

Deuteronomy - Commentaries by John Nelson Darby

Letters 3, "Ifs" in Scripture; Wilderness No Part of God's Purpose (8:3)

There is no doubt that ἁδόκιμος (1 Cor. 9:27) has its simple force of "reprobate" or "good-for-nothing." I never could find out the difficulty people have found in it. There is no difficulty in being a preacher and oneself rejected; and that is all he says.

I only add that when the wilderness comes in, as he goes on to introduce it here in chapter 10, it must be crossed, and the ifs come in. I have not a shadow of doubt that God will keep His own to the end: 1 Cor. 1, John 10, and other passages are far too clear, thank God, to leave a doubt. But we have to be kept. The wilderness forms no part of the counsels of God, but of His ways. No transit is found in Ex. 3; 6, or 15. His purposes will be infallibly accomplished; but more—Christ could take the thief to Paradise from off his cross, perfected by His one sacrifice, and we can say, "Giving thanks to the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." We are in Christ and Christ in us. There is no "if" there, and no condemnation.

But as a general rule God makes us pass through the wilderness. There (Deut. 8) He humbles us and proves us to know what is in our heart, only learning what is in His, that He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous. He does not suffer our foot to swell, nor our clothes to wax old. What we learn then is not salvation: that is the Passover, the Red Sea, and Jordan. But we learn dependence as our part; we learn to know ourselves and be humble, and we learn the sure watchful faithfulness of God—"kept by the power of God through faith;" but we have to be kept, and, if His, surely will be. But why kept if we had not need of it? No one can pluck us out of Christ's hand; but why say this if there was not real danger, and keeping of us in it? The wolf "catcheth" (same word as "pluck") the sheep and scattereth them, but cannot catch them out of Christ's hand: and here our responsibility comes in, our dependence on Him, our leaving ourselves to His infallible care; and one is as precious as the other is necessary. Hence, wherever the journey is spoken of, "ifs" are found—when righteousness and our place in Christ, never. In chapter 10 he goes on to put this to the Corinthians. Many were delivered out of Egypt and fell in the wilderness; but he does not say many were true believers, and fell in the wilderness. When I can talk of beginning and end, I find "if" Where one is in Christ, that is not the case; nor if righteousness and justification are spoken of. "By one offering he hath perfected forever."

Let me add to this note a remark: wherever falling is spoken of in Hebrews, it is always fatal and hopeless, drawing back to perdition. It is never a fall, but "falling away." Christ's priesthood in heaven is not for sins; but that we may not sin.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Expository 1, Deuteronomy 8:3 (8:3)

No one is led into the place of weeping without getting some joy. Israel were already God's people: He leads them into the wilderness to humble them; He makes them hunger that He may give them manna; He leads them into trial that He may give them something better. Some would say, If in the midst of the leeks, onions, and flesh-pots of Egypt God had given them the manna, they would have rejected all other things because the manna was better; but it is not so. While the flesh is surrounded by that which suits it, it is fed thereby, and will reject the better things. Day by day, hour by hour, God is leading us to that condition of hunger that He may give us something better, something not discernible by the natural mind, but satisfying. When I have tasted the manna, there is a reality about it; it is not faith any longer. If I am hungry in the wilderness and am fed and braced up by the food, do I not know it? Can power come into my veins and I not know it? It might be a matter of faith that we are to have the manna to-morrow; but it was a matter of feeling and reality that they had eaten it today. As we eat and are strengthened, let us say, I know that man doth not live by bread alone. We feed on Jesus the living bread, the gift of the Father, and we may say that we are miraculously fed from heaven every day by supernatural food, that we might know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

What think you of possessing in measure now all that we shall possess in the day of the Lord? Then pain of body and pain of heart would all appear very light, and we could say with the apostle, after enumerating things that would make some people mad, "these light afflictions, which are but for a moment." Why do not we thus speak? It is the right of all who have the Spirit. Outside the sanctuary, until the Lord comes, there will be troubled hearts and diseased souls, but it must not surprise us; it is all alike an opportunity for the display of God's grace which spreads itself abroad to meet the misery. Every want that pressed on the Lord Jesus always gave an occasion in His soul to the cry of faith.

The Christian Shepherd: 2004, God Gives Something Better (8:3)

"He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live" (Deut. 8:3).

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If in the midst of the leeks, onions and fleshpots of Egypt God had given them the manna, would they have rejected all else because the manna was better? No. While the flesh is surrounded by that which suits it, it is fed thereby and rejects better things. Day by day, hour by hour, God is leading us to that condition of hunger that He may give us something better, not discernible by the natural mind, but satisfying.

When I have tasted the manna, there is a reality about it; it is not faith any longer. If I am hungry in the wilderness and am fed and braced up by the food, do I not know it? Can power come into my veins and I not know it? It might be a matter of faith that we are to have the manna tomorrow, but it was a matter of feeling and reality that they had eaten it today. As we eat and are strengthened, let us say, I know that man does not live by bread alone. We feed on Jesus the living bread, the Father's gift, and we may say that we are miraculously fed from heaven every day by supernatural food. Thus we know man "doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord."

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J. N. Darby

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Miscellaneous 1, Government of God and His Counsels in Grace, On the (32:8-9)

ALTHOUGH we may speak of change or variety in the revealed ways of God, there are certain fundamental principles of His acting which remain unchanged. These are things which flow from the nature of God, and must be. So a man " must be born again " to enter the kingdom of God, whether the man is Adam, or Paul, or any one else; he must get a nature which can enjoy God. So also as sinners we must be washed in the precious blood of Christ before we can have any part with God. But the character of His ways, His mode of acting, is not always the same. And this is simple; for our individual salvation and what concerns this is not the first thing in God's revelation, but the glory of God. He is displaying His glory, and He has ways of glorifying Himself.

There are two great subjects set before us in scripture in connection with this (that is, always supposing salvation settled, as the groundwork of all for us; for it is not till we are born again, and have peace with God, that we are free to enter into His mind as revealed), viz.—

1st, The government of God in this world; and

2nd, The sovereign grace which gives sinners a place according to His own counsels.

There is a direct government of God, and there is the exercise of sovereign grace which gives special blessing in His own presence.

The Jews are the center of the one, and the church of the other, after Christ, of course, who is the Center of all.

By the government of God in the world I do not mean that universal government 'which He exercises over the universe-what is called providence-in the exercise of which even " a sparrow does not fall to the ground " without Him; but the direct government of God on the earth. There is no doubt He also deals in government with His children even now, but as to this world the Jews were the center of His acting in that respect.

You will see what I mean in Deut. 32:8, 9. " When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the peoples (not people) according to the number of the children of Israel; for Jehovah's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance."

" Most High " is always the name of God used to denote Him as supreme over the earth. See, for instance, what Melchisedec said to Abraham, when he came out to meet him, after the defeat of the kings who had carried off Lot, " Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth " (Gen. 14:19); and also in Dan. 4:24, 25, where God is announced by this name to Nebuchadnezzar as the One who in His government of the earth was about to interfere in judgment upon him. " This is the decree of the Most High which is come upon my lord the king: that they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." And this is also what Nebuchadnezzar was brought to own as the fruit of that dealing. See verses 33-36.

In connection with the earth and His people at different times, God has revealed Himself by different names, which are characteristic of different relationships. It is, of course, always the same God, although known in a different relation. In Psa. 91 we get all these names of God (except Father, which was not then revealed) grouped together in their proper connection. " He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of Jehovah, he is my refuge and my fortress: My God [Elohim]; in him will I trust." That is, he who has the secret of who the Most High is, shall have the blessings of Abraham's God. Jehovah is the God of the Jews, and so Messiah, in the second verse, answers as it were, the riddle put in the first, saying, " I will say of Jehovah, He is my refuge and my fortress: my Elohim; in him will I trust." In verses 3-8 the Spirit declares the consequences of this (verse 9 is the Jewish people speaking), and Jehovah puts His seal upon it in verses 14-16.

God revealed Himself to Abraham as " the Almighty " (El Shaddai). Abraham was called to be a pilgrim, with none but God to look to, so He is revealed to Him as the " All Powerful One."

To the Jews He is " Jehovah," the force of which is, " Is, and was, and is to come." See Ex. 6:2, 3: " And God said unto Moses, I am Jehovah. And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them." (See also Ex. 3:18; 5:3; 7:16; 9:1, etc.)

" Most High " is not yet fulfilled. (See Rev. 19, etc.) " Father " is the name by which He is known specially to Christians. (See John 17:26, and 20: 17.) On these revelations of Himself God has also founded responsibilities as to the walk of His people, which are specially connected with and always dependent on the relation in which He is known.

Thus, to Abraham, in Gen. 17:1, God said, " I am the Almighty God: walk before me and be thou perfect." Abraham is called to walk before Him in the power of His name as the Almighty One, not allowing anything inconsistent with this, for nothing but perfection in the relationship which God has established will suit His nature. To the Jews He says in Deut. 18:13, " Thou shalt be perfect with Jehovah thy God "; for what characterized the Jews was that, as a redeemed people, they were brought outwardly near to God. We hear of His dwelling with men for the first time (Ex. 15 and 29: 45); for God's dwelling with men is consequent on redemption. To us He says, Matt. 5:48, " Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." We ought to manifest the Father. Brought as children to God, we are responsible to show what our Father is; for we are the epistle of Christ, of Him who perfectly manifested the Father, overcoming evil with good, and displaying the grace of God amongst men. The relationship of Father is revealed only in Christ. The prophets are occupied with God's claims on Israel from the past, or Israel's future, according to God; or with God in the government of this world.

As Most High He will settle this world as He pleases; and Deut. 32:8, 9, shows us that Israel is the center in His actings in this character, " He set the bounds of the peoples," etc. In another place (Eph. 1) we get the Second Man charging Himself with our failure as responsible men (the first Adam being thus, so to speak, set aside for us) and glorifying God in this place; and we get the sovereign grace of God connecting men with the Second Man, who has cleared away our sins as responsible under the first Adam, and perfectly glorified God where the evil was and as made sin; and thus the perfect foundation was laid for the accomplishment and revelation of the counsel of God. It is God's thought and purpose to have us with Christ and like Christ, His own blessed Son in glory, and to give us now, in this present time, the knowledge that we have this place. We have this place now, though we are not in the glory yet; we are associated with the Second Man in glory, and are to be like Him. " The glory thou hast given me I have given them," etc. " Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

There is no uncertainty about this; it is sure; although Christians have even been bold enough to say it is a humble thing not to be too confident about salvation: a sad proof of how Satan can use for the time being even a Christian to carry out his lie against God. Faith is always sure. It has set to its seal, by grace, that God is true, and " We have the earnest of the Spirit," says Paul; " therefore we are always confident." (2 Cor. 5). It is no humility to be uncertain or to doubt, but the opposite. True humility is to own the grace as entirely of God, and our place in Christ in the full sense that we are nothing in ourselves, and what is of self only evil and without God; but that now we are in Christ. If you doubt, it is thinking your own thoughts when God has spoken. When God puts the best robe on a worthless sinner, the greatest humility is to bow and wear it, knowing that all else is unfitness and rags, and that God has given us that. If you begin to wonder if you are fit, or to say I am not fit to wear it, it shows that you think it possible you could be fit. The Father " hath made us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." True lowliness is to accept God's gift in grace. It would be folly or worse for us to think of being like God's Son; but when He says so, we must just own it, and give up our own thoughts as bad and take Him as good. We have no business to think when God has spoken; our business is to believe.

If God says we shall be like His Son, we know we shall, for He has said it. This is the only true humility-giving up the thought of what we are for God as perfectly bad, and taking the thought of what God is for us as perfectly good. The prodigal may have thought he was humble, and may seem to some now to have been very humble when he was saying that he would ask his father to " make him as one of the hired servants." But this was before he met his Father, and was just the reasoning of his own heart, but a reasoning founded on weighing the sense of sin with some sense of God's (his Father's) goodness which did not yet know how to take all from love. It only showed he did not know the Father's heart. So, when really in the Father's presence, there was no place for such a thought; nor did he then say so. It was not the prodigal's fitness that was in question-hell was his desert- but grace found the Father on his neck with the kiss of reconciliation. Did the prodigal question the Father's act? Did he say then, " make me a hired servant "? No, he could not then; he simply received the Father's goodness and lost sight of himself in His wondrous love, and, as has been remarked, we then hear only of the Father, not of the prodigal.

And so it is: true humility will always receive from God. It is no question either of thinking or reasoning about the possibility of what God has said. What right have we to think or reason when His word is that we are to be like His Son? We are to take as a gift from God what He has for us, what He has wrought for us, and what He has made us in Christ. Our fitness is for hell, neither more nor less; but God has chosen to put us in the place with Christ, not to our glory, but to Christ's, though glorified we are. The counsels of God come first, for they were before the world; but they were not revealed till Christ had died in the world, because this was the ground on which all rested in their accomplishment. God goes on through scripture revealing His ways, and (as it is His history of the world, His ways in the world, with man in the world, too) thus the word of God is, in its testimony, from the fall of man right on to the book of Revelation, my history in some form or other-what man is, what I am, with whom God thus deals. Every individual believer goes through it in his own soul-some quickly, some slowly; but each, individually, experiences the character of that which God was bringing out from Adam to Christ.

But before the world existed at all, as Ephesians tells us, God had His counsels about a people who were to be in particular association with Christ. I never get the counsels of God, properly speaking, that is, we never get them brought out (I do not speak of election), till Christ died. See Eph. 1:1-4: " According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world," etc. It is not the choosing being before the world which constitutes its sovereignty, because the grace of God would be just as sovereign if it chose us now, to-day, or any time. But this expression shows that before the world existed He had His thought and counsel about a certain set of people. He chose them independently of the world; and therefore this shows that they are not of it, although in it, of course. Christ confirmed this of those whom He chose, " they are not of the world even as I am not of the world " (John 17:16).

We find the same truth in 2 Tim. 1:9, 10: " God, who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ," etc. This is no question of election here, even if it be involved, but that a place in Christ-the sovereign calling-was given us before the world began, but was not made manifest till Christ came.

See also Titus 1:2, 3: " Eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began, but hath in due times manifested," etc. The counsel of God-that which was in God's mind connecting us with Christ, and was before the world existed-came out in the gospel, and never came out till after Christ came and died and made atonement.

In creation we get another thing, and a different thing- not a counsel but a responsible being placed in this world. The first thing he does is to fail. This is so all through the history of man; the first thing he does is failure. The first thing we hear of Adam is that he fails; the first thing we hear of Noah when he had offered his sacrifice after the flood is that he gets drunk; the first thing we hear of after the law is given is that, before Moses came down from the mount, it is broken; the priesthood is set up, and the first day, they offer strange fire, and the high priest never puts on the garments of glory and beauty to go into the presence of Jehovah in the most holy place, nor it would seem at all, except when consecrated. So even in Christianity, as responsible to God, for Paul says, " All seek their own and not the things that are Jesus Christ's," and that after his decease evil would prevail from without and within. And John can tell us there were many Antichrists whereby it was known it was the last time.

Man in responsibility always fails. Man was never in his innocency the head of a people; and as for Noah, he was, so to speak, a drunken head over the world. In Adam there is only and total failure and judgment executed. Created in innocence and beauty, he distrusts God and listens to the devil, who said that God had jealously kept back the best thing: then lust comes in, next transgression, and all is over as to his state; he shrinks from God, and is turned out of Paradise. The world goes on and is so wicked that God brings in the flood. After that Noah fails directly. And as I have said, the priests never put on their garments of glory and beauty except when consecrated; and the Jews were a law-breaking people. In every place of responsibility the first thing we hear is man's utter failure. Not that there were not exceptions through grace; but, as to man, the inevitable result of responsibility is failure. As to principle Cain completed the sin of man: the main feature of Adam's sin was sin against God, that of Cain's was sin against his neighbor; and these two make up the sum of all sins.

In Paradise we get side by side the two principles about which men have been fighting ever since, namely, man's responsibility and simple communicated grace; the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life. We find these two trees in Eden: the tree of responsibility, or the knowledge of good and evil; and the tree of life. In Christ alone are both principles fully brought to an issue, God glorified as to them, and blessing secured. He has met the failure in the fruit of the tree of responsibility, and secured eternal life, and the accomplishment of God's counsels in sovereign grace, and that in righteousness. God shut man out of Eden before he ate of the tree of life, and thus reserved His principle of grace for fuller hopes. Indeed to perpetuate life in sin would hardly have been in the ways of God.

God's promise to Abraham raised no question of responsibility; it was a simple promise in grace. See Gen. 12, simply, " I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing, and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." God took care that before the law came (" the law was 430 years after," Gal. 3:16, 17) the principle of grace should be maintained. But righteousness was all-important, and the law raises the question of righteousness, recognizing man in responsibility; and so in it we get the two trees in principle, but the tree of responsibility before life: " Do this and thou shalt live."

Israel failed, as all have but Christ, who was perfect in every way. God still tries man, however. He sends prophets to call the people back to law, and so "the law and the prophets were until John." Obedience was the way of happiness for man under God's government of the world, so the prophets called back to obedience as the way of man's happiness. This, too, failed, as God says, in touching grace, " And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes [or continually and carefully] and sending'; because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling-place; but they mocked the messengers of God and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of God arose against his people, till there was no remedy " (2 Chron. 36:15, 16.)

At last God sends His Son. He said, " I have yet one Son, it may be they will reverence my Son," and He would try man by His coming. " They cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him." In Matt. 21 we find God seeking fruit from that which ought to have yielded it; and so Christ, when He came, first looked for fruit. He desired to find (v. 18, 19). " He hungered. And when he saw a fig-tree in the way he came to it, and found nothing thereon but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever; and presently the fig-tree withered away." He cursed it-this was nature judged, that flesh should NEVER produce fruit, for there was nothing in man in the flesh to suit God. Plenty of profession, outward show, and assumption to be something, "but leaves only." "There is none good; no, not one." And so He said, " Now is the judgment of this world." The world was judged then, although that judgment is not executed yet; in grace God tarries the execution; but still there was the complete ending of all human responsibility as regards the record of it. Each individual may have to come to conviction of it, of course.

But according to the gospel, Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost, not in probation whether he would be so. All is proved worthless; for the husbandmen not only killed God's Son, who came looking for fruit, but also rejected all His invitations and Himself come in grace. If God spent His Son in the effort to get man's heart back to Himself, it only showed that his heart was enmity against God, and would not own Him. He came with perfect grace, and showed He had power sufficient to bring every blessing to man; all His miracles were blessing to man except the cursing of the fig tree, which was not, because, after all, there must be the judgment of the flesh. The cross then comes in, and proves not only that man is a sinner (we get that in his being turned out of Paradise), but that man is in himself irreclaimable. This closes the first Adam's history-the history of man responsible in the flesh, and it was the end of the world; that is, morally, the world was ended and judged. So the apostle speaks in Heb. 9:26. " Now once in the end of the world " (literally " in the end [or consummation] of the ages," those ages in which God was testing man in responsibility as a reclaimable sinner)-" hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

Christ came to seek fruit and they had none for Him. He came to make a feast, as the expression of God's grace to them, and they would not sit at it. In the two parables (Matt. 21 and 22) there is not only the end of the history of man in responsibility, but also the rejection of Christ come in grace. The mind of the flesh is proved to be enmity against God; and we must learn that there is no good in us. But God does not

give up His grace, it super-abounds over all man's condition as a sinner, and an irreclaimable one.

This is just the difference between the synoptical Gospels and John. The first three-Matthew, Mark, and Luke-are the presentation of Christ to man to be received, and with proofs of power sufficient to remove all the effects of sin; but behind all you find the difficulty that man is in the flesh, and the mind of the flesh is enmity against God. John's testimony starts with this, that He was not received, and therefore coming in that grace which was above all the rejection. In chapter 1, "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came to his own and his own received him not"; so God comes out in grace. The flesh is looked at in John as having disowned Christ, and therefore his Gospel all through is election and grace. There is no such language in the other three Gospels as He uses here in speaking of man. He goes to the roots and principles of things in John, and so He says, "Ye are of your father the devil," speaking to sinners, and "no man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." But He says, I'll have my own sheep notwithstanding what man is. Thus, on the rejection of His word in chapter 8 and His work in chapter 9, He gathers them, whether of the Jews or of the Gentiles, to the one Shepherd, and gives them eternal life. So in John 1 we find Him received by those who were born of God, not of the will of man. "To as many as received him to them gave he power [that is, title, authority, or right] to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," John 1:12, 13. There I get the people of God. Man's responsibility is closed: he is a lost sinner; he has been in a state of probation, and it is over.

Now, although the ground of man's responsibility is over in the sense of having wholly failed under it, when proved in every possible way, yet as to moral dealing with each individual, the responsibility is there to the full; and as an individual under moral dealing, a man has to go through the history of the process of responsibility and its failure; but he goes through it to bring out this, that he is lost already. He has to prove the truth of God's verdict that in man there is no good thing; and so the result of the principle of responsibility is for him to find out that he is lost, that the responsibility is over; not as if it was not true, but because he is lost and ruined, as the man who has lost all his money by foolish ways. It is important to keep up responsibility, but the individual is brought to the consciousness that on that ground it is all up with him. Man is lost. We have spent every farthing, and have only debts; these we have if that is any good. It is all over with the first man, and no mending of him will do: he is lost and ruined; but Christ came to save the lost.

Now the Second Man is set up. It is not a mending of the first man, but the substitution of the Second. There is no improvement or correction of the first man (although we are practically changed if we come to Christ), but the sins of the first Adam are all cleared away; and, secondly, the tree itself is cut down by the roots for faith. In the cross we see the responsibility met completely; Christ has met all the failure, the fruit of the tree of responsibility, and has glorified God in so doing. Man has brought in confusion; but Christ came, met the case, and cleared the scene, and triumphed over all. When He came, God's character as to facts was compromised, and there was no escape. If He had saved none, but at once cast off sinners, it were righteousness, but there would have been no love. If He had let all pass, when man was a sinner, and in such sort saved all (which man would call love, but which would not have been divine love, for God is holy), where were the righteousness? But Christ came. Well, surely in the cross there is righteousness against sin, as nowhere else, yet there is the infinite love of God to sinners.

In Him, in Christ, I get both the trees of Paradise united, fulfilled in grace, bearing our sins and putting away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and becoming life according to righteousness. I am brought to the discovery of what I am, and then I see Christ has died on the cross and has taken the whole thing on Himself. When I see Him-the Son of God-dying on the cross, I say if this is not righteousness-judgment against sin-I do not know what is. But whom is He dying for?-the guilty sinner. Well, if this is not love, I do not know what is. On the cross we get every attribute of God perfectly maintained-His majesty and truth, as well as His righteousness and love-every claim met, and God perfectly glorified in the Person of Christ, the Lamb of God. He was there making atonement for sin that the gospel might go out to all the world; and as to believers, bearing their every sin. The whole thing is met there, and the believer's responsibility cleared away, as to sins, that he may enter into responsibility on a new ground, that of a child of God. He has met fully, and completely, and absolutely, all the fruit of man's eating the tree and all the sins of the believer (his responsibility). This, of course, does not touch the believer's responsibility to Christ or to God as a believer in Christ; for this is of a new order, and comes in upon a different ground.

But in the cross God's character is not only maintained but fully glorified; for the death of Christ is the perfect putting away of sin¹ and of all that belonged to the first man. We, therefore, as believers, are crucified with Christ; we are not in the flesh but in Christ. We are dead to the condition in which we were as children of Adam, and we are in a new position altogether; in Christ we are children of God. All that we were has been met and settled on the cross, and a new life has been given to us, so that now we are not in the first Adam but in the Second Man. The fruit of the first is all taken away, and the tree itself cut up by the roots for our faith; we have died with Christ, been crucified with Him. The responsibility is met by the atonement, and He Himself is the eternal life; so the two trees of Paradise are fully reconciled.

Now the counsels of God come out, because He could not bring them out till redemption was accomplished, and righteousness fully established, and in respect of all that, too, which called it in question. The ground we stand on is not now God's forbearance, because what we have is not promise, but the accomplishment of promise. It was forbearance He exercised towards the Old Testament saints, passing over their sins, but it is in the atonement we see His righteousness in doing this. Now God is righteous in saving a poor sinner-just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus; and because righteousness is now established, my standing is not founded on responsibility as a child of Adam, but on redemption as a son of God. It is a new footing and foundation. Not only are my sins put away, but that which has put them away has so vindicated the righteousness of God, and glorified Him, that man has a place at the right hand of God in glory.

With regard to this Christ could appeal to the Father righteously to give Him that place. "I have glorified thee," He said, "glorify thou me," and Jehovah answered, "Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thy foes thy footstool." This puts the Son of man in the glory of God; and God has given us a place and standing in Him, clear of all the responsibility of the first Adam. But there is responsibility now for us, and it flows from and is measured by this very standing.

We have thus the two trees in grace-the tree of life, and the tree of responsibility. Under the law we saw it was responsibility first, and then life. In grace it is first life, then responsibility.

Not only are my sins gone, but I and everything belonging to me buried in the death of Christ; the "I" merged into Him as to life, as it is written, "Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," and the life I now live is in the Risen One. He rose, and is now seated in glory in virtue of what He

did as man, and has sent down the Holy Ghost to unite to Himself as Head (having taken this place as man in heaven) believers as members of His body, and to reveal all the counsels that were about us before the world was; and this is the church. The Christian is united with Christ, where He now is, we are seated there, and blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Him. The Head is there, and we, the members, are, by the Holy Ghost, united to Him.

Now comes in the responsibility of the Christian. True responsibility flows from the place we are in—not as having to get into the place, but as being in it. Seeing our place we can learn what our responsibilities are; else we never can assume responsibility. You are not responsible to me as children or servants, because you are not my children or my servants. If you were my servant, your duties and responsibilities would flow from your being so. You have totally failed as a child of Adam; and now, if a believer, God says you are a child of God. Well, now, let us see if you are walking as a child of God in all your ways. This is our responsibility. We are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, and are left in this world to show out the character of such. We are the epistle of Christ, and have to see that we are a good one, known and manifestly so before all men. Christ should be so seen in us that he who runs may read.

If you are in Christ, Christ is in you; and our place is a settled one. Christ is before God for us, and we are before the world for Christ. What is laid on us is not responsibility before God as a child of Adam, but as a child of God. I am not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, and the life of Jesus is to be manifested in our mortal bodies. There is our responsibility, and it is an individual thing. You will see the individual put always first in scripture, because the individual must be put right before there can be any church. The epistle to the Romans deals with the individual, so also does the first chapter to the Ephesians, till we come to the last verses. We always have truth brought out for the individual before corporate blessing is unfolded or responsibility is enforced. We are saved by Christ individually and owned as brethren.

This leads on to relationship with Christ and with one another. Our relationship with the Father is that of children; our relationship with Christ, first, that He is not ashamed to call us brethren, and then as members of His body, and so baptized into one body by the Holy Ghost. This is the effect of God's work, and we are created unto good works, which God has fore-ordained for us. The ground we stand on is not our works: Christ stood on that ground once for us, and if we did we should be lost. We stand on Christ's work and are saved, and the Holy Ghost has come down and united us to Christ as His members; and he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.

This brings out what the church of God is. The Holy Ghost never came down to earth before that, although He was the immediate agent of all God's works. All immediate action from creation onwards is the Holy Ghost; He is the direct agent, but never came till the day of Pentecost.

We must never confound the action of a divine person with the coming of a divine person. All things were created by the Son and for Him, but He never came till the incarnation. So the Holy Ghost wrought all through, in creation, prophecy, etc., but never came till Pentecost; and speaking of this Christ said, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you," John 16:7. Not only has He come, but what is of special importance is that when on earth He dwells in the believer and in the assembly. This gives another character to the church. God never can dwell among men except on the footing of redemption. We never hear of such a thing in the Old Testament until redemption has been accomplished in figure. He visited Adam, but never dwelt with him; He talked with Abraham often, but never dwelt with him. But as soon as He redeems Israel, though only figuratively and outwardly, for the first time in scripture, we hear of His coming to dwell. (See Ex. 15, and 29:46.) He came in the cloud, and His presence and glory dwelt in the camp of Israel.

When the church is brought out, it is said God dwells in it spiritually: "Builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit," Eph. 2:22. This dwelling of God with us is the fruit of redemption. It is distinct from being born again; it is founded on redemption; and the Holy Ghost dwells with us because we are washed pure and spotless by the blood of Christ. Immediately after redemption holiness is mentioned as a necessary consequence of God's presence. "Glorious in holiness" is His name this side the Red Sea.

"Ye shall be unto me a holy nation," Ex. 19:6. "Be ye holy, for I am holy." He must have a clean house to dwell in. In the Old Testament figure a man was washed with water, sprinkled with blood, and anointed with oil. So we are quickened, and feel our need, are brought under the blood of sprinkling and cleansed by it, and then sealed by the Holy Ghost. It is God's stamp on us that we have been cleansed through faith in the blood of Christ. God cannot seal an unbeliever; this would be sealing wicked men, and sins, and corrupt flesh. It is God's seal on one that has life. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father," Gal. 4:6.

By the indwelling of the Holy Ghost we are sealed and linked with Christ in heaven. Our place is on high, though we walk on earth. The church is associated with Christ in heaven; but it was in consequence of His ascension that the Holy Ghost came. He could not have come before. The church could not exist as an actual thing on earth till the atonement, till Christ had died and risen; and the idea of the church could not be revealed till after His death. The Jewish system was maintained by the middle wall of partition being kept up; there was to be no connection with the Gentiles. The church is founded on the breaking down of the middle wall of partition. You cannot take scripture and not see that even the idea of the church could not be revealed until Christ had died, gone up on high, and the middle wall of partition had been broken down. In the church there is no difference between Jew and Gentile, but this would have been sin till God removed the wall of division by the death of Christ; Eph. 2.

We get before that (in Deut. 32:43) such a word as "Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people"; but there is His people: the nationality is kept up, and the Gentiles are kept distinct from His people. The Jews were the people who had the promises; but the One in whom all the promises centered came, and they refused and crucified Him; so they must now come in on the ground of mercy like any poor Gentile. There is no difference, for they have all alike sinned. God fulfilled His promise, but the Jew who had it rejected the fulfillment. So then the middle wall of partition could be broken down, for both came alike under mercy. All nationality now is merged in Christ. He now sits in glory as man, and the Holy Ghost whom He has sent down links us with Him. The distinction of Jew and Gentile is abolished, and the church is the dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost. If you had had a mention of the church in the Old Testament, Judaism must have gone. The church is a heavenly body, the Head being in heaven.

Now, if you appropriate Old Testament promises and apply them to the church, you drag it down from heaven to earth, and put Israel quite out of that place which God in His sovereignty gave to His chosen people. Individually we get much comfort for our hearts and instruction, too, from God's dealings with Israel; for (besides great truths as to God's nature), what happened to them happened to them for ensamples, and is written for our admonition on whom the ends of the world are come. See, for instance, Deut. 8:2-4, which is the history of God's

dealings with them in the wilderness. So we too, in a spiritual sense, are put through the wilderness, and learn God's care of us and our continual dependence on Him for every need and each step of the way. God took care even of the wearing out of their coats all the time, while He sought to teach them what they were. We are in the wilderness, and need to learn to know the God of the wilderness. We are left here to find out both what we are and what He is, and we have the same principles to guide us as led Israel in their wanderings.

Being children of God, however, our home is the Father's house, and Christ has gone there to prepare a place for us. This leads us at once to the coming of Christ, not as a matter of prophecy, but for us, as He said, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also," John 14. This is not prophecy, which is concerned with the government of this world, and is connected with the Jews who are the center of prophecy. We are identified with Christ, and were in the counsels of God before even the world was, and so are not of the world at all. He has promised to come first and put us in our right place beside Himself; and when prophecy comes true we shall be with the Lord. We are in heavenly places in Christ, and our conflict is there now; "we wrestle... against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places."

So completely is this in Paul's thoughts that he does not once speak of going to heaven—it is to depart and be with Christ, not go to heaven, though no doubt it is heaven. But we must wait till He comes to be fully in the same likeness with Christ. As an individual, the promise I have got is that I shall be conformed to the image of His Son, but I must wait till He comes and I see Him as He is for that; and so I try to be as conformed to Him as I can in this poor mortal body. (See 1 John 3.) If I should be absent from the body while I wait, I shall be present with the Lord—in heaven doubtless, though this is not the thought. But I am not conformed to the image of Christ till He comes and I am raised or changed.

The appearing of the saints in glory (Col. 3:4) will prove to the world the oneness of the place which God has given us with Christ. He is the first fruits of them that slept; not of the wicked, but of His saints; and they will be raised because He delights in them, as Christ was, because God delighted in Him, though He indeed could not be holden of death. They will be raised in glory, fashioned like unto His own glorious body, and this is the fullest seal put upon the righteousness of God. We shall all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, but we shall appear in glory. It is not then our eternal state has to be settled and judgment pronounced whether we are saved or lost: we shall be glorified when we get there. Paul has been with Christ these 1800 years, and are you going to bring him out to have his case settled? We shall give an account of everything to God from the time we were born, but we shall be in glory when we give it. We have an account to render as Christians, for we are responsible as to how far we have glorified Christ with gifts and all He has given us; and as to how far also we have grieved the Holy Spirit who has dwelt in us; but it is the saved who give this account (the others at the day of judgment, of course, before the great white throne).

When I die I shall be happy; but this is not, however, blessed as it is, fully what the Lord promises me; I am told I shall be "like Christ." "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly,"

Cor. 15. This is our hope. I am to be like Christ when He raises me, and glorifies me; I am to be conformed to His image when He comes; and as regards the church, the marriage of the Lamb does not come till then.

The only proper hope of the Christian is to wait for God's Son from heaven. When He will come, no one knows. The church was in the counsels of God in eternity in Him before time began, and the Holy Ghost said, "Of the times and seasons ye have no need that I write unto you." When the last member of the church is gathered in He will come; but whether at midnight, or in the first watch, or in the second watch, or at cock-crow, neither you nor I know. It may be to-night, but this is known only to the Lord. He is Sovereign, yet He "is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Prophetic 1, Evidence From Scripture of the Passing Away of the Present Dispensation (32:34-35)

THE testimony of Scripture is the only secure resting-place for man amid the darkness of this world. This, through the teaching of the Spirit, is the believer's light and security; from this his judgment flows; and, consequently, from this the rule and foundation of his conduct springs. Wrong thoughts as to God's dealings, and our own place before Him, must lead to wrong judgment as to the conduct claimed from us; and thus all our service will be folly, and, perhaps, our hopes presumption; our light will be darkness, and then what will become of those "who are led"?

Immediately connected with this inquiry (and thus involving the most practical results) is the question as to the dispensation in which we stand, and what are to be our hopes in it? Many most interesting inquiries are connected with this subject, as to the development of the purposes of God; but it is not my present purpose to enter into them. I intend to confine myself to the scriptural evidence on the two following most important questions, which, in the highest degree, affect the present interests and operations of the church of Christ.

(1) IS THIS DISPENSATION THE LAST, OR NOT?

(2) WHAT ARE THE CIRCUMSTANCES BY WHICH ANY OTHER IS TO BE INTRODUCED?

The answer to these questions appears to me to involve the whole ground of the judgment of a believer's mind, as to his present position in the world; and, consequently, as to his duty and his hopes. Without examining the detail of circumstances, I shall endeavor to seize on some of the broad facts and principles.

(1) Is this dispensation the last, or is it not?

First—Let us consider the evidence of Scripture as to the Christian body.

The 9th verse of the 15th of Ephesians affords a leading declaration of Scripture on this subject: " Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance " (v. 10). Now this is in no way applicable to the present dispensation. He is to gather together in one all things which are in heaven, and which are on earth. This the present dispensation does not assume to do: it is a dispensation in which Satan is the prince and god of this world-in which he sows tares among the wheat, and is in high places. In this, God visits the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. This is indeed a dispensation of another gathering (as we shall see presently), in which angels minister and devils oppose anything but a gathering into one things in heaven and things on earth; for we must be absent from the body to be present with the Lord, and absent from the Lord to be at home in the body; and we " groan " waiting. Indeed, there is ample demonstration in the above passage, that the present dispensation does not and was not meant to do this. The passage declares that God has made known this to us, as that which should happen in the fullness of times, of which we have the earnest under the present dispensation until the redemption. This is not merely "going to heaven," because, as we see in the passage itself, God is to gather together in one all things in heaven and on earth in Christ. That which we have under the present dispensation is an earnest merely of that which we are to have; which is not a going to heaven, but a dispensation in which all things are gathered together in heaven and on earth. In a word, the passage declares a gathering, which cannot mean the church in the present dispensation, or in any dispensation; for the church, as applied to believers, in no dispensation comprehends all things in heaven and on earth; and that which comprehends and gathers all into one (all things in heaven and on earth) is manifestly not the church; for the church, even here, is gathered out of the earth, and does not gather all things on the earth into itself, and as a dispensation of the assembled saints in heaven, it has none of the things of the earth in it at all. Indeed, except from the force of habitual prejudice, it is just as fairly inferred from this passage that all the things in heaven will be gathered in the earth, as that all on the earth will be gathered in heaven. If we do not acknowledge a common gathering of all things both in heaven and on earth under the authority of Christ (as is also written elsewhere), it is manifest we must force this passage into some previously assumed sense, and then it may mean anything we like. Chapter 3 of John's gospel might throw light on this, if the reader is disposed to inquire. But as it is manifest that the church is no such gathering actually, so it is equally manifest that to say that the assembly of the saints in heaven is a gathering of all things in heaven and on earth into one, is a plain perversion to suit previous ideas; for the saints are not all things, if the position taken were otherwise tenable: and it is thinking that they are so (in self-complacency) which is one grand source of error, for thus His glory is marred and shortened, by whom and for whom all things are created. I affirm (though it be the manifestation of God's wisdom) that the church of God's saints is only a part-a small part-of the glory and purposes of God, as fulfilled: a part worthy, indeed, of all admiration, as it is; but one which, if we take the comeliness that God has put upon us, and make our boast as if it were all God's glory, He will show us it is as nothing in His sight-calling the things that are not as though they were.

Again (1 Peter 1:9-13), " Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Here we have three things: the prophets prophesying of a grace to be brought to us, the Holy Ghost reporting these same things, and, therefore, the Christian church waiting to the end for the things which are to be brought unto them at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

That is to say, that which the prophets prophesied should be brought to us, the Holy Ghost, in the present dispensation, reports in the word, and believers, therefore, wait for as about to be brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ. But it was not heaven the prophets prophesied of, but the dealings and dispensations of God; therefore there is yet a dispensation to come, in which the things prophesied of by the prophets will come, and for which those who have received the truth wait; and this dispensation is not it.

Further, there is another important fact we would advert to:

There is no promise of universality annexed to the present dispensation, but the contrary. " Go ye," is its leading instruction, " Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned." But there is a dispensation, when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. This is therefore not the last, for the effects stated of that are not contemplated in the instructions of this. This is a dispensation of testimony and of instruction; that, of universal knowledge, and therefore essentially different, for men shall no more say, " Know the Lord."

Again, as to the Jews, there shall be a state of things in which all Israel shall be saved, i.e. as a body. But now, " Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah ": and again, " Even so, then, at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace." The dispensations, therefore, are essentially different in their character; the one the rescuing of the remnant, the other, the saving of the body. So, of the Gentiles, " Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name." It has not, therefore, the intention of universality manifested in it.

So John 11:52: " And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." Here we have a gathering which characterizes this dispensation, but essentially distinct from that noticed by Paul in the Ephesians.

Again, in connection with this, the character and position annexed to His people equally contravene the idea of the universality of the dispensation. " Who gave himself for us," we read, " that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works ": all this is essentially distinctive, therefore not universal.

So Peter: " But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

So Phil. 2:15: " That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world."

So John, in the conclusion of his first epistle, and many like passages, and others withal, which prove suffering to be their portion.

And connected with this, is the direct warning of the excision of the church¹ on its failure of maintaining effectually this position. See the whole of Rom. 11 The conclusion is summed up in verse 22: " Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward, thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." But is not the confidence of the necessary continuance of the present dispensation very like that high-minded conceit which ruined the Jews though they had perhaps better ground for it; and against which, expressly, the apostles warned these Gentiles? Is it not what the apostle warned of as the very way of being cut off? The ruin of the Jews was, boasting of the comeliness which God had put upon them. But to proceed (nevertheless, he that hath ears to hear, let him hear), the position in which they are thus put, with such purpose and responsibility, under pain of excision, is thus expressed (Matt. 5:13): " Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is henceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."

The consequences are fully stated by the Lord: "In the world ye shall have tribulation." "Whoso taketh not up his cross, and followeth not after me, cannot be my disciple." "He that saveth his life shall lose it... he that serveth me, let him follow me ": and many other like passages, familiar to the Christian. They were to be called Beelzebub, and he that killed them would think that he did God service-they were to be hated of all men, etc.-nor, may we add, was the church at any other time pure.

So the apostles, or rather the Spirit in them: "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." "Yea, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution ": and yet more, for "yourselves know that also we are appointed thereunto."

Again, the results of the testimony of Christ by the Spirit, and the ultimate results of His incarnation, are contrasted: "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth," is the title of the latter; "Suppose ye that I am come to send peace on the earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division," is the result of the former.

Again, the full continuance of evil, until some change by power be wrought, is fully declared: " As it was in the days of Noe," and "as it was in the days of Lot," we are told, "shall it be in the day when the Son of man shall be revealed."

Further, this could not be a day of universal blessing simply, or it would be idle to talk of it as coming "unawares," "as a thief in the night "; and that there would be some whom it did not take unawares. Judgment may overtake those unsuited for it; but spiritual light and blessing are blessings because they do so. Yet Peter declares this is the day of grace to the church, which was prophesied by the prophets of old, even the glory of Christ that was to follow; 1 Peter 1:10-12.

But more, evil shall get worse:

" Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse," says Paul to Timothy, " deceiving and being deceived." This does not look like the knowledge of the glory of the Lord covering the earth, as the waters cover the sea.

In the next place, we are assured that the man of sin, the apostasy of professing Christianity, will be destroyed by the brightness (lit. appearing) of Christ's coming; 2 Thess. 2:8. What that is I think may be fairly learned from Titus 2:13; but I do not here press it thus far. I merely use it as evidence that this is not the last dispensation. It is, however, not different in degree, but contrasted in character from "the grace... which hath appeared" in verse 11,2 just before; the one leads to wait for the other. But the passage in Thessalonians proves this: that the apostasy continues up to a time when a wholly different power has intervened, and a new state of things ensued; for, not to hang it on the thread of sense which connects 2 Thessalonians (which some would cut boldly through), its association with chapter 1 of this epistle is evident. In chapter. 1 The instrument which cuts off the apostasy is represented as giving rest from the existing dispensation, and introducing another, when the wicked should cease from troubling, and the weary be at rest. That is, chapter 1 declares (in the terms used by the Lord in Luke, and the apostle Peter in his epistle) His revelation; that He will then and so clear His kingdom from them that trouble the church. Thus it is an entirely new dispensation which we are to look for-the wicked continuing and growing worse to the end of this.

This may suffice for direct testimony; more will appear when we consider the manner of the introduction of the next dispensation, every evidence of which is evidence also, of course, of its existence. I shall only mention one thing more here, before I turn to evidence of another character. The parable of the tares of the field is a testimony from the Lord, stating directly that the church³ would become corrupt: i.e., that the field (the world in which the Son of man had sown good seed) would be overrun with tares, and that it would be rectified by a dispensation of judgment-a harvest, not a re-sowing of the field. It is not said that the tares would be turned into wheat, but be gathered in bundles to be burned, and the wheat itself made to shine in some other system. What that is, is another question. But the place where the change was to occur, where the exercise of the judgment was to be, the kingdom spoken of as the Son's, was the place where the seed was sown, the field of the world, out of which all things that offended were to be gathered.

Let us now pursue, as other evidence, the uniform method of God's dealings. It has been surely this: some strong manifestation of divine glory, followed by a declension from the practical faith of that glory, and then judgments, preceded, however, by testimony, that they which have ears to hear may escape the judgment.

Thus, in the patriarchal dispensation, the original association of paradise, the judgment and the promise (not without intervening testimony), formed the basis of patriarchal faith: from this, even as Adam from his innocence, men declined, losing the power of testimony in lust. The very sons of God became defiled, till the earth was corrupt before God, and filled with violence; and He said, I will destroy man whom I have made, from off the face of the earth. Then came the testimony -the deluge coming, and the ark of escape, and then the judgment testified of. Again, upon the introduction of idolatry, Abraham was called out to be, in his seed after the flesh, the source of another dispensation, as he was the father of the faithful, circumcised as well as not. And in due time the Jews were drawn out into fresh national relationship with God, with signs and wonders, and an outstretched arm-mercies and securities of peace-and their God nigh to them in glory and power as none other nation had; but they were stiffnecked and rebellious. The Lord, indeed, sent deliverances while it was sin, and not infidelity; and then prophets, rising up early and sending them, till there was no remedy; when after their restoration from Babylon, a yet last hope was afforded by Him who had yet one Son, and spent Him, as it were, upon them. Upon their filling up the measure of their fathers, the abundant

testimony of the apostolic spirit went forth, before a destruction not leaving one stone upon another which was not thrown down, came upon a disobedient and gainsaying people, despising thus their own mercy. The remnant of believers in this very testimony alone escaped the judgments. And (if God spared not the natural branches, the people, in all whose affliction He was afflicted, the angel of His presence succoring them) shall the Gentile church, fallen into yet greater evil, after yet greater blessings, go unpunished? It shall not go unpunished: "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

Is popery, infidelity, worldliness, the minding earthly things, which they who do are enemies of the cross of Christ, the continuing in God's goodness? If not, is there not ample evidence, that if there be not some new dispensation, God's glory is defeated and destroyed in the world, and that instead of the Lord destroying the works of the devil, the devil, as far as this world goes, the only place he could, has destroyed the work of the Lord? But it will be said, the Lord is showing His arm, and the gospel is preached in a way it never was before. Doubtless it is, and here is one of the strongest evidences-not that there will be no change of dispensation, but that the change is near. In the first place, there is no instance of the renewal of a dispensation which had declined away and departed from its God, but a full and extraordinary testimony before the judgment came, in order to the gathering out the remnant before the judgments. Such there is now we admit, and rejoice in the mercy of it: this also we do say, that every one that listeneth to the testimony will escape. Would that all had ears to hear! for if they would turn and repent, God would surely turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind Him; yet we know that if they will not, they shall receive the reward of their unbelief; they that do, shall receive yet greater blessings and glory in the Lord's righteousness.

Having thus seen that the uniform analogy of God's dealings (by all parts of it, save judgment itself), and also the direct warnings of Scripture, lead us thus to judge of the nature and object of the testimony referred to, let us now turn to the light afforded by the passage usually quoted in connection herewith: that it is thus justly quoted I am willing to admit,⁴ because I believe it does point out what is going on now in the testimony which some think will convert the world. "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people "; but what is the message?-"Saying, with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of his judgment is come." We have, then, the uniform analogy of God's moral dealings (herein His ways are evidenced to be equal)-the solemn warning-and the actual testimony (on which those who think otherwise rely), all tending to this point, that this dispensation inherits judgment, not the world; is itself to be cut off, not to be the system of the world's blessing. I expressly avoid argument upon the subject here, because it supposes either space for very great length, or the reception of first principles, and, though profitable, is less direct than testimony; to which, therefore, I confine myself. But this I say, that either the church must show that it has continued in God's goodness, or else it must admit the conclusion, it shall be cut off, save repentance avert it. Testimony, however, in self satisfaction, is not repentance: "I shall see no sorrow," is the language of Babylon as fit for cutting off. There is, indeed, a most important principle and truth at the bottom of, and revealed in, all this; namely, the constant failure (under the power of Satan) of the creature, as the first-and then, indeed, every dispensation externally-has failed and will fail, unsustained by the direct power of God: and where evil is, the creature must fail, though God may uphold him, as He has and ever will His own people through all the dispensations, till they be brought where there is no evil. And here we may learn the special character of the millennium (purposely confining myself to the point in hand, I mention this only as a fact throwing light upon the failure of this dispensation), kept by power till Satan be let loose again, though finally, in its external form, the elect be gathered as out of all other dispensations: for, as we know that Satan's prevailing in one dispensation has, in its destruction, only given occasion to a better, so will it be then-even to the final destruction of his power-when all the elect of God shall be perfected in everlasting habitations, all evil removed, and God be all in all.

(2) Let us now consider what are the circumstances by which that dispensation is to be introduced.

First, then, judgment is the portion of this, and the introduction of that, and nothing else, whatever may accompany it for other, in themselves perhaps more important, objects.

And, secondly, it is connected with the dealings of God with the Jews as a people, setting up a dispensation among them. It will be impossible to state all the evidence of these separately, because the accomplishment of both being in one act, of course they are testified of together. There is, however, distinctness, as in New Testament statements, where often, as relating only to the church, the Gentile judgment solely is alluded to. Nevertheless, having stated them as objects of reference, it will be easy, under God's grace, to see them each to be definitely revealed by the Spirit, even when both are found together. I shall therefore (and the rather that they may prove themselves, and not be made to speak by any forced juxtaposition of mine) quote them with scarcely any order but that in which they present themselves; and, if the word is to be trusted (for that is the question), the truth I here, I sorrow to say, have to prove, rests on the fullest testimony of the word, as demonstrated to the mind of the believer. But let me here remark an enormous fallacy in the minds of those who reason on these subjects, and do not take the testimony.

It is admitted upon all hands that there is a time, or dispensation, in which the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. This is a great object held out in prophecy. The question between us is, How is this to be brought about? They say, By our preaching, or the preaching of the gospel. (I take the best ground for them.) How do they know that? How do they conclude that? Did the gospel ever do it before? Was it ever promised that it should do it? That man is responsible for its not doing so, I freely admit, but that is not the question. And that he is guilty, too, I admit. I conceive, indeed, that therefore the Gentile church will be cut off, because it has not done so; and therefore, we may say, as a church it is damnably guilty, because it has not done so. But as to actual result, those I speak of pass by the present sin of the church, and then prophesy (i.e., assert as to the future), that of which they can have no experience as to the past, that their exertions will do it. They charge us with looking into prophecy: undoubtedly we do, and use it as God intended it, as a charge and warning against our present sin and state; while they prophesy for themselves that which is credit for themselves-though never has the professing church at large been so far from godliness as now; if not, why all this labor, effort, formation of societies for home or continental purposes? This is the simple difference: we acknowledge it as a result of God's power; they say, without God's word (and we must add, against it), 'It will be done by our instrumentality.' Believers say, with God's word, It will not be done thus. We quarrel not with their efforts, but join in them according to our ability of God, as far as our poor hearts permit us; but we do quarrel with their assumption as to the coming result of their own labors, as if they were prophets, of that of which God has prophesied otherwise. They prophesy; we consult the word, and apply it to judge ourselves, and find the church guilty. Our assertion, accordingly, is this:

Firstly, that there is no prophecy in Scripture, or promise (which as to means, observe, of future accomplishment, is prophecy) that the gradual diffusion of the gospel shall convert the world. If there be, let them produce it: if not, I affirm that they are assuming something future, without any warrant for it but their own thoughts.

Secondly, that the prophecies always connect the filling of the world with the knowledge of the glory-with judgments.

Thirdly, we add, to those who are laboring without reference to this glory, yet are looking to the gathering of God's elect- faithfully perhaps-that there is a vast purpose of God, and one which is the result of all God's purposes, not embraced in their views, and that, as teachers of God's mind and will, their system must be wholly and utterly defective; for the earth is to be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. They recognize, and justly, that that cannot be, as it has never been, and, as we have seen, that it was not intended to be, by the gospel. There must, therefore, if they admit the truth of God's word, be some great plan and act of God's power, on which His mind is especially set (for His glory on the earth, as in heaven, must be His end as well as our desire, because we are His saints, and have the mind of Christ), of which they embrace nothing, teach nothing.

As to our assertion just made, of these three points, the second point, viz., that the prophecies always connect the filling of the world with the knowledge of the glory-with judgments,' is that which we would now prove. The first, ' That there is no prophecy in scripture that the gradual diffusion of the gospel shall convert the world,' would be proved by the second, were it complete; but, as a negative assertion, it rests only on reference to Scripture-and must be disproved by them-a single text is sufficient for the purpose, and to disprove the whole view, so that their task is a very easy one, if I am wrong. The third, as argumentative, is not a subject for proof here.

Let us now turn to the second: and may God in mercy and grace guide us herein to the right and full use of His word, receiving it with simplicity of faith and obedience in our consciences!

Let us turn to Zeph. 3:8, 9: " Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent." The explicitness of this needs no comment; it is an express and unequivocal assertion, that it is upon all the earth's being devoured with the fire of God's jealousy, after assembling the kingdoms to this end, that the Lord will turn to the people a pure language, to serve Him with one consent. I will only observe that people, in the original, is plural, Ammim not Goyim, Gentiles, and is the word, I think, in the original, for all nations not contemplated as excluded from the covenant (see page 106).

Let us turn to Isa. 65:13 to the end: " Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit. And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name: that he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth: because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes. For, behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock; and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord."

Here we have both points, namely, the introduction of the blessing by judgment, and its connection with the Jewish people. If any one will say this means the gospel, let him tell me what is the meaning, after saying the unbelieving Jews shall be left for a curse to His chosen, of the former troubles being forgotten, and how the rest of the passage applies to the church; for the former troubles of the Jews were only then beginning, or, at the least, accomplishing; so much so, that wrath was " come upon them to the uttermost." To the Gentiles it could have no application; for there was nothing of " former " to them; indeed, the whole passage has so plainly another and a fuller aim, that more argument seems needless.

Zech. 12:9, 10: " And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And 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."

Here we have the destruction (God's seeking to destroy all nations that come against Jerusalem) given as the occasion of the conversion of the Jews to the recognition of Him whom they had pierced: in a word, the cutting off of the nations (the general results of which we saw in Zephaniah) stated in the special circumstances resulting to the Jews. If Jerusalem be the church, still destruction is poured, not conversion, upon the nations; and if Jerusalem, as it must be in that case, be the true church, what is all this mourning as a new fruit of the destruction of their enemies? or how comes this to be the spirit now first called forth, and what is its suitableness?

Let us now turn to Zech. 14:1-9: " Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east; and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of

the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah: and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light. 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. And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one."

Our notice of this need be but short, because the first three verses can hardly be gainsaid in their force. The gospel cannot be made out of them, for Jerusalem is to be taken; but the Lord, as we have seen in other cases, is to go forth and fight against those nations, and then the Lord is to be King over all the earth; and in that day there shall be one Lord and His name one—that is, the blessing of the universal acknowledgment of the Lord covering the earth, is, by some extraordinary dispensations, in which the nations are gathered against Jerusalem, and the Lord seeks, as we have seen above, to destroy them there; and then His name is known in all the earth.

Let us compare Isa. 66:6, 18, 19, 13-16, indeed to the end of the chapter, noticing verses 22 and 23: "A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense to his enemies.... As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb: and the hand of the Lord shall be known toward his servants, and his indignation toward his enemies. For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all

flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many.... For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see my glory. And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord. And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord. For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh."

We have here the simplest demonstration that judgment is the portion of the Gentile world, and that by it the glory of the Lord is known. Now the Lord never pleaded by fire and sword with all flesh at a time when His gospel, or glory by it, was made known to them; still less did He then bless and restore the Jews; but more of this hereafter.

To the same purpose we may quote Ezekiel, without quoting the whole passage, which may be easily referred to by those interested in it. It may be sufficient to refer to two verses, viz., the 6th and 7th of chapter 39: "And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the Lord. So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel." We have here the same fact, so distinctly stated as to need no observation: if any doubt its application, they may easily satisfy themselves that it is not the gospel, by reading the verses following: if so, then it is by judgment that the heathen are to know that Jehovah is the Lord, and that in Israel.

And this is the day of which the Lord hath spoken, as Gog and Magog were the party of whom the Lord hath spoken. Here, too, I may quote the solemn announcement of Joel 3:9-18: "Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near: let them come up: beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens, and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim"—describing thus, as we have seen in too many places not to determine its character, some solemn and determinate act, closing up the intentions of God: an act of judgment at once upon the heathen, and by which, yet, the heathen, with Israel, are to know that God is the Lord in Israel, and when God shall thereupon turn to the people a pure language.

But from Deut. 32:34, 35, we shall see that this was the original intention and plan of God.

After describing the sale of the children of Israel into the hands of their enemies, He says, "Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures? To me belongeth vengeance and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time." Who have been the instruments of judgment and oppression upon the Jews? whose feet, therefore, shall slide in due time? Then the order of this is seen (v. 36, 40-43): "For the Lord shall judge his people and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left.... For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live forever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. I will make my arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives from the beginning of the revenges upon the enemy. Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people; for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people."

Let us now trace some of the passages of Isaiah where this subject is developed in one of its branches at length. Thus (Isa. 63:1-7), "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? that this is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength? I

that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine fat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth. I will mention the loving kindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving kindnesses." We may make the same remark here as in Zephaniah, as to the term people; it is 'ammim.' But generally it is the exercise of the judgment of the Lord, treading down the people in His fury, breaking out into the testimony of the lovingkindness of the Lord towards Israel (see page 101).

Again, in Isa. 61:2, to the end of the chapter, "To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. And they shall build up the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. But ye shall be named the priests of the Lord: men shall call you the ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves. For your shame ye shall have double, and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double; everlasting joy shall be unto them. For I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering: and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people; all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." With the testimony of the full blessing then to flow from what is described, we have this remarkable circumstance, that that portion of the prophecy, as the Lord's people have often observed, which applied to the manifestation of Christ in grace, was quoted by the Lord, but the latter part not; so that we have here demonstrative evidence of the application of the latter part to some ulterior visitation. I would remark that this is always the case in prophecies embracing the first and second advents of our Lord, and their circumstances: they are quoted so far even when most apparently mixed, as they are applicable to the existing circumstances, and there they stop. The application of the latter part to Zion is too manifest to need proof; indeed, all that is personal to our Lord in the flesh belongs exclusively to their dispensation, but this, of course, we cannot pursue here. But, on the whole, the day of vengeance is the day of Zion's joy, relief, blessing, and inheriting the Gentiles, and rebuilding the former desolations.

Again, in Isa. 52:7-10, the same truths are brought before us, with (we must add) the same distinction by Paul as before by the Lord, namely, stopping at the part which was applicable to the former coming of the Lord, even in humiliation: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice: with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." The forty-ninth chapter is a full exposé of the order of these things, but as not bearing on the point of judgment I pass it by, with this notice only to direct the attention of Christian brethren to it.

But I must, though without comment, direct attention to chapter 32 of the same prophet; which I do the rather, because it was in this the Lord was pleased, without man's teaching, first to open my eyes on this subject, that I might learn His will concerning it throughout-not by the first blessed truths stated in it, but the latter part, when there shall be a complete change in the dispensation, the wilderness becoming the fruitful field of God's fruit and glory, and that which had been so, being counted a forest, at a time when the Lord's judgments should come down, even great hail, upon this forest; and the city, even of pride, be utterly abased. That the Spirit's pouring out upon the Jews, and their substitution for the Gentile church, become a forest, is here adverted to, is evident from the connection of the previous verses. I shall quote only the latter verses (from verse 14), begging, however, reference to the former part: "Because the palaces shall be forsaken: the multitude of the city shall be left: the forts and towers shall be for dens forever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks; until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places; when it shall hail, coming down on the forest: and the city shall be low in a low place. Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass." I can only refer to the chapters 34 and 35- the whole chapters should be read; they are too plain to need any comment, if the point stated has been so stated as to be understood.

Again, chapter 30: 25, to the end: "And there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers and streams of waters in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound. Behold, the name of the Lord cometh from far, burning with his anger, and the burden thereof is heavy; his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire: and his breath as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity: and there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err. Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the Lord, to the Mighty One of Israel. And the Lord shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, tempest, and hailstones. For through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be beaten down, which smote with a rod. And in every place where the grounded [i.e. decreed or determined] staff shall pass, which the Lord shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps: and in battles of shaking [or, an outstretched hand] will he fight with it. For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it."

Again, chapter 29: 17 to the end, with the reason and occasion, verse 20: " Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest? And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. For the terrible one is brought to naught, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off: that make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of naught. Therefore, thus saith the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale. But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel. They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine."

Again, chapter 26: 19, to the end: " Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain."

Isa. 25:3-7, and 12: " Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee. For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers as the heat in a dry place; even the heat with the shadow of a cloud; the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low. And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations.... And the fortress of the high fort of thy walls shall he bring down, lay low, and bring to the ground, even to the dust."

The whole of the chapter 24 may be read, particularly the latter part; and lest any should conclude that it applied only to the land of Israel, we would refer them to verses 4 and 21. This is not the place to enter into the special application of the word earth, or rather the word from which it is translated, Greek or Hebrew; but it is full of interest, and I believe the Spirit always to use it in the same and a consistent sense.

I would just advert only to chapter 17: 12-14. I only advert to this as applying to the same truth, because I admit that within itself (and I am not here expounding all prophecy), it does not contain on the face of it the evidence that it cannot apply to Sennacherib; and, therefore, though I give it as the same truth, I do not use it as an argument: " Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters! The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountain before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind. And behold at evening tide trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us."

Let us turn to chapter 11: 1-12: " And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots: and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. 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, and from the islands of the sea."

Here we have one of the passages where the knowledge of the Lord covering the earth is spoken of; and how? The destruction of the Assyrian, when Lebanon should fall by a mighty one, or mightily-this is stated as the occasion when One should arise who should reprove with equity for the meek of the earth, who should smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He should slay the wicked. I know they say the breath of His mouth is the gospel; but this is merely to hold a system together: for slaying the wicked is not converting them, nor is the breath of the Lord the gospel. In chapter 30: 33, it is compared to a stream of brimstone kindling the fire for the king; and so it is said, in the epistle to the Thessalonians, of the wicked one whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth. We surely need not argue that this is the destruction, not the conversion, of the wicked one. Let us refer to Psa. 18, where this expression (I might say subject, but from this I must refrain) is brought before us: " Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved, and were shaken, because he was wroth. There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it." So verses 13-15 of the same Psalm. At that time peace shall be indeed on earth, without hurt or destruction; a day when the Lord shall set Himself again to recover the remnant, even the dispersed of Judah from the four quarters of the earth-when they should prevail against their enemies, and Assyria be smitten, and this known in all the earth, for the Lord shall be great in Zion. Here, then, again we have the circumstances in which the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea-judgment, excision of enemies, the blessing of Israel, His gathering from the four quarters of the earth, and the Lord's being great in Zion.

So the Jews are taught by the results of His first coming to look for, and wait on, Him who hideth His face from the house of Jacob; Isa. 8:14-17. " And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken. Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him."

Compare also chapter 4: 2 to the end, which proves, as other passages, the involving of the Jews in that day, in days of purging trial. So Ezek. 1 can only refer generally to Isa. 1 from verse 24 to the end of chapter 2, where the great moral bearing of these truths is fully and solemnly brought forward.

Let us turn now to Jeremiah. In chapter 3: 17, 18 we find Jerusalem the throne of the Lord, when all nations are gathered together in the name of the Lord, when also the children of Israel and Judah come out of captivity into their own land: " 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: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north, to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers."

So also see Jer. 31:10-12, for the Jewish part of the inquiry: " Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all."

So Jer. 30:7-11, where the language is sufficiently plain without comment, as denoting the circumstances which attend the time of blessing: " Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Therefore fear them not, O my servant Jacob, saith the Lord; neither be dismayed, O Israel; for, lo, I will save them from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished."

Again, more distinctly, Jer. 33:7-9. The language here is of the utmost strength: " And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them as at the first. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honor before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness, and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it."

The testimony of Micah is very definite also, to the same purpose-as Mic. 4:1-5, and I1 to the end: " But in the last days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nations shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it. For all people will walk, every one, in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever.... Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion. But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor. Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion; for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many people; and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth." In this, the gathering of the nations, not understanding the thoughts of the Lord, as in so many passages we have seen, is distinctly revealed, as well as the special blessing of Jerusalem as the center of worship. Mic. 5 may be referred to for the same purpose; both points are there distinctly stated: the blessing of Israel in Christ, as in verses 9 and 15; the lifting up His hand on all His adversaries, and vengeance on the heathen, such as they have not heard: " Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off.... And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen, such as they have not heard."

Hab. 2 need only be referred to and read, simply to see that the knowledge of the Lord filling the earth, as the waters cover the sea, is the result of the destruction of the oppressing proud man, who was the scourge of guilty Israel, who had gathered all nations; when, of the Lord of hosts, the people should labor in the very fire, and weary themselves for very vanity, or under affliction. This surely is not the preaching of the gospel, or anything like it. Yet this is what makes the prophet say, " For the earth shall be full of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." We have, I may remark, these same " Ammim " here again, as before (see page 101).

Let me here remark, before turning to the collateral statements of Scripture, that in many of these passages it is not merely the statement of the fact which we affirm, which is material, but its statement coincidently with facts which leave it impossible to spiritualize it away to other meanings. For example, it might be said that gathering all nations to Jerusalem, or coming up to Jerusalem, meant the assembly of the Gentiles into the church; but I find it associated with the re-gathering and exaltation of the Jewish nation, and at the same time desolating destructions and judgments on these same Gentile nations. Then I see that the one cannot mean former restorations, because then there was no gathering of Gentiles into the church; nor the gathering by the gospel, when it went forth from Zion before; because there was no gathering of the Jewish nation, but their dispersion, nor any judgment on the Gentile nations which came up against Jerusalem, but on the Jews themselves. Yet I find these things introduced as coincident occurrences, leading me to sure conclusions as to the unfulfilled character of the transaction, and how to receive their force.

One passage demands our attention, before we turn to the New Testament: I mean Daniel's image. There we have a stone cut out without hands, unseen till the image was formed, even to the ten toes. This stone did not progressively diffuse its influence over the image. Indeed the image was not the earth, nor people, but empires, or kingdoms of well-known characters; nor was the stone the gospel, but something that destroyed the image. This stone, then, was cut out without hands, as its first act here stated, struck the image on its feet (i.e., the Roman empire in its divided state), and thereby put empire out of the earth; and the stone which smote the image became a mountain, and filled the whole earth: it was that which destroyed the empire of the whole earth. Here, then, we have a power, differing in its nature, but analogous in its character, not formed by the ordinary instrumentality of man, acting in destruction of that which assumed authority on the

earth in its last form; and then, after having destroyed it, filling the earth, the place of them being no more found. Is not the character of this work as simple and determinate as possible, and the manner by which the hoped-for filling the earth with the glory of the Lord is to be accomplished evidently declared?-a work in which man has no part, and which is not the gospel but Christ's power.

Can we find nothing analogous to this in the short book of Christian prophecy? We have already adverted to the parable of the tares, sufficiently to show the judicial process by which Christ's field, this world, is set right. Let us shortly turn to Matt. 25-the parable of the sheep and the goats. The former chapter had, as to judgment, developed the dealings of the Lord with the Jews, with the associated introduction of the gospel, and its nature, of which more hereafter. This declares that the Lord would gather all the Gentiles before Him, and try them according to the manner in which this testimony of the gospel had been received. That is, He will fulfill that which is testified of by Joel: "Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about." The gospel might be despised meanwhile, in the world, but this His followers might be assured of, that it was precisely according to the way in which they were treated that all the Gentiles would be judged; for they, as well as the Jews, were subjects of His Son's power.⁵ Such is manifestly the force of this passage, if taken in its order as a revelation.

Coincidentally with this, and as indicative of our whole subject, compare Matt. 24:14: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." True, the nations ought to be converted; but that which is declared as preceding the end (i.e., of the dispensation of the separation of the Jewish people from their head), is a testimony, a witness to all nations; then comes the end. This is all, therefore, we are entitled to look for.

But have the vials no associations with these judgments on the nations? Is there no wrath in them? That they are poured out before the millennium is evident, because there is a gathering to Armageddon in them, and after that (i.e., in the seventh) great Babylon comes in remembrance. And are the vials conversion by preaching, or are they poured out on the heathen, or on the professing church? "All the kings of the earth and of the whole world," sounds much like the judgments we have been hearing of. They were to be gathered, as we saw before: are there to be two such gatherings, or what is it? At any rate, there is wrath on the earth and air, and a gathering of all the earth by Satan against the Lamb, before and as an introduction to the millennium. Again, do the harvest of the earth and the vine of the earth, trodden in the winepress of God's wrath, bear no analogy to that which we have seen in the Prophets? What is the vine of the earth? when is this? and, perhaps we might ask, where? Note, also, in the Jewish order, the feast of tabernacles came after the vintage. Lev. 23 is the history of the world in its septarian⁶ form. We have seen, historically, the antitypes, in the history of the church, of two of the feasts, though in their effects not fully accomplished: of the great eight-day feast we have yet to see the blessing and accomplishment; and it was after the vintage, the end of God's prophetic year, I mean of the revolution of history, in Christ manifested in the flesh.

Rev. 14 affords another eventful septary,⁷ beginning with the general blessing. The millennium comes after this; this ends with the vintage. Will the church shut its ears to the testimony of the warning which God has given it? Let us conclude our references, at least, by turning to Luke 21. We have here the Lord's answer to His disciples' inquiries on these subjects. This is important and interesting. Let us consider it.

What is the character, then, given of the dispensation? Any sign? any promise of universal blessing or peace by the gospel? I find it not. I find persecution, betrayal, hating of all men for His name's sake; and then, when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, during which the scene of God's visible power on earth is removed, how are we taught to look for redemption? (I mean not as regards our present condition, extensive blessing, or the pervading of the word, but redemption.) There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars, and on the earth, distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring, and men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming on the earth. And are they looking in vain? In truth, they are not; for as His fear is, so is His wrath; for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken, Jerusalem shall be trodden down till- but that "till" comes in desolation and destruction on the apostate Gentiles: for when they say, Peace and safety, behold sudden destruction shall come upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape; and the professing church is the special object of this, as it is specially responsible.

And now, what do we complain of? Is it not prying into futurity? Far otherwise. It is not taking the testimony of God and applying it to present judgment, and thus consequently offering the sacrifice of folly. I do say it is the privilege of the saints to know what is revealed. It is mere infidelity and unbelief-simple infidelity and unbelief, and rejection of the promise, "He shall show you things to come"; and, again, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit!" that is, the things which He hath prepared for them that love Him. Men may say, It is presumption! But it is no more presumption in me to believe what God has said, and has declared that He has revealed to us for our blessing as to this, than it is to believe what He has stated concerning the accomplished work of Christ; and I suspect the notion of presumption runs pretty much together as to both. But this is not my present subject, but this: that the church is hiding the present judgment of itself from its eyes, that God's judgments, are upon the church in warning, and they will not hear; and therefore they will be cut off if they repent not. "And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. Wherefore the Lord saith, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid," Isa. 29:11-14.

If it be so, that these things are hid, then I say it is a solemn judgment from God, His greatest judgment on the church, thus to hide them-a sign of judgment that they may be judged. Yet men seem to rejoice and pride themselves on their wisdom in knowing nothing about them-rejoice in the last heaviest sign, the deep hope-obscuring cloud, before the judgments of God break down upon them who have willfully stayed abroad in the field because they believed not, or received not the word and warnings and threatenings of God the Lord. For there is one that seeth and judgeth. Poor man! If the Lord hath indeed poured out upon you a deep sleep and hath closed your eyes, the prophets, and rulers, and seers hath He covered; then woe for you; and what shall the sheep do? All your services are but folly; for when God, perhaps, is calling for repentance, behold, you are in joy; when judgment is ready to strike, you are rejoicing; when God calls to fasting, and weeping, and mourning, behold you are killing sheep and slaying oxen. If the testimony of God be not received as applicable in our present state, then all our worship and service must be guided by man's judgment and our fear by the precept of men, and be foolishness and rebellion in His sight. But ye say, We will not consider... I say not to you, look at the hopes and the future glory; but I say, God has warned of judgment now. I

speak of something which applies to you now: yea, why even of yourselves judge ye not that which is right? Does not the church, do not we, deserve judgment? The Lord hearken to the supplication of His servants, that our eyes may be opened! Infidel liberty is not Christian liberty. God may use it for His own purposes in punishing the wicked, as He saith, " O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation." But if the people rejoice in Rezin and Pekah, trust in this Tiglath-Pileser does but show their infidelity, and will be their distress, and not their strength; for yet it is but a little while (as indeed it is the rod of God against the corruption of the church) His anger will cease, and His indignation, in their destruction. The prophet may be grieved at the evil of the church, but the spirit of infidelity is the spirit of pride-a proud man which enlargeth his desire as hell, neither stayeth at home. It will have its day, perhaps, against a corrupt and guilty church; it may seek to sit upon the mount of God; but as soon as the Lord has accomplished His whole work upon Mount Zion and Jerusalem, He will punish the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks; and the spirit of the prophet will be of grief, intercession, and pity, that the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he. The Lord will hearken, hear, and deliver; for, though he be proud, his heart that is lifted up is not righteous in him; and the just shall live by his faith. Of this infidelity may be sure, that it will rack its heart in bitterness or the madness with which it is now proud; for God's eye is upon it, and the proof of it is, that it sees Him not; it is rushing in blindness into the bitterness of God's wrath. There will they be in great fear, for God is in the generation of the righteous.

It may be right to mention, in conclusion, that the abundant testimony of the Psalms on this subject has not been referred to, as it would have introduced too great an extent of testimony here; but reference, with this subject in our mind, will at once satisfy the believing enquirer how direct and full the development of God's Spirit in the word is there-as in Psa. 2; 9; 10; 18; 67; 68; 75; 76; 83; 92, and many others which I omit, as supposing more detailed inquiry into the subject, though not of obscurer evidence when understood through the light of other scriptures.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Critical 1, Basket of Firstfruits, The (26:1-11)

That it applies to Israel's possession of the land at any time is plain. The last words of the first verse imply as much: "And it shall be when thou art come in unto the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein, that thou shalt take," etc. Ex. 23:19; Lev. 23; and Num. 18:13, fully confirm this. It was a standing ordinance in the land. The spirit of the offering is also clear: a full profession before God that they possessed the things which He had promised to their fathers. Their father had been a Syrian ready to perish, a slave in Egypt, and redemption had brought them out thence, and into the good land of which they were now in full enjoyment. Therefore were they come up to own the Giver in offering to Him the first-fruits. They worshipped and rejoiced in every good thing Jehovah had given them, and this in grace, with the Levite and the stranger.

How all this bears on the way in which the believer now makes the offering is evident. All his worship is but the answer, the reflex, and bringing back to God of the fruit-the first-fruits, if true faith and godliness be there-of what God has revealed Himself to be to him, and of that heavenly joy into which He has introduced him. Such is properly what the Lord calls " that which is your own; " for on earth we are pilgrims, in the desert it is not " ours." The characteristic of piety will be found to be, in scripture, and everywhere, and ever, that the first effect of blessing is turning back to God and owning it there, not the personal enjoyment of it, which, without this, turns us from God. The love that gave it is more present than even the gift. See Eliezer at the well (Gen. 24), the cleansed Samaritan leper (Luke 17), and a multitude of other examples. He who gives is more and more before us than the gift itself. This is the elevating character of divine enjoyment. Then surely we do enjoy it, freely and blessedly, and the stream of grace flows out to the Levite and the stranger-to those whose hearts are in need, and who have not an inheritance in the land we enjoy. It is, then, the return of the heart to God in the enjoyment of the heavenly blessings which are the fruit of redemption. The Christian too can enjoy or so worship when he has the consciousness that heavenly things are his. It is the profession, the open avowal, of this; if he has not this consciousness, neither can he bring his basket of first-fruits. "A Syrian ready to perish " was a thing past. The worship was grounded on possession of the blessing and on a known inheritance-type of sitting " in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." It is not thankfulness for promises, however surely this has its place, but thankfulness that they are accomplished-in Christ, yea and amen. Redemption is owned as an accomplished thing that has put us in possession, though for the redemption of the body we have yet to wait.

Indeed, this is the general character of Deuteronomy. It is not drawing near to God in the sanctuary by means of sacrifice, but the people-not the priest merely for them-are themselves in possession, and hence the sentiments towards God Himself, and towards the desolate of men, in the enjoyment of the blessing; for free grace becomes him who has received all through grace. Compare Deut. 16, where even the various degrees of this are traced in the three principal feasts of Jehovah. Hence also the responsibility of the people as to the continuance of the enjoyment of the blessing; for it is in the path of obedience that such enjoyment is known. Deuteronomy is a book of the deepest practical instruction in this respect.

Christian Truth: Volume 29, Basket of First Fruits, The (26:1-11)

"And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein; that thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place His name there.

"And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the LORD thy God, that I am come unto the country which the LORD swore unto our fathers for to give us. And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of the LORD thy God.

"And thou shalt speak and say before the LORD thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous: and the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid

upon us hard bondage: and when we cried unto the LORD God of our fathers, the LORD heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labor, and our oppression: and the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders: and He hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey.

"And now, behold I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which Thou, O LORD, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the LORD thy God, and worship before the Lord thy God: and thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the LORD thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you." Deut. 26:1-11.

That this scripture applies to Israel's possession of the land at any time is plain. The last words of the first verse imply as much: "And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein; that thou shalt take," etc. Exod. 23:19, Leviticus 23, and Numb. 18:13 fully confirm this. It was a standing ordinance in the land. The spirit of the offering is also clear—a full profession before God that they possessed the things which He had promised to their fathers. Their father had been a Syrian ready to perish, a slave in Egypt, and redemption had brought them out thence and into the good land of which they were now in full enjoyment. Therefore were they come up to own the Giver in offering to Him the first fruits. They worshiped and rejoiced in every good thing Jehovah had given them, and this in grace, with the Levite and the stranger.

How all this bears on the way in which the believer now makes the offering, is evident. All his worship is but the answer, the reflex, and bringing back to God of the fruit—the first fruits if true faith and godliness be there—of what God has revealed Himself to be to him, and of that heavenly joy into which He has introduced him. Such is properly what the Lord calls "that which is your own"; for on earth we are pilgrims, in the desert it is not "ours." The characteristic of piety will be found to be, in Scripture, and everywhere and ever, that the first effect of blessing is turning back to God and owning it there, not the personal enjoyment of it which without this turns us from God. The love that gave it is more present than even the gift. See Eliezer at the well (Gen. 24), the cleansed Samaritan leper (Luke 17), and a multitude of other examples. He who gives is more and more before us than the gift itself. This is the elevating character of divine enjoyment. Then surely we do enjoy it, freely and blessedly; and the stream of grace flows out to the Levite and the stranger—to those whose hearts are in need, and who have not an inheritance in the land we enjoy. It is then the return of the heart to God in the enjoyment of the heavenly blessings which are the fruit of redemption. The Christian too can enjoy or so worship when he has the consciousness that heavenly things are his. It is the profession, the open avowal of this; if he has not this consciousness, neither can he bring his basket of first fruits.

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