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## *Part 4: Books*

### *The Ways of God:*

*A Brief Outline of*

*God's Dealings with Israel, the Nations,  
and the Church, and His Purposes  
for the Glory of Christ*

**“Hold fast the form (outline) of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, an faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 1:13).**

### *Preface*

This little sketch of God's Ways, will, it is hoped, be useful to some in grasping the great outline of the purposes and counsels of God.

They were written by the author at the time the subjects were lectured upon to a small company of Christians in 1865.

That the Lord may deign to use and bless them to His glory and His people's good, is his earnest prayer.

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## Chapter 1:

### *Introduction: Government, Grace, And Glory*

At a time like the present so full of events crowding themselves together in the history of this present age -- an age which ends with consequences so deep and solemn to the world, and so full of blessing to the Christian, and the Church of God -- it is a blessing from the Lord to have our minds directed towards the Prophetic Word, and to the Ways of God. It is said of the Prophetic Word, that "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" (2 Pet. 1:19).

It is desired, as briefly as is consistent with the end in view, and as the Lord may graciously afford guidance and blessing, to bring before the reader, the general scope of the great dispensational dealings of God, which it has pleased him, in His infinite grace, to make known to us in His Word, so as to display those dealings in the Government of the world -- His Grace towards sinners -- and His purposes for the Glory of His Son. Those subjects have been entered upon with the desire that some may be enabled to follow those dealings in their *consecutive* order as nearly as such may be followed, and thus grasp the dispensational dealings and purposes of God thus revealed.

It is not pretended to give a complete view of these things, but such a general view of the whole dispensational dealings of God as may lead the mind to a closer searching after the more minute details of these dealings from the Word, and thus to a more perfect and growing apprehension of His purposes and ways.

In carrying out such a desire, many truths well known of late amongst the Lord's people will be before us -- needfully so -- that the more important parts may not be forgotten or omitted in the consecutive order of God's ways. And should it be found necessary to depart from this consecutive order, it will be with the desire but to link together the events more fully and clearly, that the mind may be enabled to pass along the chain without leaving any links behind.

The purpose of these papers is to put the truth plainly and simply before the mind from Scripture, for that "godly edifying which is in faith" -- not to combat with error, however useful and necessary such may be in its season. For it is strongly felt that when the truth, with its divine and perfect Light shines into the soul, it dispels the darkness, and finds a resting-place in the heart that desires to be subject to the everlasting Word of God. It is like the bringing in of a light to a dark place -- it dispels the darkness; while the endeavor to combat with the darkness will

not dispel it and the two things -- light and darkness -- cannot combine.

May the consideration of these truths prove a blessing from Him who alone can bless. And may He enable us to practice that which He teaches, and to live in the power of the things which are unseen and eternal -- abundantly blessing His own word to our souls.

In searching into these subjects a very large scope of Scripture will be before us.

The prophetic Scriptures of the Old Testament embrace five great distinct subjects, viz.

1. The Corruption or Ruin of Israel, God's elect nation.
2. Judgment following this ruin, whether from the hand of the Gentiles or otherwise.
3. The Times of the Gentiles, and their judgment.
4. The Crisis, or short period of judgment when the Lord will make "short work upon the earth"; introductory of that age when "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14).
5. The glory or Kingdom, which we know familiarly as the Millennium.

Prophecy is in the main occupied with earthly events; and that of the OT is silent as to the mystery, "which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God" (Eph 3:9). "The mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest through the prophetic writings" (Rom. 16:25, 26; *διά, τε γραφῶν προφητικῶν*, i.e. the prophetic writings of the NT in which are revealed the mystery of "Christ and the Church"). God's dear Son having been rejected by the world and the Jew, is to have a heavenly bride -- a church gathered to Him out of Jew and Gentile -- while He is hidden in the heavens, by the Holy Ghost come down, which will to joint heir with Him of all the glory which the Father has given Him when 'He assumes openly the headship of all things.

I would make a remark upon 2 Pet. 1:20, before passing on. "Knowing this first that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." There have been certain *partial* fulfillment of prophecy in times past which, no doubt, bore largely in them the features of the occurrences to which, when fulfilled in a primary application, they referred. But if we were

to say that their scope *ended* there, we should miss the mind of the Spirit in the object of the scripture, and at once make it of private interpretation, by confining its application solely to the occurrence which had come to pass. Prophecy begins in the mind, and counsels, and self-conceived purposes of God, and only ends in the full display of Himself and in the glory to be perfected and displayed in His Son. It links together two things -- the counsels of God and their accomplishment in Christ, We cannot, therefore, begin at a subsequent point, or stop at any prior to the end, without losing its great aim.

No matter how accurate may have been the apparent fulfilment of certain prophecies; when we come to examine the details, we are sure to find features which clearly show that

when God was pleased to use the circumstances that were then coming, or through which those who were addressed were passing at the moment; and even these before Him, -- He has always shown that He had other thoughts in view, reaching on to the accomplishment of His full purposes and glory; of which the matter then before Him served as a type. Instance the plague of locusts in Joel, which the Spirit of God uses to bring the consciences of the people before Him at the moment; and yet it forms an impressive figure of the judgment of Judah at the hands of the northern army, and the deliverance of the nation and judgment of the Gentiles, at the time of the introduction of the kingdom. Many other instances could be adduced as to this principle.

## Chapter 2:

### *The General Scope of the Dealings of God*

With respect to this subject we will refer to three Scriptures:

1st, "But when the *fulness of the time* was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal. 4:4).

2nd, "In the *dispensation of the fullness of times*, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him; in whom also we have obtained an inheritance" (Eph. 1:10, 11).

3rd, "And the angel . . . sware by him that liveth for ever and ever . . . that there should *be time (delay) no longer*: but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished" (Rev. 10:6, &c.).

These three portions of Scripture mark out the great leading events or epochs of God's dealings towards the world. The first of them is past; and the two others manifestly future. We shall now endeavor to ascertain from Scripture to what past dealings and ways of God the expression in Galatians refers -- "When the fulness of the time was come." We must, consequently, take a general glance at the past history of man, as revealed to us, from the beginning until that moment.

We turn to Gen. 1, 2, and there we find that God, having created the man and the woman in innocence, bestowed upon them the

Dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth

-- a joint universal dominion over all that God had created in this world. We pass on to Gen. 3, and there we find that Satan had come in and succeeded in overthrowing him from this universal lordship, and that man had fallen under his power and become estranged from God. God had given to Adam in his state of

innocency a law, upon the observance of which he was to retain the blessings and dominion he had received, in the condition in which he had been placed. The observance of this command of God -- to avoid the eating of one tree in the garden -- would have kept him as a creature in his proper place of subjection to God. It marked his responsibility as an intelligent creature to his Creation.

Adam, thus fallen, hears a promise that in due time the woman's seed (which he was not) should bruise the head of Satan, who had thus brought man under judgment before God, and had thus overthrown man from this place of dominion through his subtlety. Adam, hearing of this promise made to the woman's seed, passes out from the presence of God, and from a state into which he could never return. God "drove out the man," and placed a barrier to prevent his access to the Tree of Life, and his return to the condition of innocence in which he had been placed at the beginning. Then begins the trial of man in this condition, which lasts about four thousand years, till the "fulness of the time was come."

For about sixteen or seventeen hundred years of this time of testing, men are left to themselves (God always preserving a witness in the world for Himself) till the flood; when the earth was "corrupt before God, and . . . was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth" (Gen. 6:11, 12). The knowledge of God which men had, and the testimonies of creation, proving His eternal power and Godhead. Paul says, writing of this,

The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse (Rom. 1:20).

So He said,

The end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold I will destroy them with the earth (Gen. 6:13).

God brought in the flood upon the world of the ungodly, saving Noah, the eighth person, who had found grace in His sight. And the world that then was, being overflowed with water perished; and this ended the trial of man left to himself without law.

Noah and his family are saved through the judgment of the world; and we find him on the earth thus cleansed. Into his hand God places the sword of government -- (Adam had lordship -- Noah, government).

Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he man" (Gen. 9:6).

Noah, thus entrusted, began to be an husbandman, and planted a vineyard, and he drank of the wine and was drunken. His younger son, Ham, came into his tent, and beheld the degradation of his father, who thus lost morally the place which God had given him.

The world had begun again on a new principle; which goes on until its judgment by fire. Peter writes,

The world that then was, (*i.e.* before the flood,) being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens, and the earth which are now, by the same word, are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men (2 Pet. 3:6, 7).

A new principle now finds a place in the hearts of men. The worship of Demons began. When men knew God,

they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened: professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts, and creeping things (Rom. 1:21, &c.)

Wherefore God gave them up to what they desired; and as man cannot do without something to rule his conscience and heart; if he has not God as above him, he will have some thing else. Satan gets this place, and man turns to the worship of devils. We learn this in Josh. 24:2.

Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood (properly "river") in old time, even Terah the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods.

These gods were demons, as we read, "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God" (Deut. 32:17; 1 Cor 10:20).

In such a state of things man's heart became filled with self-will. Self-will which shows itself in independence of God, and would prove a center in it self, having lost that which linked it with Him as the only center of good. Men unite to make a common center of unity apart from God.

Let us build us a city and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth (Gen. 11).

This was expressed in the building of Babel. This meets its judgment from God; who goes down and scatters men abroad upon the face of the earth, giving restraint of the confusion of different tongues or languages, which has ever since proved a

hindrance to this common purpose of man's heart, preventing the intelligent interchange of his thoughts.

When the world had thus gone into idolatry, "and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever," God separated to Himself one man -- Abraham -- and in him a family, a nation, -- *i.e.*, Israel -- that He might (amongst other governmental ways) place man under another test on new ground. In the course of time He separates, by a typical redemption, this nation from the world (Egypt,) to Himself: giving them, thus separated His Law; and eventually taking up His dwelling amongst them between the cherubim, on the ark of the covenant.

The law represented to man the test of his responsibility as a fallen child of Adam, and the authority of God. Ignorant of themselves, they accept it as the condition of their relationship with God -- the lawgiver, Moses, goes up to mount Sinai to receive it, and before he returns to name the conditions, those who accepted them set up a golden calf and worshiped it as their God, and fail! (See Ex. 32.) God then puts the tables of the law into the hands of the mediator a second time, and adds to the conditions of pure law, the character of long-suffering and mercy, saying,

Jehovah, Jehovah 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 (Ex. 34:6, 7).

The history of Israel thus set on new ground, gives us the result of this fresh trial. It lasted till the captivity of Babylon. During that time of trial we hearken to the pleading voice of the prophets and messengers of God, striving to win back the rebellious people to the observance of the conditions of their relations with Him, and to keep the law that defined those conditions: but we hearken in vain to a national response from the people. This long-suffering and mercy goes on till they had exhausted it -- till to allow it to go further would but show that God was careless as they about His name. At last it runs out; and we read in Hos. 1:6, as to Israel (the ten tribes)

I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away.

And again as to Judah, to whom was granted a further respite,

Ye are not my people, and I will not be your God (Hos. 1:9).

Man now gets a trial in another form. That of Israel had been at the beginning of their history, a pure theocracy, until they desired a king. After the history of the royalty of Israel and its failure, God removed the seat of His government from the center from which He had governed the world, while He owned Israel as His nation -- He took away the glory or Shekinah, where He manifested His presence from their midst, and gave them up to captivity in Babylon. He then transferred the supreme power of the world into the hands of the Gentiles, beginning with Babylon. Universal despotic dominion is given unto the hands of Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon:

Thou, O King, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory;

and whosoever the children of men dwell, the beast of the field, and the fowls of the heaven hath He given into thy hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all (Dan. 2: 37, 38).

How then will he use it? Will it be to the glory and honor of Him from whom he had received it? The result is known. Lifted up in pride of heart, as soon as he had received the power, he makes of himself a center; and endeavors to make a religious and idolatrous center of unity apart from God; (see the golden image of Dan. 3) and casts the saints of God who witnessed for Him, into the burning fiery furnace. Lifted up in pride, he says,

Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty? (Dan. 4:30).

He loses his moral reason and becomes a beast; thus typifying as their head, the power of the Gentiles in the whole period of their existence, till the "times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled."

And now into this wilderness of the world, into the spot where God had fenced in His vineyard and planted His vine -- "a wholly right seed" -- that it might bring forth fruit. The vineyard of which He says,

What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? (Isa. 5);

and when He looked that it should bring forth grapes, it brought forth wild grapes, after all His care and culture, and became "the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me." Into the moral wilderness of this world, and into that little spot on which He had bestowed such care, came His last trial for man.

Then said the lord of the vineyard, what shall I do? I will send my beloved Son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him (Luke 20:13-15).

The tale was soon told. They gave Him a cross, when He came to seek His crown. They gave Him spitting, when He came to seek for fruit! And thus ended the probation of man for four thousand years, under every form of trial. The fulness of the time was come (Gal. 4:4, 5).

Man cannot now say that one single way was left untried of God -- He is left without excuse. The fulness of the time was come, and God had sent forth His Son, who was so received. The Son had come to seek and to save that which was lost! He took the two-fold position: "made of a woman," through whom sin had entered -- "made under the law," through which the Jew was under condemnation. His purpose was to redeem, by His death, them that were under the law, that those who believe, of both Jew and Gentile, might receive the adoption of sons -- that God might display the exceeding riches of His grace towards those who were under sin and condemnation. He bore in Himself on the cross the judgment of God against and concerning sin, making good the righteous demands of the moral nature of God as to sin. Rising from the dead He becomes the Head of the new creation, and the One in whom all who believe, live; and "have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7).

To those who believe, God reveals His purpose;

that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him; in whom also we have obtained an inheritance (Eph. 1:10, 11).

And when that time shall have come, the strong angel swears by Him that liveth for ever and ever, that there should be time (delay) no longer, and that when the seventh angel should sound, the "mystery of God" should be finished (Rev. 10). When that sounding comes, we find the time has arrived to gather together in one all things in heaven and on earth, in Christ; and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of the Lord and His Christ in the days of the millennium. This glory, or kingdom is, as we shall see, the making good of all that has been ruined by the first Adam, in and by the second {last} Adam -- the Lord Jesus; and will comprise the restored nation of Israel, again God's *earthly* center; the Gentiles rejoicing with His people. And in the *heavenly* sphere of its glory, the saints will have their inheritance or joint-heirship with Christ, in His glorious reign over the world for the thousand years. "The glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another."

During the interval between the "fulness of the time," and the "dispensation of the fulness of times," the mystery of God," of Rev. 10, goes on. This is His non-intervention in open power) to set things in the world to rights; while He watches over all in secret -- the time when He bears with long-suffering the evil, without judging it -- when wickedness is in high places, and goodness trampled under foot -- when falsehood triumphs, and truth is fallen in the streets. The Son, too, sits upon the Father's throne, having overcome the world, in this anomalous state of things (Rev. 3:21). The testimony of the cross and rejection of Jesus, and His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God -- the gathering together, while He is hidden, of the joint-heirs -- God's secret work progressing, fitting the spiritual stones to His spiritual house. The Church of God suffers through this interval in outward brokenness and weakness in the "kingdom and patience of Jesus" -- the "kingdom and power" will come. Judgment and government placed in the hands of the Gentiles is so far separated from righteousness, that when the only righteous Man stood before the judgment-seat of Pilate, owning that the power which was there was given of God, ("Thou couldst have no power at all, except it were given thee from above," John 19), it condemned the guiltless. The time, too, of blindness for a season of the beloved people of Israel -- a veil is over their face. Gentile domination goes on in the world. The great image of Dan. 2 has not yet received the blow upon its feet by the stone cut out without hands. The whole creation groans and travails in pain, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19-22). Satan goes about unrestrained, as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Jesus, rejected by the world, sits at God's right hand, waiting till His enemies are made His footstool (Psa. 110; Heb. 10).

We must now retrace our steps for a little. We saw that man lost the headship and dominion given to him in Gen. 1, 2. If we turn to Psa. 8, we shall find that there is a "Son of Man" on whom this dominion is bestowed.

Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands, thou hast put all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the

paths of the seas.

Who is this “Son of Man”? And where is this dominion to be exercised and enjoyed? Heb. 2 answers us,

Unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the habitable earth to come (οικουμενη) whereof we speak; but one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of man that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels, thou crownedst him with glory and honor; and didst set him over the works of thy hands; thou has put all things in subjection under his feet . . . We see not yet all things put under him, but we see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honor.”

It is the second {last} Adam -- the Son of Man -- to whom this headship is given. It is in an *age to come* this dominion is to be exercised and enjoyed. Meanwhile, when waiting for the assumption of this headship, He is “crowned with glory and honor.”

We will now turn to Eph. 1:19-23, to discover what work progresses while He is there. We find the apostle again quoting the same Psalm in v. 22. He speaks of the exceeding greatness of God’s power, which He wrought in Christ

when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body; the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

We learn from this and other scriptures that while He is thus exalted and hidden from the world, a Church or Bride is being formed for Him out of Jew and Gentile; that God puts forth the same power that He used to raise Christ, as Man, from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand; (He was always the eternal Son, the word that was with God, and was God). That the same power is put forth to quicken with, raise up together, and seat together in Christ, in the heavenly places, the joint heirs, by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

We find this Psalm {83} again used by the apostle in 1 Cor. 15:27. There we learn that this dominion is taken by Christ at the resurrection of the saints from among the dead of which the chapter treats. Christ has been the “first fruits” of this “first resurrection”; they that are Christ’s (and they only) at His coming. When that day comes some shall not have been laid to sleep by Jesus; but all -- living or dead -- shall be raised or changed. The dead raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. It is then that God will gather together all things, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, in Christ; and when the saying shall be brought to pass, “death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor. 15:54; Isa. 25:8). God then brings in the blessing of the habitable earth, in the judgment of the world or the quick {the living}, as we find largely brought before us in this and its kindred passages or content of the prophets. And the kingdoms of this world shall then become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ. “When the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.”

We find this, to speak for a moment in general terms, in Isa. 24-27. The world and its systems brought under judgment, and reeling to and fro like a drunkard under the judgment of God (Isa. 24: 20). The hosts of the high ones on high (Isa. 24: 21) are cast

out and restrained. Satan and his hosts cast out of the heavenlies (Rev. 12), having so long deceived and hindered the earth’s blessing from God. The kings of the earth (Isa. 24:21) shall be punished on the earth when they are gathered together against the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19). This universal judgment makes way for the establishment of His throne in Zion. “In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined” (Isa. 25). He will remove the vail of idolatry that is spread over all nations; He will take away the rebuke of the remnant of His people Israel who have waited for his intervention. During this judgment “He is a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.” The Lord subdues the pride of the terrible enemies of His people, and gives them songs of deliverance in the land of Judah. “We have a strong city, salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks” (Isa. 26). These three chapters are of exceeding beauty, showing what the Lord will do at that day, when the saying is brought to pass -- “Death is swallowed up in victory” -- or in other words, the time of the first resurrection. All things that had been marred and destroyed in the hands of the first Adam, shall be more than made good in the last Adam -- the Son of God. He takes the headship of Psa. 8 not only by right, but by redemption, as the inheritance had fallen under the power of the enemy through man’s sin. The joint-heirs will then enjoy unitedly with Him this headship in the heavenly glory, and the name of the Lord shall be excellent in all the earth: not only as King in Zion, at “the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world begun.”

To conclude, we see that man has destroyed himself; every fresh trial and deeper privilege only proving how complete has been his ruin and failure. He has sinned away every blessing as soon as he had received it; but God will make good in a far higher sense, and to His own glory, everything that man has ruined, and under which he has failed, in the last Adam -- in Christ! The period which we have considered as to man’s trial embraces the time from the garden of Eden to the cross -- the rejection of God himself in the person of Christ. We shall see, in considering the other subjects, this humiliating, yet necessary discovery, more clearly brought out in detail.

True, that man was as really lost and ruined at the day of Gen. 3, as when he rejected and crucified Christ Himself, but it was the cross which brought out definitely the enmity of his heart to God and good. Before the cross there was no distinct demonstration of this. He had failed in many a patient trial from God; but his ruined state was fully proved, when God, gentle, human, loving, full of grace and truth, came into his midst, and was rejected in the person of Jesus Christ!

## Chapter 3:

### *The Past History of The People of Israel*

After our short survey of the general dealings of God, we now come to consider His ways, as exhibited more in detail; and in doing so we turn to that people, or nation, which was peculiarly the platform for their display, in government, long-suffering, and mercy -- the people of Israel.

We have seen the state of the world and failure of man in the days before the flood: and afterwards Noah set up on the renewed earth, the world going into idolatry, and amongst the jarring elements of human wills, man striving to make a center and a name apart from God, and the judgment of God thereon -- the divisions of the world into nations in the family of Noah. There was a purpose with God at that time, in His mind and counsels, which we find in Deut. 32:8.

When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the peoples, according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.

Here we find that centuries before they existed as a nation, the counsels of God were occupied about them. His dealings with the nations of the world were arranged with reference to the seed of Jacob.

The world had lost the knowledge of the one true God and had gone after idols, even the family of him of whom it was said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem." Satan had succeeded in gaining the position God should have had in the mind and heart of man.

"Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the river in old time, even Terah, the father of Abram, and the father of Nachor: and they served other Gods" (Josh. 24:2).

We learn from 1 Cor. 10:20, in which the apostle quotes Deut. 32, that these gods were demons. This being the case, God *chose* one man, whom He *called* to separate himself from his country, associations, and his family, to be a witness in the world, and against the world for Him. To this man, Abraham, God *gave certain promises*, both of a temporal and of a spiritual nature.

The question before us being the past history of the nation of Israel, we pursue only the temporal promises. When Abraham came into the land of Canaan, God said, "Unto thy seed will I give this land" (Gen. 12). When Lot had separated from him, these promises are renewed.

Lift up now thine eyes and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward; for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it and to

thy seed for ever, &c. (Gen. 13:14, &c.).

Again in Gen. 15 we find the promise renewed, and the bounds of the land named; "And he said unto him, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it." And again, "Unto thy seed have I given this land from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates." In a vision in the same chapter God reveals to Abraham that his seed would be a stranger in a land that was not theirs and that they should serve them. "And they shall afflict them four hundred years. And afterward they shall come out with great substance."

Now these promises were *entirely unconditional*: they were given by God, and received by Abraham without any condition whatsoever. We find them, still without condition, repeated to Isaac, in Gen. 26, and to Jacob in Gen. 28. We turn to Ex. 2 when the four hundred years were expired, and we find these promises to the father's alluded to;

And God 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 (Ex. 2:23-25).

The people are now redeemed, and taken out of Egypt (Ex. 12-14), the covenant name of Jehovah revealed to them (Ex. 6:2, 3). Afterwards they are told God's purpose in thus taking them out.

Unto thee it was showed that thou mightest know that the Lord (Jehovah) he is God, there is none else beside him (Deut. 4:35).

Or, as He says in Isa. 43:12, "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I (Jehovah) am God." On the redemption of the people God takes up His dwelling amongst them in the cloud and the glory.

The question, Had fallen man any righteousness for God? -- had not, however, yet been raised. The people journey from the Red Sea to Mount Sinai, the objects of perfect grace. Here God proposes certain terms of relationship with them;

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, &c.* (Ex. 19).

And all the people answered together and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.

See also Ex. 24:3, 7, where the covenant is ratified by blood. Thus they enter upon a covenant of obedience as the terms of

relationship with God. Instead of saying, “No, we cannot trust ourselves in the least; if we accept such conditions as these, we shall surely fail: we shall not be able to keep our blessings for one hour.” Instead of this, they were full of confidence and ignorant of themselves. The result is plain and solemn. The lawgiver goes up to the mount that burned, to receive the terms of the covenant; and, ere he returns, the people make a calf and worship it, as the god that brought them out of Egypt: they say,

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 (Ex. 32:1).

Moses returns with the tables of the law in his hand; he sees the music and the dancing when he came *nigh* unto the camp: he saw that on the side of the people the terms of the relationship were broken; and his anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hand, and broke them beneath the mount. Pure and unmixed law never, therefore, came amongst the people. The lawgiver returns to the mount; he goes up again, “Peradventure he might make an atonement for their sin”; and in answer to the prayer of Moses, the people is spared, and a covenant of long-suffering, patience, and mercy added to that of the law; and it is established afresh in the hands of the mediator and the people (Ex. 34: 27).

The Book of Leviticus, with other matters, settles the approach to God, who dwelt amongst them, and the priesthood, which as soon as it was consecrated was ruined, Nadab and Abihu offering strange fire, are destroyed (Lev. 10).

The Book of Numbers gives the journey through the wilderness, and the revolt of the Levites (Num. 16).

When about to enter the land, the covenant is renewed in the plainest way, establishing the terms of their possession of the land on condition of their observing them, in the Book of Deuteronomy. Deut. 27 states the principle of legal righteousness, and Deut. 28, as other parts of the book, the conditions of their inheritance and blessing, in the land.

And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth, and all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field: blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep: blessed shall be thy basket and thy store: blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out” (Deut. 28:1-6).

And the alternative,

But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day, that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee. Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field; cursed shall be thy basket and thy store; cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land; the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep: cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and

cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out (Deut. 28:15-19).

The whole chapter, as the book at large, states in the most solemn manner the conditions of their possession and retention of their blessings in the land. And we read in Deut. 29:1,

These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab (in the borders of Israel), beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.

Accordingly we find them entering the land under the leadership of Joshua, the waters of Jordan separating themselves, and the “*Lord of all the earth*” passing into the land before His people, to possess the land in them. This was an important title which the Lord thus assumes, to which we shall have occasion to refer again (see Josh. 3).

The Book of Joshua gives the history of their conquest and partial establishment in the land. In the last chapter we find Joshua establishing a covenant with the people, in which they bind themselves to serve the “*Lord their God*,” and to obey His voice, and under these conditions to retain the blessing.

We now see one point established clearly, of the utmost importance, which is, that the people never yet possessed the land, or the blessings promised to the fathers, under the *unconditional* terms promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These promises are yet to be fulfilled and accomplished in grace; they took them under the law.

The results of their inheritance of the land, and the blessings conditionally held, we find in the Book of Judges, as in other scriptures.

And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served Baalim: and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods; of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger. And they forsook the Lord and served Baal and Ashtoreth . . . And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my *covenant* which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice: I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died; that through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord, to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it or not, &c. (Judg. 2:11, 13, 20-22).

This book shows their failure, and the faithfulness and long-suffering of God, who raised up judges and deliverers from time to time, to bring temporary relief to them from the hands of their enemies.

In 1 Samuel we find the failure of the priesthood in the family of Eli. We read, “Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial, they knew not the Lord” (1 Sam. 2:12). This chapter treats of this failure, and the cognizance the Lord takes of it. In Judg. 3 the Lord establishes the regular line of prophets in Samuel (Acts 3:24), “ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord,” to form the link between Himself and the

consciences of the people. <sup>1</sup> In 1 Sam. 4, the Ark of God, on which He manifested His presence, is taken. Eli dies, and the wife of Phinehas, dying on giving birth to her child, names him "Ichabod," saying, "The glory is departed from Israel." The prophet Samuel is now the link between God and the people. "He judged Israel all the days of his life."

When he became old, he set his sons to be judges over Israel, but they "walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment" (1 Sam. 8).

The people now desire a king, and

the thing displeased Samuel when they said, Give us a king to judge us; and Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee for they have not rejected *thee*, but they have rejected *me*, that I should not reign over them.

The Lord now gives them a king, a man of their own choice, Saul the son of Kish. 1 Sam. 9-15 give us the history of his appointment and failure, in that which he had been raised up to do.

And Samuel said unto him, The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from *thee* this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine, that is better than thou (1 Sam. 15:28).

God now gives them a king, a man of His own choice, "David the son of Jesse,"<sup>2</sup> who at last is settled in the kingdom. After him, his son Solomon is established on the throne of the kingdom, in the full tide of prosperity and blessing, "neither adversary nor evil occurrent" (see 1 Sam. 16 -- 1 Kings 5). But "Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt," and he multiplied wives unto himself. Both of these things were expressly forbidden in Deut. 17,

And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice; and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the Lord commanded (1 Kings 11:9, 10).

They had now failed under *prophets, priests, and kings*. Solomon had for a little moment united all these in his own person, serving as a type of Him in whom all shall be established. We read in 2 Chron. 9:3, 4, when the Queen of Sheba came up, she heard the *wisdom* of the *prophet*, and saw the magnificence of the *king*, and the ascent of the royal *priest* to the House of the Lord -- a faint shadow of the coming day of the glory of the Millennial Kingdom.

God now stirs up the adversaries of the kingdom against

Solomon, declaring by His prophet that He would take the kingdom from him; yet He would still preserve one tribe to David's house, that he might always have a light before Him. Accordingly when Rehoboam came to the throne the mass of the nation revolted under Jeroboam, who established a separate kingdom, and idolatrous centers of unity at Bethel and Dan (1 Kings 12:25, &c.). The tribe of Judah only was preserved to the house of David.

From this time we pursue the histories of these two divisions of the nation, under the kings of Israel, and the kings of Judah. That of the former is a tale of evil without any redeeming point, till we come to 2 Kings 17, when, under their last king, Hoshea, Shalmaneser, the king of Assyria came up and led away the nation of Israel captive.

In the ninth year of the reign of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes (2 Kings 17:6).

Read the entire chapter, which gives the account of this. These tribes have never been restored.

We follow the history of the kingdom of the house of Judah from Rehoboam's day, which is such another tale of wretchedness, and failure, and departure from God, occasionally relieved by the reign of some faithful king, such as Josiah and Hezekiah, till the house of David consummated its guilt in Ahaz. This king had set up the altar of a strange god in the house of the Lord, and made molten images for Baalim, and followed the abominations of the heathen. He was scarcely exceeded in iniquity by Manasseh after the reign of Hezekiah. In the reign of Zedekiah the time had come when those touching and solemn words were pronounced:

The Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes and sending, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place; but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and mis-used his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy (2 Chron. 36:15, 16).

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came against the city of Jerusalem, and besieged it and took it, and brought the nation captive into the land of Babylon, and put out the eyes of the king and slew his sons, rifled the house of the Lord, and burnt it and the king's house, leaving a few of the poor of the people to be vine-dressers and husbandmen in the land. They had failed under prophets, priests, and kings, and God pronounced these words by the prophet concerning their last king:

And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, thus saith the Lord God, Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him (Ezek. 21:25-27).

The glory, or presence of Jehovah, that had dwelt amongst them since they had been redeemed from Egypt, departs from its house. Turn to chs. 9 to 11 of the prophet Ezekiel. In ch. 9 the prophet sees the glory of the God of Israel gone up from the

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1. This is a very important principle. When the ark, which was the first link in the chain of relationship between God and His people is gone, there was no use in the Priesthood, because a priest had no place to sprinkle the blood, or to get the answers by Urim and Thummin. Priesthood was that by which a people in external relationship with God could *draw nigh to Him*. When it had become useless what was to be done? Here sovereign grace comes in, and establishes a line of prophets, by which He *could draw nigh to His people*, and keep up the link in their consciences, when all ordered relationships were broken. A prophet is one, at any time, who speaks from God to the conscience. A prophet is always sovereign grace.

cherub, and standing upon the threshold of the house the Lord marks His own, who were faithful, then executes judgment. In Ezek. 10., the glory departs from off the threshold, and stood over the cherubim that were to bear it away. And in Ezek. 11, the glory goes up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mount of Olivet, that is upon the east side of the city.

As soon as the people had gone into captivity, the “sword” of government is handed over to the Gentile king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, and the “Times of the Gentiles” begin.

Thou, O king, art a king of kings, for the God of *heaven* hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of heaven, hath he given into thy hand, and hath made the ruler over them (Dan. 2:37, 38).

Israel had been God’s servant up to this (in this *position*, however faithless). See Isa. 43:10 -- “Ye are my . . . servant whom I have chosen.” (See also Isa. 41:8; 42:19; 44:21.) The Gentile king now takes the place of the Lord’s servant, though in another sense. (See Ezek. 29:18, 20; Jer. 25:9, &c.) During the times of the Gentiles, God assumes the title of the “God of *heaven*,” as we see all through the Book of Daniel, which treats of these times. He had gone over Jordan into the land of Israel, as we saw, under the title of the “Lord of all the *earth*,” and had exercised His government from the center of Israel. The people having proved themselves worse than the heathen around, utterly untrue witnesses to the “Lord of all the *earth*,” God removes His presence from amongst them, and bestows the government of the world into the hands of the Gentile king.

Thus ends, properly speaking, the past history of the nation of Israel. In the language of Hosea,

The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prime, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim.

And again,

Call his name, Lo-ammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God” (Hos. 1, 3).

We must not however, close our brief review of their past history, without looking shortly at the return of a remnant, part of Judah and Benjamin at the close of the Babylonish captivity. We turn to Jer. 25 and we find that when they were about to be sent into captivity into Babylon they are told by the prophet,

Behold I will send . . . Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof . . . and this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

We find in the Book of Esther how God secretly watched over His people, without publicly owning them or manifesting Himself to them, in the land of their captivity.

We read in Dan. 9 that as soon as the seventy years of the kingdom of Babylon had expired, and Darius the Mede had taken the kingdom,

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.

When the seventy years were over, a remnant of Judah and Benjamin came back, and settled in the land (Ezra 1, &c.); they rebuilt the temple, and reared up and repaired the city (Nehemiah).

The history of this remnant is touching and impressive. It was, however, an empty temple; they had neither the Shekinah, (the Glory, or presence of Jehovah), nor the ark, nor the Urim and Thummim. They did not pretend to more than they had, but did what they could in the ruins of everything around. This was not the *national* restoration as was promised by the Prophets; nor was it the inheritance of the land according to the promises to the Fathers; only a remnant of Judah and Benjamin returned under the permissive patronage of their rulers, to whom they were still subject.

Behold we are servants this day; and for the land that thou gavest to our fathers to eat the fruit thereof, and the good thereof, behold, we are servants in it; and it yieldeth much increase to the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress (Neh. 9:36, 37).

The national restoration will yet take place of which God declares,

I will make them *one* nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and *one* king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all (Ezek. 37:22).

And again,

They shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors (Isa. 14:2).

This remnant of the nation remained in the land under their oppressors, until the coming of their Messiah, and His presentation to them. Only a little band of disciples attached themselves to Him, and received Him as the Christ: the mass of the people refused Him and choose a murderer in His stead. They were warned by Him that He had come in His Father’s name and that they would reject Him: and that if another would come in his own name, him they would receive (John 5).

With His own blessed, unwearying love He pleaded with, yearned over, and wept for the people still beloved for their fathers’ sakes, till compelled to say,

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate, for I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord (Matt. 23:37-39).

The sentence of judicial blindness, and hardness of heart, pronounced by the prophet seven hundred years before, but in longsuffering withheld (Isa. 6:9, 10) came to pass (Matt. 13; John 12). The householder had sent His Son to receive the fruits of His vineyard, and the husbandmen said,

This is the heir, come let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours; and they caught him and cast him out of the

vineyard, and slew him.

His love was not turned aside even by this; the Holy Ghost takes up the voice of Jesus on the cross, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do," by the mouth of Peter in Acts 3, who says, "And now brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also our rulers." Repent and be converted, and even now He will return. But they gnashed their teeth upon His witness, Stephen, and stoned him and sent a message by him after Jesus, "We will not have this man to reign over us."

Still in longsuffering He lingers until the day of Acts 28, when the final carrying out of the sentence was pronounced by Paul,

Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive, for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed: lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them (Acts 28:25-27).

It only remained to complete the sentence by the armies of Titus -- till

The cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, and the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land (Isa. 6:11, 12).

The great *prophet* had come into the midst of His people: to Him they would not hearken. Rejected, He had gone to heaven to be a *Priest* for those who now believe; and when He comes again as *King* He will unite all these glories in His own person, and His kingdom shall have no end!

## Chapter 4:

### *The Times of The Gentiles, And Their Judgment*

We have shortly traced the past history of the people of Israel to the Babylonish captivity, when the sentence “Lo Ammi” (not my people) was passed upon them, the Glory, or symbol of the presence of Jehovah, departed from their midst, and the government of the world was transferred to the Gentiles. That is, “The times of the Gentiles” began {cp. Luke 21:24; Dan. 2}. We have also followed the history of the remnant of Judah and Benjamin, which returned to the land to have their Messiah presented to them, the sentence “Lo Ammi” {Hos. 1:9} not having been removed;<sup>2</sup> till after their complete dispersion and the destruction of the cities of the land<sup>3</sup> (Isa. 6:10).

Just before the time when Judah was finally called into captivity, God sends His Prophet to Zedekiah, and to the Kings of Edom, Moab, &c., who were plotting to throw off the yoke of the king of Babylon, requiring that they should bring their necks under his yoke. He says,

I have made the earth, the man, and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power, and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him . . . Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live (Jer. 37:5-12).

It is with this Gentile power, and those which succeed him, until the end of their “times,” we have now to do.

We turn to the Book of Daniel and read of one of the Hebrew captives enabled of God to recall and interpret his dream to the Gentile king, who had forgotten it (Dan. 2:31-45). The dream was of a great image, whose head was of gold; the breast and arms of silver; his belly and thighs of brass; his legs of iron, and his feet part of iron and part of clay. The interpretation shows that this image typified the Gentile power from the days of the first king, Nebuchadnezzar, till its close. When in its *last* state, a stone<sup>4</sup> “cut without hands,” a kingdom set up by the God of heaven, smites the image on its *feet*, i.e., at the close of its existence. Accordingly the component parts

of the image, then fully formed, are broken to pieces, and consumed by a crushing act of judgment, inflicted by the stone. They become like chaff in the summer threshing-floors, and the wind carries them away, so that no place is found for them.

Thus it is that the stone, which executed this act of judgment, becomes a great mountain, and fills the whole earth. The vision is plain, and needs but few words. The Gentile powers exist in different stages, each inferior to the other, the farther it removes from the source of its first power, until an act of judgment most complete and destructive is executed on its *last* state, by a power not intrusted to the hands of men, so that every vestige of the image disappears from the scene; and the power that strikes the blow is then exalted, and stands for ever.

Babylon was the head of gold; its source was God, as we have seen; its power absolute and unquestioned.

For the majesty that God gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up, and whom he would he put down<sup>5</sup> (Dan. 5:19).

After it came the Medo-Persian, the breast and arms of silver, a united power (two arms), inferior to the first in its absolute power, inasmuch as if he who wielded the power made a law he was himself subject to that law as another; for “the law of the Medes and Persians altereth not.” And the power and government of the Empire was divided among Satraps and Princes under the King. See Dan. 6:1; Esther 1; &c.

The third kingdom, of brass, the Grecian, was still inferior; as the fourth, that of the iron, and the iron mixed with the miry clay, degenerates yet more. This last power was the Roman Empire.

The great point for us to understand is, that the great power given to the Gentile king, to which succeeded the other powers, as typified in the great image (which, as its existence is prolonged, deteriorates), runs on, till one great, crushing, complete act of judgment, *yet* to be executed, carries the whole, and every vestige of it away, replaces it, and *then* fills the whole earth.

I say “yet to be executed,” because it is a common thought to misapply this kingdom, which destroys the others and then fills the earth, to the Gospel. Grace, or the gospel, is never

2. The prophets who prophesied after the captivity count the years by the years of the Gentile oppressors, and none address the people as the people of God thus owned, save for the future.

3. This was carried out about AD 79 {sic, AD70}, at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman General, Titus Vespasianus.

4. That this stone is Christ, declares The Law (Gen. 49: 24); the Prophets (Isa. 8:14; 28:16); the Psalms (Psa. 118:22); the Gospels (Matt. 21:44); and the Epistles (Rom. 9:33 ; 1 Pet. 2:4).

5. Gentile Royalty was *despotic* royalty; as Jewish was to have been *obedient* Royalty.

represented in Scripture as doing this. In the first place, the image did not exist in the state typified by the *feet* in the beginning of the Gospel-day. In the next, it is on *them* the blow is struck, which is a crushing act of judgment, not grace. And next, it is the *first* act of the stone, an act of judgment, *before* it begins to grow and to fill the earth. This is noticed only in passing, as the object of these papers is rather to establish the truth, in tracing these Gentile powers to their end than to combat with error.

We now turn to Dan. 7, where these four great powers are expressed under the form of four ravening beasts. From the vast sea of human passions and wills, which floated unorganized in the world, striven upon by the four winds of heaven, came up four wild beasts or kingdoms. The wind is the force of Satan's power acting upon the *sea* -- *i.e.*, the vast masses of human population in a disorganized state. The first like a lion, king among the beasts of the earth, with eagles wings, the chief of birds: a power rapid in its flight, and soaring above the other powers of the world. This we know was the first of the four great monarchies -- Babylon (Dan. 1:1; 2:37, 38). It lasted 70 years.

Another wild beast follows -- the Medo-Persian, which succeeded that of Babylon (see Dan. 5:28, 30, 31).

Then a third -- the Grecian empire, formed by Alexander the Great, which followed the Medo-Persian (see Dan. 8:21, 22), afterwards divided into four heads.

The fourth, diverse from all the other beasts and yet partaking of the qualities or materials of all (see Rev. 13:2), strong exceedingly, devouring and breaking to pieces and destroying the rest, which also had ten horns. It is with this fourth empire we have more particularly to do: the chapter we are looking at is principally occupied with him. The fourth great power was Rome, which replaced the Grecian empire after it was broken into four heads (Dan. 7:6; 8:21, 22). This imperial power is introduced by the ancient name of that which surrounded it, its center, Rome, in Dan. 11, where we read, "the ships from Kittim shall come," &c. This is merely referred to, to show that we have all four powers defined from Scripture, either by name or circumstances adjacent. This power existed in its vast unbroken state in the days of Christ, as we read in Luke 2:1,

And there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that *all the world* should be taxed.

And it is with this power we, as Christians, called out from the Gentiles, have most to do.

In the second vision of Dan. 7, we find that the fourth beast had ten horns, and that amongst the horns came up another horn, before whom three fell; and this horn had eyes, expressive of active intelligence and design; and a mouth speaking great things. He speaks great words against the Most High, wears out the saints of the Most High, prevailing against them; thinks to change times (Jewish festivals), and laws (ceremonies), which are given into his hand for a time, times, and the dividing of a time: (*i.e.* the last three and a half years of the times of the Gentiles). Thrones are set and the Ancient of days sits, the dominion of the little horn is taken away, (he

personifies the beast in the end, taking the lead amongst the other horns, and so becomes the expression of the whole), his body destroyed and given to the burning flame. Judgment is given to the saints of the Most High (the *heavenlies*, "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world" 1 Cor. 6), and the saints possess the kingdom; (the earthly, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25). Afterwards we find, in another vision, the kingdom of the Son of man substituted for that of the fourth beast (the Ancient of days is the Son of man Himself, see Dan. 7:22), which is personified in the little horn that came up last amongst the other horns.

The questions now arise,

1st. Has not the fourth kingdom long ceased to exist in its vast iron power?

2ndly. Has it ever assumed the features conveyed by the ten horns?

3dly. Has it ever done what is attributed to it in v. 25?

Now these questions will be satisfactorily answered by other Scriptures. We turn to Rev. 13, and read of a wild beast which the prophet sees arising from the sea. It partook of the characteristics of the three foregoing beasts of Dan. 7, but it has another added, which was, that the dragon, Satan, gave him his power, and seat and great authority; this it had not before. It had seven heads and ten horns -- seven forms of government and ten divisions in its administrative power. John saw one of its heads wounded as it seemed, unto death, and the deadly wound was healed. There is no doubt but that this head was its imperial form, which has long ceased to exist: some think for ever -- that the wound was unto death. But the apparently deadly wound was healed, and all the world wonders; and they worship him, and, through him, Satan, who had given him his power, and seat, and great authority; and they say, "Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?" This is clearly the little horn of Dan. 7, for the same doings are attributed to him. But we have in Revelation this added -- that he was the full expression and instrument of Satan when revived; for (as in Dan. 7:25) we read that there was given him a mouth speaking great things, and blasphemies; and power was given to him to make war forty and two months (three and a half years). He blasphemous God and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven, "the saints of the heavenlies"; and makes war with the saints on earth, and overcomes them -- we know from Dan. 7 until the Ancient of Days comes.

Turning to Rev. 17, in the explanation of the vision to the prophet we find the same beast, which "was, and is not." It had existed in its one vast empire, the fourth kingdom of Dan. 7; it had ceased to exist and "shall ascend out of the bottomless pit"; it would again appear, but when it did, it would be the full expression of Satan -- "The dragon gave him his power, and his seat and great authority" (Rev. 13:2).

But we must proceed with his description under his last form. "There are seven kings," seven forms of government of the Latin empire. "Five are fallen," five had disappeared when the prophet wrote. "One is," it existed then. Another form, not yet come, was to arise, and continue for a brief space. Then the

Beast or last head of the Latin Empire, that was, and had ceased to exist, -- he would be an eighth form, yet of the seven (Rev. 17:10, 11).

There is now a feature to be explained as to the ten horns, not belonging to his former state of existence. The ten horns are ten kings, they had received no kingdom then, they did not belong to his antecedents as one vast empire, but they would appear, and receive power at the same time as he when he would re-exist in his final form. They would have one mind, and they give their power and strength to the beast; they would have each his separate existence, and yet would own the beast as their chief -- the expression of the entire. These make war with the Lamb, and He overcomes them. Their end we find in Rev. 19. The rider upon the white horse, with the armies of heaven, comes forth at the last daring and blasphemous defiance of His authority; and the beast and these kings are gathered to make war against Him that sat upon the horse and His armies; and the beast was taken and was "cast alive into a lake burning with fire and brimstone." His armies, too, are judicially slain.

We have one point to remark, to account for the presence of Satan on the earth at this closing scene, when he gives his power to the last form of the Latin empire, three years and a half before the execution of the judgment, which introduces the kingdom of the Son of man. We turn for this to Rev. 12. There we find the man-child (Christ and the Church, His body) <sup>6</sup> caught up to God and to His throne, which is immediately followed by war in heaven. Satan is cast out to the earth; rejoicing in heaven follows; woe is pronounced upon the inhabitants of the earth, "for the devil is come down unto you, in great wrath, having but a short time." <sup>7</sup> He then turns his malice against the Jewish saints below, who are then the objects of the attention of God. He gives his power and authority to the beast for the 1260 days or forty-two months, or "time, times, and the dividing of a time," before, the end of the beast's existence: and the closing time of the times of the Gentiles.

Let us now sum up shortly what we have gathered from Scripture, i.e., the history of the Gentile powers from its beginning to its close.

We have seen that four great kingdoms arose, commencing with Babylon, which had its power directly from God, followed by the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and the

Roman; this last was in existence when John wrote, and for some hundreds of years afterwards in more or less of its iron sway. It was then broken up into different kingdoms, and continued thus for a long time. Three and a half years before the end of the Gentile power, Satan is cast out of heaven. Next, the Latin empire, so long apparently destroyed and forgotten, is restored, but in a new form; not one vast iron power, but its divided kingdoms uniting to own one power amongst them as their chief, and giving to him their power and force. Satan makes him his ready tool, and the world wonders and worships. This chief blasphemes God, and as Satan cannot now accuse the saints in the heavenlies, "he makes his instruments blaspheme them. He turns his rage through this chief against a Remnant of the Jewish people then gathered into their country. And, finally, he leads him to turn his heart in open rebellion against Christ who comes to take possession of His world-kingdom, and put an end to the Gentile power. This chief and his allies gather together against the King of kings and His heavenly saints, and the end of the beast is the lake of fire and brimstone. This closes the history of the Times of the Gentiles.

We have now followed, without much diversion from our subject, the history of the Gentile empires to their conclusion, looking especially upon the features the fourth empire will assume, when revived as an imperial power, three and a half years before the close of its existence; when, in the person of its leader, it will be the plain and complete expression of diabolical power. Possessed by Satan, it will be instigated in rebellion against God and Christ and so be destroyed.

But, dear friends, we may remember when considering the past history of Israel, we saw that when Christ was presented to the Jews at Jerusalem, He was rejected, and received only by a little band of disciples, and that He told them that He had come in His Father's name and Him they would *not* receive; and that if another would come in his own name, him they *would* receive. Now during the time of the crisis of the world's history, synchronical with the three and a half years of the full-formed evil of the beast, which we have seen, the Jews will again have been gathered into their land, the chief part of them in a state of apostasy. Scripture largely shows that a false Messiah will present himself to them at that time, who will be received by the mass of the people, and rejected by a remnant of faithful ones -- just the reverse of what occurred in the day when our Lord Himself was there. This personage is the connecting link between the Gentile powers in a state of apostasy and revolt, and the Jews in a similar state. Christ was presented to Pilate as the representative of the fourth monarchy, and to Caiaphas who spiritually represented the Jewish nation in that day: both united in crucifying Him. At the same time He was rejected by the mass of the Jews and received by a little band of disciples. At the close of the existence of the fourth monarchy in its revived state, this false Messiah will appear, the mass of the returned Jews will receive him, and he will be recognized by the imperial head of the restored Latin empire, into whose hands he will play his game; but he will be refused by a little remnant, whose hearts God is training, through unexampled tribulation, for the Kingdom

6. This is apparent if we examine the Scriptures. In Psa. 2, Christ will get the Heathen and uttermost parts of the earth for His inheritance, and break them with a rod of iron and so inherit them by judgment. He gives this to the Saints in Rev. 2:26, 27. The man-child, embracing both Christ and the Church, is said to be the one who was to "Rule all nations with the rod of iron," in Rev. 10:11. Besides this, John, in Revelations, speaks as the prophets of the Old Testament, linking together the time previous to the ascension of Christ with God's dealing with the earth at His return, passing over the present interval of the calling of the Church, which is never counted in prophecy.

7. This casting out of Satan from the heavenlies is important. Satan and wicked spirits are spoken of as being in the heavenlies at this present time. He is termed the "prince of the power of the air"; and the Church of God is said, in Eph. 6, to "wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with wicked spirits in the heavenlies."

about to be substituted for that of the Beast when judgment is executed.

After thus shortly introducing this false Messiah {Antichrist}, we will follow in order the scriptures that speak of him. He is introduced in Dan. 11:36-39; and we may remark that the prophet is told in Dan. 10:14 that the angel was come to make him understand what would befall the Jews "in the latter days." Dan. 10 - 12 are all one vision, and are occupied with this subject and the Lord Himself in His directions to the Jewish remnant in Matt. 24 alludes to prophecy (Dan. 12) as still future, and that the circumstance of the abomination of desolation, &c., come to pass, it would be the sign for the remnant to flee, adding that "*Immediately after* those days shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven . . . coming . . . with power and great glory." We can apply it therefore, to no other time than to the hour of the great tribulation, or the closing 1260 days, before the appearing of Christ and the judgment executed by Him and the Kingdom set up (see also Dan. 12:11, where 30 days are added), and substituted for that of the beast.

"The king" {Antichrist} is at once introduced in Dan. 11:36-39, as one who has that title in the eyes of the Jews. He does according to his own will, exalts himself and magnifies himself above every god, speaks marvelously against the God of gods, and prospers till the indignation is accomplished. He regards not the God of the Jews, nor the true Messiah, nor any god, magnifying himself above them all. The "indignation" is spoken of in Isa. 10:5, 24, 25, where we find that there is an appointed time for its duration. These are the only verses in the book of Daniel which treat of the Antichrist.

We turn to Rev. 13:11, where we find this personage brought before us again, as the second beast, which comes up out of the earth, having two horns like a lamb some imitation of Christ, but his voice like a dragon. He cannot set aside the power of the Gentile king, the Beast or head of the Latin empire -- that is reserved for Christ; but he ministers to him and "exercises the power of the first beast before him" the power of Satan, but subordinate to that of the Beast.

And he doeth great wonders, so that he causes fire to come down from heaven, on the earth, in the sight of men, &c.

He thus imitates the great power of God; (of course it is not so, but only in the sight or apprehension of men).

Read now Rev. 16:13, 14, where we find the three great allies in wickedness, the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet; unclean spirits proceeding from each, to gather together the kings of the whole habitable earth to the battle of the great day of God Almighty.

In Rev. 19:20, we find Satan's two great instruments -- the Beast and the false prophet. The Beast with his vassal kings, as we have seen before, gathered together to make war with the Lamb, the Lord of lords, and King of kings, who is accompanied by His heavenly Saints. The Beast and the false prophet here meet their doom. Allies in wickedness and blasphemy, they are allied in judgment. "These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."

There is a link now wanting, beloved friends, in this sad and sorrowful history. Sad and sorrowful it is, because in the judgment of these two men we see the end, first of one who personifies, in the close of the times of Gentile domination, the abuse of the power that had been delivered into the hands of man by God: filled with moral madness and impotent pride, he becomes the ready instrument of Satan, in the last and closing acts of his stupendous wickedness, till he is bound by Him whose heel he bruised when here, and who then exhibits in this world, so long the playground of Satan's deeds, the blessings He had prevailed to procure for men, when He went down into the dark domain of sorrow and judgment. Sad and sorrowful, too, as to the second, that the minds of men, ever ready to receive the veriest lie of Satan, and ever ready to doubt the love of God, at last become so besotted in wickedness and moral blindness; as to receive such an one as he for their Christ.

But there is, as we were remarking, one link yet wanting, and that is, how this consummation of spiritual wickedness, this false Messiah, becomes the link, as we may say, between the history of professing Christendom and the Jews, in the close and the crisis of the history of this age, before the introduction of an age of blessedness and peace. This will be brought before our minds again; but before this we must consider another subject which comes in during the great Gentile parenthesis {the times of the Gentiles}, which fills up the space between that time when Israel was the earthly people of God, owned and acknowledged, and that when they shall be so again.

This subject is the "calling of the Church." In it is involved the second coming of Christ for His saints, before His manifestation with them to the world, in the judgment which we have been partially considering. Also the first resurrection, the resurrection from among the dead (of which Christ was the first-fruits) of the saints the "children of the resurrection." This subject, dear friends, is a blessed one, near to the heart of Christ -- the secret that was hid in God; the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:9-11; 5:32).

## Chapter 5:

### *The Calling of The Church, and Her Glory*

Turn to Psa. 2 where we read,

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and his Anointed (or Christ), saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

Here we find a confederacy between Gentiles and people of Israel, the kings and rulers, to reject the authority of the Lord and His Christ. Turn now to Acts 4:24-26, where we find this Psalm quoted by the Holy Ghost as far as we have read, and the comment then added,

for of a truth against the holy child {servant} Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

He was presented to Jew and Gentile, rulers and kings and people, as king in Zion, and rejected. The Lord is represented in this psalm as laughing at their impotent rage. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision." But with all their rage and rejection of Christ, He says, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." They could not turn His purpose aside.

Now while we are assured that the full rejection of Christ, as their Messiah, by the people of Israel, was at the cross, when they said, "We will have no king but Caesar"; still when we examine the gospel narratives we find that the spirit which showed itself in full hostility at the cross, had been exhibited in various ways, especially amongst the rulers and chief ones of the nation, during the Lord's ministry amongst them. This caused Him, after declaring the new era that His rejection would introduce, to desire His disciples to say no more that He was "*the Christ*"; (there was no further good to be had by this testimony to the people, that is, as to His rights as the Messiah). He adds immediately,

*The Son of man* must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.

This latter clause He adds to the declaration of His rejection and sufferings. Consult Matt. 16:20, 21; Luke 9:20-22, which convey, I doubt not, the truth we are about to see.

In considering Psa. 8 in connection with other subjects, we saw that there was a "Son of man" to whom dominion was bestowed over all creation, which Adam had sinned away and

lost. He, we saw, was the Lord Jesus Himself as Heb. 2 informs us, even as His inheritance will be enjoyed in an age to come. This title the Lord takes to Himself according to that Psalm, after His rejection as King in Zion according to Psa. 2 taking it in resurrection. He takes the headship and inheritance, with its load of sin and guilt upon it; and inherits it not only as His by right, but by redemption also. He takes it as the Redeemer-Heir. "We see not yet," says Heb. 2, "all things put under him; but we see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honor." Men said, "We will not have this man to reign over us"; God said, "Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

We turn to Eph. 1, and there we find that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ (looked upon here as the exalted and glorified Man), had raised Christ from among the dead, and

set him at his own right hand in the heavenlies, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in *this* age, but also in *that* which is to come; and hath put all things in subjection under his feet, and given him to be head *over* all things to the *church which is his* body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Here we find Him raised and seated in the heavenlies, as the glorified Man, all things not yet visibly put under Him, but His title declared; and while as the expectant Heir, He is seated there, a work is going on of quickening, raising up, and seating together in Him, the second {last} Adam, in the heavenly places, the joint heirs of all his glory.

It is a work, that, the more we search into and meditate upon its depth and magnificence, humbles us to the dust at the "exceeding riches of God's grace." Human words can but feebly convey to us just thoughts of a work which takes up the Magdalenes, and outcasts, and vile ones, lost and defiled through sin, and sets them in the same glory as the Son of God! Not only blessing them *through* Him and His blessed work on the cross, but *with* Him! conferring upon them every dignity, every glory, and every honor, conferred upon Christ Himself as the risen, and exalted, and glorified Son of man! and yet a work in which God is glorified, and in which He will, in the ages to come, exhibit to the heavenly hosts the exceeding riches of His own precious grace!

This serves truly to level every pretension of man, to think on these things. We look at ourselves, and we are inclined to ask the question, "How can these things be?" But we look at God and His purposes, for the glory of His Son; and that we

serve now to manifest to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies, the manifold wisdom of God, (Eph. 3:10) and to teach them in the ages to come the meaning of "Grace!" May we learn to be silent, and to submit ourselves to Him, who does all things well!

The Epistle to the Ephesians is that Scripture which so fully brings out these things. We find there the purpose of God, and the execution of that purpose: His own counsels and the good pleasure of His will revealed; Himself the source of the blessings; His Son Jesus Christ the *measure* of them; ourselves by nature dead in trespasses and sins, the *objects* of them!

But to return. We have seen for a moment the work that is going on while the Head is seated in heaven -- of quickening, raising up, and uniting to Him the joint-heirs. This is the work of the Holy Spirit since His descent at Pentecost. Now it is most freely admitted that saints were born again in all ages and dispensations. Sinners have been, since the fall of man, new-born by the Holy Ghost, through the word of God, and led to trust in the promises of God for salvation by a coming Redeemer, faintly seen in types and shadows of old. Still the saints were born again; they trusted, lived, and died in faith, and were saved. But individual salvation is not the Church of God. Every individual of that Church, no doubt, is a saved one; still, collectively, they occupy a place, as we shall see, beyond all that went before, and peculiar to the interval in which we live. It was reserved for the day when the Lord Jesus, rejected, crucified, dead, buried, risen, ascended, and seated at God's right hand; not only as God's eternal Son, but as a glorified Man, who had fully accomplished redemption in His own person, had put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, glorified God to the utmost as to sin, substituted Himself for His people on the cross, and had been thus seated far above all heavens -- it was reserved for such a time, to bring out this mystery, which, from the beginning of the ages, had been hid in God, -- the mystery of "Christ and the Church."

The first notice of this work we find in Matt. 16, where the Lord declares the foundation in Himself, as Son of the living God. He speaks of the Church as that which was to come. He says, when Peter confessed Him to be "the Christ, the Son of the living God," "Upon this rock I *will* build my church." The Apostle afterwards learned the true meaning of the foundation here declared, when he says by the Spirit, "To whom coming as unto a living stone . . . Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house," &c. This, however, is by the way, as to Paul's ministry, and to it alone, is entrusted the revelation of the mystery of Christ and the Church. The Lord Himself does not reveal it. He had disciples during His ministry here, but not disciples baptized into one body and united by the Holy Ghost to a glorified Man in heaven.

In the days of Judaism, it was an unlawful thing for a man that was a Jew to have any dealings with those of any other nation. He was separated from amongst the other nations of the earth to God. "You only have I known of *all* the families of the earth," says God, by His prophet to that people (Amos 3:2).

When we look upon the Lord's life and ministry here, we find that He was constantly going beyond the middle wall of partition which surrounded the Jewish enclosure, in the outflow

of His own blessed grace, to those who had no relationship with God even in an outward way. Witness the woman of Canaan in Matt. 15, and the woman of Samaria in John 4.

He was a minister of the circumcision for the *truth* of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy (Rom. 15:8, 9).

Still, the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile was not really destroyed till the cross, however our Lord's actions may have shown what was coming, We find the position of Jew and Gentile forcibly contrasted in the following scriptures:

Who are *Israelites*, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen (Rom. 9:4, 5).

And again,

Wherefore remember, that ye being in times past *Gentiles* in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world (Eph. 2:11, 12).

We find in this epistle, that the apostle speaks in the first chapter of the purpose and counsels of God, and the redemption of His people, the latter being an accomplished thing; adding His future purpose to be executed in the dispensation of the fulness of times, when all things shall have been gathered together, in heaven and earth under the headship of Christ; and when those who believe shall have entered on their inheritance with Him and in Him in these things. He goes on to show that the Head, who had been in death (he sees Him only thus) was alive again, raised up and glorified, Head of all principality, &c., set there as "head over all things to the Church, which is his body."

In Eph. 2 he sees both Jew and Gentile dead in trespasses and sins, as children of the first Adam. In Eph. 2:1 and 2, he states what the Gentiles were, and then turns round upon the favored Jew and writes, "Among whom *we* also and . . . were children of wrath even as others." This was the position of both Jew and Gentile by nature. We go on and find that Christ

hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the law of commandments contained in ordinances: for to make in himself of twain, one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both to God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.

There could be, and there was, salvation for individuals, as we have seen, before the cross, by virtue of what Christ would accomplish there; but the cross itself is the foundation of this unity of Jew and Gentile in one body by the presence of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven. "He came and preached peace to you which were afar off and to them that were nigh. For through him (Christ) we both (Jew and Gentile), have access *by one Spirit* unto the Father (Eph. 2:17, 18). Here we learn this unity, of which the cross was the basis.

The Holy Ghost, constitutes by His presence upon earth, individually dwelling in every believer, uniting him, and all

Christ's members collectively in one body to Christ in heaven.

Now it is freely admitted that everything good, and of God, that ever has been done in this world, was by the Holy Ghost. But, dear friends, it was reserved for that day when God's people, by virtue of an accomplished redemption, would have their consciences so perfectly purged, that God could come and dwell by the Holy Ghost in the believer's body; and that the Holy Ghost could be given in such a sort, as in this interval, since the day of Pentecost (see 1 Cor. 6:17).

We do not find in the experience even of a David, the possession of a purged conscience {Heb. 10:2}. There was the most blessed and perfect trust and confidence in God known in grace, displayed and enjoyed, but a purged conscience never. That was reserved till the cross had made it possible.

We read in John 14 of the Lord, before He departed, promising His disciples the Holy Ghost, as the Comforter. He says, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter (He had been that when with them), that he may abide with you for ever . . . he . . . shall be in you." "In that day [when He was come], ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you." This was the knowledge and consciousness the personal presence of the Holy Ghost would bring.

The Holy Ghost had *wrought* before He *came*; He *came* at Pentecost. Just as the Son of God had *wrought* before He became a man; He *came* down from heaven then. The Holy Ghost never *dwelt* here until redemption was accomplished. His presence thus was a new thing, and although there were believers before His descent, still it was on believers, as such, that the Holy Ghost was to be bestowed.

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive for the Holy Ghost was not yet; because Jesus was not yet glorified (John 7:37-39).

We find an example of this in Acts 19. Long after the Pentecostal gift of the Holy Ghost, Paul finds certain disciples at Ephesus. He asks the question,

Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?

They reply,

We have not so much as heard if the Holy Ghost was come.

(Cp. John 7:38). He asks again,

Unto what then were ye baptized?

They reply, "Unto John's baptism."

Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

He found here a company of disciples, believers as far as they had heard, but who had not yet received the Holy Ghost. Far from the center of the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit, they had not yet heard if He had come, not "whether there be any Holy Ghost." Our English Bible is faulty here and might lead to

wrong conclusions. As soon as

they heard, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus; and when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them.

It is sought to show that the great distinguishing feature between the state of the individual believer, under the period of the Holy Ghost's presence, dwelling upon earth as now, and the saint in that, which is past, is, that he now receives the Holy Ghost to dwell in him; that "in the Spirit" is his proper state as a Christian, and the power which unites him with Christ risen. The corporate blessings we shall see again.

In the instance quoted there was the laying on of the apostle's hands; but, doubtless, God was showing to us that there is a twofold thing -- the *new birth* and the *indwelling* of the Spirit, the latter belonging specially to the present time.

Not seeing this, is much of the reason for the low state of numbers of God's children. They think that Christianity is a sort of spiritualized Judaism, and that saints are only a little in advance of those before the descent of the Holy Ghost, as to their state.

Consequently you have in the lips of many a one of the prayer of David -- "take not thy Holy Spirit from me"; while others are ever praying for the Holy Spirit to be poured out upon them. Now the least intelligent saint who has been instructed in Christianity, *as such*, could not use such prayers. He knows that he receives the Spirit now, as he does eternal life, from God and by faith, and consequent on redemption {Eph. 1:13}. As the apostle asks the Galatians, who were getting under law, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" And again, "That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." A Christian may, doubtless, sad to say, by his unfaithfulness, grieve the Holy Spirit much, indeed so much so, as almost to think he had never had the Spirit at all; but he could not with the least intelligence in Christianity say, "Take not thy holy Spirit from me." In Rom. 8 the Spirit is the principle of our relationship with God, and Christian life is life in the Spirit, which depends on redemption being accomplished.

This is a fact assumed to be the case in all the apostolic teaching to the Church. In Eph. 1:14 He is given as the seal of redemption, and an earnest of the inheritance yet to be enjoyed, till its redemption out of the enemy's hand, the price for its purchase having been paid.

In no epistle are the official glories of the Holy Ghost brought before us more fully than this, which reveals the heavenly calling of the Church of God. In Eph. 1:14, He is the seal of redemption. Eph. 2:18, He is the medium of access by Jew and Gentile, through Jesus Christ unto the Father. Eph. 2:22, the Church is the habitation of God on earth by His Spirit. In Eph. 3:16, He strengthens the saints in the inner man, enabling them to lay hold of and enjoy their position and standing. In Eph. 4, precepts are founded upon doctrines; the saint is told not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby he has been sealed till {for} the day of redemption. In Eph. 5 he is told to be filled with the Spirit. In Eph. 6 is the power of the warfare in the heavenly places, and his prayer is to be "in the Spirit." To

multiply examples were needless.

This being established, we will now look into those Scriptures which speak of the Body of Christ and the unity of the Spirit. We saw that the Lord speaks of the Church as a future thing during His own ministry here {Matt. 16:18}. He had disciples, but not disciples gathered into one body, constituting the “fulness” of a glorified Man in heaven, by the power of the Spirit, uniting them in one. Such, and such only, is the Church of God. It was reserved for the ministry of the Apostle Paul to bring out this grand central truth of the Church.

He tells us that he had it “by revelation,” and not therefore from others.

After the rejection of the Lord and the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost we find the Church gathered in Jerusalem, and principally composed of Jews, affording a wondrous spectacle to the world around, united in one heart and soul, a dwelling-place of God by the Holy Ghost. The Lord lingered, in His longsuffering love, over His beloved, though now cast-off people, to see if even the testimony of the Holy Ghost to a risen and glorified Christ would touch their hearts. The enmity of the Jews and the religious leaders of the nation increased every hour, till it arrived at its full height, when the agents of the Sanhedrim (the great council of the nation) gnashed upon the witness of the Holy Ghost to a risen and exalted Christ, in the person of Stephen. This man, filled with the Holy Ghost, sees heaven opened, and, stoned by his murderers, is received by the “Son of man standing at the right hand of God.” The Church at Jerusalem is broken up as to its outward manifestation and dispersed. Saul of Tarsus, the young man at whose feet the murderers laid their clothes, on his journey from Jerusalem to Damascus with the high priest’s commission in his robe, and the purpose in his heart of wiping out, so to speak, if it were possible, the very name of Jesus from the earth, is struck down at midday with the vision of the glorified and exalted Jesus. He hears the wondrous truth, for the first time now proclaimed, that the poor persecuted Christians on earth were members of the body of Christ. “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me . . . I am Jesus whom thou persecutest” (Acts 9:4). He arises and straightway preaches Jesus that “He is the Son of God.”

The short period of its earthly manifestation at Jerusalem having passed, the Church henceforth fully assumes its position as the Body of Christ; locally expressed by saints gathered {together} in the name of the Lord, by the power of the Holy Ghost {Matt. 18:20}. It is the habitation of God through the Spirit.

To the Apostle Paul is committed the testimony of the mystery, hidden in God in other ages, but now revealed {Col. 1:26}. He tells us that he had it by revelation (Eph. 3:3). We will briefly notice some of the testimony by him as to this. The Epistle to the Romans being chiefly confined to the revelation of Christianity and the individual relationship of the saints with God and His dispensational wisdom in His dealings with the Jew, the subject is but shortly and practically referred to in Rom. 12:4, 5. He writes,

For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

And shortly in Rom. 16:25, 26. In 1 Cor. 12:12-17, this subject

is brought out more fully. The bare reading of the passage should be sufficient:

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit,<sup>8</sup> &c.

Nothing can be clearer to the mind subject to Scripture. The Holy Ghost is the center and living power, of the unity of the body, Christians are “members of Christ” and “members one of another.”

How this overturns the ideas of men, who speak of being members of such and such a church (so-called) or religious association! This is the only unity a Christian is bound to acknowledge and own, and to endeavor with all his heart to observe, and to witness for the unity which exists by the presence of the Holy Ghost, constituting every believer on earth a member of one body, united to Christ. The Holy Ghost is, we may so say, the soul which animates the whole body, dwelling not only in the individual believer, but in the whole church. When saints are thus gathered together, owning this unity, and this alone, they form the sphere for the manifestation of His presence, in the ministry of the word, “dividing to every man severally as he will”; taking up and using, according to His divine pleasure, those who have been gifted and set in the Church for the building up and edifying of the body, and for the perfecting of the saints. “God hath set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him (1 Cor. 12:18). So of Christ,

when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men . . . And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, &c.

The assembly on earth is the habitation of God by the Spirit (Eph. 2:22).

In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God by the Spirit.

We are now, of course, looking at the Church as the ‘house of God; others {other Scriptures}, as we have seen, view it as the body of Christ. Both are true. Eph. 1 speaks of the latter; Eph. 2 of the former.

Such being the calling of the saints, the apostle founds upon it his exhortations, in Eph. 4:1-6. He puts their privileges first before them, and then looks upon their responsibility.

For *this* cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles . . . beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called . . . Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit.

8. This Scripture unfolds the body of Christ on earth, composed only of those who are here at any given moment, maintained in unity by the power of the Holy Ghost; who, as to personal place is on earth since Pentecost. It is seen as one body on earth, the local assembly at Corinth being treated as the “body” in the principle of its gathering together (v 27); and the body having for the external symbol of its unity “one loaf,” in the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 10:16, 17).

This then is the Church of God -- this the unity we are exhorted to endeavor to keep: not to *make a* unity for ourselves, or choose one out of the many existing factions around, that best suits one's education, thoughts, feelings, circumstances, &c., but to endeavor, with hearts subject to Jesus as Lord, to keep the unity which has been here by the Holy Ghost's presence since the day of Pentecost -- the body of Christ {actually, the unity of the Spirit}.

We have in the same chapter (Eph. 4) the care of Christ for His body. "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive." He went into the domain of Satan and bound the strong man; but before He exhibits the results of His victory amongst men, in the blessing of the millennial earth, He does so in His body, bestowing gifts on men for the setting free of those captive under Satan, and the building up of those who have been delivered,

till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ {Eph. 4:13}.

Then, when the last member of Christ has been gathered in; the Church will be taken away to be, in actual fact, with Christ in heaven. Then will be the resurrection of the sleeping saints, and their translation with the living saints, when all shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air {1 Thess. 4:15-18}.

The Scriptures are full of this blessed hope of the Church. In the earliest Epistle (1 Thess.) we find that, however unintelligently it may have been understood, the saints had been converted to this blessed hope.

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

It was the hope set before the sorrowing disciples, as they gazed up into heaven after the vanishing form of the Lord, in Acts 1:11, that He "would so come in like manner." The Corinthians came "behind in no gift, waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 1:7). In Ephesians, the saints are looked upon as already seated in the heavenlies in Christ, there waiting for the gathering together of all things in the fulness of times. Their blessing is in the heavenlies, Eph. 1:3; their position, Eph. 2:6; their testimony, Eph. 3:10 and their conflict, Eph. 6:12. In Phil. 3:20, 21, the citizenship of the saints is in heaven, from whence they look for "the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body," &c. In Col. 3:4, the life of the saints is so bound up with Christ's, that, when He is manifested to the world, they are manifested with Him. In Thessalonians, the whole epistle is taken up with the hope. In 1 Thess. 1, it was connected with their conversion; in 1 Thess. 2, with the labors of Christ's servant; in 1 Thess. 3, with practical righteousness and holiness; in 1 Thess. 4, the whole matter and the manner of its accomplishment is detailed. 1 Thess. 5 shows the desire of the apostle for their practical sanctification, and their being preserved blameless till the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thess. sets the hope aright in the minds of the saints, which had been disturbed by the receipt of a spurious epistle; and distinguishes the *coming* of Christ *for* His saints and their gathering together unto Him, their proper hope {2 Thess. 2:1}, from His *manifestation* in judgment to the world, in which, we know from other Scriptures, He is accompanied by them.

I forbear to quote other Scriptures on this subject. It is almost sad to be obliged to press so blessed a hope on the hearts of the Lord's people -- a hope, of which the Scriptures of the New Testament are so full. Sad to say, it has become necessary to do so : even God's people have imbibed so much of the character of the evil and worldly-minded servant, who said in his heart, "My lord delayeth his coming" {Matt. 24:48}, and of the scoffers of the last days who say, "where is the promise of his coming?" {2 Pet. 3:4}.

In considering our first subject -- "The general purpose of God" -- we referred to three places in the NT where Psa. 8 was quoted. The first was Heb. 2:7, where the "Son of man," to whom all dominion was given, is seen in heaven "crowned with glory and honor," all things not yet put under Him -- the headship to be enjoyed in the habitable earth to come. The second was Eph. 1, 2, when the body was being prepared for the glorified head. The third remains now to be quoted again. "For he hath put all things under his feet" (1 Cor. 15:27). This will come to pass, as the chapter shows, in the day when the scriptures of Isa. 24 - 26 are fulfilled, in the day of the first resurrection.

Behold I show you a mystery, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed . . . So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, *then* shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory (Isa. 25:8) {1 Cor. 15:51-55}.

The whole chapter treats of this resurrection, of which Christ was the first fruits, it is a resurrection in power and glory. "It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power." There is no thought in the chapter of the resurrection of the wicked.<sup>9</sup> We have before considered shortly, that, at that time, the restoration of the nation of Israel will take place -- the veil will be removed from all nations. And it will be a period of universal judgment of the powers of the earth, and in the heavenlies, introductive of the kingdom in Zion and the renewed earth, which the saints of the first resurrection {Rev. 20:4, 5} will inherit and reign over, in the heavenlies, as joint-heirs with Christ

In short, it is the time of the "restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21). This period of universal judgment is, as we may see, synchronous with that spoken of in considering the "Times of the Gentiles" and their judgment.

9. It is embraced in the thought of 1 Cor. 15:26, but is not the subject of the chapter.

## Chapter 6:

### *The Corruption of Christendom*

We have seen, in some measure, the nature and unity of the Church of God -- the Church to which Christ has imparted the glory given to Him as Man, by God the Father. The glory was His by right as the eternal Son, as well as by creation. But the only way in which we could partake of His glory, was by His becoming a man; and taking this glory, and headship over all things, through death and resurrection -- thus accomplishing the redemption of His people. How little do they enter upon and realize, and walk in the power of their heavenly calling! Rather may it be said of many, "They mind earthly things." They are engrossed and absorbed in the pursuits and aims of this world -- "this present evil age"; from which He died to deliver them (Gal 1:4). They are conformed to its ways, its vanities, its projects, rather than following a rejected Christ, whom the world united under Satan its prince, to cast out; and declaring plainly in their walk and ways that theirs is strangership on earth, and citizenship in heaven, and that they are of those of whom Christ said, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world (John 17:14); and of whom the apostle, "As is the heavenly, even so are they also that are heavenly" {1 Cor. 15:48}.

Would that there were more of that intense personal devotedness amongst those who are Christ's -- amongst the Remnant to whom He has in His marvelous glaze, taught the nature and meaning of this heavenly calling, and the truth of His Church, His Bride; who are in the place of the testimony of God just now, in His own sovereign goodness!

Would that this testimony of God might press itself, more deeply on our souls, and lead us to that intense separation from the world; and personal, individual devotedness, as witnesses, or servants, as it may please Him! Surely all may serve Him in the former capacity: all may be witnesses, if all are not laborers! And surely the corporate testimony without the personal devotedness -- or the personal devotedness without the corporate testimony, is faulty; both must go together to be in accordance, in our little measure, with the mind and purpose of God.

For a little moment the desire of Christ, "That they all may be one . . . that the world may *believe*" (John 17:21), came to pass at the first blush of the unselfish joy of the Church at Pentecost, when the world beheld with wonder the great multitude of one heart and soul, having all things in common. But we may remember in our former pages, when considering the testing of man from the garden of Eden to the cross, that we

found that, tried in every way he had failed; let us now see what man under *grace* will do -- if such a position will succeed. It is just such another tale of sorrow, with this difference -- that he has now failed in and corrupted, as to its testimony in the world, that which was best!

When the Church assumed fully her heavenly calling, after the persecution and dispersion which arose at the death of Stephen, we find Paul raised up of the Lord, that He might bring out by him the true heavenly calling and doctrine of the Church of God -- the body of Christ. In the devoted labors of the apostle, and the Scriptures given to us by his instrumentality, we find that it became necessary for the Holy Ghost to reveal the consequences which would result to the Church, from its testimony on earth being entrusted into the hands of man. Evil had crept into it from the very beginning, but as long as the apostolic energy was there, it was kept from gaining head, and was judged. Judaism, false brethren, and ungodly men crept in unawares, amongst those who were true disciples; and even those who were truly disciples, became impregnated with the spirit of the world, and with the evil. Witness those solemn words of Paul to the elders of the assembly at Ephesus, the scene where all they of Asia had heard the word of the Lord:

I know this, that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock: also of *from your own selves* shall some arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them (Acts 20).

And in view of such a state of things, he directs the heart of the faithful disciple to

God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified (Acts 20:32).

God, and the Scriptures of His truth, were to be his sure and never-failing resource, in the time of ruin, which was fast closing in.

In Corinth we find schools of doctrine, and human wisdom, taking the place of revelation and divine wisdom amongst them (1 Cor. 1, 4). In the epistle to the Galatians, the influence of law-teachers and Judaizers compelled the apostle to stand in doubt of them for the moment, as to whether they had abandoned the ground of Christianity altogether or not; still he had confidence in them through the Lord. In Philippians "all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Phil. 2:21). Again,

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things (Phil. 3:18, 19).

In Colossians,

Satan was endeavoring to introduce ordinances, and philosophy, and vain deceit after the tradition of men; meats and drinks, holy-days, will-worship and neglecting of the body -- between the Head and the members.

1 Timothy,

law-teachers and Judaizers, "understanding neither what they say nor whereof they affirm"; and the warning of the apostasy of the later times.

2 Timothy,

the tide of evil came in with such a torrent, that the apostle sees the Church which he had labored for, and watched over, and builded, as a wise master-builder, -- "The house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15), the house inhabited by the Holy Ghost -- fallen into dilapidation and ruins, and becoming like "a great house," with "vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor and some to dishonor" (2 Tim. 2:20).

In such a state of things, in the "perilous times" of the "last days," the faithful disciple has but one pathway -- not to be satisfied with such a state, nor to think of being able to mend the ruin, but, to depart from iniquity, and to purge himself from the vessels to dishonor, and to walk with the faithful, who "call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (1 Tim. 2:19-22).

And again does the apostle turn the heart of the faithful one to the Scriptures of God as profitable for all and every difficulty, that he might "be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." So deeply solemn is the warning here in 2 Tim. 3:1-5, that that which bears the name of Christianity, and which before men has the character of godliness, shelters all the worst features of the corrupt human heart, that the words are literally nearly the same, and morally the same, as those which the apostle uses in describing the corruption and moral degradation of the heathen world in the close of Rom. 1. There is also the active energy of evil in those who, "reprobate concerning the faith," are deceiving and being deceived; from such the man of God was to turn away, leaving them to the judgment of God.

In Titus we find the unruly talkers and deceivers spreading their baneful influence around. 2 Peter also testifies as to these evil influences at work amongst the saints. Jude traces the apostasy from the time when "certain ungodly men crept in unawares" until the Lord comes with His saints to execute judgment upon such. In Jude 11 we have a summary of the apostasy of the natural man; "the way of Cain"; teaching error for reward, and using truth for corrupt ends, "the error of Balaam"; and lastly, where the apostasy ends, "the gainsaying of Core." This, it will be remembered, was the revolt of the Israelites, instigated by the Levite Korah, against the authority

of Christ, in His royalty, represented by Moses, and His priesthood, represented by Aaron. The Levites sought the priesthood ("Seek ye the priesthood also?" Num. 16), and were the moving spring of the revolt of the simple Israelites. And thus it has been and is ever, the ecclesiastical evil urging the civil power on to rebellion. See the revolt of Absalom against David: the moving power was Absalom's counselor, Ahithophel, who was a priest (see 2 Sam. 15:12). And so it is in the end, a beast and a false prophet, who urges on the former, and

exercises all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed (Rev. 13).

Such has been the corruption, from the beginning, of Christianity. Those who ought to have occupied the position of the Levite; that is, those who were sent into the Church to labor for the Lord, instead of retaining the *Levite place*, recognizing that *all* the people of the Lord are *priests*, and thus entitled to enter into the holiest (see 1 Pet. 2:5, 9); the ecclesiastical, or priestly position, has been assumed as the medium *between* Christ and His people; and this is not confined to the grosser evil and corruptions of Rome, but it is the same in principle throughout Christendom. Both these epistles -- 2 Peter and Jude -- testify of the rejection of the *Lordship* of Christ. Rev. 2, 3, give us in successive stages the different phases in which the evil would be developed in the Church, looked at in her place of testimony here below, from her departure from her first love, till threatened with full rejection, as something loathsome to Him -- a false witness in the world. "I am about to spue thee out of my mouth."

We have also the testimony in Matt. 13 from the Lord Himself in the parable of the tares, by which we see that the evil produced at the beginning by the introduction of the tares amongst the wheat, goes on until the harvest, when the righteous are gathered into the garner, and the tares bound in bundles and then cast into the fire and burned; thus cleansing the kingdom of the Son of man. Instead of a change, such as men think, coming over the world; and, by the gospel, the knowledge of the Lord covering the earth as the waters cover the sea, the evil increases till the harvest. How do the thoughts of men, who look for a millennium brought in by the preaching of the gospel, fall in with this? Properly Matt. 13 including the parable of the tares and the wheat, is a similitude of the kingdom of heaven, in the phase it would assume when the King would be finally rejected, not the Church, which had no existence; in a subsequent chapter (Matt. 16) the Lord speaks of it as a future thing. He came as their Messiah, to His people Israel -- His vineyard -- to seek for fruit, and He found none. He then sowed in the world ("the field is the world") that which was to produce fruit -- "the word."

I have purposely passed over 2 Thessalonians and the Epistles of John, for in them we find the personage named who shall consummate all this wickedness in himself -- "the man of sin" -- "the Antichrist."

In the former epistle, given to us on the occasion of a spurious epistle having been received by the Thessalonians as

if from Paul (2 Thess. 2:2), telling them that the “day” of Christ {day of the *Lord*} was there, the apostle (2 Thess. 2:1) beseeches them by their proper hope, which he had taught them in the first epistle, that of the coming of Christ, and their being gathered together unto Him, that they would not be shaken with the thought conveyed by the false epistle, that the “day,” or manifestation, was then present (ενεστηκε). The apostle clearly distinguishes the “coming” from the “appearing,” or “day,” which is to bring rest to them from the trials and tribulations of the world, and judgments on their enemies; for, when the “day” of His manifestation would come, the saints would be manifested *with* Him in glory.

He goes on to show that the mystery of iniquity was already at work, and would go on, restrained as to its full development by the presence of a hindering power of good (2 Thess. 2:7, 8). That hindering power once removed, the “Lawless one” would be revealed.

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth {hinders}, will let {hinder}, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed.

The removal of the restraining power of good would give scope to the complete apostasy (or “falling away”) from Christianity (v. 3). This would be coincident with the revelation of the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition. These two latter happening between the removal of the restraining power, and the “day” of judgment executed by the Lord Himself upon the Wicked, whom He would consume with the spirit of His mouth, and destroy with the brightness of His coming. (2 Thess. 2:8). This would be the “day of Christ” {day of the *Lord*} which the false epistle told them was then present. The “coming” of the Lord for them was their proper hope to remove them from the terrors of that “day.”

We have seen some of the testimonies of Scripture as to the mystery of lawlessness, but there was a good hindering power (2 Thess. 2:7), which, when removed, *then* would the lawless one be revealed. The principles were all at work, but the Holy Ghost was in the Church, the power of God was here below, and the unbridled self-will of man, exalting himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, was still restrained, till the fitting time was come; *then* the evil would assume its definite shape in the apostasy, and “the man of sin.”

We will follow to its close the mystery of iniquity. We turn to Rev. 17 and find the fourth Beast, or Latin empire, in his revived state, ridden upon by a false woman, “Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.” Imperially and gloriously arrayed, and her cup full of idolatry and fornication, drunken with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus, and the blood of saints. The prophet wonders at the end of what was once so precious, so beautiful -- the work of grace at Pentecost. She over-rides the peoples, nations, and tongues, and their kings, who have been intoxicated with the wine of her fornication; until at last,

wearied with her oppression, the ten horns *and* <sup>10</sup> the Beast, “these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.” She waits not for the *appearing* of Christ for judgment, but suffers it at the hands of those over whom she exercised her pernicious influence so long. Rev. 17 gives her judgment in the eyes of God; and the lamentation of the kings of the earth, and those who profited by her traffic and rewards, for her overthrow. Such is the end of corrupt Christianity wherever it is found.

In considering the history of the Gentile powers, from their beginning to their close in judgment; and that of the Beast, who represents it, urged on by Satan in the end, we also saw his connection with the false Messiah {the Antichrist}, whom the Jews would receive in the end of the age, and his judgment under the character of the false prophet, with the first Beast: I desired to show how this personage forms the link between their history and that of false, professing Christendom in the end.

We saw from 2 Thess. 2:3, 4, 8, that that wicked one would not be revealed till the good restraining power was removed: the mystery of iniquity worked, and the apostasy would come; this we traced to its end in the judgment of the corrupt woman of Rev. 17. Rev. 13 showed us also that it is during the revived form of the Latin empire, at the close of the existence of the fourth Beast, that this “man of sin” -- the second Beast would be fully revealed. He has title of king amongst the Jews, and is the second Beast who ministers to the power of the first Beast, (not being able to set aside the Gentile power) during the short period before the close, when Satan shall have given him his power, and seat, and great authority.

We also saw that it was after the taking up of the saints, that Satan was cast out of the heavenlies (Rev. 12). Putting all these things together, we find that it is between the coming of Christ *for* His saints, and His appearance in judgment *with* them, that the man of sin, the lawless one, is revealed.

As described in 2 Thess. 2, he does similar things to those attributed to him in Dan. 11:36-38: he

opposeth and exalteth himself above *all* that is called God, or that is worshiped so that he sitteth in the temple of God showing himself that he is God . . . whose coming is after the working of *Satan* with all powers and signs and lying wonders:

even as Christ, as the Man of righteousness, was “approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs which *God* did by him” (Acts 2:22 -- see Greek). The attainment of this position -- i.e., of God -- was the first suggestion of Satan to Adam, (ye shall be as gods, &c.). Here we find it in man, fallen, fully developed and filled with the energy of Satan, in this man of sin, who opposes the Lord Jesus -- Man in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9).

When examining Rev. 13 with regard to this personage, we saw that the miracles he performs have, in the apprehension of men, the *appearance* of divine energy, and they are mostly

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10. This is the correct reading of the passage.

of a Jewish character. In 2 Thess. 2 they are more an imitation of Christ. With regard to those in Rev. 13, we may remember that when Elijah was raised up to witness for the name of Jehovah, before the apostate tribes of Israel (1 Kings 19), the question whether Jehovah or Baal was God, was decided by fire, which came down and consumed the sacrifice, and that the people then fell down on their faces crying, "Jehovah, he is the God." In 2 Thess. 2, as we have seen in quoting Acts 2, it is more an imitation of Christ, though of Satan.

In the first Epistle of John he is termed "The Antichrist," who denies the Father and the Son {1 John 2:22}; i.e. the revelation of Christianity. Thus it is plain that in these days of strong delusion -- when men, not having received the love of the truth that they might be saved, will be given up to believe a lie -- he forms the connecting link between apostate Christianity, and apostate Judaism, and the apostasy of the fourth beast or Gentile power, and is in himself the expression of the apostasy of *man*, claiming to be God. *Judaism*, for he sits in the temple of God (I need hardly add, in Jerusalem) -- *Christianity*, as we have seen. And we find him coming to his end, with his coadjutor in evil, in Rev. 19:20, under the title of the "false prophet, {the Antichrist}, which is more his Jewish character; the ecclesiastical corruption having been destroyed, not by the Lord, but by those it had overridden, by God's judgment.

We have now traced to their end the different agents in evil, in the apostasy of the natural man entrusted with power, personified by the beast, the Antichrist to his end, and false Christianity to her end. Deeply solemn subjects, and yet needful (or our God would not have warned us about these things), they affect not ourselves as to their judgment and their end, but we are in the midst of, and have to do with, the principles which are fast ripening up around us. Ours is a calling out of, and above, the world; and we shall be with the Lord, when the evils are fully manifested, and the world carried away in delusion by them. The citizenship of the church is in heaven {Phil. 3:20}, where these evils cannot come. Blessed be our God! Evil is fast ripening to its head and the minds of men more blinded, and there are in spirit many antichrists {1 John 2:18}. May the consideration of these things lead us into a more growing separation in all our pursuits and ways from that which ends so sorrowfully. And may we with greater earnestness long for the coming of Him who will put an end to the evil, and fill the world with blessing under Himself.

Our considerations have led us thus far. We see that the three great systems (1 Cor. 10:32) set up in the world for the display of God's government and His grace, (*viz.*, the *Jew*, under law; the *Gentile*, without law, and entrusted with universal dominion; and the *Church*, as Christ's epistle in the world -- His witness of grace and truth, and under grace) have all, as far as man's responsibility reached, been a scene of ruin and failure and corruption -- the ruin of that which was most excellent proving the worst of corruptions.

**NOTE.** It is deeply and practically important for us to see that while the ruin of Christendom has presented to us such a tale of solemn character; that the "unity of the Spirit" {Eph. 4:3},

forming one Body in the world; united to Christ glorified, can never be marred. As to its outward manifestation, as a candlestick, or an Epistle of Christ, through the oneness of heart and purpose of its numbers this has truly been a failure. But what the Holy Ghost has constituted -- the Body of Christ, cannot be marred; it is this unity we are responsible to endeavor to keep, as members of Christ, and as to this unity we are exhorted in Eph. 4:3. This gives us a divine principle, and our resource now is, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). We can ever claim His promise when we come together in our weakness, and in principle as the Body of Christ.

## Chapter 7:

### *The Judgment of Israel and the Nations Introductive of the Kingdom*

In the opening subject of our considerations of the Ways of God, we mentioned that the prophetic Scriptures are occupied with earthly events; and embrace five great leading and distinct subjects, some of which, if not all, are often found grouped together in the same prophecy.

It is with the fourth of these subjects we shall now be specially occupied -- the Crisis, or short period of judgment, which cleanses the world of all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, preparatory to the setting up of the kingdom -- "The hour of temptation {trial} which comes upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev. 3:10); "The time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it" (Jer. 30:7). The nation of Israel is most prominent during this period, and is the subject of judgment, in which the Gentiles are sharers. The testimonies of Scripture are very full on this subject; and to help to clear it in our minds, I have classified them into three divisions, as follow:

1. The promises made of restoration to Israel, after their failure, and in view of it; besides the unconditional promises made to the fathers, both of which will be fulfilled to a remnant of the nation, who will be established in the kingdom, under Christ, in the land.
2. The testimonies of Scripture that Israel would be set aside for a long timeless period, known only to God, and again taken up to be restored.
3. That when this timeless period shall have run out, the nation will be restored by *judgment*, which delivers a remnant; and not only on them, but at the same time a universal judgment falls on the nations of the world; which introduces God's kingdom in Zion, -- the Millennial period, when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea.

1. As to the first point, we will turn to Lev. 26, where we find the result placed before Israel consequent on their observing a the conditions they had accepted as the terms of their relationship with God; and retention of their blessings in the land: and the alternative in case of the non-fulfilment of these terms. "If ye will walk in my statutes . . . *then* I will give you rain," &c. (Lev. 26:3-13); "But and if ye will not hearken . . . I also will do this unto you," &c. (Lev. 26:14-39). It goes on, assuming that the latter would be the case, till the cities are wasted, and the land and her sanctuaries brought to desolation,

and the nation dispersed amongst the heathen, in their enemies' land; and then, even when in the enemies' land, God says,

I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them, for I am the Lord their God. But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God.

The Lord then returns to his *own unconditional promises to their forefathers*, after they have destroyed themselves: and when in their enemies' land, He forgets them not, nor casts them off utterly.

If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers . . . and that they have walked contrary to me . . . *then* will I remember my *covenant with Jacob* . . . *also my covenant with Abraham will I remember*, and I will remember the land (Lev. 26:40-42).

Turn now to Deut. 30:1-10:

And it shall come to pass when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind amongst all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the Lord thy God . . . that *then* the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee . . . and bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it: and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers, &c.

This is not so striking as Lev. 26, where the promises to the fathers are alluded to. Deuteronomy is more the *principle* of their acceptance *as a nation* after failure, and when "Lo Ammi" {Hos. 1:9} had been written upon them. It also lays down the principle of their acceptance as *individuals* in the interim by the gospel, and righteousness by faith. See the use made of it by the Apostle Paul in Rom. 10:11-14.

There are other promises in view of their restoration, especially that to the house of David, to be made good in Christ. We read in 1 Chron. 17:11-14,

And it shall come to pass, when the days be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me an house, and I will establish his throne for ever. I will be his father, and

he shall be my son; and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee, but I will settle him in my house and in my kingdom for ever, and his throne shall be established for evermore.

This passage is applied to Christ in Heb. 1:5.

We find the promises to the fathers alluded to in view of their full deliverance in the end. See Micah 7:19, 20. The prophet expresses the adoration of his heart in contemplating the goodness of God in their deliverance; he says,

Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn to *our fathers* from the days of old.

We must ever remember that if God were to fail in fulfilling those *earthly* promises to Abraham, we have no reason to suppose that He would not also fail in His *spiritual* promises to us as well. Consult Gal. 3:6-14. Neither, we know, can ever fail.

Again, when Christ came, "As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed for ever" (Luke 1:54, 55). In Luke 1:69-74, when both the promises to the fathers and to David's house are recalled,

He hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David . . . to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he sware to our father Abraham.

It is almost needless to say that the earthly blessings were deferred, because of the rejection of Christ by the nation.

Turn now to Isa. 49. We find that Israel having failed as God's servant (see Isa. 40 - 48), is set aside, and Christ presented as the true servant; and yet He says, "I have labored in vain"; for Israel rejected Him. The answer of God comes in v. 5, &c. It was a light thing to raise up the tribes of Israel, but He should be exalted and given as a light to the Gentiles. In v. 8, He is given as a covenant to the people to deliver them in the end. The language of the prophecy is very beautiful:

Sing O heavens, and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains, for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

Zion, apparently forsaken, then learns that the Lord's faithfulness is greater than a mother's towards her sucking child.

Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls (Jerusalem) are continually before me.

Her children make haste to return to her, and her destroyers go forth from her.

Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold all these [the restored and gathered remnant of the people] gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee as a bride doeth. For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away. The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me; give place to me that I may dwell. Then shalt

thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold I was left alone: these where had they been? Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people, and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee, with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord, for they shalt not be ashamed that wait for me.

The thought of applying this to the Church is almost too overstrained to need a remark. When does the Church ever say, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me," and that at the very time when the blessing is complete? The Church was then an unrevealed mystery; hid in God {Eph. 3:9; Rom. 16:25, 26; Col. 1:26}.

In Rom. 11 the Apostle Paul deals with this subject, showing that God hath not cast off His people; and he gives three leading reasons in his argument.

**First:** there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

**Secondly:** through the fall of his nation, salvation is come to the Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy (see Deut. 32:21), and not to reject them. And,

**Thirdly,** "There *shall* come out of *Zion* the Deliverer,<sup>11</sup> and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob," at the time that *all* Israel (that is, as a whole, or nationally), shall be saved {cp. Rom. 11:26}.

When we consider the third point proposed, many of those promises of restoration will come before us, connected with the judgment of the apostates of the nation, and the Gentiles.

2. As to the next point, we will turn to Dan. 9:24-27, where we find the answer to the prayer of Daniel, who was one of the captives of Israel in Babylon. Naturally the subject of all others most dear to his Jewish heart and affections, was the restoration of his people; and the subject of most importance was to ascertain the length of time they would be subject to their captors, under whose yoke they were reaping what they had sown when owned of God.

In the beginning of the chapter we find that, like any godly man, Daniel was a student of Scripture; and in the first year of Darius the Mede, who took the kingdom after the fall of Babylon, he had ascertained from the book of Jeremiah that the seventy years of the desolations of Jerusalem were now past. Faith was at work in his soul, and he set his face to wait upon God and to humble himself before Him about his nation with prayer and supplication, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. He puts himself in the position of the nation according to its sins before God, and identifies himself with them (see Lev. 26:40,

11. It is remarkable that this promise is quoted by the apostle as *yet to come*, long after the first coming of Christ, and His rejection. Christianity had been now established for some years.

41). His heart owns the God with whom he had to do, as one who never changed -- a merciful and gracious God. God *Himself* is his confidence.

O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belongs mercies and forgiveness, *though* we have rebelled against him.

It is something beautiful how his faith calls Jerusalem "thy city," and Israel "thy people," as Moses did when the people made the golden calf, and God could not own them. We read, "Whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin, and the sin of my people Israel . . . the man Gabriel . . . informed me," &c.

In the communication which follows -- that is, the prophecy of the seventy weeks {Dan. 9:24-27} -- he receives the answer to his prayer. We may remark that God speaks of the people to Daniel as "thy people" -- as to Moses on the occasion to which we have referred; and the prophecy relates to the Jewish people, and to Jerusalem.

Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish 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 (place). 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. And after (the) threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off and shall have nothing, (*marg.*), 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. And he shall confirm a (*marg.*) covenant with many for one week and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

Here then is a clearly defined period, at the end of which a remarkable change would be brought to his people, the Jews, and to their city -- their return and complete re-establishment in grace -- transgressions pardoned, sins made an end of, iniquity forgiven, and everlasting righteousness introduced, the vision and prophecy sealed up, and the most holy place anointed.

Now let us call to mind the state of Judah and Jerusalem, as we saw when examining the past history of the people of Israel, at the time that Judah went into captivity to Babylon, in the closing chapters of 2 Kings. The king of Judah and the nation were brought into captivity (Israel, or the ten tribes, had long before been brought into captivity by the Assyrian), the city was broken up, and the house of the Lord burned with fire, and a few of the poorest of the people left to be vinedressers and husbandmen in the land. And let us compare that state with what is here in Dan. 9:24, where we find a complete and perfect restoration and re-establishment promised.

During the continuance of those seventy weeks of years (490), it assumes, or declares, that the people or a remnant of them, *will be in the land*; but not yet owned as God's people, and still under the power of the Gentiles; the temple rebuilt, and the city restored. This is of much importance, to let us bear in mind those three points which together characterize the continuance of the seventy weeks.

1. The people (or some of them) are in the land but not owned of God.
2. The temple rebuilt, and the city.
3. The Gentiles still in possession of the throne of the world, or in other words, the "Times of the Gentiles" not run out.

These *three* things together do not characterize the *present* time.

The seventy weeks are divided into three periods, or divisions: seven weeks, sixty two weeks, and one week. The first division of seven weeks, or {of the} four hundred and ninety years,<sup>12</sup> counts from the going forth of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem; this was the starting point.

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.

First this rebuilding goes on for seven weeks of years (49). We read in Nehemiah that it was a time of great distress and trouble.

But it came to pass that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice I will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? &c.

Then we have sixty-two weeks of years (434) from the rebuilding of Jerusalem unto Messiah, in all sixty-nine weeks of the seventy (483). Messiah is then cut off and rejected, and does not get His kingdom. "After the threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off and shall have nothing." Christ presents Himself to the nation as their King, and instead of getting His kingdom, He is *crucified*, after the threescore and two weeks; and the counting out of the seventieth week ceases for the time.<sup>13</sup> Then the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. This was accomplished

12. I do not enter here into this question. It will be, I suppose, universally admitted that it is weeks of years which is meant.

13. The first half of this seventieth week is for Christians, Christ's ministry on earth, of three and a half years. For the unbelieving Jews, it is Anti-Christ's ministry here upon earth in the last days, before the Kingdom. {It appears that when the Lord came into Jerusalem in fulfilment of Zech. 9:9 (probably the 10<sup>th</sup> Nisan), the 69<sup>th</sup> week ended at that point. Thus, a few days after the end of the 69<sup>th</sup> week, He was cut off. See *The Bible Treasury*, June 1880, vol. 13, p. 91, for this (suggested two years earlier than Sir Robert Anderson). The 70<sup>th</sup> week is still in the future.

under Titus and the Roman armies at the destruction of Jerusalem {AD 70}, after the rejection of Christ. The people whose armies accomplished this were the Roman people. In John 11:48, we find the fears of the Jewish leaders absolutely prophetic of this event. "If we let him (Christ) thus alone, all men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." And the Lord Himself predicted when He beheld the city, and wept over it,

For the days shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground (Luke 19:43).

And again,

And some spake of the temple how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down . . . and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (Luke 21:5, 6, 24).<sup>14</sup>

Messiah having been cut off after the sixty-ninth week, the chain of events with the Jewish people ceases (absolutely, when the city was destroyed), and time therefore ceases to be counted from that period to the present. God, as we have seen, becomes occupied with heavenly things. The seventieth week was to bring in and establish in full prosperity and blessing the people, according to v. 24; but instead of the blessing, the cutting off of Messiah after the sixty-ninth week, the city and sanctuary trodden down, and a long nameless period of desolations to the people and city follow. Evidently, as we have seen, it was the Roman people who were to do what is stated in Dan. 9:26, "The people of the prince that shall come," &c. The *prince* was not there, only the *people* are named, but the prince himself was not come. He is brought before us after his long timeless period of desolations, still running on, "He shall confirm a covenant," &c.

The rejection of Christ, therefore, suspended all relations and dealings of God with the Jewish people, as His earthly people, and this allotted period of seventy weeks ceased to run on. And when the Jews are again the objects of God's dealings, in the short period of judgment before He owns them as His nation, the period which remains of the seventy weeks, will be counted out, and will bring in the full restoration. This short period, therefore, as we may easily see synchronizes with the closing events, or crisis of the history of the world, introductive of the kingdom.

We find the same thing in many other Scriptures. either assumed or declared. (See Isa. 8:14-22; 9:1-7.) Christ becomes a stone of stumbling to the nation -- the testimony is confined

to His disciples -- the Lord then hides His face from the house of Jacob for a long, timeless period, and the prophet passes over to the last days, which introduce the kingdom by judgment. Again in Isa. 61:1, 2, when the Lord announced His mission in the synagogue of Nazareth, He stops short in the middle of v. 2, which is separated from the next clause already for more than eighteen hundred years, and which clause announces the "day of vengeance," and comforting them that mourn, the remnant of the nation in the kingdom.

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14. The counting out of the seventy weeks brings in the full blessing to the Jews, is the closing moment of the times of the Gentiles: which run on till that moment also. Jerusalem is still trodden down of the Gentiles; and will be so till their times are fulfilled. If they were expired, Jerusalem would not be trodden under their foot. When one ends the other ends as well. And if one exists the other exists as well. Hence the Jew cannot be fully restored, although the attempt may be made, till the Gentile power ceases in the world.

## Chapter 8:

### *The Judgment of Israel and The Nations Introductive of the Kingdom*

(Continued)

3. Now consider the testimony of Scripture as to the third point proposed. Turn to Deut. 32. In the closing verses of Deut. 31, Moses gathers the elders and officers of the people of Israel together to recite in their ears the prophetic song given to him by the Lord as a witness, in view of their failure. He says,

I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way that I command you, and evil will befall you in the latter days, because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger through the works of your hands.

Then in Deut. 32 they are viewed as having corrupted themselves. "They have corrupted themselves; their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation." He then goes on to relate their wonderful history, and the counsels and care of God as to them, and the return they made to Him.

Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked . . . they provoked him to jealousy with strange gods . . . they sacrificed unto devils . . . And when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them . . . and he said, I will hide my face from them; I will see what their end shall be, for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God . . . and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people.

And then in His anger He casts them off utterly, heaping mischief upon them.

When thus cast off He acts in His own sovereignty, and in view of this He declares,

For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he sees their power is gone, and that there is none shut up or left.

He judges His people, avenges the blood of His servants. When His hand takes hold on judgment, He renders vengeance to His enemies -- makes His arrows drunk with blood -- His sword devours much flesh; then He turns in mercy to His people and to His land. The result of this judgment on the nations is, that the Gentiles sing the song of deliverance with the remnant of His people who are delivered. (See Psa. 67; 117.)

Psalms 2, 8 - 10. In the first of these Psalms we find Christ presented as King in Zion and rejected, yet God's purposes were only delayed for a while. Christ takes in resurrection the wider glory of the Son of man, according to Psa. 8; we saw before that the Holy Ghost, in Acts 4, quotes the first two verses of Psa. 2 and stops. The Lord is represented as laughing at their rage, but for all their rage He declares, "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." Messiah is desired, "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance," &c. When rejected, and about to be crucified, He represents Himself as praying for His disciples, "I pray for them, I pray not for the world" (John 17), but the time is coming when He will ask for the heathen for His inheritance, and the answer comes,

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

He inherits them by judgment, in which His people now being gathered share with Him; a proof that, wherever *Christ* is spoken of in the Old Testament, we find the portion of the *Church* as well.<sup>15</sup>

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 in pieces, even as I received of my Father (Rev. 2:28).

This however is not his best portion, for "I will give him the morning star" -- Christ Himself. Then, not only is the name of Jehovah excellent in all the earth, but He sets His glory above the heavens (Psa. 8:1), and stills the enemy and the avenger.

Psa. 9, 10 show us the position and circumstances in which the nation is found in this crisis of judgment. The delivered remnant say,

For thou hast maintained my right and my cause . . . thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever . . . the Lord

15. {The author does not mean that the church is a subject of the OT prophecies. What Christ inherits, as prophesied by the OT prophets, the church will share with Christ.}

is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands . . . The wicked shall be turned into hell and all the nations that forget God. For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever . Arise, O Lord; let not man prevail; let the heathen be judged in thy sight. Put them in fear, O Lord; that the nations may know themselves to be but men.

It is when there is none to say, "How long?" that the Lord appears to their deliverance.

Again,

The Lord is King for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land. Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart [that is of the spared ones who are trained for the kingdom]; thou wilt cause their ear to hear, &c.

How mistaken to think the Psalms are the expression of *Christian* experience as such! How often the simple-hearted Christian has been stumbled at the cry for vengeance on enemies, running through this class of Psalms, put into his mouth, whose calling is to do well and suffer for it, and take it patiently, while in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ! The kingdom and power will be looked for by these Jewish hearts, as that which brings their deliverance. The trials of the heavenly saints end, just *before* those of the Jewish saints begin. See Rev. 12, where we find rejoicing in heaven when the accuser is cast down, and woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea, "for the devil is come down to you." He then turns his rage against the woman and her seed, the Jewish people. The Spirit of Christ has graciously entered into these trials, that He might give a voice to the remnant {as heard in these Psalms}, in the closing days before the kingdom.

Read now Psa. 110. Christ rejected by men, and by His people as their king -- who said, "We have no king but Csesar," "We will not have this man to reign over us" -- is exalted to God's right hand. God said, "Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (see Heb. 1:13; 10:13). He remains then for the nameless time "until" that hour known only to the Father. The Lord, when that hour comes, sends out of Zion the rod of His strength; and Christ rules in the midst of His enemies. His people are willing in the day of His power. (They are unwilling in the day of His humiliation.) "The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen," &c.

Turn to Isa. 1 - 4. Blessing and rest are proposed in ch. 1 consequent on the repentance of the nation; but they would not hearken. Eventually it is brought in by judgment --

Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness; and the destruction of the transgressors, and of the sinners shall be together.

The result of this judgment is in Isa. 2:1-4; 4:2-6, a time of peace and glory.

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 *all* nations shall flow unto it . . . He shall judge among the nations . . . and they shall beat their

swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall *not* lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

How different the time in which we live, while the times of the Gentiles are running on, characterized by those words of our Lord,

Nation *shall* rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom . . . upon 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,

precursors of the Son of man's coming with power and great glory (Luke 21:10, 25-27).

The remaining part of Isa. 2., &c., shows the connection between the judgment of the nations and that of Israel.

Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty: and the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of man shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day . . . *when* he ariseth to shake terribly the earth."

The result of this universal judgment is the establishment of His people in the glory of the kingdom.

It will come to pass that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy; even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning. And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and a smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defense. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.

His own presence will be there, when His people are delivered, as in the wilderness of old.

Isa. 11. The reading of this chapter is so plain as scarcely to need a word. A time of universal blessedness and peace; His people restored and under the government of Messiah, introduced by judgment, which falls on them and the nations.

He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off, &c.

Isa. 13, 14 treat of the same time, a time of universal judgment on the imperial throne of the world (ch. 13).

The day of the Lord [when] all hands shall be faint and every man's heart shall melt. For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land; and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob . . . and they shall take them captives whose captives they were, and they shall rule over their oppressors . . . in the day that the Lord shall

give thee rest from thy sorrow and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve.

This is the purpose that is purposed upon the *whole earth*; and this is the hand that is stretched out upon *all* the nations (Isa. 14:1-3, 26).

It goes on to the destruction of the Assyrian *after* their deliverance (the power that occupies at that day the territory of their ancient enemy); I say “after,” because in past history the Assyrian fell *before* Babylon; here, which proves its *future* application, he falls after Babylon is judged.

Isa. 24 - 27. This prophecy we have examined shortly before; it shows the universal judgment upon the nations and Israel; and the deliverance of a remnant -- the Lord's throne established in Zion -- the reproach of His people removed, the vail taken away from all nations. The Lord had hidden his face from the house of Israel while they were disowned: but He is spoken of as coming out of His place for their deliverance.

Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee, hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth also shall disclose her blood, and no more cover her slain . . . And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

Isa. 30.

Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun; and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people and healeth the stroke of their wound. Behold the name of the Lord cometh from far, burning with his anger, and the burden thereof is heavy; his lips are full of indignation; and his tongue as a devouring fire: and his breath, as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity: i.e., and there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people causing them to err . . . And the Lord shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lightning down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones. For through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be beaten down which smote with a rod. And in every place where the grounded staff shall pass [the rod of vengeance which God hath decreed], which the Lord shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps [when it is laid on the Assyrian, it is the source of joy and deliverance at the end of the indignation, to the remnant of Israel], and with battles of shaking will he fight with it. For Tophet is ordained of old, yea, for the king it is prepared” [the Anti-christ, who has this title amongst the apostate nation]; he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.

Isa. 59:15-21. Verse 20 of this passage is quoted by the apostle in Rom. 11, in view of the future restoration of the people.

The Redeemer shall come to Zion and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob.

And then He establishes the new covenant with Israel; His Spirit is with His people, and His words are in their mouth, which would abide with them for ever. Verse 18, &c., shows that it is introduced by judgment;

He will repay fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies: to the islands he will pay recompense; so shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west and his glory from the rising of the sun. The next chapter declares that Jerusalem is restored in the glory of the kingdom, and her sons and daughters gathered from every side.

Isa. 66. This chapter gives the judgment which introduces the glory and blessedness of the restored nation, described in the latter portion of Isa. 65. First, we have the remnant who fear the name of Jehovah and wait for him; then, the apostates of the nation. The former are encouraged with the promise that the Lord would appear to their joy and deliverance, and to the shame of the apostates, who said in contempt “Let the Lord display his glory.”

Behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with *all* flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many (Isa. 66:15, 16).

This passage shows that He comes suddenly, like a whirlwind, and renders to His enemies the fire of judgment. Then we have the result of this in vv. 6-14; the Jews are set up again in a wondrous manner, and Jerusalem restored.

Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her all ye that love her: rejoice with joy for her, all ye that mourn for her . . . for thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to *her* like a river, and the glory of the *Gentiles* like a flowing stream . . . as one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you: and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb: and the hand of the Lord shall be known towards his servants, and his indignation towards his enemies.

Then, in Isa. 66:19, 20, those who are spared go forth to declare the glory of the Lord among the Gentiles, and to bring back the dispersed of Israel. The whole chapter shows most clearly the connection between the universal judgment of the nations and Israel, with the deliverance of a remnant, and the Gentiles who are spared, blessed around the people of God.

Turn to Jer. 25. We referred to this chapter before; it declared the length of the captivity of Judah in Babylon to be seventy years: but God, having given the throne of the world to Babylon, when He had set aside His people and removed His presence from their midst -- in principle, when Babylon is overthrown His people are delivered, because it was the only power that held its dominion directly from God -- the other Gentile powers followed providentially. Jerusalem was only partially restored; however, it shows the principle. In examining this chapter, we find that the judgment goes on to the end, in which His people are involved; primarily it referred to the judgment which was executed on Jerusalem and the nations at the time to which the prophecy referred, Babylon which had executed it falling last of all; and serves as a type of

the final crisis of judgment of *all* the nations of the world.

For lo, . . . I will call for a sword upon *all* the inhabitants of the earth, saith the Lord of hosts. A noise shall come even to the *ends* of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with the nations, he will plead with *all* flesh . . . and the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth, &c. (Jer. 25:29-33).

Jer. 30-33. In this beautiful series of prophecies we find, first, Judah restored; then Israel; then both established under the new covenant; the land restored; Messiah and the priesthood, all introduced by judgment on the Jews and the nations, which finds Jacob at the height of his distress. Let us examine it more closely. In Jer. 30:7, the prophet writes,

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. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him, but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the Lord, neither be thou dismayed, O Israel, for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee, though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee in measure and will not leave thee altogether unpunished . . . therefore all they that devour thee shall be devoured, and all thine adversaries, every one of them shall go into captivity, and they that spoil thee shall be a spoil and all they that prey upon thee will I give for a prey. For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord, because they called thee an outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after . . . the city shall be builded upon her own heap . . . The fierce anger of the Lord shall not return, until he has done it, and until he has performed the intents of his heart: in the *later days* ye shall consider it.

Jer. 31 sets forth the deliverance, at the same time, of all the families of Israel:

And they shall plant vines in the mountains of Samaria and eat them as common things.

The language of this deliverance is touchingly beautiful.

Behold I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child, and her that travaileth with child together; a great company shall return thither. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them, and I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters by a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble, for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn . . . He that scattered Israel, will gather them . . . Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock, and of the herd; and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all . . . Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah [both houses, the entire nation], "not according to the covenant that I made with their

fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which covenant they brake . . . But this shall be the covenant . . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts . . . and they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more . . . If those ordinances [of creation] depart from before me, saith the Lord, *then* the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.

When Messiah was cut off, the blood of this new covenant was shed, mid all necessary on God's part was accomplished to their righteous establishment under it. Plainly the return from Babylon, of the remnant of Judah was not this re-establishment; for it will be established with *all* Israel, as it declares, and in grace. The blessing of it, however, never brings them within the veil, although giving them access, for worshiping there through faith, as we do as Christians now {???}.

Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that the city shall be built to the Lord, from the tower of Hannanel unto the gate of the corner. And the measuring line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath. And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook Kedron, unto the corner of the horse gate towards the east, shall be holy unto the Lord; and it shall not be plucked up nor thrown down, any more for ever.

In Jer. 32 the Lord takes up the circumstances of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar to declare His counsels in grace as to their final restoration. The prophet is directed to buy a field in token that the people would again possess the land (Jer. 32:37-44).

Behold, I will gather them out of all countries whither I have driven them in mine anger . . . and I will bring them again into their place, and I will cause them to dwell safely . . . Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart, and with my whole soul.

Read on to the end of this chapter.

Jer. 33 repeats the blessings, looking forward to the day when their Messiah would be with them.

I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel [both] to return . . . and I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me: and I will pardon all their iniquities whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me . . . In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David: and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in *the land*. ["Judgment shall return to righteousness, and all the upright in heart shall follow it" Psa. 94:15].

In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the same wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness. For thus saith the Lord, David shall never want a man to sit upon the Throne of the house of *Israel* [not merely Judah].

Thus saith the Lord, If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy upon them.

Turn now to Ezek. 20. The Spirit here retraces the idolatry of the entire nation, from the time of their deliverance out of Egypt. God had brought them out, and given them His sabbaths to be a sign between Him and them: but they had even rebelled in the wilderness against Him, and polluted His sabbaths.

Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes . . . they polluted my sabbaths . . . in the wilderness.

God had told them (Deut. 32; Lev. 26) that He would scatter them amongst the heathen. Yet when they had been brought into the land, they had forsaken the Lord for the high places, and the Lord had sworn that He would not be enquired of by them; but the nation, hardened in their idolatry, had resolved to be like the heathen, and serve wood and stone. Then the Lord said that with fury poured out He would rule over them.

And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered . . . and I will plead with you face to face . . . and I will cause you to pass under the rod . . . and I will purge out from among you the rebels [the apostates], and them that transgress against me . . . and they shall *not* enter into the land of Israel . . . For in my holy mountain . . . there shall *all* the house of Israel, all of them *in the land*, serve me . . . when I shall bring you into the land of Israel; into the country for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to *your fathers*. And I will kindle a fire in thee . . . and *all* flesh shall see that I the Lord have kindled it: and it shall not be quenched (Ezek. 20:33, 48).

Israel is here dealt with, amongst the nations of the world, *for idolatry*; as Judah *for the rejection of Christ*, (for Israel is the ten tribes, never returned to have their Messiah presented to them, as Judah), which was her special sin, in which she was joined by the fourth Gentile empire, represented by Pilate. In the end she is found in close alliance with, and politically favored by, the fourth Gentile empire in its revived state. The unclean spirit of idolatry did not return to the Jews after the return of the remnant from Babylon. The Lord notices this in Matt. 12:

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished; then goeth he and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

Verse 48 shows the connection of the judgment of the nations with that of Israel.

Ezek. 36 - 39. In this series of chapters we get, first, the

moral renewing of the nation; then the quickening and restoration of the people in national resurrection; then when restored and in their land, their last great enemy, which occupies the territory of the Assyrian, comes up against them; and is destroyed in the mountains of Israel.

Ezek. 36. The past failure of the nation is put before them that they may own it before God. The heathen said, "These are the people of the Lord and (yet) they are gone forth out of his land" (v. 20.) But then God remembers that His name is involved, and for His holy name's sake He delivers them. Then, as He had shown to Nicodemus, a master in Israel, the new birth was necessary even to the enjoyment of earthly blessings {John 3:12}; which, as a teacher in Israel he ought to have known, from the testimony of the prophets.

I will sprinkle clean water upon you . . . a new heart also will I give you . . . and I will put my Spirit within you . . . and ye shall dwell in the land that I gave your fathers . . . And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field . . . I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded, &c.

The nation is thus morally renewed that they may loathe themselves for their sins before God, in true repentance.

Ezek. 37. In the vision of this chapter we have a figure of the national resurrection of the people. The prophet sees a valley of dry bones, to which he prophesies, as commanded; and there was a noise and a shaking, and the bones came together, and the sinews and flesh came up upon them, and the breath came unto them, and they lived.

Then said he unto me, Son of man, these bones are the *whole* house of Israel; behold they say [in captivity], Our bones are dried, our hope is lost; we are cut off from our parts . . . Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel . . . and shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live; and I shall place you in *your own land*.

The figure of resurrection is here used to show the gathering of the nation, apparently long lost amongst the nations of the world, into their land. Clearly it only applies to this, not to the literal resurrection of the saints, who have died in the Lord; it would not be "in the land," but to heaven, they would be brought. In what follows, we find that Judah and Israel, long apart, are united into one nation, under one king. God sets up his tabernacle and his sanctuary amongst them, and establishes His covenant of peace.

In Ezek. 38, 39, the Assyrian, the ancient enemy of the people when owned of God -- "the rod of the Lord's anger" (Isa. 10:5) against His people, to chastise them for their sins -- is here introduced under the title of Gog, the prince of Rosh (Russia); Meschah (Moscow); and Tubal (Tobolsk). He embraces the territory under Russia, or which that power shall have gathered under her in that day. He is represented as wickedly coming up against the nation in Palestine when at rest and restored.

Thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwallied villages: I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely . . . to take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thy hand upon

the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon their people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land . . . Thus saith the Lord . . . it shall be in the *latter days*, and I will bring thee against my land . . . art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel . . . and it shall come to pass when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, my fury shall come up in my face . . . and I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood . . . and I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee . . . Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel . . . Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord God; this is the day whereof I have spoken. Then shall they [the house of Israel] know that I am the Lord their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen; but I have gathered them into their own land . . . Neither will I hide my face any more from them; for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God.

Compare also for this destruction of the Assyrian, after the people are restored, Isa. 24:24, 25; 33. We must carefully distinguish Gog the land of Magog in Ezek. 38, 39, from Gog and Magog of Rev. 20. The former comes up when the people are restored, in the *beginning* of the kingdom; the latter, *after* the thousand years of the kingdom have expired. When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, &c., (Rev. 20:7, 8).

## Chapter 9:

### *The Judgment of Israel and the Nations Introductive of the Kingdom*

(Continued)

Dan. 12. We have seen that the time of the great tribulation, spoken of here, is that to which the Lord Himself alludes, as happening at the time the abomination of desolation is set up in the temple, and which ends by the coming of the Lord Himself; and the deliverance of the people. It is the closing half of the seventieth week, when the restored Latin empire is the full expression of Satanic energy, the destruction of which makes way for the kingdom under Christ.

We read,

At that time shall Michael stand up . . . for the children of *thy* people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time; and at *that* time shall thy people be delivered . . . And many [not "all"] of them that sleep in the dust of the earth [this is a figure analogous to the moral death and resurrection in Isa. 26:13-19, and the national resurrection as conveyed by the figure of the valley of dry bones in Ezek. 37] shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to [instruct the many in] righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever . . . And one said . . . How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? [that is, to the end of the tribulation] and he sware, that it should be for a time, times, and a half;

to put an end to the dispersion of the holy people: the closing half of the seventieth week of Dan. 9, which brings in the full blessing.

Joel 3. It is but necessary to read vv. 1, 2, 9-17, to show the connection.

For, behold, in those days . . . when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather *all nations*, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat [the judgment of Jehovah], and will plead with them there for my people, and my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land . . . Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles . . . assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about. Let the heathen be waked, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about [this is the judgment of the quick, or living nations]. The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and will be the

hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel . . . *Then* shall Jerusalem be holy, and then shall no stranger pass through her any more.

She shall be no more trodden down of the Gentiles; their times shall have been fulfilled.

Micah 4, 5. This prophecy shows in the most wondrously beautiful manner, the coming and rejection of the Bethlehemite by His people, who are then given up for a time until Zion, which travails, shall have brought forth, and the Son be owned as born to the nation (see Isa. 9); and the remnant shall be restored. The Assyrian then comes up, and He whom they had rejected is then their peace.

And he shall stand and rule in the strength of the Lord . . . And this man shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land, and when he shall tread in our palaces. [He] shall deliver us from the Assyrian . . . and the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people, as the dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.

Jacob shall be the channel of refreshing grace from God to the world, and a testimony to His power.

Zeph. 3:8, 20.

Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations . . . to pour upon them my indignation . . . for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.

The remnant is thus encouraged to wait for this time of judgment from the Lord when He would rise up to the prey; this alone would set them free, and teach the nations to call upon the Lord, and serve Him with one consent. In that day God would gather His dispersed people from beyond the rivers of Ethiopia (Euphrates and Nile), and have in their midst a people that trust in the name of Jehovah; and

the remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid. Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem; the Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy; the King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee; thou shalt not see evil any more. In that day it shall

he said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not; and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. 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 . . . I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the lord.

#### Haggai 2.

For thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts . . . The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former . . . I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen . . . saith the Lord of hosts.

This universal judgment, introductory of Christ and the glory of the restored nation, is referred to by the Holy Ghost, in Heb. 12:26, as *yet* to come.

Zech. 10-14. In this series of chapters we have the restoration of Judah and Israel at a time of universal judgment; and this is spoken of still as *future, long after the return of Judah from the Babylonish captivity*.

And in that day I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people; all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it . . . and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem . . . And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all nations that come up against Jerusalem.

The verses following, which speak of the repentance of the house of David and the nation, are extremely beautiful. The rejected Messiah is the Jehovah who delivers them. They look upon Him whom they have pierced. There is a great mourning in the land as in the valley of Megiddon of old. This allusion to 2 Chron. 35:22, &c., is touching in the extreme. *There*, in the closing days of their former history, their faithful king, Josiah, had fallen, and there the nation had mourned and made great lamentation over their slain king. *Here* they learn to mourn in the dust, when they learn that the king whom their nation crucified is the Lord of hosts Himself!

In the past history of the nation we saw how that they had failed -- the people, the priests, the prophets, and the kings. Here {Zech. 12:12-14} we find these classes all represented in this national and yet individual repentance. The house of David, which represents the kings -- the house of Nathan, the prophets -- the house of Levi, the priests -- and the house of Shimei (Simeon), the people.

Judah is here dealt with, in the land, for the rejection of Christ; not like Israel, as we have seen, for idolatry.

And . . . in all the land . . . two parts therein shall be cut off and die, but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and I will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name and I will hear them; I will say, It is my people; [Ammi] and they shall say, the Lord is my God.

The sentence "Call his name Lo Ammi, for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God" (Hos.1:9), is removed.

In Zech. 14 the Lord appears to their deliverance, in the place from which the "glory" of the God of Israel departed, when He transferred the "sword" to the Gentile. From the same place He had entered Jerusalem as their King, according to this prophet, Zech. 9:9, riding upon an ass's colt. On the same Mount of Olives He sat, in Matt. 24, surrounded by His Jewish disciples; after He had left His nation, until the day when they would say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," and instructed them as to the restoration and gathering of their nation from the four quarters of the earth, at the coming of the Son of man in His glory. And from the same mountain did He ascend, having been rejected by His nation and crucified, to heaven (Acts 1). And on that same mountain shall His feet stand when He returns to their full and complete deliverance in grace!

Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations . . . And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east . . . And the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee . . . And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem . . . And the Lord shall be King over all the earth . . . All the land shall be turned as a plain, from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem; and it shall be lifted up and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate, unto the place of the first-gate, unto the corner gate, and from the towers of Hananeel unto the king's wine-presses . . . And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year and worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.

We have now followed without much comment, and allowing Scripture to speak for itself; which it has done, from the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, giving the testimony of a time of universal judgment; when God turns, to occupy Himself directly, with the world again; the nation of Israel being the special object before Him. All these dealings making way for God's kingdom in Zion and the restored earth; at the time of the restitution of all things spoken of by the Prophets {Acts 3:21}; -- and we have seen most distinctly that this time of judgment is symbolical with the counting out of the closing part of the seventieth week of Dan. 9 -- the crisis of the history of this world.

Before closing this subject, I would shortly notice the position of the heavenly and glorified saints -- the Church of the first-born -- during these scenes of universal judgment. We saw them taken up at the time of the first resurrection to be "ever with the Lord" (when the saying of Isa. 25:8; 1 Cor. 15:54, is brought to pass, "Death is swallowed up in victory"), when this period of judgment begins.

We find this in the book of Rev., in chs. 4-19, which are occupied with this period of judgment, precursory of the kingdom. It is assumed also in other Scriptures. In Rev. 1 we have "the things which thou has seen," the vision of Christ walking amongst the candlesticks. Rev. 2, 3, "the things that are" (Rev. 1:19), or the time-state of the Church as a light-

bearer here below for Christ, in her place of responsibility. The various features which would mark her existence in the world are portrayed, from the time of her departure from her first love, till she is threatened with total excision -- "I will spue thee out of my mouth." No doubt seven actual assemblies in Asia are addressed, but the moral state of each is seized to describe that which would be found in Christendom. That these seven assemblies, and they *alone*, could not be termed "the things that are," is clear, as they did not constitute all that existed then; and besides, Rev. 3:10 clearly indicates that the whole *time-existence* of the Church is embraced, as it promises that the overcomer who kept the word of Christ's patience would be kept from "the hour <sup>16</sup> of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth" -- the period of judgment we have been considering, which introduces or rather precedes the kingdom. Rev. 4, &c., "The things which shall be after these things" (μετα ταυτα) begins this period. "Come up hither, and I will show the things which must be after these things."

All through the course of these chapters of the Apocalypse, we find a company seated in heaven, calm and peaceful, amidst the thunders and lightnings and judgments, cognizant of the mind of God; and with full understanding of all that goes on beneath them in the world.

In Rev. 4 we find them, in the presence of a throne of judgment, seated as kings and priests, clothed with white raiment, and on their heads crowns of gold -- the complement of the heads of the heavenly priesthood; those who had been received up at Christ's coming. In Rev. 5 one of their number explains to the prophet that which caused his thoughts to be troubled; and they are again seen exercising priestly services around the Lamb. Again, in Rev. 7 we find them in heaven, and one of their number explains to the prophet, the meaning of the one hundred and forty-four thousand of Israel, and the palm-hearing multitude of Gentiles who had been sealed for preservation through the judgments for the millennial earth, no more to be subject to hunger, or thirst, or sorrow.

Again, in Rev. 12, we hear their voices celebrating the casting out of Satan and his angels from the heavenlies: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth," proclaimed because Satan had gone down in great wrath, having but a short time -- the closing one thousand two hundred and sixty days of the beast's power. The sorrows of the saints for the heavenlies cease, when they had been caught up, and just before those of the Jewish saints, sealed for preservation, begin. In Rev. 13 these saints are the objects of Satan's blasphemy through the beast; he can now no longer accuse, or cause them sorrow, so he blasphemeth "those that dwell in heaven."

In Rev. 19, after the marriage of the Lamb, we see Christ as King of kings, and Lord of lords, coming forth to judgment, accompanied by the armies of heaven, clothed with fine linen, which is the righteousness of saints. (Cp. also Rev. 17:14.) He

comes forth to exercise His power over the nations, and to rule them with a rod of iron, in which the saints have a part with Him. See Psa. 2:9, "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel," with Rev. 2:28,

He that overcometh . . . 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 in shivers: even as I received of my Father.

Then, in Rev. 20, the thrones are set, and

they sat on them, and judgment was given unto them . . . they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years.

In Rev. 20: 4 we find three classes.

First, those who had been received up at the *coming* of Christ;

second, those who, during the interval of judgment before His *appearing*, "were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God," the souls that were martyred under the fifth seal (see Rev. 6:9); and,

third, those who, during the raging of the beast in his last effort, set on by Satan, "had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands."

These last two companies are not deprived of their blessing for having suffered. They lose those of the kingdom below, but are not forgotten, and receive the heavenly blessing with the others who had been received up at Christ's coming. All three companies, taken together, compose the "first resurrection" {Rev. 20:4, 5}.

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16. {The reader should understand that this does not mean being kept through the tribulation; it says, that one will be kept out of the *time*, the hour, of it.}

## Chapter 10

### *The Glory, or Kingdom*

The short period of universal judgment which we have been considering cleanses the sphere of the kingdom from everything which offends, and them which do iniquity; and ends in the coming of the Son of man Himself with power and great glory, to execute the last blow of judgment; and to reign over the world during the continuance of the kingdom. When it is established, God will have accomplished in and under His Son, His counsels and purposes as to everything which had been put into the hands of the first Adam and by Him defiled and destroyed.

We have seen the *first Adam*, innocent, and surrounded with blessing, failing; losing his place of dominion over the earth, and subjecting the creature to vanity by his fall (Rom. 8:20). Left to himself when fallen, and outside the center of good, he fills the earth with corruption and violence, and Satan usurps the place God should have had in his mind. Afterwards the three great systems, set up in the world --

the *Jew* under law,

the *Gentile* without law, and entrusted with supreme power, and

the *Church* under grace

-- each proving a failure where entrusted to men; I speak of the Church as a witness in the world, in the place of responsibility and testimony, not as the body of Christ.

In the days of the kingdom the *last Adam* will be there. In His own perfect, stainless manhood, He came and stood among the ruins of a lost world, and was confronted by Satan, who had obtained his power over it, through the lusts of the first Adam when fallen (Luke 4). He stood in His inheritance, and found the "kingdoms of this world and the glory of them" in the hands of Satan, sin-defiled and in ruins. He took it thus, with its load of sin and defilement, and died to redeem it. He foiled and vanquished Satan in the place of his power; bound the strong man, and then proceeded to spoil him of his goods. The prince of this world came, but had nothing in Him. He went down into the domain of "him that had the power of death, that is the devil" (Heb. 2) and through death He destroyed his power. In due time He will cast him out of the heavenlies with his angel (Rev. 12) and when he has for a short period consummated his stupendous wickedness, in the revived Latin Empire, and the Antichrist, He will bind him and cast him into the bottomless pit till the thousand years of the kingdom are ended, and then he will cast him into the lake of fire. When Christ was here, He exhibited the "powers of the world to come" {Heb. 6:5}, or of the kingdom, casting out evil spirits, miraculously feeding and healing man. When that day shall be here, Satan shall be in the bottomless pit, and

the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing (Isa. 35).

*The creature*, which was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of man when he fell, groaning and travailing in pain, waiting for that day of its deliverance, shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. We read in Gen. 3, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake . . . thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee." But of the day of its regeneration, "instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree." "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." Again, the sentence pronounced upon Cain, "When thou tillest the ground it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength," shall be removed; for we read of the day when God shall cause His face to shine upon restored Israel, that

then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our own God, shall bless us; God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him (Psa. 67).

*The Jew*, restored; will be the center of God's recognized government in the world under Christ. Supremacy over the Gentiles established in Him, who shall rise to reign over them; Jewish royalty restored to the house of David, and priesthood in its excellence and purity made good.

Men had attempted to form a name and a center, apart from God at Babel, and had been broken into nations and tongues (Gen. 11). Israel was the nation with regard to which they had received their inheritance; it was proposed as the center of God's government in the world (Deut. 32:8). It became unworthy of the trust; as we read of Jerusalem;

Thus saith the Lord God, This is Jerusalem, I have set it in the midst of the nations and the countries that are round about her. And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations, and my statutes more than the countries that are round about her; for they have refused my judgments, and my statutes they have not walked in them (Ezek. 5:5, 6).

And the Gentile king endeavored to make a religious unity apart from God (Dan. 3). Many have been the centers of gathering proposed amongst men to reverse that sentence of scattering pronounced at Babel, by God: and as many times have they failed -- God has but One!

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until *Shiloh* come; and unto *him* shall the gathering of the people be (Gen. 49:10).

When He came to Judah He was rejected -- "Beauty and Bands" were broken (Zech. 11); and there was no gathering of the nations. Again, His name was proposed as a center, when mercy rejoiced over judgment at Pentecost, and God in grace took occasion of tongues, the sign of judgment, to let the nations hear, each in the tongue wherein he was born, of the wonderful works

and grace of God. But again, His center was refused, and there was no gathering of the nations, but a people out of them for His name and for heaven, to which the center of gathering, refused on earth, had been removed.

In the days of the kingdom, of which we speak, that which we find revealed in Gen. 28 to the wanderer of Jacob in a dream, of a ladder connecting the heavens with the earth (God Himself doing in grace what man had assayed to do in self-will at Babel).<sup>17</sup> We see a type of the days of the kingdom, when Christ will be this link of union, between the heavens inhabited by the glorified saints, and the millennial earth, when the seed of Jacob, wanderers now on the face of the earth, without land or altar, "shall be as the dust of the earth"; and when God will have brought them again into their land, and have done all that He hath spoken of (Gen. 38:15). The seed of Jacob will then be the head and not the tail; (Deut. 28:13) and

many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, In those days it shall come to pass that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you (Zech. 8:3).

Again, Jehovah had passed over Jordan before the tribes under Joshua, in their former days, by the title of "The Lord of all the earth" (Josh. 3); but when Israel ceased to be a witness to this title, and was set aside, and the dominion transferred to the Gentile king, God assumes the title of the "God of heaven," as we have before seen, and retains such all through the "times of the Gentiles." But during the introductory scene of judgment which we have considered, His claims as the "Lord of the earth," are again proclaimed by His witnesses (Rev. 11). He then assumes that title fully, and the substance of the Gentiles who desire to have the world without God, is consecrated unto the "Lord of the whole earth" (Micah 4:13).

And the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one (Zech. 14: 9; see also Isa. 54:5).

*Jerusalem* -- trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled -- will, at that day, be restored: when the "Redeemer shall have come back to Zion" (Isa. 59; Rom. 11:26). It will be said to her;

Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee; and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side; the forces of the Gentiles shall come to thee, the multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall minister unto thee; they shall come with acceptance on mine altar; and I will glorify the house of my glory . . . Thy gates shall

be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish: yea those nations shall be utterly wasted . . . The sons of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee, and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee the City of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas, thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations . . . For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron; I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness, violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders: but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates praise.

See also Isa. 65.

Behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people; and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying . . . And they shall build houses, and inhabit them, and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit, they shall not plant and another eat; for 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 labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them . . . the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord (Isa. 65).

Jerusalem, long forsaken of Jehovah, as the beginning of Ezekiel informs us, when His glory departed to heaven, and He transferred the sword to the Gentile, becomes again the dwelling place of His glory. Ezekiel in view of her day of glory (chs. 40-48) describes the restored city and the sanctuary. We read in Ezek. 43:2-5,

And, behold, the glory of the God Israel came from the way of the east, and his voice was like the noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory. And it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city . . . and the glory of the Lord came into the house . . . and, behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house.

And again,

The name of the city from that day shall be Jehovah-Shammah, [or] the Lord is there (Ezek. 48:35).

At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord: and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem (Jer. 3:17),

and this in the day when Israel and Judah shall be one nation in the land.

*Her people* shall be all righteous, as we read, Isa. 4:3:

It shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is left among the living in Jerusalem.

And again,

Thy people also shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the

17. {One may doubt that that was the purpose of sinful men.}

land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hand, that I may be glorified (Isa. 60:21).

The law shall be written in their hearts.

After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people (Jer 31:33).

The nations also shall all call upon the name of the Lord. When He has executed the judgment which delivers the remnant of His people, we read,

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 (Zeph. 3:9).

Again,

All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee (Psa. 22:27).

The unconditional promises to the fathers will then be fulfilled in grace, and brought in as we have seen, by judgment. Psa. 105 is prophetic of this, and offers thanksgiving to Jehovah, and calls upon the seed of *Abraham* and *Jacob*, to whom they had been made, to sing unto Him, and glory in His name. For

He is the Lord our God; his judgments are in all the earth. He hath remembered his covenant for ever; the word which he commanded to a thousand generations which covenant he made with *Abraham*, and his oath unto *Isaac*, and confirmed the same unto *Jacob* for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant, saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance (vv. 7-11).

We may remember that in considering the past history of the nation we saw that these promises have never yet been fulfilled the people having taken their inheritance under law -- lost it. They will be made good to them in sovereign grace, and, as v. 7 declares, by judgment, evidencing most clearly their still future application.

The knowledge of the Lord and of His glory shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea; and the throne of God, and His righteous government shall be known in the world. "Judgment will have returned to righteousness" (Psa. 94:15). And "righteousness and judgment shall be the habitation of his throne" (Psa. 97:2). Christ will be the Prince of this world, and Satan bound, who is its prince now. Obedience will be paid to His manifested power, and when this obedience is not observed, excision will be the result; death if it takes place during the continuance of the kingdom, it will be recognized that it is by the judicial acts of God's government; and all will go on peacefully and happily. Satan will not be there to act on men and tempt them to sin.

We find the principles of Messiah's government in the land in Psa. 101 --

A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person. Whoso privily slandereth his neighbor, him will I cut off; him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer. Mine eyes shall be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me . . . He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight. I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all the wicked doers from the city of the Lord.

We have excision the result of sin, also, in Isa. 65:20, where we read, "The sinner living an hundred years old shall be accursed," that is, if cut off it will be recognized as excision for sin in the government of God. The kingdom of Israel will be the earthly center of the administration of God's government in the world.

He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment . . . He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. 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 . . . The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; and the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him . . . There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like the grass of the earth . . . Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen (Psa. 72).

Again,

Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment . . . Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever (Isa. 32).

Thus far we have briefly seen the *earthly* blessings of the kingdom. We left the saints of the heavenlies, who had been received up, at the *coming* of Christ, to heaven, as well as those who had been martyred during the crisis of judgment which introduced the kingdom, seated on thrones at His *manifestation*, to reign with Him for a thousand years.

Let us now look at the *heavenly* blessing of the kingdom. In Rev. 21:9, 22:5, we find a description of the millennial display of the *heavenly* {*new*} Jerusalem to the world.<sup>18</sup> The prophet sees her "descending" (not descended), out of heaven, from God. What the saints should be in this day of trial -- "lights in the world" (Phil. 2); the Church is in the heavenly places {Eph. 2:6}, to the world, in the day of glory, reflecting all the glories of God and of the Lamb; the seat of the *heavenly* administrative power of the kingdom ("know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?"), her *heavenly* character and position, and yet her *connection* with the government of the *millennial earth* is revealed -- clothed with divine glory, such as that of Him who sat upon the throne in Rev. 4.

Angels are the willing door-keepers of that secure city, which is the chief fruit of the travail of Christ's soul. It has the fulness in perfection of administrative power towards and over the world -- twelve gates, for the gate was the place of judgment.

The varied displays of God's nature, under the figure of precious stones, which shone in creation (Ezek. 28), and in grace, in the high priest's breastplate (Ex. 28), here shine in glory. The city and its street is formed in divine righteousness, of which gold is always the fitting emblem, and holiness of truth, "like

18. {The reader must keep in mind that the city, new Jerusalem, is really the bride (Rev. 21:9, 10). The city is symbolic, not literal.}

unto clear glass." The Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb are its temple and its light. The nations (spared through the judgments on earth) walk in the light of the celestial city, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor *to* it (never "into" it); they own that the heavenly kingdom now established, and the heavens themselves, are the source of blessing to the earth. "The Lord shall hear the heavens and they shall hear the earth"; and they own that "the heavens do rule" (Dan. 4:26).

No evil of man or Satan is there, and nothing enters in that defiles or makes a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. The river of God and the fruits of the tree of life are for the refreshing of the Lord's redeemed; no tree of *responsibility* is now there but *one* tree, which is the tree of life, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations of the world. The city is the vessel of grace to the world at that day -- grace characterizes *her*; as the *royal supremacy* of the restored earthly sanctuary, and city of *Jerusalem*, is ever preserved; for we read, "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish" (Isa. 60:12). Thus we find all that have been ruined and defiled by the first Adam, made good in the day of the kingdom, in and under Christ. The three great systems set up by God, and destroyed by men, established in glory.

The *Jew* in earthly supremacy and blessing;

the *Gentile* subordinately blessed around, governed in righteousness, and

the *Church of God* in the heavenly glory; the center of the administration of kingdom, and the vessel of grace to the world.

The river of God (Psa. 66). His stream of blessing, ever full of water, has ever been dried up in its outflow in this world, not as to its source, but as from time to time God formed a channel for the blessing in and towards the world; it has been corrupted, and He has been forced to remove the pure stream to other courses, ever intent upon the blessing of man; the channel having proved itself unworthy of the stream. In Eden it took its rise in the beginning when the dispensation proposed was one of earthly good, and it divided into four heads, to bear to the world the riches of such a dispensation. Soon, however, as we know, its channels became corrupted, and there was found no place for such blessing to flow, and so the sources were stopped, and channels obliterated by the waters of the flood.

Again, when Israel was redeemed, and God amongst them, the river took its rise in the rock which was smitten for His people in the wilderness. "They drank of that spiritual rock which followed them," during the forty years' journey, till they were safe in the land. Then, in the daily and yearly round of feasts and gatherings to Jehovah, the people was refreshed with the waters of Shiloah, which ran softly amongst them -- of the river "the streams whereof made glad the city of God" (Psa. 46).

But again the channels were corrupted, so that when He, who was their source, came to visit that one family, whom He knew of all the families of the earth (Amos 3:2), and whom He had chosen to form the objects of the outflow of the river of God's blessing, and to be its channel to the Gentile world. He had found it had so corrupted itself that He could not own it or permit it any longer to defile the stream; and so, again, the source was transferred to another place, and the world became *fully*, what it was to Him and what it has been ever since to His people, "a dry

and thirsty land where no water is" (Psa. 63).

The source was now to be the glorified Son of man in heaven; and the dispensation one of spiritual blessings in the heavenlies; and the channel of the blessing, His members on earth. We read in John 7:39, where the Lord passed by and could not own the channel (the yearly returning feasts), which had rendered itself unfit for the river of God's blessing:

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But 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.)

Faithless as His people have proved themselves in this dispensation, and much hindered as the stream has become, still it flows on and will never be exhausted or dried up. "He (the Holy Ghost) shall abide with you for ever."

But the day is coming when it will be not only a dispensation of *spiritual* blessings in *heavenly* places, but one of *earthly* good as well. When there will be one glory of the *celestial* and another of the *terrestrial*. When all things both which are *in heaven* and which are on *earth*, will be gathered together in Christ. When the Lord "will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth -- and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel" (Hos. 2:21, 22), the seed of God. The river of God's blessing will then have a twofold source in heavenly and earthly blessing, its source in the *heavenly glory* will be the *heavenly* {new} Jerusalem -- the Church of the glorified:

The pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the midst thereof (Rev. 22:1).

And the source of the *earthly glory* will be the sanctuary of the *earthly Zion*, when living waters shall flow out of the restored Jerusalem, for the blessing of the Gentiles and of the millennial earth.

Behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward," &c. (Ezek. 47; cp. also Joel 3:15; Zech. 14:8).

And Christ will be true Melehisedec, a Priest on His throne; the link between the heavenly and the earthly glory. The true feast of Tabernacles will be kept both by Israel and the Gentiles, after the harvest or ingathering, and the vintage of judgment, at the end of this age.

And it shall come to pass that every one that is left of all the nations which come up against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.

And the nations that refuse to go up, will not partake of the refreshing streams of the river of God. The Lord hasten the day in His time!

## Chapter 11:

### *Satan Loosed For a Little Season, The Great White Throne, And The Eternal State: and Conclusion*

After the close of the kingdom, before Christ delivers up the kingdom to the Father, and God is "all in all" {1 Cor. 15:28} we find another testimony of man's ruin. Having beheld Christ, and having been set in the midst of, and surrounded by the blessings of the kingdom, still we learn that man is ever the same. We had the testimony of Scripture that all His people are righteous at the commencement of the kingdom. The inhabitants of the world had learned righteousness by the judgments which introduced it but we have not the same testimony as to those who shall be born during its continuance. And the closing scene proves to us the fact that grace, and being born again, are as necessary then, as now, that man may be brought to God. It is clear from this, that there will be a declension during the continuance of the kingdom.

After the close of the kingdom, Satan is loosed for a little season, and goes out to the four corners of the earth (he never returns to the heavenlies), and the nations are thus tested for the last time, and the unrenewed fall, in numbers as the sand of the sea, into his hands. They who are thus deceived, go up against the camp of the saints on earth, and are destroyed by the fire of God's judgment -- thus separated by judgment from the faithful. Satan is then cast into the lake of fire, where the beast and the false prophet had been, after which the great white throne is set; and the earth and the heavens flee away from the presence of Him that sat thereon; and no place is found for them. The wicked dead stand before the throne, and are judged by Him who judges the secrets of men (Rom. 2), and who knows them! This judgment is according to their works and their responsibility, marked by "the books." The book of life was opened, but none of them are found therein, and they are cast into the lake of fire. Death, the last enemy, is destroyed, and Hades, the place of departed spirits, exists no longer; its whole contents were cast into the lake of fire {Rev. 20}.

Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power For he must reign till he hath put all enemies 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 [Father, Son, and Holy Ghost] may be all in all (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

Then follows the eternal state, the new heavens and the new earth "wherein *righteousness dwells*" (2 Pet. 3:13), not that over which "a king shall reign in *righteousness*," but where *righteousness dwells*, for all things had been brought into full

order and subjection, so that blessing unhindered flows forth from God. God dwells amongst men! Yet in this state of supreme blessedness we find that the Bride, the New Jerusalem, has her own peculiar place, she is the tabernacle of God among men! {Rev. 21:3}. He wipes away all tears, and there is no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain; for former things, connected with sin, have passed away. The overcomer has God for his God, and he shall be his Son. And yet -- solemn thought for those who would oppose the truth -- even in this eternal state, when the Lamb's mediatorial kingdom has passed away, and God is all in all, eternal punishment goes on, side by side, through the endless ages of eternity, with eternal blessing! Unto God "be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen!"

NOTE. We may have observed that Rev. 20 and part of Rev. 21:1-8 is succeeded by the description of the millennial state of the Bride, the Lamb's wife. Rev. 20 begins with the binding of Satan, at the commencement of the kingdom, and goes on through the time of the kingdom, or 1000 years, to v. 7, then it takes up the interval of Satan's last acts of wickedness when loosed for the little season; and finally the judgment of the dead, and destruction of the last enemy, death, before Christ gives up His kingdom to God (to Him who is Father), and God is all in all; so that Rev. 21:1-8 follow on in their *consecutive* order into the eternal state, as the verses we have quoted in 1 Cor. 15. Then the Spirit turns to describe that which had not before been given, the millennial glories of the Heavenly {new} Jerusalem, during the days of the kingdom, as is evident from vv. 10, 24, 26, and vv. 1 and 2 of ch. 21. The division into chapters and verses has thus disconnected the true order.

## Chapter 12:

### Conclusion

We have now passed along this outline of the great dispensational dealings of God in their larger features, as through grace we have been enabled: from the fall of man, out to the eternal state.

We read in Psa. 25,

The meek will he guide in judgment, the *meek* will he teach his way . . . The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant.

And, in His dealings with His servants, we find that He acts according to the principles of His word: for we read in Num. 12,

Now the man Moses was very *meek* above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.

And in Psa. 103:7,

He made known his ways to Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.

It is to those who are morally near Him He deals thus, giving them capacity to understand Him, and the communications of His mind. This is solemn. For while Israel could only know Him in His overt acts, they were morally far from Him, and consequently unfit to hear the communications of His counsels and ways. This is ever so: there is a moral fitness in one Christian -- a practical obedience to His mind and will as revealed -- a desire to bow to Him, and respond to the way He has revealed Himself, that He waits upon, and guides and instructs; while another is dull of hearing, and learns but little, and even that little has not its freshness and power in his soul.

The natural man [on the other hand,] 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 Cor. 2:14).

If any man will [desire] to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself (John 7:17).

-- is a simple principle, and yet how much it involves! God does not reveal His truth, to be a mere sum of knowledge learned, for the gratification of the mind. What He teaches, with so much condescension, is imperfectly learned, if learned at all, when the conscience has been unexercised, and the claims of His truth have not found a response in the soul, so as to judge the darkness, and set the feet to walk in, and rise, and live in the power of it. And besides this, divine truth is so contrary to every thought of men, even of the best of men, that even the soul which enjoys the revelation of it, is prone to sink into human thoughts, arid human use of tire truth.

Our meditations have led us, we trust, through grace, into some understanding of the greater features of the dispensational dealings of God, than which nothing is more important: without an understanding of dispensational truth, the soul is unsteady in its testimony. If laboring for the Lord, it makes the need of souls the paramount object; and the claims of the Lord upon the souls of His people are too often forgotten. The "alabaster box of ointment" should be joined with "this gospel," that is, the publication of the activities of the grace of God by the Gospel, meeting the soul's need, united to such teaching as would lead the soul, through grace, thus satisfied and set at rest, into such an apprehension of the person of Christ Himself, and such an appreciation of Him, that the knowledge of His mind and will is sought; and the heart learns to bow to His claims, and to walk in the path of intelligent obedience, which His eye would mark out, and His written word direct, so that it may please God (1 Thess. 4:1).

I am bold to say that without a knowledge of dispensational truth, this is quite impossible: doubtless there may be, and there is piety amongst many; but piety, while it meets with a certain amount of respect, even from the man of the world, whose heart is not seared, is not "the truth of God." It is one thing to be pious, another to walk in the truth. The soul that has been established in dispensational truth, and that has ascertained the ways of God during the various dispensations (and even when the testimony entrusted to men in each dispensation has been corrupted and destroyed), learns how to respond to God's way; how to walk before Him in accordance with His mind and will; even when the dispensation has fallen into ruins.

Surely one judges that the path marked out in one dispensation, would be unsuited for another; and judges, too, with spiritual discernment, that a path right in the *beginning* of a dispensation, necessarily changes its character when the dispensation has fallen into ruins through the unfaithfulness of those to whom the testimony is entrusted; yet all the while recognizing that divine principles *never* have changed, even while the vessel proved that it could not hold the treasure committed to it.

The Christian, thus instructed, sees that which answered to God in a divine way, the fruit of the Spirit's teaching, in the soul of a godly Jew under law, when his nation, as an elect earthly one, was owned of God, necessarily altering its character when his nation became corrupted; while the divine counsels altered not. And still he is able to see the more vividly that the pathway of a godly Jew, in an earthly nation,

under the law, cannot be that of a Christian in a dispensation where his calling is one out of and *above* the world altogether; and, moreover, that the experience of a godly Israelite in *his* dispensation is not such, in its best state, as is suited to a member of the body of a glorified Christ. That to be satisfied with such, is to ignore the position of the Christian *as such*, and to return to Judaism in principle. To walk as those of whom it is said, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the *law* of the Lord" (Psa. 119:1), is right and blessed in its time while to "walk in the *light*, as he is in the light" {1 John 1:7}, is quite another, and far beyond it; it is to realize that the dispensation with an unrent veil has ceased, that the things permitted in such a dispensation have passed away, and that the Christian is now within the veil, in the full light of God's presence, set there to walk as becomes such a position, and to judge everything in his ways inconsistent with the place, in the liberty of grace. The whole range of his responsibility flows from his position and from the relationship in which he is placed.

The Christian, so instructed, is enabled to pass through the world, with the truth girding his loins, and with a moral apprehension as to the worth of all its vaunted progress in civilization, religion, politics, and everything around: and although his testimony may be, as it were, an individual one, "clothed in sackcloth," still his faith is confirmed by the very principles around him which tend in an opposite direction, -- and he feels that through grace "none of these things move" him; and that the day is coming when his testimony, if in accordance with the mind of the Lord, will be owned, and that then he will see to the full the use the Lord has had for him as a witness, when to outward appearance he was, as Jeremiah, "shut up" -- and when he "sat alone," the word of the Lord the joy and rejoicing of his heart.

Let me ask the Christian soul a question. Are the claims of the Lord Jesus on you of deep and paramount importance in your eyes? In proposing such a question, I do so to those who profess to love and own Christ as their Lord; and whose consciences have been for ever set at rest; and introduced by faith into the full cloudless presence of God, in Christ -- to those who see every question that could hinder their perfect peace, answered by the atoning blood -- past, present, future -- all secure. Are the claims of Christ of sufficient weight, that you would seek to know His mind and will, even if it were to break up the most cherished associations of your heart? And, knowing His mind and will, are you seeking for grace to walk therein? I feel this a deeply solemn question in the present day, a day of the highest sounding profession, without conscience or life toward God.

Religion is putting forth her fairest and most seductive forms; seeking the aid of science, and poetry, and art, to deck herself withal; holding in her band a cup of prostitution, which stupefies the senses, lulls to sleep the conscience. And even where she is not putting on the outward adorning, she practices all sorts of deceits. Those whose senses would not be ensnared by the outward adorning, are ensnared by the specious arguments of expediency, and a round of evangelical activity -- works perfect it may be, before men, but not perfect before God (Rev. 3:2). She is suiting herself more and more to

natural, unrenewed man, and under the name of Christ, she turns away her eye from Christ, and boasts that she is "rich and increased with goods and has need of nothing" (Rev. 3:17). "The form of godliness, without the power," surely is the condition of things around us. The Lordship of Christ is ignored. The presence of the Holy Ghost either denied in words; or, what is worse, professed to be acknowledged in words, and completely denied in practice. This is truly solemn. The very vital central truth of Christianity, and of the Church of God -- that which marks off, in a clear line this interval, from all that went before or which follows, denied; and the whole merged into a heap of confusion, out of which souls can find no clue; and are "ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

"The foundation of God stands sure," whatever man's unfaithfulness has been. God's principles do not alter; and the responsibility of His people never alters. While it is their blessing to know that "the Lord knoweth them that are his," still their responsibility is,

Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19, &c.).

The Christian is to purge himself from the vessels unto dishonor, that he may be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for his master's use, prepared unto every good work. He must not, as we have before touched upon, rest satisfied with the corruption -- nor need he try to repair the injury that has been done; that will never be repaired till the professing mass meets its end in judgment. His path is a plain one. "Depart from iniquity." "Purge himself from the vessels to dishonor." And now comes his personal walk of holiness. He is to "flee also youthful lusts"; and then his walk, in the company of others, to "follow righteousness, faith, peace, charity *with them* that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." This is the principle -- a plain one -- separation *from* evil, and *to* God in the midst of it.

May He, who alone can do so, give subjection to His word to those whose eyes fall upon these pages, and a growing separation and deepening subjection, as they go on their pathway, to those who by grace have learned in their measure to walk therein!

He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; [and] if a man love me, he will keep my words (John 14).

This is characteristic of Christianity. It is intelligent obedience rendered to a *person*, not to a *law*. The time was when the faithful and undefiled in the way were blessed, who walked in the law of the Lord (Psa. 119:1, &c.). Then God was unrevealed. He was hidden behind the veil and the dispensational barriers of the age. He was hidden, and had sent forth His claims to men in the law; and although it had said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and with all thy strength," still it did not reveal a *person* to attract the heart. That time has passed away. Christ has come; and "by him we believe in God" (1 Pet. 1), and to Him we owe the love of our hearts and the obedience of our lives -- one whose love constrains us to live henceforth, "not unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:15). It is a *person* we are thus called upon to live for

and to love; one who has sanctified us unto obedience such as that which characterized His own (1 Pet. 1:2), surrendering self, life, all, for those who hated Him. The law proposed that a man should love his neighbor as *himself*. The obedience of Christ was the *surrendering of self* altogether for His enemies.

The Lord Jesus appealed in His day to the Jews (Luke 12:54, 57) to discern “the signs of the times,” even by the force of natural conscience, and to judge what was right. His word should find an echo in many a Christian heart now, that has sunk down to sleep amongst the dead (Eph. 5:1). Everything around us in the present day, religion, the state of men, nations, powers, kingdoms, are each gradually and perceptibly taking their places for the closing scenes of judgment. The Christian, instructed beforehand of these things, can watch them calmly and quietly, awaiting the coming of his Lord. He knows his calling is a heavenly one {Heb. 3:1} where judgments cannot come. The coming of the Lord, the Son of God, for his people, is the one boundary, or horizon, of his hopes. His actions, and service, and plans, and sojourn here, are arranged in view of that event; and if called to serve his Lord and Master here, he does so in the sense that he serves as in the last days. May a deepening sense of this fill the souls of His people; and may this their proper hope, ere the day dawn be formed in their hearts, and serve to direct their ways!

It has been said that the Old Testament scriptures end with the hope of the coming of the Sun of Righteousness, and the New with that of the “Morning Star.” Sweetly beautiful is this. The godly remnant of Israel who feared the Lord and spake often one to another, &c. (Mal. 3), had that precious consolation before them -- that of the coming of the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings (Mal. 4). And we find them in Luke 2, the Simeons and Annas, and “all them that looked for redemption in Israel” (Luke 2:25, 38), rejoicing in the advent of the “Sun of Righteousness,” “the consolation of Israel.” But, alas, His beams fell coldly on the hearts of His nation; they had no heart for Him. Men were morally unfit to have God amongst them; and so He was obliged to hide His beams of blessing in the darkened scene that surrounded the cross, and to reserve the day of blessing till another season. Meanwhile, *our* calling was revealed, and our hope presented to us; not as the “Sun of Righteousness,” but as the Morning Star!”

The more we contemplate the fitness of this symbol of our hope, the more does its divine origin appear. It is the watcher during the long night who sees the morning star for a few moments, while the darkness is rolling itself away from off the face of the earth, and before the beams of the sun enliven the earth with their rays. And so with the Christian’s hope; he watches during the moral darkness of the world, till the dawn; and just as the darkness is deepest and is about to roll itself away before the beams of the advent of the “Sun of Righteousness,” his hope is rewarded in seeing the “Morning Star” (Rev. 22:16), in His earliest brightness, coming to take His people to Himself, that they may shine forth with Him as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt. 13:43), when He reveals Himself to the Millennial earth as the Sun of Righteousness!

May He, who alone can give blessing, abundantly bless the consideration of these things, and give that hope its own sanctifying power in our souls!

I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify these things in the churches; I am the root and offspring of David, the bright and the Morning Star . . . He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus . . . Amen.

# *A Chosen Vessel*

*“The Lord said unto him, Go thy way:  
for he is a chosen vessel unto me” (Acts 9:15).*

London: G. Morrish

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## Chapter 1

### *The Vessel in The Potter: The Potter in The Vessel*

**Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it (Jer. 18:3, 4).**

**Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? (Rom. 9: 21).**

It is of immense interest and profoundly instructive to us, to trace the history of souls in the word of God. Not only does this interest grow upon us in apprehending His dealings with "men of like passions as ourselves"; but in such a study we learn what God Himself is, in His unspeakable goodness and mercy: One who never withdraws His gifts, nor repents of His calling; and who never falters in His purpose until it is accomplished fully; in vessels "which he afore hath prepared unto glory, even us whom he hath called; not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles."

In all this work His sovereignty shines conspicuously. Nay, He would have us accord to Him His own place in this; who "works all things after the counsel of his own will." He has a right to do as He pleases, which man has not. Man would seek to bind God to certain laws of his own, and so fetter His sovereign will, as to refuse that He should act outside them, but once we know that all our blessing hinges upon His absoluteness--and that this absoluteness is pleased to display itself in mercy, in which He delights -- all is changed. In fact, beloved reader, we are shut up to this in God. We have no more right to *claim* our soul's salvation from Him, than we have power to change places with Him on His throne of glory! We may have grace given to *surrender* this supposed claim; to put ourselves before Him, conscious that He has a right to do just as it pleases Him. We may find, too -- nay, we shall find, that our very title to mercy is the absence of any! and that rest of soul is found in His *nature* itself -- which, had He not been pleased to reveal to us, in Christ, we never even would have known.

He was pleased to create a world, to set it revolving in space amongst the countless orbs which shine in the heavens around us. He was pleased to allow sin and death to enter that fair scene. Who can reply? He was pleased to choose and to call a people out of it, and to permit them to destroy themselves, while He, with long suffering, bore with them "till there was no remedy." He was pleased to send His Son to endure the cross and bear His wrath. Who was before Him in all this? Not one! In all things He wrought He permitted; He ordered; and it is He who challenges the stubborn heart which would say "Why doth he yet find fault; for who hath resisted his will?" It is He who deigns to stoop to the reply, "Nay, but

O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?" (Rom. 9:20).

Have we ever stood in the potter's house, and beheld him, as he wrought on the wheels? The workman takes the lump of clay; he presses it to the wheel; the wheel revolves before his eye. Where now, (let me ask) is the vessel? It is in the mind of the potter, before it is formed: the design is there. His fingers shape the mass before him: gradually it grows up before his eye: gradually the thought in his mind is transferred to the clay, and it rises up before him, and the thoughts hitherto unexpressed, grow into the vessel which his fingers mold.

He sees a flaw; an imperfection in the clay. Others, beholding, have not detected it, as with the artist's eye. He crushes the clay, under his hand into a shapeless mass again. And again his fingers mold and fashion it into his design. Again, and again defects appear. Again and again the clay is reduced to a shapeless mass, until at last it rises, in perfection of design before him; his eye surveys it with satisfaction and pride; and he removes it from the wheel to take its place with the choice things of the earth around.

Where now is the potter? Where was the vessel before he began? It was in the potter! Where now is the potter? He is in the vessel All that his mind designed and wrought is there seen. The vessel is fit for that which he had intended.

And this is the history of the soul. The clay is in the Potter's hand. His fingers fashion it, and it is marred; the clay needs more of His patient manipulation and skill. It is not yet smooth and even, nor pliable to His hand. He crushes it time after time. The perfect vessel stood before His mind and purpose ere His hand had taken the clay, and placed it on the wheel. But when all is done, He has transferred His thought with unerring skill to the clay; the Potter is now seen in His handiwork; and it is a vessel of mercy, which He afore has prepared for glory.

How important, as these crushings take place, is the need of the interpretation of these skillful workings of the hand of the Potter! How often are the lessons misunderstood; or not apprehended at all! In the history of souls in the Word these actions are seen; the results are reached. In them we read the

history of His dealings with our own souls, and the handiwork of God. We look then for the lines of beauty, resulting from His hand; we yield ourselves to the things which happen; we see the end of the Lord: we know how it is that all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called

according to His purpose.

As a Potter (*Yatsar*) the Lord God took of the dust of the ground, in the first creation; and fashioned it into a man; and then “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” But the vessel was marred. Again the divine Potter takes of the same lump, and puts forth afresh His skill, and forms a vessel of mercy, for eternal glory: a new creation in “Christ.”

## Chapter 2:

### *The End of Man's History*

“Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?”

There was but one man on earth, (once a child of Adam) who could say, “Be ye followers together of me” (Phil. 3:17); and this without any qualifying word. This man was the apostle of the Gentiles -- Saul of Tarsus; afterwards called Paul. In this he does not speak to us as an apostle, armed with the power and authority of Christ; but as a Christian-the leader or representative man, of the whole profession of Christianity; than whom none knew better when to assert and to prove his apostolic office, nor better how and when to lay it aside. He lays it aside here in this remarkable expression, as well as in the epistle generally, in which it is found.

There are other passages where he uses language apparently of like significance, but to which he adds some qualifying words: “Be ye followers of me, as I am also of Christ”<sup>19</sup> (1 Cor. 11:1, &c.). But the difference is very great, even without entering on the meaning of the words in the original tongue. In *this*, he is inculcating the *surrender* of all things for another's wealth: this Christ ever did, and in this he followed Him. But in *that* (Phil. 3:7-14) he runs the Christian race for the goal, casting all behind his back, and looking to “win Christ, and be found in him,” to be like Him in full conformity! He runs to *attain* all, at the end. This Christ never did. He surrendered all indeed; but never ran to attain, for He was always *Himself*-- whether here or on high.

I need not dwell on the fact, which is of course clear; that whether asserting his apostolate, or laying it aside, his writings have each and all the same authority, as the word of God. These fine and touching distinctions will only be the more valued, when apprehended by the spiritual mind.

Let us look then upon him as a Christian; a heavenly man; a vessel of mercy; a “chosen vessel unto me”; as the representative, or typical man, of the whole scheme of Christianity; a vessel filled with the Spirit, who can say, “Be ye

followers together of me, and mark them which walk, so as ye have us for a type” (τύπος).

First of all, let us see the moment, in the history of the world, when the “chosen vessel” was called. This imparts great significance to the manner and method of his call; as well as to the state of mankind at that moment, out of which he is separated to Christ.

We will refer first to the parable of the fig tree, planted in the vineyard -- used by the Lord Jesus in Luke 13. The hour of Israel's judgment was fast approaching; yet their eyes were such as “see not.” They had made their Lord their “adversary” (Matt. 5:55; Luke 12:58) in rejecting Him, and He counsels them, if even so, to agree with their adversary “quickly, as thou art in the way,” lest when the end came the adversary would deliver them to the judge, and the judge to the officer, -- the officer to the prison; from which there was no escape till the last mite was paid. Talking of judgment thus, some mentioned a *partial* one which had fallen on those Galileans who had been slain by Pilate. They spake of it as of the ordinary news of the day, and with the not uncommon thought, that a special visitation of such a kind from God's hand, only marked those upon whom it fell, as deserving it beyond their fellows. They deemed that such was the sign of God's outwardly and manifestly governing the world, so that they could approve or understand. The Lord at once applies this to the conscience of all around; as also the case of the eighteen persons on whom the tower of Siloam fell; saying that judgment would now be universal, and not *partial*, and that unless they repented, they would *all* likewise perish, not merely those of their brethren whom they were bringing up for His judgment.

He then speaks the parable of the fig-tree, planted in the vineyard (Ch. 13:6-9). This was a picture of what was passing around at the moment, and of its end. For three years the Lord had come, in His ministry, seeking fruit from His fig-tree -- and finding none, He saith to the dresser of the vineyard, “Behold

19. This verse belongs more correctly to the close of ch. 10 and of the line of truth there spoken.

these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none; cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" Here was the sentence in righteousness. The fig tree was not only fruitless, but mischievous, "a cumberer of the ground." But grace said, "Let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." This extra period of trial was the fresh ministry of the Holy Ghost sent down at Pentecost; and ended with the martyrdom of Stephen, when they finally refused Christ in glory. This closed the history of Israel, as of man under the dealings of God.

This extra year of grace was marked by every sign and pleading of the Lord with His people, until refused. When we open the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1), we find the Lord Jesus in resurrection amongst His disciples. Their hearts still lingered over the hopes of Israel-uncertain as to the end. "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be my witnesses, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in the uttermost parts of the earth."

In the enactment of the laws of a country-when a statute becomes obsolete -- the circumstances having changed under which it was given-the legislature repeals the old law, and then enacts a new one adapted to the fresh condition of things.

When the Lord had sent out the twelve to preach the kingdom of heaven to Israel (Matt. 10), the mission was confined and narrow. He was "a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers" (Rom. 15:8). All the promises to Israel were fulfilled in Himself. Their mission was "Go not into the way of the *Gentiles*,"-there was yet no word for them. "And into any city of the *Samaritans* enter ye not." This mongrel race, half heathen, half Jew, had no promises from God any more than the Gentiles. But," said the Lord, "Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of *Israel*." They were the objects of this narrow, but necessary and preliminary mission. And yet it did not even embrace all Israel, "For they are not all Israel, who are of Israel" (Rom. 9:6). Nay, "Into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire *who in it is worthy*!" Narrowed up thus, was this mission, to the worthy ones -- the godly remnant of the people. But the nation having refused Jesus, and His atoning work having been accomplished on that cross, where His own people had placed Him by Gentile hands, all was now over on the ground of promises to Israel.

But Christ had risen; triumphant over all His foes. The boundless grace of God was set free to bless all men in righteousness through His work on the cross. The old enactment of Matt. 10 must now be changed. The sphere was too narrow for this grace to flow out; and as His footfall grew lighter, as it were, as He neared the top of Olivet, He turns round to a lost and ruined world of sinners -- giving His disciples in the breadth of His heart, their new and fresh enactment. They were to begin at Jerusalem, where faith was dead: they were to carry the mission onwards to Samaria, where faith was corrupted for centuries; and to the uttermost parts of the earth, where there was no faith at all! And the grand answer to every state of man would be found in a *risen Christ*, of whom they were witnesses.

May we not say that these three concentric circles give us

the key to the Acts of the Apostles, in the twenty-seven chapters which follow?

he mission began at Jerusalem (Acts 2-7);

it went out to Samaria (Acts 8),

and to the uttermost parts of the earth, in principle, as to the whole creation, with Paul, in the chapters which follow, to the end (cf. Col. 1:23).

These were His last words on earth His farewell words. "When he had spoken these things while they beheld he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly (*ἀτενίζω*) toward heaven, as he went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:9-11). The special year of grace was to be ministered to the fig-tree: the Lord would not therefore yet take them definitely out of their Jewish hopes. These "men of Galilee" have their eyes diverted from the heavens towards which they were gazing. They were to keep their eyes downwards on the earth: Jesus would "so" come again to them; outside the cloud He would be seen; and His feet would stand upon the mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4), from which He had just ascended in their sight. This would be His coming to Israel, with the ensigns of the kingdom, and earthly glory.

They could not yet see (by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven) the inside of the cloud, which Stephen saw, when, filled with the Spirit, he saw the heavens opened, as he steadfastly gazed (*ἀτενίζω*) into it. All then was over finally, and instead of angels diverting his eyes *from* the heavens, as in Acts 1, the Holy Ghost directs his eyes to heaven, as the sphere to which he now belongs, and Jesus, first sustaining him in the hands of his murderers, receives his spirit, and all closes with man on that ground for ever.

In Paul we will see further still, how he takes his origin from the glory of God, now seen in the face of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven in Acts 2. The witnesses -- in Acts 3 -- Peter and John, go up to the temple "at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour." A certain man was daily carried, and laid at the "Beautiful" gate: a cripple from his birth; who begged his bread. This was the picture of Israel. "Beautiful" as was the spot where they were, they were like this lame beggar, and had never really walked; and were bereft too, of Israel's blessings of "basket and store," of "silver and gold." Their history now, as under probation had closed, for the man was "above forty years old" (Acts 4:22). Once there lay a paralytic at the pool of Bethesda (John 5) for thirty and eight years (the time of Israel's wandering in the wilderness, until the brazen serpent was uplifted for them, in Num. 21) -- their history was not then fully told, as in John 5. But now all had closed (Acts 3) as far as they were concerned. Forty years spoke of their moral end as a people under the old state of things.

But that "ninth hour" had witnessed another prayer, from the heart of Jesus on the cross, and darkness had covered the whole land, from the sixth to the ninth hour (Luke 23:44) -- the "hour of prayer" and of the "evening sacrifice" too (Dan. 9). At that hour Jesus had committed His spirit to His Father, and the veil

was rent from the top to the bottom. Judaism was over; God was fully revealed; man's sin had come to its fullest height, as he there stood face to face with God. But the sins of His people were borne at that moment, and the throne of righteousness eternally satisfied.

"Silver and gold have I none," said Peter, "But such as I have I give thee; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." And immediately the "lame man leaped as an hart," and he entered the temple "walking and leaping and praising God." God was ready, through Jesus, to do this for the whole nation of Israel, had they then received His Son, and bowed in faith to His name.

Peter now addresses Israel (Acts 3:12-26), offering them, on their repentance thus, that the Christ they had refused would return from the heavens, and that the times of restitution of all things of which the prophets had spoken, would come, and the nation would be fully blest. The answer to this is in the following chapters. In Acts 4, they put the two witnesses in prison -- and in Acts 5, the whole twelve are also put there. Then in Acts 6, 7, Stephen, the last great witness, summed up their history as the rejecters of every deliverer God had ever sent. Joseph, they had sold into Egypt; Moses, they had asked "Who made thee a ruler and a judge?" They had slain the Just One, as their prophets had foretold; and now they resisted the Spirit of God! A broken law; stoned prophets; a slain Christ; and a resisted Spirit closed the tale. As they "stopped their ears and ran upon him," they were like the "deaf adder, that stoppeth her ear" at the voice of "charmners, charming never so wisely" (Psa. 58). Stephen's spirit passes away to Christ; and Christ, standing and ready to return, now sits down at God's right hand, waiting till His enemies are made His footstool (Heb. 10).

Saul of Tarsus, then a young man, was present at Stephen's death, and "kept the raiment of them that slew him."

The Sanhedrim was becoming effete and old. Its energy, hitherto fiercely waged in vain against the cross, was growing feeble, when this young man came upon the scene. One of great learning and unspotted life -- and probably of the highest caste amongst the Jews, excelling all amongst his people in the religion of the Pharisee; with perhaps the finest energy given to man -- he had been welcomed by the great Sanhedrim of Israel, and entrusted with authority to extirpate the religion of the Nazarene! With a zeal for the God of his fathers beyond all others at that day, he stood by when the final stroke was put to the rejection of Jesus, in the stoning of the proto-martyr Stephen. And lest the murderers should be impeded, by their long Eastern garments, he "kept the raiment of them that slew him," and "consented unto his death."

The whole Christian assembly was then broken up in Jerusalem, and scattered everywhere, "except the apostles." Saul must now carry out his commission elsewhere, and Damascus was to have been the next scene of his zeal.

But before I refer to this, I would note the touching grace which shines out in the eighth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

During the past history of Israel, God had sought to find a response in their heart, under the culture of His hand; whether, as under the law, or the prophets, the Baptist, or Christ. All had

failed: there was no answer in their heart either to the thunderings of the law, or to the pleadings of the prophetic ministry; nor had the grace of Christ drawn forth other than the cry at the end, "Away with him; crucify him." The final witness was seen in the church, formed at Pentecost, and the voice of the Holy Ghost proclaimed the "wonderful works of God." This followed, as we have seen, till the seventh chapter of the Acts closed the trial that sought for good out of Israel's heart, or for an answer there to perfect goodness in the heart of God. Now the turning-point had come; and it would be no more sought to *produce* good from man's heart; but to *put* good into it by a new ministry inaugurated in the conversion of Saul. But there was still something to be met which God would not pass over, and this we find in chapter eight of the Acts of the Apostles.

A child of Ham had traveled a toilsome journey across the deserts of Africa, from the abodes of Cush, and with a burdened heart, to "Judah, where God was known" (Psa. 76:1, 2). He had heard of the God of Israel, and of the Holy city where He might be found. Up to this the stream of mercy from God's throne had been poured forth upon Jerusalem. But Jerusalem, refusing the "sure mercies of David," had diverted the stream. Still, it had not ceased to flow, though its course was changed. It turns its course now to unclean Samaria, and onward still, till it reached the deserts beyond. There, this Ethiopian was seen, returning to his own land, with his soul unsatisfied, for Jerusalem's day had passed; she "knew not the day of her visitation." But God is "a rewarder of those that diligently seek him," and this seeking heart shall not have sought in vain. Philip draws near at the Spirit's bidding, and hears this man read the prophet Esaias. Neither wealth nor learning, nor worldly place, had given him the riches he was about to find-treasured in the book which he had brought away from Jerusalem. Philip began at the same scripture which he read, and "evangelized to him Jesus." The Person who alone could satisfy his soul was found, and he goes "on his way rejoicing." Ethiopia had not stretched out her hand in vain to God! (Psa. 68). God did not change His governmental ways in placing the race of Ham under degradation (Gen. 9), in the blackened skin of the negro race: but while leaving all questions of government as they were, He makes -- not the face -- but the heart and conscience of the negro as white as snow, by the blood of the Lamb!

I read this chapter, in this light, as a parenthesis: thrown in between the first notice of Saul at Stephen's death, and his journey to Damascus (Acts 9). It is, beloved, as if God would say, even when this solemn scene of martyrdom had closed for ever the ground on which He would have dealt with Israel; and when He was about to "cast them out of his lap," and to inaugurate a new order of things -- as if He would say, if there be a seeking soul in the wide earth, even the child of a cursed race, that soul shall not seek Me in vain. I am a rewarder of all that diligently seek Me.

But when I come to Saul I find the other side, illustrative of this new departure from the old ways; and in him is exemplified the word -- afterwards written by his own pen -- "I am found of them that sought me not" (Rom. 10).

## Chapter 3:

### *The Vessel Called: The New Man*

**“He is a chosen vessel unto me” (Acts 9:15).**

We thus see the moment in the history of the people and of the world at which we have now arrived. All had closed up for ever in the way of grace presented to be received by Israel, and of Israel’s testing to prove what man is.

We must now see more than this in Saul, who comes in, not as a member of the chosen race, the seed of Abraham, but on the common ground of man, “dead in trespasses and sins.” Therefore in him we find embodied the sin of man as a race, in all its varied answers to the dealings of God.

We may possibly know that after God had tested man in paradise, and man had fallen, He tested him out of paradise as a sinner (whose back had been turned against God) for four thousand years. These trials, in broad lines, were first, by his *conscience* which he received when he fell, and he became lawless and unclean. Then under the *Law* -- and he became a law-breaker; then by the ministry of Jesus in *grace*, whom he had crucified and slain; and lastly, by the *Spirit* of God sent down from heaven -- whom he resisted. This was, with many details, the history of the probation of man.

If we now turn to a passage in 1 Tim. 1:15, 16, we read,

This is a faithful [or trustworthy] saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth the whole [τὴν πᾶσαν μακροθυμίαν] long-suffering for a pattern [or delineation] of them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

Here he plainly occupies the first place, as “chief of sinners”; as the man, too, in whom the whole long-suffering of God was displayed; and as the pattern for all who should follow in the faith of Christ. This is worthy of our marked attention. Mark well the expression -- “the whole long-suffering!” This embraces that great period between the fall of man-his departure from God at the first, when driven out of paradise -- until that long-suffering absolutely closed in the rejected ministry of the Holy Ghost (Acts 7).

God’s long-suffering since then is on other grounds (2 Pet. 3:9, 15). He has not counseled (μη βουλόμενος) that any should perish; but that all should come (or be afforded a place) for repentance. And again, “The long-suffering of our Lord is salvation.”

But, in Saul, outwardly spotless in life, we behold the man who could say:

1st, “I have lived in all good conscience unto this day.”

2nd, “Touching the righteousness in the law [I am] blameless.”

3rd, “I verily thought I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.” And,

4th, when the martyr Stephen charged the Jews, saying, “Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did, so do ye,” Saul was there, and Stephen’s murderers placed their clothes at his feet, while he, consenting unto Stephen’s death, kept the garments of them that slew him!

Here then we see the embodiment of the whole long-suffering of God in a man, immaculate, outwardly, as he was. Yet, while, with conscience inviolate, and the law’s righteousness fulfilled, as far as he himself knew -- he persecuted Christ, and with murderous zeal, resisted the Spirit of God: yea, more, a man who could claim, by the Spirit of God, to be, in a superlative manner, the chief of sinners. Because, in his mighty energy, he had undertaken a task, never surpassed in purpose by another, to wipe out the name of the Nazarene from the earth, as a man wipes a dish and turns it upside down!

Armed with the powers of the Sanhedrim, such as they were, and breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord,” this “cumberer of the ground,” this fruitless Pharisee, doing evil on every hand, proceeds on his way to Damascus, and God’s hand laid hold of the axe, and with one stroke cut down the tree! It had cumbered the ground too long -- doing mischief to all around.

But now, let us, with retracing steps, examine the grounds of the attitude of Christ to him as presented in this scene.

His cross was “the judgment of the world:” man had placed Jesus there with wicked hands. It was the reply of his heart to the perfection of goodness in God. It was that in which “the thoughts of many hearts were revealed.” The heart of man was there; and the heart of God. The heart of Christ was there; and that of the poor convicted sinner; as well, too, as were the hearts of those who truly loved their Master; but who, when Satan’s power -- the power of darkness -- was over the minds of men, forsook Him and fled away.

But the moment Christ expired, the veil of the temple was rent in twain, as if God was waiting until that moment arrived, to shew that the judgment was so fully borne-that the distance between Him and a world of sinners was gone-that He could

now come forth and kiss the prodigal in righteousness; and impart new life to the tree which He had cut down, while yet it cumbered the ground. Three days afterwards the tomb where Jesus had lain was rent, to shew that He who had removed this distance was also gone. But now (Acts 9), He rends the heavens and comes forth, proclaiming afresh His true and God-given name of "Jesus" -- Jehovah the Savior: "I am Jesus," the Nazarene, the Savior of My people from their sins.

Saul, and those that were with him, were journeying onwards to Damascus, with letters to the synagogues, that if he found any of "the way" (τῆς ὁδοῦ) he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. At this time Christianity had no name. It had come into the world, but was not of it, nor of its ways. It was not Judaism with its ceremonies, instituted of God, though now corrupted by man. It was not heathenism, with its orgies of uncleanness and abomination. It was a strange and heavenly thing, governed by no principle that governed the world. And it had no name; but was termed "the way." Several times in the Acts do we find it so named.<sup>20</sup>

Of one heart and one soul, and with great grace upon all, there was, in the hearts of those who had been cast out of all on earth, a heavenly purpose, a courage and joy which was not of man. The martyr Stephen, when being crushed to death by the stones of the multitude, could kneel down, and with yearning of soul for his slayers, and without one thought but for their blessing, pray for them, and looking up steadfastly to heaven, commit his spirit to Christ and pass away. Let its disciples be scourged by the rods, and with their feet fast in the stocks, and their bleeding backs on the cold ground of the innermost prison--they would sing praises to the Lord at midnight, instead of murmuring at their lot. Others could count it all joy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus. What name then could be found for such a creed? There was none! And therefore it was called "the way." And indeed, we may add that it never got its name, till the mocking and witty Antiochians named the disciples "Christians" first, in their city. Called such in sarcasm by man, it was accepted by the Spirit of God from that day. Still, as yet it had no name; and Saul, with his company, bent upon its extermination, turned towards Damascus to find out any there that were of "the way."

In a moment all was changed. "At midday O King," said the apostle, long afterwards, "I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me, and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest" (Acts 26:13-15).

Here was the solemn end for his conscience, the terrible reply. Christ and Saul were face to face! Saul, in the full flush of energy, in enmity and violence against the Lord; and He, with the calm and touching reply of One whose very answer speaks of mercy. "I," and "Thou!" Personally, individually,

alone, and face to face, were Christ and this persecuting and injurious man: this "cumberer of the ground"; the dread devaster and waster of the church of God. "I am Jesus": His mission fulfilled on earth; and in the brightness of the glory above, only seeking such objects as Saul, to display the virtues of salvation! Speak, Saul; let thy voice be heard; the day has not come, when those who refuse to answer now will be "speechless!"

"And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" It is not now the answer of another who knew not his own heart yet -- "Lord, *I will* go with thee," &c. Nay, that was the will of man. It is rather, "Lord, what *wilt thou* have me to do?" This soul was converted to Christ. Here was the will of man broken; the will of God alone allowed. This was the instinct and out-speaking of obedience--the first characteristic of the new man. The old tree was cut down to its roots; new life was implanted, through the quickening voice of the Son of God -- and at once it struggles for action, even before his conscience was at rest: nay, even while his soul was in an agony.

Blind for days, with the glory of that light; blind to all around, that he may see only what was within his own heart, no food nor drink passed his lips for three days: his soul in anguish might say, "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord." All this was produced in one little moment, and now to be made good in his soul by a gospel, dating from the throne of God; a gospel by which is declared the Father's estimate of what His Son has done, when He had died, and risen, and ascended on high: the gospel of the glory of Christ. This son of Benjamin -- ravening "like a wolf," at midday-soon shall "divide the spoil."

"They led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus." There, in the isolation of repentance, in the house of Judas, in the street called "Straight," upon his knees in prayer--so real, that the Lord calls attention to it in that touching interview with Ananias, in the words "Behold, he prayeth" -- this was the second characteristic of the new man. Here was prayer -- the expression of dependence, at once heard: this, too, as well as the desire of obedience, before his soul had found rest, or peace with God.

But Ananias -- is he prepared for this full expression of mercy to such as Saul? Could he understand the new wine of this gospel of the glory, which could come forth and lay hold of such as he? Nay; he remonstrates, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints in Jerusalem, and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call upon thy name." He cannot but suppose that all was a mistake. Impossible that one like this could be thus laid hold of, as a suited vessel to display the fulness of mercy. Saul himself is astonished. Even he would plead, "Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee and when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him" (Acts 22:19).

The Lord's reply to Ananias was this: "Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me . . . for I will show him how great

20. Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:22.

things he must suffer for my name's sake." And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house, and putting his hand upon him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord has sent me, (Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest) that thou mightest look up, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

Here we have the gospel, carried by Ananias, from the Lord to Saul, removing the fear of God which had filled his soul; speaking peace to his troubled conscience; withdrawing with a tender hand the barbed arrow of conviction; and the Spirit of God is now received by Saul as a seal of this message of mercy. His eyes, which had hitherto been blinded to all but the darkness within, are now enabled to "look up" (ἀναβλέψης) to the source from which all had come -- to the very face of Jesus Christ in glory.

Ananias then receives him by baptism: "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God." This was a true conversion: the turning round of the whole man: the breaking of his will. The features, too, of the new life, the new man, are at once expressed: peace with God learned, and the Holy Ghost, sealing all home to his soul; and he could say, as more fully afterwards, "I believed, and therefore have I spoken," as his voice is heard preaching Christ in the synagogues of Damascus.

This was the call of this "chosen vessel unto me." Separated from the people of Israel, as well as from the Gentiles (Acts 26:6), by his conversion from the glory of God on high, where Christ was; he is sent forth to be "a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee "to make known on earth, as sent from Christ in glory, all that he knew of Him who was there. Heavenly in his birth, and heavenly in his testimony, he is the pattern of all who should believe on Jesus afterwards, even from that moment, to life everlasting. Every believer since that day, has taken his birthplace from that glory. The condition of Christ at any moment, determines that of all who belong to Him; whether as incarnate; or risen; or ascended to the glory of God. Such have to bear witness that they belong to that scene, and to Him who is there; they have to witness that they have been taken out from the people or from the Gentiles, as neither of one, nor of the other, but as heavenly men, who have, like him, to be shown what they must suffer for His name's sake, while living in, and passing through a world which rejected Him.

What a wondrous thought, that it is no good that God is seeking from man! He seeks rather those, who may be the more fitted to display that mercy in which He delights. To "make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us whom he hath called, not out of the Jews only, but also out of the Gentiles."

## Chapter 4:

### *The Vessel Set Free*

**"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2).**

The guilt of a lifetime is often learned by the convicted soul, in an incredibly short space of time. Drowning men, who have been recovered, have said, that like a flash of light, their lives stood out before them; and the forgotten sins, which years before have been committed, seemed in one moment to rise before them, in their terrible category. As the language of "Moses, the man of God," it would be: "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance" (Psa. 90). The dead conscience awakes, quickened under the convicting rays of God's light, and in a moment we stand before One who told us all things that ever we did.

When this is so, excuses are of no avail: no palliation is offered now. A man finds his soul laid bare, in the presence of infinite holiness. Hitherto, the conscience may have been

asleep, with no thought of guilt, unless the vague sense that all is not well. Or the conscience may hitherto have been uneasy, yet no defined sense of guilt be there. Doubtless, Saul of Tarsus quailed before the words, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." The natural conscience of man feels this pricking and goading at times: its zeal and ardor is forced and unreal. There are compunctions in that principle which sits in judgment upon men's actions (which conscience does), and though it be sought to silence its voice with freshened zeal, it never rests.

Were there no prickings of the natural conscience in Saul of Tarsus, when with upturned face, shining like an angel, the martyr Stephen gazed into the heavens, his body shattered by the stones of the multitude, and commended his spirit to Jesus? Were there none, when those pale faces of some who loved

their Lord and Master-to save themselves, and those they loved, from prison and from death -- blasphemed His name, compelled to it by this violent man? (Acts 26:11). Ah, "the way of transgressors is hard," and it was so with Saul. Yet, while natural conscience takes knowledge of these things., it does not follow that the soul is converted to God. Nay, rather, natural conscience drives a man away from Him. It drove Saul to greater excesses than before. It drove Adam away from God to hide under the trees of the garden; until his conscience felt the power of the word -- "Adam, where art thou?" Then it was awakened, and he stood before God a convicted sinner. It drove Saul to seek to hide his real state under the religious zeal which hitherto filled his soul.

But when the voice of Jesus reached him in his mad career, his guilt stood forth in its terrible intensity, as he was brought to bay. And when he was allowed to read his own soul's guilt in the presence of God, where no excuse could avail, then his conscience was purged and set at rest. But with him at this time, there may have been no question of his *nature* raised. This is not the question which comes foremost in the history of souls. The efforts to avoid the evil, and perform the good, to be well pleasing to the Lord, which follow true conversion, bring out this in its true and terrible depths. Saul has now to pass through this stage of the soul's history, for his own deliverance, as a saint; I do not dwell here on the fact of its necessity afterwards for helping others -- but as a vessel of mercy, which, from such a state, must be set free.

Probably during the three years, in which he "went down into Arabia, and abode at Damascus," it was, when this took place. On this I do not dogmatize: but it was a needful process, whenever it occurred; and the result of it we find in the experimental learning of his nature, through the bitter anguish and exercises detailed in Rom. 7, much of which doubtless he had to learn experimentally for himself, as also the many lessons which he learned for the sake of other souls.

Here I would remark, that the experience of the closing verses of this well-known chapter (Rom. 7:14-26) have a wider and larger significance, than perhaps many may be aware of. It is so framed by the Spirit of God, that no exercised soul, however deep may be its experience, and under whatsoever dealings and dispensations it is found, but may find expression in some way for that which it is passing through. In some cry or other there recorded, it will find what answers to that which it endures; though doubtless its *full* pressure could not be known until the light of Christianity had shone. I do not enter upon its details. Many have done this: some with lasting profit for many more. But I judge that it reaches far behind the exercises of a soul under the law, as expressed in the "ten words."

The natural man may have lived -- "touching the righteous that is in the law, blameless," yet with his soul still unawakened. In overt acts its prohibitions had never been broken. But they never touched the tree -- the root of "sin" within! There was one of its commands which reached his inmost soul at last: the command which said, "Thou shalt not lust," and when that commandment came, expressing the holiness of the law, "sin revived, and I died." "Sin, taking

occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of lust, for without law, sin was dead"; it lay dormant; or unprovoked within his soul; until its unholiness was thus revealed.

Human nature fallen, too plainly speaks on every hand, not to have discovered to us the fact, that the moment a prohibition comes home to us -- from the earliest childhood to our latest breath -- at once is kindled within us the desire for the very thing which it forbade. A thousand instances and examples might be presented to prove this.

But there was "Law" in Paradise -- before man fell, and man was a responsible creature before he broke away from God: he was responsible to obey the law-prohibiting his eating the fruits of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil -- before he became a "transgressor." God had revealed His ways to him, as a Giver, in the largest and widest munificence. Nothing was withheld from man. The ten thousand tributary streams which contributed to his happiness in Eden, spoke of a God who would withhold no good thing. "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat"; proclaimed the freeness and fullness of no niggard Hand. The man was to enjoy it all freely. One small interdict prohibited the eating of the fruit of one tree: a tree which marked a responsibility which, when accepted, would only entail evil: "In the day that thou eatest thereof, dying, thou shalt die." It was that, in observing which, he expressed that his will was subject to God who had placed him there, and surrounded him with every creature blessing.

This is the principle of law. An interdict will always prove a will in the person addressed, either subject or insubject to another. The smallest interdict is sufficient for this. It is the way to discover whether another is subject to you or not. If insubject, the authority of that other is refused, and as a consequence two wills are opposed, the one to the other: while the man that is tested, owns in conscience, that God has a right to be obeyed.

Now Satan did not begin by calling attention to the blessedness with which the man had been surrounded: nor to the character of God as "giving all things richly to enjoy." Rather does he seize upon the prohibition calling attention to the interdict alone -- "Yea, hath God said, Ye *shall not* eat of every tree of the garden?" whereas, God had said, "Ye *shall* eat of every tree." The grand master-stroke of the serpent was, to instil lust into the soul, and distrust of God; to cast a suspicion on the fulness and freeness of His nature to bestow. This was the poison of the serpent, which has permeated humanity ever since that day. It was done before ever there was a sin committed. The devil had stepped in, and sown distrust in man's heart; creating a suspicion in the soul; and separating man and his Creator by the loss of faith in Him.

This is what men do between each other now-a-days, to reach some end they have in view. I dare say they may not perhaps think so: but the largest portion of the sorrows between men, or even between brethren, are caused by some hint, behind backs; or some whispered story, to which the heart of others is ready to lend an ear; which causes distrust to spring up between souls. Distrust engendered, dislike follows, but more especially in the one who has wronged the other. *It is*

*exceedingly hard to trust a heart you have wronged.* “A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it”; and “He that repeateth a matter, separateth very friends”; and “He that did his neighbor wrong, thrust him away,” &c. These passages (kindred in their character) are but the workings of this principle of evil. Hence the true saying, “The injured may forget; the injurer, never!”

To restore man to perfect confidence in God: and to meet the outrage on His nature, was the work of Christ at the “end of the world.”

Man, then, was a responsible creature before he fell. Distrust of God and lust were instilled into the soul of the woman. Will was put forth against: God -- and in the case of Adam, high-handed will (for “*he* was not deceived” (1 Tim. 2:12); and man fell. A breach, as wide as the poles, came in at once between God and man; an abyss, impossible to repair, or to recross. Man became as “one of us,” said the Lord, “to know good and evil” (Gen. 3:22). This he never can unlearn. He never returns to innocence again.

What, then, is “to know good and evil”? It is something which is said of Godhead too; “as one of us,” we read “to know good and evil”! It is to sit in judgment, and pass sentence, on good or evil which we find in our own souls. Of David the king, it was said, by the wise woman of Tekoah, “as an angel of God, so is my Lord the king, to discern good and bad” (2 Sam. 14:17). This in reference to the decisions of judgment. So of Solomon in 1 Kings 3:9; so of Israel, Deut. 1:39; see also Heb. 5:14.

This is the work of conscience: to take know-ledge of the evil practiced by a will opposed to God; to sit in judgment upon it, and to condemn: and, alas! to apprehend the good, while opposed to it; to approve of it, without the power to perform. This was fallen man with a conscience. Responsible before he fell; distrusting God; and transgressing in will His command. An ability, even when fallen, to pass sentence upon his own actions, by the knowledge of good and evil: good that he had not the power nor desire to practice, and evil that he was not able to avoid! Then, at last, he is driven out of the presence of God; for he had lost his place on such a ground for ever. These three things marked his state. Distrust of God; sin committed in that distrust; and his place irrecoverably lost. These three things are reversed by the gospel. His confidence is restored by faith in Him as a Savior; his sins removed, which had been committed in distrust; and he is brought into a new place in Christ before Him.

The soul when thus awakened, finds these great primal enmities which separated between God and man, wrought upon, in deep and solemn exercises. The sense of responsibility as a sinner who had eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, at enmity in his mind by wicked works; the knowledge of good unfulfilled, and of the evil of his nature exposed; powerless, too, for all but evil; the sense, in some measure, differing according to circumstances, of good in God Himself; and a responsibility to set itself, as it supposes, right with Him. These things are forced on the soul in terribly bitter lessons.

Nothing in man’s words can equal those of the soul’s anguish in Rom. 7.

I am carnal,<sup>21</sup> sold under sin; for that which I do, I allow not: for that I would, that do I not; but what I hate that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law, that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good which I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do, that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For 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.

Mark, reader, this struggle between “good “ and “evil,” by a soul under the sense of responsibility, or, “in the flesh.” Yet it is not his guilt which troubles, but his state. The deep anguish not only takes in all this, but goes back to the first spring of departure of man from God. All the roots of its being are laid naked, and open, before Him with whom it has to do. How varied are the ways of God to lead the soul into this struggle; that it may learn to struggle no more; that it may learn that every effort, every trial, every struggle, as long as they continue, are only the more distinct proofs that it is not yet arrived at that point where, when ceasing to struggle, it surrenders; and then only finds, that this surrender; is liberty. It is then set free.

I forbear here, to deduce examples of these exercises and their end, as found in the word. Many are to be found there; many, too, may be interpreted every day by scripture, as they are seen in the people of God.

The discovery of an evil nature, by a saint, suggests at once, that it should be subdued. The desires and longings of his renewed soul, when felt by him, suggest at once, that they should be gratified; and that God had implanted it there to that end. The sense, too, of responsibility, that both these suggestions should find their answer somehow, lays the ground of this painful struggle. It is not conflict, properly so called, at all. It is the effort which only ends in defeat, more painful still. It leads into captivity, but does not set free. But when deliverance comes -- not victory (victory would be my own meritorious act, deliverance that of Another), it comes as a double deliverance -- answering to the “good” which it found

21. There are two words in the original tongue for “carnal” (σάρκινος and σαρκικό) the only difference being one letter. They are found in 1 Cor. 3:3 and Rom. 7:14, and elsewhere. One word is applied to the *standing* of an awakened {quickened} man, still “in the flesh,” that is, having the sense of his responsibility, as a child of Adam, and no deliverance before God. This is Rom. 7. The other is applied to saints, whose practical *state* was not spiritual: they “walked as men” (1 Cor. 3). This latter is opposed to the normal state of a saint as a “spiritual” man. We find in the context (1 Cor. 2, 3) the “natural,” the “spiritual,” and “the carnal man.” The first a man merely with a natural soul unquickened: the second, the normal state of the saint; and the third, the saint walking after the flesh.

itself incapable of producing, and to the evil which it was impossible to avoid. The soul must be able to look up, rejoicing in liberty with God, and it must be able to look down into its own heart, and be able to produce the good which it longed to perform, and have power over the working of a sinful nature, the flesh," within.

Here it is that we find a defect in our souls. Many *have* got that liberty which enables them to look up to God: they can say, "All there is well." But are we all free from the power of the evil within, when we examine our own hearts? Nay; the very joy and thankfulness which the soul experiences in being free in looking up, makes too often careless, alas! about the other. This may be through ignorance; indeed, it may frequently be so. We need to be taught that there is a freedom of the soul, which is filled with the Spirit, in which it may walk each day absolutely apart from all the workings of the flesh, or the desires of the mind: such a liberty, indeed, as if there was no evil to combat there at all—a freedom which brings forth fruit to God.

It is not that there will not be conflict to the end of our pathway here; it is not that "the flesh" will cease to be an occasion of constant watchfulness. Nor is it that "sin in the flesh" can ever cease to exist, while we are here on earth, though "condemned" when Christ died. But let us remember Paul's path as a saint, a vessel chosen to God; one who walked in such a way (and in this he would join others also), saying, "It is God that worketh in you, both *to will* and *to do* according to his good pleasure!" It is no more *then*, "the good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do." Nay, the "willing" and the "doing" are accomplished by souls set free; vessels in whom God can work, and wield according to His good pleasure.

For what, beloved reader, is a vessel? Suppose you placed one on the table at your side, have you not two thoughts in your mind as to its use? You place it there to *hold* what you put in it; this is one thought. Then the other is, that it may be held by the hand of another. Had it a will or a motion, these uses would be hindered.

And so with God's vessels of mercy; they must be will-less, and motionless too; they are to be filled with that which He puts in them, and to be held and used by His hand. It is only in the measure that our wills, our motions, our thoughts, are set aside, that we are really vessels; and, as such, fitted and meet for the Master's use.

But this is not our present subject. Here we are discussing the deliverance of the vessel, so that it may be free in soul with God, and free, too, from the workings of the will of the flesh, and have power to bring forth fruit to God; that on the one hand it may realize its place "in Christ," and on the other, that "Christ liveth in me."

I remember, years since, visiting at the bedside of an aged saint. We spoke for some time on general things as Christians. I asked her if she had ever thought of Christ who was in glory, 'living' in her weak body, on its bed of suffering? I have not forgotten the strange look she gave, as the thought flashed upon her mind, for the first time, as it appeared to me. "Ah,"

she said, "Christ living in me!" It seemed a wonderful revelation to her soul: the body, as the vessel -- so much in the power of this, that Christ, not self, lived. "Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. Is not this even a greater thought, though the converse of that word of Paul, "To me to live is Christ"? The latter was the motive of his life—the spring in his soul; the former, the result of this, "Christ liveth in me."

This is freedom indeed. "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free." We speak of the law of gravitation, the law of nature. We mean the natural tendency of each which governs its actions; as the apple falls to the ground: it does not rise when disengaged from the tree. This thought in its own character, is here. That "law," -- the tendency in which it must move -- "of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free." It lifts the soul out of that other law of sin, that which governs the nature of the flesh; and also, that law of death. *It* has become the law -- the natural issue, of *life*, which He breathed on His own when He arose -- a quickening Spirit -- the second Man -- the risen Lord.

Thus, may we not say, the soul finding its responsibility -- "under law," as having eaten of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil," -- passes through these deep lessons, that it may discover experimentally, the depths of a ruined nature -- "the flesh" -- which sprang up in man's heart when he broke away from God. But now set free, it finds too, that it has reached in Christ, the "Tree of life": the "law of the spirit of life" in Him, setting it wholly "free from the law of sin and death." Free, too, in that two-fold way which we have in measure discussed. Namely, free in soul in looking upward at God; free to enjoy in the present, and in hope, all that He is. And free from the workings of "the flesh" within. Self is ignored, and the life lived in the flesh is lived by the faith of the Son of God: that is, faith in Him as object, and power, and all. The springs and motives of such a life do not spring from self, but from "Christ"; and thus only bring forth fruit to God: being filled with the fruit of righteousness, which is by Jesus Christ, to His praise and glory.

## Chapter 5:

### *Why Did God Permit the Entrance of Evil?*

**“By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin” (Rom. 5:12).**

Before examining God’s ways further with “a chosen vessel,” it will be profitable to examine the testimonies of the word as to the “new man, God’s “new creation,” in Christ Jesus, which is thus being developed in the vessel of mercy.

The terms “old man” and “new man” are very definitely used in scripture. I judge that neither term can be used of an individual *as such*. That is, an individual could not say, “I am the old man”; nor, “I am the new.” The terms are generic and comprehensive, embracing -- the first -- all that we were “in Adam”; and the second -- all that believers are “in Christ.” Nor do I find that scripture will allow us to say that we have the “old man” in us -- while it teaches most fully, that we have “the flesh” in us to the end; if it works, we read “with the flesh (we serve) the law of sin” (Rom. 7:25). These terms will come out more fully, as we proceed with the examination of the truths now before us.

One great and important question here arises, reverting to the condition of man as first created of God. That is, the solemn question of the entrance of moral evil into this world. How frequently is such mooted by the sceptic; and as frequently found without reply, in the mind even of the believer in Christ! The question is Why did God permit the entrance of sin? Why leave it a possibility? And in this is embraced the entrance of death by sin.

How immensely important to possess clearly an answer to this stupendous question; one that will leave the infidel without excuse, and, at the same time, settle firmly in divine truth the minds of those who believe. I do not here go further than its entrance into *this present world* on which we live. For we know from scripture that *sin* had already entered the universe, possibly through Satan’s rebellious fall, once an “anointed cherub” (Ezek. 28). Nor do I comprehend the fall of the angels that had sinned, and who are reserved in Tartarus (2 Pet.2: 4), until the judgment of the great day. I confine the question to the entrance of sin into *this world*; and that of death -- its consequence -- having passed upon man -- the race of Adam alone. Death may have been, and was possibly, there -- even in *this world*, in its previous periods of change, during the ages and cycles which had passed prior to its having been shaped by God’s hand, in the six days’ work, into an abode for man.

I accept what is now pretty well known by the student of the word, that in the term which opens the book of Genesis --

“In the beginning,” as well as in the next clause of the verse, God has left it open for the possibility of millions of years to have elapsed since that “beginning” was, when God created the heavens and the earth; and thus time sufficient was allowed, to form the strata of the earth, as it is now found, before the work of the six days was accomplished, in the varied ages which had passed, and through the many catastrophes which had probably taken place. For we read in the next clause of the verse, that the earth (not the heavens), was without form and *waste (tohu)*, having probably fallen into chaos. God had not created it in this state, as Isaiah testifies (Isa. 45:18). “He created it *not waste*” -- the same Hebrew word as used in Gen.1.

We are aware that there are traces of death to be found in the fossils and petrifications of extinct animals, of species now unknown, in the strata formed by the ages gone by. This is admitted most fully; but it does not interfere with our present question in any wise.

I take therefore, the statement of Rom. 5:13, as the basis of the great question now before us: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered *the world*, and death by sin; and so death passed upon *all men*, for that all have sinned.” The first part of this important passage confines the entrance of *sin* to *this world*; and the second limits the passing of *death*, as a consequence of sin on man; without noticing, in the former case, the possible entrance of sin into other spheres; and, in the latter, the fact of death passing upon other than the human family.

Let us now turn to Gen. 1, 2, where we have the account of the creation of man,

And Elohim saith, we will make man [Adam] in our image, after our likeness, and they shall have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every reptile that is creeping on the earth.

So Elohim created the man [Adam] in his own image, in the image of Elohim created he him; male and female, created he them.”<sup>22</sup>

There are two distinct words used here by God, very different in their signification; they are “image” and “likeness.” Another has given valued thoughts on the use assigned to each, to which I would add some remarks. How accurately this

22. Translation of Gen. 1 from the Hebrew, by G. V. W. {Wigram}.

usage is maintained throughout the word of God, is amongst the wonders of its perfections.

The word "image" is sometimes, in human language, used to signify the likeness in one for another; as one would say, 'such an one is the very image of his father' -- meaning that he is an exact likeness; but this is not the way it is used in general, in scripture. There it is used, rather in speaking of that which is set to *represent* another, without having any reference to its being like or unlike, in features, or otherwise, to the person represented. As we read of Christ being "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15). And man being "the image and glory of God" (1 Cor. 11:7), &c.; the word image being here used, as fully representing another, as the image of Jupiter, of Caesar, &c. Now "likeness" is different from this: its meaning is simple and readily understood, as describing a person being like another, that is, having the same traits of character and features, &c.

The man was created then in both these ways. He was set as the great center of an immense system, fully to represent God, as His *image*. The dominion of the vast system was his. All created things were under him. All intelligences, his wife included, were to look up to him as God's representative in that sphere. God alone was over him; all else being subject to man. But he was also in the likeness of God. He was pure as his Creator made him, he was very good: he was sinless too, absolutely without evil: he was from God, to be for God, and thus like Him, and fit, therefore, to be His image -- to represent Him; and to be the center to which all should look up; and with an intelligent will; his choice also was free.

But again we ask, Why did God leave moral evil a possibility? Or, in other words, why permit the entrance of sin? Could He not have created a being, which could not fall? One who could only do what was good and right?

The answer is plain. Because, if He would create a glorious creature -- man, after His own image, and in His likeness, free to choose either good or evil, and not a creature governed by a mere chain of instinct, as the birds and beasts around him -- He must leave the entrance to him of evil, a possibility, though not a necessity.

If man, as God created him, could not choose evil, then he had no choice at all: and he would be no more virtuous in doing good, than the mere animal which follows the instincts of its nature. And because, in such a case, he *must* do good, he would be no more virtuous in doing so than they.

Either God *must refrain*, -- we write the words with reverence -- from creating such a being, of this high and glorious order of existence, with a free choice and will; or He must leave the question of evil a possibility to him. Alas, for the result! of which a fallen race speaks with such terrible reality. He chose the evil and refused the good; and the moment he exercised his choice he became a sinner. Man, created in the image of God, fell from that pinnacle of eminence, never to be restored to it again. Fallen Adam begets a son in his *own* likeness after *his* image (Gen. 5:3), while unfallen Adam had been created "in the likeness of God" (Gen. 5:1).

Observe, in all this there was no thought of man being *holy*: nor could it have been said *as* afterwards of the "new man," that he of Him, was "created in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Eph. 4:24). God is holy -- absolutely so. But holiness is relative, inasmuch as it supposes evil to exist, and implies absolute separation from it. This could not be said of man, as God created him. He was pure, and perfectly good, but evil was not for him in existence, until he chose evil, when presented in the form of a temptation, and thus he threw aside the authority and will of God, who had given it to him. So of righteousness, which also presupposes the existence of evil.

How everything in the sinner now depends on his will, in having to do with God; his salvation and all, depend upon the surrender of his will to Him. "Ye *will* not come unto me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40). And "Whosoever *will*, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). Now Christ is said to be the "image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15); the "image of God" Himself. (2 Cor. 4:4). This is because he fully represents God; but He is never said to be in His "likeness"; simply because He is God Himself, therefore not merely *like* Him. But it is said that He came in the "*likeness* of sinful flesh," and rightly so; because He was *not* sinful flesh at all. See Rom. 8:3.

He too, had His own perfect will; and while tested to the uttermost in life and in death, it was always subject to God's. "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34).

This obedience and subjection found its perfection fully in death. He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). Mark, He was not subject to death, as the first man, through his sin. With him it was the penalty of disobedience, and the ending, by God's sentence, in death, of will in him to the uttermost. But it was there that the perfection of Christ's surrender of a perfect will in obedience, shone out most fully. Or rather, may we not say? the perfect blending of a perfect will in Him with that of God, in obedience unto death itself.

## Chapter 6:

### *The New Man*

**“Created in righteousness and holiness of truth” (Eph. 4:24).**

We now come to the New Testament, where we find a gradual unfolding of God’s ways as to the new man”; indeed, we may say a new kind of man altogether from the first man. I would just draw attention to some of the salient points which are found there in the three great epistles, which, taken together, would give us the completeness of God’s thoughts, and His purposes in the new creation in Christ. I refer to Romans, Colossians, and Ephesians.

The first of these epistles unfolds in detail, the moral closing up of the history of the first man, as fallen, under every advantage, and after every trial from God whether without law, as being proved lawless; or under law, as a law breaker, and this, subsequent to the possession of privileges and advantages, which were before the special dealings of God took place in a separate people. The end of the trial and time of testing was, when Christ came and was refused. “All (now) had sinned,” in looking back, and “come short of the glory of God”-- the measure now, and standard by which all would be judged. Man had been set up in perfection as a creature, and had fallen; could he now meet the burning rays of God’s glory? On this, as on all other grounds, all was now over, with the old man for ever. God must now either end that man, whose will was set up against Him, by judgment in righteousness: or reveal Himself in sovereign grace through righteousness, in virtue of the work of Christ. I do not here, of course, enter upon this work of the cross, and the death, and resurrection of Christ; only looking at it, as the means, whereby God would close morally for faith the history of man in righteousness, and begin His new creation in His Son -- as head of a new race.

The section of the epistle in which God first shows how the race was all under judgment, and guilty before Him, ends in verse 19 of chapter 3. We then find, immediately following, in Rom. 3:20, &c., how the righteousness of God is now manifested *for* the sinner, in God’s raising up His Son from death and setting Him on high; and not *against* him, as standing in his own responsibility. And this, too, “by faith in Jesus Christ,” personally; and “by faith in his blood,” as the means by which the righteousness of God was vindicated against sin. He thus stands in perfect justification from all his *guilt*.

But his *state* as a sinner in the first Adam is not thus ended. When we pass that section which deals in all details with his guilt, and which ends at Rom. 5:11, we are introduced to the manner, in which our whole state is dealt with, and closed in the death of Christ. We read in Rom. 6,

Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve

sin.

There is nothing in the Romans about the “new man” in any wise. But there is the crucifixion of “our old man” fully set forth, in order that the body, or totality, of sin might be set aside. The nearest approach to anything positive on this head is found in the expression of Rom. 7. “I delight in the law of God after the *inner man*,” but it goes no further. While fully closing up the questions of our guilt and state, it goes no further, but while showing *Christ* risen, the believer is not said to be risen with Him. For this, we must have the next step, in the Epistle to the Colossians.

There is in Romans a new will shown as either struggling against the old -- the flesh, in Rom. 7; or else, when the soul is set free, walking in “newness of spirit,” and “newness of life.” Romans gives us therefore, the crucifixion of “our old man” with Christ.

Now Colossians stands between Romans and Ephesians in doctrine. In the former, man is seen as alive in sins; the heart is going out after all its lusts unhindered. What then, must be done? He must be brought down into death -- the death of Christ -- to have his history closed: “Knowing this, that our old man is co-crucified with him.”

In Ephesians, we have man “dead in trespasses and sins,” and consequently another kind of dealing must come in. Unlike the Romans, where he must be brought down into death, because alive in sins, life must come in positively to quicken a dead soul in that condition, and to raise him up out of it; and all must be a new creation in Christ Jesus, who is in heavenly places.

Colossians, therefore, as we might suppose, would take in both sides--dead in sins, and alive in them. This it does, looking back on our Romans condition, and looking forward to our Ephesians condition in Christ Jesus. Therefore we read, “In the which (sins, &c.) ye walked when ye *lived* in them” (Col. 3:7). And we also read, “And you, being *dead* in your sins,” &c. (Col. 2:13). The saint therefore, is looked upon as “dead with Christ” from the elements of the world, as well as dead to sin, and dead to the law; and also risen with Christ, and though not sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, he is seeking those things “above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.” He is, therefore, down here on earth.

This being so, he has not reached his new place with God in Colossians, though he is suited to the place as in life, and as risen with Christ. He has a new status, but not a new place. We would not therefore find, here in the epistle, the “new man” spoken of

as in Ephesians. Indeed it is remarkable, that when it is apparently spoken of in Eph. 3, it falls far short of the full thoughts of Eph. 4:24; different words being used in the Greek original; and the word man (ἄνθρωπος) being omitted altogether (Eph. 3:9).

We have, therefore, a different word for “new,” used in Colossians, as compared with Ephesians. In the former it is νέος; in the latter καινός; the latter signifying what I may term familiarly by the graphic expression ‘brand new!’ a kind of man never seen or heard of before;<sup>23</sup> while the former would be entirely new, but does not imply a new kind or genus, as the latter would.

We find, however, that the knitting up of both scriptures, Eph. 4 and Col. 3 is done by the Spirit of God in remarkable wisdom, by the use of these two words, being found in the construction of the verbs, “renewed” in Eph. 4:23, and Col. 3:10; that in Ephesians being compounded with the “new” of Colossians; and that in Colossians with the new of Ephesians.<sup>24</sup> Wondrously wise are the scriptures of our God!

We may also here notice what is still the more striking and instructive, namely, that the word “putting off” is quite different in each epistle; in fact, there is no affinity at all between the words in Greek. In Colossians we have a word which signifies “passing out from under,” or, “being divested of” something; as a garment. In Ephesians we have not this, but its being absolutely “laid aside,” or “laid down.” I might take off my garment in one action; and I may also, by another action, lay it aside when I have taken it off. We shall presently understand the reason why it should be thus in each epistle, coupled with what we have seen already.

There is an illustration of the use of these two words in the LXX of Lev. 16:23, where Aaron, having finished the work of the great day of atonement, clothed in the white linen garments, first “cuts off” those garments, and then leaves them in the tabernacle of the congregation. I would also refer the English reader to Acts 7:58, here the verb of Eph. 4:24 and translated “putting off” -- which should be, more correctly, “laying aside” -- is used by Stephen’s murderers, who “laid down” their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul; and also to Heb. 12:1, where the same word is translated “lay aside,” as to “every weight,” &c.

In fact, while Colossians gives us the *subjective* side of the “new man” (what is practical life in which the saint lives here while walking on earth), Ephesians gives us the *objective* side of the “new man,” as showing us what he is on high. Colossians being rather Christ in us.

In Romans, therefore, we find “our old man *crucified*”: in Colossians the “old man parted with,” and the *subjective* side of the “new man.” While in Ephesians we have the old man wholly “laid aside,” where we are seen as all that we are in Christ -- the objective presentation of the full ‘brand-new’ man: an absolutely new creation in Christ.

23. It is not Adam innocent, nor Adam fallen, and righteousness under law, but a positively new creation.

24. It has been noted that the καινός of Eph. 4:24, and the νέος of Col. 3:10, are characteristic of each epistle. In Ephesians it is a new creation in *contrast* with an old; in Colossians it is a *practical* new life in which we live; though the care is taken to show that it is a new thing entirely, formed of God.

We may read vv 21-23, thus: “If so be ye have heard him, and in him have been instructed, as is truth in Jesus (namely) your having laid aside, according to the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the lusts of deceit. But he made new [that is, absolutely new] in the spirit of your mind. And your having been invested with the new man [that is, the brand-new thing] which is after God, [or, according to God] having been created in righteousness [not innocence] and holiness of the truth.”

This “holiness of the truth,” stands in contrast with the “lusts of deceit” of v. 22. The deceit of the serpent having produced the lusts of the heart at the beginning; and righteousness being the basis of God’s new creation, he is formed -- created -- in it, and in holiness (absolute separation from evil) of the truth, which has begotten him.

As to the passage in Colossians corresponding and filling up on the practical side, we may read: “Your having been invested with the new” (νέος) he does not write “man” (ἄνθρωπος -- this word only being used of the full absolute thing in Eph. 4 -- “which is continuously being made new toward perfect knowledge, according to the image of the Creator of him.”

Now remark again, that in Colossians we have “*Christ*” as the example of all for the new (man). Your life is hid with him in God (v. 3). The *characters* of Christ as the elect of God, presented as forming and practiced (vv. 12 and 13). The *word* of Christ is to dwell in him richly (v. 16). In fact, as v. 11 states, “Christ is all, and in all.” While in Ephesians it is “*God*,” and the nature of God is presented as the standard of all. The “new man” there is created after God (v. 24). He is to be an imitator of God (Eph. 5:1). To walk in *love* (which Christ showed fully) and walk as children of *light* -- God’s two essential characteristics, what He is (Eph. 5:2 and 8).

Again, we have more: we have in Colossians the “*image* of him that created him.” In Ephesians we have rather “*likeness*” to God Himself pressed (κατὰ θεόν).

Here, therefore, we come back to these words as at the first, “likeness” and “image”; the new man of Ephesians being morally like God -- seen in his true place as in Christ in heaven and as objectively presented to us there in Him. Therefore, when we come into the practical life -- the subjective side, in Col. 3 we have “image,” because there he walks on earth at the present, but is morally to represent God, who was fully represented in Christ Himself, and who is “all.”

Then again, as to the exhortation of each epistle connected with the “new man.” We find in Col. 3:9, “Lie not one to another.” There it is the practical life. But in Eph. 4:25 we have, “Wherefore having laid aside lying, speak truth” to each other. Here, with the old man who has been laid aside, goes the thing itself-lying. Not merely is the exhortation, as in Colossians, to refuse the practice of it; but the thing is looked upon as gone here, and the exhortation takes the positive side, exhorting to speak the truth, &c., as in the other parts of the context in the epistle. There alone, too, have we the conflict of the saint in its true and only measure. Satan is again on the scene in a special way, to oppose this man of a new creation, as at the first he did in the old. On this I do not enter here.

## Chapter 7:

### *The Vessel Emptied of Human Strength*

**“Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor. 12).**

In another connection, which we may hope to refer to again, the apostle Paul writes thus: “We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not from us” (see Greek). I cite this now with reference to the end of the verse. God never gives intrinsic power to His saints. “God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God” (Psa. 62:11). If this is important in the lives of the saints, how much more, if I may draw a distinction, is it for those who are called upon to serve in the word. Yet in every service and in every action in the lives of God’s people, the power of God is needful, that they may walk and serve and work and toil in the energy of the Spirit, and in the expression of the life of Jesus in their mortal flesh.

For this end, another character of discipline takes place after deliverance is known. This may be more or less spread across their lives, but one absolutely needful to produce that condition in which the power of Christ works: which is, as we read, “made perfect in weakness.”

The object of this discipline is not easily distinguished at first by the majority of saints. It is more often divined and felt by those who serve outwardly in the word, than in the ordinary pathways of the people of God. It frequently happens, too, that it mixes itself up with exercises before deliverance is known, and is not easily separated from these, in the analysis of the soul’s history. However, although we may confound them experimentally in ourselves, scripture distinguishes them most clearly. It is only as we grow in the apprehension of the word, and of the mind of the Spirit there, that we are able to give to each its place and its true interpretation. We only know in part, at best, while here; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away; and then shall we know even as also we are known.

Saul had served amongst the saints for some years, before he was separated to the work to which he had been called. This took place formally and definitely at Antioch (Acts 13), where he was sent forth by the Holy Ghost on his first mission amongst the Gentiles; but going, as he always did, “to the Jew first.” We find this mission described at length in chs. 13 and 14 of the Acts of the Apostles. The vessel had been prepared in quiet, and now in going forth into that wider harvest field, he needed special dealings of the Lord to strip him finally and fully from every thought of *quasi* strength in man. The very success of the work, and the power of God manifested towards

souls, needed corresponding dealings to countervail the tendencies of the flesh. It ever seeks to intrude, and hinder the work of God. Often, in apparently insignificant ways, its intrusion is felt by one’s self or by others: like the “dead flies” which “cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savor.”

It is therefore to be expected that special dealings of God should be discerned distinctly at the opening of this great world-wide service of the apostle, commencing here. After the early part of the work is described, and that at Antioch in Pisidia took place (Acts 13:14, &c.); he now leads the band of servants, first to Iconium (Acts 14:1, &c.), and from thence to Derbe and to Lystra. Here he was stoned, and drawn out of the city, as they supposed him to be dead. I refer to this to connect this moment with what he reveals of his life in 2 Cor. 12.

Having no visible proof of his being called to serve the Lord, like Peter and the rest, who were appointed by Him in life; he must prove, as all true ministry must from that day, its divine origin by the effect of it upon souls. Consequently his ministry was constantly called in question. The servant must expect this now-a-days also, as a consequence, when he seeks to serve according to God’s mind, and as following in the line of those gifted from Christ in glory.

This took place in a very painful manner at Corinth. The jealousies of others so wrought against him there, where the chiefest of his work had been accomplished, that he was forced to speak of himself very prominently (always a painful and trying subject), and to tell of services, of toils, and of sorrows, seldom (perhaps never) equaled by those of any other man. The folly of others gives us here a glimpse of an unparalleled life of devotedness to Christ and the church. “Are they ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool, I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness” &c. (2 Cor. 11:23-27).

This is what he had done for the Lord! But what had the

Lord done for Paul? "It is not expedient for me, doubtless, to glory, for [γάρο] I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord" (2 Cor. 12:1). And here he discloses what had happened to him "above fourteen years ago." The scene at Lystra, when he was left for dead, was more than probably the moment when what is recorded here took place.<sup>25</sup>

If 2 Cor. 11 gives a history which might clothe Paul with honors, and give grounds for him to boast: ch. 12 gives us a dealing of the Lord which reduced him to "nothing." No doubt it was necessary that the leading man in the Christian course should be introduced into things which it was not lawful to reveal. It was needful, too, to strengthen him in a special way -- giving him to realize, above others, what was the portion of all: the possible state for every saint to enjoy, though, in the state of things, unspeakable also. But to follow this, and consequent upon it, the discipline came which had the effect of emptying Paul of every vestige of human strength, reducing him to the condition of a will-less, powerless vessel, so that he might be fitted thus to be wielded and used by the hand of the Lord who did so.

"It is not," said he, "expedient for me, doubt-less to glory, for I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew [οἶδα] a man in Christ, above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man . . . how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not possible for man to utter. Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in my weaknesses."

Here was the realization given him of all that he was, both as a man in Christ, and of the sphere of blessing where his portion lay; and of those things which he heard there, which human language could not express. The measure of this common portion of all His saints, may be realized variously by each; but the portion is the same for all. Upon this I do not enter. Each, too, may minister in part of that which he consciously possesses. But if so, the special dealings of God ensue to check the evil of the flesh, which according to the measure of the revelation rises *pari passu* with its abundance.

This discipline is suited and adapted to each several soul. This is the reason why, I doubt not, that all speculations as to what was the nature of Paul's thorn in the flesh, end in nothing. God has wisely seen fit to leave it untold. Were it made known, we would have perhaps settled that it was not ours, and then have left it there. To have left it untold, gives us to see that there was a great principle of God's dealings, seen in this man's case, but applicable to all. Each would have his suited "thorn": the very thing that would counteract his natural tendency; and so act as to strip him of every pretension to power, and break any fancied strength of man.

We see this on every hand, we see it better in our own soul's history. For it is not always that another is permitted to know the secret thorn which rankles in the breast, such as that

we would give the world to remove, ere we know the "end of the Lord." He presses home the "stake" (σκόλοψ) which pins us to the earth, as it were, in very powerlessness. You see this at times, for instance, in incongruous marriages. The soul is worn away, especially in a sensitive, spiritual mind; and there is no earthly power which can change the sorrow, and heavenly deliverance is withheld. Again, there is a child whose conduct breaks the heart of a parent: every measure fails to deal with him, and the "thorn" rankles deeply in the wounded heart. It may be that some disgrace is permitted, as to which the soul feels that death were easier to bear. It may be that slander has stung the soul with deeper pain. There may be, too, some human weakness, which renders the afflicted one an object of pain to those who love him, or of ridicule to others. Such as these, and the many sorrows of the way are used of God as the "thorn" to curb the energy, to break the strength of "man." Circumstances, friends, relations, health, good name, all are touched by Wisdom in this holy discipline of the soul. These things in the hand of God are like the river banks which on either side guide the stream of waters which flow between them; rendering the waters useful and fructifying, which, if flowing onwards without these guides, would devastate all around, in-stead of bearing a blessing on their bosom. How often have we not thought what good Christians we might have been if circumstances were different; in short, if the banks which carry the river were broken down. Nay, these are the wise dealings of our God to *keep us just* in the channel and path where we are, to shine and glorify Him.

Like Paul of old, when the "stake" was driven home, we may cry to God, even thrice, as he: Take away this thorn, this terrible hindrance to the work of Christ, this feebleness of the vessel, this sapping of energy, this hindrance to service, this cruel "stake" from which the soul struggles in vain to be free. But no; there it remains, until we find, in the acceptance of its bitterness, the occasion of a strength which is not of man, but the emptying us of fancied human power. We learn our powerlessness, we feel that struggling is but in vain. Yet here the secret of strength is found: but not of man, not our own. The Lord comes in. He finds the vessel bereft of strength; prepared for that power with which He can wield it. He finds that condition which it is His to use. "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for power is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather boast in my weaknesses,<sup>26</sup> that the power of Christ may rest [“tabernacle over”] upon me:" "The surpassingness of the power is of God, and not from us."

Those who serve the Lord outwardly in the word, know in measure these things. They know well, much as they may be blessed, and valued too; what bitter lessons they have to learn in secret with the Lord. Never could they be explained to another; yet they are but the emptying of fancied strength in man. No true servant but will find this out for himself; he will recall those moments, when death was working in the fragile vessel, that life might work in those to whom he ministered. Yea, he begins to find how good these lessons are, that made

25. I see no reason to question the chronology of the Authorized Version here. It shows that the stoning occurred first at that time.

26. It is not "infirmities" but "weaknesses" in which he glories.

room for a power working which he is conscious is not himself, not of man; and that when, outwardly calm, he felt the abject weakness of his own heart, his Lord might step in and give him victory.

Thus, then, is the vessel brought by the hand of the potter, often through bruising and breaking and crushings on the wheel, to its true and blessed form in which God can work Himself alone. When the vessel would say, "not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God": and again, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of

God and not from us. Forcible and striking this is: he does not allow that the power would be 'from' God, as something apart from Him, and conferred or imparted to us. Nay, but it is divine, and yet inseparable from Him who works; it is "of God" -- and yet not 'of us,' as not only negating the thought that it might be so; but the word he uses still more strongly emphasizes this: that the power is *of* God and not *from* us.

There is a "threefold cord" which must be found in the saint if he would serve his Lord aright: the *motive*, the *energy* and the *end*.

At times the *motive* may be right and the *end* also, but the *energy* may be but the human vessel working out (as it supposes) the things of the Lord. All three must go together, and this is the object of this disciplinary process that all may be of God, and not of man.

## Chapter 8:

### *The Purpose of God in the Vessel*

**"For the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).**

Because [it is] God who spoke light to shine out of darkness who hath shined [or 'lit a lamp'] in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassingness of the power may be of God, and not from us (2 Cor. 4:6, 7).

Marvelous purpose in God! To light a lamp within us, and so deal with us, that He may reduce the vessel to a *transparency* in His hands, in order that the glory of God shining in Jesus on high, should shine out so that His people may be God's lanterns in a dark and Christ-rejecting world.

Some have referred to Gideon's lamps and pitchers (Judg. 7), as if there was an analogy here to that scene; but there the lamps shone out only when the pitcher was broken: not so here. The vessel is rendered *transparent*, if I may so say; all the hindering element of flesh is so attenuated that the "treasure" possessed by the vessel may shine forth undimmed.

The circumstances through which the vessel was passing at this moment, all working to this end, are worthy of our deep consideration. They enter into all the texture of the teaching which flows from God to us in this epistle. Indeed this is ever so in the ministry of the New Testament times. The vessel is passed through the trial or exercise, whatever that may be, and the heart thus trained; the affections formed by these things; the man himself so sustained and supported of God in the sorrows

of the way, that "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." He has drunk the living stream at the fountain head of all, in the eighth day of heavenly power and blessedness in Christ. His thirst has been quenched by Christ. And so his inner man -- the mind, the heart, the soul, the whole vessel, becomes the medium of those streams of refreshment to others, which have consoled his own soul in its sorrow. The Father of mercies has filled it with all His consolation in Christ--so full, so blessedly full, that it overflows and the stream passes on in living power, fructifying those in the desert sands of the world where his path lies.

Fourteen years, after what we have already spoken of, had passed: scene after scene of his labors had been traversed; and during the successful work at Ephesus (Acts 19), news had come of the sorrows and sins of those in Corinth, who had been the objects of the labors of Paul. He had written to them a letter (1 Cor.), his heart full of anxiety, but teaching, largely too, what was needful there. The mighty energy of God's Spirit had sustained the vessel for this service, and, then it was despatched by the hand of Titus.

At this moment the enemy had come in, in terrible power at Ephesus (Acts 19), and the infuriated mob, moved by the spirit of idolatry, had made the insurrection which we learn of there. Paul, after the manner of men, might have said he had "fought with beasts" there. He had like to be torn limb from

limb by those whom Satan led at that moment in terrible power. So terrible was the moment that hope was gone, the jaws of death were all but reached, and his spirit passed into the state of one who had “the sentence of death” in himself, and he “despaired even of life.” (2 Cor. 1:8).

Here was a moment for the soul! A living man, whose life was so real before God that God, as it were, might have said: Such a real man as Paul must learn all in power himself; his purpose is to bear about in his body the dying of Jesus; well, then, he shall be helped in this. He shall be delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus may be manifest in his mortal flesh. This is ever God’s reward to those who seek to live in the power of what they teach and know.

But at that same moment a deeper anguish filled his soul. The energy of the Spirit had waned, in which he had been sustained when he wrote to the Corinthians. A reaction came. Titus was gone. There was no recalling what was past. We love those to whom we have ministered in the church of God more deeply than others. There is a link formed between their souls and ours, which even the glory will not efface (cp. 1 Thess. 2:19, 20). What bitter pangs does the heart feel when, in any way, the enemy’s power comes in to sever this bond. We look upon them as lost to us; the joys of fellowship with them destroyed. He wrote in the greatness of his service, and with the truth of the Spirit from his pen. But now the reaction came. He feared he had lost the beloved Corinthians. How will they receive his letter? Was it too hard, too severe? In deep exercise he repented having written it. “I did repent,” said he, speaking of his tried heart’s exercise (2 Cor. 7:8). A greater death than that of the body, which seemed to have impended, was now felt; his soul died within him, as it were, in the bitterness of his sorrow. Some have passed through this kind of death: it must be known in measure to be understood. He could not rest in his spirit at a great and prosperous work at Troas, but went in search of Titus, that his soul might be relieved (2 Cor. 2:13).

Pressure after pressure at the hand of the potter, for he was but the clay upon the wheel; growing up under the skillful eye and hand of the Master. All these varied trials fell at one moment of crushing soul-death on this vessel. God was attenuating the opaqueness which still remained, that the light might shine forth with brighter power; that the Treasure of his heart might be more clearly seen, that His purpose in the vessel might be unhinderedly manifested.

At last -- God which comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus” (2 Cor. 7:6). God “delivered us from as great a death” -- as from the fury of man at Ephesus. What a moment of soul-comfort which now followed! “We were comforted in your comfort; yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all” (2 Cor. 7:13). Well can he say, “O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.” He can pour forth his heart’s teaching. He is unhindered in his joy.

What a moment for the true servant! What a moment for the people of God! Little do they know how the servant’s heart is hindered in the ministry at times: how the springs of God are

dry to them because of their state: then the servant has to learn fresh lessons of death working in himself; and his brightest words become dull, because the Spirit of God is grieved, and hearts are dull of hearing. He must be a rebuker to both servant and people, instead of rivers of refreshment in a thirsty land.

But what was this Treasure which he possessed? Strange casket was he for such, also one which would not *conceal* but permit its full *display*. The context will explain. It does so, first by recalling a moment in Israel’s history which laid the ground of it in the nature of God there first made known -- in sovereignty, displayed in mercy.

Israel’s history had run on under pure and living grace, from the day when God called Moses to be a deliverer of His people, at the backside of the desert in Midian, until, as a delivered people purchased and redeemed, they drank the waters from the smitten rock at Rephidim. Many a time did they abuse this living stream of grace, and murmur against Him who poured it forth.

Then came the giving of the law to Israel, which was only accepted to be broken. Thus all relations, whether of grace or law, were destroyed, grace was abused, and the golden calf was the answer to their word, “All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.” Moses goes up from that scene saying, “Peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.” He returns, and separates himself from the guilty camp of Israel. Then, in the touching interview which followed, and at his cry, “I beseech thee, shew me thy glory,” the Lord retires into Himself -- He stands upon a sovereignty which can do as it pleases. He alone can say, “I will,” and none can hinder. “I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy.” This is the manner in which His sovereignty will be displayed, “Because he delighteth in mercy.”

And Moses comes down from the mount, with the second table of the law in his hand, the skin of his face shining with the brightness of this fresh and suited name: “The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth.” Sovereign mercy was the foundation of this relationship of God with Israel. But now we come to Paul in 2 Corinthians, and there we find that *sovereign mercy is the basis of the gospel of the glory*, which in a special way he names as “Our Gospel.” (2 Cor. 5:3).

What, then, was the gospel? Was it different from that of the other apostles? For by it was communicated “this Treasure” to Paul, who stands here as the representative man -- the pattern to all coming after. Mercy, sovereign and free, shines in this man’s case more fully than all, as we have already seen. He would tell us so, saying, “Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received *mercy*, we faint not.”

Christ had died: God had “made him sin for us, who knew no sin.” God had abandoned Him who had trusted in His God. He who had taught others to trust in Him was Himself forsaken, and the cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” attested this; and was the mocking taunt of His foes, “He trusted in God, let him deliver him now if he will have him” (Matt. 27:43). We see no righteousness in this. But we see that “The righteous Lord . . . hateth iniquity” -- and His

Son having taken that place must take all its consequences. It was God's righteous judgment *against sin* which we see there.

He was taken from the cross and placed in the grave. The soldiers sleep as they guard the tomb: they became as dead when the angel of God descended to roll back the stone where the dead had been laid. But Christ had risen. He was not there. The tomb unsealed, the grave-clothes unmoved, pointed to the mighty fact that no grave could hold the Son of God.

Some days elapse, when we see another sight. On the Mount of Olives, perhaps some five hundred disciples stood, and from their midst a Man ascends to heaven, out of their sight. He is saluted there by God in righteousness as the Author of eternal salvation; the Establisher of righteousness against sin, for "the righteous Lord loveth righteousness." The Father gives Him the Holy Ghost afresh for others-and out from the glory comes the message, which afterwards arrested Saul of Tarsus, that this righteousness of God was so vindicated by the Son, that God set Him on His throne, and the news is sent forth from the heavens that God's righteousness could now be displayed *for man, a sinner, in salvation-and not against him in judgment*: that all who submitted to Jesus, the Nazarene, should become God's righteousness in Him.

"Our Gospel" dates from the glory of God. It comes forth as a ministration of righteousness, and of the Spirit (2 Cor.3:8,

9): no more the ministration of "condemnation" and "death." It shines out from His face who accomplished the work, and whom God seated on His throne -- the witness of His estimate of the work which He had accomplished. The "Treasure" was this. It was all that was thus brought forth from the glory of God, as found in Christ there; and as possessed by the vessel of clay.

Then came the attenuating process, by which the vessel would be made the medium through which it should shine. The light was taken in through exercises of conscience; and shone out through the exercises of his heart. The "*life of Jesus*" must be made manifest in the earthen vessel (2 Cor. 4:10); out of it the *faith* of Jesus (2 Cor. 4:13 and cp. Psa. 116:10) must be expressed; and the *hope* of Jesus (2 Cor. 4:14) must actuate the heart. And the momentary lightness of the affliction, through which it passed, only worked to enlarge the capacity and give in result a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The eye was fixed on the unseen and the eternal: the seen and temporal was passing away; and even if the earthly tabernacle -- suited to the present passing stage -- were dissolved, a building of God, a house not made with hands, was sure; and if Jesus came -- all that was mortal which remained would be swallowed up of life (cp. 2 Cor 4, 5).

This, then, was the purpose of God with the earthen vessel; this the process to reduce it to all that He desired. The light of the glory in the face of Jesus shone in the holiest on high, and on earth the light of the lamps shone over against the candlestick to cause its beauty to be seen.

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## Chapter 9:

### *God in the Vessel.*

**"The sentence of death" (1 Cor. 1:10).**

**"The power of his resurrection" (Phil. 3:10).**

The passages at the head of this chapter present two principles which the vessel of God's choice must practically learn. They are not confined to the Christian interval alone; but have been the lessons, variously taught, and more or less intelligently learned by the elect, at all times, and in all dispensations; though the clear, doctrinal meaning was not known until New Testament times.

They are, as we may speak, in a certain sense, correlative. The vessel is taught experimentally the *first* of these; and in the same way he finds the *second* working in him. What has "the

power of his resurrection" to do with aught but a dead man? Surely nothing! Therefore if death works in him, life works also in him in the power of resurrection. This power is of God alone.

These are the great lessons set for every saint while here. The measure in which they are learned is quite another matter: as is also the soul's apprehension of the lesson. But oh, what conscious power is found, as the soul learns to hold the cross, to every motion of human life which works in his body! to bear about in himself the sentence of death, morally or physically,

that he should not trust in himself, but in God who raises the dead. Then death works in him, and life towards others.

The former principle -- "we have the sentence of death in ourselves" -- is preparatory to the desire "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection." And this will be seen as we examine other cases in scripture, "written for our learning."

The history of the "father of the faithful" will help to this end. In Abraham's path we are introduced to one, and the dealings of God with him, in whom we see the gradual unfolding of God's lessons for the soul, before the doctrine of these things is developed to us in the New Testament scripture.

Like ourselves in our measure, he had to pass through all in an experimental way, to reach the perfect end. With the saint in the New Testament, did he but accept what is there taught, it would be with him that the place where others ended he would begin. But the state of soul, and the power of the flesh, and the deceivableness of our own hearts, are such that we must, alas! learn, too, all the lessons in an experimental way.

In Paul we see one who learned these things practically, but with much difference from ourselves. Speaking for oneself, and perhaps for others, we learn them through failure, in which we experience (more like Peter) the extricating ministry of Christ. Paul's case differed much, for in him we see rather the true heart taught, the singleness of eye met, so that he had more of the preventive or preserving ministry of Christ, rather than the restorative or extricating, while, at the same time, he was passed through circumstances of varied kinds that the lesson might be experienced in his own soul. We see failures in his life, but they were few.

We all experience, in a sense, the threefold way in which God revealed Himself to Abraham. He was called by the "*God of glory*" (Acts 7:2). He was sustained by the "*Almighty God*," and all was provided by "*Jehovah Jireh*." This was his history as a saint. But all was not revealed to him at first: the flesh had to be broken, fallen nature exposed, law had to be tried and found fruitless for faith, promise had to be rested upon, and then the fruit of accomplished promise had to be surrendered for the power of resurrection on Mount Moriah. Until this came he never was really and fully a worshiper, nor did he ever know God by that new name, "Jehovah-Jireh." I do not dwell much upon his earlier history. He did what true children of God do also, until they learn otherwise. He saw, when called of God at first, that which it was God's will should be done or possessed, and he assayed to realize and accomplish it in the strength of man. All fails, and then at last God *does by him* what he assayed *to do himself*. The end in view was right and the motive was right, but the energy put forth was of "man." He had not yet taken "the sentence of death" to himself, nor had he learned "the power of his resurrection."

Was not this so with Moses when he assayed to deliver Israel? With David at Ziklag? With Peter in the judgment hall? Each was tried, each sought to do that which was right and of God; but the energy was of man, and God did, at the end, by each one the same things which each had assayed to do themselves. We see this every day around in the history of saints. We know it in our own. Often, too, we have seen, in the

first freshness of soul in a young saint apprehending the truth, a deeper and more spiritual recognition of the will of the Lord than at later times in his life. He may have turned aside from the performance of it, or he may have sought to do it in the power of man, thinking that because it was right and of God *he* should do so. Years after the thing is done (if there was no failure or turning aside) by God Himself in him. Or, if failure supervened and -- turning aside, it was forced upon him through sorrows and trials and breakings of the flesh, and of the will of man which had come in to hinder.

You see it, too, in those that have assayed to serve in the gospel or in the church. The energy of the heart which pushed forth the young man as a servant, fails, he breaks down, he is coldly received, or the like. If there is gift from Christ, the thing was right and of God; but the energy was self -- unbroken. Painful lessons followed (than which there are few more so), but if we watch that man's after history, if he walk with God, he will come forth brightly in useful service to the Lord: *God* doing by *him* what *he* assayed to do *himself* in vain.

In Abraham's case we will examine the moment when he was enabled to take home "the sentence of death" to himself in the "sign of circumcision" (Gen. 17), thus learning the fruitlessness of flesh, and to be cut off from himself in the things of God.

Nearly fourteen years had passed since the birth of Ishmael, this son of the bondwoman: this effort of the energy of man to accomplish the thoughts of God. He was born and was brought up in Abraham's house for twice seven years. All seemed outwardly promising for the time; but Abraham had trodden for those fourteen years a path which was self-devised. These years are passed over as a blank in his history -- utterly unrecognized. And oh, how many histories of God's saints will be found a blank by-and-by! The power of man was seeking to further the things of God. But this he must discover, in one short interview, in which his whole path and his Ishmael are totally ignored; not by words, indeed, but by the simple revelation of God Himself -- the almighty One who was *all-powerful*, in contrast with *quasi-power* in man.

Let me ask my reader has he ever known cases analogous to this? Has he not seen with an enlightened eye lives of apparent usefulness -- and this, too, in ways supposed to be of God -- blown upon in one moment by some truth flashing upon the soul, which judges all? How multitudinous are the paths that would fade into a mist as one flash of divine light is shed upon them! Yea, even those which are based upon the word of God and His known will in the truth, not to speak of the ten thousand paths and ways of supposed service, which have no warrant from it at all: the former done in the strength of man and worthless, the latter I care not to analyze, so worthless are they.

And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God [El-Shaddai] walk before me, and be thou perfect. And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him" (Gen.17). What a moment was this! To discover in that interview that he had never yet touched the pathway of the Lord. He had walked by

the light of his own eyes. All was worthless, all was ignored, he has but to listen as he lay on his face before God, until the whole unfolding of God's mind, thus far known, is heard, and the previous fourteen years is treated as a blank in his history. One sentence alone passes his lips in this whole chapter, one cry from his heart is heard. It is the struggle of one who now feels that nothing of God was in those many years of hope, that he must now step off this self-devised pathway on to the path of God, leaving all behind as a mistake, as the effort of man to accomplish the things of God.

What a moment for the soul! Have there not been such-like soul-awakenings in God's saints at times? Moments when all was fading away which had delighted the eye, and the heart's cry was heard: "O that Ishmael may live before thee!" Must all then go? Is there not some remnant of former days which may be spared? Has *all* been a mistake? Is all to be thus ignored? God may pity the soul in this -- though not His purpose. He may say, as it were: "And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee." And the link may be spared and blessed in an earthly way, but it never enters the path which is divine: "But my covenant will I establish with Isaac."

Seven times do we now hear the utterances of God in His unchallengeable "I will" (vv. 2-8). Those purposes are announced, into which man could never enter as co-worker with God. "I will make my covenant with thee"; and I "will multiply thee exceedingly"; "I will make thee exceeding fruitful"; "I will make nations of thee"; "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and to thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (cp. Gal. 3:29; Phil. 4:19). "I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land whereon thou art a stranger"; and "I will be their God."

Abram has but to hearken, to receive, to hear, all that God Himself would do by him. Abram's strength was but that of man, it could but mar the power of God in resurrection. He must accept the seal of this new creation, he must take "the sentence of death" home to his own soul in the "sign of circumcision" -- the seal of the righteousness that he had by faith, being yet uncircumcised.

Mark the significance of all this, expressed in the changing of his name at this time. Rather, let us say, in God imparting to that name the breathings of His own. Instead of Abram he would now be Abraham. The breathings of the name of Jehovah, the self-existing God, are imparted to him; he is made, as it were, a "partaker of the divine nature" (Cp. 2 Pet. 1:2). He belongs to the new creation of God.<sup>27</sup>

This was the sign of "the sentence of death" upon man, and the entrance into that where "all things are of God" -- of which circumcision was the seal. The work of God would be done in the vessel by Himself alone. The human vessel must bow. It must take this sentence home to itself. In spirit it must enter into the new creation with a new and divinely-breathed name.

The vessel must be will-less and powerless in His hand.

But more: "The power of his resurrection" must be known, for it alone can avail in a dead man, to lift him out of the dead and into this new sphere. ("He considered<sup>28</sup> his own body now dead." "He hesitated not at the promise of God through unbelief.") This power now comes in: "As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be." She, too, must be made partaker, as it were, of the divine nature; she must, like him, have the breathing of God's name put to hers, that she may in figure be of the new creation also. "And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her and she shall be the mother of nations, kings and people shall be of her." Again he falls on his face -- now as *Abraham*. He "found strength in faith, giving glory to God." Abram once had fallen on his face and *listened*; but now *Abraham* fell on his face and *laughed*, and said in his heart, "Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old: and shall Sarah that is ninety years old bear? . . . And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee *a son indeed*; and thou shalt call his name Isaac:<sup>29</sup> and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him."

This was "the power of resurrection," now the resource of God. Human strength and human hopes were dead in Abraham and Sarah, the "sentence of death" taken home to their souls, that they "should not trust in themselves, but in God that raiseth the dead." "Against hope he believed with hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken. So shall thy seed be" (Rom. 4:18).

But there was more taught here. God had said, at the moment when he first appeared to Abraham as the Almighty, "Walk before *me*, and be thou *perfect*."

Hitherto the Lord had been his shield and his exceeding great reward. His guardian care had marked his path -- his shelter from his foes. Now more was asked: God's new name would bring fresh responsibility. El-Shaddai had been revealed Himself, who could do all things, who only needed an empty vessel under "the sentence of death," to use. "Perfection" must now be found. This was the answer of the soul to the revelation of God, the soul responding, as face answers to face in the glass, to all that God is -- as thus known.

We have then:

1. Circumcision first brought in, the sign of the sentence of death and the cutting off from ourselves;
2. the power of His resurrection follows, as that of God, who would work in a dead man;
3. we have perfection required in those in whom the other two are seen.

Thus were the roots of these things learned in practical power by the vessel of promise, afterwards to be known in their

27. See also how Oshea is turned to Jehoshna, and many other cases in the word (Num. 13).

28. The omission of the "not" here is very probably right, and in keeping with the subject.

29. Which signifies "laughter" or "joy": he makes melody in his heart to the Lord; realizing this heavenly joy: this "eighth day" of creation power.

spiritual significance in New Testament times.

When therefore we turn to Paul in Philippians we find all there. The vessel is there in its moral beauty and perfection, as far as this can be reached below. The workings of flesh are not there, nor sin, nor the weakness of man, as a vessel of mercy upon the potter's wheel. No flaw is here. The vessel is not now marred in the hands of the potter. True, it is not yet transformed into the potter's image in glory; but it is attenuated to its utmost on earth, rendered as transparent as it may yet be; and the "Treasure" shining out in every phase. Christ is motive, Christ is energy, Christ is end. The potter is now seen in the vessel.

We find those great principles which we saw in Gen. 17, in Phil. 3. Paul has gone through the prefatory work. Four years in prison, chained to a soldier, had wrought its work. The soul had been stripped of all its "desirable things." The labor for Christ which was his life was now arrested, as to outward warfare in the work. Brighter lessons were in store: lessons for the church of God, in all ages of her sojourn here on earth, were to come forth from the Roman capitol, where he wore his chain.

He takes the conscious place -- not now merely as learning the fact of *death* to all the energy of man, as Abraham -- but of accepting it. "*We are*"; said he, "*the circumcision.*" The painful lesson is past. Christ had passed away from the earth: He had died to the scene, and died out of it, to rise into that new place, now fully taken, as "the beginning of the creation of God." Head of that new order of things, associated with Him, "circumcised with the circumcision not made with hands," we partake of all that into which He as Man had entered. We are circumcised in Him, as Sarah was in Abraham. "We are the circumcision, who worship God by the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh:" the "sentence of death" to all that savored of the energy of man, even at his best, and the flesh only to be ignored, even in its best phase.

There all that savored of this, all that of which man could boast, is cast aside. Of all men he had that of which he could boast as to the flesh. Not the "flesh of sin" here, but that which looked fair in man's eyes, and was the best fruit that man could produce, as such, in divine things. By birth, by religious zeal, by righteousness of the law which applied to man in the flesh, all was surrendered in that moral death, of which circumcision was the seal.

But more: "all things" were counted loss, they but stood in the way of that which was "all his desire." "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection." Here was another of those striking points found in Gen. 17: the desire in gazing at Christ in glory, to know Him there -- gone up to that scene where all His glory shone. And here on earth, as a vessel indeed, will-less, powerless, empty, finding that power which raised up the Son, out of every sorrow and grief by the way -- and by which, at last, He rose from the grave -- working in the vessel, wielding it and using it for the purposes which alone were His, to work, while here, for His glory.

How did this power work in Paul? Look at the man who above all on earth was filled with such mighty energy in the service of Christ in the gospel: shut up as a malefactor in

prison, suspected by his brethren, shunned by all for a time, cut off from the work which was more than life to him. His great heart had swelled with the hope that, as he had evangelized the eastern world -- "From Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum," he had fully preached "the gospel of Christ" -- he would now go forth to the western world, as far as Spain -- carrying the word of life.

Caught in the toils of a prison, the great vessel learns, after four years of exercise, to say: "I would have you understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." God was doing greater things when the great vessel to whom the gospel of the glory of Christ was committed was set aside from its active work. Most of the brethren were waxing confident now (as in quietness of heart, his case in God's hands, he waited on His vindicating love), his bonds were known to be for Christ; others were the more bold to speak the word without fear.

But God was *making* the vessel for His use. It was on the potter's wheel. There were greater things to be done by him than his heart had devised. It was a light thing to evangelize the western world compared with the writing of those epistles which came from his prison in Rome, to instruct and comfort and rejoice the hearts of millions of His saints for well-nigh two thousand years. To this end "the power of his resurrection" alone could work. And if the fellowship of his sufferings" reached even to "conformity to his death," it was but the path by which he would arrive at "the resurrection out from among the dead," and thus be more like Christ.

There again we have "perfection" seen in the vessel, as far as such can be reached while here on earth. This "perfection" is always dispensational in its character, and answering to the revelation of Himself which God has been pleased to make from time to time: as *Almighty*, or *Jehovah*, or the *Father of the Lord Jesus Christ*.<sup>30</sup>

It is important for us that we understand the different ways that perfection is looked at in the word.

1. We have *positional* perfection, as we may term it, which every soul that belongs to Christ possesses in Him; the *standing* of the saint as set free under the gospel now set forth. This positional perfection is in contrast with what a Jew under the law could possess; because "the law made nothing perfect." Under the gospel--the conscience of the believer is perfected by the precious blood of Christ. When "once purged," no charge of sin can ever press itself on the worshiper. By one offering, Christ has perfected continuously the sanctified ones, that is, those separated to God by His blood.

But more: he has died with Christ out of the old status, which he possessed as a child of Adam. He is risen with Christ into a new sphere, too; he has been quickened together with Christ, and raised up together (Jew and Gentile) and seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Every soul who is in union with Christ stands in this "perfection" before God. I do not speak here of their realization of such. Paul labored that he

30. Compare Gen. 17:1; Deut. 18:8; Matt. 5:48; Phil. 3:15.

might present every man perfect in Christ (Col.1:28). In this there is no intrinsic perfection in the saint, it is his dispensational standing. He is complete in Him who is the Head of all principality and power. He is circumcised (positionally) in Him by the passing out, in the circumcision of Christ, into that new order of things, that eighth day, to which circumcision belonged. (It must be performed in the type on that eighth day.)

2. There is a *moral* perfection which is attainable here below on earth, to which Paul exhorts and in which he walked himself (Phil. 3:15). This is what the Spirit of God wrought in the vessel, in the condition found in Philippians producing in it a reflex and an answer here to all that Christ on high is with the hope filling the soul, to be conformed to Him in His path on earth, reaching even to the grave, and out of which the power of His resurrection would raise it if it reach “conformity unto his death.” “All things” were dross and dung in see king for such perfection; but it was attained by the setting aside of all that man could glory in, and it was wrought by the Holy Ghost in an empty, will-less vessel, hastening on to the goal. “Let as many as be perfect, be thus minded:” attainable, indeed, by all, though perhaps few really attain it, for want of a single eye.

3. But “*perfection*” *itself* could never be reached on earth. True, the *positional* perfection, all who are Christ’s possess in Him. *Moral* perfection would be attained by the true-hearted saint who yielded himself to the workings of the Spirit of God. But the end would not be reached while here. Nor until the

mighty power of Christ would be put forth, and “mortality would be swallowed up of life,” and He would change our vile body that it might be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the power whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself. Of this Paul would say: “Not that I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I am also apprehended of Christ.”

Thus the father of all that believe learned his threefold lesson experimentally in his path of old; and the leader of the people of God, in New Testament days, learned it in his. He was a man of like passions as ourselves, but a man with a single eye, a single motive, an undivided heart. He waits on high with Christ for the fruit of all that the potter’s hand had skillfully wrought, not a flaw remains, no more crushings are now required. He enjoys the “far better” thing meanwhile. By-and-by “This corruptible shall have put on incorruption; and this mortal shall have put on immortality,” and the Master’s handiwork will shine in him, as a “vessel of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.”

He will have then received the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give him at that day, and not to him only, but unto all those that love His appearing (2 Tim. 4:8).

