

Ephesians - Commentaries by John Gifford Bellett

The Christian Shepherd: 2003, Ambassador in Bonds, An (6:18-20)

"Praying... for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds" (Eph. 6:18-20).

Did you ever hear of such a thing as the ambassador of one nation being put in bonds by the nation to which he was sent? Why, God has fared worse in this world than the representative of any nation in it would, and what message did this ambassador bring? A message of boundless grace. And that is the way He has been treated. The law of nations would not allow it for an instant. Yet that is the way God, for two thousand years, in the person of His servants and witnesses, has consented to be treated.

J. G. Bellett

The Christian Shepherd: 1998, Brief Notes on Ephesians Chapter 6:10-24 (6:10-24)

The doctrine of the Epistle to the Ephesians closes with chapter 4:16. From that point to chapter 6:9, we get practical instructions. From chapter 6:9 to the end, we get conflict. So this epistle naturally distributes itself into three parts teaching, walk and conflict.

The teaching, we remember, was the education of the church the body of Christ. We have constant proof all along the line of Old Testament days of heavenly calling, but only distant, shadowy intimations of the body of Christ. It is not said of Abraham that he was blessed in heavenly places in Christ, incorporated in Christ. This is the grand teaching of this highest of all the epistles.

When we leave the doctrinal part, we get the practical part and there the doctrinal part is gloriously honored. Precepts become, by the Spirit, the expression of the moral virtue of my calling.

In the next place precepts are given a dispensational character. God is not dwelling in the same light now as when He was sitting on the throne in Jerusalem. That was an earthly light. The light that God now dwells in is the awful yet most precious mystery that He has been rejected here in His dear Son and that that Son is now glorified in heaven. Now you must be in the light where God dwells. You must make God's dispensational truth the rule of your ways. I speak not, of course, of the light in which God dwells, as in His own proper glory as we read in 1 Timothy 6:16.

The difference between chapters 5 and 6 is that in chapter 5 we see the saint walking in the midst of the circumstances of human life. In chapter 6 we see the saint in the field of battle. You are in conflict today and you will be again tomorrow. There is plenty of work for us to do if we are practical, living saints of God.

Now, in opening this third view, he tells us to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, taking to us the whole armor of God, that we may withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. The Spirit contemplates that it is a war from the beginning to end. There may be specific battles, but you must still stand as in war. Are you prepared for finding human life a war? It is to be incessant war until you have done with this world, this flesh and the devil.

"The evil day" is a specific battle. If we have won the victory, why are we still called to stand? Because war has been proclaimed. You are to recognize that while you are in the body, you are a fighting man. That being your position, you are to put on the whole armor of God, "for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers,... against spiritual wickedness in high places." Now, how do you understand this? Do you rest in the thought that wicked spirits are in heavenly places?

But what do these wicked spirits do? They come down with all their wiles and lies and deceivings to practice them in your heart and mine. Paul says, "We are not ignorant of his devices," and again, "O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil." All these prove that he acts by wiles. He acts by violence and by persecution also, but that is not contemplated here. If we go over the story of Satan in Scripture, we shall find him an accuser. Was he not an accuser of the brethren in the book of Job? And is not the very same character attached to him in the book of the Revelation? Thus, finding myself in the presence of the enemy, I am to put on the whole armor of God.

Let us inspect each part of this armor. There is not one single piece of this armor which is fitted to battle against flesh and blood. There are no slings or jawbones of asses as with David and Samson. If I have not the armor here, I am not fighting for Christ. Saints may take carnal weapons, but if I do if, for instance, I go into a court of justice to assert my rights do not let me talk of being in the light of God. That is where dispensational truth is so important. I find here that the Spirit sends me into a field of battle, and I find that my security depends on truth, righteousness, faith, peace and the sword of the Spirit.

Now suppose we were to describe a few of these wiles: infidel heresies, superstitious vanities, evil doctrines. We are not here in conflict with our lusts but with the direct attempts of the enemy. We withstand the temptations of our hearts in this world in chapter 5. In chapter 6 we are set face to face with Satan. How could you attach yourself to Jesus and not turn round in the face of the enemy and let him know that you are at war with him?

Then we find that having this armor on us, if a quickened condition of soul be not maintained in communion, the armor will be cumbrous. "Praying always... and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds." Did you ever hear of such a thing as the ambassador of one nation being put in bonds by the nation to which he was sent? Why, God has fared worse in this world than any nation in it would! And what message did this ambassador bring? A message of boundless grace. And that is the way He has been treated. The law of nations would not allow it for an instant. Yet that is the way God, for almost two thousand years, in the person of His servants, has consented to be treated.

The Apostle tells them that he sends Tychicus "that he might comfort your hearts." Oh, if we could be in prison, yet able to comfort others! As a dear believer, a clergyman in the Bishop of London's coalhole, sent to his wife, "Be merry, dear wife, be merry; we're all merry here. We weep with Him now, but we shall laugh with Him forever." That is equal to Paul sending from a prison in Rome a cheering word to his brethren at Ephesus.

God grant that we may be taught by the doctrine, instructed in the morals and put on something of strength for the battle by this closing scene.

J. G. Bellett

The Christian Shepherd: 1998, Brief Notes on Ephesians Chapter 4:17 - Chapter 5 (4:17-32)

The doctrine of this epistle closes with chapter 4:16. From that point to chapter 6:9, we get practical instructions. From chapter 6:9 to the end, we get conflict.

In Ephesians 5 and 6 we get not only the church, but saints individually. We do not lose our personality. And so it is with gifts: "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints." The first business of gifts was with each individually.

So when we come to practical details, we are also addressed individually. We are told to put away lying, as being members one of another. "Be ye angry, and sin not." Anger may be as holy a feeling as any other, but do not retain it so as to let it degenerate into nature. Then, resist the devil, and "let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor... that he may have to give to him that needeth." This is very beautiful. Ceasing from stealing, he is to become a workman for others. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth... and grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." Our works are looked at and our words and now our tempers.

Then, "Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." I am to measure myself by God.

Chapter 5

"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us." Suppose I was a good neighbor just to keep my conscience a little easy. Would that be meeting the demands of this passage? "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us": that makes kindness, Christian kindness. I take the Lord Jesus as my great prototype. I am to walk in love, because Christ has loved me and given Himself for me.

You know that your renewed conscience would never be satisfied merely by doing what is right. You must have the springs of action purified. Uncleanliness does not become saints. But am I to lay it aside because it is uncleanliness? No, but because it does not become saints.

The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, as in the benevolent virtues righteousness, as in integrity and honesty, and all connected with truth. We find these two in the world, but not connected with truth. These things are given to make us practically like Christ. As an old writer says, "Christ Himself is the ground of all laws to a Christian." He would have us sober, truthful and honest.

Now are you light, and what quality of light? Light "in the Lord." "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." But are you merely an emptied, stripped thing? No; you have put on the new man. As the old man would have made plunder out of what belonged to another, so now you are to work for him whom before you would have plundered.

"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time." I am to have an understanding, not of the philosophy of schools, but of the will of the Lord. The Spirit keeps you in company with Christ. He puts Christ upon you. The old man might get drunk with wine, but the new man has the Spirit to fill himself with. If the old man is to be mortified, the new man is to be cultivated.

This filling of the Spirit expresses itself "in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." This is a vessel filled with the Spirit. Once filled with wine, now it is bubbling up in melody to the Lord.

Now he addresses husbands and wives. There, I need not say, how deeply we are in company with Christ. Now Christ is called "head" in three aspects. In chapter 1 He is Head over all things to the church. In chapter 4 it is as being Head of influence, dispensing virtue to members. Here in chapter 5 we see Him in another aspect, as the Head of authority. "The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church."

Then, the Lord becomes the "new sanction" for children's obedience to their parents. Under Moses, it was a legal thing.

So with fathers. A father ought to delight in serving his child. At every hour he should be watching that the nurture and admonition of the Lord are ministered to his child. He should minister Christ to him.

As to servants, it is beautiful: They are to be obedient. It matters not the character of their master. They are to be doing service "as unto the Lord."

Then as to masters do not be guilty of threatening. The lordly ways of masters and mistresses are hateful. How does your Master in heaven treat you?

Here the practical part ends, but I ask, Does it not dignify you? You are in company up there with Jesus, even while carrying on these practical duties. It is the same Jesus who is enfolding, embracing and enriching you in every step of the journey, and that for His own eternity.

J. G. Bellett

Every Family in Heaven and on Earth, Every Family in Heaven and on Earth: 2 (3:15)

Now the order and progress of the Savior's journey of old, back to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, and also of His return and entrance into that glory which is still reserved for Him, may be somewhat traced in scripture. And what paths are these to trace!

In passing from the grave to His glory, having broken the bands of death because it was not possible that He should be holden in it, He stayed for a while on this earth, which of old He had given to the children of men. Here He spake with those who were His for forty days, concerning the kingdom of God; showing pledges to them of His constant faithful love, and showing not only that He Who was dead was alive again, but that He was going to glory; the same gracious Master Whose love in the days of His sojourn with them, had been ever so present to comfort and keep them.

In passing upward from them to His seat higher than all heavens, we may trace Him spoiling principalities and powers, the spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places, leading captivity captive, making show of them openly, triumphing over them (it may be in the sight of the elect angels), as the serpent's mighty bruiser, Who had come down to the earth, the house of the strong man, and as the stronger than he, had bound him and spoiled his goods. Then, having accomplished His way back to the highest heavens, He was received of the Father and seated at His own right hand in token of the Father's infinite complacency in Him, and, for His sake, in the saints, for whom He had thus humbled Himself and fought and conquered. "Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool," was the welcome with which He was then received. Sweet consolation for Him Who had heard the cry from earth, "We will not have this man to reign over us." The fullness of joy awaited Him there, though here He was crucified. "In thy presence is fullness of joy," said the Lord anticipating His ascension to the Father.

The season of His return, from this His seat on high, awaits the Father's pleasure, Who has put this in His own power, for the Son has subjected Himself according to the counsels of grace for us; He receives a kingdom and then returns. The present prince of the air, the spiritual wickedness that is now in the heavenly places, ruling the darkness of this world, is to be displaced. Michael and his angels are to fight against the dragon and his angels. Jesus is to descend from "On high" into these lower heavens, and by Michael to prevail, till the great dragon, that old serpent called the Devil and Satan, is cast into the earth, and his angels with him, and no place be found for them any more in heaven (Rev. 12:7-9).

The dragon, thus cast out of heaven, comes down with great wrath to the inhabitants of the earth and sea, his persecution being directed especially against Israel, who will then be brought into expectation of their Messiah as heir of David's throne; and thus consequently be witness to Him as heir of the world against the dragon the usurper of it, and the kings of the earth his champions. The dragon's title to the earth is already disproved, as indeed the Lord's right to everything from the grave of death to the throne of the Highest in heaven, has been blessedly manifested by His passing through all these, rising in the execution of His mighty work as the descended and ascended One; but He the rightful heir has not actually assumed His right; and thus the usurper has still power, and throne, and great authority to confer, which he will do until He comes Whose all power is.

And come He will with "ten thousands of His saints," to smite the kings of the earth, to show Himself as the mighty God, the Kinsman-Redeemer, Who shall deliver the inheritance of the family of God, and fix it in their possession forever.

His action, as the Goel or Redeemer, as appears, will be conducted in the wrath of the Lamb, against the Antichrist and his company, who have despised His grace as the Lamb of God presented to them for the taking away of sin; and in the wrath of the Son (Who as being Son should have been acknowledged to be Heir also) against the kings and judges of the earth who refused to do righteously as for Him, King of kings and Lord of lords, but held themselves as the ministers of iniquity and champions of the usurper (Rev. 6:16., Psa. 11, 12.). The citizens of this world sent after the departing Lord the cry, "We will not have this man to reign over us;" that cry has been echoed through their ranks ever since, and will be kept up until it is answered in righteous wrath. "These mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me" (Luke 19:27). "O my God, make them like a wheel, as the stubble before the wind; as the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire, so persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with Thy storm; fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Thy name, O Lord; let them be confounded and troubled forever; yea let them be put to shame and perish; that men may know that Thou, Whose name alone is Jehovah, art Most High over all the earth" (Psa. 83:13-18). How terrible that such language as this should be righteously taken up on the lips of those who are now beseeching the powers of the earth to be reconciled to this blessed Son! "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth, serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling; kiss the Son lest He be angry and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him" (2:10-12). But if the counsel of the Lord be now set at naught, the coming calamity will be laughed at. Blessed, blessed Lord, write all Thy word with Thine own living Spirit on the fleshy tables of our hearts, that we may not in our weakness only speak of these things, but in His power have our life in them, and according to them! It is then that the Lord will awake as out of sleep (Psa. 10:12; 44:23); then will He, to Whom vengeance belongeth, show Himself (Psa. 94:1). He Whose right hand (the emblem of His power) is now folded in His bosom, will then

pluck it thence to use it (Psa. 74:10, 11); to use it as the true David for the clearing of the promised inheritance of all the enemies of God and His people; and then for the sitting down as the true Solomon, in the fullness and peace of His kingly honors; His sun rising on the earth as a morning without clouds (2 Sam. 23:4); His light enlightening the Gentiles, and being the glory of His people Israel; the first dominion, the kingdom brought to the daughter of Jerusalem, but the people of the nations flowing into it—the Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, being then called the God of the whole earth (Isa. 54:1-5; Psa. 72:8-11; Mic. 4:1-8).

This shall be the gathering of “every family on earth,” the full display of the kingdom, when the will of God shall be done on earth as it is done in heaven, when the days of heaven shall be upon the earth (Deut. 11:21); all bowing their knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and every tongue confessing that the once rejected Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:11).

This order of gathering, first every family in heaven, and then every family on earth, is, as I apprehend, represented in several scriptures, as in Rom. 11, already alluded to, “The fullness of the Gentiles,” preceding the salvation of “all Israel.” I will, however, in addition, only notice the twelfth chapter of John, which very fully and graciously gives us to look at this order of Christ's procedure in taking the heaven and the earth, and gathering His families there.

When the chapter opens, our blessed Lord's paschal sufferings were approaching very slowly. He was on His way to Jerusalem as the place out of which a prophet could not perish. He first reaches Bethany, which lay outside the city, and is there refreshed: and the scene represents us with a lively figure of the Lord in the bosom of His church, as we may draw from the following considerations—

1.—This house in Bethany exhibited a sample of faith in Him as dead and alive again. The anointing His feet, by the loving worshipping Mary, was in token of her faith in His burial and all its blessed wondrous fruit. It expressed her faith in Him as the Holy One of God, Whose body should not see corruption, but that He, the Jesus, Who was about to be crucified, should be anointed, and glorified, and consecrated to a royal priesthood; for this was signified by the ceremonial oil of the law, whose mystical virtues her pot of spikenard would fain rival and set forth. And such is the faith of the church now. She stands as believing in Him Who raised up Jesus from the dead (Rom. 4:24); Who wrought His mighty power in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies, far above all principality, and power, and dominion (Eph. 1:20); in God Who has exalted Jesus, obedient unto death, and given Him a name, at which every knee in heaven, and earth, and under the earth, should bow (Phil. 2:8-10).

His resurrection-power in the person of Lazarus. “You hath He quickened,” is the word to every member of the church, “who were dead in trespasses and sins.” “If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” “But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.” And Lazarus, the witness of Christ's resurrection-power is, in this house of blessing, seen seated with the Lord, in token of that full fellowship which the saints are to have with Him, when they sit at His table with Him in His kingdom (Matt. 26:29).

3. This house in Bethany was the place into which the Lord retired. when He was rejected by Israel (see Matt. 21:17; Mark 11:11-19); as the church is the place of His presence, the witness of His grace and power, while Israel remains in unbelief and separation from Him. “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” (Isa. 8:16, 17; see also Deut. 32:20; Isa. 65:1, 2).

Thus are we given to trace, in this happy household at Bethany, the sure resemblance of the church of God; which the Lord by His Spirit is now gathering, and which is, when brought to its fullness, to constitute the family of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in heaven.

After giving a view of our Lord in the midst of this beloved household, our next chapter presents Him entering into the royal city as Son of David. On this occasion He is attended with crowds of His willing people, triumphantly bidding Him welcome as the King of Israel. All this was illustrative of that day, when, after the fullness of the Gentiles is come in, or the church is perfected in all its members, this same Jesus shall come to Zion, “and all Israel shall be saved”; when He, for whom as Head His body is now preparing, shall as King of Israel gather His willing people around Him, and reign Himself over the earth the Heir of all its glory.

And when the Lord has thus taken His throne in Jerusalem, the destined center of the whole earth, “the city of the great King,” He will speedily receive the heathen for His inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for His possession; for the Holy One of Israel shall be called the God of the whole earth (Isa. 54:5). The one Lord shall be King over the whole earth (Zech. 14:9). To the Shiloh of Judah shall then be the gathering of the peoples (Gen. 49:10); and the kingdom of the world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ (Rev. 11:15). And so, as this chapter proceeds, we have a sample of this gathering to Shiloh; for, after His royal entry into Jerusalem, we see our blessed Jesus receiving the willing homage of the Gentiles, who came to worship there, in pledge as: it were of that day when every one shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles (Zech. 14:16; Isa. 66:23): and, when many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of Hosts at Jerusalem” (Zech. 8:22).

Then shall every family on earth be collected under the same blessed One as is the Head of every family in heaven, and the promised “greater things” shall then be seen, the union and yet distinctness of heaven and earth, “the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man” (John 1:51).¹

Thus does this chapter give us a view of the order in which the gatherings of the Lord's households are, as I believe scripture teaches us, to be conducted: the church brought to her fullness, and seated with the Lord at His table in His kingdom; Israel saved—their Kinsman-Redeemer, their Royal Deliverer in their midst, and on His throne in Zion; and then the uttermost parts of the earth taken into possession, and made the worshippers of Him Who is “the desire of all nations” (Hag. 2:7). When these scenes had thus passed in review before Him, the blessed Jesus was wrapt into vision of the day of His glory. “The hour is come,” says He, “that the Son of Man should be glorified” (John 12:23). We shall not however here follow (though of deep and affecting interest to the soul that adheres to Him in love and desire) the course of His thoughts in the, verses that follow. Only we will observe, that He at once recognized the necessity of His previous sufferings; for thus had the prophets testified beforehand, “The sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow” (1 Peter 1:11).

I have been tracing the principle upon which every family of God is to be formed, and the order in which the several branches of it are to be gathered. I would now close with presenting a few hints from scripture of the connection and intercourse that is to be known between every family in heaven and every family on earth, all acknowledging, as they will, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we have many distinct intimations of the character of intercourse which may then be enjoyed between the glorified saints, “the children of the resurrection,” and the subject people of the earth.

Our Lord Himself had fellowship of a very peculiar character with His disciples after He had risen from the dead. He did not dwell among them as one of themselves, as He had done before He suffered: their lodging and their repast was not His, as they had been; but He went in and out among them as it pleased Him or the Father (Acts 10:40, ἔδωκεν αὐτὸν ἐμφανῆ γενέσθαι) and, though just the same Master as before, full of the graciousness of First-born among many brethren, yet was He, to their sense, and indeed, in another form. His body had passed through its change; it was flesh and bones (Luke 24:39), instinct with spirit and not with blood (1 Cor. 10 v. 44); but consistent with His glory. He appeared at pleasure in different forms to His elect; as of old while predestinatively assuming His risen body, He had appeared to Abraham, Jacob, Joshua, and Others (see Luke 24:15; John 20:5-15) And I believe He did then show Himself after His resurrection, in order, among other purposes, to give us to know something of that manner of intercourse that shall pass between the glorified saints, and the restored and sanctified families of man upon the earth.

A passing glimpse we have of the same thing in the bodies of many of the saints arising, after the Lord had risen, and coming out of the graves, and going into the holy city and appearing to many (Matt. 27:53). We have also, as I judge, a gracious sample of this fellowship given to us, at the time when Israel was first brought into covenant with Jehovah, while the blood of sprinkling was still warm and fresh upon them, and before they had done any despite to the mercy of their God, but had rather said, “All that the Lord hath said, will we do and be obedient.” Moses with his train went up to the Lord, “and they saw the God of Israel; and there was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in clearness.” Moses alone came near, alone goes into the Mount, but the elders were eye-witnesses of the Majesty of Israel—they stand undismayed in the sight, though not, like Moses, in the midst, of the cloud of glory— “they saw God, and did eat and drink” (Ex. 24); thus shewing the distinction of being in the glory, and outside of it, and yet in some sort in fellowship together.

So, in the holy mount, we have a very sweet exhibition of the same intercourse, and Moses is seen in the same place of glory. The Lord is there with His raised and changed saints Moses and Elias in glory; and His disciples, still as inhabitants of the earth in their bodies of flesh and blood, are brought into nearest view of that glory. The holy Jerusalem having the glory of God, with the Lamb the light thereof, is there, as it were, shown to us; its pearly gates are opened before us, and the nations are seen as walking in the light of it (Rev. 21:24). The disciples were not in the heavens; for as one of them says, the “voice which came from heaven we heard” (2 Peter 1:18); but though they did not enter with Moses and Elias into the cloud of the excellent glory (see Luke 9:34, Gr.), yet they saw it and have spoken of it (2 Peter 1:17). They have testified to us that they have been “eye-witnesses of His Majesty”; as hereafter in the kingdom, the remnant that is saved shall go “to the isles afar off,” saith Jehovah-Jesus, “that have not heard My fame, neither have seen My glory; and they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles” (Isa. 66:19). And this distinction of being in the glory, and of only standing in the presence of it, appears to be given to us by the apostle, as the several callings of the church and of Israel (see 2 Cor. 3:12-18). He there anticipates the day when Israel shall turn to the Lord, and the veil shall be taken away; when they shall be able to look on the glory without dismay—that glory into the image of which by the Spirit, the church, like Moses, was to be changed (Phil. 3:21).

In the day when Israel, the unfaithful, is betrothed to the Lord forever, and her land is married, the harmony of all the parts of the redeemed system of the heavens and the earth (having Jehovah in the highest, and beneath, the whole creation which now groans and travels in pain, brought into the liberty of the glory of God's sons), is exhibited by the prophet Hosea, “And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground; and I will break the bow, and the sword, and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely: and I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness and judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord; and it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel” (Hos. 2:18-22).

So, Jacob's vision of the ladder, whose foot was set upon the earth, and the top of which reached into heaven, also gives us another image of the same fellowship. The heavens were seen, as it were, shining in their brightness, high above the earth on which the patriarch was resting, but all the while the angels of God were traveling up and down the ladder. So shall the saints, the children of the resurrection, who shall be “as the angels,” and shall become sharers of the Son's throne, pass and repass throughout the regions which acknowledge Him the heir of all things; and what less shall the earth then be, than “The gate of heaven?” (Gen. 28:17.)

And I will here further observe, as so taught by the word of God, that when heaven is thus opened upon the earth, hell will be shut; for He Who prevails to take the keys of heaven, and claim it as His throne, and to open it to all believers, Who prevails to take the key of the house of David, and in like manner to claim the earth for His footstool, and to gather His ransomed tribes and worshipping nations there, will likewise prevail to take the key of the bottomless pit and there bind and shut up the dragon. And is it not sweet in the midst of present distraction, to think on the concord of the whole acknowledged creation when thus the offense is taken away when nothing shall hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain, when “there shall be one Lord and His name One?”

The vision of the glory, which Ezekiel had, appears specially to mark out this harmony throughout all the reign or the government of the Son of Man in His day: the hosts of heaven in their glories, the movements upon earth in their multiplied complexity still obedient to the same Spirit, under the scepter of Him Who will then exercise, as now He has title to, “all power in heaven and in earth” (Ezek. 1). So this harmony is as the temple, which with its holy and most holy place—one for the ark, the other for the footstool of our God (1 Chron. 28:2)—was still one temple. As when Isaiah saw the Lord, He was seated within the veil, but His train filled the temple; the body of the glory in that day shall be in heaven, but its presence shall be known and felt on earth. And oh! what gladness for man then, when, like Jacob, he shall walk on the earth in the blessed consciousness that it is none other than “the gate of heaven!” —the whole earth an extended Bethel!— “The house of God.”

Thus it is said, that it is in the manifestation of the sons of God creation shall rejoice: the heavens, where the sons are set, shall shine unhindered upon the earth; and the creation, as it were, consciously repose in the light thereof. For all things shall be gathered into one; and though still they be things on earth and things in heaven, yet the earth shall, as it were, touch the skirtings of the heavens, as now, at times, we know not whether it be the clouds of heaven, or the high lands of the earth, that we see in the distant shadowy prospect. Paradise with its tree of life shall be restored, without access for the Serpent; and no tree of knowledge shall be there to put man to proof of his subjection to God; but, instead of it, the priesthood of the King shall be there, witnessing to his subjection in the continued offering of praise to our God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are on the sea, and all that are in them, shall be heard saying, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever!" "They shall speak," O Jehovah-Jesus, "of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power." "O Lord, our Lord," shall Israel and the nations sing, "how excellent is Thy name in all the earth, Who hast set Thy glory above the heavens," and the heavens shall shout, "Hallelujah." J. G. B.

(Concluded from page 26.)

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Every Family in Heaven and on Earth, Every Family in Heaven and on Earth: 1 (3:15)

πάσα πατριὰ ἐν οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς. (Eph. 3:15.)

The blessing of man, and with him of all creation, is to be determined simply by his position before God. Therefore to be without God is to be without hope in the world; and thus every renewed soul proves, in the daily, hourly history of his own little kingdom within, that his blessing is in the favor of the Lord, and that clouds and sorrows arise when that favor is withdrawn or forgotten. As man at first stood on the face of this earth of ours, his blessing was all of this character. He was blest because his whole condition reflected the kindness and love of his Creator. His very constitution was as the image of God, the manifestation of divine perfections and dominion (Gen. 1:27); in the sabbath a standing witness of fellowship between him and his Creator was ordained (Gen. 2:3); over him he had a most gracious Lord, who enjoined on him only a necessary burden (Gen. 2:16); around him he saw a fair creation spread as his own domain, made willingly subject to him in its ten thousand sources of tribute and service, by their great Creator; for, in token of man's lordship of them all, the Lord brought them to him to be named, and whatsoever name Adam gave them the same was the name thereof (Gen. 2:19, see Isa. 40. 26). By his side, to complete the blessedness, he had given him of the Lord a companion fully meet for him, a part of himself—bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh (Gen. 2:22); and thus was his condition perfect and blessed in every relation, showing forth the kindness of God; and he had access to the tree of life to keep it so. But all this state of things was forfeited by transgression—all blessing was gone when the divine favor was withdrawn, when enmity fell out between the righteous God and His offending creature; so did it between the creatures as among themselves. There was no longer the due subjection of the earth to Adam, when Adam had failed in his subjection to God; the earth yielded thorns and thistles to him, as soon as he had brought forth the fruit of a heart revolted from God. And the joys of innocency between the man and the woman were all likewise fled: their nakedness was now their shame, and confidence was changed for covering.

The whole economy of creature-blessedness in paradise, thus presented for a moment, and thus disturbed, was however a mystery; the tabernacle there was, it is true, quickly taken down, but not until we had seen in it the shadows of better things to come.

The purpose of God is not affected by this failure in man. The order of creation, as set in subjection to Adam for the glory of the Lord God, and the union of man with woman taken out of him, and thus made the partner of his name and dignity, is "a great mystery." We have divinely traced for us in all this, the union of Christ and the church, and the creation put in subjection under Him (see Psa. 8, Eph. 5:23); and we look now for the opening of a happier paradise, for the erection of a second temple, that is never to be taken down, but to continue the blessed witness of the sustaining faithful strength of the Second Man, Who is the Lord from heaven; Who having bruised her enemy under her foot, will go in and out there with His espoused church, made "bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh," who shall then know the support and comfort of His right hand forever.

The opening heavens do thus, as it were, shine around us in the opening of the book of God; the fellowship of heaven and earth that is there presented, the fellowship of man and the woman, the fellowship of man with the creation around him, shall all be displayed again, and that too in still more blessedness and glory; because of the dignity of the person, and the unspeakable riches and excellency of the work, of Him, in and by Whom all this is to be established. Christ Jesus our Lord is the single-handed power of God to do all this. He alone is the slayer and abolisher of every enmity; the reconciler and fixed center of all this order and fellowship forever; as it is written, "Hereafter shall ye see the heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (John 1:51); and again "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times, He (God) might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him" (Eph. 1:10).

Our Lord Christ who is at once "God over all, blessed forever," and "Son of man," "made of a woman," Who, in the work given Him to do according to the everlasting covenant, descended first into the lower parts of the earth, and then ascended up far above all heavens, has title to "fill all things" (Eph. 4:10): and in Him when He has asserted this His title, "every family in heaven and on earth" is to be gathered. May the Spirit who witnesses to Him, and shows the saints things to come, so trace before us those varied features of His glory, that desiring Him we may ever in Spirit be saying, "Come Lord Jesus!" And let us not be ashamed to own, "that hope long deferred maketh the heart sick," seeing that we should know no full satisfying joy till we see Him (John 16:22). The Lord Jesus Who was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification, and by Whom, through faith in His name, the poor sinner has even now full remission of sins, and access to God as his heavenly Father in full assurance of His love, is known in scripture to sustain the glorious characters, among many other, of King of Israel and Head of the church.

The Jewish nation had constant expectation of Messiah, in the first of these. To the hope connected with Him as King of Israel, the twelve tribes, as the apostle says, instantly serving God day and night, hoped to come. It was therefore simply by such a character that the Jews tried the claims of Jesus of Nazareth. Thus when He spake to them of being lifted up, signifying thereby what death He should die, they said to Him, (John 12:34) "We have heard out of the law, that Christ abideth forever; and how sagest Thou the Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?" They had known their Messiah under this title of Son of man, but then it was in connection with a dominion, and glory and kingdom, that should never pass away; for thus had their prophet spoken (Dan. 7:13, 14). But who was this Son of man who was thus "to be lifted up?" And His own apostles, whom He had called and chosen for Himself out of Israel, were thus Jewish in their expectation respecting Him; as appears, I might say, from the whole tenor of their intercourse with the Lord, and particularly from the request of Zebedee's children, and from the apostles, saying, even after He had risen from the dead, "Wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6.) Besides, there was equal ignorance in the Jews and the apostles, touching the mystery of "the little while" (John 7:33., 16:16). The difference between them did not rest in any different expectation respecting the Messiah, but rather in their faith or unbelief concerning the truth, that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

And this knowledge of Christ, according to the measure of Jewish hopes even by His own chosen ones, was only "after the flesh" (2 Cor. 5:16); for it linked their expectations with this earth merely. It did not take them out of the system of human affections and associations, or guide them into the apprehension of any heavenly inheritance in and with Him. For this rests in the revelation of Him as Head of the church, and this character of Messiah is to be known only by the ministry of the Holy Ghost among the saints.

The second character of the Christ, Head of the church, with its resulting power in the church or body mystical, I judge to have been the mystery laid up in the purpose of God, but hid from ages and generations, i.e., not disclosed in former times or by previous dispensations (Rom. 16:25., Eph. 3:5). And there is involved in its very nature, if I may so speak, a necessity for its being thus hidden: for the blessed Lord entered into the character of Head of the church on His entrance into His heavenly glory, and this resulted from Israel's rejection of Him; so that the revelation of the Christ as Head of His body the church has to await the manifestation of Israel's apostasy, and thus could not, by dispensations, have been disclosed till the apostasy was so evidenced. That the Lord's entrance into His present glory in heaven resulted from Israel's apostasy, among other passages, is intimated by His own words in the presence of the great organs of Jewish unbelief, in the day of the power of darkness. When challenged of the elders, chief priests, and scribes, to say whether He were "The Christ the Son of God," after speaking in terms full of righteous condemnation of them, He convicts as it were the place of judgment, that behold iniquity was there, saying, "If I tell you, ye will not believe; and if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, or let me go." He adds, "From henceforth (ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν); shall ye see the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God;" that is, that now was the time of exalting Him to His heavenly glory, since Israel had rejected Him, giving Him no place of glory on earth (Luke 22:68, 69).

The Father has thus made man's wrath to praise Him. The Christ has lost His earthly glory for a season, being the Heir of the vineyard and yet cast out by the vineyard's wicked husbandmen; but the Father has raised the rejected Stone to the highest, and thus prepared larger joys and new honors to await Him in the coming day of the revelation of His glory.

During this present age (while waiting for Him Who has turned away His face in righteous anger from the house of Israel, until He repent and leave a blessing behind Him, Isa. 8:17) the Christ, as Head over all things to His church, is gathering His saints by His word and Spirit. The saints, "whose conversation is in heaven," who "sit in heavenly places," by the ministry of the Spirit, shall be brought to their perfect measure, and thus being constituted "the family in heaven," who are knit together in "the knowledge of the Son of God," will have their place with the Son in the Father's house; and in His, the Son's, kingdom (Eph. 4:13., Isa. 14:1., Rev. 3:2.1).

This family, ordained for heaven, is already through the Spirit brought into circumstances altogether ultra-Jewish, if I may so speak. They are in the adoption, and not merely in the place of servitude (Gal. 4:1-4); they are even now "blest with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies," not merely with blessings of the earth. They are in the expectancy of the inheritance of all things with Christ; and not merely becoming the subjects of a kingdom under Him (Rom. 8:17). They are in present conflict not with flesh and blood, or with the nations of the earth, but with spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies, and are taught to hope for final victory over them, and of completely dispossessing them of their present place and power (Eph. 2:2 with 1 Thess. 4:17; see also Rev. 12:10).

When the church is thus complete and Gentile fullness brought in, "all Israel" is to be saved (Rom. 11:26). This present dispensation will have its purpose answered in the taking of the saints into their place of union in heaven with the Lord their Head, which is the first resurrection. Then the same blessed Lord, Who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in power, and on Whose head are to be "many crowns," will turn His hand to gather His family on earth, (for the blessings of the earth are Israel's, and all the nations in and through them) in the character of the King of Israel, or, "God of the whole earth" (Isa. 54:5). His glory shall then arise on Zion, and the Gentiles shall come to the light thereof. He shall be set on the earth as God's salvation, to be the glory of His people Israel, and to embrace all the nations within the light of His presence (Luke 2:32). Then shall come the glorious dispensation of the fullness of times, when all things, whether in heaven or on earth, will be gathered together in one, even in Christ (Eph. 1:10). Then shall the fellowship of heaven and earth be restored, and Christ, as the true Jacob's ladder, be the Ruler and Sustainer of it all. Truth shall then spring out of the earth, and righteousness look down from heaven. The heavens and the earth, the morning stars and the children of Israel, the angels in the heights, and kings with all people of the earth, shall together praise the name of the Lord (Psa. 148). "His will shall be done in all places of His dominion, and the days of heaven shall be upon the earth" (Deut. 11:21).

The verse which I have selected, as summarily presenting that truth which I am desiring to trace in this paper (Eph. 3:15), has no doubt been commonly read as describing the saints who have departed this life, and are now, as is judged, in heaven; and those who are still in their bodies on the earth. I would be understood fully to grant that there are numbers of God's dear family now disembodied, in heaven, and members of the same family still on earth, and that these are, of course, included in "every family"; but then they cannot assuredly constitute of themselves that family in its wholeness. The family presented in its wholeness must wait for the day when all whom God regards as His are gathered together; and to which this passage in its natural bearing has respect. The purpose of the Holy Ghost in this verse (which may be treated as an adjective parenthesis) is, to tell us that "every family" acknowledges one God and Father, "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"; thus leaving it for other scriptures to instruct us of whom it is that "every family" is to consist. It is this which, as desiring and praying to be fully subject to those scriptures, I am now aiming to do. May the Lord give us the Spirit of humble worshippers in all our labors.

Every family then, though part is in heaven and part on earth, shall be one, as owning one Father, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The heavenly branch of it is to be with the Firstborn in the Father's house, His God their God, His Father their Father, His dwelling their dwelling, His inheritance theirs also, the fullness of the Father's love theirs as His (John 17:26., 20:17). "Ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." And the branch of it which is to be found on the earth will be gathered by and into a Father's love also; for the true Solomon, Christ as David's son, the Head of Jewish glory, shall enjoy that ancient promise of His God, "I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son;" and this joy resting in fullness on His head shall circulate among the thousands of His Israel; this oil of gladness shall descend from the beard to the skirts of the Aaron clothing; for Jehovah of old spake of Israel as His son, as His firstborn (Ex. 4:22). So, in this dispensation, believers are made now the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). And the prophet, anticipating the day of Judah's salvation, says of Jerusalem, "This is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness" Jer. 20 13:16).

This leads me, then, to consider what is to be the principle upon which "every family in heaven and on earth" is to be formed. I design, then, to consider the order, or successive acts of Christ by which these branches of the family of God are to be thus formed; and then also the connection and intercourse that may be maintained among them. Sweet meditations for faith and hope! though knowing but in part, we can but speak or think of these things in part.

As to the principle, by which every family of God is to be formed, it is mere grace—grace setting the saints in heaven, and establishing Israel with the worshipping obedient nations on the earth; grace coming forth from the love of God, to bring us home into the love of the Father. "God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all," is the apostle's summary of the Lord's dealings with the Gentiles and with Israel, after He had been tracing Israel's rejection for a time, in order to let in "the fullness of the Gentiles," and in the end to save all Israel; thus showing that mercy should alike rejoice through the gathered and blest families in heaven and on earth. And in the satisfying sense of this, he breaks forth into that note, not of ignorant, but of intelligent admiration, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out" (Rom. 11:33). Here may our souls rest forever; here may we dwell, having our delight therein, the mercy of our God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

That grace is the principle of our present salvation, and our future inheritance, of that which is now reserved in heaven for us, is the sweet burthen, I would say, of all the New Testament scriptures, and to which every thought and feeling of the renewed soul must fully consent. I would not, therefore, speak particularly upon it. But that Israel is to come hereafter into the blessing of the earth, simply by grace, may be more carefully traced. Though gradually presented in many parts of scripture, yet it is specifically so in that beautiful scene recorded in Ex. 32-34, which has been already slightly referred to in one of the papers of this publication. I would here shortly refer to another passage (Deut. 29., 30.), as exhibiting the same doctrine.

Moses had just pointed to the people the blessing and the curse that was necessarily appended to their obedience or disobedience (Deut. 28.); when he calls them again to listen further to words of covenant between them and the Lord (29:1). He then recites generally the mercies they had enjoyed at the hand of God from their days in Egypt, telling them however that the Lord had not as yet circumcised their hearts (2-9). He then solemnly places them before the Lord as His people, warning them as he had done before, that disobedience would but cause them to be scattered through the earth, their land to be left a wilderness, and then themselves to become, as it were, a proverb and wonder to the nations of the world (10-29). He proceeds then to further unfold the Lord's covenant with them, showing them that, when they had thus fully entered into the curse of disobedience, if they or the children (for that covenant equally embraced all generations) of them (29:15, 30:2) should repent, then the Lord would have compassion on them and gather them, and circumcise their heart so that they should live forever, and be blest in every work of their hand, in the fruit of their body, of their cattle, and of their land (30:1-10). He then darkly hints to them on what this repentance was to be founded, i.e., faith; for he uses the very same words which the apostle quotes as expressive of the dispensation of faith or grace in opposition to that of law and works (11-14, Rom. 10:6).

This dispensation then, of faith or grace, is that which is hereafter to establish Israel in the blessing of the earth forever, when they repent, or in faith turn to Jesus their Messiah, looking to Him Whom they pierced (Zech. 12:10), and welcoming Him as their King and Deliverer (Matt. 23:39), saying, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." So also in Moses' Song, which follows very closely upon this (Deut. 32.), we have the same covenant presented. For there, after the prophet had been forewarning his nation of the curse that was to come upon them for their unfaithfulness to Jehovah, he points to the land of the people in the distant future as receiving mercy, and speaks of this as that which was among other things sealed up among God's treasures (32:34-43), as he had before called the grace or mercy of God to Israel God's "secret" (29:29); and it is these sealed treasures of grace, this secret of mercy, that the Spirit largely discloses, and makes known in our dispensation, showing, as He graciously does, "plainly of the Father."

That grace is thus the fountain of all blessing to Israel, and shall hereafter establish them in the land of their fathers, is presented to us also very strikingly in an event in the life of the patriarch Jacob. When he was returning with his households and flocks out of the land of his exile, his brother's heart was moved against him, and he came forth to meet him with four hundred men. Jacob commits his case into the hands of God, and from Him, in the action of wrestling with the Angel until he had prevailed, he receives a pledge that the mercy he desired should be his. And so it was; the anger that stirred in his brother's heart was quieted, and Jacob passed safely and honorably into the land of his covenant (Gen. 32:24).

Now Jacob in all this stands before us as the type of Israel in the last times, when they shall come forth from their present exile to claim their promised inheritance; and their God and Deliverer shall show Himself in the hour of their need, to still the enemy and avenger, and give them the land of their fathers.

Jacob, Israel's representative, was taught by the Angels touch disjoining the hollow of his thigh, to know that the blessing then pledged to him was all of grace: for that the Angel had not put forth all his strength, but had even allowed himself to be prevailed over; and just as our apostle who was given in like manner and with like purpose, a thorn in the flesh, that he might learn that he was weak in himself, but through grace had all his sufficiency in Jesus (2 Cor. 12:9).

Israel then, as Jacob was, shall be taken through grace into their earthly inheritance, and the church shall, through the same grace be taken into the heavenly glory; and thus mercy alone shall establish every family in heaven and on earth.

I would now beloved (through the mercy of our God, who would have His saints to meditate in His ways, and humbly and yet freely inquire in His temple), seek to trace from scripture what will be the order or procedure of our God when He comes to form His households and to set His every family in heaven and on earth. And what shall we ask Him by the Spirit to give us in this and in all our inquiries? The temper of children who consciously know nothing but through His word and teaching; the mind of friends who delight to use the privilege of friendship by learning his secrets, and claiming confidence: the unshod feet of worshippers ever heedful that the ground is holy. For though whatever things are written, are for our learning; yet are they the things of the blessed God, and we are but the creatures of His band. And oh, for faith to trace these things, and meditate upon them, as though we stood in the presence of them; so that we may enter more and more into the substance of the things hoped for, and be less sensible of the things that are present, whether joyous or sorrowing; having blessed deliverance from their power, through the faith of the things that lie beyond them all.

The blessed Lord Jesus is now ascended up far above all heavens and is seated on the Father's throne, the place of incommunicable glory and majesty. He has gone up on high as a mighty conqueror, and has all power given Him in heaven and on earth. He has gone up on high as a mighty High Priest, to the service of the heavenly temple for us, waiting in sympathy on our infirmities, and being our Advocate with the Father. In these His ascension glories, He is exercising Himself for the completing the full measure and stature of His body the church, until it come to the "perfect man" in Christ. His long delayed return is "salvation, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." And thus His ascension state is not to be the last stage in His wondrous history. The heavens only retain Him until the times of the decreed restitution of all things be come. He then is to come again in like manner as He once went into heaven; as the high priest who once a year went into the holiest, came forth again to meet the people.

Miscellaneous Papers, Redemption of the Purchased Possession, The (1:14)

The earth is the subject of redemption as well as man. It is already purchased, and by and bye, in due season, it shall be rescued or delivered. That is, it is the subject of the two-fold redemption known in scripture, redemption by price, and redemption by power.

The blood of the cross has already reconciled or purchased it. As we read, "and having made peace by the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, by Him, I say, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven" (Col. 1).

This gives the inheritance the title of "the purchased possession."

But though purchased, it is not yet delivered. It is still under "the bondage of corruption" (Rom. 8). It is redeemed by purchase, but not as yet by power. We therefore wait for the "redemption" of that which is already a "purchased possession."

This bright and happy truth, this mystery found among the mysteries of God, has had its pledges and foreshadowings, as well as others.

The ordinance of the Jubilee seems to set forth this two-fold redemption—by price and by power. (See Lev. 25.) For that chapter teaches us that at any time during forty-nine years, the alienated possession of an Israelite might have been purchased by the kinsman of the heir, and thus redeemed or brought back to the family to which, under God, it had belonged; but if that were not done, it would return to the heir in the fiftieth year, or the Jubilee, without purchase.

These two ordinances, again, I say, seem to set forth the mystery I am speaking of—redemption by money and redemption by power. The kinsman might redeem with money, the Jubilee would redeem without money, by virtue of its own title, by virtue of that force or authority imparted to it by Him who was the God of Israel and the Lord of the soil. We ourselves wait to be redeemed by power. Resurrection will do that.

Again, Jeremiah the prophet was commanded to purchase the field of Hanameel, his uncle's son. He did so, in the spirit and obedience of faith, though at that moment the Chaldean army was in the land, and was under commission from the Lord to tread it down, and waste it, or possess themselves of it. But when Jeremiah made inquiry respecting this strange thing, that he should be asked to lay out his money upon a piece of land thus devoted to the sword of an invader, the Lord tells him that a day of power was to come, and that in that land there should be redemption, and that the Lord's own people should possess it again, brought back out of the hand of every spoiler. This was the Lord's answer to His servant. And thus Jeremiah had reason to know that the purchase now made by good money of the merchant, should be made good in a coming day of power. (See Jer. 32.)

And let me add one other notice of this distinguished case, the purchase of Hanameel's field, for it has interested me. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" is the Lord's challenge of Jeremiah on this occasion, as it is of Sarah in Genesis 18. Sarah did not know how she, whose body was then dead, could have a child, for she knew not the resurrection-strength of God. Jeremiah did not know how he, who was laying out his money on a piece of ground which was then in the hand of the enemy, could get its value back again; for, like Sarah, he knew not the resurrection-strength of God.

That strength makes all simple. The victory of Christ, the resurrection of Jesus, gives us to our inheritance sure rights under the seal of a title-deed easy to be read.

Paul's Apostleship and Epistles, Christ, the Head of the Church (1:22-23)

When the Lord ascended, on His way up, He was a conqueror in triumph, leading captivity captive. But when He reached His heavenly seat, He became a crowned priest,¹ and sent down coronation gifts to His Church, by the ministry of which He is either forming or strengthening the union between Himself and the members here, and their union among themselves. These ministries thus act like the joints and bands in

the human body; and all other ministries the Apostle sets aside as “rudiments of the world,” fitted to those who are alive in the world, but most unsuited to those who are—as the Church is—dead and risen with Christ (see Eph. 4:16; Col. 2:19-23).

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