

# Christ's Position

A PATTERN OF THE  
BELIEVER'S NEW  
POSITION. . . .

“This is my beloved Son in whom I  
am well pleased.” (Matt. iii. 17.)

REVISED.

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(Matt. iv.)

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viii.)

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viii.)

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# THE BELIEVER'S NEW POSITION.

(MATT. III.)

**WE** have indicated in the end of this chapter the new position for man, that is, for believers, marked out in the Lord Jesus Christ personally: a position which, previous to Christ, no man had, or could occupy; but one which, upon the accomplishment of redemption, would be filled by many. Only the glory of the Person of Jesus is always carefully guarded, who ever was, what we are not, however consistent.

We see in the life of the Lord Jesus upon earth the enjoyment and the display of an altogether different relationship with God to that which any of God's people of old enjoyed; and even to that which the disciples themselves either enjoyed, or entered into. A relationship enjoyed *then* in solitary blessedness. And the conditions which go to constitute this

position are set forth distinctly here in His entry upon His ministry.

The conditions are these, namely :  
 1. Sonship. 2. The sealing of the Spirit. 3. The opened heavens.

In all these conditions there is a distinction between the way the Lord Jesus Christ occupied them and that in which we do. The relationship which He occupied naturally, we are introduced into as the result of His death and resurrection, and only thus was it possible. He is sealed with the Holy Spirit before redemption, we *only* upon the ground of accomplished redemption. And while He is the Object of the opened heavens, as a Man down here on earth, that the Father may express His good pleasure in Him in whom He found all His delight, they are now opened for us to look up into and be occupied with Him there, and to find our delight in Him who has accomplished redemption for us. Yet the heavens *are* opened to *us* ! The heavens !!

It is of the utmost importance to apprehend this in order that we may know the reality of the wonderful position that God gives His people since the cross. A position created by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in His own Person for man ; and one in which He was alone until the accomplishment of redemption's work, and but for it must have abode alone.

This chapter is a wonderful one ; it gives us in pattern not only the new position, but shews us how entirely the old one is set aside. It gives God's estimate of what the first man is, and His own description of what the second Man is ; of what He is to Him.

True, this gospel is generally of a dispensational character, yet other matters pass before the mind of the Spirit in it. As, in these early chapters we see how the history of God's people Israel, and of man generally, is gone over again in Christ, though of course in perfect contrast to them. What is said in Matthew ii. 15,

“Out of Egypt have I called my Son,” was, we know, quoted by the prophet Hosea (see chap. xi. 1), of Israel. It is now, however, applied by the Spirit to Christ, as the only One in whom it was fulfilled.

We have also in chapter ii. the expression, nine times repeated, “*the young child*,” shewing that God had begun again morally with another Man. In chapter iii. the first man is morally set aside, and this shews

#### REPENTANCE IS NECESSARY.

John Baptist comes, then, preaching in the wilderness. He says, “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” (Vers. 2, 3.) He does not quote Isaiah literally. The people were in such a condition that God could not put His name upon them; it was Jehovah who came nevertheless, and he says,

‘Make *his* paths straight,’ not “make straight in the desert a highway for *our* God.”

The kingdom of heaven was at hand: that kingdom had long been the subject of promise, of prophecy and of hope; now it was announced as “at hand.” The Jews, too, were those who should primarily have been the subjects of that kingdom with God’s name in their midst, but their apostate state would not sanction such a thing; hence with the announcement of the kingdom at hand comes the earnest and all-needed call to “Repent!” But for this they were not generally prepared. They plumed themselves upon being the children of the kingdom, and that when it was announced they had nothing to do but to enter it; and they were not expecting to be called upon to repent. Yet thus John addresses them. It tells us at once the character of the people and how low they had sunk. They knew the prophecies as to the kingdom and

were waiting for it, but when it was announced, God's messenger had to say to them, "You must *repent* to enter it." What did it mean?

It meant they were not fit for it! That was a solemn fact. Not a man upon earth fit for the kingdom!! So distinct is it that John himself in his appearance and place of habitation shews that he can have no fellowship with those who boasted themselves that they were of God. He would not go near the city of Jerusalem, nor into any city of Judea; he would have none of their apparel, or their dainties, nor link himself with that which had fallen into such a low state before God, that He could not accredit it. (Vers. 1-4.)

But God wrought and the people went out to John and were baptised of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. It was really a sorry condition for Israel to be in, when it was necessary for them to be thus called upon to repent; and when God did work by His Spirit in the



remnant they had to be called out to the desert. In other words, neither persons nor places were suited to what God was about to introduce; and the fact is thus brought out, that God had done with the whole of the old position for man.

When John saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism (ver. 7), he tells them there must be moral reality. They had boasted themselves in ordinances, and had flattered themselves they had kept the law, though they had not done so; they therefore thought it was a proper thing for them to go in at the door, into the kingdom. But the kingdom was here presented to those who had failed in responsibility and on the ground of repentance. They thought to enter without owning this, but John says, God must have reality; prove the truth of your professed repentance. (Ver. 8.) You have failed in your responsibility and must own your guilt, and the law at once condemns you; you can,

then, confessing your sins, throw yourself upon grace. To admit your claim to the kingdom in your present unrepentant state would be to do violence to the principles of the kingdom.

This is really what the Lord speaks of when He says, "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force." (Matt. xi. 12.) Now if those who were the children of the kingdom according to lineage had been in a right condition of soul it would have been perfectly legitimate for them to go in at the door; but they were not thus right, and the Lord says, as John does, "You are not right. You must own your failure under the law and you can then come into the kingdom on the ground of grace. You cannot be allowed to do violence to the principles of the kingdom. It can only be entered now by those who, owning their unworthiness, throw themselves upon God and his promises in grace."

So also in Luke xvi. 16-18 it is compared to adultery. They are set on taking the kingdom, but are without any moral condition of soul for having part in it. This is spiritual adultery, as in Romans vii. also. Those only who came to John *confessing their sins* were morally right, and they were thrown upon God to do as He would with them. All

#### NATURAL CLAIMS ARE DISALLOWED.

“And think not,” says the prophet (ver. 9), “to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our Father.” Mere natural descent was not enough; a man must be of faith to be blessed with faithful Abraham, and on this ground of promise God could open the door to all the children of faith.

God looks for moral condition and finds none. He is going to begin afresh now. If Jehovah is coming in the Person of a Man down here on earth, He is coming as One who will search the hearts of men; but His

very coming proves the inferiority of all that has gone before. If Christ comes as a Man, it is all over with the first man as such.

God marks out in the Person of His Son the new position He is about to give to man; a position superior to that of Jewish believers, but which is given to us now, though only as *in* Him, and as the fruit of His death. But we are by grace associated with and are of Him who is the second Man, although He is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows.

Mark what John calls the Pharisees and Sadducees who came out to Him. "O generation of vipers!" It was no good for man as such to attempt to make any claim upon God, for on the ground of law-keeping the Jew had forfeited everything; nor could he claim, under the promises, which were really of grace, more than the Gentile he despised. Stephen eventually charges them with breaking the law; stoning the

prophets; betraying and murdering the Lord Jesus; and resisting the Holy Ghost. There was nothing for them but

### THE AXE AND THE FIRE.

“And now also the axe is laid to the root of the trees.” (Ver. 10.) This is John’s testimony, and it is of the utmost importance for our souls to lay hold of it. There was not one good tree standing; all must pass under judgment; the axe is laid to the root, and the fire must complete the work of destruction. Not only has this a distinct application to Israel in that day, but beside this, it is the solemn testimony of the Spirit of God as to the condition of man universally; the first man must be unsparingly and entirely set aside. God has nothing for man in responsibility but the axe and the fire.

This simile will be understood by men who go into new countries and take up land for farming or other purposes. They go into the scrub

where the land is covered with trees—giants of the forest, worth a day's ride to see in many instances—but the object is to grow corn, or sugar, and all the natural products of the land must be felled. The settler shoulders his axe and makes the forest resound with his sturdy blows, until all the trees are laid low. Then at a favourable opportunity, he gets a running fire over the ground and all is reduced to ashes. He then cultivates an altogether new crop.

That is exactly God's testimony by John as to man in responsibility. It was a picked sample of the race that this was testified of. He was speaking to Israel; not to those outside the covenant, aliens, strangers; but to the people of God as such. Man was utterly gone! Where are the good trees to come from if all are only fit for the burning? This is God's work, who in new creation power produces in the heart a recognition of its lost condition.

Thus the only good trees in the

husbandry of God at that time were those who owned they were not good; an apparent paradox. The first good fruit that any bore for God was to own that hitherto they had produced none. And this was the *first-fruits of the Spirit*. God working to produce this, upon the heart of the repentant remnant. This was the call of John, and as in Luke xv. so here, God's joy is in the repentant ones. John baptises with water unto repentance, but he introduces Another who comes to scrutinise and purge His floor on the one hand (vers. 11, 12), and to link Himself in grace with the repentant ones on the other. (Vers. 13-15.)

The condescension of the blessed Lord from being in the form of God, to taking His place in the likeness of men, is immeasurable! And when John introduced Him He had been for thirty years in this world—He had lived unobserved and unknown; but now He is coming out into public, and now God sends a testi-

mony by John Baptist. If *He* is here it is manifest that there is nothing but the axe and the fire for the first man; though, through mercy, while God turns *man* to destruction, He says, "Return ye *children of men.*" (Psa. xc. 3.) The race is gone, but members of that race are to be linked up with the Head of the new race. But this only in resurrection, and as the result of Christ's bearing all the penalty of the failure of the members of the first race, who "Return," in answer to the invitation.

And oh! dear reader, what is the use of trying to cultivate that which is only fit for the fire! How important it is to make a clean start and to have done with this first man. We have the flesh in us and we do not like to give it up. We talk of a new position before God; but do you know what has become of the old? There was nothing for it but the axe and the fire! That is John's testimony as to man when Christ



comes upon the scene ; and then He shews there is something completely new and infinitely superior to all that went before.

What is the meaning of the doubts and fears that spring up in people's minds? It is the sad discovery they are worse than they thought they were ; in other words, they have never yet learned they are fit for nothing but the axe and the fire. You cannot discover yourself worse than you thought if you knew that, and this is God's testimony as to you.

Repentance is an absolute necessity. It is not preached enough to-day. It may be said this was preached to the Jews, but repentance is as much needed now as then. Paul called upon the Gentiles to repent with as strenuous a voice as John Baptist or Peter called upon the Jews to do so. It is an absolute necessity ! One's mind must be entirely changed about God and about oneself, and one's condition be owned before Him. Is it not repentance to

own that one is only fit for the axe and the fire? Oneself, one's responsibility all gone? Everything connected with oneself as a child of Adam? There is an end of me! A man who has learned that, who has passed the judgment of God upon himself, will never be surprised at what he finds in himself. The surprise comes from not having a good start. We get a good start here. The ground is scorched; seared by the fire. Weed seeds are, for the moment, destroyed. All is clear. The colonist gets a good crop from his ground after the fire, with scarce a single weed, the first year.

If a young convert has had a good start thus and has passed the judgment of God upon himself, he may, for the moment, be tempted to think there is nothing evil left in him. Let him wait a little, he will soon find there is nothing naturally but what is fit only for the axe and the fire still. Yet there is a new crop, only it is the produce of the new

nature in the power of the Spirit—His fruit. (Gal. v. 22.)

John introduces Christ in verses 11, 12 as the One mightier than himself; as the One who should baptise with the Holy Ghost and with fire; and there is in this an illustration of the way scripture brings things together in the same verse, as though they followed each other immediately as to time, while there is in fact a great space of time between them. The baptism with the Holy Ghost followed upon the rejection of Christ, and that by fire is yet to come, although judgment came upon Israel shortly after; but the unquenchable fire of verse 12 has not yet become the portion of the chaff. The floor was Israel and—the figure being changed—the good trees are the wheat which was to be gathered into the garner. It is interesting to notice that this word “garner” is the same as that translated “barn” in Matthew xiii. 30 and is the first in-

dication of the Lord's gathering His people to Himself.

It may no doubt refer to the gathering up in Israel of that which was real, and putting it into the church, which follows; but it looks on to the rapture also, the gathering up of all the saints at the close of the dispensation; and to the heavenly portion of the slain remnant afterwards.

Jesus now comes from Galilee to Jordan to be baptised of John. (Ver. 13.) He saw those who were real, and who were in unfeigned repentance, submitting to John's baptism, and He comes to identify Himself with them. It was the first-fruits of the Spirit—and Jesus can rejoice in it even as God could. It is

### A FEAST UNTO JEHOVAH!

Did you ever think, beloved reader, what that feast in Leviticus xxiii. sets forth, which in type gives us the mourning of the children of Israel—the feast of the blowing of trumpets? It awakens in the heart of the rem-

nant the sense of what they are before God. The people afflict their souls, and there will be an immense mourning amongst them, every family apart, and their wives apart: as spoken of in Zechariah xii. 10-14. This state of repentance is a feast to Jehovah; to no one else perhaps, but it is one of the Lord's feasts. Does God then like to see His people in tears? He does indeed! It is a feast to Him. See the poor woman who came to the feet of the Lord Jesus in the Pharisee's house. The Pharisee had neglected to provide water for His feet, and she washes them—travel-stained and weary—with her tears and wipes them with the hairs of her head. God broke up the fountain of her tears, thus providing a feast for the Lord's heart, as for His own.

Therefore John calls upon them to "Repent," as though he would say, I want you to give God a feast; and when the Spirit works repentance in the remnant, Jesus at once identifies

Himself with them. Yet is the infinite superiority of His own blessed Person never more marked, for while they are all confessing their sins, the heavens open over Him to declare Him the Son of the Father. Yet there they are,

### JESUS AND THE REMNANT!

Blessed it is to see the grace, the perfect grace of Jesus, in linking Himself with the repentant remnant. (Vers. 14, 15.) It is the dependent Man of Psalm xvi. we have here; the One who says, "Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust. Oh my soul, thou hast said unto Jehovah, Thou art my Lord, my goodness extendeth not to thee; but [thou hast said] to the saints, They are the excellent of the earth, all my delight is in them." Where did He find the saints the excellent of the earth? He found them in this poor and despised remnant coming to Jordan confessing their sins.

What does He do? He comes in the

power and energy of the Spirit of God, and associates Himself with *that remnant*, who by the operation of the same Spirit brought forth their first good fruit in owning they had none at all.

What a thing it was! The blessed Lord in grace associates Himself in all the humbled majesty of His own Person with the poor of the flock; the publicans and the harlots who came to be baptised of John!

John exposes the Pharisees and scribes and calls them a generation of vipers. The Lord says of this poor and feeble remnant, These are the excellent of the earth, all my delight is in them; and He takes His place with them. He would not as a man say to Jehovah, "My goodness extendeth to thee;" but He says, My delight is with the saints.

Do we know what it is to delight in the saints thus? Naturally one may think they are a very poor indifferent lot, I will have nothing to do with them; there is nothing naturally in them to attract! But

they are God's saints. There is the work of the Spirit of God in them. The Lord saw them with God's eyes and said, "They are the excellent of the earth." Where are they to-day? In the poor despised people who *cleave to the word of God*, and it is more to do that, than to have all sorts of good works that would accredit you before the eyes of men, or accomplish the mightiest results as man counts them.

Jesus comes down, then, to that remnant. Had He any sins to confess? The thought would be blasphemy. With Him—and He links John with Himself in it—it was to fulfil righteousness. "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh *us* to fulfil all righteousness." He associates Himself in grace with the remnant and John with Himself in fulfilling righteousness. A great many Christians to-day think they can follow their Saviour in that way in baptism. It may be a pious thought, but it is a wrong one. We cannot fulfil right-



eousness. No! Baptism, for us too, is the owning that we are fit only for the axe and the fire.

It is a blessed thing, beloved, to be associated with Him, and He with us; to be in company with the Christ of God. And it is more to have His own company than all the world can give. Better to be low down with the poor and despised, giving God a feast, and owning we are nothing, and having the Christ of God with us, than to be with the great of the earth, doing great things that give us a standing before man. We have to be careful how we go *up*. The path of the Christian is a downward path. Now is the only time we have the opportunity of sharing with Christ His moral glory. What was it? His moral glory was coming down. Look at Philippians ii., God became Man, and as such went down to the death of the cross; that was morally His perfection. That is what is meant in John xiii. 31. "Now is the Son of man glorified." This is

His moral glory. We may depend upon it, our path here, if we share with Christ, is a downward path.

But we turn now to

### THE NEW POSITION

for the believer to-day. It is set forth in the Person of the Lord Jesus as He comes up out of Jordan. There are three distinct things that go to form it. The heavens are opened unto Him. The Spirit of God descends like a dove and lights upon Him. A voice from heaven declares "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!" This last is expressive of the Father's delight in Him, in His whole walk on earth; in a way it could not be true of us, save as in Him. Yet it is true now, that God finds good pleasure in man!

Never before had such a thing taken place as the heavens opened over a man upon earth! True, Ezekiel saw the heavens opened, but it was in vision. Here was the reality of it. A Man upon earth,

over whom the Father could open the heavens to express His delight in Him, owning Him as Son!

It is the position in which Jesus is seen here, that *redemption's* work introduces the believer into now. A wondrous position! Impossible to man before. May the soul learn consciously what it is to be brought into it.

Let us look for a moment at what scripture says as to *believers* occupying this new position, and we will look at it in inverse order to that in which it is given here. The first thing to consider in this order is that

### SONSHIP IS OURS.

(Gal iv. 5.) And though this involves glory (Rom. viii. 23), faith enters into the joy of it now. We, who in ourselves are only fit for the axe and the fire, are put into this position by God Himself. It is one that we can by no means attain to; but it is the only position that Christ gives to-day. There is a difference, although an analogy, between Christ

and ourselves in this position. He was Son of God as born into this world; His very human nature being begotten by the Holy Ghost. There never was another like Christ in this. He was a Man of His own order. But the Holy Ghost produces in us a nature as distinctly of God. We are born of God. We are moreover put into the relationship of children. "Now are we the children of God." (1 John iii. 2.) And although we wait for sonship in its full sense (Rom. viii. 23), yet already we have received the spirit of sonship, crying, Abba, Father. (Rom. viii. 15.) This is the manner of the Father's love! This is the position into which Christ delights to usher us after the travail of redemption's work! "I ascend to my Father and your Father." (John xx. 17.)

As to our nature as men, it is utterly unlike Christ's morally. Ours is sinful; His was holy. We get man in four ways in scripture. Innocent in Adam originally. Sinful, in every one

since the fall, till Christ came. In Christ on earth we have a holy Man. Fourthly, we have in Him in heaven, the glorified Man. We never can be what Christ was; but we shall be as He is. Here is a marvellous thought! Still we are born of God, and have a nature morally like Him; and we are put into the *relationship* of children since Christ died and rose again. We have moreover the position of sons, and await full conformity to His image. Never before could this be! They were "born of God" before, and had the title to become children, but had not the position of sons until Christ ascended and the Holy Spirit was given.

Do we confess what we are? What a man *is*, is infinitely more than what he *has*. He may be as poor as his Master; though there are few as poor as He was; no place to lay His head! Nothing to call His own, though Lord of all! But what a dignity! "Thou art no more servant, but son"! Well, this is what

God does for us; nothing less would suit Him! Next,

### WE ARE SEALED WITH THE SPIRIT.

The Spirit of God descended like a dove and came upon Jesus. In this, again, there is distinction. The Spirit anointed Jesus as a man without redemption: He never could anoint us apart from redemption. Yet redemption being accomplished, the Holy Spirit seals, anoints, and dwells in the believer. "Having believed, ye were sealed." (Eph. i. 13.) "Ye have an unction from the Holy One." (1 John ii. 20.) And, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (Gal. iv. 6.) This is the promise of the Lord Jesus in John xiv. 16, 17, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; . . . he abideth with you, and shall be in you."

Moreover, of this Spirit Paul speaks

in Romans viii. "The Spirit of God dwells in you;" as characteristic of the standing. (Ver. 9.) "The Spirit of Christ," as characteristic of the walk. (Vers. 9, 10.) And, "The Spirit of him that raised up Jesus," a pledge of the quickening of the mortal body. (Ver. 11.) Also, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." (Vers. 14, 15.)

In our chapter, the Spirit indicates for us the power to look up into the opened heavens, as Jesus said: "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into eternal life." (John iv. 14.) Thus is revealed to us the source, sphere and Object of eternal life.

This is true of believers since Christ ascended, having accomplished redemption; but before, it was true of Christ alone, that the Holy Spirit descended from heaven and abode

upon Him. Moreover, it is suitably in the form of a dove that the Spirit descends upon Him, marking the lowly, meek, obedient Spirit of that blessed man; whereas it was as tongues of fire the Holy Spirit first descended upon redeemed man at Pentecost. Again,

### THE HEAVENS ARE OPENED.

Since Christ entered heaven as Son of man, the heavens are open to us. They were opened to Jesus that the Father might declare Him Son, and His own good pleasure in Him; that is, Jesus was as a Man upon earth the Object of the opened heavens. There was a moment in the history of this sin-stained earth when no object in heaven could fix the gaze of God.

There was, however, a humble Man on earth, who had just identified Himself, in grace, with the publicans and harlots who were confessing their sins, and God opens heaven to say, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I



am well pleased." Well may we say with Gambold :

“There has one Object been disclosed on earth,  
That might commend the place ; but now  
'tis gone :  
Jesus is with the Father !”

And Jesus is always the Object of those opened heavens, whether as above, or as in John i. 50, 51, when the Lord, in reply to the astonishment of the Israelite in whom was no guile, said, “Thou shalt see greater things than these. Henceforth ye shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” It is Christ on earth the Object of the ministry of the angels, answering to Psalm xci. 11. Or, whether it be as in the case of Stephen, who looks up into the opened heavens and sees Jesus the Son of man standing at the right hand of God ; Christ is still the Object.

Now Stephen is the first man we read of who sets forth all the condi-

tions of the position that was marked out by the Lord. Redemption being accomplished he is in the position of a son; the Holy Spirit has also come down from an ascended Christ, and Stephen is full of the Holy Ghost; moreover, he looks up steadfastly into heaven and sees Jesus there. That blessed Object holding his heart and his gaze, he is able in the energy and power of the Holy Ghost to do as his Master had done in like circumstances, being morally conformed to Him. And as they battered out his brains, he says, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," and, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Stephen not only occupied this position, but was morally like his Lord, and that is what God wants. We may think that at such a juncture we could set this forth morally; but if we cannot now in our own circumstances, we could not in such as these.

Paul, too, could find no object to give rest or satisfaction but there, in the Person of that Christ, who looked

down into his heart, as he was on the way to Damascus to persecute the church of God. These two men and servants of Christ were attracted in heart and affection to the scene up there ; and in them we have examples of those who understood the new position given to believers.

The disciples, when the Lord was here, knew nothing about this position. They were not in it yet, nor did they enter into the Father's thoughts about the Son. The Lord laboured to instruct them in the fact of His Sonship, and that He had come from the Father to reveal Him under that precious title, which put into the shade every other revelation, or name by which God had been declared ; but they never rose to it then. "By this we believe that thou camest forth from *God*," shewed how utterly they failed to enter into it.

It is quite true they were born of God, and had a new nature (John i. 13) ; but while this was the necessary

foundation, it was not conscious sonship. They were not in the position of sons till Christ ushered them into it in resurrection, nor were they conscious of it till the Holy Spirit came. Yet the Holy Spirit is communicated to them as life by the risen Saviour in John xx. 17-22. We may notice also in this connection some other

### DISTINCTIONS OF TERMS.

There is, in John iii., a marked distinction between the new birth and eternal life. Nicodemus ought to have known as a Master in Israel about the former, which he must possess in order to enter into the kingdom, as a distinctly earthly thing, and marked off by the Lord Himself from the heavenly things He was about to speak of, first of which comes the lifting up of the Son of man, that believers in Him might have eternal life. There can be no doubt that in the Lord's days on earth there was this distinction,

though now the new birth and eternal life are connected together, in God's purpose, and both are the portion of the believer in Christ since the cross, upon which the Son of man was lifted up, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

There is, again, a distinction between life as "being," and life as "state of being," ordinarily recognised; the last indicating a right condition in which the being lives suitably to its surroundings, for which it was created by God. Hence for the Christian, since Christ is his life, he must be where Christ is in order to enjoy that life. The sphere where Christ is, is its true place, and to be in the enjoyment of communion in that sphere is a right "state of being." He has "being" of a new order; and the old order having for him passed away, it only remains to let it go practically. How could one cling to the old, if in the enjoyment of the new?

“Being” we have, beloved; but what of the moral condition? Is the spiritual state right? What of communion? What of “state of being?”

Now we may see in the conditions that are set forth in the Person of the blessed Lord in Matthew iii. those under which eternal life may be known and enjoyed here. And since the blood has been shed, and the Spirit given from an ascended Christ, it is the accorded privilege of every believer in Him to come under these conditions, and in the power of the Spirit to be within those opened heavens, absorbed with the beauty and glory of the Object revealed to him there.

In John xx. we see the disciples for the first time introduced into the new position, although the Holy Spirit personally was not yet on earth. Community of relationship is established between the risen Christ and themselves, “My Father and your Father, my God and your God.” Then He breathes on them, and saith

unto them, "Receive ye, Holy Spirit." It is not here, *the* Holy Spirit personally, to abide with them; that was not yet, although they were marked off to receive Him when He should come; but it is as the Spirit of life. Life more abundantly is communicated to them.

And now, seeing every believer is in this new position, what is wanted is, increased sensibility to the reality of it. We have not only divine life, but heavenly joys, and we have by the Spirit, competency to enter into what God in His rich grace has made ours. Our element is not to be found on earth, but in heaven. Are we there in the power of the Spirit in the sense of our union with Him?

The Lord grant, that like Stephen, we may be engrossed with the joys of our new position, so that we may be altogether oblivious to those of the old one. It is a solemn thing to think of a man having such a position—and it is the only one God gives to-day—and not enjoying it!

Not exhibiting the truth of it! If any be convicted of this, the only remedy is to turn to Him who obtained this position for us at the cost of His life's blood, and get occupied with Him, and what He has thus obtained for us. Sons of God; sealed with the Holy Spirit; the heavens are opened to us that we may look up and see Jesus there, and in that sphere enter into communion with Him about the Father who gave Him; and into communion with the Father about the Son whom He gave. This, this is life!

G. J. S.

