

Deuteronomy - Commentaries by William Kelly

Lectures on the Second Coming and Kingdom of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Gentiles in Relation to the Coming of the Lord, The

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DEUT. 32:8.

Lecture 3.

THIS remarkable Scripture establishes a truth of the highest importance, often forgotten now, but continually assumed throughout the great mass of the prophecies of God. The people of Israel are the necessary center in God's plan for dealing with the nations of the earth. It is a thought not a little humbling and offensive to the Gentile mind; for men evince, even to this hour, in spite of many opposing tendencies in the days in which we live, the latent contempt and natural scorn which the Gentile has for the Jew. Nevertheless, God, in all that He regulated or permitted, kept before His own eye the great governing thought, that all other peoples must find their place according to this plan. To the tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, must come the first dominion, For Israel His choicest earthly blessing is reserved, though it will flow far and wide to the nations. For the time being, their grievous presumption, as well as in subjection to God, has frustrated all; but by and by mercy will triumph, when the day comes for God to prove what He is for Israel, spite of what Israel has been against Himself. This, however, is but one form in which God gives us His mind touching the nations.

We find a change of immense import which came in at a subsequent date; and God has not left us without explaining the grounds and results of this great event. But the truth here revealed looks up to the earliest formation of nations, and peoples, and tongues after the flood. In Gen. 10 we hear of their first fathers or founders. One name of very solemn import comes before us from the very first—the name of Babel. Not merely does it appear from this division of the rising nations into their separate languages and distinct bounds of habitation, but it reappears when that vast change I have alluded to comes to pass. It will be found of much interest, and even importance, for the believer rightly to apprehend the original constitution of the nations as circling round Israel, as well as the new arrangement according to God's sovereign will when Israel publicly forfeited their central place. First, nothing can be plainer than the way in which the scriptures account for that which is otherwise perfectly inexplicable. You are aware that men are now searching with diligence, and sometimes applauding each other upon the very scanty measure of success with which they trace out, these different nationalities. The word of God has laid it all open to those who believe. He that searches the Scriptures has a clear, comprehensive, and perfectly intelligible account; he sees in it not accident, but the mighty and wise design of God — His judgment, too, in humbling the pride of man, which renewed its tendency from the flood, as at the first. That principle, on which men so pique themselves at the present hour, the power of union, was attempted directly after the flood; and men gathered together to build a conspicuous and permanent testimony to human greatness and an uniting bond for mankind, otherwise in danger of dispersion. But the tower which man built, in his pride and self-confidence, as a means of unity, was the ground on which God brought in confusion. Because they built a tower that they might remain together as one race, God broke them up into that division of languages, and tribes, and tongues according to the several lands which He arranged in His own mind for them; and the main substantial landmarks of the mighty judgment of God abide to our day, and shall abide till the Lord Jesus Christ comes, yea, till the new heavens and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Now, in this dispersion to which God sentenced the race, Israel was the central thought; and therefore it is that we find in Gen. 10 the Mosaic account of these different families according to the three sons of Noah. In Gen. 11 follows the key or hidden reason why God so dealt with man; for it was a new thing, an utterly unprecedented change, which has left results that unbelieving man cannot yet divine, but only speculate upon and lose himself in wandering mazes. For God it was no mere dealing with man's presumption, however surely this was checked. There was also the gracious intention of making Israel the means of blessedness for these dispersed nations of the earth. Accordingly Gen. 12 shows us the root and stock of the promises to Israel. Thus there is a very manifest and beautiful divine order in the way in which these truths come before us. Here, then, stands clearly the moral sequence — the rise of tongues and nationalities as the consequence of a divine judgment, the explanation of that which drew down the judgment; next, the revelation of that astonishing principle of divine grace, whether for earth or heaven — God's call of man to Himself. Abraham accordingly becomes the great witness of the call of God, the father of Israel, in due time to be called out also. They were called out of Egypt; but at Sinai they preferred to trust themselves rather than God. They forgot His promises to the fathers, or at least their principle; they accepted terms of their own obedience, i.e., really of their own goodness; and thus, as ever, their history became the constant evident proof of their entire badness. It is the moral tale of every heart; it is what we all prove till grace humbles the soul and brings us to God through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus. As it was with Israel, so is it with every child of man now who essays to enter into covenant with God, till self is judged, and the heart, purified by faith, finds its rest and strength in another, even Christ.

It is not my purpose to follow the history of Israel, but just to show in a prefatory way the place in which the nations are first viewed in the word of God, as circulating round Israel, where God was pleased to manifest His presence as far as was consistent with His counsels as then revealed. The Shechinah of glory was in their midst, hidden, it is true, behind a veil; but still such a manifestation of divine glory as no other people had. God dwelt in darkness; still it was God who dwelt there; and this of all their national privileges was surely inferior to none. God was in the midst of Israel; but they preferred other gods. They abandoned shamefully, shamelessly, the living God who deigned to be there, their God. There was not a vile idol of the nations to which they did not bow down, none, according to the expressive figure of Scripture, with which they did not commit adultery. The consequence was, that God began to deal with the larger portion of the nation which had already rejected their king. Having proved themselves rebellious to the royal house that God had Himself chosen for them, they consummated that rebellion by apostasy from God, who, after slighted warnings, swept away the ten tribes of Israel first, as a most solemn lesson to those who

remained. But Judah was deaf and blind to that which God was pointing out through guilty Israel; and when not only they, but the king of David's line, seemed only to vie with each other who would be foremost in the invention of idolatry, and in the debasing imitation of the nations whose false gods they set up, the true God, after reiterated summons and threats, allowed Babel to come forth once more. It was that same system of confusion; but now in a new form. Babylon, the mother of Old Testament abominations, the inventress of idols, — Babylon must be the instrument of executing judgment on idolatrous Judah! It was a strange sight to see at first; but there was the deep wisdom of God in the choice. Thus the God of heaven singled out Babylon of all the powers of the earth to have a new character of dominion never possessed before. Up to this epoch, Israel and Judah had been patiently waited on by the Lord of the whole earth, who had vouchsafed His presence, as we have seen, in their midst. There was a long course of long-suffering on the part of God, if peradventure the people would repent; but they became more and more guilty, and even apostate, yea, and their king. All hope was gone. Then the God of heaven in His sovereignty raised up the very worst of the Gentiles. The old seat of man — idolatrous, self-exalting, and concentrating in contempt of God, now a young, vigorous power, that lately rebelled against the Assyrian, and was the active means of overthrowing that old overthrower of Israel — Babylon, was summoned of God to the place of imperial power, of a world-empire. There was a definite grant of power on God's part to Babylon. The empire of Nebuchadnezzar had from God Himself a charter of universal dominion. He was the head of gold in the image he saw. The times of the Gentiles began.

This, then, is the great change to which I referred. For the first time in the world's history one king was permitted of God to be the undisputed monarch of the world. It is not a question of how far he pushed his conquests. Nebuchadnezzar was sufficiently active, we all know, in the East, and as far as Egypt and Palestine; but God gave him the place which others sought in vain. More than one had struggled for it: the various competitors for it failed one after another. God gave the world-power to the king of Babylon. The proofs of this will appear presently and abundantly, and I trust souls may see a little more clearly its importance. The first witness I would cite is Dan. 2. In the dream which God recalled to Nebuchadnezzar by the prophet, there was a great image. "This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them. And the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." Happily, there is no controversy worth talking about as to the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The prophet himself explains that the king of Babylon answers to the head of the image. That dynasty was followed by one inferior to it, not in extent of territory, but in the character of its power. Instead of having it direct from God, and using it as a solemn trust for His glory, you find a number of human counselors interfering with and weakening the sense of a responsibility immediate to God. This was the Persian rule, the features of which appear in Dan. 6, Esther, and Ezra. Then you have the third empire of brass, the Macedonian kingdom, under the well-known Alexander the Great, where there was a still lower character of influence intercepting the sovereign will of him who had called himself to the throne: not grave senators, men accustomed to rule, but soldiers of fortune, who could not, however clever generals, be supposed to understand matters of state. Here it was evidently the predominance of the military element, not the patrician; Again, you have in the fourth empire that which is common enough in our days, sovereignty founded on the multitude, on the simple will of man, and, of course, therefore on a majority, who could be least able to weigh all the difficulties, the niceties, the conflicts of human interests — everything that is required in legislation or rule. So it was in the Roman empire, as we know, republican in its origin, and therefore farther and farther removed from the idea of God conferring sovereignty upon man.

Besides, we find the striking intimation that this picture of the last empire shows, particularly in the interpretation given by the prophet, a foreign element introduced into it. This, certainly, is of no small interest to us, inasmuch as the clay is precisely that which indicates the intermixture of our barbarian forefathers, the wild hordes that burst from the northeast of Europe, first upsetting the old Roman empire, and then gradually incorporated into it. They, of course, were not free from the violence proper to the uncivilized, with wild notions of human freedom, recklessness of rule, and the passionate rejection of almost every kind of restraint. Hence in due course, when toned down by civilization, the boasted principle of constitutionalism. Men have wondered whence it came; but it is all explained in the word of God. It is the foreign element that did not belong to the empire in its origin. Thus it is the introduction of the Teutonic element — these strangers from the north of Europe and Asia — into the old Roman empire, which formed the combination of the past with semi-barbarian willfulness. This, accordingly, led to a very important point that begins to appear in our chapter (Dan. 2) — the break up of the empire into a number of separate kingdoms. It is alluded to briefly; but we shall have it much more fully in chapter 7. After describing the mixture of the miry clay with the iron of Rome, it is said, "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed." Your attention is particularly called to this; "In the days of these kings." What kings? The prophet had spoken about the image terminating in feet and toes; and, I think, there cannot be a doubt, more particularly by comparing this chapter with the seventh, that the toes of the image answer to the horns of the fourth beast. The proof of this will appear directly. Referring to the ten separate kingdoms, or their kings, Daniel says, "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed." There is no propriety in applying "these kings" to the four empires, because unquestionably the God of heaven sets up His kingdom, not during their course, but in the closing state of the fourth or last of the empires. Does not this fix the meaning to kings of the divided Roman empire in its last phase? It is impossible fairly to resist the conclusion.

I am aware that there are those who apply this portion of the interpretation to the introducing of Christianity into the earth. They conceive that such is the kingdom which the God of heaven set up. But a remark or two, I think, will disabuse any dispassionate mind here of such a thought. It is a very momentous subject to be clear upon, and a great many Christians are under the impression alluded to. Those who know better will bear with me for a moment, if I digress to dispose of a thought as injurious as it is popular. You will observe that the clay is supposed to have entered the image, and the division to have ensued, when we read, "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed." Was this the case when Christ was born? Was there anything correspondent when Christ died, rose again, went to heaven, and sent down the Holy Ghost? Was there any change answerable to the union of the miry clay with the iron of Rome? On the contrary, do we not know clearly from the Bible — and it is a great mercy we have not to travel farther than the Bible for proof of it — that there was but one head of the Roman empire then (Luke 2), that the realm was unbroken and the ruler a single individual, and consequently "the day of these kings" was not yet come? Thus it was iron, and nothing but iron, for many years after Christianity was set up. The importance of the remark, however simple, is this, — that one cannot anywhere introduce Christianity, or anything else that can answer to the setting up of the kingdom then.

The truth is, that though the foreign element predicted here be come in, this division is still future: for full proof of this, I must ask you to look with me into Daniel 7. I shall not go over the earlier verses that describe the other kingdoms; but in the 7th verse we read: "After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things."

You see, every different passage communicates some further truth from God. We had a division in chapter 2; we have here not only that division still more clearly shown, but also another personage quite distinct from those kings, whose conduct brings judgment not only upon himself, but upon all his associates. All I would first press is, that you have here the fourth beast, or imperial power; and, besides, separate horns pertaining to that beast. This denotes the peculiar features of the beast at the close. The ten horns are not successive but contemporaneous kings. Upon another occasion we may hope to dwell on the last king a little more fully. What can be plainer than that we have here the Spirit of God tracing from beginning to end the course of world-empire, — that so many powers should rise, and no more? It is a well-known fact — nobody disputes it — that these great imperial powers have arisen, and that none has been established since. What does the word of God declare to be the end? "A little stone cut without hands" is the figure of God's kingdom used in Daniel 2. The Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven is that which corresponds with it in chapter 7. Remark the action of the little stone. It falls upon the iron-clay feet of the image. This is its first operation. There is no working to transform the image-power; there is no introduction of new principles or moral influence, so as to effect a change in its character. On the contrary, a blow falls — a sudden, decisive stroke. The inference would be natural and necessary for an unprejudiced mind, even if the word of God did not explain it, that the blow means judgment by divine intervention, — the destruction and sweeping away of the last imperial power then subsisting in the world, with all the rains of the empires which had preceded it. Can an event of such a character as this be considered secondary? Is it not an intimation of the utmost possible weight for any soul to contemplate as at hand? Undoubtedly we who believe are by grace called to bright hopes; and God has opened heaven to us, showing us our portion in Christ at His right hand. But He has been also pleased to give us the lamp of prophecy to shine distinctly upon that which is about to take place in the world. This demonstrates that He will ere long raise the question of the earth; nay, more, — that His hands must soon be lifted up to strike: for He must execute judgment if way is to be made for blessing. But His judgment will be destruction, not merely of wicked individuals here and there, but a public conclusive act of divine judgment, which shall take effect upon those that are highest in the world and all their adherents. So, in the vision of Daniel 2 "was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." What God does now in His kingdom, where there is faith or even outward Christian profession, finds no expression here. Daniel speaks exclusively of the manifested kingdom of God which expands over all the earth, when His judgment, executed by the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel, has smitten the Roman empire in its final condition. So, in chapter 7 "because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake; I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame." It is the execution of God's vengeance on the Roman empire and its several kings, because of the blasphemous lawlessness of the little horn or its last chief. The kingdom of the Son of man, of which the prophet speaks, is established forever, and displayed when judgment has cleared the scene of their horrors.

Once the mind of the believer submits to this reviled yet simple fact, what a flood of light is cast upon all that is at work in the world and that awaits it! How it harmonizes with the great mass of scriptures that otherwise the eye might pass lightly over! We have in the word of God frequent declarations of the blessing God has in store for the world. One of the earliest of these is in the Book of Numbers, where He swears solemnly that He will fill the earth with His glory. I press this. Let no one, then, suppose that we are merely looking at the dark side of that which God is going to bring about. The scripture referred to is in Numbers 14:19-23: "Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word: but as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it." The reader can hardly fail to observe that the very same text which presents the Lord filling the earth with His glory, puts it in immediate connection with the execution of judgment upon sinful men. Look again at Isaiah 11:4-9. If we have another declaration of glory for the earth, we have the same solemn association of divine judgment with it: "In righteousness shall he [the Messiah, who is evidently the person spoken of, — the branch of David] judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." Then follows the assured blessing of the earth in the richest terms, wound up with the promise that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." If we turn, moreover, to the prophecy of Habakkuk, chapter 13:14, the connection is if possible, still clearer. "Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people[s] shall labor in the very fire, and the people[s] shall weary themselves for very vanity?" (How just a description of that which occupies men laboriously but in vain!) "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." But in the immediate neighborhood we have woes pronounced, the unequivocal intimation of divine judgment.

Thus the order in which Scripture presents the dark and the bright for the earth is abundantly plain. God means to bless the world, and fill it with His glory: there is no doubt of it whatever. But has He not also shown us how the blessing is to be effected? As little does He leave us in doubt as to the answer; and this on moral grounds. For the Gentiles will have proved themselves to be as thoroughly lawless, false, and apostate, judged to their responsibility, as we saw Israel to be, measured by the standard God applies to them. It is remarkable, too, that this is what occupies the mind of the Spirit of God between the two chapters which furnish the prophetic account of the four empires (Dan. 2 and 7), as has often been remarked, though it may be well to repeat it briefly now. The departure of the Gentiles was immediate, and the history that follows soon cut off all hope of real improvement, i.e., of repentance. What is the very next scene to the setting of Nebuchadnezzar in his place of undisputed power as the governor of the world? We have him at once erecting a golden image, and sending out a mandate, in which, on pain of a most cruel death, he insisted that the inhabitants of his vast dominions, congregated there at least representatively, should bow down and worship, at a given signal, the idol that he had just set up. In a word, the Gentile used his power (it is the very first occasion which Scripture records) to compel his subjects to idolatry under penalty of death. Is the Gentile any better in the other chapters (Dan. 4-6)? He is seen attributing all his grandeur to his own skill: "Is not this great Babylon that I have built?" Entirely forgetful of the grant of God, Nebuchadnezzar is thereon made an example of by divine power; his heart is changed from man's, and a beast's heart given him till "seven times" passed over him (which, no doubt, furnished the reason for the empires being designated "beasts" in chapter 7). Then comes, in

chapter 5, dissolute pride, and desecration of God in His holy things, in order to vaunt the false gods of the nations. Judgment falls upon Babylon at once. Finally, in chapter 6, the head of the new imperial power, King Darius, forbids the offering of any worship, for a certain time, save to himself. How evident a type of the self-deifying end of the Gentile power! Thus God's word, from the very first, stamps upon the Gentile empires their character and their judgment. Their history and end were all spread out from the beginning. Between the visions of the second and of the seventh chapters, we have their moral course which necessitated such a doom. The character may not yet have been manifested to its full extent, but it is the same principle; there may be outward difference and large development, but God marked it all from the very first, and the scriptures of truth show us that so it will be at the last.

And what then? God judges the Gentiles, and sets up His own kingdom under the Son of man. "And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages [not a mere election out of them — as now], should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

But where is the gospel all the while? In this prophecy totally unnoticed. And why so? Because the gospel is not a system of power, however glorious, that puts down rebellious nations, but a display of grace which unites all who receive it, whether Jew or Gentile, to Christ at the right hand of God. Here we have the course of what was earthly judged when the heavens ruled; but the gospel has nothing to do with governing the powers of this world. What is it, then? Not a superior power from heaven putting down all antagonists, but grace gathering souls out of the earth to heaven, and forming them, by the Lord the Spirit, according to Christ as seen there. This is the gospel of the glory of Christ, founded, no doubt, upon the cross — the glad tidings of grace which God can send forth to every creature, because of the precious blood of Jesus Christ. The object of the gospel is to set the soul perfectly free from all question of its guilt, to purge the conscience, to bring the heart and mind into communion with God's delight in His beloved Son. But then it is the revelation of Christ when He had finished the work of redemption upon earth, and taken His place in heaven. It is clearly, therefore, wholly distinct in source, character, and issues, from all that we trace out here. Yet men still assert that the kingdom which the God of heaven sets up, according to Daniel 2, is Christianity. Why is it that they "labor in the very fire," if one may so say, to press this vanity? The reason is obvious. Man likes to be energetic in the world, loves to have some great objects here, would prefer to have a religion that would suit and consort with the earth. Hence it is that the well-known system of Roman-ism so readily gains on natural minds of a certain religious character. Catholicism was before Roman-ism proper, but the Catholic principle of the early ages led to the Papacy of Rome, which found convenient for its purposes the current delusion as to the kingdom that the God of heaven would set up here. Why was it? In truth Christendom had long fallen from its heavenly enjoyment of, and testimony to, Christ. Hence it could look for an empire upon the earth. In this it was, ere long, gratified to the full. We all know that the Roman empire at length acknowledged Christ in an outward manner, and hearts too ready to believe what they liked supposed it to be the accomplishment of this and other prophecies of the sort. Thus men like Eusebius and others in no long time taught the notion that the vision of God's kingdom, according to Daniel 2, &c., began when Christ came to earth, and was completed, to a certain extent, when the Emperor Constantine and his successors authoritatively owned Christianity as the truth in the empire. Notwithstanding, the great revolution of that day, important as it was, is outside this Scripture, as the plainest reasons prove. Being an earthly view, it displaces heavenly grace from its power over the heart; and not being of God, it allows some idol connected with ourselves to be set up, instead of illustrating how all God's thoughts and purposes find their real application in the Lord Jesus Christ. The truth is, just as sin only betrayed its full character when Christ came, as the exceeding malignity of the flesh was only made manifest when He died and rose again, so also the world was then judged in principle. This is so important for the soul, that a mistake in these matters involves profoundly evil consequences. There may be piety and devotedness, as there has been, in men who conceive that the vision is accomplished in what is going on now, or in the past. But no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation: it cannot be rightly severed from being an item in the great sum which testifies of the coming kingdom of Christ. The inevitable effect is, that, as far as it goes, it turns away the heart from heaven to earth, and substitutes the creature in its littleness now for that mighty power of God which will work after a new fashion when the Lord Jesus reigns over the earth.

It hinders all right moral feeling as to present things; for it refuses to regard the world as a condemned system on which judgment is ever suspended and about to fall.

But, on the contrary, if the kingdom of God, according to the prophecy, has been already introduced, then it becomes a question of faith to see the blessing that flows all around us, and of hope for the mountain to fill the whole earth, while those who cannot see it must be troublers of Israel — mere Ishmaelites, whose chief work is to make man uncomfortable, and pour contempt on the efforts of Christendom. But if it be true that the world-power has never yet been judged of God, as we have seen in Daniel 2 and 7; if it be allowed that Christianity is another thing, not found here, but fully and clearly revealed in the New Testament (the proofs of which I hope to pursue on another occasion); if it be certain that God in this prophecy simply reveals the times of the Gentiles, put in a place of power, guilty from the very first, and pursuing their course of evil to the last, what a different aspect appears it ought to be remembered, that there was no such thing as the division into ten kingdoms when Christ was born, or when Constantine and others professed Christianity. The hordes of barbarians from the north and east had not poured into the empire and broken it up. Certainly nothing since has answered to it, unless you imagine the Papacy to be the kingdom which the God of heaven sets up. But men ever so little imbued with the mind of God know well that not only is all grace centered in Christ, but that He alone is worthy to be entrusted with the execution of judgment. Everything, therefore, tends to fix the eye and the ear of the believer upon Him.

Be sure of this, that one never really gets hold of any truth of the Bible unless somehow or other we are enabled to see it as a reflection of Christ, or as something that contributes to manifest the power of God in Him. Consequently this ever ready and only sure test of the truth becomes invaluable when applied to our subject. Has Christ yet smitten the Roman empire as is here described? Instead of His acting as the victorious "Stone," instead of smiting it, the Roman empire smote Him. In the Christ of humiliation we see the very reverse of what is described here. The Roman empire smote Him, nay, had the guilt — not alone, it is true, but in conjunction with apostate Judaism — of crucifying the Lord of glory. The Lord, speaking of Himself as the Stone in Matthew 21, has perfectly and with divine clearness and brevity put the two cases. "Whosoever shall fall on this stone [as He was here in shame going to the cross] shall be broken; but on whosoever it shall fall, [when He returns in power and glory,] it will grind him to powder." Manifestly there is no Stone of humiliation in the prophecy of Daniel. The first fact alleged of the Stone cut without hands, is not of unbelief stumbling over it as it was presented in lowly love, but that it falls and smites the great image of the world in its last phase of imperial power. It is not, as it were, a stone for man to tread and stumble on; it comes from above; it smites, overwhelms, and only then swells into a mountain and fills all the earth. In few words, then, a stumbling-stone is Christ in His humiliation; and those who stumble upon Him are broken. But what is it when presented afterward?

“Upon whomsoever it shall fall, they shall be ground to powder.” The Lord refers in these last words, and in these only, to the statement of our prophet, who leaves out all question of stumbling. We have only the Stone falling and grinding to powder. We have not a Stone of stumbling in Daniel, but only the Stone of judgment from above, which, as its preliminary action, breaks the image to pieces; so that not only the clay and the iron, but even the brass, the silver, and the gold, all disappear. The iron and the clay mix for the last form of the fourth empire. The separate nations exist now; but there is no such thing as the beast revived, nor the final division either; for they all receive power for one hour. (Rev. 17:12.) The beast is the uniting corporate bond and head which wields the force of the ten western kings. Much may be getting ready, everything in prospect of it; but there still lacks this bond of union under a chief of the west. It awaits the accomplishment of other purposes of God.

There is a restraint, as we know from 2 Thess. Satan cannot bring his scheme to pass until the moment that is known in the mind of God. Nevertheless, all ripens each day for it, and the desire of men for it is manifest, however great their wonder may be when it is realized. Ambition is not without aspirations after it. The converse of men shows a presentiment of it in their minds. The most careless are afraid of what looms upon the earth. Such is over the case before some mighty catastrophe. Cong events cast their shadows before. This always has been, and always will be, till the Lord take the world under His own government. All this, then, goes on; yet there is a power that hinders its fulfilment, because God has other plans to consummate before He will allow the final climax of evil. But when the apostasy arrives and the man of sin is revealed and the beast emerges from the pit, the end of the age is at hand. Divine power will act in judgment, and the kingdom of God appears.

Again, the symbolic expression of “a Stone cut without hands” in no way suits the gathering of believers which began at Pentecost. Individually considered, these may be, and are, viewed as living stones. (1 Peter 2) But, as a whole, they are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit; they are growing into an holy temple in the Lord; they are even now the temple of God, God’s house, the assembly of the living God.

The “Stone” is appropriated to Christ in the law (Gen. 49), as we have seen in the Psalms (118) and in the prophets (Isa. 28); and it is clear to me, that our Lord, in Matt. 21:42-44 already referred to, connects Daniel 2 with Psalms 118. I need not add other allusions to the same effect in the Acts and the Epistles, but conclude that it means the kingdom of God and of heaven appearing in, the peon of the Lord Jesus, and this in judgment of the Roman empire. The point of contrast with the four image world-powers in Daniel 2 is its source above man, its immediate judicial overthrow of all existing empire with the relics of the past, its unprecedented expansion after the first destructive blow, and its perpetuity, instead of falling to others like its predecessors. Of a spiritual power dealing with hearts by faith, by heavenly aims, by divine principles, and thus spreading over humanity a regenerating influence, not a word appears here. The Stone has never yet smitten the Image, still less has it grown so as to fill the whole earth. Daniel 7 contrasts with the four beasts emerging from the mass of troubled waters one like a Son of man, invested by the Ancient of days with universal dominion. Put the two things tether, and what can be simpler in itself? what sense more beautifully true? what more harmonizing with the general scope of the truth of God? Whatever form of existence the kingdom of God may have had in the world, the question here is one of the Lord’s intervention in irresistible might, judgment, and destruction of the powers that be, and of His subsequent reign with His saints over the earth in power and glory.

I may now briefly refer to a few more passages of Scripture to show, not merely the vast imperial system of Gentile power judged by the Lord when He conies in the clouds of heaven, but that God has not given up His design of making Israel the center of independent nations circling round that people. Nothing can be more striking than to see the admirable concord of the prophets, and indeed of all Scripture. In some, our Lord Jesus is referred to as the Son of David. It is His Messianic glory. Where this is the thought, Zion (Jerusalem) is the revealed scene of His reign, and Israel the channel of the blessing that He will diffuse through the nations. Next, when the times of the Gentiles are introduced, as in Daniel, a farther scene opens. As God abandons for the time Israel as His pivot of blessing, as He raises up the great universal empire, so the Lord Jesus will have a sphere of dominion answering to these larger dealings of God. Hence, in Daniel 7. He is not as the Son of David, but “one like a Son of man” is seen. Why so? Because He receives an unlimited dominion over the children of men. “Them was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

Thus the most perfect harmony reigns between the different portions of divine truth, even as the rejection of Christ in one glory led in God’s wisdom to the unfolding of a still larger and higher. Let me turn now to some Scriptures of the prophets, which follow up what we have seen in Deuteronomy and Daniel. In Isaiah, in Jeremiah, in Ezekiel, as well as in the minor prophets and the Psalms, we have much confirmatory truth. As it is important to have distinct thoughts on that which God has revealed in relation to this subject, let me dwell for a short time upon some of the more salient points. In Jeremiah 3 we see that the Spirit of God cherishes the first thought alluded to. Israel are viewed as yet to be God’s earthly center for the blessing of the nations. “It shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more. 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.” Does any fair (not to say instructed) person here believe that there has been the smallest approach to an accomplishment of this prophecy? Mark the time when God gave it — not before the days of David and Solomon, but after Israel had been broken up, and the great mass of the tribes had been carried away into captivity; when Judah, that still remained, was falling into the worst possible defection from God, being flooded with idols yet more than Israel. It was, therefore, after the developed evil of Israel, and of Judah too. The prediction supposes the fact of the Babylonish captivity that was then impending because of idolatry. Yet God predicts, through His servant, a time so glorious, that no period of glory in the past should be comparable to that which was coming. But I refer to this Scripture now to show, not the future blessing of Israel, but that the first view of the Gentiles I have sought to present tonight supposes Israel to be blessed, and disclaims all hope of a good time for the world at large, except through Israel restored and regenerate. Here, accordingly, it is said that Jerusalem shall be called “the throne of Jehovah, and all the nations shall be gathered unto it.” Where has there been the smallest realization of this promise? If any nations were ever gathered to Jerusalem up to the present, it was to desolate and trample the Jews down of old, or to destroy one another since, Our Lord has Himself told us that Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. But here is the time of Israel; here Jerusalem’s blessing comes, not the eking out of the sad days of Gentile supremacy. All the nations shall be gathered, not for vain contests between the Cross and the Crescent, but “to be name of the Lord, to Jerusalem.” It is not the gospel; for its direction is precisely the opposite. The message of grace is now being diffused to the Gentiles, to every nation throughout the world. Here it is the gathering of the nations to an earthly center — to Jerusalem.

Does anyone slight this as a low thought unworthy of God? Oh, what an abuse of heavenly blessing! Surely, to be blessed with Christ in heaven is infinitely higher, sweeter, lovelier, holier than any glory which concerns the earth. But am I, therefore, to deny the wonderful word of my God, that He means to bless this world? Am I to defraud of aught the Savior that has died for us, brought us nigh to God, and that will have us in heaven along with Himself? Am I to say, that the will of the Father shall not be done on earth, as it is in heaven? Am I not to pray this prayer in spirit and understanding also, instead of reducing it to an unknown, unmeaning form? Every one virtually mutes it out, or at least ignores its meaning, who denies that the earth is to be blessed, creation delivered from the curse. It now groans under, the nations to have the glory of the Lord filling it and themselves, therefore, sharing these precious blessings with Israel. Jerusalem, then, is to be the throne of Jehovah. Ah! if it be worthy of God, suitable to His grace, and due to His Son, that He should show mercy to the vilest of sinners now, will it detract from His glory, or will, it lessen His grace, if He pour out His mercy over the earth — if He yet make that guilty city to be a holy city, not in word only, but in deed and in truth? The time shall come when He who saw and wept over its growing iniquity, and was the herald of judgments to the Gentiles, will be the unhindered and eternal blessing of Jerusalem, that the nations may be blessed too. Is not this the comforting thought that is presented here? Is there not here predicted a full cup of joy for Jerusalem, that all the nations may share it? Not that they shall be on the same level, or enjoy the same measure of blessing; but certainly they shall be gathered to Jerusalem to be blessed there. (See Appendix.)

Again, without enlarging on any one prophecy particularly tonight, let me refer to a very striking one in the prophecy of Ezekiel. We shall see that the elements needful for its accomplishment have been brought out by God most remarkably within the last two or three centuries. The Scripture in my thought is Ezekiel 38, 39. Let me make, however, a remark, before we enter upon it. In Jeremiah and Ezekiel we have nothing at all about the new system of the great empires of the world. Jeremiah deals more particularly with the moral iniquity, the idolatry of Judah, and shows us also the final restoration of the people, and their blessing — particularly that which God will effect when He writes His laws on their hearts. Jeremiah passes over all that intervenes, as Ezekiel does in another way. The main difference is, that the latter does not make, first, the moral condition of the people, and then the spiritual blessing in the latter day, the great points, so to speak, of his prophecy. Ezekiel's main task is about the manifestation of God's glory in Israel. Hence he begins in the early chapters with the living creatures, which finally leave the temple, city, and the land. In the latter chapters they are seen returning to dwell there forever, when Jerusalem shall be Jehovah-Shammah ("the Lord is there"). In this prophet, therefore, we have the converse of the Book of Daniel, who gives us exactly what is between the two points. In the four successive imperial powers of the Gentiles there is no such fact as the governmental glory of God manifesting itself upon the earth, it had existed up to the time of the Babylonish captivity; it will be again, when Israel shall be restored to, and planted in, their own land once more. But between those distant points there intervene the times of the Gentiles, which still run on. Meanwhile Christianity also comes in; but this belongs to the New Testament: it is the mystery of Christ and the Church, and is hidden, as far as the Old Testament is concerned.

In Ezekiel 38, then, we have these words: "Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal." As Gog is the name of this destined leader of the Gentiles in the north and east and south, so we have his land described as the land of Magog. There is no doubt that this distant land means what the ancients used to call Scythia, what is now included under the vast European and Asiatic possessions of the Russian empire. But, moreover, there is confirmatory evidence in the names of various races, which fact is somewhat obscured in our version; for it is well to observe, that "the chief prince" should be "the prince of Rosh" The word is not only an ordinary appellation, meaning head or chief, but the Hebrew proper name for Russia, or the Russians, in which sense the proper nouns following prove it should be here taken.¹

Nor is this at all the mere resource of modern interpreters, after events pointed out the way. The oldest version of the Old Testament is the Septuagint, or Greek Bible of the Seventy, which affirms the sense just mentioned. This, it is well known, is the version which our Lord quoted and the apostles used very frequently. In this case the rendering is simple, natural, and clear. The bearing of the prophecy is, that a certain prince comes up under the name (perhaps the mystic name) of Gog, as to which no theory whatever is pressed or hazarded here. From the land of Magog, or old Scythia, comes this prince of certain races — the Russians (Rosh), the Muscovites (Meshech), and the inhabitants of Tobolsk (Tubal). This personage, actuated by territorial greed and especially of the Holy Land, is to lead countless forces of armed followers against the land of Israel in the last day, but to his own and their total destruction, under divine judgment. Now, what could be less looked for, if we turn back to Ezekiel's times, than the then delineation of such a power? And what can be of more profound interest to us now? There would not be, ought not, perhaps, to be, the same confidence, were this merely a discovery of the prophet's meaning confined to our own day. Not, of course, that this would falsify the prophecy; for his inspired words would be just as true, if no translator or interpreter had given the just sense before Russia began to develop and aspire. But when we see that such is the simple force of this Scripture, when we remember that the oldest version of the passage is the best (a version executed some 150 or 200 years before our Lord lived in the world), when we bear in mind that not only in the day of the prophet and of the Greek translators, but for a thousand years after the last, the races the now compose the properly Russian elements of the empire were hardly beyond wandering barbarians, is not the hand and mind of God most apparent? There was not the smallest appearance of the emergence of the gigantic power that is continually absorbing in the East; that claims equality at least with the greatest powers of the Roman empire; that threatens, too, in connection with the Holy Land. For some two or three centuries we know that it has cherished, religiously and systematically, the scheme of unlimited aggression and progress; that its plans are formed upon the thought of possessing the East to itself, as well as of overawing the West; and that, being a power not less superstitious than aggressive, it is peculiarly desirous of gaining and propping up a sacred character by the acquisition of the land consecrated by our Lord's life and death. It were strange if all these considerations did not invest the prophecy and the races in question with exceeding gravity, more particularly as the days are at hand and the effect of every vision. That these thoughts are set forth as revealed truth, and I trust also in a plain manner, is not at all owing to any events that have of late transpired in the world. It is well known, that the very same truths have been held and taught long before there was the recent feud about the holy places or any fighting in the East. Still, no one can deny, nor do I wish to weaken, the confirmatory character of that which has been witnessed there.

But mark another thing. This is a power entirely outside the Roman empire, nay, outside all the ancient imperial powers. It is an empire entirely to itself, singularly blending barbarism with civilization, and rude force with subtle policy; beyond doubt, characterized by the lust of territorial aggrandizement, and panting above all for mastery in the Holy Land. Lapse of time only brings out features that fall in most distinctly with the prediction, and prepares the way for the final struggle, if men want confirmation of God's word in its clear, simple meaning. No dispassionate mind can say that this part of Ezekiel has been fulfilled as yet. Gog, his hosts and allies, come down when Israel (more or less represented) are in their land. The previous chapters (36, 37) also point to this distinctly. Thus Ezekiel 36 presents a view of the Lord, not

only bringing back His people to Palestine, but acting graciously on their souls — according to the figure, sprinkling clean water upon them, exchanging their stony hearts for a heart of flesh, and putting His Spirit within them. The bearing of all this is unquestionable, or at least should not be questioned: God will restore Israel and convert them in the land. Next, in chapter 37, we have a fresh picture of the power and goodness of God in their favor, under the figure of the valley of dry bones, and then under the two sticks emblematically joined in one, On the dry bones the Spirit breathed, so that flesh came, and breath subsequently, and they all stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army, This is divinely explained to mean the revival of the whole house of Israel, and their return into the land. But something more was necessary. What about the union of the long-divided people, the twelve-tribe nationality of Israel? The answer is given in the same chapter, under the symbol of the two sticks, henceforth united together. The Spirit of God leaves no room for doubt or speculation. The meaning is, Israel and Judah united as a people under one head, who is figuratively called “David,” the beloved, their king. Is it not evident that all, these chapters dovetail into the whole blessing of the latter day for Israel and the Gentiles, not the Church? They suppose a new action of God, for which the earth has yet to wait, in which He will bring back, then convert, and after that unite, the tribes of Israel such under one beloved King, who will diffuse and secure divine blessing through His people, and, as we know from elsewhere, throughout all the nations of the earth, It would appear to be at the beginning of this very dealing of God, when Israel, in part at least, are in their land, that Gog comes down upon them, seeing the land unprotected by the ordinary munitions of war. He counts it the fairest opportunity for at last consummating his long-cherished plan. He has no faith in the reality of God’s presence with, and protection of, His people. But he comes down to his own irreparable ruin. This is described most fully in the latter part of Ezekiel 38, as well as in the next chapter. We need not linger on the, details. But as a further following up of the prophecy; and more for the purpose of leading persons to search the word of God than of saying much about it now, I would refer to the weighty fact of the long-departed glory returning (ch. 43, 44) to the earth, and resuming its place in Israel, only in an infinitely more blessed way. (Compare also Isa. 4) All this furnishes the most evident proofs that a future time of blessedness is in view — often promised, but, when it comes, surpassing every expectation, if not also the very promises themselves.

Let me, before closing, touch on one prophecy more towards the conclusion of the Old Testament.

We have some points of remarkable interest in the latter part of Zechariah. In chapter 11 is predicted the Savior’s rejection; and then, by one of those transitions so characteristic of Scripture, we have another, not the true Shepherd, but one designated the idol shepherd. “Lo,” says the Lord, “I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.” Who that reads the Scriptures with an intelligent eye, can fail to see that, as we had first Christ despised, so at last have we Antichrist? The Good; Shepherd was refused — the evil shepherd is accepted.

God thereon deals retributively with His guilty people. In the next chapter (12) we have the nations gathering against Jerusalem. The reception of the Antichrist, as the sequel of rejecting the Christ, is the ground of God’s terrible judgments. But it is added, “In that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people.” If they assemble themselves, and God uses them for dealing with Jerusalem, He will turn His hand and use Jerusalem for dealing with the nations. The ax shall not boast against Him that hews with it. There is a double process going on. It is the time of universal judgment of the quick; but if He chastens the Jews, assuredly the nations shall not go unpunished “for yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger, in their destruction” But Jerusalem’s part is notable; for, clearly, it is not only a question of idolatry, but of Christ scorned and crucified. Hover, it was not merely the Jews who rejected Christ, but the nations too. So that there will be a double reason for the execution of Divine judgment in the last days — idolatry, and “not this man but” Antichrist. The Gentiles will share with Israel in both respects. There is some difference as to this with the nations, as indeed among the tribes of Israel, which we need not stop to discuss particularly now. Suffice it to say that all the nations are here gathered in hostility to Jerusalem; and this is the language in which the Spirit of God expresses it: “The Lord shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David, and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, do not magnify themselves against Judah. In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” Has this, or anything like it, been accomplished yet? What has taken place since Zechariah? The defilement of Antiochus, the siege of Titus, and the like. In which of these, or, on what occasion since, was the Lord saving Jerusalem and its inhabitants? There has never been the smallest approach to a fulfillment. Reading a little further, we are told that “it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all nations that come against Jerusalem.” What then? Has the prophecy failed? Not for a moment. The prophecy supposes the Jews returned, and of course, therefore, is not yet accomplished. The conclusion is equally simple and certain; it must yet be fulfilled. Then mark further. It is not only that there is a great execution of divine judgment threatened on all nations, which has never yet been, but Jehovah here says (vss. 10, 11), “I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son; and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.” As yet, the very reverse of this has been true of Jerusalem and the Jews. It is a future scene in all its parts, and with genuine marks of singularity: for though that day is ushered in with clouds and darkness, none the less will there arise a Sun of glory that never sets. When that bright day comes — the day of the Lord, and not of men — there will be a mighty action of the Holy Ghost; and, as is always the case where God acts in men, it is not alone the heart that is moved, and the affections kindled towards Himself and all that is good; but, inasmuch as grace is dealing with sinful men, there will be true and deep repentance, a real plowing up of the soul, an appropriation of sin: and wherever it is so, it is individually felt and Confessed. Each is alone with God. If we assert the truth of God as to these magnificent scenes of the latter day, when God will deal with the Jews and the nations, let no one suppose for a moment that He will give up His personal claim upon the heart and conscience of man. There will be, no doubt, an universal dealing with Jews and Gentiles; yet, after all, how the mighty work of the Spirit of God individualizes, and necessarily so! For as we read, not only in that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, but it is added, “And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.” The closest relationships will not interfere in the least degree with the call of God, when each soul, as it were, shall stand before Him in conscience; and, although they are brought into joy, it will be surely to rejoice with trembling. Such will, then, be the searching work of the Spirit in the Jews.

Mark, again, how evidently this is a future scene. We have David’s family and Nathan’s family apart. Who can tell the family of David? or the family of Nathan? It is the very thing the Jews cannot settle. Their genealogies are lost — these records exist not. They may form indistinct notions here and there, but they cannot know for certain. But this will be a day when from God secret things will re-appear, as it is the day when man’s conscience will be wrought upon by the Spirit of God. Is it not always the case where grace really works? But how wondrous the

scene, when in the midst of that mighty work of deliverance God will deal with the conscience. There will be those that derive their lineage from the great king David, and others too who claim kin with the prophet who convicted David of his sin; but in that day, whether it be the family of the rebuke, king, or that of the rebuking prophet, here will be no difference. The descendants of both will be there; but they are alike bowed down in the presence of God's grace and a pierced Messiah. Each confesses his sin. Whatever may have been the distinction in their forefathers in the wonderful scene of David and Nathan, there will be "no difference" in the future day as to their descendants; all feel their sin — each acknowledges his sin before God. Again, in the earliest hours of Israel's history, there was another scene, when two heads of houses or tribes of Israel joined together in a cruel vindication of their injured sister, and caused the name of Jacob to stink among the inhabitants of the land, instead of being an attractive light to the nations of the earth. In this day the sons of Shimei [Simeon] and the sons of Levi will be there; but there to give an account of their folly — to mourn and weep over their sins before the Lord — each apart, and their wives apart.

Is there a heart that would blot out this blessed and most touching witness of God's faithfulness to His people, and of the wonders His mercy will yet work for Israel? Do we think to enrich ourselves by taking it all from them for ourselves? In truth, where men do so, it is not merely stealing that which is God's own gift, pledged, so to speak, to Israel, but by a just retribution they hinder the blessing of the Gentiles also.

In chapters 14 the nations re-appear once more, and the Lord goes forth at the head of His people and overthrows them. The nations may seem at first to succeed. They take Jerusalem, and half of the city goes into captivity; but, nevertheless, the nations are discomfited forever immediately after. When has there been the very faintest appearance of the accomplishment of this prophecy? But there is more than this. It is said, "In that day the Lord shall come, and all His saints with Him." Has this too been fulfilled? Still more, as if to confront the thoughts of man, as if to stamp the dreams of rationalism with evident folly, God will not leave the mount of Olives without an everlasting token that the Maker of heaven and earth is that glorious One, whose feet stand there in that day. Is Olivet cloven now? Clearly not. What can you make of it by the so-called spiritual interpretation? Absolutely nothing. No matter who or what you are, sure I am that mysticism fails, and here, if anywhere, it ought to confess its fault with shame. The undivided mountain rises up to condemn those false interpretations, and is a silent standing witness that the prophecy is not yet accomplished; before God and man the fact declares that the prophecy awaits its fulfillment. When the Lord does come to accomplish it, the mount will part asunder, and there shall be a very great valley between the northern and southern fragments. You who would unwittingly make this prophecy of private interpretation, weigh the fact now before us. Can you etherealize, so to speak, the mount of Olives? Can you turn it into a myth? Impossible! God condescends to map it out, so to speak, that there may be no mistake. He is pleased even to give the geographical position of it (vs. 4), as if to expose and refute all such mysticism forever. Then we have the effects of the appearing of the Lord on the mount of Olives. Not only are the nations defeated, but, besides, "It shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day nor night, but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light." Instead of day succeeding night, as has always been the case in the world's history before, when one might expect the night, it will still be the light of day. There will be an exceptional interruption of the ordinary change of day and night, marking the presence of the Lord God of the world. One feels how right it is that it should be so. How could the sun go clown, so to speak, if the Lord be no longer hidden, but come in His glory? "And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea; in summer and in winter shall it be." In this we have the sign of refreshing fertilizing power that goes out to the mass of people, even the most hopeless, and this, independently of times and seasons henceforth. "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one." There is also the witness of the authority of God in what He will do. He will judge the nations that do not come up to Jerusalem. (vss. 12-19.) If the world is to be blessed, it cannot be at the expense of His honor or His sovereign choice of Jerusalem as the earth's metropolis and sanctuary. (vss. 20-21.) The Lord accordingly shows the unmistakable tokens of His future day for the earth, a day without parallel. If it be perfectly certain that all this does not suit the time before or since Christ's first advent, is it not evident that it must, refer to the age that follows His second? Further, is it not equally plain, that it cannot be the Lord God at the end destroying the earth and things that now are? Have we not seen that He is King in that day, and that blessings flow out from Jerusalem? Have we not even geographical signs as if to put to flight every tendency to a mythicizing of Scripture? There is not a scene far away from this present creation; it is not possible to be said of the heavens, but only of the earth. It is admitted fully, that our place will be above with the Lord; but what reason is this against the Lord's having also the throne of His father David on the earth (Isa. 9), or filling it with the knowledge of Jehovah's glory, as the waters cover the sea? (Isaiah rd.) And so we find it here— "All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon." "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, art from the islands of the sea." (vss. 10-11.) It is not the earth dissolved, it is not the elements melting with fervent heat, but the earth that now is blessed, as it has never been since the curse fell upon it. The language of Scripture is as precise as that of a chart. How evident that it is not the epoch of the burning up of all things, when every landmark necessarily disappears. The clean contrary is the case. The well-known spots that every Israelite treasures in his memory are found once more: only are gone the marks of desolation; no longer the signs of Gentile oppression appear, but the blessing of the Lord God given to the people of His choice, the whole earth sharing the joy and peace of that day.

But no more on this subject, save to commend it to your attention. It necessarily involves appalling judgments on the Gentiles; but, as we have seen, the Lord in the midst of judgment remembers mercy. He puts down evil solemnly, unsparingly in that day; but He also diffuses countless blessings for those that are spared on the earth, as He will have filled the heavens according to the counsels of His own will, and to the praise of His glory.

The Feasts in Deuteronomy, Feasts in Deuteronomy, The: Passover

1.—THE PASSOVER, IN VERSES 1-8.

The three great feasts of Jehovah here specified were instituted by Him for the express purpose of filling the hearts of His people with the enjoyment of Himself revealed in distinct blessings. If it was so in the letter for Israel, what is taught and conveyed to us, who have the substance of these earthly shadows! For all that God wrought or gave in the times that are past is but a little thing, compared with what the

incarnate Son of God presented to Him in His person, and accomplished in His death, resurrection, and ascension, that the Holy Spirit might testify to the believer a blessedness worthy of the Father and the Son. Yet who could deny that these feasts were full of rich remembrance and rich promise of mercy? What a magnificent putting forth of divine power it was to bring Israel, a then nation of slaves, from under the greatest power at the time ruling on the earth! Nor in that deliverance was it merely power. There was a far deeper question before God. Israel, no less than the Egyptians, were a sinful race. How could God make light of their sins? Against all the gods of Egypt Jehovah was about to execute judgment. Pharaoh, who denied His title to claim Israel, must be publicly humbled and punished. But withal what about the sins of Israel? Therefore, while closing His preliminary blows upon guilty Egypt, God directed the last of them to fall on the firstborn sons of the Egyptians, from the king's down to the maid's behind the mill. How then was it with His people? Were they not as real sinners as the Egyptians? And would God make light of sin because they were His own? Is not Jehovah sanctified in those that are near Him? Does it not add immensely to the horribleness of sins in His sight when they break out in one that He chooses to Himself. He had favored and blessed their fathers, marking them out clearly for hundreds of years while growing up to be such a people as they then became.

Accordingly He instituted the Passover, and made it the more striking, for a new reckoning commenced from that fact as a foundation for Israel. Abib was the seventh month of the civil year; "for in the month of Abib, Jehovah thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night" (ver. 1). It now began the holy year. Jehovah was dealing judicially beyond all that had gone before; and the lamb's blood alone could shelter guilty Israel. It was a whole people confessing their sins and His righteousness in the same solemn sacrifice applied to every household and every soul who entered that night the blood-sprinkled doors. So we read in Ex. 12. Only observe that in Deut. 16 it is simply the passover sacrificed. Nothing is said here of the blood put upon the door-posts. "And thou shalt sacrifice the passover unto Jehovah thy God, of the flock and the herd" (ver. 2).

The reason is plain. The use of the blood as on that first celebration was made but once. This intimates a great deal for the effectual reality, as well as in its typical significance, as we may read, over and over again, in the Epistle to the Hebrews. How much on the other hand among men depends on repetition! Only thus it is that ordinarily, they attain an approach to what they consider worthy. With God Who cannot fail, any more than lie, it is quite another thing. Repetition in His institutions imposed on man means that the end is not reached. But there was only one paschal sprinkling of blood on the door-posts; nor was there failure in the then result. It was not repeated at any subsequent observance of the feast. Attention was thereby drawn to the unity of the blood-sprinkling when judgment was proceeding as never again in Israel's history. But "sacrifice" must always be, as it is, the ground of righteousness for man as he is. And whose righteousness was it? Not man's certainly but God's righteousness. So in the cross of Christ God would lay such a foundation that He might not only judge the evil, but justify the ungodly who had wrought nothing to deserve protection. It was grace therefore, but God's righteousness according to His word. It is His appreciation of Christ's work on behalf of those whose works were only evil.

All are aware that the Passover was before the law. The attempt therefore to bring in the law is plainly and absolutely excluded. Had that feast only come in after the law, there might have seemed some little ground for such an inference. Men are ready enough to catch at this or that appearance in order to lay down what pleases them. And the reason why the law pleases is because it necessarily is addressed to man himself and his works. He therefore likes it; man is somebody, and can do something. Yet the law was God's claim on man; but what He taught by it was the impossibility of pleasing God on any such ground. Here too He was showing by the passover, before the law was, His way of sheltering from judgment a guilty people by the blood He directed them to put on their door-posts. Be it that they were Israel; but their sins He could not ignore, as if they were nothing; or must be borne with, because they were the sins of His people. No, He found a way of righteousness, His own righteousness in the lamb that was slain; and only once was the lamb's blood put (yet in a way that brought the ground of their exemption from judgment home to each Israelite,) on the entrance to every house. No one that was there could enter save under the lamb's blood which was put not within, but outside the house.

And what could show so clearly that it was for Jehovah's eye, not for man as a matter of sense, or mind? It was put on the two side-posts, and on the lintel for his faith simply, but all the more for the profoundest feelings of his heart. Had it been inside, it would have naturally awakened the suggestion that they were to gaze at the lamb's blood, to which they owed their security. But there was nothing of the kind, the lamb's blood was put outside; within they eat the flesh roast with fire. What makes the force of that which has been said the more evident is the fact that it was "night." There was no natural light to enable the blood to be seen of men. Only the divine eye could see the blood on the door-posts. And He was the One concerned; sins refer to His judgment. He might work by a destroyer; but it was Jehovah Who smote Egypt, man, beast, and gods; it was Jehovah Who saw the blood, and passed over Israel sheltered by it. There was the blood for the eye of Jehovah Himself to discern. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Thus and thus only could the people be screened from the destroyer.

This was the foundation of all Man had lived upon the earth long before; he had tried his own way in every possible form. Jehovah's people too had shown what they were; as His own fidelity and goodness had failed in no way. But never before had anything for His people been wrought as a righteous groundwork till the Passover.

Here however we see in this chapter as the people were about to enter the land of promise, the same blessed truth is recalled to mind when Jehovah gathered Israel round Himself. If the application of the blood to the door-posts, so striking and instructive on the original occasion, is left out here, even this is quite appropriate to Israel then and to the believer now. No doubt when a man is first awakened and receives the glad tidings of redemption in Christ Jesus through the shedding of His blood, imminent danger from the wrath to come clearly appeals to the soul. But after he has bowed to the truth, he is no longer filled with alarm, still less in the same degree or way. Is it that Christ's work is valued less? A great deal more. When souls wake up at Christ's word from moral death, when they justly feel their sins in the sight of God, there are deep and vehement heart searchings and painful pressure of guilt on the conscience; and the grace of Christ administers truly divine relief. Afterward, as the soul submits to the righteousness of God, does the value of Christ and His work diminish? It acquires a far deepening character, as faith is exercised by the word.

May I observe that there are not a few hymns tending to make people think that the first joy of looking to the Lord Jesus as the Savior is so bright and full, that all afterward here below becomes comparatively pale. But is this really consistent with the truth? Does scripture justify our looking back on that early and indelible hour of contrition, when the Savior's welcome was tasted, as the fullness of blessing for ourselves? I believe that for such as do so, the heart has feebly entered into "the riches of His grace," little, if at all, into what the apostle calls "the glory of His grace." Great as that mercy was, we are all entitled to "receive of His fullness," and to know experimentally depths of

His grace in Himself and His work far beyond.

It is the abiding blessing of Christ in His work of redemption that is here presented. Many circumstances of the first burst of the truth on the people of God are left out, the wondrous sacrifice in itself is recalled in its simple majesty, without any particular reference to the form in which it applied in the first instance. The Spirit of God is here anticipating the way in which the passover should be kept in the land of God. Now it is precisely because the grace is anticipated of Jehovah bringing in Israel there, that no lack of care is tolerable, that the deepest call is made on their spiritual affections. It is no more leaving Egypt, nor yet the wilderness through which they passed, but Jehovah putting forth His power in new and, if possible, richer ways in bringing His people into the full accomplishment of the blessing. Does not this mark Israel entering into and dwelling in the "good" land where His eyes rest continually? So when we are first awakened, the pressure of our sense of danger is great, the urgent necessity of being screened by Christ's work from judgment because of our iniquities; but surely He and that work lead us on to appreciate far deeper things. So now we have the calm and peaceful enjoyment of a work in itself intrinsically the same, and infinite in its value. This seems to be what Jehovah would have His people enjoy in the passover kept in the land. "Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the passover unto Jehovah thy God, of the flock and the herd,¹ in the place which Jehovah shall choose to cause His name to dwell there" (ver. 2). But while the peculiar circumstances of its first celebration disappear, there is no difference as to the unleavened bread. It may be presumed that all know that the purity which must follow "the sacrifice," means the total denial of all ungodliness and corruption, however palatable to fallen nature. In the glorious land as Daniel calls it, could there be any relaxation of purity? Here we have the unleavened bread particularly enjoined; "Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, [even] the bread of affliction; for thou earnest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste; that thou mayest remember the day when thou earnest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life." So it was then, but there is no haste now. So there was and must have been on the first occasion; they are merely reminded of this in looking back: "that thou mayest remember the day... all the days of thy life." It personally concerned each one. When Israel come to know Who He is that was sacrificed for them, on Whose blood hung their entire shelter, what incomparably deeper thoughts and affections will arise God-ward! No wonder will it appear then that "there shall be no leaven seen with thee in all thy borders seven days." Our entrance into its force is revealed in 1 Cor. 5:7, 8. The vail done away in Christ, lies upon their heart, because they reject Him; but whensoever it shall turn to the Lord, the vail is taken away. We, not Israel, are here below keeping the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. They will keep it when Messiah appears to their joy. They too are to eat the flesh of the lamb of which we have partaken in faith, while they are unbelieving. Mark the deepest reverence here for the sacrifice with full liberty to eat of it. "Neither shall any of the flesh which thou sacrificest the first day at even remain all night until the morning." The lamb's flesh must never be treated as common food. What was not then eaten must be burnt, not kept for ordinary use; it was a sacrifice to God, as well as a holy communion.

The grand secret of Christianity, I do not say of Christendom, the everlasting and peculiar blessing that we boast before our God, is Christ Himself. Oh, what a joy to have one word that contains all that we delight in, and, what is far more important, all that God delights in, the same object, God's delight and our delight, in Him who unites Godhead and manhood in His own person! But more than that—There was a particular time that, even for God, drew out what Christ expressed in that fact, as before prophetically, which never was before and never can be again. With reverence be it spoken, I believe that as on the one hand God never felt before as He did at the cross of Christ; so on the other hand the Lord Jesus never felt as He did save at the cross. As His Spirit predicted it through David; so did He in the garden anticipate it; and oh, what a grief and weight of conflict for His Spirit! But anticipation is not accomplishment. It was on the cross there came from Christ that expression of it, so familiar, yet so solemn, to all our souls, "My God, my God, why didst thou forsake me?" There is the wondrous basis of all blessing. It is Christ forsaken of God after all the perfection of a life of obedience incomparable here below; Christ rejected and atoning for sin. What an unfathomable truth! What creature on earth or in heaven would ever have looked for it? For who was Christ? Was He not the eternal life with the Father before ever there was a creature? Was He not the Creator? Yet here He lay in death: and what a death! How did such a consummation come to pass? It was for sin; for our sins borne in His own body on the tree. This we know too well, yet alas! far too little. He, the Son, became man; man as truly as He was and is God. And God made sin for us Him Who knew no sin. Here therefore we rest on that foundation which can have no equal. God never saw aught but perfection in the Son of His love throughout eternity. When the Word became flesh and tabernacled among men, in a world of sin, that perfection was unfolded in such forms of moral beauty and grace, as were never before seen, and only in measure predicted. Truly He was the Second man and last Adam. Never did love and obedience, meekness, zeal and suffering, reach their acme till the cross. Never was God or God's Son, the Son of man, so glorified as therein. And every child of God in this hall knows it, and has, in his measure responded to it in faith. But the more we weigh it, the greatness of that work rises before our souls. The ground of righteousness is only found in that word so terrible to man's conscience—in death; and wondrous to say, in His death, which was our sin (for He was rejected of men), yet on God's part a sacrifice to God. Here then dawns on us this first feast—the Passover; and more truly ours, by faith, than Israel's. They had, no doubt, their lamb; and they were entitled to enjoy the remembrance of God's deliverance of their nation from the land of Egypt. But what is that compared to God judging sin in Christ? This is what we read in the cross of our Lord Jesus. What infinite things for our souls have we not in "the Lord's death!" What words could be put together speaking with the same power revealing a divine ground of righteousness for sin comparably with "the Lord's death?"

(To be continued.)

The Feasts in Deuteronomy, Feasts in Deuteronomy, The: The Feast of Tabernacles

Can there then be more blessing than this? There is a third Feast. How truly is it written that "all things are ours"! If one were a Jew and not a Christian, he could only keep one at a time. One he was bound to observe, the Passover, first and alone; then as the others came, each could only be kept separately. Indeed the Feast of Tabernacles points to a new and future state of blessedness. But "all things are ours"; and we are meant to have all these joys, once tasted; together in our hearts and to have them always, if we are given to know them from God.

Here we read in verse 13, "Thou shalt observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days." The day of Pentecost, if only one day, brings us pre-eminently into the anticipated joy of what is heavenly, eternal. It is based on the wave-sheaf exhibited in the wave loaves. A course of time here below is not marked in it as in the Passover on the one hand, nor on the other in the Feast of Tabernacles. Seven days, are an

earthly period. There is no such thing in the Feast of Weeks. In a certain sense Pentecost, although a day marked off from all others, is the emblem of that which has no end. As one with Christ we enter into the things above and unseen which are eternal. There will never be a time when we shall lose the Spirit of God, not even in heaven. So our Lord gave commandments to the apostles through the Holy Spirit after He rose from the dead (Acts 1:2). He received the Spirit at His baptism (Luke 3), and again in heaven, as the Father's promise, to shed forth on us (Acts 2:33). For in virtue of redemption we have the Spirit too. We shall not lose the Spirit when we rise. It would be an irreparable blank if we had the Spirit no more when in heaven. But there it will no longer be His gracious condescension in working in us that we may judge ourselves and correct our faults. Alas! what a great part of His work now is not only ministering to us the blessedness of Christ but dealing with our short comings; in heaven it will be so no more: every affection will rise in worship, or go forth in service. He will have nothing to correct. All will go out in power and sweet savor to God. But here we have this Feast of Tabernacles seven days. How comes it to pass and when do the seven days of glory—seven days of grace crowned by that which does not end at all—Pentecost—come on?

We enter into the power of the resurrection at the same time that we rest upon the foundation of His death. But now here we have another thing. We have Christ in heaven and we have Christ coming again, so that all our blessing is bound up with Christ, and so we read “after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine.” Now I think that none can have any doubt as to the meaning of the gathering in of the corn and the wine. You are all familiar with the gathering in of the corn—the harvest. The harvest is typical not only of the Lord's coming, but coming to judge; and farther, you know that there is another type—the vintage—still more tremendous. In the harvest, there is the gathering out of the good as well as the execution on the bad; but in the vintage there is nothing but the trampling down of that which is most hateful to God; and what is that? It is the religion of the world. When God is dealing simply with the world some will be gathered in, for of some, although just like the rest, grace will make a difference. But God has no measure of His abhorrence of the religion of the world. The vine of the earth, that which is of the earth, earthy—taking the place of the true Vine, after the true Vine had been here; but how horrible in the sight of God! how hateful to God! and accordingly there is nothing but trampling down in His fury. The Lord Himself will do it. After that the Feast of Tabernacles will come. And what is after the Lord's accomplishment of His judgment on the earth? Well, it is the day of glory. The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea; therefore, as I have said, there will be a stated and full time of glory—seven days. Just as there was a stated and full time of grace, so here there is a stated and full time of glory. But we are not waiting for that time in order to enter into the joy of glory. We see the glory, in its best case and highest power, in our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently it is said not only that the Spirit of God rests upon you, that is Pentecost; but the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. So we are entitled to keep the Feast of Tabernacles too.

And what belongs to the Feast of Tabernacles? “Thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son and thy daughter,” —practically the same thing as before. “Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto Jehovah thy God in the place which Jehovah shall choose: because Jehovah thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands.” There is not a word of this said before. That will mark the day of glory, not only personal blessing, that is really now for all that are Christ's; but what will be then, “bless thee in all thine Increase, and in all the works of thine hands.” That is not the case now. There is many a saint now with whom all things go wrong, people are tried in every way, the apostles were the very off-scouring of all things, set forth the last, set forth as a spectacle to the world; that is not a blessing on the increase of the works of the hands! And where, on the contrary, people flourish in the things of this world the Lord intimates that it is hard, not impossible but hard, for such to enter into the kingdom of God. It is a difficulty but not an impossibility; but then there will be no difficulty. The time is coming to bless everything, not only persons, separated from all the rest of the world; that is now where the blessing comes on souls high or low they are called out from the world, they are Galled not to go with the world in the slightest degree, as the Lord said, “They are not of the world, as I am not of the world” (John 17:16).

Whereas in that day the world is to be blessed. Then will be the time when the Lord will ask for the world. He does not pray for it now. “I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me: for they are thine.” That is what came in at Pentecost; but in the future He will ask for the world, and He will have it, and more than that, Jehovah will have it full of blessing every where. That is the Feast of Tabernacles. The universal blessing—all but universal blessing. There will be exceptions even in that time, just to show it is not the eternal state although the spirit of that day will have come.

“Because Jehovah thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice. Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before Jehovah thy God in the place which he shall choose” (vers. 15, 16).

Here we have a blessed setting out of our portion. May the Lord grant that our unfeigned confidence may be in Himself, that our joy and delight may be, above all, in that Christ that covers everything.

If I look at the dark side, there is death that covers it now; the blood is before God; not our folly not our death. His death! That has changed all for us. If I look up, there He is in all the glory and perfection of His person, according to the counsels of God and I am placed there in Him. And so you are, so are you; and this is the portion of all that are His. As Christ is, so are we in this world. And if we look forward, there is nothing to fear in looking forward, there is all the fullness of blessing in all the increase of the works of the hands in that day. For the time will then have come for the day of blessing—the Melchisedec Priesthood—not merely the principle of it, but the exercise of it, and not only according to the order of Melchisedec as now. Then will be the true Melchisedec bringing forth the bread and the wine, that it may not be simply meeting the necessary wants of the body, but everything that can cheat the heart of God's people here below. W.K.

(Concluded from p. 116)

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The Feasts in Deuteronomy, Feasts in Deuteronomy, The: The Feast of Weeks

Consequently, there we have it before us, we have it through the infinite mercy of our God habitually and particularly on the resurrection day. There is something remarkably sweet in that, that we have His death on the day of resurrection, for it is never meant that we should be so absorbed in death as to forget the joy of resurrection. I would only now notice the words of verse 5, "Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of thy gates." There was to be but one place henceforth, many were allowed before. It had been taken in Egypt, house by house, and in the wilderness only at first. But now in the land where it might have seemed any place would do, because it was the holy land, Jehovah chose one sole place. He would take the matter of His blessing and of Israel's enjoyment of it entirely out of their hands, to bless them all the more because of binding it up with His presence. Jehovah chose one place and one only for the celebration of the passover; it was where He Himself dwelt. There He commanded the blessing, even life for evermore. This, He said, is my resting-place forever. Here will I dwell; for I have desired it. Such was the place that Jehovah chose for His people's eating of the passover. Thus may be seen from those early days God manifesting, particularly in the way in which it is presented in the last book of Moses, the celebration of the passover in the land, which typifies our connection with heaven. Jehovah chose, for the purpose of our enjoying His interest in, us as to that which is deepest for our souls. And what goes down into such depths as the passover, especially in the light and association of heaven where He is to whom we are united by the Holy Spirit, one spirit with the Lord.

But remark, although they took it "at the place which Jehovah thy God shall choose to cause His name to dwell in, thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou tamest forth out of Egypt. Thou shalt roast and eat it in the place which Jehovah thy God shall choose; and thou shalt turn in the morning and go unto thy tents" (vers. 5-7). For Israel at least there was a return to their own things. It was not such peaceful communion with Jehovah as to detach them from all things in principle to Himself. They turn and go into their tents in the morning after eating the passover. They eat unleavened bread with the bread of affliction. It was far from being all that Jehovah designed and gave in the feasts to follow in due time. More was needed to impart full enjoyment of Jehovah's blessing in His chosen place. Only to the passover are these words appended; they are dropped, not only for the Feast of Tabernacles, but also for the Feast of Weeks.

Ver. 8 repeats the obligation to eat unleavened bread six days. On the seventh was a solemn assembly to Jehovah the God of Israel, and no work to be done. His work they celebrated and rested in. Only in this feast is work here forbidden to be done.

2.—THE FEAST OF WEEKS, IN VERSES 9-12.

Then comes quite a different feast—the Feast of Weeks. What does this rest on or spring from?

Christ not in death but risen again. Not the life before He died but the life of Christ triumphing over death. That is intimated by the wave-sheaf in due time followed by the two wave loaves brought before us in the Feast of Weeks. Not only are we told (ver. 9) that Christ was the first-fruits, but that the loaves at the Feast of Weeks were also first-fruits (Lev. 23:17). They alike receive the same name. There was nothing like this in the passover nor is there anything like it in the Feast of Tabernacles. There is a union with Christ when we come to the Feast of Weeks, found no where else. The reason is plain. We are united to Christ risen and ascended. The living Christ stood alone, was heard and followed by faith; but union there could not be before His death. "Except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Yet are we not united to Christ dead. We have all the virtue of the death of Christ and can thus more than ever enjoy all the benefits of the life and the example of the Living One; and they are both of the richest value for the believer. Indeed we must begin with our sins, which were in His cross met once for all. It would have been a dangerous thing to have spoken of the example of Christ before our sins are dealt with. What do we find in the disciples who followed Him every day? Did they manifest Christ? They manifested tolerably decent Jews, sometimes pious, not infrequently prejudiced, and preoccupied with themselves. Now and then appeared a good deal of self-righteousness, besides too, ambition and jealousy; but at what time did not self work? There never was a truth that Christ brought out to which their souls fully answered. He was always misunderstood, and even when it was a very grave misunderstanding the Lord says, "what thou knowest not now thou shalt know hereafter." But that was what was so blessed in our Lord—His love to them always the same, His patience whatever their incapacity—spiritual incapacity. And why was this? And why spiritual incapacity? Because there never can be spiritual power till in the death of Christ I have faced my sins. No life of Christ will ever do alone, no example of Christ.

(Continued from p. 74).

(To be continued).

The Feasts in Deuteronomy, Feasts in Deuteronomy, The: The Feast of Weeks

No life of Christ will ever do alone, no example of Christ, except to show how unlike to Him we are. And so it is that there is far too light dealing with our state, and a total incapacity of estimating the immense distance between the Son of God and every saint that loves Him.

But now it is another thing. The state of believers in the time of our Lord was not Christian. They were saints; but a Christian is a great deal more than a saint. A Christian is a saint since redemption; a Christian is a saint that is united to Christ. A Christian is a saint that rests upon the death and precious blood of Christ in all its virtue before God, which has changed everything from that moment. Now starts a new reckoning of time altogether. There is a manifest progress from what was, to what God has now given us in our Lord Jesus. What a comfort it is that every question that could arise between our souls and. God is now settled! There are many saints at the present time who lose incalculably; they stop short at getting Christ for the forgiveness of their sins, if, indeed, they know this as a truth always abiding. In general, they think that the forgiveness of sins is a great privilege that is being dribbled out day by day; and that one is forgiven to-day, wanting more to-morrow, and more and more all the time one is here below. But this is not the way in which scripture puts the mighty work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here we have a death that meets sins completely; nor is it merely our sins, but sin. I admit that this is beyond what we have any type for, for the types were the types of the law, and the Passover was taken up when the law was given, although it was instituted before. So also the Sabbath in the same way; the Sabbath was long before the law but nevertheless it was embodied in the law.

But “that which the law could not do” God did. And how? “Sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.” It could not have been in the reality of sinful flesh. In that case He could not have been a sacrifice for sin at all. If there had been an atom of the reality of sinful flesh, if there had been a single taint, it would have destroyed the sin offering. Of the “meal-offering” which represents the life of Christ, and of the “sin” (and “trespass”) Offering which brings before us His death—of both these offerings are we alike told that “it is most holy.” No, the Lord Jesus looked like another, therefore is it said, “in the likeness.” There was nothing outwardly to distinguish the Lord, as far as His body was concerned, from another man.

Mind, I am not speculating upon the Lord's appearance—I abhor all such speculations, but, at the same time, I am bound to believe from what Scripture says, that He was like any other man. Truly a man, as truly as we are, there was nothing in our Lord's outer man to indicate the essential difference, nothing to indicate that infinite difference that there is between Him and every other.

Therefore is it said, “in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin,” or as the meaning is, “a sacrifice for sin.”

Well, this is what God did, He sent His Son “in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin.” He “condemned sin in the flesh.” This is what God did. He executed sentence on the Lord Jesus at the cross. He had shown Him in the likeness of sinful flesh during His life, and there wasn't a sin nor the appearance of one. “In Him is no sin.” And now there is another work, His death as “a sacrifice for sin.” He condemned—not only the sins—He forgave the sins—but He condemned “sin”; He executed sentence of death on the sin—not upon the sinner, which would have been his everlasting ruin—but on Christ. Assuredly, as “a sacrifice for sin” that we might be, not only forgiven, but that we might know the old nature completely and forever dealt with for every believer. That is the reason why we are no longer “tied and bound with the chain of our sins,” as many excellent people say that they are: some of the best in Christendom. Really true saints believe that they are tied and bound by the chain of their sins. Many very earnest indeed in their way among our own nation. Others speaking our own tongue elsewhere, I must say, have shown more care for the truth of God as a general thing. But still there is that terrible lack, they don't know how God has met sin in the flesh. But this is exactly what God has said: “What the law could not do” the impossibility of the law God has done perfectly. He has executed sentence of condemnation, and the consequence is there is no condemnation for us. Not only that there is no condemnation for what we did, or have done, but there is no condemnation for the sin in our nature. That is the point of the apostle Paul in the beginning of the eighth of Romans. Then comes another thing; that is, the positive place into which we are brought. We have not to go looking for it elsewhere. And what do people substitute for that? They either fall back on the example of Christ, or they take up the law. They say, we know we could not keep the law or follow its example before we were converted, but now we are converted that is what we can do, and the Spirit will help us. But the Spirit of God will do nothing of the kind. What! the Spirit of God help people to keep the law as their rule of life! No. That the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in the Christian, I admit; and I understand the righteousness of the law consists of the two great parts—the love of God, and love to our neighbor. If a Christian does not love God and his neighbor, nobody does. There is not a single Christian in the main that is not really true. No Christian but what his heart goes out to God when he knows His love. I am supposing now a man who believes the gospel. “We love Him, because He first loved us.” And what about our neighbor? I think the poorest Christian in the world is deeply anxious about the salvation of others. No doubt we are not like Christ. There is no need to say that; there is no need of crying up what a Christian is. But the new nature shows itself in every child of God by the desire for the blessing of people, with cost to itself, and further also I affirm that there is still more unqualifiedly the love of the God that has so blessed him.

But that all is not all that we find here. We have a great deal more. We have God's way of presenting it, and that is, that the believer now according to the Feast of Weeks has Christ risen from the dead, not only Christ down here as the manna, but Christ risen from the dead as his food. We see elsewhere in scripture that the heavenly food is Christ risen; Christ in heaven is the food of the believer now, and he requires it. The manna is not all, but there is Christ thus in the presence of God to feed on. There is another thing here, and that is, that “as He (Christ) is, so are we in this world.” That is a wonderful thing to say. I ask this of you. If you hadn't these words in the First Epistle of John would you have believed them? If they were not written out in the Bible I should like any man in this room to say that he could have thought them? I don't believe a word of it. You are only cheating yourself if you think you could have dared to say these words. I say it again, As Christ is—not as He was, but now, in the presence of God, in all His glory there, the glorified man—“As He is, so are we in this world.” So are we—not, so we shall be in the next world, but—in this world. Why, if these words were not the words of Scripture, it would be the most fearful presumption that ever passed through the heart of man to say them. But they are God's words; and they are God's words because they are His truth. They are the rich blessing He has given you and me at this very time, and, thank God, not to us only. There is no Christian here, in England, in the world but what has these words said of him, and they are meant of him and for him to take them home to his heart and live on them—at any rate upon the One into whose nearness of relationship we are now brought, into that wonderful place of union with Christ. If it were not the life of Christ that is given to us it could not be true. It is in virtue of that that we are one with Christ—that it can be said, “as He is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4:17).

If I look at myself or you, would that warrant such language? How is it then? Why, because our oneness with Christ is not with Christ come down to take part of our nature, but with Him risen from the dead and gone to heaven. On what does this depend? On the Holy Spirit sent down in consequence of Christ's exaltation. And you see how perfectly the word read to-night suits it. The Feast of Weeks was the day of Pentecost—the day when the Holy Ghost was given. It could not have been true a day before. It is always true after.

(Continued from p. 87)

(To be continued)

The Feasts in Deuteronomy, Feasts in Deuteronomy, The: The Feast of Weeks

We may observe that this feast differs from others in that in it we have not only our individual responsibility brought before us, as in the passover for instance, but also our privilege. In the passover we have the solemn responsibility of practical holiness being maintained, also of our life being holy—all grounded upon Christ, the Lamb slain.

But here we have another thing, not our responsibility but our privilege. Now we have this new privilege that could not be in the least degree entered into by a Jew at that time. Now we can read, and are bound to read, these Jewish forms in a light that they did not possess or enjoy. The heavenly light shines upon us because Christ is in heaven. He is that light. That is the meaning of the day dawning and day star arising in the heart, of which Peter speaks in his Second Epistle (chap. i.). "And we have the prophetic word confirmed, to which we do well to take heed (as to a lamp shining in a dark place);" it is more than dark, it is squalid as well as dark. Look at all the prophecies, the terrible state of man which they show; for prophecy came in when things were in a state of ruin. That however is not. Christianity. The blessedness of Christianity came when Christ came, when Christ died, when Christ arose and went up to heaven still more. This is the day dawn.

Now then here we have the rising to a height that cannot be exceeded, and it is all in Christ. How precious! Not only that we have all the blessedness of judgment stayed, of sins gone, and sin itself judged in that same death of Christ—all His mighty work in our favor to draw out the sense of God's love and to produce love to God as well, as nothing else could, but now it is the enjoyment of this wondrous place of Christ, a new place even for Him. Great is the mystery of godliness "God has been" or "He who has been manifested in flesh... received up in glory." What is the mystery of godliness? People might have thought that it is something we can do, something the Holy Spirit would work in us, but no, the mystery of godliness is Christ Himself, it is bound up with Christ.

This is what we find in these three Feasts, Christ in the Passover—Christ in the Feast of Weeks—the Spirit of God come down; but He was not the new corn of the land—the corn of wheat that had fallen into the ground and died, but is now risen. No, Christ is that, and we are part of the same stock. We have the same nature—made "partakers of a divine nature." Christ is risen and He is our life, we have not only the life but we have also the Holy Ghost to give divine power of enjoyment of the life, which can never be unless the heart surrenders itself to the death of Christ. People stop short of that, they don't know the power of His resurrection till the power of His death is known. And that is what makes a full gospel of such grand importance for the saint. There is a great difference between a free and a full gospel. A free gospel is the finest thing possible for the sinner. A full gospel is not for the sinner but rather for the saint. I might say Peter preached a free gospel, and three thousand were converted on the first occasion. Paul preached a full gospel. There is this difference that the preaching of Paul was most rich and profound and of the greatest possible blessing where it was entered into. It is all there for us and we ought not to come short of it, and if it is for us to know it is for us to preach. But the grand point for us is to take it into our souls. When that is done there is full blessing now. It is the for evermore, where death can never enter, where sin never did enter. Yow there is delivering power and that is the power that works in us. That is our portion by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, for that blessed. Person is always at any rate faithful to Christ, and to Christ not merely dead, but risen from the dead. He never stops short at the death of Christ—He would have that death entered into in all its sweetness—and in many respects there is nothing like it, but still there is this power in resurrection that we do well not to lose, and the Holy Ghost would have us follow Christ in faith where He is, and to know that our portion is in Himself there.

His death! It was for us, but now in His resurrection and. His present place in heaven we are there in Him. As Christ is, so are we in this world. Connected with this I would just add one word. It is remarkable that the day of Pentecost was...the day when the law was given. The law was given on the first Pentecost—not yet called Pentecost in the same way as now, but still it was fifty days after the wave sheaf and there was the law, and oh! what weakness, what death, and what misery, just because the law was good and we bad, because Christ was not there. But now that Christ has come, everything is turned into blessing. The judgment of God! Yes, because it fell on Him, it was due to us but it fell on Him, and surely it is an immense thing to know that; and can anything show more clearly where these dear evangelical people are than the fact that this great truth of the gospel is not believed. The wonderful thing is that they are so good practically with so little truth to be their foundation. It is a vital truth of the gospel that the believer shall not come into judgment.

I lost a most valued friend years ago by insisting upon that great truth—a lady of remarkable spiritual power, more so than most women I have ever met. She never came into communion. There were great difficulties. Her family dependent upon her being faithful to what they called their own mother the church, and there she was—much to be felt for. She had been a Roman Catholic and had married a High Churchman who died and whose children were bound very strictly indeed. She however could not get over that difficulty in her mind. I have found few persons that more appreciated the truth as far as she knew. But when she heard this wondrous truth of the gospel, she thought it peculiar and something out of the common rut—this rich wondrous truth which has been so fully brought out of late years. But no, my dear friends, this truth is bound up with the gospel. It is a full gospel.

There is nothing more wonderful than a full gospel—the gospel as Paul preached it. As the Lord said in John 5 "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hears my word," not the word of Moses or the prophets now, "and believes him," not believes on Him, that is, about it, but "believes him that sent me." The essence of faith is that I believe God, that I believe what God says. He that, through hearing Christ's word, believes God that sent Him "hath life eternal, and cometh not into judgment," not merely "condemnation." Our translators of 1611 changed it to that, and I have never met with one of these evangelical, pious, people—even the most intelligent, that believed that he should not come into judgment. They think that the believer will come into it, but be kept and brought through it. But, let me tell you, if the believer goes into the judgment he would not, could not, get through it because he is not guiltless. Even David felt this when he said "Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified" (Psa. 143:2). And the judgment is a real thing. It is a foolish thing to go into a judgment that is unreal, and the idea of God's sparing anyone is an impossibility. This idea of the believer going into judgment undoes the effect of Christ's redemption. It is true that they think that the blood of Christ will speak in the day of judgment. But no, no one will speak in the day of judgment but the Judge. There are the books, and they are opened, and the books speak of the guilt of the man and the guilt is undeniable, and so there can be no issue from judgment but to be cast into the lake of fire. There is no soul but a sinful soul that passes through the judgment. The believer's judgment is past, that has been borne by Christ for all who believe. We shall not stand before the great white throne. We shall tell all out, or, "be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ;" we shall confess everything there, but that is a totally different thing to being "judged." Being judged means that I suffer for what I have done, and if that is so what could it be but everlasting ruin! But it is not so. It would be a total denial of, a total inconsistency with, life eternal. Impossible that a person who has life eternal could be judged! A man who has life eternal, judged! such a judgment would be a mockery. The whole thing is a jumble of mistake. However, this dear friend presented my letter setting out the truth on the subject to the then Bishop of Carlisle, and he was horrified.

I mention this to show that nothing startles these people more than a full gospel. A free gospel presents rather what we are delivered from. It is a mercy to have got thus far, but I do believe that those I am addressing to-night are peculiarly responsible to God, that if they have got the truth fully for themselves, and I don't deny that they have, they are responsible to make it known to those who may not have had such opportunities. I don't deny that they ought to break it up into the smallest pieces to suit palates and the weakest stomachs. It is right to think of the state of souls, but we should seek to lead them on, little by little, and not to leave them where they are.

That is the danger of too great quickness in receiving into fellow ship. Souls should be led on to know the gospel—a full gospel, otherwise they remain where they are in their souls. We are all to blame. Instead of teaching them about the antichrist and Babylon and the woman of the seven hills (all very interesting and profitable, in its proper place), let us seek that souls should hear and believe the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation. For what are all these things compared with a sound and full gospel as a foundation for the soul—to know that all the evil is cleared away in the death of Christ now, that we are in the unclouded favor of God, and that Christ's place is ours? No doubt, it is entirely through Him and His death. It is not merely that we look back but we look up to where He is now, we know that we are one with Him who is there. That is the grand truth of this Feast of Weeks.

“Thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the Lord thy God with a tribute of a free will offering of thine hand.” Well, undoubtedly, this free will offering of the hand is a bright testimony in its own way. The free will offering of the hand is supposed to represent the heart, and so it does. It is one who is delighting in Christ, for we are delivered from all unreality, from all appearances, and it is the saddest disgrace for a Christian if the heart is not behind all that the hand does. “Which thou shalt give unto Jehovah according as Jehovah thy God hath blessed thee.” The essence of Christianity is our personal blessedness now. We are not only a forgiven people, but a people blessed; and how far? “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ.” Well, that is just the Feast of Weeks, and as there is this blessing—the richest possible for God even for us now on the earth—mark the effect (ver. 11), “Thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter,” but it does not end there, “and thy manservant, and thy maidservant.” The blessing is to be felt by those that serve in the humblest position. Is it for those in the houses only? No, “and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you” —the specimens of the various classes of sorrow and need that are in this poor world. There we have the opening of the heart to all. Truly this is divine love, that if we are thus blessed the heart opens in love both Godward and man ward too, and wherever there is most distress, there it goes out the most actively.

“And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt” (ver. 12). This is not a man tied and bound with the chain of his sins. No, he remembers that he Was a bondman. It is the denial of that. It is not that you get the denial of it simply in the eighth of Romans, but, here you have it in the type of Deut. 16. The apostle presents it thus— “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:12). So, manifestly, I am no longer in bondage, but delivered. It is “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” Had it been the law of Moses, I would be under bondage, and that is the reason really why these pious people are tied and bound with the chain of their sins. The law is continually before their eyes. When we are looking at Christ, we do fulfill what is according to the law; Christ in that case fills the heart. “Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt; and thou shalt observe, and do these statutes.” That is, the spirit of obedience is strengthened in the soul in the highest degree by, the sense of this complete deliverance and this blessed union with Christ.

(Continued from page 100.)

(To be continued).

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