

3. This will prepare us for the case of the jailor (Acts 16:1-40). We take this rather than that of the Jews on the day of Pentecost, because the question is put by him in its most distinct form. Paul and Silas, at the instigation of an excited crowd, had been put into prison at Philippi; and at midnight, we read, the apostles prayed, and sang praises to God: and "suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed" (Acts 16:25-26). The keeper of the prison was terrified, and in the excitement of the moment, thinking that the prisoners had escaped, would have killed himself, but for the interposition of Paul. "Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:27-31).

Why do Paul and Silas treat him otherwise than our Lord dealt with the two cases already considered? The answer in each case meets the moral condition of the questioner. But Paul and Silas are able to direct the jailor instantly to Christ, because he came in the moral condition set forth by the dying man in the parable. And hence if any of my readers are putting this same question, they cannot be answered until they take the same place. This truth has already been insisted on in the second chapter; but we again emphasize it here. For until the lesson is learnt the way of salvation cannot be known. Are you then, beloved readers, recognizing, not only that you can bring nothing to God, that even the things that might be a gain to you amongst men are

worthless before Him, but also that you are sinners, and as such lost and undone; that therefore you can do nothing towards your salvation, and that if you are saved, it must be by the work and grace of another? If you are, we can then unfold to you the blessed truth, contained in the words, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). To be saved therefore, to have eternal life, you must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is thus a question not of doing, but of believing. For it is now, not what the sinner can do, but what Christ has done, for "He took what I had earned; I get the fruit of what He has done." Therefore it is, and ever must be, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." There is no other way; and hence salvation is always connected with faith. Take a few instances: "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (Luke 7:50); "Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole" (Luke 17:19); "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3:36); "He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation (judgment); but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24); "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life" (John 6:47); "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43); "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1, etc. etc.). Do you then, beloved reader, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? We have pointed out the place the sinner must first take; that he must accept God's testimony concerning himself — that he is both helpless, guilty, and lost. If you accept God's word as to yourself and your condition, we then point you to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world; for He who declares to us what we are by nature and practice in His sight, has provided redemption for us in Christ: He "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). Look away therefore from yourself to Christ, accept God's testimony also concerning Him, and even while you look you shall pass from death unto life. "The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:8-10).

06.07. Chapter 7 Difficulties

Chapter 7 Difficulties No sooner is the soul awakened, convinced of sin, and directed to Christ, than difficulties will often appear on every side, threatening deprivation for ever of the blessing now so earnestly desired. Magnified by the unbelief which is native to our hearts, and pressed continually upon the soul by the activity of Satan, they seem insuperable; and it may therefore be helpful, if the most prevalent forms which they assume are indicated and explained. At the same time it should never be forgotten that the only effectual solver of difficulties is the Lord Himself; and that they will soon cease to harass the mind, if carried and spread out in simple faith before the throne of grace.

1. "My sins have been too many and too grievous." How often are words like these uttered by the self-judged penitent when he is told of the freeness of God's grace in Christ Jesus. "Yes," he will say, "Christ is able to save, and God no doubt waits to be gracious. But I am very guilty. I have sinned against light and knowledge; others may come and be saved; but for me there is no hope." Two or three remarks will show the real nature of this feeling. In the first place, it really expresses a doubt concerning the efficacy of the precious blood of Christ; for if it cannot cleanse you, it cannot cleanse from all sin. Moreover, it distrusts the sincerity of God in the invitations which He sends to sinners through the gospel of His grace. For He says, "Whosoever believeth in Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16); "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17); and if you say that you are not included in these "whosoever," what is it but to doubt the truth of God? Again, our Lord Himself says, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matthew 9:13). This is not some, but ALL sinners. Hence, to be a sinner, is to have a title to come to Christ; and thus the more sure you are of your sinfulness, the more certain you ought to be that there is nothing in your case to shut you out from the mercy of God.

It is worthy of question whether the root of such a feeling is not self-righteousness, for it really means that you are too unworthy. As another has said, "If when God speaks I refuse to believe on the ground of something in myself, I make Him a liar (1 John 5:10). When God declares His love, and I refuse to believe because I do not deem myself a sufficiently worthy object, I . . . exhibit the inherent pride of my heart . . . God's love flows forth spontaneously. It is not drawn forth by my deserts, but by my misery. Nor is it a question as to the place which I deserve, but which Christ deserves. Christ took the sinner's place on the cross, that the sinner might take His place in the glory. Christ got what the sinner deserved, that the sinner might get what Christ deserves. Thus self is totally set aside."

Besides, it may be added, our Lord has met by anticipation your objection, by receiving while on earth some of the vilest and most degraded. The woman who was "a sinner" (Luke 7:37-39), and the thief on the cross (Luke 23:40-43) are everlasting monuments of His willingness to receive the guiltiest. Meet therefore all such thoughts by the plain examples and statements of God's word; and never harbour, even for a moment, any suggestion which tends to obscure the Saviour's willingness to receive, or His ability to save, any and all who come in penitence to His feet.

2. "I do not feel my sins enough." This is quite true; for it is a complaint that even believers have to make, and will make to the end of their days upon earth. It is sure therefore to be the case with every anxious one; and it is on account of his sinfulness that he does not feel more deeply. But this only argues his greater and more urgent need of Christ. For his want of feeling is but the evidence of his alienation from God, and consequently of his need of reconciliation through the blood of Christ. It cannot then be, that to feel deeply is a qualification for coming to Christ, for that would mean that we must first cleanse ourselves from some part of our sinfulness. No; the gospel makes no conditions with men about feelings; it demands no preparation of heart, but proclaims a present salvation to every one that believeth.

"But must I not first repent?" Let me then ask, What is meant by repentance? It is simply taking the place of self-judgment, the place of a sinner before God, taking God's view about my sins. The confusion arises from the misconception that it signifies "the feeling sorry for, and the determination to forsake, sin"; and hence many probe themselves to discover whether they are in this state of mind. But the only thing you have to consider is, Do I know that I am a sinner? and, Do I accept God's judgment of myself as a sinner? If you do, there is nothing on God's part between you and the sinner's Saviour. For the only message of the gospel is, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house (Acts 16:31).

3. "I cannot be sure that Christ died for me; that I am personally included in the invitations of the gospel." And why not? For when God speaks in His word so repeatedly, and says, "WHOSOEVER believeth" shall be saved (John 3:15-16, John 3:36; Acts 10:43, etc.), is it not as evident that you are included as if your name were written there? As an evangelist recently put it, if you saw written over a gate, Whosoever will may enter, you would understand at once that you had a title to entrance; and you would regard it as downright folly if a companion were to argue with you on the subject, contending that the notice was not distinct. When then we read in the Scriptures, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," (Revelation 22:17), it is nothing but rank unbelief to express the doubt whether we are included in the invitation. In a recently published memoir there is an example of the kind. The subject of it, when first awakened, had this difficulty; and, though Scripture after Scripture was pressed upon him, remained immovable. But going home, he spent a great part of the night alone with God. At last he took a piece of paper, and wrote, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezekiel 33:11); then he added, "I am one of the wicked"; and further, "Therefore the Lord God has no pleasure in my death," and was thus led to believe that he was within the range of the divine mercy.

Every sinner is entitled to adopt the same plan. Let any one therefore who is troubled with the doubt named take, for example, John 3:16, and write it out with self-application, and he will find that it is as clear as noonday that God includes him in the term "whosoever." There is no limit indeed to God's grace in the gospel, except in the unbelief of sinful hearts.

4. "It may be that I am not one of the elect." Now this is the most useless of all doubts, except indeed for the purposes of Satan. For secret things belong unto God, and no amount of speculation or reasoning can discover them. And let it be remembered that the sinner has nothing whatever to do with God's purposes. Election has to do with saints, and saints alone. The difficulty, if sincerely felt, should therefore be met by the simple question, Am I a sinner? For if that can be plainly answered, it has already been abundantly shown that the invitations of the gospel are

addressed to you, and that to be a sinner is the only qualification for coming to Christ.

5. "I cannot believe." Let us examine this difficulty. What then is it that you cannot believe? Cannot you believe that you are a sinner? God testifies this to you in His word; and if you want any confirmation of His truth, the experience of a single day will surely be sufficient. No; you do not doubt that you are a sinner. Can you not then believe God's testimony concerning His Son? What is that testimony? It is that "He was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification (Romans 4:25); that "He hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18); that God "made Him [to be] sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Do you believe this? You will say, "Of course I do." Then see what this involves. You believe on the one hand that you are a sinner, and on the other that Christ has died for sinners; and yet you say "you cannot believe." Let me then put another question. Do you believe that God is satisfied with and has accepted that which Christ has done for sinners by His death? Before you attempt to answer this question, remember two things; first, that the resurrection of Christ, and His glorification at the right hand of the Majesty on high, is the proof that God is satisfied — that He has abundantly accepted the atonement made on the cross; and secondly, that the proclamation of the gospel is a proof also of it, for the gospel is a consequence of the finished work of Christ, and its acceptance by God. It is on the foundation of the cross that the message is sent forth, "Be ye reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20). Do you then believe that God is satisfied? You cannot doubt it. What remains? That you also should be satisfied. This and nothing more.

"Cannot believe," therefore, often means unwillingness to believe, the refusal to bow before God's judgment upon yourself as a sinner; for when you have truly taken the place of a sinner, you must of necessity welcome the offers of salvation as glad tidings of great joy. Suppose now a family in a state of starvation at the point of death, and provision is carried to their doors, and freely offered to them, what would you think if they were to reply, "We cannot believe it is for us"? Of a like character is the objection of the sinner under condemnation to the invitations of the gospel, "I cannot believe." For remember it is God who speaks, and is it possible for unbelief to go so far as to doubt whether He is worthy of credit? If a friend were to come to you with some announcement, and you were to reply, "I cannot believe you," he would regard it, if spoken in seriousness, as an insult. Much more, then, should you hesitate to doubt the truth and veracity of God.

6. "I cannot feel that I am saved." This is often said by those who think and avow that they believe in Christ, but who yet have no peace. How then is the knowledge of salvation to be obtained? Many expect some sudden accession of joy, or some inward experience to certify them of it. A young believer once came to the writer, and said, "I know I am saved now, because I feel so happy." But when he replied, "Suppose you feel unhappy tomorrow, will you come and say, "I know I am not saved now, because I feel so miserable"? she at once saw that she was building a wrong foundation. How then can it be known? By faith — faith in the word of God. For when God testifies that "whosoever believeth in Christ should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16), I am entitled, if I believe, to say that I am saved, resting my confidence on this word; and peace comes as the result of my belief of God's testimony.

Such is the divine order. First, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; secondly, knowledge of salvation, or assurance, as it is sometimes termed, from belief in the word of God; and lastly, peace as the

consequence of knowing that I am saved. Take a simple illustration. If I owe a debt of one hundred pounds, and have not wherewith to meet it, I shall be under constant concern and anxiety. If however a friend comes and says, "Be under no concern for the debt. I have discharged it," my anxiety will instantly cease, if I believe his word, not otherwise. So is it with our knowledge of salvation. If I believe in Christ Jesus, I shall know that all God's claims against me have been satisfied, and consequently I shall have peace, if I believe His word, and in no other way. It is most important to apprehend this point; for many, making "assurance" to depend on feeling, are continually in a state of disquiet and unrest. But when we see that the foundation of our confidence lies in the immutable truth of God, we shall never doubt our salvation, whatever the chequered character of our inward experiences. The fact indeed is too often lost sight of (as pointed out in another chapter), that the ground of our peace is entirely outside of ourselves, in the work of Christ for us; and hence the eye is turned inward, instead of outward to His cross, His precious blood. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through out Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

It will be observed that we have spoken only of the ground of assurance. Having peace, there will be, indeed should be, happy experiences; for God sends His Spirit to dwell in the hearts of saved ones, and He bears witness with their spirits that they are the children of God. But happy experiences must follow upon, and cannot precede, the knowledge that we are saved.

7. "Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost." As very many anxious souls are perplexed with the fear that they have been guilty of this sin, and that they are consequently shut out from the offers of mercy in the gospel, it may be well to explain its true character. The words in which our Lord describes it are these: "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come" (Matthew 12:31-32; see also Mark 3:28-30). The sin then spoken of is "blasphemy," or "speaking against" the Holy Ghost, and the precise force of these terms may be gathered from an examination of the context. The Saviour had just performed a miracle. We read, "Then was brought unto Him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and He healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw" (Matthew 12:22). The people were deeply impressed with this display of divine power and mercy, and saw in it an evidence of His Messiahship; for they said, "Is not this the Son of David?" But the enemies of Christ — the Pharisees — made it an occasion for the exhibition of their enmity, and with the miracle before their eyes — indeed, confessing it — ascribed the power which they had seen exerted to the devil. They said, "This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils." Hence it is that we find in the gospel of Mark the reason given for the Saviour's warning concerning "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost": "Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit." The sin therefore spoken of is the wilful ascription to Satan of the power wrought by the Holy Ghost, and therefore blaspheming the Holy Ghost by maligning His operations as devilish. To prevent all possibility of mistake, the argument may be displayed at length.

1. The power in which Jesus laboured, wrought miracles, performed His mission, was that of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1-18; Isaiah 61:1-2; John 3:34; John 14:10, etc.).

2. It was, therefore, by the power of the Spirit of God that He expelled the devil from the blind and dumb man.
3. The Pharisees acknowledged the miracle; they had seen it done, and could not deny it.
4. They had therefore before them a clear proof of the Saviour's mission; for, if done, it substantiated His claim to be the Messiah.
5. They ignored the evidence, and sought to discredit Jesus by charging Him with being the agent of the devil.
6. They thus wilfully not only sinned against, but "blasphemed," the Holy Ghost.

Thus, as another has said, "What the Lord denounces is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Keeping that distinctly in view would save many souls a great deal of needless trouble. How many have groaned in terror through fear of being guilty of sin against the Holy Ghost! That phrase admits of vague notions and general reasonings about its nature. But our Lord spoke definitely of blasphemous, unforgivable sin against Him. All sin, I presume, is sin against the Holy Ghost, who has taken His place in Christendom, and consequently gives all sin this character. Thus, lying in the church is not mere falsehood toward man, but unto God, because of the great truth that the Holy Ghost is there. Here, on the contrary, the Lord speaks of unforgivable sin (not that vague sense of evil which troubled souls dread as "sin against the Holy Ghost," but blasphemy against Him). What, is this evil never to be forgiven? It is attributing the power that wrought in Jesus to the devil. How many troubled souls would be instantly relieved if they laid hold of that simple truth! It would dissipate what really is a delusion of the devil, who strives hard to plunge them into anxiety, and drive them into despair, if possible. The truth is, that as any sin of a Christian may be said to be sin against the Holy Ghost, what is especially the sin against the Holy Ghost, if there be anything which is so, is that which directly hinders the free action of the Holy Ghost in the work of God, or in His church. Such might be said to be the sin, if you speak of it with precision. But what our Lord referred to was neither a sin nor the sin, but blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. It was that which the Jewish nation was then rapidly falling into, and for which they were neither forgiven then, nor will ever be forgiven. There will be a new stock, so to speak; another generation will be raised up, who will receive the Christ whom their fathers blasphemed; but as far as that generation was concerned, they were guilty of this sin, and could not be forgiven. They began it in the lifetime of Jesus; they consummated it when the Holy Ghost was sent down and despised. They still carried it on persistently; and it is always the case when men enter upon a bad course, unless sovereign grace deliver. The more God brings out of love, grace, truth, wisdom, the more determinedly and blindly they rush on to their own perdition. So it was with Israel. So it ever is with man left to himself, and despising the grace of God. "He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness." It is the final stage of rebellion against God.

It may then be confidently affirmed, that no one under convictions of sin, no one who desires reconciliation to God through the blood of Christ, can have committed "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost." Nay, these very convictions of sin, and desires after peace with God, are the effects of His own work in the soul; the sure proof that this "blasphemy" has not been committed.

8. The "sin unto death." This is popularly confounded with that just considered. But an examination of the Scripture in which it is mentioned will show that it is a totally distinct thing. It is thus

described: "If any man see his brother sin a sin [which is] not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it" (1 John 5:16). Here the question is concerning the sin of a believer. If any man see his brother, etc.; and since it is a believer who is spoken of, there can be no reference to eternal death, In fact, the death spoken of is bodily. Thus Ananias and Sapphira committed a sin "unto death" (Acts 5:1-42). Their sin was of such a character that God interposed and removed them from off the scene, in merciful chastisement upon themselves, and in solemn warning to others. But though they sinned "unto death," this did not affect their standing, if they were real believers. Their death was the result of the interposition of God in governmental discipline in the church on earth. Allusion is made to other cases of a similar character in 1 Corinthians. The apostle, writing concerning the abuses of the Lord's Supper, says, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation" (judgment, as in margin) "to himself; not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (1 Corinthians 11:29-30). That is, as the result of God's intervention in discipline, many had died.

It will be seen from the above explanation that no one can tell beforehand what constitutes the "sin unto death," because it is judged only by the Lord. Indeed, it does not follow that the same act would constitute the same sin in different circumstances; for there is little doubt that there have been many Ananiases and Sapphiras since their day. But we need not pursue the subject, as we have shown that the sin is that of a believer, and that it is connected with bodily, and not eternal, death, and hence that anxious ones cannot have been guilty of it before God.

9. The case supposed in Hebrews 6:3-6 is often a real difficulty. But a careful examination of the passage, though we cannot here go into it minutely, will show that it can have no application to those who are anxious and who desire peace with God. For the case is that of "those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame." Let it be first of all distinctly noted, that this cannot refer to the falling away of any who have been really converted. For nothing is more plainly taught in the Scriptures than that it is impossible for a child of God to perish. (See John 10:27-29; Romans 8:28-39; 1 Corinthians 1:8-9; Ephesians 1:13-14; Php 1:6-7, etc., etc.). It must be borne in mind indeed that the epistle was addressed to Hebrew Christians; and the case put is that of those who had been brought out of Judaism, and convinced of the truth of Christianity, thus far enlightened by the power of the Holy Ghost, but not converted, born again. They were brought into the blessings indicated, but were still without life; and it is concerning these we are told, that if they should fall away it would be impossible to renew them again unto repentance, etc. And why? Because they would be deliberately and wilfully going back to what they knew to be no longer according to God; re-associating themselves with the nation that crucified the Son of God, and thus, by endorsing with their eyes open the act of the nation, crucifying for themselves the Son of God, and putting Him to an open shame (Hebrews 6:6). The case supposed therefore is that of wilful apostates. But no doubt it is intended as a solemn warning, though not for anxious souls. The warning will have its application to many who are associated with believers in various ways, to professors, and such professors as have been the subjects of much enlightenment without being born again, so that they, knowing the divine character of redemption, are persuaded that the only

way of salvation is through a crucified and risen Saviour, and may even be outwardly zealous for Christ. It is for such that this warning is intended; for if they turn their backs upon what they know to be true, deny Him whom they know to be the Christ of God, become wilful apostates, their case is hopeless. It is to this class alone that this passage applies; and it therefore cannot include those who, convicted of sin by the Spirit of God, desire above all things to know that Christ is their Saviour and Lord. In a word, no one who desires to be saved, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, can be of that class and character.

There are doubtless many other difficulties in special cases, but those dealt with are the most common. Our aim should be to bring everything to the word of God in a prayerful spirit; for "unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness" (Psalms 112:4), and "the entrance of thy words giveth light" (Psalms 119:130).

06.08. Chapter 8 Deliverance

Chapter 8 Deliverance

Many who have been awakened, quickened, and who may even be under the sure protection of the blood of Christ, are yet without a clear knowledge of salvation. They have sometimes a "good hope" that they are saved, but then sin breaks out within them in such overwhelming power, that, thereby made to know the utter corruption of their sinful hearts, they are plunged back into uncertainty and distress. They are thus deprived of the fullness of the blessing which belongs to all who believe in Christ, owing to ignorance (oftentimes through bad teaching) of the two natures, and of the provision which God has made in Christ for indwelling sin, as well as for sins. In other words, they have never learned that complete deliverance is to be found in Christ, both from the guilt of sin and from our sinful nature, so that the believer can say, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus . . . For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:1-2). The truth on this subject is specially unfolded in the epistle to the Romans, from Romans 5:1-21, Romans 6:1-23, Romans 7:1-25 Romans 8:1-39. This section has been described by another as follows:

Hitherto the great truth of the remission [forgiveness] of the believer's sins has been fully set forth, closing with the blessed privileges which belong to the justified man, but still in that connection, the expiatory efficacy of the blood of Jesus, and this displayed in His resurrection. Precious as it all is, it is not everything the believer wants. He may be miserable in the discovery of what he finds within himself; and if he knows not the truth that applies to his difficulties on this score, he is in danger of yielding to hardness on one side, or of bearing a burdened spirit of bondage on the other. How many saints have never learned the extent of their deliverance, and go mourning from day to day under efforts which they would be the first to confess unavailing against their inward corruption! How many settle down callously balancing their faith in the forgiveness of their sins by the blood of Christ as a set-off against a plague which they suppose must needs be, and, of course, with no more power over it than those who are honestly, but in vain, struggling to get better. Neither the one nor the other understands the value to them of the sentence already executed on the old man in the cross, nor their own new place before God in Christ risen from the dead. This it is the Spirit's object to unfold in what follows. The sentences italicized in the above extract find a striking confirmation in Romans 7:1-25, where we have a quickened man, one who has been born again, not knowing his deliverance from law, struggling and groaning under the burden of his indwelling sin, so much so that he cries, "I am carnal, sold under sin" (Romans 7:14); and again, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:22-24). This is precisely the condition of many who are termed anxious souls. It is the felt contrariety of their state to all that they had longed for and hoped which leads them to doubt whether they are saved.

How then has God met this need of the soul? There can be only one answer to this question: it is in the death of Jesus Christ. For not only did He, as we have seen, bear our sins in His own body on the tree, but He was also made sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21); yea, "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). The application of this truth is expounded in Romans 6:1-23. Having shown in the previous chapter that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:20-21), the apostle proceeds, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also [in the likeness] of [His] resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with [Him], that the body of sin might be destroyed (annulled), that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed" (justified, in margin) "from sin" (Romans 6:1-7).

If now we give attention to the words which we have emphasized by italics, we shall understand the whole subject.

1. We are here taught that we have part in Christ's death: we "were baptized into (or unto) His death"; "our old man is crucified with Him" (Romans 6:3-6). This is on the principle of substitution, a principle which finds a striking illustration in the following familiar incident. During the days of Napoleon I, a young man was drawn as a soldier, but having some means, he purchased a substitute, who went in his stead to fight the battles of his country. The substitute was soon killed, and not long after a decree for another conscription was issued. It so happened that the same young man was drawn for the second time, but he pleaded that he was a dead man. When asked what he meant by such a plea, he answered that, since his substitute had been killed, he himself ought to be regarded as dead. The case, from its singularity, was carried before the courts of law, and, after examination and trial, it was ruled that the young man was dead before the law of conscription, on the ground of the death of his substitute. So with us, if we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. We can plead that we have died in the person of our Substitute, that in Him the whole judgment and condemnation due to our sin and sins have been borne and exhausted.

2. We are consequently "dead to sin" (Romans 6:2); and being dead, we are "freed (justified) from sin" (Romans 6:7). That is, our Adam nature — the seat of indwelling sin — our old man, has been judicially judged by God in the death of Christ; so that the penalty has already been paid, our doom so completely met, that before God we are regarded as judicially dead, and being dead we are justified from sin — cleared from all charge on account of it, completely delivered from it, through our death in the death of Christ. The practical consequences of this truth are given in the succeeding verses. "Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in" (not through) "Christ Jesus our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof," etc. (Romans 6:8-12). We are thus reminded, by implication at least, that we have part

not only in the death of Christ, but also in Him as risen. "For if we be dead with Him, we believe that we shall also live with Him" (Romans 6:8); and this is confirmed and enforced by the fact, that "in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God" (Romans 6:10).

Then follow the practical exhortations. a. We are to reckon ourselves dead to sin. The very terms of the exhortation indicate the truth; for if we were actually dead, we could not be told to reckon ourselves so. What we are then to do is to take God's estimate of ourselves. Having judged us, as to our Adam nature, in the cross of Christ, He holds us as having met our judgment, and consequently to be dead in His sight. This is His judicial estimate of every believer as to the old man; and this judicial estimate is to be the estimate of our faith. What God declares we are to believe, and to believe spite of all appearances or experiences to the contrary; and since He holds us to have been crucified with Christ, we are to reckon ourselves dead to sin. This will explain many otherwise difficult expressions in the Scriptures. "I am" (or have been) "crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20). "If ye be dead" (or have died) "with Christ," etc. (Colossians 2:20); these, and all such, setting forth the truth here considered, that God regards all believers as having died with Christ, and therefore as having in Him borne the condemnation of sin. And this truth is to be our vantage-ground in the presence of temptation. We should remember in the presence of all solicitations to sin, that our old man has been crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin (Romans 6:6).

Thus our place before God determines our responsibility; and hence if I yield to sin, I contradict in fact that I have died with Christ; for sin argues, evidences one alive in the flesh and acting in the flesh. On the other hand, taking God's estimate of myself to be true for faith, I cannot let sin reign in my mortal body, that I should obey it in the lust thereof. I reckon myself to be dead to sin, and therefore delivered from it by the death of Christ; and thus my peace is undisturbed because I know that the flesh which I still have in me, and which, if not kept in the place of death, would break out at any moment in unbridled lusts, has already been judged, and condemned on the cross. b. But we are also to reckon ourselves as alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord. This, as before said, implies our resurrection with Christ — although this truth is not here formally stated — because it is only as being in the risen Christ that we can be alive unto God. In the Colossians we find this aspect fully developed, the apostle making the fact of our being risen with Christ the ground of a practical appeal: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead" (or have died), "and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:1-3). It is not only therefore that we have been crucified with Christ, but in Christ we passed through death; for "God hath raised us up together" with Christ. (Ephesians 2:6). This was typified by the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea. In type "the Red Sea is evidently the death and resurrection of Jesus, and of His people in Him; God acting in it, in order to bring them into death to sin, and to deliverance from it, by death, where He had brought them in Christ, and consequently beyond the possibility of being reached by the enemy. We are made partakers of it already through faith. Sheltered from the judgment of God by the blood, we are delivered, by His power which acts for us, from the power of Satan, the prince of this world. The blood keeping us from the judgment of God was the beginning. The power which has made us alive, through Christ, has made us free from the whole power of Satan, who followed us, and from all his attacks and accusations. We have done with Egypt and the world."

Two things have to be carefully noted. It is in Christ that we are alive unto God; and secondly, our being so is to be a matter of faith: we are to reckon ourselves so. We are alive in Christ really and actually; but this is not the thought here presented. We are also in this respect to take God's estimate, spite of all the contradictions to it within and without. Since God regards me as dead to sin, and alive unto Him in Christ Jesus, I am to reckon myself so; His estimate being the foundation of my faith and confidence, as well as the measure of my responsibility.

We are thus before God brought through the death and resurrection of Christ out of our old state and standing altogether, into a place and sphere where the flesh has no entrance — a deliverance so complete that not only is it said, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," but also, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you" (Romans 8:1, Romans 8:9). Such is our perfect standing before God in Christ as risen from the dead.

3. We shall now be in a position to understand the concluding exhortation of the passage cited; viz., "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Romans 6:12, etc.). We have here the contrast between our standing before God in Christ Jesus and our practical condition. He holds us, as we have seen, as dead to sin; but this exhortation supposes the presence of sin in the believer. Now it is in the understanding of this contrast, and its practical consequences and responsibilities, that the solution is found of the difficulties which are so often encountered at the outset of the Christian life, and which indeed in many cases keep believers in bondage for years, if not throughout the whole of their lives. It behooves us to be the more careful that our statements, in summing up the teachings upon this subject, are according to the word of God.

(a) Indwelling sin will always be present in the believer. Though he has a complete deliverance before God, the flesh in him remains unchanged; so that he will ever have to say, "In my flesh dwelleth no good thing." He must therefore never expect any amendment in the character of the flesh. What it was before his conversion it will be after, until he departs to be with Christ, either at His coming or through death (Romans 7:18; Romans 8:1-13; Galatians 3:16-26).

(b) The presence of indwelling sin does not affect our perfect standing, our complete acceptance, before God in Christ Jesus; for God regards us as dead to sin. This is His judicial estimate of us, and consequently He looks upon the sin in us as already judged in the death of Christ. Thus sin in the flesh has been condemned (Romans 8:3). Its motions therefore within me, if I do not yield to them, cannot for one minute obscure even my enjoyment of the love of God; for I reckon the flesh in me as judged, according to His own estimate. It is thus not only that my standing is unalterable, but also my peace, my communion, is undisturbed.

(c) My responsibility is measured by God's estimate. If He regards me as dead to sin, I have to do the same; and therefore I must not allow sin to reign in my mortal body, that I should obey it in the lusts thereof. For if I were to allow sin to reign, I should practically contradict God's estimate of me as dead to it. I have thus to keep myself in the place of death, to mortify my members which are upon the earth (Colossians 3:5), because I am dead with Christ. Here then is the whole secret. I cannot rid myself of the foe. But God has judged it, and I have simply to act according to that judgment; to keep it in that place of death where He has already put it. Hence we are not told to expel sin, to root it out, to cast it away from us, as moralists, and even divines [clergy], ignorant of

the Scriptures, sometimes exhort us to do; but we are told not to let it reign; i.e., it must be kept under, in the place and under the sentence of death which has been passed upon it.

"Ah!" you exclaim, "here is my difficulty. How am I, a poor feeble creature, to do this thing?" It is thus that unbelief ever speaks. Look at David in the presence of Goliath. Does he feel the impossibility of coping with such a powerful adversary? Nothing of the kind. His one conviction was that "the battle was the Lord's"; that Goliath was the Lord's enemy, and hence that the Lord would that day deliver him into his hand (1 Samuel 17:45-47). He thus measured his foe by the strength of the Lord; and by that measurement Goliath dwindled down before him into a puny dwarf, yea, into utter impotence and nothingness. So should it be with us. Granted that indwelling sin is strong and active, yet He who tells us to reckon ourselves to be dead to it, has supplied the power to enable us to comply with the exhortation. He has given us the indwelling Spirit, and if we "through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live" (Romans 8:13); if "we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). The Spirit of God is therefore our strength in this warfare, the all sufficient power given to enable us to keep sin from reigning in our mortal body. The completeness of our deliverance is thus not even touched by the presence of indwelling sin. God has judged it in the death of Christ; we are brought clean out from under its power through the resurrection of Christ; and we have the power, in the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts, to keep it where God has put it, under judgment and death. Blessed be His name! We can therefore, like Israel, stand upon the resurrection side of our Red Sea, and sing, "The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation" (Exodus 15:2).

06.09. Chapter 9 The Indwelling Spirit

Chapter 9 The Indwelling Spirit

Ye are all the sons (uioi) of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26). "And because ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6). This is the divine order. We are born of the Spirit through faith in Christ Jesus, and thus are made sons; then God sends forth the Spirit as the Spirit of sonship to dwell in our hearts. The indwelling of the Spirit is therefore, it will be observed, not coincident with, but consequent upon, becoming sons. This divine order is shadowed forth in God's dealings with Israel. On the passover night, while still in Egypt, Israel was completely sheltered by the blood; but it is not until they had crossed the Red Sea that we read either of salvation, or of God's "holy habitation"; and we know that, as a matter of fact, God did not dwell in the midst of His people until they were brought out from Egypt, through the Red Sea, into the wilderness. So now. A soul may be quickened, born again, be under the protection of the blood of Christ, but he must be indwelt by the Spirit of God before he can cry, "Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6). Accordingly, we do not find in the epistle to the Romans any distinct mention of the Holy Spirit, as dwelling in the believer, until we come to the eighth chapter. As long as the believer does not know his deliverance from sin and from the law, we search in vain for any teaching on this subject; but no sooner do we get the complete answer to the question raised, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" than we are told, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you" (Romans 8:9). The truth then is that every saved soul has the indwelling Spirit; and doubtless when the gospel was first proclaimed — proclaimed as it was in all its fullness, simplicity, and power — those who received it by the grace of God were brought at once out of darkness into light, and immediately received the seal of their redemption in the gift of the Holy Ghost. But now in the confusion that reigns around, when the gospel has been so largely corrupted by human admixtures, that the fullness of the grace of God in Christ Jesus is seldom preached, there are numbers who, though quickened, are still groping in the twilight, groaning in the house of their bondage, and consequently have not yet received that Spirit of adoption whereby alone believers can cry, Abba, Father. For "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16); and hence if we do not know that we are children of God, and cannot cry in filial confidence, Abba, Father, it is because we have not the Holy Ghost dwelling in us. Our object now is to unfold what the Scriptures teach concerning this subject. As we have seen, the Spirit of God takes up His abode in us, consequent upon our becoming sons. And this it is which distinguishes a Christian from the saints under the old dispensation. Jewish believers were quickened, born again, but they knew nothing of God's Spirit as dwelling in them; "for the Holy Ghost was not yet, because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39). He wrought by His power; for it was He who quickened the Jewish saints, as well as Christians; He also strengthened them for walk and service; but His coming down from heaven as a person to dwell in believers, and in the Church, was consequent upon the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. This difference is marked in one aspect very plainly by a prayer of the psalmist: "Cast me not away

from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me" (Psalms 51:11); but the apostle Paul, writing to the Ephesians says, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30). Working by His influences in the heart of the psalmist, it was possible for him to lose that blessed power; but believers now, though they may grieve, are sealed by the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption. Just as the presence of the Holy Ghost upon the earth, in the house of God, characterizes Christianity, so His dwelling in God's children distinguishes them from the believers of all past dispensations. For it is the Holy Spirit that unites us to Christ, makes us members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 5:30); and this union, this place as members of His body, was not possible until Christ had been glorified, and had taken the place of Head in heaven.

There are several prominent aspects of the indwelling Spirit which we desire briefly to notice.

1. As a witness. The presence of the Holy Spirit on earth is the witness of accomplished redemption. For before our Lord departed, He promised to send "another Comforter" (John 14:16-17, John 14:25-26; John 15:26-27; John 16:7-14); and He distinctly told His disciples that "He would send the promise of His Father upon them," and that they were to "tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). The descent therefore of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost was the infallible sign of the completion of redemption or rather the proof that God had accepted and was resting satisfied in the finished work of Christ. For "it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth" (1 John 5:6). But here we speak rather of the Spirit as dwelling in God's children, and as such, as we have seen, He "bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:15-16; Galatians 4:6-7). In this aspect, He is the witness of accomplished redemption to the individual soul — as will be seen when treating the next point — and hence every child of God ought to know by this sure testimony that he is saved. But it may be asked, How is this witness borne to our sonship? The very fact of His presence within us testifies to it; but by His presence He forms within us affections suited to our relationship, begets in us desires after the enjoyment of the Father's love, enables us in the holy intimacies of our filial place and position to cry, Abba, Father, verifies to our souls the word on which we have trusted as revealing to us the relationship and the blessings which belong to us as God's children, and thus bears very distinct witness with our spirit. No! it is not an audible testimony, and it is discerned and apprehended by our spirit alone; but it is none the less, nay, it is all the more, real on this account, because indeed it is a living secret between ourselves and God. The strength and distinctness of His testimony, it ought not to be forgotten, will depend upon conditions. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." In other words, just as being led by the Spirit of God is an evidence of our being the sons of God, so it is, when we are led walking in simple, loving obedience and dependence, that our spirit will discern most clearly His testimony to our sonship. But if we are so walking as to grieve Him, we shall listen in vain for His testimony, for we shall have grieved Him into silence. God will not therefore permit any of His children to walk carelessly, resting the certainty of their salvation on the ground of their being children; but He reminds us that if we are His we shall be led of the Spirit, and that He will bear witness with our spirit, and teach us to cry, Abba, Father.

2. As a Seal. This truth is set before us in several passages. "Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us" (2 Corinthians 1:21-22). Again, "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise"

(Ephesians 1:13); and in the same epistle we are exhorted to "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30). The Holy Spirit given to dwell in believers is Himself the seal; i.e., God thereby marks them out, takes possession of them as His own, and declares them by the Spirit being within them to be His property. If one may use the illustration, just as the broad- arrow declares the thing on which it is marked to belong to the Queen, so the Spirit of God sets us apart, marks us out as belonging to God. But the figure is that of a seal. Now the seal not only indicated ownership by the impress upon it, but it was put also for protection. Hence believers are said to be sealed until the day of redemption. They are secured by the seal until the Lord shall return to receive them unto Himself. And hence only believers are sealed; and they are not sealed until they are the Lord's, until they are brought out of the house of their bondage (as before seen), through the death and resurrection of Christ, until they not only are safe, but are also saved.

3. As an Earnest. Two of the passages already cited speak of the Spirit as the earnest. "Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Corinthians 1:22); "In whom after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory" (Ephesians 1:13-14). It is the latter passage which defines most exactly the character of the earnest. The Holy Spirit as now given is regarded as "the earnest of our inheritance"; that is, He is the first-fruits of that which we shall inherit in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. As indeed when a sale is effected of a property, a portion of the purchase-money is paid down as earnest-money for the completion of the bargain, so God graciously gives us the indwelling Spirit as the earnest of our inheritance, thereby assuring us that we shall possess all that He has promised, and binding Himself (if we may so speak) to accomplish His own faithful word; for the earnest-money is both a promise and a pledge. But the Holy Spirit is even more, because, as we have seen, He is also the seal, thereby securing us for the inheritance, as well as certifying us that God will put us into possession of it to the praise of His glory.

4. It would lead us far beyond the scope of these pages to enter fully upon the offices of the indwelling Spirit. We can therefore only briefly indicate that He alone is our power for worship (John 4:23-24; Php 3:3); for prayer (Romans 8:26-27; Ephesians 6:18; Jude 1:20); for walk (Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:16-26); for service (1 Corinthians 2:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:5, etc.); for the apprehension of truth (1 Corinthians 2:9-16; John 16:13; 1 John 2:20-27); for growth (Ephesians 3:16-19), etc. Indeed, as the Spirit characterizes our existence before God — for we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in us (Romans 8:2) — He only is the source of power for all the activities of our spiritual life, whether those activities have God or man for their object. Blessed fact! for it is only when we know our own weakness and nothingness that we can learn the lesson of dependence; and when we are dependent, the Spirit of God is free to act within us according to His will. A caution is often given, and much needed both by anxious souls and young believers, not to confound the Spirit's work in us with Christ's work for us. Thus another has said, "We are constantly prone to look at something in ourselves as necessary to form the ground of peace. We are apt to regard the work of the Spirit in us, rather than the work of Christ for us, as the foundation of our peace. This is a mistake . . . The Holy Ghost did not make peace; but Christ did. The Holy Ghost is not said to be our peace; but Christ is. God did not send 'preaching peace' by the Holy Ghost, but 'by Jesus Christ.'" (Compare Acts

10:36; Ephesians 2:14, Ephesians 2:17; Colossians 1:20). The Holy Ghost reveals Christ; He makes us know, enjoy, and feed upon Christ. He bears witness to Christ, takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us. He is the power of communion, the seal, the witness, the earnest, the unction. In short, His operations are essential. Without Him we can neither see, hear, know, feel, experience, enjoy, nor exhibit aught of Christ. This is plain, and is understood and admitted by every true and rightly-instructed Christian. Yet, notwithstanding all this, the work of the Spirit is not the ground of peace, though He enables us to enjoy the peace. He is not our title, though He reveals our title, and enables us to enjoy it." No; the foundation or ground of peace is Christ — Christ in His finished work which He accomplished on the cross. For whoever believes "on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification," is justified; and "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 4:24-25; Romans 5:1). The foundation of peace then, it should ever be remembered, is outside of ourselves; and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, as pointed out, is consequent upon our becoming the sons of God. But we cannot be too sensible to the fact that, if believers, we have the Spirit of God dwelling in us; nor too solicitous not to grieve Him by unholy actings in the flesh. (See Ephesians 4:29-32). Hence too the solemn interrogation of the apostle, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost [which is] in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20); and the exhortations, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh"; "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16-25).

06.10. Chapter 10 Standing and Responsibility

Chapter 10 Standing and Responsibility No exposition of the salvation which is connected with faith in Christ would be complete, without some explanation of the perfect place of blessing into which we are thereby brought. There is little doubt indeed that many quickened souls are also kept in the bondage of doubt and anxiety through their ignorance of what Christ has really accomplished on their behalf; and it is perfectly certain that they can have no adequate apprehension of their responsibility without a knowledge of their position in Christ Jesus.

Every one understands that forgiveness of sins is the immediate portion of the believer in Christ. But great as is this blessing, it is but a small part of the provisions of grace. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). The very next verse speaks of two additional blessings: "access by faith into this grace in which we stand," i.e., into the full favour of God in Christ; and "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God," i.e., the full fruition and consummation of our present blessings. But these gifts of God's grace through Christ belong to us here, as justified men; and in the same way we can turn to other passages which speak of perfect and everlasting reconciliation. (See Colossians 1:21-22). But there is something beyond all this; as indeed we partly saw when treating of "deliverance."

What then is our standing, position, or place before God? It is in Christ where He is. Let us explain. We have seen (Romans 8:1-39) that every believer is regarded by God as having died with Christ; that the apostle could write to the Colossians, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3); and the context (Colossians 3:1) of the same passage speaks further of our "being risen with Christ." Turning to another epistle we get even more. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4-6). These expressions refer to something already accomplished, and we learn from them that, though we are still actually in the body on the earth, we are before God seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that the work of Christ on our behalf is so efficacious and wonderful, so God-glorifying, that God even now can righteously accord us a position in Christ in the heavenly places. For Christ "has not only borne our sins, and died to sin, and closed the whole history of the old man in death, for those who believe, they having been crucified with Him; but He has glorified God in this work (John 13:31-32; John 17:4-5), and so obtained a place for man in the glory of God, and a place of present positive acceptance, according to the nature and favour of God whom He has glorified; and that is our place before God. It is not only that the old man and his sins are all put out of God's sight, but we are in Christ before God." Every believer therefore has been crucified with Christ, raised up with Him, and is now seated in Him in the heavenlies. He is thus taken altogether out of his old standing — his Adam standing; for "he is not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in him (Romans 8:9); and his new standing is in Christ, and thus of necessity in Christ where He is. Hence too the measure of his acceptance is the acceptance of Christ; "for as He is so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). This is often very difficult for the young believer to understand. Be

it therefore very distinctly noted that it is no question whatever of attainment or experience, that it belongs to every believer; and the difficulty will vanish if the eye be taken off from self and directed to Christ. If we look within, consider our weaknesses, failures, imperfections, sins, well might we be perplexed to understand how such imperfect ones, as we are practically, could have such a perfect and inalienable place before God. But when we look at Christ, at His precious blood, at what He was to God on the cross, and what He accomplished there, we instantly confess that He is worthy of the place He fills. Here is the whole secret. It is in His worthiness we stand. All that we were, as to the old nature, is gone from before God: Christ only remains, and we in Him. Our place, standing, is thus God's response to the worthiness, the merits, of His own Son. He can therefore righteously shelter us by the blood, bring us out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, across the Jordan, and set us down in Christ in the heavenlies. And just because our standing is in Christ, it is unalterable and immutable. Knowing this, the completeness of our redemption, because of our union with that blessed One who is risen from among the dead, we have abiding confidence and peace. We may change, fluctuate in feeling and attainment, but Christ can never change; He is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8). And hence, since our standing is in Him, we dwell for ever in the light and presence of God; for our home is before Him, though we may sometimes forget it; and where should we dwell but in our home? The more fully therefore we understand our true place and standing in Christ, the more familiar shall we be with the presence and glory of God. But such a wondrous place or standing has its responsibilities; and it is to these we would now turn. As we have seen, we are in Christ before God; and, marvelous fact, Christ is in us down here (see John 15:4; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 3:17; Colossians 1:27, etc.), and this defines and measures our responsibilities; for if God has given us a place in Christ where He is, it is that we may exhibit Christ where we are. A few illustrations of this may be collected from the Scriptures. "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1 John 2:6). Taking this in its most general form, we may ask, And how did the Lord Jesus walk? Ever as the heavenly One upon the earth. As when speaking to Nicodemus, He could say, "The Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13), so was it during the whole of His earthly sojourn; for the life He lived was a heavenly life — as One who had come forth from the Father, revealing Him, and unfolding the perfectness of heaven upon earth. He could thus say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9); for morally He was the perfect presentation of the Father. So ought we to walk — as belonging not to earth, but to heaven, and unfolding the ways of heaven upon earth — as samples of the heavenly character; for we are dead with Christ. We have not only died in Him to sin, but we have also died with Him from out of this scene in which we move, and have been raised together with Him. Our citizenship, or commonwealth, is in heaven (Php 3:20), and in accordance with this character must be our lives. This responsibility is summed up, in its double aspect, by the apostle Paul when he says, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthians 4:10-11). Thus it is death on the one side, and life on the other: death as to all that we were in the flesh; life as to all that we are in Christ, or rather, Christ Himself as our life — manifested even in our mortal flesh. Hence the obligation to mortify our members which are upon the earth (Colossians 3:5) — an obligation which distinctly flows from the fact that our standing is in Christ risen. The apostle shows that he had apprehended the responsibility when He says, "To me to live is Christ" (Php 1:21); and just in proportion as we approximate to the ability

to say the same thing will be our understanding of our true place in Christ.

Another form of our responsibility is found in the passage, "Be ye therefore followers (imitators) of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour" (Ephesians 5:1-2). The same thing is enforced by the apostle John. Herein we have known love, because He has laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren (1 John 3:16). We have also an example, in one particular direction, given in John 13:1-27. After the Lord Jesus had washed the feet of His disciples, "and had taken His garments, and was set down again, He said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, [your] Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:12-15). The love of Christ therefore to us, even in yielding Himself up to death on our behalf, is proposed to us as our example. If He laid down His life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren, love's uttermost expression, and this — no degree short of this — is our responsibility. But mark the language of the first of the passages which we have cited; and see how carefully the Spirit of God has defined the character of the love which should also flow out from us, and thereby guarded it from degenerating into human kindness and amiability. It is, "As Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." While therefore we are under responsibility to love our brethren to the uttermost, God, and not they, is to be the object before our souls. It must be expressed as to Him; and can therefore only be expressed in the pathways of obedience. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments" (1 John 5:2). Accordingly, our Lord's sacrifice of Himself is characterized as "obedience unto death" (Php 2:8); and He Himself thus speaks of it: "I have power to lay it" (His life) "down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:18). Thus Christ must be before our souls — Christ in motive as well as act, in treading in His path of love, in seeking to love one another, even as He hath loved us (John 15:12). The apostle Peter gives us another aspect of our responsibility in the presentation of Christ in walk, an aspect towards enemies or persecutors. "If, when ye do well, and suffer [for it], ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously: who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:20-24). It is thus Christ, in whatever way we look; for since He is our life, our responsibility is to live Christ. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

It may tend to simplify the whole subject, and aid in its apprehension, if we refer briefly to two other passages which treat of it in another form. Ephesians 4:20-32, and Colossians 3:1-25 contain a number of practical exhortations which are all based upon our standing in Christ. We take the latter to indicate their general character. The first part of the chapter (Colossians 3:1-25) deals with our death and resurrection with Christ, on which we have already touched. Following upon this we have practical directions. Then the apostle lays the foundation of all. "Lie not one to another,

seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new [man], which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond [nor] free: but Christ is all, and in all. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness," etc. (Colossians 3:9-12). Without entering upon a detailed exposition of the passage, it will be observed that the ground of the exhortations lies in the Colossian believers having "put off the old man," and having "put on the new." But when did they put off the old man? It was in the death of Christ that our old man (Adam) was crucified (Romans 6:6). And when did they put on the new man? In the resurrection of Christ (Colossians 2:11-13; Colossians 3:1-5). And herein lies the whole of our responsibility. For if I, through grace, have put off the old man, my responsibility is, to live no longer according to the old man, but to mortify my members which are upon the earth; and if I have put on the new man, I am under the obligation to walk accordingly, for we have been brought, through the death and resurrection of Christ, out of the old state and standing in which Adam was all and in all, into the new, where Christ is all and in all. If therefore Christ in glory is the measure of my standing, He also is the measure of my responsibility, and these two things are always connected in the word of God, as they should also ever be connected in our own souls. "If any man be in Christ, a new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17), i.e., he is brought into that new creation of which Christ is the beginning and the Head; and hence every believer is responsible to walk in accordance with the character of the place into which he is brought.

06.11. Chapter 11 The Coming of the Lord

Chapter 11 The Coming of the Lord

One object of hope is placed before the believer in the Scriptures as soon as he has been brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light, and that is the coming or return of the Lord Jesus. This is the case in almost every book of the New Testament; and this fact makes it the more surprising that the hope of the Lord's return has been lost sight of by almost the whole professing Church. Let us examine the Scriptures on this point. In the first place, we shall find that our Lord Himself was continually pressing this truth upon the attention of His disciples. In the gospel of Matthew it is found again and again, and the "parable of the virgins" embodies it in its most striking form (Matthew 25:1-46). In Mark we get the exhortation, "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning," etc. (Mark 13:35-37). In Luke we read, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately" (Luke 12:35-36). In John we have those blessed and familiar words: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if [it were] not [so], I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, [there] ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

These are only samples of the way in which the Lord presented His return to His disciples; and we now pass on to the subsequent books of the New Testament, because it is after the resurrection and ascension of Christ that the Holy Spirit reveals this truth as the distinctive hope of the believer. Indeed, no sooner had the Lord been taken from His disciples up into heaven than this message was sent to them: "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 1:10-11). Passing still onward to the epistles which were addressed to churches or to saints, we shall find the same thing. The first epistle to the Thessalonians was the earliest in point of time of these; and in this, describing their conversion, the apostle says: "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" (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; see also 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, etc.). The second epistle to the same church treats of the same subject, correcting some mistakes into which the saints were in danger of falling through false teaching. (See 2 Thessalonians 2:1-6). In Colossians we have the same distinct note — "When Christ, [who is] our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:4), showing here indeed that the saints will have been caught up to meet the Lord before His appearing. In Philippians also we have, "Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Php 3:20). So in Titus, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

Taking now the last book of the Bible, what do we find? The same thing both at the commencement and at the close. Of all the seven churches Philadelphia seems most in accord with the Lord's mind; and it is to it that He says, "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Revelation 3:11). And our Lord thus closes His communications to His people, and the whole canon of inspired truth: "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly" (Revelation 22:20), sufficient evidence surely of the place He would have His coming to occupy in our minds. And not only is it the fact that our attitude should ever be that of waiting for the Lord Jesus, but we are also taught that there is nothing of necessity, as far as is revealed, between the present and that coming, no intervening events to occupy us or to turn aside our gaze; but that at any moment, even while this page is being written or read, the Lord may "descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God," to raise His sleeping saints, and to change the living ones, that both alike may be caught up "in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18). Thus the apostle, in the constant expectation of this event, says, "We which are alive and remain shall be caught up," etc. (1 Thessalonians 4:17); and again, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51). Accordingly, it is the evil servant who is spoken of as saying in his heart, "My lord delayeth his coming" (Matthew 24:48); and Peter also tells us that there will be scoffers in the last days, "walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Peter 3:3-4).

Waiting, looking for, expecting the coming of the Lord should thus characterize every believer. For, as we have continually seen in these pages, we are a heavenly people, and hence our hope is also heavenly; and we wait for the Lord Jesus, because He Himself has told us to do so. And, moreover, He has been pleased to reveal to us that then will be the consummation of our redemption. It is then that we shall be like Him (1 John 3:2); that we shall be like Him bodily as well as morally (Php 3:21). For if we shall have died as to the body ere He returns, He will raise us from among the dead, in resurrection bodies like His own; if we are still on the earth, we shall "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" (i.e., the living) "shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). Then, too, not only shall we enter upon our association with Him in the glory, but we shall also "ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). The effect of this hope upon the soul should be most blessed. We may adduce a few instances of the practical power which it is intended to exercise. Beyond all, the constant expectation of Christ constitutes a searching test of our spiritual condition. This is one of the main points in the parable of the virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). All the virgins are professors; but the fatal distinction is, that while five are wise, five are foolish. All alike had lamps, and all alike professed to go forth to meet the Bridegroom. Outwardly therefore there was no difference; and as far as can be discovered from the parable the essential difference between them was not detected until the cry was raised, "Behold the Bridegroom!" Then it is, in the prospect of His approach, and in order to be ready to meet Him, that they are aroused from their slumbers, and that they begin to trim their lamps; but no sooner was the light applied to the wicks of their lamps than five discover their lack of oil. Until now they had thought that all was well. They were professors, and walked, outwardly at least, as the Lord's people; but now, in the near prospect of meeting the Lord, they are made to know that they had no oil, that they had not been born again, that they had no indwelling Spirit to bear witness with their spirits that they were God's children, that they were professors and nothing else,

and therefore that as such they could not meet the Bridegroom. Hence their endeavours to get the oil: but no, their efforts are vain; it is too late, for the Bridegroom and those that were ready have gone in to the marriage: "and the door was shut" (Matthew 25:10). Undaunted still, they press onwards and reach the door, and standing there, they raise the pleading cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us. But He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not" (Matthew 25:11-12). And the solemn lesson which the Lord Himself draws is this, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour" (Matthew 25:13); for what happened to the foolish virgins in the parable may happen to any of us, if we take only the lamp of profession, and have no oil; i.e., if we are Christians only in name, never having been born again, and received the Spirit of adoption. But not only does the expectation of Christ reveal the true state of professors, but it also discovers the condition of the wise virgins. These equally with the foolish had slumbered and slept, and it is the cry, "Behold the Bridegroom" which also awakens them, and constrains them to trim their lamps that they might go forth and meet Him; and it is only thus that being ready they went in with Him to the marriage (Matthew 25:10). Indeed, when believers are constantly expecting their Lord, it is impossible for them to sleep. In spirit they are already in His presence, and their own state and associations are instantly revealed. And it would seem from the parable that there are four things which constitute readiness to meet the Lord: First, the one essential thing, oil; secondly, the lamp trimmed and burning; thirdly, separation, for they were to go out to meet the Bridegroom; and lastly, watchfulness, for their failure was in having slumbered and slept. And it is when the Lord is momentarily expected that believers will seek to have these characteristics of preparedness for His presence.

It should be also an incentive to fidelity in service. Thus in the parable of the ten pounds, the charge which accompanied their delivery to the ten servants was, "Occupy till I come" (Luke 19:12-27). Concerning the evil servant, already mentioned, it is said, "The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites," etc. (Matthew 24:50-51). Thus the coming of Christ is a double motive to fidelity; it holds out encouragement to the faithful, and it affords a warning to the careless servant. The former will say with joyful anticipation, "My Lord is at hand, and therefore I must seek to be diligent ere He comes"; while the latter, if he reflect at all, will surely think, "What will my Lord say if He find me, at His coming, both careless and unfaithful?" The more fully therefore we live in the power of the expectation of Christ, the more shall we feel the need of serving as in His sight, knowing that He will reckon with us on His return. The prospect of the coming of Christ exerts also a separating power upon heart and life. The apostle John says, "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 (i.e., in Christ) purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 2:2-3). Nothing indeed will detach us from all that is unsuited to His presence like the constant expectation of Christ. Knowing that He may return at any moment, and living with this expectation, it will be our desire to be separated from all, whether in heart, manner, habit, life, and walk, on which He could not smile. Yea, it will lead us to judge everything within and without ourselves by the light of His presence as being in spirit already with Him, and thus having Him in glory continually before our souls, to "purify ourselves even as He is pure."

These are only some of the practical effects of the living expectation of the coming of Christ. If the Scriptures are examined further on the subject, it will be found that the coming of Christ is always associated with the heart and life of the believer. But enough has been said to indicate the practical character of the doctrine. A grievous wrong is therefore done to the young believer when he is kept in ignorance of this most blessed truth. For if the cross of Christ is the foundation, the coming of Christ is the completion of his salvation, for it is then, as we have seen, that in body also he will be like his Lord. And not only so, but he is also deprived of that hope which, applied by the Holy Spirit, not only sustains him in discouragement, comforts him in trouble, consoles him in bereavement, nerves him for conflict, stimulates his zeal, and calls forth his affections, but also works mightily for his practical sanctification. It is no wonder therefore that Satan should seek to obscure it from the minds of believers; but it is a wonder that so many should fall into his snare, inasmuch as our blessed Lord has for ever associated it with the touching memorials of His own death. For every time "we eat the bread, and drink the cup, we do show the Lord's death TILL HE COME" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
 - 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net