

Colossians 1 Rochdale

by John Nelson Darby

John Nelson Darby's sermon on Colossians 1 emphasizes the believer's identity in Christ and the importance of living a life worthy of that calling while navigating earthly challenges.

Scripture: Colossians 1:12

Topics: "Identity in Christ", "Dependence On God"

Description

John Nelson Darby discusses the Epistle to the Colossians, emphasizing its focus on Gentile believers and their identity as risen with Christ while still living on earth. He highlights the importance of understanding the 'if' statements in Colossians, which reflect the believer's dependence on God amidst earthly challenges. Darby contrasts this with Ephesians, where believers are seen as seated in heavenly places, and he stresses the significance of walking worthy of the Lord, rooted in knowledge and spiritual understanding. He also addresses the concepts of reconciliation, hope, and the believer's relationship with Christ, underscoring that true faith involves both assurance and dependence on God's faithfulness.

Transcript

The epistle to the Colossians was written more expressly to Gentiles; that to the Ephesians was, too, but Colossians exclusively so.

The saint is here viewed as risen, but still on earth, and his hope is laid up for him in heaven; that gives a character to the epistle. And inasmuch as he is on earth, he is still in the desert, and so there is an "if." You get no "ifs" in Ephesians, because you are there sitting in the heavenly places in Christ. But whenever you get the desert, you get "if." It is well to keep the two clear and distinct.

Ques. In the first epistle of John there are many "ifs"?

It is just another kind of way of speaking, in many cases. I might say to you, if you are an Englishman, I hope you will not dishonour your country; that is the way in 1 John as well as in Colossians 3. It has no reference to progress; but "if we say," "if we confess," is merely putting the case; it is not, you will be in glory if you are faithful to the end."

God's chastening forms no part of His purpose, but it is part of His way.

Ques. Is it in God's ways, then, that we get priesthood?

Yes; priesthood, and "ifs," and all that. Only remember that along with the desert "if," you get God's certain faithfulness to bring us through. That is not simply salvation, but God's keeping. "No man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Then there is somebody who wants to pluck me, I suppose.

Ques. But at the end of Exodus 4 you get Aaron brought to Moses?

Yes, but that is more apostolic than priesthood.

Ques. As to what does "if" imply a doubt?

No doubt as to anything else but dependence, so that I may not doubt. God has delivered me out of Egypt, and I am not in the flesh; but now, how do I know that I am going to get into glory? God will keep me, and that is dependence.

Ques. But there cannot be real dependence, if there is a doubt?

Precisely so. Then I have every-day cares, and God chastens me and proves me. He puts us through a process which both exercises us and shews us His own constant love and care.

In Colossians 1 you get the fullest statement of not only our redemption, but also of our fitness for glory and of our being reconciled, and then we find an "if."

96 Ques. Is there any thought of communion in Colossians?

Yes; but that is not its subject. There is of the one body. The epistle to the Colossians treats of life; union is by the Holy Ghost, and He is not spoken of in Colossians save in the verse, "love in the Spirit," and that is only to shew the general character of the affection.

The presence of the Holy Ghost in us makes our bodies His temples; and if that was the same thing in itself as life, I should be an incarnation of the Holy Ghost.

If I am starting across the wilderness to reach Canaan for the blessing, I must get there before I can obtain the blessing.

Ques. Our place and title are in heaven, and we are not living in the world?

Yes, but we are living in the world.

Ques. Then why does he says, "Why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances"?

Because he is blaming them for acting in the world as if of it; but then that shews they are still here.

In Romans, the Christian is looked at as an actual living man in the world.

In Ephesians, it is as a man in Christ in heaven;

In Colossians, he is risen, but not yet in heaven;

In Philippians, you get the full character of faithfulness in the race, and the like. Even justification is put before Christ there: "That I may . . . be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law," etc. Not that he doubted for himself a moment, for he says, "I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

Philippians is not so much the certainty of the place I am in but that God's way, when He has redeemed me, is to bring me into a place of experiences through which I must go; only I have the certainty that He will keep me in it. Where people bring in this question of certainty, and connect it with their acceptance, all becomes uncertainty. And that is what systems do.

Ques. Would a servant be accepted in his work, if he has not the purpose of God?

Well, yes, he might be.

Ques. Would he not be deficient?

97 Yes, to that extent.

Ques. Why, "if by any means I might attain"?

If it cost him his life. He did not mean to say that he had attained.

Ques. What is "walking worthy"?

Well, it is just having the same motives and principles as Christ. There are three such passages:

"Walk worthy of God who calls you to his own kingdom and glory," 1 Thess. 2:12;

"Walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing," Col. 1;

"Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called," Eph. 4:1.

They are all substantially the same thing, but different characters of it.

When you come to full Christianity, you see the Lord Jesus always walked and spake in this world as the Son of man who is in heaven; and though they made a great outcry about it, He was a heavenly Man. He was a true, real and heavenly Man down here.

Ques. But, "Who is in heaven," could not now be applied to a believer?

No, only as in Christ.

Ques. Would not, "in heaven," involve His omnipresence?

Of course it would.

Ques. But in John is it not the existing thing on earth?

Yes, it is the divine presence. It proves the unity of the two natures. That verse is strongly quoted against those who deny the Deity of Christ.

You cannot separate the glory in which Christ is from the actual holiness in which we ought to walk down here. The character of holiness is always the reflection of Christ in the glory. So, "We all looking on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory."

The end of the 1 Thessalonians 3 is almost nonsense, as man looks at things; if we had been writing, we should say, "stablish you unblamable in holiness down here" ; but it is all made out, and manifested there.

In John, I know I am going to be perfectly like Him in the glory, and so I purify myself according to that standard.

Ques. Is there any distinction between being in heaven and "in heavenly places"?

98 No; "heavenly places" is more general, that is all.

In Exodus 15:13, you find a difference which shews the thing, typically speaking: "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation," i.e., to Himself. But in verse 17, it is, "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance," and there you get typified the heavenly places.

God is sovereign in love, and it is nowhere said in Scripture that we are love. I cannot be love, nor can I say that I am it; but as to light, it is said, "Now are ye light in the Lord." Light is a pure nature. It shews the sovereign character of love.

Ques. "Preserved blameless." How do you understand that? Is it perfection?

It is a different thing from perfection. I am to be a babe in Christ, and I shall walk as a babe, but without tripping, as I lean on Him. Perfection is really being like Christ in glory. I have no standard but Christ in glory; and that is to be realised in my path down here, in thoughts, and motives, and feelings.

Ques. Then Christ's life down here is not the standard?

Yes, it is. Down here, He was the expression of what is divine and heavenly in heaven.

Suppose you have a motive that you could not enjoy in heaven, are you walking worthy of Christ? No.

There are, as to bodily necessities, a great many things I do here that I shall not do there.

But if I only eat because I am hungry, I eat in the same way a pig eats. Christ would not eat when hungry, because He had no word from God to do so. He walked down here as having motives and affections up in heaven. And we can never go rightly except so far as our mind and conversation are up in heaven.

Ques. Is that word 'conversation' a correct one?

It is not quite exact; it means the moral and the political life.

Ques. This makes a vast difference between the walk of a saint in the old dispensation, and the walk of a saint now?

Of course it does. Old Testament saints were not, as regards their actual faith, dead and risen at all, though of course they had life. And they soon found out that this world did not do for them.

But now, we have the Christian viewed as risen, with a hope which is of great importance as regards this practical life: "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

99 Ques. Peter does not go so far as this?

No. Redemption, and born of the incorruptible seed of the word of God; that is the basis in Peter.

Ques. It is the moral effects of Christ's death, in Peter, rather than the death and resurrection?

Yes; Christ has suffered, and he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin. It is the same thing, but more the practical side of it.

Ques. He says, "being dead to sins"?

He does, but it is rather as "having done with sins."

Paul goes to the root of the whole thing.

It is not only in the fact of having life, but also in the associations of life, that we belong to there where Christ is.

Those who have not the hope of the Lord's return cannot apprehend what is the true path of a Christian; they may have life, of course, in one sense, but they have not the proper stamp of heavenly life in their daily practice down here.

I never would myself put forth the Lord's coming as a thing to be proved, but rather as being a substantive part of Christianity itself. You might have to prove it to an infidel.

Ques. Could a person walk "as he walked," who did not know it?

No. But it ought to give tone to every-day life in a Christian. The Lord's coming is an integral part of the gospel; it is put so here: "Whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel."

Ques. Might not people have it in their hearts?

Yes; but, for that, it must be a fact before them. "Love his appearing" is the affections of the heart.

Ques. Does not the general idea that people have about the Lord's coming give a certain character to them?

Well, it is more as taking place at the end of the world, in people's ideas; but that is not waiting for somebody.

If I am waiting for someone to come and take me up out of it, what then is the world to me? What comes of its plans, and its running after money, and all that kind of thing? A man may not know much about the rapture of the church, and yet be waiting for someone to come and take him out of this scene.

Before ever I knew about the Lord's coming, I think I loved His appearing. I knew nothing about the doctrine, but the principle of loving His appearing was in my mind, though I could not define it. I do not talk now of the rapture, though it is most blessed to get that, too. What I delight in, is Christ's coming and setting aside the whole thing I am in.

100 Ques. Would that be more John 14?

Yes. But that brings in the full element of our place in heaven. John 13 and 14 are, that the Lord cannot stay with His disciples here, but as He is not going to give them up, He must take them there.

Ques. Is there any thought of the rapture in the parable of the ten virgins?

No. Matthew was to Israel, so you get no ascension there at all.

Ques. What is, "they . . . went in with him"?

They have a part with Him down here; and the marriage is with Jerusalem on earth, not the Jerusalem above.

Ques. How does that apply to saints now?

Exactly; they went out to meet the Bridegroom. It is not the heavenly side and the rapture, though when the Bridegroom comes and they meet Him, that would be practically the rapture to us.

Ques. Is it connected with responsibility more than with grace?

Well, it is more a history of what will happen. The difficulty is as to the virgins. They were converted, you may say, to wait for God's Son, and they go out to meet Him. And while the Bridegroom tarried, they turned in to some place to rest; and then they went to sleep. They are heavenly saints, but not the bride, i.e., not viewed in that aspect. So they go in to the marriage.

Ques. But at the end of the chapter we have His coming in?

No; He sits on the throne of His glory, but it is not quite His coming in glory.

The kingdom of heaven, as we have it now, is without a king. When Christ comes it will not be so. The heavens rule in that general way after He comes, but then it will be the kingdom of the Father and of the Son of man.

Ques. Then the kingdom of heaven exists in three forms: first, in principles; next, in mystery; and lastly, in actual power at the end?

101 Quite so; but the mystery character is over when He comes in power.

Ques. What is the difference between the two terms "coming" and "appearing"?

"Coming" is a general word; you get the "appearing of his coming" in 2 Thessalonians 2. First He comes, and does not appear, and takes us up to be with Himself. But "when he shall appear," we shall appear with Him in glory.

Ques. What are the "saints of the most high places" in the seventh chapter of Daniel?

Those who are linked with God in heaven, during the time that earthly power is in the hands of His enemies. They are killed for their testimony, or by the beast when he is in power, and, being so killed, they would lose earthly blessing, so God takes them up to heaven, though it will be too late for them to be in the body of Christ.

Ques. What is the kingdom of the Father?

The heavenly part of the kingdom of heaven which will be our portion. That of the Son of man is the earthly part of it.

In Ephesians, we are seen sitting in the heavenly places in Christ, and therefore the inheritance is the inheritance of all things that Christ created. Creation is the inheritance. But in 1 Peter or in Colossians, the thing is in heaven, and you are down here; it is incorruptible and undefiled, reserved in heaven for you, or

a hope that is laid up for you in heaven.

Ques. Then what is "the kingdom of the Son of his love"?

It is an expression only used here; we were under the power of darkness, i.e., of Satan; but now we have been brought not merely out of darkness into His marvellous light, but also into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in the oneness of the love.

In verses 9 and 10, our walk is connected with our spiritual state; God does not intend that these should be separated. To have simply the knowledge of God's will, in fact, without walking worthy, would be mischief to me, because I should then be without exercise as to being a spiritual saint. But the being "filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," is in order "that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work." I must get divine wisdom and spiritual understanding; but then this acquaintance with His will is here connected with the state of soul. There might be something in the state of my soul that hinders the full following of Christ. It is, "that ye might walk worthy of the Lord." How can I do that if I do not know what Christ is?

102 It should read, I think, "increasing by the knowledge of God"; that is its meaning.

Ques. You connect it all with knowing Christ in glory?

Yes; but I get also the knowledge of what God is in His nature. Christ as a man had perfect knowledge of God; and so perfect obedience and love to His Father flowed out in Him. He says: "If I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you."

Ques. "Saints in light," what is that?

The absolute purity of God's presence, and that is what I am made meet for.

Ques. Whose "power" is it in verse 11?

It is God's power. It is walk worthy of the Lord; but you get, "walk worthy of God" in 1 Thessalonians. If I am walking about in my Father's name, I ought at least to walk worthy of Him.

The revelation of the name of the Father brings eternal life with it; "the Father sent the Son that we might live through him." What brings eternal life is Christ Himself, who was with the Father and was manifested unto us; and if I get Christ, I get life. But if the Son is my life, I cry Abba, Father, through the Spirit.

Ques. Do you mean to imply that the millennial revelation (Most High) does not give eternal life?

Certainly I do. Christ can quicken whom He will, but life and incorruptibility were brought to light by the gospel, not by the Most High as such.

Ques. Can you speak of that life as existing in the believer?

Certainly I can. It is not in me in an independent way, but He says, "ye in me and I in you"; and the life of Jesus should be manifested in our mortal bodies. If you talk of it existing in the believer, it is not communicated to him without his having the Son in him.

Ques. Had Old Testament saints eternal life?

It was not revealed to them; it is the same thing essentially. It says "brought . . . to light," it does not say that they then only began to exist by it.

The intelligent Jew had a hope; but Peter says, "Unto whom it was revealed that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister."

103 People tell you that Christianity is the accomplishment of the promises. It is no such thing. They have yet to be accomplished. We are living between the sufferings and the glory.

Ques. Would not a converted Jew see Christ in the types?

Partly so. They had prophets, too.

Ques. Then we have eternal life in us?

We have eternal life in us, because Christ is in us, its source; He is it. Scripture is very accurate. This is becoming to be of immense moment. If I say it is not me, as me, then it is my own state, and not Christ my life. Some are urging, 'How can you have a new me,' but that is simply fighting Scripture.

The new me is Christ. "Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." This is most important, because now-adays the setting human nature right is what they are all at.

When the prodigal son was converted and was going to meet his father, he says, "Make me as one of thy hired servants," which just shows he had not yet met his father.

Don't you say "Father" if you do not know that you are a child.

Where a man is still in the flesh, as regards the state of his soul, he always mixes up his state with his acceptance.

Ques. Where would you place, as to the body, those quickened souls which have not the Holy Ghost?

They are not in the body.

The moment redemption was accomplished and everything was finished, so that Christ went back to God, then the Holy Ghost came down on all them that believed. He had previously wrought in the prophets, and in creation, too, but He had not come till then.

Ques. "They that are in the flesh," does that contemplate a quickened soul?

It is an abstract statement.

Rochdale - Reading in Colossians 1 (continued)

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"Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." Patience is a wonderful thing; and it is a great thing to have patience that does not give way. You must wait until God has worked things out in people's souls. James insists upon it: "Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Not that that touches the perfection of the work of grace. People fancy they reach holiness by enfeebling the work of grace. They talk about

being justified, and then made meet; but you will never find that in Scripture. There are plenty of scriptures about progress, but not one of them is connected with our being meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

Ques. Do you distinguish between justification and being made meet?

Justification is more the clearing us from the old thing. There are two things in my acceptance, like as in the fifth and the eighth of Romans. Christ was delivered for our offences, that is one thing.

Ques. In Romans 4 you get the imputation of righteousness?

Yes; in Romans 4 that is used as the same thing with forgiving sins. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" is the eighth, and there I have a new thing - positive acceptance - I am fit for God in the life of Christ.

Ques. Then as to sanctification?

That depends; for we are sanctified to the blood of sprinkling, in 1 Peter 1. Whenever you get sanctifying and justifying put together, the sanctifying comes first, though that is very unorthodox.

But the clearing the believer from guilt, and the putting him in the positive place of acceptance, are two things. What is the measure of my acceptance? Is it only that my sins are put away?

Ques. What about "unto obedience" in 1 Peter 1?

The obedience of Christ is the character of our obedience. Suppose my child wanted to go into the town, and I said, "No, sit down and do your lesson," and he does; it would be very nice and right; but Christ never obeyed in that way. The proper character of Christian obedience is that the motive for doing a thing is that it is God's will.

105 Ques. Does not justification include the imputation of righteousness in itself?

It is the same thing. Justification gives me title to stand in the presence of God; but it does not tell me what I am when there. There is the fact that my sins are cleared away, but I also get the acceptance of Christ Himself. I find Him sitting now at the right hand of God, and I am brought to God in all His value.

Ques. But in Romans 5 the believer is justified by faith, and has peace with God, and rejoices as well in hope of the glory of God?

Yes; you find the favour of God is towards us, but you do not get our new place before God. In the eighth chapter you do get this, and it is connected with seeing you are not in the flesh at all. Then where are you? You are in Christ. Heaps of dear people do not know that. They say they are poor sinners, and the cross of Christ just suits them; but let them put themselves before the judgment-seat, and are they sure they are perfectly saved? No, they are not. But what if I am the righteousness of God!!

It is one thing to say, I am clear from my sins as a child of Adam, and quite another thing to say, I am accepted in Christ as a child of God.

None of us values the cross as it ought to be valued by us, but the more we look at the cross, the more we shall see that every question of good and evil has been brought to an issue there.

Man in absolute wickedness, hating God come in goodness as a Man among them. The devil is there in all his power, and the rest are rejoicing in getting rid of God come in Christ. Then in Christ there is perfect Man in perfect goodness, and in perfect love and obedience towards God also. "That the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do." There, too, I see God in righteous judgment against sin, and nowhere else, but God in perfect goodness towards the sinner. What God is, and what man is, and what the devil is, all is alike brought out at the cross!

Then as to acceptance and judgment, when I am called to give an account of myself at the judgment-seat, I am perfectly like the Judge who is sitting upon it, raised in glory!! But you will find a great many dear souls who have no idea of this. Bad teaching, and carelessness too, and going on with the world, have their sure effect; and so all is dim.

106 Ques. Is it not peculiar here, when it says the Father has made us meet?

Well, it is Christ, of course, who wrought the work.

Ques. Did the Israelites of old know the new place?

How could they? The brazen altar was justification from sins; and on the great day of atonement the blood was carried in to where God was. Now, in every sense, we have a totally new place.

Adam innocent had nothing at all to do with a risen Man We are accepted in a Christ risen and glorified; we are in Him. And you must condemn Christ glorified if you are to condemn the man who is in Him.

In Romans 8 you have three characters of the same Spirit: the Spirit of God, which is in contrast with that which is of man; the Spirit of Christ, that is, as formative of what Christ was, and in whose power Christ acted and offered Himself to God; and then the Spirit of Him that raised up Christ from the dead, which includes the ultimate deliverance of the body itself.

Ques. It says in 1 Corinthians 2, "we have the mind of Christ." Is that the same thing?

No; that is another thing altogether.

As to fitness, the thief was as fit to go to paradise as Christ. He went; well, but he had no time to get ready.

Ques. Is it the inheritance, or the saints, in the light?

Both are in the light. And the man that is fit, is fit for that light. There is this also now, that we walk in the light as God is in the light.

Ques. Is it saints in glory?

Yes; it goes on to that.

Ques. What is "darkness"?

The absence of the knowledge of God, and, as to that, it is not possible for any Christian to be in darkness.

As I get Christ, I get light. God is light, and if I know Him, I am not in darkness.

I could not be before God except through Christ; but He has let the light out, and has also put away my sins so that I should be as white as snow. In answer to Christ's work, the veil was rent from top to bottom, but the rending of the veil has put me in the place of the light. I find love, too, as well as light. All God's love is exercised in forgiving me, and I get also a position and standing before Him in Christ.

107 Ques. Is there not a difference between redemption and forgiveness of sins?

They are the same thing here; elsewhere, redemption may include the body, but not here.

Ques. Does not redemption imply the deliverance from the state in which I was?

Yes, in its full sense it does, but not here.

Ques. "Meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Is that the Red Sea, or Jordan?

I should say it was the Red Sea, although in reality the Red Sea and Jordan coalesce.

In the Red Sea I get Christ's death and resurrection, and in this sense all is complete; but in Jordan I get my death and resurrection with Christ, and then you find the experimental sense of things, and also Gilgal.

Colossians is not quite in the land; it is a kind of in-between thing. Ephesians views a man dead in his sins, and then there is a new creation, quickened together with Christ.

Ques. In Colossians 2:11, is that circumcision after being in the land?

Yes; you are over Jordan, but without being seated in the heavenly places. In Ephesians we are; not of course with Christ, but in Him.

In Ephesians it is gross sins, and the highest privileges.

In Colossians, every part of the life of the Christian is developed. Verses 9, 10, and 11 give the foundation. Then follows the unfolding of the greatness and the glory of Christ, through whom we get all this. He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.

Ques. In what sense is God spoken of as invisible?

He dwells in the light unapproachable.

Ques. Will that be God Himself, or only in Christ?

In Christ is not there. I do not believe a creature can see God in His essence. But it is said that the pure in heart shall see God, and "in heaven . . . angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

Ques. How, then, do we see Him, if not in His essence?

I cannot tell you; but I am not going to be in my Father's house, and have nothing to say to Him.

108 Ques. If God ceased to be invisible, would not Christ cease to be His image?

Yes, of course; we should not want Him then.

You never could separate the Son from the Father, nor the Father from the Son, whatever we may see. You must distinguish between abstract names which speak of a Being, and names which express relationships.

Ques. What of the "glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ" in 2 Corinthians 4?

It is seen there now, and it will still be. The Lord was the One who expressed this on earth, and He has not ceased to do so in heaven. He is God, and if I see Him, I see God.

Rem. "I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it."

The Lamb is a distinct object; and it was so when Stephen saw Him at the right hand of God.

But the Father was revealed in Christ, in His life here below. That is not the same thing as here in Colossians; that would confound the Father and God. There is all the difference between my speaking of someone as a man, and my speaking of him as my father. So you might see clouds and lightnings on Mount Sinai, but not the Father. John says, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him"; it is not the love of God there, but the love of the Father, because He has a new creation now.

Ques. "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God." What is that?

Well, just so; but it does not speak of seeing or not.

Ques. What is the force of James saying "likeness," and not "image"?

No particular force that I know of.

We know the Lord as the Word, and as Christ, and as Man.

Ques. How was Adam made in the likeness of God?

There was no sin in him, and death had no power over him; and other things, too; he was a centre, and everything around him was subject to him. An angel was not made a centre of anything. Although there was no evil in Adam, he was liable to fall, of course.

The reason the Firstborn takes this place is that He created all things, they were created by Him and for Him.

Ques. "Before all things"; was this as to time?

Not merely, I think, but as having pre-eminence. As John says, "He is preferred before me, for he was before me."

109 Then everything consists by Him. People talk about general laws, but I do not admit any general law without constant power exercised.

God has blown on general laws in connection with Christian faith, for resurrection is certainly no general law. Christianity is based on resurrection, yet certainly resurrection is not the natural consequence of death. The general way in nature is all well, but Christianity is not nature. So science can neither explain nor contradict Christianity.

Then there is a second headship, that of the body. And another new thing: He created everything, and then went down into death, which is below everything. "A living dog is better than a dead lion." The first man went into death by disobedience, but the Second Man went into death in obedience. He could not be holden of it, and He rises up out of it. So the Second Man has passed death; passed sin; passed judgment; passed the power of Satan. He is a Man beyond it all. And we know Him thus, besides knowing the work of atonement. It is not like the first man, put to the test to see if he could glorify God or not, but Christ has been placed in the glory where He now is, after having glorified God, for His obedience was perfect.

God has been glorified, in His love, and majesty, and truth, and everything. This having been done, all now stands upon what is finished. As a Man, too, Christ is now Head of everything. "In him all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell"; ('Father' is in italics in the A.V.). He takes the first place because He has a title to it.

Ques. How is He the beginning?

Absolutely; He is the beginning of the whole thing.

Ques. It says, "head of every man" in Corinthians?

Yes, that is just the statement of the fact, as a question of order, but it does not go on to say there, why or how.

Ques. In Hebrews 1 it says, "When he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world." When is that?

Hereafter.

Ques. Is it "again"?

Well, not again, I think.

Ques. Is there then no reference to Bethlehem, when it is said that the angels worship Him?

No; I don't think so.

110 Then follows another very precious thing: "And you . . . hath he reconciled." Not only I have forgiveness, and am made fit for God, and have been translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love, but also I am reconciled to God Himself.

All is sovereign love in Christ, and therefore the Apostle says, "We love him, because he first loved us"; but we do love Him.

If I realise what is in that passage, first, that God sent His Son the propitiation for our sins; next, that God dwells in me (which is by the Holy Ghost); and then, what about the day of judgment? "We . . . have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world." I enter into His love; I enjoy it in my heart; and, when I think of judgment, I know I am already as He Himself is.

Ques. Why does it say, "in this world"?

Because I am in it now; I do not wait for the day of judgment to know this.

Reconciliation here means and involves relationship as well as forgiveness. I am quickened together with Him; and body and all are to be raised up. My life is up there in heaven, and my body is down here. I am identified with heaven, in a certain sense, while at the same time I am identified, in fact, with the old creation.

Ques. What does reconciliation mean as applied to sins and the world?

That every thing is brought into order before God.

Ques. How are things out of order now?

Why did the angel, in Daniel, stay three weeks on the road, when he had given him an answer to take? You do not call that in order, do you?

Ques. When it says, "the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these," what is that?

In the tabernacle you have God's throne where nobody went; then the other place where the priest went to the altar of incense, and so on. These figured the heavens; but Christ has passed through the heavens, and is sitting at the right hand of God. The reconciliation will be made good, and every knee shall bow to Christ, to His power and authority.

Ques. But not until after the millennium?

Not finally and fully, but as to the heavens, it will be so when Satan is cast out. Luke says, when Christ rides into Jerusalem, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." Until you get peace in heaven, Christ cannot ride in; but when peace is in heaven, you cannot hinder it.

111 Ques. What is the difference between "made peace," and "you . . . hath he reconciled"?

He made the peace, by Him to reconcile.

There are two things, the abstract and absolute. When God sees the blood of Christ, He sees the victory which that death is over sin and Satan; but the full effect of it is not yet produced; it has to be wrought out.

Ques. Why, "in the body of his flesh"?

It was in the death of His body on the cross. His body connected Him with the creation, and made Him a responsible Man. People think of reconciliation as only something done in their own minds. Here, it is reconciling things in heaven and things on earth.

Ques. They talk of universal reconciliation?

That denies atonement; both annihilationism and universalism deny atonement entirely. It is the state of things in heaven and earth that is referred to. Afterwards, angels will no longer be bothered and hindered by devils. Ques. Is reconciliation, then, the state produced corresponding to the work by which the peace has been made? Well, yes.

Ques. But surely it is persons?

Yes, of course, it includes them. "You . . . hath he reconciled."

Then comes, "if ye continue in the faith," etc.

Clearly, they are not sitting in heavenly places in Christ. If now you give up Christ, you won't get to heaven. We are kept by the power of God, but then we are kept because we are in danger.

Ques. But a good Wesleyan would say, You may fall away?

As a professor, I am liable to fall away, but I have the positive certainty that I never shall.

Ques. What, then, is the use and force of the liability?

To make me feel my dependence every minute on Him who keeps me. I do not want to weaken one atom these "ifs."

Ques. What does "castaway" mean?

Castaway means castaway. The thing Paul is there insisting on is, that I may preach to other people, and be a castaway myself.

112 I believe that "anon with joy receiving it" is a very bad sign, if people have not been exercised before.

In Hebrews, you never get people falling into sin, except it is finally, fatally; there is no restoring. Esau found no place of repentance, though he sought it, i.e., the blessing, carefully with tears.

Ques. In Hebrews 6 we read, "crucify to themselves the Son of God." What is that?

The nation had already done it, but now if any still reject Him, they crucify Him again for themselves.

Ques. Will the sin against the Holy Ghost be a sin in the latter day?

I do not doubt it will be so, but still it was a sin in that day.

Ques. Could you take the gospel to a man who has given up Christianity?

You might; it might be a case of a man met and overcome by a cleverer man. One that has rejected Christ, as a man in humiliation, may be reached by knowing Him as a glorified Christ; but if he rejects that, there is nothing left.

God will keep to the end the one that is His own; but a man may make all sorts of profession, and he may even get his affections moved, without being converted.

To the Jews, Christ will be the crown of glory, but to us, He is the hope of glory now.

Ques. Does "perfect" here (v. 28) look on to the glory?

Here, he is looking at holiness; it is Christ revealed in my soul as the power of sanctification.

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