

FROM

GENESIS TO REVELATION

LECTURES ON THE
STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS OF THE BIBLE BOOKS

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PREFATORY NOTE

IT is with hesitation that the following pages are put before the reader—with a real sense of their imperfect and fragmentary character. With their contents many are already familiar from other sources. From these sources it has been my privilege to draw most of what is here presented; and I would be grateful indeed did the perusal of these pages awaken fresh interest in “The Synopsis of the Books of the Bible,” “The Numerical Structure of Scripture,” and “The Numerical Bible.”

I have hopes even that the colloquial and desultory style, with frequent repetition of thoughts, may carry the reader on with less effort than a more studied work, and thus awaken an appetite for truth which, as just stated above, can be found elsewhere.

That God will bless the book to this end, and thus magnify His word more and more in the hearts of His people is my prayer.

S. R.

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INTRODUCTORY

Deut. viii. 7-9; xxxiv. 1-4.

THESE two scriptures give us what I conceive to be the two ways in which we can read and understand the word of God.

In the first scripture you have it as that which provides the food for the soul. As you notice, everything there tells us of the fertility of the land; its hills and valleys; its springs and water-courses; its pomegranates, figs and oil olive—everything that was good for food, reminding one almost of the garden of Eden itself. In the other scripture we have Moses viewing the land from a distance. I do not speak of it being a penalty for his conduct. In one way it seems infinitely pathetic that the man who had been most faithful to God in his day and generation, should be the one singled out by Him to mark the inflexible righteousness which is ever exercised in His house. It is not merely the failing Israelite who is not allowed to enter into the land, not merely the stumbled one of insignificant place or of little value in the work of God. But it is the leader himself,—Moses—the one who had led them out of Egypt, who had borne with all their folly and shortcomings in the desert, who had brought them to the border of the land—who for one act of haste, which dishonored God is singled out in order to show, as I said, that inflexible judgment which ever belongs to His house. In grace Moses has the highest place, but in government he must be with the lowest, under the mighty hand of God.

It is not of Moses, however, I would speak, but rather of ourselves: and to show from this passage the other way in which we can look at the land, that is, look at it from a distance. Moses was not allowed to go in; he is

taken, however, to the top of Mount Pisgah, and there his eye can range over the whole territory. From distant Dan in the north, down through all the central mountain region to the far south country, from near by Jordan over to the western sea his eye can range, and God says, This is the land which I promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is what Israel is to enter into.

In like manner we can apply it to the word of God. I need not tell you that in one sense we have, like Abraham, not a single foot of land to call our own. Who are poorer than the children of God? All our precious things are invisible to sight. The things of greatest value to us, the world says do not exist: all the inheritance of God's people is a future inheritance. But where do we find that inheritance described? where do we have it spread before us in all its beauty, fertility, and perfection? In the precious Word of God. And so these scriptures are our present inheritance, into which we can enter now by faith, and already enjoy the reality which is there unfolded to us.

Now you see how these two scriptures apply. We have first of all the word of God supplying the varied food for our souls. There you have the fruit of the vine, the fig-tree, the pomegranate, the wheat, the barley, the oil olive of which we were speaking,—food for our souls. Then again you have the view from Mount Pisgah looking over the whole heritage, taking in the general scope of the word of God, and the grouping of its parts; and just as you would climb to some mountain summit to get a view of the whole land, and then go down and enter into some farm-house to get food for your hunger, so it is our purpose, with the Lord's help, to take up at this time the mountain view of Scripture; to look at the whole Word of God, to see its groupings and general contents, and to descend from time to time to get something for our own souls. That is God's way in all His works.

We can look at nature with the telescope, or with the microscope. The astronomer sweeps the heavens with his telescope. He gazes into their depths and where we see naught, he sees, not merely worlds, but systems of worlds. The biologist will take a single drop of water, and with his microscope see a new world there just as perfect and real as the starry worlds above. How perfect is all God's work, whether of His hands or of His Spirit.

Thus we can come to the Bible and look at it, as it were, with the telescope and range over all its fulness seeing its general harmony and its contents. Then we can take, as with a microscope, a single verse—a single sentence, yea, single words, and find therein the same wisdom and perfection that we see in the mighty fulness of the Scriptures as a whole.

We will take up the Word in that larger way, and seek to get a general idea of the purposes of God as unfolded thus.

People get salvation mostly through single verses of the Bible. How many have found peace through that precious verse "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." I thank God, we do not have to be scholars to be saved; we do not even have to know where to find a single verse in the word of God. The simplest truth as to Christ, the Saviour of the lost, is the means of our salvation. Do I know I am a lost sinner? that I have sinned and come short of the glory of God? Can I say "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned?" Then it is my privilege to hearken to that other word, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," and to know that God's love is commended to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

But we do not want to remain ignorant. God saves

us to be sharers in His thoughts. That is why we ought to covet to understand His Word.

We are so intensely selfish naturally that we cheat ourselves as most selfish people do. We are so selfish that unless we think a certain portion of God's word is going to minister to our comfort, or specially suits our case, it has no bearing for us, there is no good in it for us, and therefore we fail to be in harmony with the thoughts of God. As a result we live a poor low life that is exposed to the temptations of the enemy.

Why is it that Satan has such power over the people of God, dragging them into the world, occupying them with its thoughts? It is because they neglect the word of God. You neglect the Scriptures on the plea that you are already saved and that all you need is a few little rules by which you can guide your course,—something like a navigator on a merchant vessel, who can take his bearings, and know how to steer his ship, but at the same time is ignorant of the mighty works of God and passes heedlessly under that which speaks of the glory of God, the firmament which showeth His handiwork. And so you and I may have two or three verses that apply to the Christian walk, and two or three more scriptures that apply to restoration and communion and a few more that apply to our dealings with the world, and we think we have enough to live by: but we are not in communion with God. There is only one way to be in communion with God and that is through His precious Word. Now that is the importance of our taking up as we are going to do in somewhat an orderly way, an unfolding of some of the perfections of that blessed Word.

LECTURE I

THE PENTATEUCH

I NEED not say that the books of the Bible are grouped together in an orderly way, evidently not thrown together at haphazard. Take for instance the Old and New Testaments. You find that they treat of two distinct subjects. We come however to our particular subject to-night, the five books of Moses, the first part of the Bible. They are all held fast together. It is one coherent whole; you could not take one of them away without mutilating this whole portion of scripture. Rob us of Genesis, for instance, and we would be without the very foundation as to God's ways and works in this world. Rob us of Deuteronomy or put it with another part of the Bible and we would be without the conclusion as to God's ways.

Moses was the author of all these books, the single author. At their close we see him laying down his life with his pen in token of a completed work. We shall find as we go on in the study of Scripture, that this Pentateuch as it is called, (which simply means five volumes) gives us the model upon which the whole word of God is written, a key by which we can understand something of His purpose in giving us such a full revelation. I have said that they are one whole; that you could not take one of them away without mutilating the rest.

We have however to look at the other side also, which is, that they are entirely distinct one from the other. People might say Why did not Moses write just one book. If he is the author of the whole as he evidently

is, why did he write it in five volumes instead of one? Simply to emphasize the fact that here we have a diversity, a divine progress and that God has a lesson to teach us in the fact that there are five books, just as well as in the fact that it is one division of Scripture. Now what is the lesson that is upon the very surface of this? There are five books. The subject of Genesis is creation, and the life of individual saints. When you come to Exodus, you get an entirely new thought. The prominent thing there is redemption, the redemption of a people to be in association with God. Come again to Leviticus and there is a distinct line of truth that underlies the whole book, the truth of access to God, of holiness. Passing into Numbers is like passing into another room. You find an entirely different thought. It is now the pathway of God's people along the wilderness journey, and when Numbers closes and we get to Deuteronomy, it seems to return as it were to the very beginning. There you have God's summary of His ways with the people.

Now this is what lies upon the very surface, and you will notice that we have here a distinct progress, a distinct advance in each book upon what you had in the previous one. Let us go over them again typically. *In Genesis you have creation, the type of new creation, the work of divine life in the soul.* Now what is there that answers to that in simple language for our souls? Is it not new birth? "Except a man be born again, he cannot see, (he cannot enter) the Kingdom of God." There must be new birth, there must be a new nature imparted, if there is to be relationship with God. But is that all He has to unfold to us, as to our relationship with Himself? No, that is only the beginning. What is the next point? The ground of our relationship with Him. And in the book of Exodus we find the prominent thought throughout is the basis of all relationship with God,—redemption by blood. Now a man

is born again by the sovereign act of the Spirit of God; that is new birth; but what is the basis of our relationship with God, what is the foundation of our peace with Him? Is it not this Exodus truth, this great truth of redemption? So you see that Exodus is clearly another book and it presents a distinct and advanced thought. First we have life, secondly we have redemption. Now pass to Leviticus, and what do you have again? The theme of Leviticus, as I was saying, is the sanctuary of God; it is the principle of divine holiness that must be maintained; you get to Leviticus, and you find it quite different from Exodus. What God is occupied with there is the holiness that becometh His house, it is the ground upon which His people can draw near *and enjoy fellowship with Himself*, which was led up to in Exodus. The very close of the book prepares you for that which you find in Leviticus, but all through it there is unfolded as a distinct truth an advance upon what we had in Exodus—the truth of holiness and access. Translate that again into our practical every day life. “Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.” Now peace with God is peace by the blood of the passover Lamb; but the “access by faith into this grace wherein we stand,” corresponds to this book of Leviticus; it is access, nearness, beholding the holy glory of God and rejoicing in that. What losers would we be, if there were no principle of holiness, such as we find in Leviticus. I fear, alas, for most of us that we are quite content to remain in Exodus as it were, quite content to go on merely with the knowledge of salvation, without enjoying the precious privilege of entering into the holy place, and sharing the thoughts of God.

But again is that all? does that sum up the whole of the believer's life? Surely not. Our feet are here upon

the desert sands, we meet with manifold temptations. What are we to do in this hostile world? We are occupied as to our souls with the infinite fulness of Christ. We enjoy all the precious things that are unfolded to us as to Him, but what about our daily life? what about our testimony in a world like this? What about that development of character that comes from exercise? I will quote again from that same chapter in Romans: "Not only so, but we glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." Where are we with experiences like that? Not in Leviticus, but we have passed into Numbers. I have enjoyed my access in Leviticus, and now I can glory in the very tribulation, that I have to pass through in this world. Now that is exactly what is unfolded to us in the book of Numbers; it is the testing, the trial, and alas, when you try the flesh, its weakness, its failure, its feebleness, its dishonoring God are brought out on the one hand. But is that all? Thank God there is also brought out the infinite patience, the long-suffering and wisdom of our God, and if in this wilderness experience on the one hand I learn what I am, on the other hand I learn God as I could not learn Him, I say it reverently, even in the glory up there. I learn Him here as the One who upholds me, and sustains me in the midst of the sorest trials; who, when I have tripped and fallen, or grown cold and careless, can restore me, can bring me back, can bring me *through*, and bring me to the end of it all; and I could not learn that in heaven; and that, dear brethren, is what we have brought out in the book of Numbers.

Are you not thankful that we have such a book as that? that He has given us in His precious Word a whole volume as to our earthly walk, a whole volume as to His

grace in the place where we need grace? So the book of Numbers we find is a distinct advance, another step in the progress of God's people, and that brings us to the last book, Deuteronomy. Is it merely that we are brought through the world? that God sustains us, and brings us to the end of our journey? That is not all. The holiness of God demands that when we have reached our journey's end, and there is not another step to be taken in the wilderness, His love for us demands that we turn round with Him now and look back over that history and see the steps we have trodden, and see our failures and shortcomings with Him to recount them to us, and so you find the whole book of Deuteronomy devoted to a recapitulation. You find no new event narrated there; but the old events, things that happened long years ago are taken, up never forgotten by our God, not one step that we have taken, not one failure that we have made will ever be forgotten by Him. He takes them all up, and there at the end of the journey He goes over them all. What for? To humble us? We had our humbling long before. He humbled us in the wilderness and taught us that man should not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. He goes over the history not to humble us, but to give us lessons for eternity. Think of that! We are so apt to think of heaven as a place where we need no lessons. We are just ready to begin to learn our lessons there; most of us are so slow here, that we learn very little. The first thing that we have got when we get to heaven is to learn the lesson of our wilderness journey. I need not tell you that it is the judgment-seat of Christ where we learn all this; when the Lord Jesus gathers His redeemed people up there, in the glory with Himself and like Himself, that He opens the record of their whole life and goes over it. Deuteronomy is the last step in the progress of the saints.

Now then do you not see the beauty of that order? and you will agree with me that you could not displace that order. Could you take out Genesis and put it last? Could you put Leviticus in the fourth place? No, they are linked together in just that order, and you will find there is a distinct definite progress in the history of your soul, and in the history of Israel, for that matter, as a nation too; a progress that begins with Genesis, the life of God in the soul; passes on to Exodus, the knowledge of redemption and communion; then into Leviticus, access into the holiest; then through this wilderness journey, in Numbers; until finally all is recapitulated for us in the book of Deuteronomy.

Let us look at another thought before we go further. You notice that these books are in order and that their order cannot be changed, and that order therefore, gives to each book a certain number. Genesis for instance is number 1, Exodus is number 2, Leviticus number 3, Numbers is 4, and Deuteronomy 5. They could not be anything else because they are in that absolute order. Do those numbers mean anything for us? Are we to learn anything from that? Genesis as "one," tells us of creation, of the origin of things, of God as the author, the source. You will find that truth as to number *one*, goes through all Scripture, and when we come to look a little more closely at the book of Genesis, you will find that to be the character of the book everywhere. For instance, take Abraham, God calls him out in sovereign grace, that is number 1; it is sovereignty. You will find this thought of sovereignty and the control of God over the lives of His people prominent in the book. Take another thought of one; it means a single person an individual as contrasted with a nation. Genesis is a history of individuals. We shall see presently that it is a history of seven individuals.

Now you come to Exodus and what a contrast, it is a

second book, and *two* suggests evil; it suggests bondage, and captivity; it suggests more than that, blessed be God,—help from Him, salvation, redemption. Then it suggests communion, association, and so you find this number 2 stamped,—do I say stamped? nay woven into the very fibre and texture of the whole book. It is a book that tells us of bondage and of redemption from bondage; of sin and of sacrifice for sin; of deliverance out of Egypt; of walking with God, or communion; and so you find throughout number 2.

Go again to Leviticus, the third book, and here we find *three* prominent. Who is the third person of the Trinity? just as the Father is connected with Genesis, for it is the book of birth, and the Son is connected with Exodus, for it is the book of redemption, so the Spirit is connected with Leviticus for it is the book of holiness. Here are the great principles of God's holiness, and it brings us into that into which we can only enter in the power of resurrection, and that is into the sanctuary of God. *Three* is the number of the sanctuary; it is the number of the presence of God. I have been particularly struck of late with the fact that when Scripture speaks of the Holy Spirit, it does not present something peculiar to Him, any unfolding of His character, as it were, but you have an unfolding of Christ, of the work of Christ, which agrees exactly with the promise of the Lord that He would send the Holy Spirit and He would glorify Christ, that He would take of the things of Christ and show them unto us. How blessed that is. The blessed Spirit of God is having His time (if I may use such an expression) of humiliation. Christ has had His season of humiliation. The Lord came here, took a lowly place and became obedient unto death—the death of the cross, and now in this dispensation the Holy Spirit veils His glory and instead of speaking of the things concerning Himself primarily, He speaks of Christ and His work. That is

why you find in the book of Leviticus, the work and Person of Christ typically unfolded with a fulness that is found nowhere else in the whole word of God.

Passing to number four; it is the earth number, the number of this world. We speak of the four corners of the earth, the four winds. It is that which has to do with the earth. We have already seen that the book of Numbers has to do with this present world. Forty days, forty years—how they tell us of testing. You might write for instance at the head of the book of Numbers, Forty years, for it is the history of the forty years' testing in the wilderness. This number four is woven into the very texture of the book so that it could not be anything else.

That brings us to the fifth book. Deuteronomy is a history too, but a history that comes from the lips of God. It is the "one" added to the four, and that "One" is God; O what a difference that makes; my history in God's hands, He will make a blessing, even out of my failure. So this number five, which tells us of God with man, gives us exactly the character of the book of Deuteronomy.

Pardon me a still further step, as to these numbers. You have the odd and the even numbers, which sounds very prosaic. But look at the three odd numbers; one is Genesis, three is Leviticus, and five is Deuteronomy. You find God in them in an especial way. In the "one" you have God as the author of life, in "three," you are introduced into His presence, and in the "five" of which we have just been speaking, you have God with man.

In the two even numbers, two and four, you have evil and failure. Blessed be God you have something else too, salvation from sin, and succor in times of failure. Is it not remarkable that in these five numbers you should have linked together, in such a way that we cannot break them apart, five books that unfold five thoughts that are absolutely connected with the meaning of each

of the numbers? I make no apology for this because if God has given us these things in His word, the sooner we learn them and familiarize ourselves with them, the sooner will we get the blessing out of them. Our Bible will become more and more dear, and will as it were interpret itself to us.

Now let us take Genesis for a moment and see some of the prominent thoughts which lie there. We have seen that it is the book of origin. Looking closer we find that it divides in a very remarkable way. We must look elsewhere for these divisions as a rule, but there is something very striking about this book of Genesis; it divides the whole volume.

Two chapters give us the history of unfallen man, and the rest of scripture—fallen man. That is what we have made our Bible; we have compelled God, as it were, in writing His book to divide it into two such unequal parts, that a single leaf tells of what man was when he came from God's hand, and the whole volume tells us of God's remedy, when the ruin and the sin had come in. Thus we find in that first part, man as he came from God, and in the second part, whether it be the whole Scripture, or more particularly the book of Genesis, salvation.

In the second part, the narrative clusters around seven men. This will enable us to remember the contents of Genesis:—Adam, Seth, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph—these seven men divide the whole of the remainder of the book amongst them.

Adam comes first, of course. He is the first recipient of the promise. Secondly, Seth is the substitute; Abel was slain by Cain, and Seth is appointed in his place as his substitute; that is the number two. The brief history of Enoch belongs likewise to that period. Noah, the third prominent one, brings us through the flood, out on resurrection ground in the new earth; that is number three. The next prominent one is the pilgrim

Abraham, the fourth, who went through this wilderness as a stranger. The fifth gives us God with man as it were. You have in Isaac the first great prominent personal type of Christ, God's man; and then in Jacob you have God's discipline, the testing which God allows His people to pass through in order to restrain the evil in them, and to overcome their self-will. So we find in Jacob the history of self-will. And then in Joseph the last one, you have God's perfect man to whose image we are one day to be conformed. Now those seven men give us the entire book of Genesis. In them we have set before us the history of divine life in a seven-fold way.

Let us dwell upon this a little further, for it is very attractive. The promise is the first thing a sinner gets, the promise of salvation through the woman's seed. The next thing he needs is deliverance from the power of sin; that is typified in Seth the substitute. The third thing he needs is to walk in the power of resurrection; that is Noah the risen man. Then he must be a stranger and a pilgrim. Next, he is to learn that subjection which we find in the image of Christ, the Man down here, typified in Isaac. The sixth is the restraint upon our self-will which alas! we have given God so much occasion to restrain,—and the chastening: we have this in Jacob. And finally we are conformed to the image of Joseph, the one who is such a perfect type of Christ that you scarcely think of him but his great Antitype. His entire history, unlike that of Jacob is typical from beginning to end. That is very beautiful. In Jacob it is almost impossible to trace the type, in Joseph we see the type everywhere. In Jacob you find God's rod upon him all the way through. But it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness,—and we find Jacob at the last blessing the sons of Joseph on his departure, and passing out from under all the experience through which he had been brought by

his own self-will largely, entering at last into the rest of God.

We have no time to go in like manner into the other books. You will have to do that in your own private study, but you see how in this way each book has its precious lesson, and these lessons run through it in a perfect way. Each single book opens out like a lovely flower, perfectly consistent, perfectly harmonious all the way through. Let me now rapidly give you a key-thought to each of these other books. We have seen the life in the individual in Genesis. Let us take these thoughts for the first part of Exodus: "When I see the blood I will pass over you." "Sing unto the Lord for He hath triumphed gloriously."

In these two verses, you have before you the thought of Exodus—shelter by the blood from the judgment of God, and deliverance by His power from the bondage of sin, a two-fold salvation. Almost the entire second half of the book is occupied with the description of the Tabernacle and its construction—God's dwelling place with His people—emphasizing the thought of communion—and its ground in the Person and work of Christ our Lord.

The place of the law in Exodus is suggestive. The first tables never were brought into the camp, but broken at the foot of the mountain, as Israel had already broken their covenant. The second tables suggested the mediation of Moses, and in that way were not pure law. They stand, therefore, for God's claim of obedience from a people whom He had redeemed and spared, rather than the demands of a law which could not give life.

Take up Leviticus again. I was saying, you remember, that it was the book that unfolds to us in its perfection, the work and the character of Christ. But what is the key-thought to the whole book? the sixteenth chapter, the third section of a third book, is the holy of holies.

You find there the great day of atonement, and the priest carrying the blood of the sacrifices in behind the veil, and sprinkling it upon the altar. The key-thought in Leviticus is "having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He has consecrated for us." I wish we had time to dwell upon the first parts of this book. In the first seven chapters you have the sacrifices described in their varied perfection; and then, that our minds may be kept evenly balanced, you have the Priest in all His glory put before us in association with the other priests, types of ourselves; then the holiest. Take those three thoughts, the perfect work of Christ the ground of our relationship, the person of Christ our companion—if I may speak reverently in such a way; the holiest, the place of our communion with Him: the ground, the person, the place. In the same way we might go on to the eighteenth chapter towards the end, and find there holiness for the way, and the summary, and result of it all, completing the entire book.

As to Numbers, there is one key-thought that is very striking, you will find it in the fifteenth chapter, second verse. "Speak unto the children of Israel and say unto them: 'when ye be come into the land of your habitation which I give unto you.'"

But you say what has that to do with Numbers? Is not Numbers the book of the wilderness? What has it to do with the land? Let us look at what precedes that verse, and at what follows it, and you will see the beauty and the grace of it. What precedes it is the murmuring of the children of Israel, and their refusal to go into this very land,—their absolute refusal. Following it in the fifteenth chapter, you have the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. On the one hand the deliberate refusal of the people to enter into their blessing, on the other their rebellion, and turning away from their leader. And what

have you in between? "When ye be come into the land." I may fail, alas! I may turn back to Egypt in unbelief; alas! my poor heart may rebel against the grace that has given me such a leader and high-priest, but let unbelief and refusal be on either side, in between, in the very heart of the book is this precious assurance, "When ye be come into the land." We will get there! you have failed, you have refused, you may be an unbelieving child of God. Ah! you may get the rod—the father's chastening,—but just so surely as you are an Exodus child of God, just as surely as you are a Leviticus child of God, you will be a Deuteronomy child of God. You will be in the land some day. Do you say I have practically turned my back on it, I have gone into the world and been enjoying the things of this wretched earth. Very well, God hath sworn it—He will make you drink the bitter water, but just as surely as you are His child, "when you be come into the land," you will remember it all.

We are travelers, we are going through the wilderness. It is a long journey, but it is a journey that has an end, and just as surely as we have taken the first step in that way, so surely shall we reach the end. Meager as this account of Numbers is, I must pass on, with barely a mention of the first part, the first ten chapters, where everything is set in order according to God, before the journey begins, the unfailing priestly intercession in the midst of all, and the foretaste of conquest at the close.

There is much that is precious in Deuteronomy. As I said it reviews our whole history for us, goes over it all, but at the close. Two things give us the key,—Moses' song, and the blessing of the twelve tribes. They seem very different things. In Moses' song you have put before you, not the praises of the children of Israel,—it does not sound very much like a song of triumph; that we had in the fifteenth chapter of Exodus; but in the

thirty-second chapter of Deuteronomy you have glory and honor ascribed to God. In the first part of the book, He goes over the whole past history of His people, He hides none of their failure from view, and in that prophetic song, He views the whole future history of His people—nothing is hidden. He tells of their captivity of their disobedience and rebellion against Himself, but running like a golden cord through all that song is the truth that God will prevail. He will be glorified, in spite of the failure and sin of His people. That is the end of God's ways.

How good it is to think of heaven, nor merely as the place where I am going to enter into rest, nor even as the place where sin is done away, but to think of heaven as the place where God will take our poor clay miserable lives, and make them fairly shine with the glory of His goodness, His grace, His almighty power. That is the thought of this book of Deuteronomy. God glorified in the end in spite of, nay, and through the failure of His people in all their ways. And then the other thought is in connection with God's glory. Can you think, can you for a moment think of God being glorified, and His people not being blessed? Impossible. You cannot think of His glory without having your blessing. That is what the cross is. It most fully manifests the glory of God. You say it secures your salvation, so it does, but it is because God is glorified. God glorified about sin. God glorified in the obedience of His Son,—God glorified, and I defy Satan or any power to prevent our blessing in connection with that glory. And so you find in the thirty-third chapter the blessing of the tribes. In the thirty-second chapter he has been speaking of their failure, but of God's triumphing over their failure. And then when He is done describing all the glory of God, He can come down and give us blessing, such as our heart has not conceived,—blessing which reaches on

through the millennium to the very end, to the remotest end of time; "to the uttermost bounds of the everlasting hills." Beloved brethren this is what we are journeying onward to. Think of it, ye travelers through the wilderness as you are passing on weary and weak. Think of it, that even out of your own wretched experiences our blessed God is going to get glory for Himself. He is going to give blessing, eternal blessing to us. Does that sound as if we can be careless? as if we could go on in indifference through this world, and say it will all turn out right in the end; God will get the glory?

I am persuaded that any one who reasons in that way will get the chastening rod of God upon him. No dear friends, the more we are in accord with God's thoughts, the more we realize what His purposes are, the more holy we will be. And the more we apprehend what grace is, what grace will do for us in the end, the more we will rejoice even here to be more conformed to Christ's blessed image.

Of the repetition of laws, with new features, looking forward to their entry into the land, we must say little. All has significance; all will richly reward patient, careful study.

May we, by God's grace, grow more and more familiar with the divine truth of the Pentateuch; and not only so, but assimilate them, that our lives may be the living reproduction of them before the world.

LECTURE II

THE HISTORICAL BOOKS

AS HAS already been noticed, the five books of Moses give us the foundation of the whole Scripture, and the model upon which it has been written. They are, however, different from any other book of the Bible, different entirely from what we have before us to-night, in this respect more particularly, that in them you have chiefly God's thoughts. It is God's salvation in Exodus, for instance; you have God's holiness all through Leviticus; you have scarcely anything of man in the whole book of Leviticus; it is God's mercy even in Numbers, though that is the most human, I might say, of all the books of the Pentateuch; while in Deuteronomy, of course, it is God going over the whole history with them. Now that is number one, the first division; it is the foundation of all, God's thought, in connection with His people, and when they come in, it is in more or less of a minor way.

Now when we come to these books of the history, you are in quite a different atmosphere. Here man is prominent. You will find for instance nothing here that will take the place absolutely of the book of Leviticus, where God is before us, but you do find Him coming in constantly, interposing in the midst of their failure, rescuing when they had departed from Him, lifting them up out of the mire into which they had fallen, setting aside their thoughts, their purposes, their ways, in order to establish His counsels. In that way you have not merely in this second great division of the Bible, the history of the

development of His people or the history, alas, too often of departure, but, thank God, also the history of His deliverance. Now we have not time to point out the correspondence of the numbers all through, with which you are familiar; but I find it most helpful to have clearly in our minds their significance. Look for a moment at this second division. It is a history of development. "Two" gives the thought of growth, of development. It is the history of failure, or departure rather. "Two" speaks of a breach, of severance; then of deliverance, and so on. Herein lies the difference between these historical books, and the books of Moses. Man is prominent here, and wherever that is the case, you find departure and evil.

Coming next to the books themselves it is interesting to notice that each of these books has a correspondence with the one of the books of Moses. Thus Joshua, corresponds to the book of Genesis; Judges with Ruth as a supplement, to Exodus; the four books of Kings, as we shall see presently, to the book of Leviticus; then the captivity books, of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, corresponding to the book of Numbers in a striking way, while the two books of Chronicles, really one, give us again the Deuteronomy, or God's review with His people. Let us look at this a little more closely.

Joshua is a fresh beginning. You are on entirely new ground, in a new place, no longer in the wilderness, but in the land. Then in like manner you have in the book of Judges that which corresponds to the book of Exodus. Judges gives us accounts of departure from God, and when the people cry to Him, and own their departure, you have His deliverance coming in, answering in a most consistent way with its place here as a historical book, to the book of Exodus. You do not find the actual Exodus there, the mighty hand of God delivering His people once for all from the hand of Pharaoh; but only a partial deliverance to be followed again, alas, by fresh departure

and by a briefer deliverance. So departure and deliverance occur through the whole book in parallel lines. But there is a beautiful supplement, as you will see, in the book of Ruth.

In like manner in the book of Kings you find certain features which correspond closely to the book of Leviticus. It is a Levitical history, as it were. You find, for instance, the priesthood brought before us, and the prophet superceding or supplementing it. You have next the kings, man's king first, and God's king succeeding him. Then you find the tabernacle that was at Shiloh in Israel, and God's temple at Jerusalem superceding that. These are thoughts connected with the divine presence and manifestation, and they correspond in this minor way to the book of Leviticus which speaks of divine manifestation and presence.

In the same way the captivity books give us the wilderness experience, God's people under the sway of the Gentiles, but in His mercy restored to the land. In Chronicles we read the divine review of what had taken place, with the moral lessons, and in this it differs from the book of Kings which covers the same period historically.

Let us now look at these books a little more closely, and seek to discover the main thoughts that underlie them. Joshua as we were saying is the Genesis, a fresh beginning. It is not now the ultimate purpose of God, nor the history of the individual, but the history of the nation of Israel brought according to His counsel into the place which He had given them for an inheritance. Just as Abraham was brought out from his native land, and given Canaan as an inheritance, absolutely and unconditionally, as recorded in Genesis, so in this new Genesis we have the inheritance of the land, but as actual conquest by faith. First, however, we are reminded that God had promised to give them the entire land as their possession. Connected with this, however, you find

man's responsibility to enter in, and take possession. In one word God tells them the land is theirs, in another that every place that the sole of their foot shall tread upon is theirs. It is theirs, but theirs to conquer.

So you find when they go into the land, they meet at once the enemy. Jericho, with its solid walls apparently able to resist all assaults must be taken, and then follows Ai. These are but the beginning of a course of conquest until the entire land is subjugated.

Historically all refers to Israel, but how strikingly is it a figure of our present possessions in Christ, in the heavenly places. I need scarcely more than remind you of the fact that the book of Joshua corresponds in a remarkable way to the Epistle to the Ephesians.

Ephesians tells us that we *are* "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"; and yet in that very epistle you find that we "wrestle against principalities, and powers, and wicked spirits in heavenly places," that would stand between us and the enjoyment of our portion.

Now that is not fighting the flesh, overcoming our sinful passions and lusts. That would be like fighting Amalek, which is always to be avoided, save where our own negligence has entangled us with it. The rule for the Christian is "walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh."

But does that set us free from conflict? Ah, no! the warrior of Christ is just in the position to fight when he is clear from fleshly lusts; he is just in the place where he can contend most earnestly for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. Unless you have been in conflict with Satan, you will not have very much enjoyment of your possessions. We may talk about God having blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, but how do we *enjoy* these things? Look at Jericho—this fragrant world of palm-trees, whose

waving branches cast such a spell, and seem to invite us to enjoy their shade and fragrance, rather than the rugged mountain heights—our true home! Have we not felt the power of the world? Do you not remember how the apostle John writes to the young men, the very men of valor, the warriors?—"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." That is the first thing that meets us in connection with the entering upon possession of our inheritance. Here is the world, Jericho, which means "fragrance,"—"the city of palm-trees," the mighty power that would hinder our enjoyment of the things that are ours in Christ. Have we not seen thousands of Christians under the spell of Jericho? Have we not seen the king of Jericho victor perhaps? If we are to fight, and take possession of our inheritance, we must overcome that power which keeps us in the world and that is going to keep us out of our own portion. There is needed, as you know well, the power of that faith which simply walks in happy testimony about this world's wall until it is fallen down flat.

There is much else in the book of Joshua very tempting to dwell upon, did time permit, but I must call your attention to another great fundamental thought that lies even back of what I have been speaking. We have been speaking of Jericho, the world-power that lies at the very gate of our entering into the land. Back of that is yonder river of Jordan, and before they could even fight Jericho, they had to go down into Jordan, and through it and up again into the land. And after that, before they could engage in any conflict, they had to be circumcised at Gilgal. All that speaks to us most powerfully of the reality of death and resurrection with Christ. Typically, the Jordan is the same as the Red Sea, only what is emphasized is not deliverance *from* sin, but deliverance *into* our portion. In it we learn that we have been brought,

through the death and resurrection of Christ, into the place where our portion is. Dead and risen with Christ. Thank God, He has gone ahead of us into that Jordan of death and judgment. He has stopped all its waters which would otherwise have flowed over us, and the way is for us as dry shod into our inheritance as it was for Israel into the land of Canaan beyond.

In the two heaps of twelve stones, one in the bed of the river and one on the Canaan side, we see our identification with Christ in His death and resurrection.

Gilgal simply brings the sentence of death practically home, and if we are dead and risen with Christ, it is not a thing to boast about, but rather a fact to enter into. "Make thee sharp knives" is God's word, and those knives speak of the death of Christ being applied practically to us, our entering, in some reality, into that death, and so being able also to enter into the life of Christ.

Gilgal teaches thus the lesson of "no confidence in the flesh," and is fitly symbolized in what follows: Joshua is to remove his shoes, his natural protection, from his feet, in presence of the "captain of the Lord's host." Now from Gilgal they can go on conquering and to conquer. Jericho's walls have fallen. Ai, after the first humiliating defeat, because they had forgotten Gilgal, is burned to ashes. All the mighty power of the enemy from the south country to the far north, crumbled before them; there is not an enemy there to stand before their face. That is largely what you have in this book—victory; because they are associated in type, in death and resurrection with Christ, brought home to them in reality by Gilgal.

May we not take this book as our hand-book for conflict, to get our lessons out of and our furnishing, in order to take possession of what is ours in Christ. Who, however, can say that he has fully conquered? How like Joshua, we can say, "There remaineth yet very much

land to be possessed?" Take our individual cases, how much of the precious things of God we do not know which truly belong to us.

But there is another part of Joshua, and that is the actual inheritance after the conflict is over; and how wonderful it is that every city, every valley, every spring, everything is dwelt upon in such minute detail in the last half of the book, without doubt to tell us of the varied spiritual blessings that are ours.

God in His mercy has been in some measure recovering these things to us; so that we can take up the latter portion of this book with its apparently barren names of places, and its boundary lines; its water-courses, valleys, and mountains,—everything; and see there the boundless treasures that are ours.

How fully thus does this book of Joshua answer to Genesis a new and true beginning for our guidance. Surely we ought to make ample use of what it unfolds.

But we come to Judges, which, alas! gives us the saddest kind of contrast to all this. Instead of a victorious people passing on from one battle to another, their enemies put to flight, cities burned and the treasure given to the Lord,—instead of all that, you find the people, after a large measure of conflict and victory, settling down into indolence. Strange as this may at first appear, it is not strange if you look at your own history; for I am sure that whenever we have gained any victory, whenever we have entered into the possession of anything that is ours, the first great temptation is to let the hands hang down, to be satisfied with present attainments.

We need the conscience awakened or we fall into indifference, which means not merely gaining no more possessions, but *losing* what we have, the very things we once enjoyed.

That first chapter of Judges tells us about the conquests

of the tribes. It begins with Judah, and speaks of victory going on in a vigorous way; but you find right in the very beginning, instead of killing Adoni-zedek, they only cut off his thumbs and toes. It is only a partial mutilation of an enemy instead of his absolute destruction. As you go on you find everything done in part only. At first they simply put the enemy to flight. Then they are no longer able to do that, and the enemy is driven into the mountain fastnesses to live there alone. Then you find, a little further on, that they are not able to do even that; they actually make the enemies of God tributaries to them. Rome has been a great one at that. The next step shows us no power even for this; they dwell amongst them; and, lastly, you actually find that they could not drive them out of the fat valleys, the choice pastures; but that the children of Israel had to live in the mountains, and the enemy to have the best of all the land. What a progress that is!

Remember that so far as the work of Christ and the mighty power of God is concerned, there is no limit to the Christian's victory, no limit whatever. That victory is absolutely complete, but what is put in our hands most surely fails. How differently God speaks to them now, recalling their departure from Him, and delivering them into the hands of their enemies. Good, indeed, is it to see them come, if but with tears and lamentation, to Bochim. Had they retained the spirit of Gilgal, this would have been needless. Still there is reality, and where the failure is the same, there should be at this time, the same state of soul. How good it is to remember that our blessed God comes in even at Bochim. I would to God there were a Bochim for His people now, that there were such a thing as seeing His people come together and owning how they failed to drive out the enemy, owning how the enemy has prevailed and taken possession of their portion and their heritage. God can meet us at

Bochim. He cannot meet us when we lift up our head in pride and think that we have not failed.

Let the first chapter of our Judges be written as you have it recorded in the second and third chapters of Revelation. There is the book of Judges for us. If we have learned the lesson of those two chapters of Revelation, the Church's departure from her place of privilege and testimony, we will be truly in the place of weeping, owning our departure. Then there would follow deliverance, it is the second book, the book of deliverance as well as of departure. There would be for us the raising up of deliverers who would under God snatch from the enemy his power even yet, and if we would not have the mighty general conquest such as we ought to have had, as in Joshua, we would have practical victory such as Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, and Barak, and Jephtha gave them in the land. There would be the practical deliverance even in the present time.

Would that we could look a little at these deliverances; they are exceedingly interesting. Othniel is first. He is the man whose energy carried him through the conflict; who went down and conquered Kirjath Arba, and turned it into Debir. He is the man whose very name, "the Lion of God," speaks of strength. The one who has been personally a victor, and entered into *his* portion is the one who can deliver his brethren. Ehud again gives us another view of that recovery which God in His mercy grants them. Here is a man who goes single handed against the king of Moab — Ehud a left-handed man. By his name he is a Benjamite, "son of my right hand," but in actual power he is only a left-handed man. As to our standing, we are "sons of my right hand," because we are linked with the Man of God's right hand, but I never saw a Benjamite yet who was not left-handed. He only has strength in weakness. But take a left-handed man, if he but realize that he is one of God's Benjamites, real-

izes that first of all he has no strength, his left hand will be found to be strong indeed.

So we might look at them all. There seems to be all through that sort of deliverance, by the power of weakness. And so you find in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, when the apostle is rapidly summarizing this history of Judges, that he says, "out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, put to flight the armies of the aliens." It is out of weakness that is the lesson all through from Ehud's left hand to Samson's long hair. Shamgar kills hundreds of men with a simple ox-goad, a thing used to prick up the oxen to make them go a little faster. You can take that, any kind of weapon if it be used just in dependence on God. So even an exhortation. Here is a poor humble saint who could not discourse very learnedly, but he has a goad; he can speak a word to the conscience; that is what stirs up the saints and recovers them from the enemy. Oh, for the faith of some of these Judges in these days of the Church's captivity! Who among us is ready to be deliverers? If they are Judges, men first of all who have judged themselves, then they can judge Israel.

But, alas, Judges is true to its character, and you find in the deliverances themselves, that they decrease gradually in brilliancy. Instead of the mighty victories of Gideon, you have at last in Samson, the strongest man of them all, one who does less than they all. Is it because of his strength in which he had confidence? For as to Samson certainly, instead of being a true deliverer, he needed deliverance; and while as to any of these others, we might think of them as in some way a type of Christ, it is always with hesitation that we think of Samson as a type of the blessed, holy, harmless Nazarite of God. We might say that it is the purpose of God that Samson is a type of Christ, but when it was entrusted to his responsibility there is not much resemblance to the Lord.

Darker yet grows the picture. Trace it on through the whole book, and you find it closing in a wretched state of anarchy, and the fitting conclusion of it all is, "there was no king in Israel in those days; every man did that which was right in his own eyes." We have in that the explanation of their failure, and on the other hand the first glimmer of hope, for if it said every man did that which was right in his own eyes, it pointed on to the time when there should be a king, who would rule in the fear of God. And that is what you get in the next book.

Ruth is a beautiful contrast, and supplement to Judges. Judges says to man, look what you have done; Ruth says, look what God has done. It takes up the people as having forfeited all right to the land, for Naomi is a figure of Israel. In Judges we find that they had left a great part of the land, but in Ruth, Naomi goes entirely off into the land of Moab; it is not merely captivity, but departure. But then Ruth comes back with her, and in Ruth you see the dawning of God's grace in regard to His penitent and broken people who come back owning their sin, and their departure from Him. But having forfeited all right to anything by virtue of what they were according to nature, Ruth takes Naomi's place, and it is through this despised Moabitess, one who has no place in the congregation, even till the tenth generation, that blessing comes to Naomi. Not only does Ruth secure food for herself and Naomi, but she becomes the bride of Boaz, type of Christ in Resurrection—"in him is strength"—and thus an ancestor of David and of David's Lord. Most beautifully thus it shows Israel set aside on the ground of law, and then restored on the ground of pure grace, forever restored, "married," to Him from whom she had so grievously departed.

In the next book, we come into the heart of God's thought. We find first that picture of Eli which re-

minds us of Judges, for it is the last of the Judges. It is the one that ought to have been the example of the people in all things. What a rebuke it is, that so far from ruling the people, he cannot rule his own house, and he has to listen to its doom from the lips of a little child. What more significant of the fact that God is giving a new channel. It is to be through the prophet now, a divine oracle, the word of God brought directly to the people, no longer through the priest and sacrifice, but these things as it were set aside for communication with God by the prophet. Thus Samuel is called out, and the ark is carried off into the land of the Philistines,—God's throne led into captivity—because of the people's sin. The ark never was restored to the tabernacle, and there was no sanctuary of God till David established it in Mount Zion. He forsook the tabernacle, and the next place where He put His name was Mount Zion, the place I might say that was linked with Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, for it was Mount Moriah; and there the temple of God was built. Thus you have the priesthood according to the flesh set aside, and the prophet, the divine word of God, put in its place. You have the tabernacle set aside and the temple put in its place. Lastly you have a man, the king, brought before us.

We need say little of king Saul, for in this first part of the books of the Kings you have always man's side as well as God's side. Man first set aside like Eli, then the tabernacle, then king Saul, all these set aside for God's substitute to be brought in its place; and so in the person of David, you have a figure of the true King who reigns, and through whom righteousness and blessing are to come. But the whole history gives us, even in David, the history of man's failure. Solomon forsakes God, then the division of the two tribes from the ten occurs,—you have all the way through the history of constant failure. But in spite of that you have also God's good-

ness and grace coming in, and preserving His throne. Now that gives us the thought of these four books. It would be useless to attempt anything like an outline, but you have those prominent thoughts, the true prophet, that is the word of God, and the true King, and in connection with that, the true sanctuary. These all point, I need not say, to Christ the true Prophet, Priest, and the true King.

The history of the Kings is one of downward progress; things get darker and darker until there is no remedy, particularly in the last part of the books. The ten tribes are first carried away captive, then the two tribes. The kingdom of Judah is carried away, Jerusalem destroyed, trodden under foot of the Gentiles, and the glory departed from Israel, not merely as in the day of Ichabod, when it departed temporarily into the Philistine's land, but the glory departed from Jerusalem itself, and I may say never has it returned in any real sense. Surely a brighter glory shone upon the hills of Judea, a more glorious Person than any other king presented Himself, but the people were in gross darkness, and they closed their eyes to their King. That Shechinah glory which shone upon His face at Cæsarea Philippi, that would have been for them the very holy of holies, is quenched in the night of their own rejection, and in the night more awful yet of God's judgment of the blessed Substitute for sin.

Jerusalem was trodden under foot of the Gentiles then, and has been ever since, and the captivity books give us, in the fourth place, the Gentile aspect of things. It is the failure of the people. We have been seeing how under Joshua they were brought into the land, and were given complete authority to take possession of it all; they were brought in, and it would have been complete and final victory had it not been for their unbelief. Now that same people is carried off into captivity, and in these three books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, they are in the

hands of their enemies; and even if restored to the land it is by the permission of the king of Persia who allows them to go back, and they are his servants. Never anything but servants to the Gentiles, servants yet to the Gentiles, and will be, until that time when they shall be delivered completely by a power not their own, and put in possession of their land, not by their own might or their own effort, but by the mighty power of Him who is their true leader and true Lord.

In Ezra we have a remnant of the people restored, and the temple rebuilt—midst mingled shouting and weeping, for there is no glory there, no throne of God. Alas, the throne had passed to the Gentiles, and God will not reign with a rival. And so in the recovery of divine truth in these days. Some of us younger ones perhaps, rejoicing and glorying in the wonderful amount of truth that has been opened up, and in all the wonderful things God has made known to us. We say, The temple is rebuilt; the temple is rebuilt! but ah! the elder ones remember the pristine glory. By the elder I mean those who know Him that is from the beginning, who go back to the pentecostal glory, the full revelation of God, in the Person of Christ the Lord. In the temple reared in captivity in these days there are tears as well as joy. We bow and own the failure, and the ruin, the scattered condition of God's people, but we thank God for His mercy too.

In Nehemiah, we get the other side. In Ezra, the temple is built, a true centre established, and in Nehemiah a wall is reared to keep out that which would defile the temple.

You will always find when God establishes a centre of blessing, He builds a wall about it; He always encloses it; there must be an enclosure for that which is of any value. Let the enemies mock, and say that it all means nothing. Let faith build its wall. You find that

the more our weakness is manifested, instead of there being the need of greater enlargement of path, instead of there being the need of less care there must be greater.

“Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” The Philadelphian, has he anything to boast in? A little strength—he has kept My word, he has not denied My name, the Lord says; but that only describes the very least that can be done. But because he has so little, all the greater need for his holding fast what he has. Let us remember that, and if it is nothing but a little patch of lentiles in which we stand, let us hold it fast.

In its place Esther ought to be a sanctuary book, a book of Leviticus, a third book; and in one sense it manifests what God is in His care for His people, but how it witnesses of their ruin. It reveals a sanctuary without the glory. Not even is the name of God mentioned in the whole book, and yet His care and love manifested all through.

As to the book of Chronicles, it is the Deuteronomy or fifth book, and as we have seen, that gives us God’s review, to bring out His thoughts. Thus you find in Chronicles, while it resembles the book of Kings in many ways, there is a special purpose running through the entire book. Significantly the record begins with Adam. No matter how far separated in time, man has a moral link with him who brought sin in.

God traces the genealogy of the people from Adam, and when He gets to David you find king Saul is left out, and in David’s history there is no mention of any failure. So also in Solomon’s life. God is giving us thus the history from His side of view. He is presenting to us what these men are typical of; David is the victor, Solomon is the peaceable king who reigns in righteousness. You will find that so far as He can, God omits the failures in this book. The whole ten tribes are left

out as having left the place of responsibility and testimony before God. Most prominently do we find the prophet coming in all the way through—the divine witness, God speaking with man. Now all of that has instruction, and it is to show us that when God gives us His history, He does it with a purpose, to make everything centre about His blessed Son. Everything in Chronicles centres about the glory and the kingdom of David and Solomon, Christ in the two-fold thought of Victor and peaceable King. And the later history gives the account of how the people departed from that submission, and that subjection to God which marked the reigns of David and Solomon. But there is a very touching close to that book, and that is when at last we have the account of the captivity of the people. We find in the order of the Gentile king of Persia, Cyrus, that the people should go back to the land of Judea, and should rebuild their temple. That shows God's complete power over the authority of the Gentiles, making even the wrath of man to praise Him.

And so we have here in this group of historical books, God's purpose, like a golden thread, running through it, though from the very fact of their being history, as I indicated at the beginning, they are occupied primarily with man, and with man's sin. How good to know even in that which witnesses of man's shame, God has purposed to bring out victory. A victory in which we can rejoice even spite of our own sin. There is much in these books, that I have not even touched upon. Very much of principle even that we have not looked at. But I believe that we have seen at least the thought that underlies each, and that we have at least the key, which will enable us to understand this precious portion of God's word.

LECTURE III

THE PROPHETICAL BOOKS

Isaiah to Ezekiel

IN COMING next to the prophetical books, the question probably arises, Why should we take up the Prophets next instead of the poetical books, which in our Bibles come after the historical?

There is a verse in the twenty-fourth chapter of Luke and the forty-fourth verse which I think shows us that this is not an unusual thought in Scripture itself: "And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me." You notice you have here the Old Testament divided into three parts: the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms; and that the order in which you have them is, first the Law, second the Prophets, and last the Psalms. Many are doubtless aware that the prophets are divided into the former and latter prophets, or, into the historical prophets and those who wrote directly God's message to the people.

Now, that brings the prophets all together; first, the "former," or historical, then the "latter;" and in the next place, as you notice in this verse, it puts the book of Psalms, including all the poetical books, last. I simply speak of this in order that you may not think it is a mere arbitrary thing that we take up the prophets and call them the third section. I might also add that in the

Hebrew Bible, the sacred writings, the Psalm books, are all put after the prophets.

We have now to ask whether the correspondence of numerical place with theme, which we have been tracing heretofore, exists in this section also.

The books of the law, we saw, were the first; God's law is fundamental. Then secondly, the historical books are the second section, because they give us not merely the history in its continuance, but the progress and development of the truth of God in the hands of His people, and the account of His manifold deliverances. Coming to the third book, we find three is the number of revival, of resurrection; and we may expect, therefore, in these books of the prophets to see the divine power of resurrection. Three is also the number of the sanctuary, and where will you find the holiest more fully brought out in its revival principles than in the teachings of the prophets? You remember that we saw that in Samuel you have the rise of the prophet upon the failure of the priest. Eli, typical of the whole priestly order, failed; he departed from that holiness which should characterize God's house and God's priests. As a result of it you see Samuel, the first of the prophets, raised up to take the place of the failed priesthood.

So here, in this great section, you have the prophetic ministry raised up to take the place of that which had failed amongst the people of God. We are brought, as I said, face to face with the holy principles of God's truth, as it were, into the very sanctuary, and it is all the more vivid and real because it is not literally the sanctuary. The presence of the prophet, as we were saying, means that the priest is set aside, and with him all God's usual order which He established in the nation. Instead of there being a succession from father to son in the prophets, there is nothing of that kind at all. The prophet is raised up of God for a special work; he gets his message

from God; he gives it to the people; no one comes in between them. And when his work is finished, instead of transmitting his office to somebody else, his work is ended until a fresh work of God begins.*

When we come to the prophets, we come to God Himself. What a joy it is that in this resurrection-number we have that which speaks of recovery, not merely recovery of what we have lost. God's recovery is always a resurrection, always brings us to a new sphere, into the power of a new state entirely above that from which we ourselves had fallen.

Take that greatest of all illustrations. Man has fallen from his place as the creature perfect from the hands of the Creator. Here comes in grace to recover poor fallen man. Does it put him back in Eden, in man's paradise? Who would exchange the paradise of God, which poor redeemed sinners will share with Him, for the most perfect paradise of man?

God always gives us something better than that which we have forfeited. So we find in the prophets, not merely God's order, not merely His truth for the restoration of His people to the place from whence they have fallen. For instance, the aim of prophetic ministry is not to restore the divided people, to set up a son of David as king over the whole nation. It looks beyond all man's poor puny efforts at recovery, beyond this present time to the time when He whose right it is shall take the kingdom. It raises us up to the plane of Christ's glory, Christ's kingdom.

How good our God is! His truth is like a spiral; it may revolve, it may turn upon itself, as it were, but always ascending, always mounting higher and higher.

* Elijah's anointing Elisha as his successor, while apparently a contradiction of this, is not really so. The testimony from God to Israel went on. Elijah failed to enter into God's thoughts fully—though a most honored servant—and Elisha continues that prophetic ministry.

Coming now to the books themselves, you have the familiar division into five books. Here you have Isaiah as the first, corresponding to the book of Genesis, in this fact at least that it is the book of origin; it is that which speaks of God as the source of all His people's blessing and of His counsels for His chosen. He begins with God, just as you begin in Genesis with Him. It is God's glory, God's counsels, God's power that is going to accomplish God's blessings. We see that sovereignty manifested in His counsels. God has a plan, has a purpose for His people, and no matter how much they have failed, as we sometimes sing.—

“His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour.”

And then it is His chosen, God's elect, brought out so forcibly in this first book of the prophets.

In Jeremiah we have something quite different; Jeremiah with Lamentations added to it, for, as you know, Lamentations takes a place similar to that of Ruth with Judges. Just as you have Judges with Ruth, one book, practically, so you have Jeremiah and Lamentations, one book, and they correspond to Exodus. They give us “divine sorrow, and salvation for a sinful people.” The words emphasized there would be *sorrow*, *salvation*, and *sinful*. Nowhere will you find more fully brought out the awfully sinful condition of the people; nowhere will you see divine sorrow poured out through a vessel of earth more fully than in Jeremiah. And beautifully do we have salvation, redemption, brought out in that book.

Then, thirdly, Ezekiel gives us the Leviticus, and its subject might be given as, “cleansing and the sanctuary for a defiled people.” It is not a question of salvation primarily, but of cleansing.

Then Daniel brings us amongst the Gentiles, the wilderness or world experience of the prophet. It speaks of the Gentile powers primarily rather than the Jews. Writ-

ten during the time of the Gentiles, it is the book of Numbers, and it tells us of the "times, testing, and failure of the Gentiles."

That leaves us the twelve minor prophets grouped together as one as we shall see later on. They are the summary of all God's ways;—as in Deuteronomy—the principles and ways of the divine government. Let us touch on a few prominent points in each of these—draw a little water from wells of inexhaustible fulness.

Isaiah as Genesis is the prince of the prophets, and beautifully appropriate to that, we find that the prophecy is divided into seven parts, the number of perfection stamped upon the book itself. The first division is the first twelve chapters; and these give the whole case of the people gone over, the people's sin, God's restoring mercy, and all centred, as you have in the eleventh chapter, in Christ the stem of Jesse, and the Branch that shall grow out of his roots. In that blessed One we have the counsels of God fulfilled; in Him, the nation which had lost its glory and its right to any blessing, is restored. Through the entire chapter we have beautifully set before us the arm of the Lord gathering His scattered people, bringing them back, and uniting them in the land, and His banner over them is the everlasting love of Christ, and their ruler and their Lord that blessed One whom they have rejected. He is brought before us in this section in the seventh chapter as the son of the virgin, which prophecy is quoted in the first chapter of Matthew.

Another notable chapter in this section with which you are all familiar, is the sixth where we have in a most striking way the majesty and the glory of God, that which on the one hand convicts of sin and on the other witnesses of blessing and righteousness. Here is the prophet brought into the holy presence of God, all that he can say is "woe is me." I have been struck that that woe is

the seventh woe in that very connection. You will notice that in the fifth chapter we have six woes pronounced. There is woe upon this and upon that sin, woe upon every class of evil, and when we come to the next chapter, to the seventh woe; it is not woe now for some special sin, or pointing the finger at some one else, but the man brought into the presence of God, says "woe is *me*, I am undone, I am a man of unclean lips." The sixth chapter thus gives us one of the keys of this section.

Then the next division of the prophet begins at the thirteenth chapter and goes on down through the twenty-sixth chapter. Notice that in this division you have divine judgments, discriminating judgments upon the nations, and upon Israel as well, yea upon the whole earth, executed in order that the salvation of God may have nothing to hinder its full, free exercise.

How good it is as we see the mighty arm of God coming down in stroke after stroke,—the burden upon Babylon—the burden upon Moab—the burden upon Tyre—the burden upon all the great and mighty nations of earth; the burden upon His chosen and beloved Israel, the burden upon the whole world—to know that it is to build up and establish His glory permanently in a way that can never be shaken; as we have in another connection in the epistle to the Hebrews: "We having received a kingdom that cannot be moved." And it is good to see at the close of this section, after the prophetic judgments that you have down to the twenty-fourth chapter, in the twenty-fifth notice how the inspired prophet views all this desolation of God. "O Lord Thou art my God I will exalt Thee, I will praise Thy name for Thou hast done wonderful things, Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth." In view of all the desolation he lifts his voice in praise. When man is humbled, when his greatness is brought into the dust, God alone is glorified, His name is magnified.

And then beautifully in the twenty-sixth chapter, the closing of that section, you have a song of salvation, "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah. We have a strong city—salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." Do you see the beauty of it? Here is the rod of God smiting everything into the dust; cities are laid low, strong places are made desolate, mighty Babylon and all the great places of the earth are as nothing. Yet in the midst of all this ruin, faith takes up its happy song and says, "we have a strong city, salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." Who can shake that which is founded upon the acknowledged ruin of everything, by the mighty power of God Himself? Now read with that thought as the key all through those burdens, you will feel like joining in the song of praise at the close of that section. What a day will it be for Israel when with joy, the beloved Jerusalem, now trodden under foot of the Gentiles, shines in all her beauty so that that which the psalmist says shall be fulfilled, "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God."

21-35 But we pass on to the third division of our prophet which begins with the twenty-seventh chapter and goes through the thirty-fifth chapter. In this we have almost exclusively God's holiness brought face to face with Israel's sin. In the second division we reached the point of salvation, but before that salvation can be *realized*, they have to bottom the truth as to their sin. So in this section which is the third, that speaks of God's holiness, you have their unholiness and sin all manifested, and when it is all brought out, then it is that God can give them blessing. It is only when the sinner not only sees his lost condition, but goes to the bottom of his whole state that he gets full blessing. I believe in this day we often miss enjoying full blessing simply because we are satisfied with mere salvation from the judgment we deserved; because we do not understand the joy of

being made partakers of the divine nature. God loves us so much that He gave His blessed Son not merely to bear our sins, but to put away sin, and in His death I see not only my redemption eternally sealed by His blood, but I see myself by that death delivered from the law of sin; so if we are to get true joy, true power, true deliverance, it must be by going through in some way, that which answers to this third division, the holiness of God put side by side with our unholiness.

And you will notice that at the close we have a song.³⁵ Everything he takes up he develops into a song of praise, whatever it may be. So here, when the theme has been a gloomy one,—so that you might well say the prophet has done his duty, he has accomplished his mission, and has caused God's people to know their sin and that is all. Nay, when it is all gone over, he begins then to praise and worship. The flower of the song of triumph can grow in that dark sombre soil of conviction of sin. See the thirty-fifth chapter, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose, it shall blossom abundantly." And so on down to the eighth verse, "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called," (that is what we have been speaking of) "the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those: the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there, and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Welcome the holy dealings of God, welcome that which makes me see my sinful nature as well as my transgressions, when His searching leads to that happy burst of song, which we have been looking at; the barren wilderness turned into a

fruitful land, where all the blessed fruits of the Lord grow up to His glory!

We pass next to the fourth division, which goes from the thirty-sixth chapter through the thirty-ninth. As you know, it is the historical part of Isaiah, a piece of history dropped into the midst of prophecy. It is the account of the attack of Assyria upon Jerusalem in Hezekiah's day, and they are repulsed not by strength but through weakness. Hezekiah does not lead out an army, he is not able to go forth as the stronger to overthrow the weaker. He takes the place of weakness and lays before God all the threats of the king of Assyria, and God comes in as He always does. He proves that weakness is but the opportunity for His strength. The four chapters are really four sections and exactly correspond to their numerical structure.

Then we come to the fifth, which is a most important section, from the fortieth chapter on through the forty-eighth, closing with the words, "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked." It is very remarkable: in the first three divisions of the prophet you have judgment as a prominent theme, and at the close a song of praise, and in the last three divisions, you have mercy as the prominent theme and a solemn word of warning at the close. Just as you have here "there is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked," so at the close of the next section, then at the close of the whole book, where you see the doom of the ungodly visited upon them before the eyes of all. That is interesting as showing that God ever keeps the even balance of His precious truth.

In this fortieth chapter we come to what we all love. Who has not often turned to that first verse "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God." It is a beautiful chapter to read in moments of sorrow, or at any time. But take it in its setting: what do you think goes just before that comfort to the prophet, and comfort to his peo-

ple, yea and rest for God Himself? It is the prophecy that they are to be carried captive to Babylon, that the nation is to be set aside and judged. In the midst of all that havoc, and judgment for their own unfaithfulness, the word of God looks on to the time when they will be restored. No matter where we are, or how severe the stroke of God's chastening has been upon us, comfort His people He will in spite of us, and bring blessing out of our very folly and failure.

So you find in the fortieth chapter, and all through the whole section, God with His people, for it is a fifth section. He enters into controversy with them as to idolatry. Why did they give His glory to graven images, the work of man's hands? that is the controversy all through this section. We begin now with the sixth section, at the forty-ninth chapter. Here is the number six, and we know that six tells us of two things; of the full power of man, but also of the restraining power of God. Man can work his six days, and then God puts His hand upon him and makes him stop. In that very beast (Rev. xiii.) which represents the quintessence of all human power and energy, you find that his number is six, thrice repeated, as though he made a three-fold effort to leap into perfection, but could only reach the highest form of human power. And that same six tells us of a hand laid upon that power in all its exhibition of might, when he is glorifying himself, when he is compelling all to worship him *as God, God's hand is laid upon him.*

Now in this sixth section, from the forty-ninth through the fifty-ninth chapter, I have been particularly struck with one thing. It is here we have the fifty-third chapter, which all of us have enshrined in our hearts, for it is the precious truth as to Christ being led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep dumb before her shearers. In that wondrous chapter it seems as if the Spirit of God had rent the thin veil between

the past and the future, and instead of speaking of what would be, he speaks of what has been. He sees Jesus before him; so that when Philip went to the Eunuch, when he was returning from Jerusalem and found him reading that chapter, Philip does not have to turn over to another place in the book to tell him about salvation, but beginning at that very scripture he preaches Jesus unto him. Jesus is there beautifully, precisely set forth in His atoning death. But that wonderful chapter is in the section that speaks of the highest form of evil, restrained however, and triumphed over by almighty power. The greatest sin of all others was that of crucifying and rejecting the Lord of glory. There, where man's puny strength reached its highest point, where he seemed to gain the victory, the very Lord of glory in his impious hands, where his guilt in all its heinousness is seen—there too the mighty victory of grace, the hand of the everlasting God is laid upon man's victory, and brings out of that very victory the fulfilment of His purposes of grace. "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound."

That brings us to the last section to look at, from the sixtieth chapter on to the end of the book. Can you be surprised when you come to the sixtieth chapter, that the prophet should say, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come"? What is left but for Zion to shake herself from the dust to arise and shine, not in her own light, but with the glorious light of the Lord that is risen upon her, not to go down again forever? There we find in that seventh section the completion of God's counsels, His purposes all fulfilled, yea even looking beyond the millennial glory. We have in the sixty-fifth chapter a glimpse of eternal glory, the new heavens and the new earth, one of the few passages of the Old Testament which speaks of that—the glory of the Lord revealed, eternally revealed and with all His redeemed entering into final rest. Alas, alas, the judg-

ment upon the ungodly is manifested there at the close too.

I have thus gone at some length into the Book of Isaiah, not only because it is the chiefest and fullest of the prophets, but because it shows us that all the others can be thus analyzed. We must examine Jeremiah more briefly. You are struck with one or two things, the moment we come to the book. The prophet feels every word which he says. Was he telling them of the judgment that was fallen upon them, was he telling them of their sin? it makes such an awful impression upon him that he wished he had never been born, to have to declare such a message. As we tell lost sinners of their condition, do we feel the terror of the message? something like Paul when he says, "knowing the terror of the Lord." Would there not then be something of the divine compassion working through our soul intreating and beseeching, yea weeping over them? See how Jeremiah in the ninth chapter looks upon the sins of those people, whom he could denounce most sternly. "Oh! that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." Here is no indifference, but a sorrow which though it be human, and though it lead the beloved prophet even sometimes to complain of God, manifests the divine pity working through it. Is it not the sorrow of Him, who when He came near to that beloved city and saw it lying there upon the hills, which God had foretold would be its eternal foundation, wept over it as He said: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belonged to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes?" What sorrow, when He could say, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather

her chickens under her wings, but ye would not." Sorrow, pity, longing for His beloved people, that is what you find all through Jeremiah. It makes an intensely human book.

The other prominent thought is salvation. It is the second book, an Exodus, which speaks of deliverance, and there is one place amongst others that I would refer to illustrating this, the thirty-first chapter: "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus saith the Lord; refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, thy children shall come again to their own border." You remember that a part of that prophecy is quoted in the gospel of Matthew, the part containing the words of sorrow: Rachel weeping for her children, that are no more, and refusing to be comforted. How beautifully here we have the salvation that is going to succeed that, which is the theme of prophecy.

After the divine judgments upon the people, comes the divine salvation for them. Read on a little. Down in the same chapter, in the twenty-third verse: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; as yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; the Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul. Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me." He had to tell them the tale of woe, he had to pour out his tears over a guilty

sinful people, but he is here allowed to bring the message of redemption and deliverance. You can imagine the joy with which he would give out such a message to refresh the weary hearts with such sweet words from God Himself.

In the same chapter you have another aspect of salvation. It shows the perpetuity of it. The 31st verse, "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, in which I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah;" and the 33d verse, "But this shall be the covenant that I shall make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God and they shall be My people." It is the new covenant, ordered in all things and sure, which can never be set aside so long as God's creation stands.

It would be well for those who believe in spiritualizing everything that has to do with Israel to look up at yonder heavens, and realize that just as surely as the sun and moon shall endure, so surely shall Israel abide as a nation before God.

Pass on now for a few words as to Lamentations. As I said before, it is a postscript to Jeremiah. It gives us his lamentations, a most beautiful outpouring of the heart of the prophet under the guidance of the Spirit of God, and in it you see a structure, an alphabetical structure, which is most remarkable and interesting. Every chapter is an alphabetic acrostic but the last; that is, you have the whole twenty-two letters of the alphabet in each chapter in order, and you have the twenty-two verses in the last chapter. In the third chapter, the resurrection number, you have three times that alphabet; that is, you have three verses for each letter of the alphabet, stamping in this way the numerical order upon the whole book.

Ezekiel. This is the Levitical, or third book, the book of the sanctuary, and the thought of priestly holiness runs

through the whole of it. In the first chapter and the third verse we see that the prophet belongs to the priestly family. He is a prophet not because he is a priest, but priestliness characterizes the whole book. Take for instance, two or three very prominent themes in it. From the fortieth chapter till toward the close you have the re-establishment of God's sanctuary amongst the people; priestly order, priestly sacrifice, the temple rebuilt; in fact, the whole land as a sanctuary for God. You have the entire land divided amongst the people, and you notice that the city is there in the midst of that land which is the glory of all lands; that city with its twelve gates is a type of that other city, which is described in the latter part of Revelation. We have most beautifully the sanctuary name of it, Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord is there.

You find when holiness is the theme that it manifests all that is contrary to it. It has been remarked by another, that in Isaiah and Jeremiah you have the name of the covenant God of Israel; Isaiah the salvation of Jehovah, and Jeremiah, ending with Jehovah also, whereas in Ezekiel and Daniel, you have not Jehovah's name, but "El," or "God" almighty, as one who is outside of His people.

Ezekiel does not only give the holiness that I have spoken of, but it tells us that God is outside the people. Ezekiel is among the captives at the river Chebar, and while he is there he sees the glory of the Lord, that glory that was upon the cherubim, those mighty agents of divine power, the real cherubim, rather than the typical golden ones. Outside the land, away off by distant Chebar, a prophet with a name which suggests not the covenant-God, sees visions of God outside of Israel. If you turn over to the third chapter of the same book and the 23d verse, "Then I arose, and went forth into the plain: and behold, the glory of the Lord stood there as the glory

which I saw by the river of Chebar; and I fell on my face." It is the glory of God.

Again, at the eighth chapter, at the 3rd and 4th verses, "And He put forth the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my head; and the Spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God unto Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the North, where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy. And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain." Here you have God's glory and the image that provoked Him to jealousy side by side. He has already been outside of the land, but now he is going to bear witness to the righteousness of His being outside. He brings Ezekiel—lifts him up by omnipotent power, and sets him again in Jerusalem, as though He would say to him, "I will vindicate to you the reason of my absence from that city where I promised My name should be forever."

Right there in the holy place, the image of jealousy and the glory of God; as much as to say, Put My glory alongside of that which is a shame to Me and what can I do? All through the eighth chapter, He leads the prophet to one abomination after another. He shows him the elders of the people worshiping the rising sun, the women weeping for Tammuz. Thus the awful defilement of the people is put alongside of His glory, the jealous glory of the Holy God. What can be done? Let us trace it on a little further. The ninth chapter and the third verse, "And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the Cherub, whereupon He was, to the threshold of the House. And He called to the man clothed with linen which had the writer's inkhorn by his side; and the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the

forehead of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof."

Notice here the wondrous grace coming in with divine holiness. The glory takes its first step to withdraw from that temple where God's name was put. His honor cannot stand where He is dishonored; He will not abide where His glory is given to others. But here is a man clothed with white linen, emblematic of the holiness of God, with the inkhorn to make the record as to everyone; and He says, before I seal the doom of that accursed place, look for those who are the remnant that love and honor Me. But how are they known? by their bright cheerfulness? by that which makes them a remarkable people? In the midst of that apostasy God has a people who are noted by their sighing and crying for the abominations.

Look at that reluctant glory, that rises up. "How can I give thee up," we hear; "my repentings are kindled." He pauses, and He sends His messenger to see how many there may be in that city, who love and care for Him. In the tenth chapter, and the fourth verse, the glory of the Lord cannot tarry in that unholy and polluted place.

"Then the glory of the Lord departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim; and the cherubim lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight, when they went out the wheels also were beside them, and they stood at the door of the east gate of the Lord's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above." How solemn, how awful the sight! God's glory taking its departure, for the abomination and the defilement of the land! Read further in the eleventh chapter, the latter part, the twenty-third verse: "And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city." There it departed, —it left the city.

That gives us the side as to man's responsibility, the defilement of the sinful people.

But grace will have its way; and this we find over in the latter part of the prophet, in the forty-third chapter, when God's work is done and the people have repented of their sins and been restored to their land. "Afterward he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east," (the very gate out of which that glory had departed) "and, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and His voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with His glory." There, it comes back again; the glory is to be a covering upon that beloved city, "for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." In that restored glory returning to the temple, filling it again,—yea, filling it in a way that it had never before been filled, for it is in connection with Christ Himself—you find blessing flows out to the nations. The waters flows from the throne of God in the sanctuary of His temple down towards the Dead Sea. It brings fertility and blessing wherever it goes. This shows us the theme of the entire prophecy. You see there is a unity displaying the holiness and the mercy of God, who after chastening them, bring them back in full eternal blessing.

I add one or two more thoughts. In the thirty-seventh chapter, we have another characteristic of this third division, the resurrection of Israel as a nation. Three, you know, is the number of resurrection, as for instance, the Lord's resurrection on the third day. In this chapter, you have put before you the resurrection of Israel, not literally of those who have died, but of the scattered people from amongst the nations. This is seen in the prophet's vision of the dry bones in the valley quickened into life and standing up, a mighty army.

In the same chapter, we have beautifully set before us also, the reunion of Israel and Judah, brought together

as one people. He takes two pieces of a staff in his hand, and they unite in one. How beautiful it is, that in God's day, when the Lord shall take up the staff of Israel and of Judah, it will become reunited in His hand. It shall be one, as it had never been since the division. All efforts in the past have been futile. King Rehoboam might fight to bring back the revolted tribes, but it was utterly impossible. So with the efforts of other kings: Hezekiah might send out a gracious invitation for Israel to come back to the God of their fathers; a few individuals might be restored; but it is only a temporary, partial thing. But when the mighty Son of God takes hold of His people, that broken staff will be reunited and become one, a rod, a sceptre, by which He will reign over the whole earth. Thus is fittingly set before us in this book of Ezekiel, the resurrection of the nation and their being reunited as one people, manifesting to all the earth the power of God in resurrection.

LECTURE IV

THE PROPHETICAL BOOKS

Daniel and the Minor Prophets

DANIEL, as his name suggests, is the Gentile prophet. In this book we are in the times of the Gentiles. It is, as you see, the fourth in the list, corresponding thus to the book of Numbers, the wilderness or world book. We have not to do primarily with Israel at all.

The scene is laid in distant Babylon, which has usurped the place of Jerusalem and with Nebuchadnezzar as king, instead of one of the descendants of David. We have the concerns of the nations of the earth, but just so far as they refer to God's purposes.

There are many very instructive features in this book. Let us notice that just as the book of Numbers has in one of its earliest chapters that which characterizes, or should do so, the people as seen in that book—in the place and testimony of the Nazarite—so you have in the first chapter of Daniel the Nazarite place. When you come to the putting of the children of God in the world, and to the question as to how we are to walk in it, what is the first great principle that is to guide us? Numbers tells us.

In the sixth chapter of that book, a man to be a true pilgrim, a true and faithful witness for God in this world, must be a Nazarite; he must be separated from that by which he is surrounded. Abraham was the typical pilgrim, and he was the man who lived in a tent, isolated from others. In like manner, Lot is presented to us as

the child of God typically linked with the world, defiled by it, his testimony destroyed and he himself saved only as by fire.

Nazariteship is the only power by which we can walk in this world for God, if we are to be a testimony for Him. If His name is to be honored by us, it must be absolutely by our separation from everything that would defile, degrade, and drag us down. How often has the lamp of testimony been quenched by the Lord's people being mingled with the world, by our living here as those who have interests and objects in common with the world.

I say again, in Numbers you have the key-note of the whole book in that chapter on the Nazarite—separation in the midst of defilement. And here in the book of Daniel, the book where the world is going to lift its head and show its power, where we are going to have spread before us the history of the Gentile nations, the very key to it all is, the Nazariteship of Daniel and his brethren in the court of the king of Babylon. Think of that young man taken from Jerusalem—Jerusalem itself all in ruins—transferred to the very courts of the king of Babylon, the first nation of the earth; Babylon itself the first city of the earth, with all that would attract, all that would appeal to the natural man, and he himself there introduced not into some humble inferior position, but to be one of the attendants about the king himself; to be in the very line of promotion, to make a success of his life. And what does he do? The first thing he does is to cut the line that would link him with the throne of Babylon; he separates himself absolutely from everything that partakes of the character of Babylon. "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat;" and in that purpose of heart I trace the success—if I may use such a word—of his life down here for God. In that separation from the dainties of the king of Babylon, the pleasures and the allurements

of that world-city,—I trace the secret of those wondrous revelations that God gave to Daniel.

For an illustration of the same thing take John in the book of Revelation, where he has opened up to him a still wider vision, where his eye takes in not only the earth, but the heavens, not only time but eternity; takes in the whole range of God's dealing with men, and His purposes in connection with His blessed Son. What is the key-thought of that book? "I was in the island that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." Separate from all the glory and power of this world, John the lonely prisoner, in isolation, sees visions which no mortal eye can see; hears words that none but the anointed ear can hear, and opens to us the revelation of all the ways of God, introducing us into eternity itself.

Do you want to understand prophecy? Do you want to stand upon the pinnacle from whence you can look over all the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them? Do you remember One who stood upon the mountain top and looked over all that glory, all that splendor of this world and its kingdoms, unmoved, unattracted by it? It was the blessed Son of God; and when Satan pointed out all to Him, and offered to put it into His hands, that blessed One, the true Nazarite, in heart separate from it all, would have none of it until His Father gave it to Him. So, I say, the Nazarite heart, the Nazarite position, the Nazarite separation in heart from the things of the world that would defile and clog, is the only proper spirit in which to come to and understand prophecy.

Prophecy is for the heart. I know nothing more deadening, nothing more injurious to our spiritual welfare than to be occupied with prophecy in a cold intellectual way. Look at the apostle Paul in the eleventh chapter of Romans. He has been unfolding God's dealings with Israel and with the Gentiles in the ninth, tenth, and

eleventh chapters. He has been quoting Scripture proof-texts as to prophecy, foretelling the time when Israel as a nation will be restored to the Lord; but, it is his heart that has been kindled by these things. His heart takes them up, and as he gets through with his subject, he bursts out in praise, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" If we are in true Nazarite spirit occupied with these prophetic subjects, we will find that they introduce us into the sanctuary of God Himself, to be occupied with Himself, praising and worshipping.

That, then, is the key—the point of vantage upon which Daniel stands here. He is a man with Babylon beneath his feet, and he stands as God's freeman there, stands as a witness for Him, with the recollection of Zion in his heart. He can look unmoved upon Nebuchadnezzar's splendor, and Babylon's glory, and think yet of the time when the saints of the Most High shall possess the kingdom, and when Israel scattered, peeled, despised, and rejected, shall one day reign—reign in peace, and triumph over all the Gentile nations.

When you take up the book itself, we find in it subjects of the greatest interest and profit. I might say, that we have greater details in Daniel than in almost any other book. The various distinct and definite prophecies as to the future make it a book of peculiar interest. Here, for instance, in the second chapter, you have Nebuchadnezzar's vision. Nebuchadnezzar has a vision and it slips from his mind. He has forgotten it all. Not only does he fail to understand its meaning, as Pharaoh failed to understand the meaning of the dream which he had about the famine in Egypt—the seven years of famine, and the seven years of plenty,—but Nebuchadnezzar *forgets* what he has dreamed, and so when he appeals to the wise men of Babylon, they must tell him not only its meaning, but reproduce the vision itself.

That, of course, brings out the impotence of the wise men of Babylon, and to whom can he turn at a juncture like that except to those despised Hebrews, men who had refused the place, as you might say, of honor which he would have given them? Daniel comes to the front, and he tells him not merely the meaning, but actually recalls to his mind that which he saw in the night visions—that glorious image which was set before him with its head of gold, its chest of silver, its thighs of brass and its legs of iron and clay mingled together.

In the head of gold you have Nebuchadnezzar himself, entrusted with power and rule from God, and this gives us one of the prominent themes of the book—the account of the times of the Gentiles. The times of the Gentiles are those in which we are living at the present time. We are not living in the times of Israel, nor in connection with God's dealing directly with any nation upon the earth. He is dealing providentially now upon the earth, and everything in connection with it has to do with something beside an earthly nation.

When the two tribes composing the kingdom of Judah were led into captivity to Babylon, the times of the Gentiles began. You will therefore find that the description of the image which Nebuchadnezzar saw begins with a head of gold, and ends with feet of iron and clay. There is nothing about Israel in it, not a single word. You have in it first the kingdom of Babylon, or rather Nebuchadnezzar himself, then the Medo-Persian empire, then the Grecian, and finally the Roman empire, reaching down to that empire as it will be manifested in the last days, when you have the clay of democracy mingled with the iron strength of the imperial power of Rome.

You have not a word, I say, about Israel; it is a most important thing to remember that the position of Israel from the time of their first captivity is as aliens. They are not the people of God publicly acknowledged. Truly

He restored them to the land after seventy years. He put them back there a people rescued, but you remember we saw in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, that they were not there as an independent people with a king over them, but as dependent upon the king of Persia. They were there as servants to the Gentile powers.

When the Son of God Himself was born, the King of Israel, under what circumstances was it? Who occupied the throne of Israel? an Edomite, king Herod. Who was over him? Why the very beast that is typified in the seventh chapter, the head of the Roman Empire. The times of the Gentiles had come in, and the Son of God, the King of Israel, has His place in a manger, not even in the inn, the place of strangers here, but actually among the beasts. A wild beast upon the throne of the land, and His place whose true right it was to reign, amongst the beasts in the stall at Bethlehem. That shows us as nothing else could that it was the time of the Gentiles. When the true King of Israel comes He has no place in the land. We need not here trace His history, for He never got a foothold upon the throne of Israel as He never got a place in their hearts. I may say, that when the time comes that Israel will repent and turn to the Lord, He will have a place in their hearts, and when He gets that, He will have a place upon the throne of Israel. He will be their King indeed, but until they receive Him, He will not be King. The times of the Gentiles go on.

Trace the subject a little further. After the Lord's crucifixion, and He has been preached by Peter at Pentecost, you have Him still presented to the Jews for their acceptance. Had they received Him, He would have come again as Peter prophesied, and they would have had their King upon His throne. They still rejected Him, and confirmed their words to Pilate—that they had no king but Cæsar. Had they had prophetic knowledge,

it would have meant they had no king but that Beast; they had no one reigning over them, but that image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his vision with the legs of iron and clay.

So these times have gone on, they are here now, they will go on till Christ sets up His Kingdom and will reign here over the earth. That is what we see in Nebuchadnezzar's vision. The stone cut out of the mountain without hands strikes the image. Christ's Kingdom out of the mountain of God's purposes comes and smites, not upon the head of the image nor upon any other part of its body, but on the feet that were part of iron and part of miry clay. That is, Christ when He comes as King will smite with judgment that ten-fold form of the kingdom which you have in the ten toes, part of iron—imperial strength—mingled with the miry clay of democracy. It is, in other words, when the imperial power of western Europe will be reunited in a sort of democratic form, part of iron, part of clay, and that ten-fold kingdom set up with one to rule over it called the Beast, as in the book of Revelation. Then it is that Christ will come in judgment and smite that form of the kingdom; then the whole image of man's rule, which speaks of man's thoughts and hopes with regard to the world, will crumble into dust. Man's kingdom will crumble into dust and be swept forever out of sight, and the Kingdom of our blessed God with Christ as its head, that little stone cut out without hands out of a mountain, will increase and become a mighty mountain itself bringing peace and blessing and righteousness to the earth.

That is the vision which Nebuchadnezzar saw, and that the interpretation which Daniel gives him. If we had time we might see how very similar Daniel's own vision is to it, in the seventh chapter of the same book. There you have a four-fold monarchy again; it is not presented in a human form, however, but as wild and

cruel beasts. The four beasts correspond again to the four kingdoms that I have before spoken of. The final kingdom with its ten horns is the same that you have in the ten toes of the image, with the added thought of the little horn, the beast itself of whom I was speaking, the imperial head of the restored Roman empire. Instead of the stone cut out of the mountain, you have the Son of man Himself coming and taking the kingdom; but the general meaning of the visions is identical. It is striking, however, that you have in the seventh chapter, not the image of man, (such as the world sees) but what God sees. All the authority and power of this world is but of the beast. "Man being in honor and understanding not is like the beasts that perish." He is not even a man. That explains the two great pivotal chapters of the book, the image in the second chapter, and the beast in the seventh. An attentive study of these two chapters will give you the history of the times of the Gentiles.

We have very much else in the book that is of intense interest. For instance, in the next chapter, the third, we have the account of the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar set up. It seems as if the man had forgotten almost immediately the lesson that God had taught him. He saw that image crumbling into dust and passing away, but what does he do? Does he bow to God? Does he own His authority? He sets up this image to be worshiped, an image suggested doubtless by what he had seen in his vision. Everyone had to bow to that image, and if not, he was to be cast into the fiery furnace. How we are carried on to the last days here, the time at which is set up "the image of the beast," as it is called in Revelation; linking thus together these two chapters in Daniel.

When that image is set up everyone who will not bow and worship it, is to be cast into what answers to the furnace of fire. He suffers the greatest tribulation. We

see the remnant here in the third chapter, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Men who had taken, as I was saying, the Nazarite place, when it comes to bowing to the image, to owning any authority which dethrones God Himself, those separate men are the ones that can refuse. Let us turn to a practical thought for a moment. When Christ so fills our hearts, that we refuse the things of earth, they will have no charm that we bow to them. Satan will not make us bow to him nor to his things, when we take the true Nazarite place. Has not your soul thrilled many times when you have read that third chapter of Daniel? Think of that immense assemblage gathered together in the plain of Dura;—all the great men, the mighty men, the kings and notables of the empire of Babylon there assembled; and hearken to the sweet music of all the various instruments—the psaltery, the sackbut, and the harp, everything that would stir the people and make them fall in with what is going on there. Three lonely men stand there, three men face the mightiest king of the whole earth, standing there alone in the face of universal adoration of that image, with their heads covered, and upright as God's witnesses; and all the mighty power of Nebuchadnezzar cannot get them to bow. All the example of those gathered hosts cannot get them to yield. All the sweet music from that wondrous orchestra cannot influence them to bow the knee to that image. Nay that fiery furnace glowing seven times hotter than ever, threatening them, cannot turn them from their faithfulness to God.

Where are there such men to-day? We are not living in the times of the fiery furnace, but I can hear the music, I can hear the sackbut, the psaltery and the harp, and all these alluring things that would attract the people of God. Where are there those who are not, in some way or other, bowing to the image and following the multitude? What an honor to be standing for God at a time of uni-

versal apostasy. If you read your Bibles, you will find that it is in such a time that the light of testimony shines out brightest. Take the history of individuals. You will find in the darkest days of the history of the kings of Israel, that Josiah and men like him lived. If we are but few, as those men of Israel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and all the world is following after the image of a false god, if we are faithful to Him we can have a testimony like them. They are cast into the furnace, but they knew God; and they said to Nebuchadnezzar, "Our God can deliver us out of your hand." What a word to say to the mighty ruler who thought he had all things in his hands, "our God is able to deliver us, and if not"—not if He is not *able* to deliver us, but if He does not *choose* to deliver us—"be it known unto thee, O king, we will not worship the image that thou hast set up." Let us go into the furnace; heat it seven times hotter, you will but burn up your own minions, and the human bonds that would tie us; but you cannot hurt us. Into that furnace they go, only to find a companion there who is none other than the Son of God.

That is all the fire of persecution can do, all that this world's threats can do,—put us into a place where only our bands are burnt. Have you not found it so? In your times of prosperity you have found that the world was wrapping its silken cords about you, and holding you fast. Affliction has come, perhaps persecution, and how those silken cords which held you, and which were so strong, are burned away, and you *walk* in the very fire which you feared would consume you. You need never fear anything that is brought upon you through faithfulness and devotion to the Lord.

But we must hasten on for we have other subjects, and yet I am sure we love to linger on these practical lessons to get what the Lord would have for our souls. In the third chapter, we see Nebuchadnezzar with his gorgeous

image set up, and that image despised by a handful of faithful men. In the next chapter, you have him learning the lesson which he refused to learn before. We find him, the mighty man, the mightiest monarch of all the earth, humbled—because of his pride. There is only one verse in that chapter that I will quote, "Them that walk in pride, He knoweth how to abase." Words that came from Nebuchadnezzar's lips when he had learned the lesson. There is the mighty king, the head of gold—there amongst the beasts—linking again in a striking way, the second and the seventh chapters, for those who have an eye to see it. He is put amongst the beasts and eating grass like an ox—that mighty monarch. It is as though God would teach him the lesson I quoted a little while ago, "Man being in honor and understanding not, is like the beasts that perish." And he learns that God will abase those who walk in pride. Good will it be for this world and its mighty men, when they learn that pride is their worst enemy; and, to come again to a practical thought, good it is for us when we learn, no matter how painful the humbling, no matter how distasteful to us, to have no confidence in the flesh. Then we can, like Nebuchadnezzar in this fourth chapter, exalt the God of all grace, for we have taken our true place.

In the next chapter, you have the awful wickedness going on amongst the Gentiles pictured in Belshazzar and his feast. He says, "Bring all the golden vessels, and everything that has been taken from Jerusalem." He has an impious, unholy feast with them. He blasphemes the Lord as he praises his idols of silver and gold. That is the end of the kingdom of Babylon, and of Gentile oppression. It is a typically prophetic chapter, which points on to the end when God is blasphemed, as He will be in those last days, when no one shall be allowed to buy or sell who has not received the mark of the beast in his forehead or in his hand. Then comes

out the writing on the wall, "Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting." "Mene, Mene, Tekel Upharsin." Gentile history is a history of apostasy.

How foolish is the thought of man that the world is improving in the light of these solemn truths. Nebuchadnezzar was the best king the Gentiles ever had; he was more faithful to God than any other, and yet how low he had to come. Belshazzar is the fitting representative of the culmination of Gentile power, in the open apostasy and blasphemy of the last days. The writing is upon the wall; those who have eyes to see it as had Daniel, can see that writing on the wall of this world's banquet hall. You hear of a Parliament of nations, of the confederation of the world and of the progress of everything here. Ah, in the midst of the revelry of man's celebration of his progress and his development, see the finger of God writing there, "all is weighed in the balances and found wanting."

The sixth chapter gives us a final development of that, which is, That if any pray to any, God or man, except to the king Darius, he will be cast into the den of lions. That gives us another typical view. It is the final culmination. We have seen the apostasy in Belshazzar's feast, but here we have the exaltation of the king as God Himself. Darius seems to be a man, personally, that we can have a good deal of interest in, a man who recoiled from what he had done, but in type he represents the Beast—the absolute apostasy of man. Daniel represents the remnant, the faithful few who in those last days will refuse to give up the worship of God. As a result they are cast into the den of the lions, they go through the great tribulation of the last days, when Satan the "roaring lion" would devour them, but has his mouth shut; and they come out of it tried, faithful, and true for God, His witnesses, and the nucleus of a kingdom for Christ upon the earth.

That gives us the close of the whole history. The rest of the book of Daniel goes over it in another way. I have already alluded to the seventh chapter. In the eighth, you have the history of the *eastern* kingdom instead of the western, as in the seventh; and in the ninth, you have that remarkable prophecy of the seventy weeks which, as those who are familiar with prophecy know, is so important for the correct understanding of the times of God's dealings with the world. For its interpretation I must refer you to other books, and pass on even more rapidly.*

The last three chapters give us the progress of events, more particularly in the east where, with much detail that has had fulfilment in good measure, we have unmistakably the features of the Antichrist, the wilful king, who is associated in Rev. xiii. with the beast.

Very beautiful it is to see Daniel alone in the first chapter, and Daniel alone in the last chapter of his book. All the glory of this world passes before us, but the man that stands for God alone at the beginning is the man who will be alone at the end. "But go thou thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." Though the world is triumphing now, in this the brief day of man, those men, separate to God now, will stand alone in that day of blessing: "He that doeth the will of God shall abide forever."

That gives us, most imperfectly, some thought of what you have in this most interesting prophecy of Daniel. I would commend it to you for your careful study. It defines in the most beautiful way what is personal, and what is dispensational. It gives you food for your soul as well as for your intellect, and you find, as I said before, that the study of prophecy in that way makes you a

* Notes on Daniel by W. K., 55 cents; Daniel the Prophet, by E. D., 75 cents; and others.

worshiper, instead of a cold collector of statistics and proof texts.

That closes for us the fourth part of this main division, the times of the Gentiles, leaving us the twelve so-called minor prophets to complete the prophetic pentateuch. These give us the fifth section, the Deuteronomy of the prophets. That this is not arbitrary but simply following the ordinary view is well known to most Bible students. Various reasons justify this: they are all short books; similar subjects permit them to be closely grouped together. Notice particularly that in the *twelve* prophets we have the governmental number; and that is what you get in the *fifth* sections of the books.

It is God's way, God's principles in government, and that is what you find throughout the twelve books—the number of government itself.

We haven't time to look at the reasons for it, but I owe to another* the grouping of these books which is certainly suggested the moment you see them. I may say that the order of these books in our English Bible, is not what you find in the original, and has no sanction. But there is an order of subjects that is very striking. For instance, take Hosea: This prophet deals largely with Israel, rather than Judah as most of the prophets do; for instance, Isaiah and Jeremiah. But Hosea seems to be dealing as much with Israel as with Judah. The same is true of Amos and also of Micah. They all have both kingdoms before them, and their subject is the same. Hosea is very beautiful. I can remember, years ago, how he was the first prophet, I think even before Isaiah, that won my affections.

There is a pleading of the heart of God in Hosea, God coming down to man's level, and as a man pleading face

* See "The Numerical Structure of Scripture," by Mr. F. W. Grant.

to face with a people whom He loves. Ephraim apostate, feeding upon the east wind—Ephraim whose folly we have designated as that of a silly dove—and yet, a people beloved, whom He could not give up. His relentings are kindled together. He yearns over that people, and Judah, making Him plead and entreat for them to return. It is a wonderful appeal. He does not take the place of distance, standing on high and pronouncing judgment upon them, but in the person of the prophet He comes down to their true condition, He comes down to their unfaithfulness to Him, and begs them to return.

Notice in the last chapter the effect of such entreaty: "O Israel return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words and turn to the Lord." And notice, when God is pleading for His people He leaves nothing undone to induce them to return. He will put the words in their mouth; He will tell them what to say. We know not what to tell our God? then He puts the words in our lips. He says: "Say unto Him, take away all iniquity and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us," (*i. e.* the powers of the world) "we will not ride upon horses," (the power of Egypt as you have it in the thirtieth of Isaiah), "neither will we say any more to the work of our hands" (idolatry) "ye are our gods; for in Thee the fatherless findeth mercy."

What words to put into the lips of a sinful people who have departed from Him! What is His answer to that? "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from them. I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon."

God takes up the little lily with its beauty, that small flower, and yet more beautiful than Solomon in his glory;

He takes up the cedar of Lebanon in all its greatness, its strength, and He says that His poor, broken-hearted, penitent people, that blacksliding people, when they are returned to Him, that they shall be healed, they shall be as beautiful as the lily, and as great and mighty as Lebanon itself; their splendor shall fill the earth. That is the end of the dealings of God with them, and that is what you get in this prophet.

Amos takes a different ground. He does not come down and plead with the people, but he solemnly declares the judgment of God. Does not that strike you? How beautiful are His ways. In one place you see Him as it were entreating them and putting words in their lips, to repent and return to Him. In another He stands off and solemnly denounces their sin, and declares judgment that will fall upon them for it.

All through Amos you find that solemn declaration of judgment upon both Judah and Israel, and more than that upon Edom, and Moab, and Ammon, and all the nations that are connected with Israel, and who occupy their territory in the last days. We have not time to dwell upon this, but you find that he is very similar to Hosea, except as I say, the element of infinite tenderness is not there, but rather the declaration of their sin and departure from God.

Passing to Micah, which completes the first group of three, you have there God's holiness and the person of Christ. Look, for instance, in the fifth chapter, "Thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be least among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." In connection with Christ you have the repentance of the people, and their blessing in the last days.

Let us briefly go over those three parts. In Hosea he is speaking of divine mercy coupled with divine righteous-

ness; in Amos the declaration of God's judgment upon sin and the consequences of that, and when that sin is judged, God setting up the tabernacle of David again in the last days. But in Micah, after the sin of the people, the result of their alienation from God, is put before them, that Christ Himself whom they had rejected, might appear as the One through whom their blessing is to come. Even His work is presented to us there, for we are told that the judge of Israel shall be smitten upon the cheek-bone; and yet that Judge is He who shall rule over them, whose birth at Bethlehem is predicted, and to which even the scribes and Pharisees and Herod could turn as the prophet had pointed, as where Christ should be born.

Then we come to the second group, beginning with Joel. He sets before us the judgment on the nations. You have here in Joel, and in fact, in all three of these next prophets, the nations coming in. You have Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah. Joel gives us the general judgment on Israel and on the nations as a whole, and then you have in the last days the fulfilment of that prophecy as you know, when God will pour His Spirit upon all flesh. Obadiah gives us more particularly the judgment upon Edom; and then Jonah the last of the three gives us the threatened judgment upon Nineveh, and God's mercy too. We will dwell a little upon Jonah for there are some very interesting things there, though familiar to many. Jonah is not merely the personal history of the prophet, but it gives the typical history of Israel as well. Israel was to be the witness of God's righteousness among the nations; God had sent them to be a testimony to all the world, you might say. What have they done? They refused to go and bear witness for God. They go rather to Tarshish. They take their place upon the sea, that is amongst the Gentiles and they are cast into the sea like Jonah, and lost amongst the nations. That is the condition of Israel to-day; buried amongst the nations, buried in the depths

of the sea; but Jonah is a resurrection book, and you have there in type Israel cast out from amongst the nations, and going to preach then, in the last days as she would not do at first, going to declare God's message to the Gentiles typified by Nineveh the head of them all.

When God's message is declared, you have repentance on the part of Nineveh, and you have too, God's lesson as to His patience and forbearance with all mankind brought out in the last chapter. We have only time to allude to it in that way, but the second group, these three that I have spoken of, Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah, give us God's judgment upon the Gentiles, but His blessing upon them too in connection with restored Israel, raised again.

That leads us to the third group. The prophet Nahum dwells largely upon the chief of the Gentile nations, the Assyrian, and upon the pride of man as exhibited in that nation. There are many beautiful things there which we cannot speak of even, but connected with it you have next, in Habakkuk, the prophet that brings out that wonderful scripture Paul dwells on so much—"the just shall live by faith" (chap. ii. 4). In the third chapter and the seventeenth verse, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." It is the salvation of God by faith that satisfies the soul of the prophet in the midst of the abounding desolation that is all around. He cries out, "O Lord revive Thy work," but in the midst of it all, his confidence is in the Lord.

Zephaniah, the next prophet, fitly in the third place, gives us these principles of God's holiness in judgment also, and the effect. I can only quote a characteristic of it in the third chapter, and thirteenth verse: "The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies,

neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth, for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid. Sing O daughter of Zion, shout O Israel, be glad and rejoice with all thy heart O daughter of Jerusalem." And again in the seventeenth verse, "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy, He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing." How beautiful to see God's joy in His love to His people; and what has He done to rejoice in them? He has forgiven them: He has turned away their iniquity from them, He has brought out that poor and afflicted people that He speaks of in the twelfth verse; He has made them a pure and holy people, and now they can sing and rejoice. God can rejoice over them because His judgments have had their effect upon them. That is always God's way. Nahum, the pride of man abased. Habakkuk, "The just shall live by faith." Zephaniah God rejoices over His people because they have learnt the lesson of holiness.

That leads us to the last group of these twelve, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. They are, you know, entirely connected with the times of the restoration from Babylon, and what came after. All these other prophets were before the captivity; these last are the captivity prophets. Haggai speaks of the rebuilding of the temple, Zechariah of the re-establishment of Mount Zion, and the city of Jerusalem as the centre of blessing; while Malachi refers further on to the universal departure, even when they have been restored from Babylon, and of the time of blessing still future. Let us dwell a moment upon these three.

We read in the book of Ezra that the building of the temple prospered through the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah. But I want you to notice *how* it prospered: not by what we call encouragement, not by what we would call a helpful word. I think if Haggai had been amongst

us, we would have said his words were too sharp; they will offend the saints, and hinder the Lord's work. He tells them plainly what they were doing. He says, Look at the Lord's house lying waste; look at your houses with all your comforts. You are seeking your own things and neglecting the things of God. And do you expect blessing? Are you surprised that you carry out much and bring in little? you gather and you save and you put it into a bag to find it leak out through holes. Take up the building of God's house, and you will find blessing for yourselves. It was a pungent word for their conscience, but a word that had its effect, as all God's word will when we take it home to our hearts.

Are we to-day neglecting God's things? Are we thinking more of our own interests than His? We need not be surprised if our souls are lean, if the world comes in and has power over us, and even the flesh itself lead us away. If we make God's things first, if we make His glory first, everything will fall into its true place. We will find how true that is which the Lord says, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." Let His things be supreme. Let Christ's glory be the first object of our lives, we can rest assured that the least things of our need will be cared for by Him. Heaven and earth are held together in blessing by the fact that God is exalted. Let Him be exalted and His creatures must be blest. Let Him be exalted by us, we will find as Haggai told them, all their blessing will flow from this. He points on to the time when the glory of that latter house shall be greater than that of the temple that Solomon built; and that time is not yet fulfilled, but will be when in Mount Zion the temple of the Lord shall be filled with the glory of the Lord, and all nations shall flow unto it.

Zechariah gives us very strikingly throughout the whole of his prophecy, the fact that God is caring for the wel-

fare of that beloved city. You see there the horses as emblems of God's providential government among the nations. These and all the other visions in the first part of his book tell us of God's purposes all centering about Jerusalem. Then in the last part, you find him using plainer language than that of vision, language which points forward to the time when Jerusalem, though compassed with armies, and assaulted by the Gentile, shall be delivered; and when too, far more important than her deliverance, Jerusalem shall return from her sin.

He tells us the time is coming when the house of Israel shall mourn, everyone apart, every family apart, mourning for their sin. He tells us of the time too when they shall look upon the One whom they have pierced,—direct prophecy as to the rejected Christ. "They shall look upon Him whom they have pierced and mourn because of Him." Two kinds of mourning are here, for their sin and apostasy, and for their piercing of that blessed One through whom all their future blessings are to come.

He foretells in the most distinct way of Christ rejected, His betrayal by Judas, of the scattering of the people when the Shepherd is smitten; nay, he even tells of Antichrist, that idol-shepherd, that false shepherd, who shall attempt to reign over God's people. But it is all working together for the blessing of the people. Antichrist is judged, the people penitent, the Gentiles, the Assyrian, all of them scattered abroad, and Israel set up in blessing in their land, Jerusalem the joy of the whole earth; and then the Gentile nations coming from everywhere to keep the feast of Tabernacles. It is a wonderful prophecy.

We do not know what we are losing by neglecting diligent, close study of the prophets. We know Romans, Galatians perhaps, but oh to come down to a careful, thorough study and familiarity with these Old Testament prophets. You get lessons for your soul, and a vision of God's purposes with regard to the earth that will make

you walk like kings now, as we will be kings then. Kings not upon the throne, but kings with God's will enthroned in our hearts, and like the exiled king David, a king in Adullam; so we, as associated with His thoughts, may be kings even here in heart, as we look over the world.

That leaves us but Malachi, who is intensely sad because he reminds us of the fact that no matter what God might do for His people, no matter how He might recover them again from Babylon, they are the same people yet. They need to be born again. They have no heart for God or the things of God, and so you find in Malachi a most wretched state. I might say, that these four chapters of Malachi resemble portions of the gospel of Matthew. Scribes and Pharisees are in the ascendancy, religion but no reality. They can bring offerings to God of the lame or blind, whatever they please. Malachi pierces all with the sharp point of the sword when he says, "you bring that offering to your governor, and see if he will take it." Then he goes on to tell the people that they are robbing God, robbing Him by professing a devotion which they did not possess. It is a sad picture, but towards the last of it the light begins to shine. First of all you have the remnant testimony, "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard," and He says, "They shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels." Then he goes on and foretells that the prophet Elijah shall come as the forerunner of the Lord. We know that might have been fulfilled in John the Baptist, at Christ's first coming, had the people been ready; but they were not, and the Lord needed to die. Therefore John's ministry is only preparatory. The time is yet coming when there shall be a testimony as from Elijah to the people, a witness as to their having departed from God.

Then at the last the prophet says, "But unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with

healing in His wings, and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall." Malachi with all the departure of a partially restored people about him, with all the discouragement that comes from the failure of a testimony revived for the time being—his only comfort, his only hope is the same comfort and hope that you and I can have. God may raise up a testimony again and again, but ah, there is only one thing that can give you comfort here. It is not in any testimony that they may give here, but it is in the coming of that Sun of righteousness with healing in his wings. And Malachi as he saw the restored people gathered about him there,—going on with their self-righteous Pharisaism, going on to the rejection of Christ,—his eye can only look forward to the time of which David spoke in his last days, in the twenty-third of second Samuel, when he speaks of the same King as the one that ruleth over men, just, ruling in the fear of God. He says, "He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." Ah! over Israel, over the world, gross darkness prevails, but faith is linked with light from another source; faith sees the purposes of God, sees the time when Christ shall gain control here, in the world where He is rejected.

The only hope that the prophet could have—that you or I can have, is the coming of the Son of God, and a fitting conclusion that is, to these books of the prophets. Whatever their scope, whatever their thought, wherever they point the finger,—and they range over the whole world, take in all nations, and all divine principles,—it is all centred in that one hope for which we all wait, "The Sun of righteousness will arise with healing in His wings." When that sun rises upon this poor sin-cursed earth, darkness will flee away, and it will be like the morning, a cloudless morning after the rain, and the mown grass

that is dry and parched, will spring up and blossom ; or as Malachi so beautifully says, they will be led forth as calves of the stall. How near it is ! You remember, of course, that our hope is "the bright and morning Star," something even before the break of day, before the coming of the Son of Man as the Sun of righteousness, riding upon the white horse. But these are but the two aspects of His coming—we wait for His coming, that is all. We learn His will, we seek to obey Him, to bear witness for Him, but ah, there is nothing that forms the foundation for our hope but His coming again. We wait for that, nothing can take its place.

When He first came down, it was as it were on the wings of a dove bringing mercy and salvation by His death. When He comes down again it will be on the wings again, bringing healing and blessing even through judgment. Are we looking for that day ? Are we waiting for the coming of the Lord ? And are our hearts indeed so linked with His, that there is nothing that will give us greater joy than to see Him—to behold Him, and beholding Him to know that at last all His will be like Him, for all shall see Him. May we long for that coming and wait and watch for Him.

And so must close our fragmentary examination of these wondrous books. How meagre all is. May it lead us to turn afresh to these the most neglected portions of God's word.

LECTURE V

THE POETICAL BOOKS

WE have seen thus far, first of all, the books of the law, which give us the foundation of God's ways with His people, the principles upon which He deals with them. Secondly, the books of the history, the development of those principles as carried out in their lives. Thirdly, the sanctuary section, the books of the prophets, or those that unfold the principles of divine holiness which lead us into the presence of God; and now we come to the fourth section, the last of the books of the Old Testament, the books of experience, corresponding as they do most exactly with the book of Numbers. For I need not remind you that our experience is in this world, which is the place of testing for us, a place that brings out all that calls for God's help, all in us too, our weakness, our waywardness, our unbelief in the midst of trial, in the face of opposing enemies, our failures and shortcomings. How these things cluster around the thought of the world! and how, as we think of ourselves, as living in the world, we are constrained to remember the failures and shortcomings, which, alas! mark us as those walking in it!

Now there are several very suggestive things in connection with these books of experience, that we want to look at before we take them up in detail. They are the books that have to do with earth in a very special way, even different from the book of Numbers itself, which gives us mere history. Here we go deeper, we have experience, the thoughts produced in the heart by the circumstances through which God's people pass; and you

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will find that that is the great characteristic of this book. It is the heart-experience of God's people, not merely their outward history. In that connection you find here, as you will not in any other section of Scripture, the human element, as I might say. It is man giving expression to his thoughts. In the book of Job, for instance, you have even the unbelieving, imperfect expressions of men, who are not clear in their thoughts of God. In the book of Ecclesiastes you have still more clearly the expressions of one who, for the time, has shut God out; and so you will not find, as I might say,—and I use the expression guardedly—that in every verse you could say, That is a divine truth; because sometimes the verse is the utterance of an unbeliever, sometimes it is the utterance of weak faith, groping in the darkness and feeling after God. That does not mean that it is not inspired, but that it is inspired to give us the picture of the utterance of the heart.

How good it is that God has given us such books as these—books that tell out, on the one hand, our own weakness, our own depression in the midst of trial, but that go on to bring out God's sufficiency, and His succor, in that very place of trial! They are very wonderful and interesting books in that way. They comprise first of all, as the beginning, the book of Psalms, the largest and that which has the widest scope of any of them; the Genesis, as you might say. Next to that comes the book of Job, which gives us the affliction of God's people and their deliverance out of it, and the lesson they learn through that affliction. Then, corresponding to the book of Leviticus, the sanctuary, you have that lovely song of Solomon which introduces us into the very presence of the Lord Himself. After that, as a Numbers, the book of Ecclesiastes, which is the wilderness-book of the wilderness-books; and finally, Deuteronomy, or the gathered wisdom for the way, in the book of Proverbs.

It is very striking, not only what I have already alluded to, that you have in these books the utterances of the heart, the utterances of our experience, but you have another thing that is equally so—that they are uttered in poetry. God is going to teach His people that through these very trials they are to raise a song of praise, and that they may sing, whether mourning in the darkness, bewailing their own failure and shortcoming, or catching a glimpse of the wondrous Deliverer and being lifted up by Him. Whether they look at the enemy, being oppressed by him, or whether they look forward to the time when their feet shall be taken off the sands of the wilderness,—you have all their experiences of trial, of joy, of deliverance, of oppression, whatever it may be, all set to music, that they may sing it, sing it out in praise to Him who turns even the wilderness into a pool of water, and makes the desert itself to blossom as the rose.

There is something particularly attractive in this, something peculiarly beautiful, that in the book that lets me know my heart's trial more than any other section of the divine Scriptures, God has put it in the form of poetry. He says to us, Have you sorrows? Sing them out to Me. Are you pilgrims going through a weary desert? Learn that God's statutes are your songs in the house of your pilgrimage.

It is the pilgrim that sings, the one who has the experiences of trial, who knows what it is to sing and worship God. Our very sorrows are thus turned into song, and the minor notes as well as those of more exultant tone combine together in a sweet anthem of harmonious praise, in which all creation will one day join. This is the lesson that confronts us in the very form in which these books are written, the poetic form in which they are put before us.

The book of Psalms as that which is first and largest of them all, claims our first and most careful attention.

How full it is, and what a wonderful book—wonderful in its very structure. There is not a subject of experience in God's people's path that you do not find here. Sometimes I think we have rather a heartless way of speaking of the book of Psalms. We say there is no food for Christians in it, that it is not proper Christian experience. And yet the saints of God through all times have found their comfort here, have found that which gave exact expression to their own experiences. Far be it from me to say a word against the wondrous fulness of the grace of God revealed in Christ in the New Testament; far be that thought. But I say unhesitatingly that those who know best the full gospel of God's grace, love, too, these wondrous expressions of experience which you find in the Psalm books. All the way through they put words into our lips, put in language what we ourselves experience, if *we* would not utter it to God.

As to its structure, it is divided up for us, as it were, into a Bible by itself; God thus showing that our experience involves the truth of the whole Bible. And so we have brought out, as in the Revised Version, its division into five books, in the same way as throughout the larger portions of Scripture. I will first designate them and you will see how clearly marked they are. We have first, from the first psalm to the forty-first, the first book, or the Genesis of the Psalms. Then from psalm xlii. through lxxii. you have the second book, or Exodus of the Psalms, where you have brought out, the people at a distance from God, and their salvation unfolded. From psalm lxxiii. through the eighty-ninth you have the Leviticus of the Psalms, or the holiness of God, as manifested in connection with the people. If you ask how we know that these are the divisions, I simply call your attention to the fact that each of these psalms that I have marked as the close of a book ends with a doxology; for instance, here at the close of the eighty-ninth you have,

"Blessed be the Lord for evermore, Amen and Amen." Then from psalm ninety through 106th you have the fourth, or book of Numbers, which gives us the wilderness experience of the book, closing, as you notice again in the last verse of the 106th psalm, with the doxology, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting; and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the Lord." The rest of the book gives us the Deuteronomy, from the 107th to the close. Thus we find the book of Psalms itself is a Bible in miniature; a little Bible, as it were, made just for our experience, which yet gives us the whole scope of Scripture applied to the needs and longings and sorrows of the hearts of God's dear people.

But that is only the beginning. Who can pretend in the compass of a few minutes to give even a portion of the thoughts that are in this wondrous book of Psalms? Let us just strike a few key-notes that make up the grand chorus that you find rising ever higher, ever sweeter, until it culminates in the grand finale that you have there at the close in the 149th and 150th psalms. The first psalm gives us the walk of the man of God upon earth, what we should be here on earth: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly;" "but his delight is in the law of the Lord." Then he is described to us as to his fruitfulness, and on the other hand, the ungodly are described, who shall not stand in the judgment.

But who is this godly, obedient man? Is it you? is it myself? Can I say that I am the man described in that first psalm? Alas! that is what we ought to be; it is what we are not. And when we ask, Who is the man that is thus fully blessed—where is he? You find the answer more particularly in the second psalm, which presents to us, first of all, the rebellion of the nations against God's Man, and then the setting of Him up in Mount Zion as the centre and source of blessing. Let us stop there a moment. We have the key to all our experience

here upon earth. What is it? First, that our walk should suit that which is according to God's mind as to it. But it is not. Secondly, that all His counsels are centred in His Son, His King, whom He sets upon His holy hill of Zion. In other words, the experience of God's people upon earth centres around the two thoughts of our walk and of Christ. And in those two thoughts you have the key-note to the whole book of Psalms.

Now, if you trace on from the third psalm to the seventh, you find that you have five psalms there, and five is the number which speaks constantly of responsibility, and the exercise through which we pass under God's hand. You find there several prominent thoughts. There is, first of all, the enemy, who opposes us in a world like this. Then there are circumstances by which we are surrounded, circumstances such as David passed through, for instance, when he was in the cave, and Saul was pursuing him. Then you find false accusations of people not in sympathy; and you find, too, that but a remnant of Israel is truly awakened. There is also a sense of God's wrath and chastening upon this remnant. Now all these features, are primarily connected with Israel's remnant in the last days; but they speak to us, too,—connected with the Person of Christ, and with the desire of God that His people shall be according to the demands of that first psalm. So you find these five psalms linked together, and they give us, as it were, the development of truth through the exercises of the remnant in untoward circumstances, without the full knowledge of grace.

In the eighth psalm again is opened up to us the Person of the Lord; as though God said, I have set before you in the first psalm what you ought to be; and in the second psalm, Him who is to be King in Zion, through whom alone you can be blessed. I have put before you your experience in the world, in the face of the enemy, of opposition and trial; and now you emerge from that ex-

perience again to have set before you Man. But what Man? God's Man: "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars that thou hast ordained, what is man that Thou art mindful of him?" What is poor, puny man, with his little experiences, with his brief day upon earth? "What is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him?" Ah, you know in what a divine way the apostle treats that subject. He says, "We see Jesus, made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that He by the grace of God, should taste death for every man." We have Jesus before us as the true Man—the Second Man—and all things put beneath his feet. These eight psalms form a sort of preface to the whole book. It is Christ at the beginning and Christ at the ending, and whatever the experiences through which we pass, they are linked with our apprehension of Christ, and we enter more fully into the knowledge of Him through the experiences.

Do you know that it is your trials that make you know Christ better? that it is your sorrow that brings you into fellowship with Him the more? Tell me, when did Mary and Martha know Christ better? when He was a welcome guest at their home, when they heard Him, when Martha was busy serving Him, or when, with the gloom of their sorrow, with their brother in the grave, the Lord appears in the power of resurrection? We always fear as we enter into the cloud, we always tremble when we go into the darkness, but, beloved brethren, it is in the cloud that we hear the voice, "This is My beloved Son, hear ye Him." And that is what you have all through this book of the Psalms. Thus, in the ninth and tenth, the enemy is described; the man of sin, that bold, blatant foe of God's people who lurks in the secret places of the villages like a ravening lion, ready to spring out on God's poor afflicted people. They see him there setting his mouth

against the very heavens and saying, Who is God? why should I care for Him? and in view of that terrible enemy you hear their sighing and groaning.

In the five psalms that follow, (the ninth and tenth give us, as I was saying, that wicked one, the Antichrist) you have the experiences that flow out of the oppression of the Antichrist. The foundations are assailed, the fool says, "There is no God;" then you have the cry for deliverance. Then look on to the fifteenth Psalm. In the ninth and tenth they had the wicked one before them, and in the fifteenth the psalmist asks the question "Lord who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? who shall go into Thy holy hill?" He wants to know who it is, in view of the abounding wickedness of the world, that can have a place with God, and where is the answer? Did you ever think of it that the fifteenth psalm is a great interrogation point? It asks a question practically without answering it, for it puts the standard so high. But we pass into the sixteenth, and there is the answer; there is the One who shall abide in God's tabernacle. Who is it? Is it some mighty king? Is it even the King on the hill of Zion you have in the second psalm? Is it the Son of Man, with all things under His feet, as you have in the eighth psalm? No; it is He who once, as the lowly Jesus, walked here, the man of faith, walking through this world as you and I have to walk through it. That is God's answer. He says, You are groaning and asking who it is that can have a place in My tabernacle? Look at this Man of faith here: "Preserve me, O God, for in Thee, do I put my trust." And all through that psalm you have got the key-note of faith, from its beginning to the joy of resurrection at the close, where He says, "Thou wilt show me the path of life," you have set before you Christ as the perfect Man of faith here upon the earth.

And so we might go on and take up each of these psalms. From the sixteenth on through to the twenty-

fourth, you have before you, in some way or other, the person of Christ Himself, who meets every craving, every sense of need that the people of God may have—meets it most perfectly in His person and His work. I will just allude for a moment to three of these psalms, the twenty-second, twenty-third, and twenty-fourth. In the twenty-second, as you know, you have Christ as the sin-offering; the Good Shepherd who gives His life for the sheep. In the twenty-third, we have Him as He is spoken of in the epistle to the Hebrews—the Great Shepherd, the One who is brought again from the dead, and as risen now, leads His people in the green pastures and by still waters; and in the twenty-fourth, He is presented to us as the King of glory, the Chief Shepherd who will appear and lead His people through the portals of glory into the fold of true blessedness. In other words, you have brought before us in these psalms, Christ in His wondrous work—as making atonement in the twenty-second, as leading us into liberty and joy in the twenty-third, and into the fulness of blessing and reward in the twenty-fourth,—the everlasting gates lifted up.”

We hear the sighing and the groaning of the people of God, we see them under the oppression of the enemy, we see the enemy with all his false accusations against them; we even see their own conscience under the sense of their guilt before God, then He turns them to Christ and says, “In Him you will find perfect peace; in His person, in His work; and in the place into which He has gone, you will find absolutely rest for your souls.”

It is very significant that after we have passed that wonderful unfolding of what Christ is, from the twenty-second to the twenty-fourth psalms, you have the first real actual acknowledgment on the part of the people of their sin. In the twenty-fifth psalm, there is the actual confession of sin. Before that you have the sense of God's anger, the sense of His permitting the enemy to

afflict them and all that; but you have not the real, honest, open confession, "For Thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great" until after the cross. I might say who is it that can truly confess? who is it that can truly go to the very bottom and learn what sin is? where will you find sin presented in its exceeding sinfulness? Is it in the sinner who knows not Christ? He has a sense of his transgressions, and manifold shortcomings, but he does not know sin, as the saint of God knows it, who has had a view of Christ. I get a view of the sin-offering that has put away my sin, I get a view of the spotless Person as in the sixteenth psalm, who is the model for my walk, and in view of that I can come in the twenty-fifth psalm to fathom the depths of iniquity that are in my heart, and the confession will come out without forcing. I know what sin is, because I know what Christ is. You will always find the ripest saint has the deepest view of sin. The one who knows the Lord Jesus best of all is the one who knows himself best of all; or as Paul has put it for us, "We rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

But we cannot go on looking at psalm after psalm in this way. At least you see how beautifully they are linked together, and how beautifully you have thrown in, between the sorrows and sins of the people, the person and work of Christ. So let it be with our lives. Let it be with all our wilderness experience that our sighing is turned into singing His praise. That is what you find as the practical effect from the twenty-fifth psalm on to near the close of the first book—to the thirty-ninth psalm, and then at the very close you have, in the fortieth and forty-first, again presented the person of the Lord. How beautiful it is to trace all through, the person of the Lord and His work. He is seen as the sin-offering in the twenty-second psalm, and there in the fortieth, you see Him as the burnt-offering as it is quoted for us in the tenth of He-

brews: "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared me." In other words it is Christ's work in subjection to the divine will presenting us to God, "by the which will" as the apostle says, "we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once." The forty-first psalm closes the book. In none of the other books of the Psalms do you have the person and work of Christ so prominently put before us, as you do in this first book. It is most beautiful, most helpful to see how it links it all together with the experience of God's people.

Then when you come to the second book, from the forty-second on, we cannot speak in detail as we have been doing, but I want you to notice how different the thought is. Here you have the people away from God, and yet, sighing and crying for Him. The forty-second and forty-third give us that sense of distance, and the presence of the enemy. Then in the forty-fourth, you have the actual persecution: "Yea for Thy sake we are killed all the day long"; and then when they are at the lowest point, when they have told out all the sorrows of their condition, the forty-fifth begins with a song of love. The forty-fourth a song of man's hatred and persecution, the forty-fifth, the song of God's love in Christ: "My heart is inditing a good matter, I speak of the things that I have made touching the King." He is coming to His poor afflicted people in their distance under the hand of the enemy, the King that takes vengeance on their enemies, and delivers His saints. As a result in the forty-sixth we see, "God is our refuge and strength." In the forty-fourth they are "accounted as sheep for the slaughter," in the forty-sixth they are looking up with confidence to God as their refuge and strength. What is the secret of it? He who is fairer than all the sons of men has come in to succor, and the sense of that makes God their refuge and strength. The forty-seventh gives us the joy,

“Clap your hands all ye people,” and the forty-eighth is Mount Zion, the joy of the whole earth. Instead of a scattered afflicted people under the oppression of the enemy, you have Mount Zion with her bulwarks and surrounded by her walls—God known in her palaces for a refuge. It is all because of that blessed One who, for the sake of His beloved people, has girded His sword upon His thigh and gone forth to conquer their oppressors. How beautifully the Psalms are thus grouped together.

Then again most strikingly, just as you had in the twenty-fifth psalm, going into the depths of self-judgment, because of the knowledge of what Christ has done, so here after God is known for a refuge through Christ, you have in the fiftieth and fifty-first psalms a deeper going into sin still, especially in the fifty-first where you have the acknowledgment of blood-guiltiness on the part of David. But David is not only writing here for himself, because of his awful sin in giving up Uriah to be killed, but it is David speaking for the whole people, and acknowledging the sin of blood-guiltiness in their rejection of Christ, and giving Him over to be slain by the Gentiles. And just as David when he was convicted of his sin could not plead as an excuse that *he* had not slain Uriah, so the people when they are brought to a sense of their sin dare not say that *they* have not crucified Christ; the Jew will not dare to plead that he did not pierce Him. How solemnly Scripture says, “They shall look upon Him whom they have pierced.” They might say the Roman soldier pierced Him, but when they are truly convicted of sin, they will see that they are the ones who are guilty of the blood of the blessed Son of God, and they will confess it, like David owned his sin; and as a result, the walls of Zion will be built, and the blessing will come in.

Ere leaving this book, I would call your attention to the

fact that it closes with the familiar seventy-second psalm. Take the forty-second and the seventy-second psalms and compare them together. In the forty-second you have, "Like the heart panteth after the waterbrooks," a thirsty soul away from God, panting after Him. In the seventy-second, you have the Lord in possession, the Lord reigns and He comes down like rain upon the mown grass, and His people rejoice and bless God because of the restoration of the blessing through Christ Himself, the King's Son. Those two psalms, I might say, at the beginning and at the close give us the picture of their whole experience in connection with their sin. They are away from God, they are brought back through Christ. This is the Exodus.

The third book answering to Leviticus opens with a sanctuary psalm, the seventy-third, which tells us of the only place where they can understand what God is, and the whole book enlarges upon the principles of holiness which we find in the presence of God.

Then at the ninetieth and ninety-first psalms you open up the book of Numbers, the fourth, the wilderness book of the whole Psalms. These two psalms are in beautiful contrast. In the ninetieth you have what man is alone: "We spend our years as a tale that is told." Man is born, he lives, his days are few and full of trouble, and he dies; and all he can ask is, "so teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." When you come to the ninety-first, you have a beautiful contrast. It is not the first man, but the second; it is the one who "dwells in the secret place of the Most High, who abides under the shadow of the Almighty." Man without Christ is the poor man of the ninetieth psalm, fittingly written by Moses the leader through the wilderness, as an expression of what man would be without the knowledge of anything else but himself, and God's demands upon him. Then in the ninety-first you have One

who will tread upon the lion, and the adder, One who will go on conquering, in the very circumstances of trial which have oppressed the one in the ninetieth psalm. This is Christ, dear friends, the true Man, who goes through the wilderness with its joys and sorrows, as having the presence of God all the way.

There are other beautiful psalms very striking in this fourth book that we cannot speak of except to call your attention to them. For instance, you have that series commencing with the ninety-fifth and going on to the hundredth. It is in the book that speaks of the world, and of our experiences through it. You have here the world itself, the trees of the field as it were, clapping their hands, and rejoicing at the presence of the Lord, when He shall come and take His power and reign.

Just a word on the remainder of the psalms must suffice, before we pass on to the other part that is before us to-night. From the 107th till the close you have the fifth book or Deuteronomy. One of the most prominent psalms in that portion is the 119th, which gives us God's word celebrated in every possible way. The Deuteronomy, as we have seen, gives always the principles of God's dealings with His people, the wisdom which they get when they go over their path with Him. Here He shows what that wisdom is. It is in that word before us, the all-sufficient guide, the all-sufficient sustaining power for His people in this world. So you have the whole alphabet used eight times, eight verses to each letter of the alphabet, as though God would emphasize for us in this way that the new creation number, eight, is connected with His Word, and He wants us to know how full that Word is; it is as full as the new creation.

But we must close this brief glance at the Psalms. There is very much that I have not even alluded to, but enough I trust to show us what a wonderful line of truth it is that runs through it all; how wonderfully everything

leads up, higher and higher to the praise and worship which gradually gains in power and strength. All trial is looked at, everything dwelt upon only to find in it fresh fuel, fresh material for praise and worship. Just as when you have a mighty flame of fire and you cast upon it water, it does not quench it but makes it burn still more intensely, so you find that as the flame of praise and worship kindles, the thought of what Christ is above all, and of what God is to His people in every circumstance; the very afflictions and trials only cause the flame to burn up more brightly and intensely than ever, till as in the 149th and the 150th psalms, all creation joins with the redeemed people of God, in eternal songs of praise. What an ending to our experience! And the little song of praise that you may be able to sing, like a feeble chirp of some little bird in the dark before the dawning of the day, is but the prelude to that great chorus of worship, which is quickening and quickening and uniting together till it all goes up in one grand anthem of praise. Just so we have it set before us most wonderfully in the book of Revelation, where all things,—every creature in heaven and earth and sea,—unite to ascribe blessing and honor and glory and power unto Him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb forever and forever.

“Hark! the heavenly notes again!
Loudly swells the song of praise;
Through creation’s vault, Amen!
Amen! responsive joy doth raise.”

Do you wonder that the Psalms are thus the first of these books of experience, and that they give us in this way every form of experience through which God’s people pass, and turn it all to worship and to praise? A Genesis indeed, in its varied fulness.

We come to Job next; and there are three thoughts I believe that will give us the key to the whole history of Job. Those thoughts are Satan’s malice, Job’s self-right-

eousness, and God's glorious majesty. Satan's assault on Job you have in the first chapters, and when God has permitted Satan to do his worst, he passes from view. He has introduced Job into the circumstances which God will use to probe him. Satan, with all his malice, is but the tool in God's hands, as it were, to polish His people, taking from them the tarnish which prevents their reflecting His image.

But at the close of the book, God comes in, and reveals His majesty and His power; and what a change! Job who had closed the mouths of his friends, but was in bondage and misery, now learns the secret of deliverance. And what is that secret? Is it that God vindicates him, or confirms him in his good opinion of himself? He could tell Satan that there was none like Job upon the earth, but He speaks far differently to Job himself. Ah! in God's holy presence, awed and broken by His majesty, he learns how vile and full of sin he is: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." That is the secret of deliverance for the best man that the earth has. His name is significant as meaning a penitent. Think of it, the best man on earth a penitent, the best man on earth abhorring himself, and getting to the end of himself; and then you find God for him. Beloved, that is the secret, I say, of our deliverance as well as Job's. When you have learned what you are, when you have learned what good self is as well as bad self, have learned to have no confidence in yourself, then God can come in and turn all Satan's assaults and all your experiences of what you are, humiliating though they be, into blessing for you. You have now done with self, and now you can go on with God.

And how beautifully that links with the next portion that you have in these books of experience. I have come to the end of myself in Job, the end even of good self.

When a man has no more goodness that he can be occupied with, if he has no more attainment that he can delight in, if he cannot stand himself off and look at himself, and say, "See what a man I am, and what I have done," what has he as the object before his heart? How beautifully the song of Solomon gives the answer. I am delivered from myself for what purpose? To be occupied with the blessed Son of God. Oh! who would not exchange Job with all his goodness and uprightness, who would not exchange occupation with Job for occupation with Christ, with the love and with the heart of Christ? Are we wrong in saying that it is the Song of songs. That it is the song that leads all other songs, the song that sets aside all other songs, that which celebrates for us the Person and the love that passes all knowledge—Christ our blessed Lord.

I say again, to be delivered does not mean merely to be delivered in a negative way with nothing positive before us. It does not mean to be set free from self-occupation to have some other kind of occupation with things of earth; but to be delivered is to have Job set aside that Christ may fill my soul; and that it may overflow in a song that celebrates Him. We find all through this beautiful little book, with its few brief chapters, the soul grappled by a love that is so mighty, so big that the heart cannot contain it. Are you familiar with that thought in the song of Solomon? I do not say is your intellect familiar with it; I do not say can you give the various dialogues and experiences running through it; but are you familiar with the heart that throbs through it? Do you see the One from behind the lattice, who looks out at us in such a way that you can see His very features, at it were, and hear His voice? Are you, am I, living in any sense in the sanctuary of that holy place where the Lord Himself is the object before us? That is the sanctuary, the true Leviticus. That is holiness, the

acme of all experience, which is to lead us into heart acquaintance with Christ. Let us pray that God will make that more a reality, that we may know practically what, like John, it is to have the head upon the Lord's bosom, or like the bride here, who says, "Thy love is better than wine," better than the choicest vintage of earth's joy.

You go on next to that other book, of Ecclesiastes, alas, in such contrast to the song of Solomon. You step out from the heaven of the Lord's presence into the earth of the wisest man's experience. You had in Job the best man, he abhorred himself and repented in dust and ashes; and in Ecclesiastes you have the wisest man, and his wisdom is but folly. Here is a man who has had every opportunity; he has kingly prerogative; thousands wait upon his bidding; he has all wealth, every thing that heart could wish. He has all wisdom—every opportunity to enjoy himself in the world, and what is the result? "Vanity of vanity,—all is vanity."

I see a young Christian looking out on the the world. He says, I must have my experience in it, I must know something of what it has to offer. Why should he? Here we have the divine record of the experience of the man who had every opportunity to learn what the world was. "What can he do that cometh after the king?" This man marshals the world before him; he says, I will get all I can out of it; and all that he gets out of it is bitterness, vexation, disappointment. Do we repine at our circumstances? Suppose you were to answer to-night truthfully, What is it that prevents your being perfectly happy, what would you say? Is the health not very good, the position in life not just what you would wish—work is too hard, hours too long, pay too small? Would not something like that be a truthful answer for many? What is it that makes people happy? Solomon says if you have all the wealth of a king, and all his power; if you spent your time in seeking enjoyment; if

you spent your whole life in searching through the rubbish of this world, you would find nothing but disappointment.

What a mercy it is that we have not to walk in this path, but can take the experience of this wise man who has walked it. If I was traveling over a lonely moor, with the roads not very clearly marked, my eye-sight not very bright, and I should meet a traveler coming from a certain direction in which I had been thinking of going, and I see he is covered with mud; I say, "Where have you been?" "I have been up that road as far as it leads to the very end of it." "And what have you found?" "A quagmire of filth and disappointment." Would I walk up the same road? would I not be thankful to have met the man who saved me all the humiliation and trouble of walking in such a path? And yet how often is it that we do not seem willing to take the experiences of the travelers who have gone ahead of us. God has permitted one of the wisest of earth to walk through that road from end to end, and come back with all the mire of it upon him, and say, "vanity and vexation of spirit." And yet down in the bottom of our hearts how often do we wish to have our own experience of it all. We will get nothing in that path but what Solomon got. How wise we are if we take his experience, and rest satisfied with the Song of songs.

The love of Christ, and the person of Christ, and all the tender assurances of what He is to me, are sufficient without the bitter experience that I would gather in passing through the experience of Ecclesiastes. Have you learned that lesson? are you willing to learn it? Happy, happy are you if you have.

That is just what God would gather up and bring home to us in the book of Proverbs. It is divine wisdom which has gathered up all that we need for our path, and put it before us in such a shape that we find a word for almost everything. Even if we had time, I fear that all I could

do would be to point out here and there nuggets of gold which lie thick along the very surface of the book. There is this however to note: It is the book of wisdom for the path; it is God going over the path with us. In Ecclesiastes, you have king Solomon going over the path alone in his own experience; but in Proverbs, you have God going over the path with us, pointing out the dangers, the need of care in this direction or in the other. And he who will be a wise man, is the one who has his mind and heart and conscience fully equipped with the wondrous truth in this book of Proverbs. No doubt there is much that is typical in it. I have no doubt, for instance, that this strange woman in it is the world, and that what we are to beware of in her allurements is the contrast of what you have of the unchanging love of Christ in the song of Solomon.

Nor do I doubt that in the king you have,—the king who scatters away darkness by the light of his countenance, and in whose favor is joy; whose favor is like the cloud of the latter rain,—you have Christ there as the coming King. But between the beginning and the ending of the book, between the warning you get of the strange woman at the beginning and the unfoldings as to the king in the close, you have a great mass of practical words for the way.

There are thirty-one chapters in the book of Proverbs; just one chapter a day, for a month. If you will take it and read a chapter every day for a month, carefully and prayerfully, and note the words of wisdom that are in it—I need not assure you of what value it will be to you. If you will do this again and again your profit will be the greater, for it is not a book that you can close and put away, but one that you can live by as a guide-book through the world. You will find a direct word from the Lord for many a question about which you are in doubt now—about your associations, your conduct with

your fellow-men, with your brethren; about the avoidance of strife, the avoidance of pride—hundreds of dangers which beset our path. They are provided for in that wondrous book of wisdom for the way. God wants us to profit by it.

That gives us, in brief and imperfect way, the outline of these books of experience. If we have done nothing else but have our hearts stirred with a craving and a longing to know more of the wonders of God's word; if it has begotten in us a desire to make it more practically our own; if we carry out that desire, I am sure it is not in vain that we have dwelt upon it at this time.

LECTURE VI

THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

WE come now to a very distinct and new portion of our subject. No one who knows even what the Bible is can fail to see that we have in it the two great divisions of the Old and New Testaments. We have through God's goodness gone over, in some measure, all the books of the Old Testament, finding them divided into four great sections, corresponding you might say, to the first four books of Moses. The books of the Law, the books of covenant-history, the books of the Prophets, and lastly the poetical, or books of experience. That completes the Old Testament. We will not dwell upon the significance of there being *four* sections in the Old Testament—the book of an earthly people—but just to notice before we take up what is especially before us, that you now have an entirely new subject. It is the second portion of Scripture; it is not, as it were, a fifth section. It is not merely going on with what we had; but there is a complete break, and here, in the New Testament, we have that which is entirely different in its contents and in its character from everything that had gone before.

All that had gone before had to do, in brief, with man according to the flesh. There is one man with whom everything is linked in the Old Testament, and that man is Adam, the first Adam. There is one Man with whom everything is linked in the New Testament, and that is Christ, the last Adam, the Lord out of heaven. These are the two distinguishing men of the two books. Of course I am not saying a word as to the grace and good-

ness and mercy of God, which shine out here and there all through the Old Testament, but that the person about whom everything hinges is the first man; whether it be in himself or in his descendants—in Abraham or Moses or David—still they are all man according to the flesh, connected with Adam, therefore under law, and therefore to be set aside. What a contrast when we come to the New Testament, which is emphasized for us in its very structure! Instead of the four divisions, we have but one, as though it were now God Himself, one blessed unity before us, though, as we shall see, the book is divided up again and again in the most suggestive way. It is but One as contrasted with four; it is the divine as contrasted with the human; it is salvation as contrasted with failure, this second division of the whole Bible.

It divides as usual into a pentateuch. You have here the books of Gospel history corresponding to Genesis. How suggestive, dear brethren, that is! In Genesis you have the life of seven individuals, as you saw, giving us the history of the divine life in man; here, we have the life in one person; it is life in the Son of God Himself. A new Genesis, blessed be God, a new beginning indeed, not with man, no matter how faithful, but with Christ Himself.

In Acts we have an Exodus, a second division, which is the history of redemption. I do not say that in Acts you have redemption wrought; that, we know, is narrated at the close of the Gospels, in the work of Christ. But here we have redemption history, just as in Exodus we have the account of the deliverance of the children of Israel out of Egypt, brought away from under the dominion of Pharaoh. So you have in the Acts the deliverance of Israel from under the bondage of Judaism, into the liberty of the gospel of Christ. That is a true Exodus.

In the third book, answering to Leviticus, you have in the New Testament a most beautiful amplification of that.

In Paul's fourteen epistles you have a Leviticus, which for fulness, variety, and completeness, and for the wondrous nearness into which it brings us, excels the book of Leviticus, as you might expect the reality to excel the shadow. In Paul's epistles you have our place of nearness, the principles of holiness upon which we are brought near and abide in the holy presence of God, brought out in all their wonderful variety and fulness.

That brings us to Numbers again, to a wilderness experience, and most beautifully have we in the New Testament this, in the epistles of Peter, James, John, and Jude, commonly called the catholic or general epistles. These give us in marked contrast to Paul's epistles, not the place of nearness to God so much as the place of responsibility on earth, and the needed grace for our walk there according to God. Lastly, in Revelation, we have a true Deuteronomy, a glance backward at the history of God's redeemed Church, then a glance forward at the things which must take place after that, and then a still further glance deeper yet into the eternal inheritance, and portion of God's beloved people, whether earthly or heavenly; and we close the book of inspiration with our gaze fixed upon eternity, the eternal joy where Christ is, forever. A most beautiful Deuteronomy that is, ending indeed most appropriately, as its number would suggest, God with man, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them." Thus you see, we have before us a most entrancing and delightful subject of study for the time we have to spend upon it.

And now we take up to-night the Genesis of all this, the beginning of it, that without which none of the rest could possibly be, without which we could not have in the least degree one thing of all the rest. We have the foundation here in these wondrous Gospel accounts, which present to us that unique life, which, as John says, was with the Father, and was manifested unto us. In

other words, in the four Gospels we have what no one can for a moment question is the theme—the life of Christ Himself. No one thinks for a moment that it is the history of the twelve apostles; no one dreams for a moment that it is the history of the Jewish nation, or John the Baptist's life. All these and many other subjects come in, but who for a moment dreams that anything is the theme of these Gospels except the person of Christ Himself? Everything else is subordinate to Him, is in the background, only, as it were, the setting in which we have the jewel, flashing out in all its glorious brilliancy; not to dazzle, but to attract, not merely the eye, but the heart, and draw us out in adoring love to Himself.

But then because of the absolute certainty of what is the theme of the four Gospels, we need to look at them a little more closely in order to see the various elements which make up this theme. You have in most things in nature a blending. What appears to us is the result of a blending of many things. The very clothing we wear is a blended material; the very light in this room is made up of many rays of various colors, perfectly blended together, giving us as a result one ray, by which we see all things clearly. So it is in these four Gospels; there is no question that it is the blessed person of Christ that is presented to us in all its wondrous fulness, but that Person is presented to us in all its varied characters, in such a way that we get a full and not a partial view of Christ; we get a divine view of what He is, and not merely a human view.

If we had been writing a life of Jesus, we would have done exactly what hundreds of devout students of Scripture have since done. Look at the catalogues of books which give us the life of Jesus, and what do you find? Four lives? No; you find that these four Gospels have been, as it were, pushed together and made into one life. And for what reason? As though men would say, It

was rather an error to have four gospels, four lives; we want one life. I do not say this is the thought of all who have written lives of Christ—surely not—but they have failed to emphasize the feature of which I speak.

Now we know there is divine wisdom in giving us the four distinct and separate lives. Had God wanted to give us one simple perfect life of His Son, He could have done it, but He had an object in view, and that was that we should see not one side of His blessed Son, but all four sides. And so He has given it to us in four lives, written in the most natural way. All four Gospels present to us the same Person. It is the same Jesus in Matthew that you find in John, you recognize Him at once. No two persons there, but how different the presentation of that Person!

Let us compare this with the typical teachings of the tabernacle, which present to us the person of Christ here upon earth. In that part which speaks of Christ Himself, the curtains of the tent, the tabernacle proper, you have four coverings, displaying the person of the Lord. First of all, there was the tabernacle proper, or first covering which was made up of four blended colors, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen—four distinct colors blended and embroidered together in the form of cherubim. Over that there was the covering of goat's hair; over that again the covering of rams' skins dyed red, and still over that the covering of Badgers' skins outside of all. I do not wish to be fanciful, nor go beyond what one can really see in Scripture; but in these two "fours," just as you have them there, is there not the suggestion of a four-fold view of Christ. Or to go back a little further, is there not a suggestion of the earth; of the creature in dependence, in the place of trial, in the place of obedience here upon earth? Blessed be God, there is something else when we come to Christ, for if you remember, those curtains that made up the first tent were twenty-

eight cubits long, and four cubits wide. The element of four coming in twice there, speaks of this earth, and of this fourfold character of Christ; and yet the four being multiplied by seven, tells us that though in the creature place, in the place of testing, of humiliation, of subjection, there was the divine perfection in Him; seven times four making twenty-eight cubits.

Now, as I was saying, we do not want to be fanciful at all, but may there not be found, as we go on to examine more and more carefully, the corresponding Gospel to each of these colors? For instance, if I may suggest for a moment what seems right on the surface: you have the colors of the first covering, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen. Blue is the heavenly color. Have we a heavenly Gospel? I need hardly suggest it, John gives us that. Purple is the color of Jewish royalty. Have we a gospel giving us the King of the Jews? Again, Matthew answers for us that we have the King of the Jews presented to us there. Scarlet speaks of glory, of world-wide glory, and have we a Gospel that presents to us one who first went into death, and then was raised up out of that, and occupies a place of highest glory? and while perhaps not so clearly defined as the others, I think we could answer that Mark suggests that. While for the fine twined linen, that which speaks of His essentially human character, wrought out in all its perfection, the Gospel of Luke gives it to us, will it not?

Or again, take the four several coverings. We have been looking merely at the colors of the first. The first, which is the composite one, with its governmental cherubim, we may say corresponds to that which is fullest and connected with government. I would suggest that we identify it with the gospel of Matthew. Take the goats' hair, which speaks of the sin offering and we can have no question that it is the gospel of Mark that suggests that. Take again the rams' skin dyed red, and there you

have the devotion unto death which we will for the time at least, merely feeling our way, connect with John; and then in the badgers' skins, that which links with earth, connected with the gospel of Luke. Now I only suggest this, I do not mean to say that I accept it all, but it is most interesting and most striking to find that there is in some way, at least, a correspondence between the types that present to us the Lord's character in these various ways, and the Gospels, which we are now going to speak of.

Let us not think that all this is a digression. Our subject, you remember, does not permit us to take up and to unfold each book of these gospels in any full way at all. What we want to see is the general theme, the general character of each one, as compared with the rest of the Scriptures. We will go back still to the tabernacle and to that first covering. You remember that you find there cherubim embroidered on the curtain, and when you come to the veil before the holiest, they are there too. We find the cherubim first, with a flaming sword, at the gate of Eden after the fall. We next see them upon the ark, and the mercy-seat, and afterward they appear in Ezekiel, where God is executing judgment. We have them, too, in the fourth of Revelation, where God's throne for judgment is set. Now is there anything in this that gives a little further light upon these Gospels? You remember that we are told without any question of uncertainty, in the epistle to the Hebrews, that the veil is Christ's flesh. The veil presents to us Christ's person in His flesh as man down here, and upon that veil were embroidered these cherubim. Now in the veil you have the person of Christ, but in the cherubim you have with that Person the thought of the One who executes judgment. One verse in the fifth chapter of the gospel of John links those two thoughts together, "And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also because He is the Son of Man." In other

words because of our Lord's humanity, because of what He is as presented to us in these Gospels, He has authority to execute judgment, He has the cherubim character, if I may use that word, because He is the Son of Man.

So when we come to the book of Revelation, I would ask you just to notice the description of those beasts, as they are very improperly called there, a most unworthy title, a most unfortunate translation of a word of a very different meaning; "the living ones," is what it ought to be, corresponding exactly to the cherubim in the Old Testament. You have them described for us in the fourth of Revelation in the seventh verse, "And the first beast was like a lion, the second beast like a calf, the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle." Living creatures, as I said, the word should be rendered, and they present to us all the energy of God put forth in the execution of His judgment. Now in these living creatures, in these cherubim, you have just what you have on the veil in the tabernacle. They remind us of one thing, that Christ has authority to execute judgment. He is the one, therefore, who has these characteristics, but it is because He is the Son of Man. So when we come to the Son of Man as presented in the Gospels, we find the very characters that are set before us in the cherubim.

First like a lion, secondly like an ox or a bullock—the word is not exactly a calf;—thirdly, with the face of man, fourthly, a flying eagle. Let us connect these with the four Gospels. In this very portion of Revelation from which I have read, you have "the lion of the tribe of Judah" spoken of, connecting it with Jacob blessing His twelve sons, in the forty-ninth chapter of Genesis: "Judah is a lion's whelp." Men commonly speak of the lion as the king of beasts. Thus in the lion we have Christ in His kingly character, and more particularly as King of

the Jews. That is the theme of Matthew. The second living creature, the ox, is the animal for the service of man; as Scripture says, "much increase is by the strength of the ox." That is what we have in the Gospel of Mark; Christ the perfect Servant, the one who as it were took a yoke of service upon Himself,—He who had no need to bear any yoke.

Look again at Luke's wondrous chapters. We see there, not kingly authority, not even service merely, but an intensely human Gospel. It is the heart of God speaking in and to man's heart as it were. It is the face of a man. While in the eagle soaring up higher and higher into the very heights of heaven itself, there is no difficulty in tracing the Gospel of John.

Now is it not remarkable that we have in all this imagery, everything grouped about these four Gospels which present to us the person of Christ? Nothing is forced here; I do not think that anything is fanciful in what has been said so far, and I am sure it should awaken the most careful thought, and inquiry on our part as to the wondrous fulness that we have in the Gospels.

I might suggest while we are on this portion of our subject that a very able writer upon this subject has come very near to the truth in many things, and yet has failed to catch the thought of the Spirit, for a very simple reason. He has been thinking of the people for whom the Gospels were written, rather than the wonderful Person who is unveiled in the Gospels;—in other words Christ Himself was not before his soul as the one commanding object, the one whom God would have as the centre of His thoughts. Thus he tells us that Matthew is the Gospel written for the Jews, Jewish Christians, that it has a Jewish habit of thought all the way through. Quite true; but yet how far from the thought that it is Christ Himself the King of the Jews that you have there.

Similarly Mark was written for the Romans, because

there you have everything very briefly narrated quite to the point, in a most business-like way passing from one thing to another. That is true again in a certain sense, but it is not because it suits the Roman mind, but because it presents to us a perfect Servant in all the diligent promptness of His service, going from one point to another all the way through.

In like manner he tells us that the Gospel of Luke was written for the Greek, that it suits the Greek mode of thought and expression; and that the entire narrative is characterized by a certain graceful presentation of things with anecdote and illustration. Most short of the truth again, though there may be some element of truth in it, but he has lost sight of Christ, and has as it were, the people in his mind.

And then he tells us that John was written for the Church, for those who know Christ. Quite true, but very far short of the fulness of the truth.

Having now gone several times over these Gospels to connect them with their various types, we will now briefly take up each one separately. But first a word as to their connection with each other.

They are four, and that number speaks of the earth and of weakness; therefore, we have the Lord there as man upon earth, in the creature place, subjected to the testing of this world. This and much more did humanity mean for Him.

But these four Gospels are very different from one another, and the first three have a similarity to each other quite distinct from the fourth. We need not be surprised therefore, to find Matthew Mark and Luke together, and John by itself.

But let us pause there. Three Gospels and one. You take the number four and divide it for yourself, and how would you do it? two and two. That is the natural division. But the more we look at numbers the more we

find in them. As I suggested to you previously, the even numbers suggest evil and the odd numbers suggest good. We have Genesis, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy; they are the odd numbers. Genesis suggests life from God, Leviticus, access to God, and Deuteronomy, God with man; while the two even numbers, "two" and "four" suggest evil. In Exodus you have the bondage of sin from which they need deliverance, and in Numbers you have the wilderness and failure. Now if the Gospels were divided into two and two, we would have have our blessed Lord's life divided as it were in an evil sense. We would have there a cleaving which would mark weakness and the power of evil, rather than the power of good.

What do we have on the contrary? Three Gospels so clearly linked together that they have been known as the synoptic Gospels from time immemorial. And that word *synoptic* means "taken together." Taken together—three,—Matthew, Mark, and Luke. John has ever stood alone in all its peerless significance as the one Gospel by itself. Three is the number of divine manifestation. One is the number of divine unity and completeness. When you come to look at these three synoptic Gospels they suggest to us in an amazing way the divine fulness that there was in the Man Christ Jesus down here. All three together in their blended light present to us God manifested in Christ, whether as King, as Servant, or as Man.

We come to John again and find that it stands alone. No need there for any three-fold presentation of it, though most beautifully you have it divided into three portions. Three portions giving us the thought of full manifestation. But it is the one Gospel, it is the Gospel of the Divinity. However still a part of that four; all in the Man Christ Jesus.

Let me remind you of that verse in the first chapter of John. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among

us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." There is the divine glory manifested, but it is manifested in the Word made flesh, the Man Christ Jesus down here. And so I look at that fourfold gospel, and say, Here I have to do with a Man upon the earth, I have to do with the creature under testing. But I look at that Man,—that Man in the place of weakness, of humiliation, of testing—and I see the full manifestation of divine glory there—I look again and I see God—God alone in all His perfection. That is written, as it were, in the very texture of the books themselves, imprinted in their very form and character. We see this even before taking up the contents of them at all. How wonderful that God has written His Word for us in this way, and suggests to us the perfection that we are to find before we think of the contents of the books.

I suppose there is no portion of Scripture that we are more familiar with than the four Gospels, and yet is it not true that we feel how little we have truly fathomed them? Who can worthily portray the perfection that you find there? who can fully set forth the wonders in the character of the blessed Saviour Himself? We need to be learners, to take up that with which we have been most familiar since our childhood, and learn something of the wonders exhibited for our hearts, and for God's glory.

We have three together, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the lion, the ox, and the man. Matthew presents to us the Messiah, the King of Israel. You cannot read the first verse of Matthew without seeing that as the subject of the whole book. "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ Son of David, Son of Abraham." We have His two-fold title. "Son of Abraham" links him with the whole household of faith; shows, as it were, how the vine runs over the walls to the Gentiles.

If He were only the Son of David we would be like

the Syrophœnician woman, if we claimed blessing from Him in that way. She said, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, Thou Son of David." That meant the Messiah, the King of Israel, and our Lord's answer to her was: "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But when I read that He is not merely Son of David, but Son of Abraham, I say, If there is the faith to reach out the hand and claim the blessing; if there is the faith that there was in that poor Syrophœnician woman who could say—and how it delights the Lord to have His argument put back into His very face—if she could say, "Yes Lord, but the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table,"—she is a daughter of Abraham, because she has the faith of Abraham, and it is Jesus Christ the Son of David, the Son of Abraham that is presented in Matthew.

Look at that genealogy a moment, at the names of the women in it. There are but four, and every one of them is the name of a Gentile. They are not "mothers in Israel" in the ordinary sense. There you have first, Tamar. She is a Gentile, and alas! her sin is what is prominently brought before us; most shameful history, that one would blush to read in public even. Then we have Rahab, the poor woman of Jericho, another Gentile and one whose character is far, far too faulty for introduction into what would be called respectable society. Then you have Ruth who is a Moabitess, another Gentile. Then you have Bath-sheba, as to whom there may be some question, and yet Uriah her husband was a Hittite. But as to the other three, there is no question that they were Gentile women.

Here right in the genealogy to prove that the Lord was the King of the Jews, where the Jews have not the least question, are women's names who would destroy any legal title to the throne.

And yet who are they? Why there is Judah the very

progenitor of the whole tribe from which the sceptre should not depart. There is Rahab, the ancestress of David, and Ruth also nearer yet,—and in Bath-sheba, one linked with the king himself, the mother of Solomon.

How those names of Gentile women, and sinful women at that, are woven in such a way in the kingship of Israel that to be the Son of David, one has to be the son of these Gentiles. Is there not a significance in that? In the gospel which gives us unquestionably the birth of the King, you have at once the thought that the blessing is wider than Israel. He is the Son of Abraham as well. Thus in the first chapter of that gospel presenting Him as the King of the Jews, you have wondrous grace going out to the Gentiles. Look at the next chapter. He is born King at Bethlehem; He is a little babe in His mother's arms. Who is it that comes to worship Him? Wise men, not from amongst Israel, though there were wise men there who could turn up their bibles and point to chapter and verse as to where He was to be born. But they did not go one step to worship Him. "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." But men from the distant east, representing the nations from afar, could bring to Him their glory and their honor, just as the nations will, in the millennial days, bring their glory and honor unto that city where the Lamb will dwell.

That is the King of Israel, the One you will find all through Matthew. Most beautifully are the character of the King and the principles of His Kingdom traced for us through those chapters. A glance at the prominent portions must suffice. We have already seen the genealogy and birth of the King in the first chapter, and the worship of the wise men in the second, which closes with the persecution of Herod, the flight into Egypt, and the subsequent return to Nazareth in Galilee. All, "that the scriptures might be fulfilled"—a constantly recurring expression in this gospel, characteristic of its theme.

In the next two chapters, three and four, we have the King presented, anointed and owned from heaven, and then proven by His temptations in the wilderness. How blessed it is to think that before He had done one public act, before His trial even in the wilderness, God anointed Him, and set the seal of His approval upon Him. What secrets of a perfect life did those thirty years of retirement contain, for the eye and heart of God alone.

Following, we have three chapters containing the "Sermon on the Mount," where we have the divine principles of the Kingdom unfolded. What holiness, what spirituality shine through it, and yet what consistency with its place in a gospel which deals with the earth.

After the Sermon on the Mount, in lovely contrast with its pure and lofty principles of holiness, and yet in perfect consistency with them, you see the activities of the King in mercy—cleansing the leper, curing all manner of diseases, casting out devils, raising the dead—all quickly following one another, in chapters eight and nine.

Not content with this work Himself, He qualifies and sends forth (chap. x.) His disciples on the same errand of love, connecting it with the proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom, which will still be preached ere the nation will receive its true King.

In chap. xi., the shadows begin to fall. John is cast into prison, and from his loneliness sends that word of unbelieving faith—if I may use such a contradictory expression,—as to our Lord's being actually the King. In that same chapter we have the woes pronounced on the favored places, where most of His mighty works had been done, for their unbelief. But amid the gloom of unbelief so rapidly settling down upon the people, we hear those words of grace still lingering over those He loved—words which have brought peace to countless thousands of weary hearts, and will to thousands more

should He still tarry: "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

In the next chapter, the twelfth, the lines are drawn more closely, and the enmity comes out undisguised. The leaders accuse Him of doing His miracles through Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, and after this blasphemous slight put upon the Holy Ghost, He can but pronounce their own doom upon such hardened ones.

This brings us to the mystery form of the Kingdom, developed in those wondrous parables of the thirteenth chapter—a sevenfold presentation of the history of things during the absence of the King. I can barely call your attention to the fact that the first four are separated from the last three, and give us respectively the outward form where evil exists, and the inward counsels of God, including in this last the judgment which will take place ere His Kingdom is set up. The pearl is the Church; the treasure in the field is Israel in the world. The purchaser in both cases is the Lord Himself.

From this on to the final scenes we have an evident reserve. Grace continues to act, the hungry are fed and the needy are helped; but the Lord seeks retirement. He avoids, till the time when He should be offered up, all clashing with the Jews, save where faithfulness makes it necessary. But all hope, humanly speaking, has departed. It is a rejected King whose footsteps we are now tracing. And yet here, when the unbelieving nation had closed the door, we have such lovely gospel pictures as that of the Syrophœnician woman, the glimmering foreshadowing of the establishment of His Church, and the full outshining of His glory in the transfiguration.

All the gospels begin the closing scenes with the riding into Jerusalem, which is particularly appropriate to Matthew and is gone into fully, together with those matchless interviews in which He silences His enemies, and the parables in which He unfolds their responsibility,—His

prophetic discourse is complete. It includes the future of Israel, the Church and the nations.

Lastly we have the crucifixion of their King—His betrayal by one of His own; His trial and conviction before the Sanhedrim; His sentence pronounced by the unwilling Pilate and written upon His very cross—a fitting echo to which we have in the awful words of the people, "His blood be on us, and on our children." But in all this He is the King, He submits to their taunts and mockery as one who could easily have shaken them off; He confesses His kingship to Pilate; and even in death "dismissed His Spirit," as a King.

This brings me to say a word as to what is familiar to most of you regarding the view of our Lord's death in this gospel. For details you must look elsewhere; but as Matthew is the governmental gospel, so our Lord's death is looked upon in that way. Death is the governmental penalty of sin—of trespass. So you have here death, and what is deeper than death, the forsaking of God. It is the trespass-offering aspect of that death, and gives us the full satisfaction for sins committed.

The last chapter gives us the resurrection of the King. Fitting accompaniment of His triumphant rising is the resurrection of many saints—evidently sharers with Him in that act of power.

The Gospel closes in Galilee—still rejected by His own—but with the Great Commission entrusted to His servants, and the assurance of all power in His hands who is King, and of His being with them till the end of the age.

What a King! what a Gospel!

But I must hasten on to Mark, not now noticing what we have glanced at in Matthew, but merely the characteristic features of the book.

There is a great degree of similarity between it and Matthew, and some have even thought that Mark was a

sort of abridgement or a new edition of Matthew. That is worthy of the "higher critics" with all their wisdom. But any one who reads and studies this gospel will find that there is a distinct object running through it all.

In the first place the Spirit of God lops off, if I may use such an expression, all that relates to the birth and infancy of our Lord. We have Him put before us as a mature Man. John the Baptist in a few words heralds Him. He is sent into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, and there, before you have read more than ten verses, you see the faithful Servant engaged in His work.

The Servant of Jehovah, the Prophet of Jehovah is come to bring the blessings of Jehovah to poor sinful man, and He passes as it were from one person to another, laying His hands upon this leper, upon that demoniac, and upon Peter's wife's mother; whoever it may be that needs divine healing, there He is to minister to that one. And as though he would gather up for us in a single verse the varied activities of our Lord, the evangelist says, at the setting of the sun "They brought unto Him all that were afflicted, and tormented with various diseases, and He healed them all."

That is the character of this Gospel all the way through, He passes from one service to another, from one place to another. There is no lingering, there is no turning away from the work; He lets His work as it were, speak for God and then, as a Prophet of God, all that He has to say is directly, and specifically to that point.

Blessed thought it is, dear brethren, that the One who serves God perfectly here, is the One who serves poor sinful man. How exquisitely touching it is that the gospel of the perfect Servant should have been written by one who had proved himself a very poor servant. Mark had accompanied Barnabas and Paul to a certain point, and then, either from fear, or disinclination to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, had turned

back. For this reason, on their next journey Paul refused his company—even though it cost him the companionship of Barnabas. Later we read with comfort “Take Mark and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the ministry” (2 Tim. iv. 11). In like manner it is the wandering, but now restored sheep who—in Peter—is entrusted with the lambs. But such is grace.

When we come to the death of the blessed Servant, we find all in appropriate keeping with the gospel. It is as the sin-offering that we see our Lord here. There is the cry of anguish, given doubtless in the very words our blessed Lord used, and not the Hebrew as in Matthew. These are in Aramaic, the vernacular language used in Palestine at that time.

After the death we have the full result of atonement, the veil is rent.

Chap. xvi. resembles the first in this way: it rapidly recapitulates the various appearances of our Lord after His resurrection. Even at the very last we see Him, though seated in heaven, still engaged in serving with His servants. What a joy will it be in that day soon coming when it will be true of us, “His servants shall serve Him,” and what a privilege even now to do anything for Him who did all for us.

Coming to Luke we are introduced again to the birth of the Man Christ Jesus. The evangelist seems loth to get away from that. He lingers about that birth, and all those holy scenes. We can see the pious mothers of John and of Jesus having sweet intercourse together. We see Zacharias and hear his and Mary’s happy songs. We see all this intensely human picture, all centred about the birth of that Man—Christ Jesus. And so the evangelist shows how great that interest is, not merely for human hearts; he gives us a glimpse of the heavens themselves, on that wondrous night when Jesus was born. Heaven

is opened, and as though the full chorus of the angels were following their Lord out of heaven, loth to part with Him, longing to be with Him down here where He had veiled His glory, and would not have an attendant host,—we see them there and hear them saying, “Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will to men.”

All this centres about the babe, about the child; and there in Luke you have the only allusion to the Lord's boyhood. All that is most characteristic of this Gospel; you find it all the way through; He is not presented to us there as King; He is not there before us as One who is claiming authority, nor yet simply as the Servant, but He is there as the Man amongst men. Even His genealogy is traced backward to Adam—thence to God. It is the Son of *Man*.

You take that wondrous scene in Nazareth where He opened the prophet Isaiah, and read to them. What a beautiful prophecy He selected, and how beautifully human was the whole scene. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” Then He goes on and comments upon it, and you remember what their objection to it all was,—that it was the carpenter's son that is telling them all this. They marveled at the words of grace that fell from His lips, but it is a man that is telling us this, it is only a carpenter's son. And yet that is the glory of Luke. He presents to us the Man, the carpenter's Son all the way through, and as you take up one after another of those wondrous portions in this Gospel, how thankful we are for this “Man Christ Jesus.”

Look at the poor sinful woman weeping out the tears of shame and sorrow and love over His feet, and anoint-

ing them with the ointment. What a scene! It is to such an One the sinner can go, to hear words of forgiveness and love in the house even of the haughty Pharisee. And so all through this Gospel, we have the Man before us, but oh, it is the Man who was alone, none like Him, the Man Christ Jesus.

You know the parables which you find in Luke alone, the parables of the fifteenth chapter—three parables, corresponding to the third place of this gospel, where you have the full manifestation of the heart of God. How home-like, how human are the pictures. Remark, He is going to tell out the heart of God. He is going to tell us the work of the Good Shepherd—Himself. He is going to unfold the work of the Holy Ghost. What kind of pictures will He take to do it? domestic pictures—human pictures, every day pictures. They could look out on the hills themselves and see a shepherd caring for his sheep. They could go into any house and understand in a moment how the woman with busy care would sweep the house to find a lost piece of silver; and oh, who that was a son and had a father, or who that was a father and had a son could fail to understand how human—alas, how common the sorrow that caused the father to show such love. Blessed be God, it is the love that would take occasion from the sin and sorrow to exhibit itself. It is all human. People might say these are common, every-day pictures; that is the glory of it, dear friends, that they *are* every-day pictures. Blessed be God, we see the face of a Man, but we see the heart of God.

Coming to the closing scenes in this Gospel, we find all in beautiful keeping with the theme. We sit at the last Supper with Him, as with breaking heart He points out the traitor. We go to the garden and witness, as His poor sleeping disciples did not, His “agony and bloody sweat.” We follow to the priest’s palace, and thence to

Pilate's judgment hall; we see Him arrayed in royal robes and mocked by *Herod and his men of war*; we see Pilate and Herod shaking hands, as it were, over His death—oh, who that reads all this can fail to have his heart moved to its depths in human sympathy with this lonely "Man of sorrows."

In keeping with its theme we find in Luke our Lord's death as the Peace-offering. There is not the cry of forsaken anguish as in the two first Gospels. On the contrary we have grace going out to enemies even as they drive the nails into His hands and feet: "Then said Jesus, Father forgive them for they know not what they do." In the very hour of His woe, we see the triumph of grace in the salvation of the thief on the cross—the Priest sharing with the guilty sinner who believes, in the preciousness of His death.

Similarly the narrative of the resurrection still displays to us the face of the Man: the journey to Emmaus, the appearing to His own in Jerusalem, His eating before them,—all these are of the same sort as the record of His life had been, and all make very near and very dear this blessed, holy "Man Christ Jesus."

Thus we have gone over these three synoptists, as they are called, finding much in common, and at the same time, very clearly marked differences. How beautifully they blend together, giving, in their threefold fulness, a view of our blessed Lord such as one single Gospel could not!

LECTURE VII

JOHN AND THE ACTS

THE Gospel of John stands alone. It stands by itself as a gospel that is unique in its character, unique in the very narratives that it gives us, and above all, in the unfolding of the character of Christ which it presents, in a way singularly striking and attractive.

We have seen that the first three gospels stand together as one division, and that would make the gospel of John a second division. As a second, it presents to us the Son of God in all His wondrous character; and when we have the Son presented to us, we have the Saviour. These I need not tell you are characteristic of the second place which this Gospel occupies. But more than that, the number suggests as well rejection; for two is the number of rejection by man, and of enmity, and that is what is dwelt upon throughout the whole Gospel. It is a stranger with whom we are dealing, when we come to John's Gospel, a heavenly Stranger; One who had no place here. No need to say there was no room for such an One in the inn, or upon the throne of Herod. Ah! the presentation of His character tells itself that there could be no room for such an One on earth. He is a stranger all through, and in the simple words that we have at the beginning of this Gospel you have the key to this whole position. "He was in the world, the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not; He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

The world knew not its own Creator, when He came

into it. What more solemn comment could there be upon man's alienation, and ignorance of God,—a wilful ignorance and alienation,—than the fact that when his Creator came here, he had no knowledge of Him? Now that, as I said, gives us the key to the whole Gospel of John. In Matthew, for instance, you have Him presented as King at the beginning, and all through that Gospel you might say He is still presenting Himself to the people. At the very close of it you find Him driving the traders out of the temple, which takes place in John's Gospel at the very beginning, showing us that He takes His place outside, as it were, at the very introduction. He is outside all the way through. The very manner of expression seems to speak of one who is outside and a stranger. The author speaks of the feast of the Jews being nigh at hand; he explains Jewish customs, Jewish manners, Jewish feasts,—all those things, in such a way that we think of one who is outside of it all, and stranger to it all. And while this is very properly spoken of as telling us that John was written long after our Lord was upon the earth, (very probably one of the latest books of the New Testament canon) yet that is only upon the surface. The real reason is, that we have presented here the heavenly Stranger, unknown to His own people, outside the whole scene.

Taking up this Gospel we find that it is divided into three main parts, suggesting that divine fulness which the very Trinity presents to us. There is the full manifestation of the divine character of the Son of God. The first of these divisions, roughly speaking, would be the first two chapters,—properly down to the twenty-second verse of the second chapter. Then the second, or main division, is from the third chapter through the seventeenth. That is the life not merely exhibited as you have in the first section, but the life communicated to men. Then from the eighteenth chapter to the close of the book, we

have life out of death in the power of resurrection, which is significantly a third section.

In this first division you have, first of all, in the first eighteen verses of the first chapter, God's witness as to what His Son is. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." It is God presenting to us His own testimony concerning His own Son. Then from the nineteenth verse on to the thirty-fourth, you have the testimony of man, John the Baptist, as to who this is. It is very beautiful that you get in God's testimony the divine and human character of Christ,—first of all, "The Word was with God, and the Word was God," then down in the fourteenth verse, "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

There are the two great facts as to Christ's person, First, He is divine; secondly, He is human, both true, absolutely borne witness to by God Himself; and we cannot lose sight of either of them. This blessed Person whom we know is "God over all, blessed for ever." You cannot use any language too strong to express the divine dignity of the character of the Son of God. He is the Creator, He is the Almighty, He is the Upholder of all things. In Him was life, in Him was light, in Him all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily. No language is too strong, I say, to set forth the divine character of our blessed Saviour. I feel like dwelling upon that in days like these. People are apt to weaken on that point; they are apt to tone down something of that divine,—absolutely, uncreated divine glory that there is in the Son of God. Let us hold fast to it. He is God; He is God over all, blessed forever. Nothing less than that will do. People may call it what they please, if they give Him not His divine place, they are blasphemers against His holy name; and when we give Him His divine place, everything else that belongs to divinity goes with it.

Let us be assured of that; there is no such thing as an

inferior, subordinate place, when we come to speak of the divine character of the Son of God. When I think of Him humbled there in the manger, taking the lowly place, veiling His wondrous glory from view, taking the place of humiliation in order that He, as servant for man's need, might work out salvation,—as I think of that, and that men because of His humiliation have dared to deny His divine glory, oh! I feel what an awful double dishonor it is! Let us hold fast, let us be witness as to this great fundamental fact of all, that the blessed Christ of God is divine, none other than divine, none other than the Son of the true God Himself,—God over all, blessed forever. I do not want to modify that a particle. I am not careful to use accurate theological language, as people say, when it comes to speaking about this blessed One. No, the simple child of God who says, "My Jesus is God, my Jesus is the Creator, my Jesus is the upholder of all things by the word of His power,"—I would far rather hear than one dare by implication to suggest that He is anything short of being absolutely divine.

That being clear, the second fact is that He is human; and when you have gotten clear that He is God, then you can be equally clear that He is perfectly man. No need of being afraid now to say that His manhood was exactly manhood; surely not fallen manhood, but the perfect Adam, the Lord out of heaven; the Second Man—Man without sin, or taint of sin in Him, without any tendency to sin, without any corruption, without any of the infirmities which connect themselves with man as fallen. He was absolutely here the perfect One: "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;" that is the divine testimony, God's testimony to His Son. He is divine; He is human; both blended in one person.

Now look at John's testimony, from the nineteenth

verse on. There are two parts to John's testimony; first, he preaches repentance; man must judge himself, he must take his place as a guilty, lost sinner, and then he is ready to hear the next part of John's testimony, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." How blessed that is. It is not that God, as it were, testifies to that part; no, He intrusts that message to a man who needs salvation himself. It comes from human lips; it comes from God's heart, but through human lips; and John the Baptist, who first of all smites the people and calls them a generation of vipers, and warns them to flee from the wrath to come, can then add to it, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Ah! that is the human testimony which is called the Gospel, and here at the beginning God gives it to us.

Let me dwell for a moment, if one soul be here to-night not clear in the gospel. Just put these few testimonies together. First of all, the blessed Saviour is divine. Because He is divine He is able to do every thing, able to save, able to cleanse, able to keep, able to present you faultless before His presence with joy in heaven. Then He is Man,—Man so that He could die for us, so that He could lay down that perfect life upon the cross as a sin-offering for us. You and I deserve to be judged for our sins. Christ could be judged in our place because He is Man, and as man die and make atonement for sin. You have a divine Saviour, almighty; you have a human Saviour who died for us. Next, John testifies of repentance. What have I to do? to work for my salvation? to turn over a new leaf? to reform? to give up my bad habits?—is that what God asks? Nay; dear friends; Repent! is the command; and repentance is owning that I am a sinner, taking my place as a guilty, helpless, worthless sinner, not able to do a single thing for salvation, not able to work my way into heaven, but just owning that I am helpless, guilty, vile, and undone. What then? Look

away from self, look away from what you are,—your sins, though they be like scarlet, look off there at the Lamb of God, and what do you see? One who takes away the sin of the world, who removes the guilt, takes off that awful load that was on your conscience, sweeps forever from view that black cloud of your sins that was between you and God. Look at the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world! What a blessed Gospel! what a testimony!—a divine and human Saviour, repentance, and faith in Christ who died for us!

But that brings us to the third part of this first division, the attractiveness of the gospel. The disciples hear John bear this witness and they follow Jesus. Ah! blessed is the gospel that turns man from following his fellow man, no matter if it be John the Baptist himself, and points him to Christ, and he follows Christ. When the Lord sees them following Him, He says, "Whom seek ye?" "Master, where dwellest thou?" There we have the next great thought, that when the gospel is believed, when Jesus is followed, you have your place in association with Him. Where does He dwell? You have heard the gospel, we have been speaking it to-night. Does your heart go out after Christ? Do you say, "Oh! that I knew where I could find Him?" Here is the answer, "Come and see." That means simply that when we have believed upon Christ, His abiding place is our abiding place. And where is that? "In My Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you, I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where *I am*, there ye may be also." That is the place. Is that not simple? God's witness, man's witness, and association with Christ in glory. There is the gospel, as it were, in a nutshell, beginning with me a poor lost sinner, ending with me in company with Christ in His heavenly dwelling-place. Ah! dear friends, we

need not be afraid of death, we need not be afraid of any uncertainty that may befall us in this world, if we have our place with Him.

The last part of the first chapter, which is a fourth portion, comes back to earth again. And you find here Philip and Nathaniel and the ladder set upon earth, reaching to heaven. That sets before us the blessing of Israel upon earth. Just as you have the heavenly company formed by association with Christ where He dwells, so here you have the calling out of the elect remnant of Israel. Nathaniel, the godly remnant, is called out from under the fig-tree, the place of lowly humiliation, which the remnant occupies; called to recognize Christ as the Son of God, King of Israel. Then it is that the Lord says, heaven will be opened, the ladder will be there, the angels ascending and descending in their ministry upon the Son of Man. That is how blessing is coming to this earth, when Israel the remnant are taking the place of Nathaniel, and owning Jesus as the Son of God, the King of Israel. Then will the earth get blessing, but not before.

Now that is a fourth portion, and in the next chapter we have a fifth, which goes into this matter, as God does go into it, in a thorough governmental way, in a way that deals with man's responsibility. There is a marriage in Cana of Galilee. Galilee is what Israel is in her unrepentant condition. It is Galilee of the Gentiles, and that is the reason why you find all through the gospels that the Lord's ministry is largely there. Israel is in the condition of Galilee, if I may use the expression, in a sort of Gentile condition.

Now there is to be a marriage upon earth, but it must be according to God. The Song of Solomon tells us of that. There is to be a time, when the land of Israel will be called Beulah, or married, when "Thy Maker is Thy husband" will be true of Israel as a nation; but how is that marriage to be effected? Is it to be effected naturally?

If so, then there will be just what you have here. The guests are together, the ceremony goes on, and in the very midst of the feast the wine fails,—the joy fails. Instead of the joy of the marriage there is disappointment; and that is what has ever characterized all Israel's partial repentances. There has been no true recovery to God, and therefore no true joy of the marriage feast. Those empty water-pots tell the tale. They speak of the manner of the purifying of the Jews, but they are empty, mere forms and ceremonies. That is just the condition in which the Jews were; they had plenty of forms; they would not eat with unwashed hands; they would not do anything ceremonially wrong; they would strain out a gnat; they would pour out all their water through a sifting cloth, for fear they might drink some kind of a living creature, and then they would swallow a camel, as the Lord says: they had the form without the reality. They were empty water-pots.

Now the Lord says, Take those forms and fill them with water; fill those water-pots with water to the very brim. Let the word of God come in in its activity, and bring home to your soul the fact that if there is to be true purifying, it must be by repentance, the true acknowledgment of sin. When they do that, they will find the wine of the marriage-feast. So in the day that is coming, when Israel will take her place in true repentance, owning all that she is and has done, she will find that the valley of Achor is a door of hope; the valley of repentance, the valley of humiliation is the key of hope and blessing, of marriage joy for her. Then it is that the last part of this portion comes in. The Lord appears and with a scourge of small cords He purifies the temple by His power.

We see in that way, in this first portion of John's gospel, how beautifully it gives us the history of the Lord's ways! How beautifully it unfolds to us just the dispen-

sational steps of His ways in connection with man. But we must look much more rapidly at the rest of the gospel.

The main part of it is from the third chapter through the seventeenth; and that is now not the history of Christ primarily, but the history of the life as communicated by Him and enjoyed by His people. Here again you have the chapters grouped together, I have no question. We have, for instance, the third and fourth chapters together,—Nicodemus and the woman of Samaria. Strange company that, but I assure you it is divine company after all, and God's order. Then you have the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters together; that is the opposition on the part of the world to this divine life in its manifestation. From the eighth through the twelfth chapter, you have the resurrection side of things, the presence of the Lord rather than the opposition of man, and the resurrection as you have it in Lazarus. Then from the thirteenth to the seventeenth chapter you have the divine provision for our walk through this world here. Let us look at them briefly in detail. You are all familiar with Nicodemus' interview, and the woman of Samaria. In the first you have the work of the Holy Spirit, regeneration; in the woman of Samaria you have, as it were, the Lord's refreshment in revealing Himself to a sinner. With the one it is an internal work, with the other rather external, if I may use such language.

Now who would think of putting such a person as Nicodemus with all his righteousness in company with a sinner, an outcast like the woman of Samaria? And yet the two go together. When the Lord would show the need of new birth, what kind of a person does He take? He does not take a gross sinner, as we term it. He does not take one whose outward life is so full of blemishes that even we can see that he needed to be born again. We would not have been surprised if He had said the wo-

man of Samaria needed to be born again; but to Nicodemus, the righteous ruler of the Jews, He says this, and to the woman of Samaria, full of sin, her very life showing her alienation from God—to her He reveals Himself as the Christ. What blessed inconsistencies, what wonderful surprises we find here. Have we not here divine instruction as to the way we should deal with souls? Do you see a man morally upright, correct in all his ways? what he needs to have pressed upon him is that his heart is corrupt, that he needs to be born of God. Do you see a poor wretched sinner, with his sins all out, knowing and realizing them? what he needs to have presented to him, is Christ, the One through whom blessing, cleansing, and salvation come. Thus in this first portion, you have life communicated in the work done in us by the Spirit, and for us by Christ.

When you come to the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters, you have opposition. I wish I could dwell upon it more. It is opposition all the way through. The Lord heals a man, an impotent man. It was surely a mercy to do it. What is the effect of it? He heals him on a Sabbath day; He breaks man's sabbath* in order to cure man's sin. Poor man would rather have his sin and his sabbath undisturbed. Therefore there is opposition to the blessed Lord. But you find growing out of that opposition, the wondrous discourse in the fifth chapter, where the two prominent thoughts are first, judgment,—judgment for sin—and secondly, deliverance for the believer. It can be gathered up in one verse, "He that heareth My word and believeth on Him who hath sent Me, shall not come into judgment,"—the judgment He has been telling them of,—"but is passed out of death into life."

* I add a word to guard against the thought that our Lord broke God's law. Surely He did not do this. Man had added his provisions to God's word. It was these that our Lord ignored. He ever perfectly obeyed the law of God.

In the sixth chapter, you have quite a similar thing, though it goes still more deeply into it. The Lord has fed the five thousand, He has given them bread. When He speaks of the True Bread, they begin to murmur, as Israel in the wilderness, and the self-righteous Pharisees inquire, "How can this man gives us his flesh to eat?" In connection with the opposition, you have usually brought out divine truth that would sweep away all opposition, if there were only a heart for it. The Lord presents Himself as food for the soul of poor hungry starving man, "I am the bread of life, he that cometh to Me shall never hunger, he that believeth on Me shall never thirst."

We come next to the seventh chapter;—still opposition. Here is poor Israel with its wretched little feast of tabernacles. What a wretched thing it is without the living reality! The Lord does not even go up to the feast, but in the midst of it He goes up as you might say as a private individual, and He begins to teach. Then comes out the opposition, which is the keynote of this whole portion. Then it is that the Lord reveals Himself as the giver of the true feast of tabernacles, as the One in whom, if they believed, that prophecy would be fulfilled: "With joy shall they draw water out of the wells of salvation." "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive."

Now take the three thoughts of these three chapters, the three verses that I have quoted; what an emancipating gospel you have. What a gospel to sweep away all opposition of unbelief. First in chapter v. 24, you have the deliverance from judgment. Then in the sixth chapter, you have Christ as the food for the soul; and in the seventh chapter, you have Christ by the Spirit flowing

out in the life, to be a refreshing and blessing to others. What an unfolding, what a word of grace to meet opposition! Why is it that man opposes such grace as that? that the blessed Son of God, witnessing as He did in this way, still finds all the opposition of man's unbelieving heart?

We have now come to the third part of this division, from the eighth through the twelfth chapter. It is the third; you are in the sanctuary; you are going to have a revelation of the very presence of God; you are going to have brought before you what it is to be in the holy place. Who are the characters that figure in it? In that eighth chapter you have two characters—a Man in His lowly place of humiliation, and a poor wretched adulteress,—*these are the characters*. What! are you going to bring that defiled sinner into the sanctuary? Are you going to bring that wretch that deserves nothing but to be stoned to death, into the holy place? Yes, that is the unfolding of the holy place, and you see her brought in there into the presence of the Son of God. There are her accusers, railing upon her calling, out for her blood. There is the righteous Judge; He will judge righteously, surely. He will judge so righteously that He says to her accusers first of all, "Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone at her." There she is, a poor convicted soul in that holy presence, all alone with Christ. And what does He say to that broken-hearted creature of shame? "Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more." That is the holy place, and I can follow that poor woman into such a place as that. If she could go in there, I can go in too. If she is not driven out, if she meets a welcome there, oh, the worst sinner that ever lived can come into that holy presence, and find the same welcome and the same treatment. That is the sanctuary, a sinner uncovered as to her sin in the presence of perfect holiness and perfect grace. Have you been

there? has everyone of us been in that blessed presence, a confessed sinner before absolute holiness and infinite grace, finding our heaven at His feet,—pardon and life? That is the kind of company you get there. All self-righteousness, covering sin from view, has its place outside of that holy presence. It is only sinners, with their sins uncovered, but blessedly covered by God Himself, that can stand there. That is the key to that section of the book.

In the ninth chapter you have another case. He is a blind man, and is in the Lord's presence too. He had his eyes opened, and these poor wretched men who would never learn their lesson, put him out of the synagogue. But where do they put him? At the feet of Jesus, into the holiest, into the presence of the Son of God. What an exchange! Form, ceremonies, self-righteousness,—everything that speaks of man away from God, that is the synagogue; and at the feet of Jesus, worshiping the Son of God, that is the exchange. There is the holiest again.

Now it is inverted in the tenth chapter. In the ninth chapter we see the blind man put out of the synagogue into the presence of the Lord. In the tenth chapter the Lord is the good Shepherd, and He goes into the synagogue and leads them out. "He calleth His own sheep by name and leadeth them out, and when He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him; for they know His voice." He goes into the synagogue and calls His own, and leads them outside man's into His own holy presence—leads them out of Judaism into the sanctuary, and points on to the time when He shall gather all, and there shall be one flock and one Shepherd—the Lord Himself. Thus in these three chapters you have three thoughts as to the sanctuary, just as you had opposition in the other part.

Then the eleventh chapter simply gives us the power

in which all this is made good to us; it is resurrection power. I see Lazarus in the grave, utterly corrupt. As Martha says, it is not fit to bring him out to the light of day; better keep him covered up out of sight. That is just what the natural man is. But the One who brings us into His holy presence is the One who speaks the *life-giving* word. When He says, "Lazarus, come forth," he leaves his corruption in the tomb, and comes forth instinct with the new life, resurrection-life, and all he needs is to have the grave-clothes unwound, that he may be set free.

That brings us to the twelfth, the last portion of this third part, where we have another holy scene. You remember we had the sanctuary, the Lord's presence, and resurrection the power in which we are there. Here you have the worship which accompanies that. They make Him a feast, and Lazarus sits at the table, Martha serves, and Mary pours her wealth of ointment upon the Lord's feet; there is worship, feasting, and joy. What a sad contrast to it at the close of the twelfth chapter, where for the last time you hear the murmuring of unbelief on the part of the Jews. The Lord turns His back upon them, and will have no more to do with them. Most appropriately we have the sanctuary light from the sixth of Isaiah under similar circumstances, given us here at the close of the third section.

From the thirteenth to the seventeenth chapters we have divine provision for the way. First, you have seen life communicated; second, you have the opposition to that life; thirdly, you have the sanctuary as the place of that life, and resurrection as its power; then provision by which we can walk down here as we should in the power of that life. In the thirteenth chapter you get the feet washing; in the fourteenth the hope set right, our expectation to be with the Lord when He comes; in the fifteenth, fruitfulness; in the sixteenth, meeting all the

opposition and enmity of the world. In the seventeenth, we kneel and listen to our Lord pouring out His heart in the fulness of His love for us. Was there ever such a prayer as that, which lifts us up and sets us, as it were, in the presence of our God, and thus gives us power to walk down here for Him? How well equipped for the way we are!—our feet washed, the hope set right, fruitfulness by abiding in Him, all opposition faced and conquered in His name, and the power of His prayer carrying us on. Thus we have the life in its full fruition as to our pathway here.

Then all that remains is that what He has made possible, He should make good. Suppose the gospel of John had stopped at the seventeenth chapter. Suppose that wonderful vision of beauty had been unfolded to us, and there had been no record of anything further done. Suppose all that life, all that grace had been manifested, and then the Lord—dare I use the expression?—had changed His mind, and gone up to heaven. What a disappointment! what eternal disappointment to have had the cup of blessing put to our lips, and then dashed forever from them. Had Christ not died, had He not borne sin, all this wondrous unfolding, which you have in the first part of John would have been but tantalizing, and worse than that, it would have aggravated eternally our despair. But blessed be His name, never a word fell from His lips that He made not good. Did He ever reveal to us grace, did He ever open to us the fulness of the heart of God that He did not make it good? Thus, if we have listened to Him in the seventeenth chapter pouring out His heart to the Father, as He is going to Him, we may rest assured that heaven and earth will pass away before He will have turned from that cross by which it was all to be made over to us.

How perfect all is in this closing portion! How beautifully in keeping with the theme of the Gospel! We see

the Son of God, and His enemies powerless in His presence, for they went and fell backwards to the ground. Yet He yields Himself up to them, allows Himself to be taken, goes into Pilate's presence, there witnesses a good confession, goes on to the cross, there to yield up His life, in order that every word of grace that has been spoken before might be sealed by His precious blood.

And so we find in this third section that which is the power of the life of which we have been speaking. In the eighteenth chapter we see the Lord presenting Himself as the burnt-offering; in the nineteenth chapter He is actually offered; in the twentieth chapter we see Him raised again from the dead, and in the twenty-first chapter He is gathering, as the risen Shepherd, His poor scattered sheep, never more to be driven from Him. That is the gospel of John. Very feebly and imperfectly put, but the general theme of that wondrous gospel.

We now pass on to the book of Acts. It is the second part of the New Testament. All this that we have been speaking of,—the three gospels and the one,—are the Genesis, they are the life of Christ Himself personally. Then comes in Exodus, the history of the Church. The Lord, raised from the dead, brought out from the grave, is about to ascend, but before He ascends He gives His disciples again the promise of the Holy Ghost. They are to tarry at Jerusalem until they receive power from on high. And then in the first chapter of Acts, He goes up to heaven. In the second chapter the Holy Ghost comes down from heaven.

Now in these two chapters you have what is characteristic of Christianity. First Christ, after His death and resurrection, that is, after His work had been accomplished, rose and went on high. How much that means. I can follow Him wherever He goes. Is He on high? My place is there too. Is He there at the right hand of God? is He there in the Father's house? He

is there to prepare a place for me, and the position of Christ, a heavenly Man in heaven, itself tells us what our position is. No need for the Christian to be arguing about this and that questionable habit or association. No need for him to wonder whether it is right to settle down in the world. There is one great fact that will settle nearly every question for the Christian, and that is that Christ is absent from the world. My place is with Him on high, in heart associated with a glorified Christ. That is the first great fact in Christianity. In the second chapter the Holy Ghost comes down to make the Lord's presence on high a reality, and that is the second great fact of Christianity—the Holy Ghost here on earth. Christians usually reverse that, a very strange thing. They speak of the Lord Jesus in some way or other as if He were present here. They speak of Christ according to the flesh, as though He had never died. They merely use His name, and do not seem to realize the real fact of the cross and the resurrection. A man says, I am a Christian; I believe in the Sermon on the Mount, and in all the teachings of Jesus and the example He set us. If that were all, the Lord would still be on earth, the truths of Christianity would not be a fact. And then, as to the Holy Spirit: Christians will meet together and pray for the Holy Spirit to be poured out, as though Pentecost had not taken place. They actually pray for God to send down the Holy Ghost though He was sent down at Pentecost after the Lord had been fifty days out of His tomb.

These are the two great facts of Christianity: Christ on high, the Holy Ghost down here; and the third grows out of them, the Lord's coming as the proper hope of His people. Now that gives us the key to the book of Acts. Here are the Lord's beloved people on the earth, in Judaism. Just as we have seen in the Gospel of John, how the Good Shepherd puts His sheep out and leads them

forth from the fold of Judaism, in this book He is going to do it. There is a peculiar charm in the book of Acts which does not lie upon the surface, and that is its infinite tenderness. Look at the bulwark of Judaism;—it has withstood the blessed Lord all through His life and ministry here, and yet what does He tell His disciples to do? Does He say to them, You can bear witness that I have plead with the Jews and dealt with them patiently, and now I want you to have nothing to do with them; go to the Gentiles; go as far off as possible? Ah no! Repentance and remission of sins is to be preached among all nations beginning, however, at Jerusalem. They are to begin not even in dear Galilee but at Jerusalem, where He had been crucified. Old John Bunyan wrote a treatise which He called “the Jerusalem sinner saved,” and in that treatise he told how the Jerusalem sinner had rejected Christ, how he had given his voice that Christ should be crucified after he had seen all His works and heard all His wondrous words; and yet the Jerusalem sinner, the one who had enjoyed the greatest privileges, is the one who has the gospel preached to him first. That is grace. It is only divine grace that would do a thing like that. We were Jerusalem sinners; everyone that had godly parents, everyone that heard the gospel from his childhood, everyone who has come under the sound of God’s word is a Jerusalem sinner, and He deserves nothing but eternal punishment. Yet what does he get? He gets the first message of salvation; and if there is any sinner who is to praise the grace of God more than another, it is that wretched Jerusalem sinner who has trampled upon and despised all the offers of mercy and still has the gospel presented to him. I might add that if hell is hotter for one than for another, would it not be for that Jerusalem sinner who continues to reject such grace as that?

Now what you have in the book of Acts, I say, is the Jerusalem sinner first, the gospel preached where Christ

was crucified. There is divine wisdom in that. He is going to lead His dear people out of Judaism, to break the link. Judaism is nothing but a corpse, an empty tomb. When the Lord of glory left the sepulchre and rose from the dead, He left Judaism. He left the sepulchre of Judaism as well, and now He is going to lead His dear people out. First of all, the Holy Ghost comes down, fills the disciples, and they bear witness to those sinners of the Jews who had rejected, denied and crucified Christ, that if they repent and take the name of Jesus as their Saviour, they shall receive remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost. A mighty work of grace begins at once at Jerusalem and goes on with divine power. What joy it must have brought to the Lord's heart, when after so long bearing witness and holding out His hand in invitation to a guilty people, who refused it all, to see them break down under the preaching of Peter.

In the third chapter, Peter and John go into the temple, and there is a lame man there, just like poor, lame Israel, sitting and begging by the beautiful gate of the temple. A picture of what Judaism was with its beautiful temple: but a poor, lame beggar. The name of Jesus sets him free; he leaps, he walks, he praises God.

When a miracle like that is done the people have either got to accept it or reject it. So you find that when the power of the name of Jesus is manifested in that way, the Sadducees, and the rest of the Jews for that matter, reject the gospel.

Opposition sets in at once, and so through the third and fourth chapters you find verified our Lord's words—"If they have persecuted Me, they will persecute you; if they have kept My sayings, they will keep yours also." They treat the disciples exactly as they treated the Lord. This portion also contains the awful judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira—corruption within, as well as persecution without.

Stephen closes that part of the book. In the seventh chapter he presents their whole history—and they stone him to death. Stephen stoned, Christ in the glory; Stephen stoned and passing, as to his spirit, into the Lord's presence there—that is the end of the offer to Jerusalem. Jerusalem has again rejected Christ, and the Spirit's testimony by Stephen.

Then we come to the second part, from the eighth chapter to the twelfth. There you find the gospel going out. There is a saying that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. So out from the blood of Stephen comes the seed that grows and bears fruit amongst the Gentiles as well. After that persecution you have the gospel going down to Samaria, first of all; Samaria was outside of Judaism. Then there was the Ethiopian eunuch. He had been up to Jerusalem and got nothing for his soul there. He has come all the way from Ethiopia, a poor hungry man, to get something at Jerusalem where the knowledge of the true God was taught, and yet going back with an empty heart. Would the Lord let that be? Would He let a man who is seeking Him in that way, go back empty? He takes Philip from the midst of the revival at Samaria and sends him into the desert, and there He brings Philip and the eunuch together, with the Bible open at the very place where He wants him to preach from, in the eunuch's hands. Out of the fifty-third of Isaiah, Philip preaches Jesus to him. Did you ever think of it? There is one lonely man coming from Jerusalem, another lonely man coming from Samaria; the Lord had led them, and they meet out there in a desert place, with the Bible open at the very message that man needs for his soul. That is the blessed Lord we serve, who again and again brings just such things to pass.

Then you have Cornelius, a Gentile—the gospel is going out wider and wider. Then the arch-persecuter, Saul of Tarsus, has a revelation of Jesus from the glory of God,

and he is turned into a servant of Christ to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth, and that closes the second part of Acts, the twelfth chapter.

Beginning at the thirteenth chapter, you have the gospel connected with the ministry of Paul, which is the mystery. It is the Church proper. Before this there had been Judaism first, and then a modified sort of Judaism: First Jerusalem, then Samaria, then the eunuch, and Cornelius. It was Peter's ministry. Now it is Paul's, and Antioch has become the centre instead of Jerusalem. I might say, that in the first section of Acts, Jerusalem is the characteristic city; in the second it is Samaria; in the third, Antioch. God begins with His own beloved Israel. They reject Christ, and He leads out His own, as it were, and takes up Samaria, occupying a place between the Gentile and the Jew. Then He passes from Samaria to Antioch the Gentile centre, and it is there from Antioch, and not from the apostles but from the servants of Christ, unofficially you might say, that the Holy Ghost sends them forth on the mission which is the unfolding of the mystery of Christ amongst the Gentiles.

It is Paul's ministry, and you can insert in that third portion nearly all of Paul's epistles,—those wondrous unfoldings of the mystery of Christ. They have their moral link with that third section of the book of Acts, from the thirteenth chapter down to the twentieth chapter.

First, you have the ministry at Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and other cities of Asia. Then the call goes out to Europe,—Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth. Then coming back again to Ephesus; then going back to Macedonia, down to Corinth, coming back on his way alas! where to? to Jerusalem; and that is just what marks the fourth section of this book. It is the failure, if I may use such an expression, where the apostle turns again to Jerusalem. It had been

rejected because of its unbelief, yet he turns again to it, goes back there, and what is the result? He gets into captivity, is put in prison, bound with chains and carried down to Cæsarea, and handed over to Gentile powers; goes to Rome in chains and imprisonment to the last.

Now I think we have in that way got in this book of Acts, the history of God's work.

He would have gently led His beloved servants, first from Jerusalem to Samaria, and then to Antioch; led them out into liberty and power not only to Corinth and Athens and Philippi, the Grecian cities, but on to Rome and the far west. The gospel gets there, Paul gets there too, but why does he get there in chains? why does he get there by way of Jerusalem instead of going directly on his ministry?

I believe that a careful study of that portion of Acts will show us that the beloved apostle Paul, that faithful, honored servant of Christ, allowed his love—a love scarcely ever equalled in man's heart—for his beloved brethren according to the flesh, to take him back to Jerusalem. He goes back in love to them. The Holy Ghost bore witness that bonds and imprisonment awaited him there. Brethren who were prophets spoke to him by the Holy Ghost that he should not go back to Jerusalem. But he went, his love was mighty, he had offerings in his hands for them from the Gentile Christians, and he thought he could win his brethren in that way. What is the result? His own countrymen arrested him, persecuted him, and would have put him to death except that he is rescued by the Gentiles themselves.

But still you notice the marvelous purpose of God goes on. You begin Acts at Jerusalem, but at the close you find Paul at Rome. He may be bound—but the word of God is not bound. He sends for the Jews once more. There is a final message given to them, and then he says, "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of

God is sent to the Gentiles and that they will hear it." The Jews go and have "great reasoning among themselves." They are not done with that reasoning yet. But Paul has gone on too. He has been preaching the precious gospel of the grace of God to the Gentiles; and the emancipation from Judaism has gone on, the Church of Christ has been gathered out from amongst the Gentile nations with sinners of the Jews as well, all together forming a heavenly Church—a heavenly body, the receptacle of that revelation which we find brought out so perfectly in Paul's epistles.

Thus you see how the book of Acts gives us in a most important way the connecting link between the gospels where you have the life of Christ, and Paul's epistles where you have the results of His work.

We live, I may say, and move and have our being in the epistles of Paul. That is what marks us as Christians. A man does not know what true Christianity is unless he knows what the epistles of Paul are. But how were they to get from the blessed Person of the Son of God into the full place into which His grace has brought us? The book of Acts is the bridge; it leads us out of the bondage of Judaism into the liberty of Christianity. It is thus the Exodus of the New Testament, where the Spirit of God leads His people out where they can enter into the fulness of Christ.

And that brings us to the book of Leviticus which we have in the epistles of Paul.

LECTURE VIII

PAUL'S EPISTLES

PART I

IN speaking upon the book of Acts, you remember we came to that point in the second portion of the book where we saw the conversion of that arch enemy and persecutor of the Church of Christ, Saul of Tarsus. You remember that we had, in the first seven chapters, God's ways of patience with Israel, still lingering with long-suffering, if perchance they might even yet turn and repent as a nation, and receive the blessed Lord whom they had crucified and rejected. We saw that in the stoning of Stephen that door was closed to the unrepentant nation, that they simply sealed their guilt by putting the martyr's crown on Stephen's head, and thus rejected the testimony of the Holy Ghost, as they had already the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ when He was here.

The witnesses in Stephen's stoning laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. Saul was the ringleader of the persecution, whose enmity instead of being quenched by this crime, seems to have been quickened into fresh activity. He was distinguished as persecuting all who bore the name of Christ, and, as he tells us, being exceeding mad against them, he persecuted them even to other cities. For that purpose, armed with authority from the chief priests, he was on his way to Damascus to arraign and bring back to Jerusalem any who bore the hated name of Jesus.

How unlikely that such a man should be the chosen

instrument to unfold to the Church of Christ the priceless truths in which we rejoice to-night! How unlikely that he who was the chief of Jews, and the chief of sinners too, the bitter enemy of Christ and of every one who bore His name, should be the chosen vessel of God to introduce us into these precious things! And yet we know that his very conversion was characteristic of his whole after-ministry. He was not converted through the preaching of the law; he was not converted through the preaching of repentance by human lips; he did not hear the gospel from men, and he was therefore not an apostle of men, neither by men. There was a voice from the excellent glory, from Christ on high, revealing Himself in the awful light of His glorious majesty and holiness, which smote that man to the earth. Two great changes took place then; there was the end to the natural man, and the opening up of the Holiest of God. In the brightness of that light Saul sees and abhors himself; he counts the things in which he had gloried, as worthless. There is an introduction, typically at least, (for he is still in the darkness until he went to Damascus and received light at the hands of one of those despised disciples whom he had persecuted) into that sphere of heavenly truth which was ever after the theme of his ministry.

Now link those things together. There is Stephen preaching to the Jews the truth that would have emancipated them from Judaism, stoned to death. He sees Jesus at the right hand of God. When Saul is converted it is by the revelation of Jesus at the right hand of God; and the whole character of His ministry is taken from that. It was not to gather an earthly people, nor to re-establish Judaism,—not to do any thing that had connection with the old creation; it was a new thing entirely. It was the introduction of God's people into His sanctuary.

That being true, we find most appropriately that these epistles bring us into what answers to Leviticus, a third

section. In the Acts you have the Exodus, the people led out from under the bondage of Judaism, but into what? The Spirit of God not only leads out, but he leads into; and in Paul's epistles you have the positive side of Christianity. Far be it from us to depreciate any portion of God's precious word; to think lightly, for instance, of the epistles of Peter or James or of the Old Testament, or anything of that kind. It always marks a low, carnal nature to despise or to think lightly of the smallest portion of the word of God from Genesis to Revelation. Every bit of it is absolutely perfect, perfect in its place as unfolding the will, counsel, purpose, of God in that connection. But it is always in its proper connection; and in Paul's writings we have that which is the Christian position set before us in the fullest and most unmistakable way. It is into the holiest, into the presence of God, that we are introduced, with our souls emancipated by the precious truth that you have unfolded in those epistles. Is it only by chance that they are just fourteen in number? which speaks, as you know, of a twofold perfection, of a perfection perfectly borne witness to. These epistles are moreover divided into what would be suggested by this, into two portions, one of which has more particularly to do with the believer's standing, and the other more particularly with his relationships and responsibilities. Our purpose to-night is simply to take up the first division.

Romans is the beginning. It corresponds to the book of Genesis in being the foundation of all truth as to Christian standing. Next we have Galatians, thirdly Ephesians, fourthly Colossians, and fifthly Philippians. You have unfolded in them the perfection of Christian standing, in a fivefold aspect, corresponding, just as we have seen in the other books, to the five books of Moses.

Then we have the epistles of relationship. First of all, Thessalonians, secondly Corinthians, thirdly Hebrews,

fourthly Timothy, and fifthly Titus. These, you can see at a glance, have to do not so much with our position, but with our relationships and the responsibilities which grow out of those relationships. I believe you will agree that the division is clear and marked and that we are in somewhat different atmosphere in the second division of the epistles than we are in the first.

Returning to the first division, Romans is the Genesis. It gives us the foundation in divine righteousness of all the rest. Next comes Galatians, and no one who has ever been under the law but realizes that the epistle to the Galatians is a true Exodus, which tells us of deliverance from the law, and warns us against being brought into bondage to it again. Passing on to Ephesians we enter into the heavenly places. Our blessing in Christ in the heavenly places is set before us in such glorious fulness that we realize we are in the presence of God. We have thus the Leviticus of this portion, the sanctuary. Then as to our walk, corresponding to the book of Numbers,—our walk here upon earth, testing and trial in the place of weakness,—we have Colossians. That is putting Christ Himself as the standard of the believer's walk here. As Ephesians deals with heavenly places so Colossians deals with earthly places. You find the believer on earth, but seeking things which are above. He is a pilgrim, just as Israel was a pilgrim in the book of Numbers, walking through the desert, but seeking a resting place beyond. And then for a Deuteronomy—that which gives us God with man, the moral principles and wisdom for our pathway here, such as you find in the book of Deuteronomy,—Philippians gives us that most appropriately, as we can see when we come to look at it. I have omitted to mention that the epistle to Colossians has a short postscript, which we are already familiar with in the book of Judges which has Ruth as a postscript, and in the prophet Jeremiah which has Lamen-

tations. So here, the epistle to Colossians has Philemon for a postscript, and a most beautiful one it is.

Taking up the contents of these Epistles, I feel like saying, for myself and for all of us, that if we are dealing with familiar truth, let us be on guard that it is not familiar to be despised. I know of nothing more deadening to the conscience, nothing more injurious to the spiritual life, than to handle holy truths without their having power in our hearts, or realizing what a wondrous privilege we have. I have no hesitation in saying that these truths are absolutely the highest revelation which God has given to us. If the Lord Jesus could turn to His disciples and say, "Blessed are the eyes that see the things that ye see, and the ears that hear the things that ye hear; for I say unto you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things that ye see and have not seen them, and to hear the things that ye hear and have not heard them,"—if the Lord Jesus could say that to His disciples when He was here on earth, how much more for us who have received the Holy Ghost, the wondrous unfolding of the secrets of the very heart of God, things hid from the foundation of the world, the opening out of the mystery hid in God! Are these things to be handled in a trifling way? as those that we know, that we are quite familiar with, a sort of creed?—the one body, heavenly places, and all that sort of thing—without any living power in it?

When these characteristic truths of Paul's epistles lose their power we lose our testimony; we lose that for which we are left down here, and the precious truth which God in His mercy has recovered for us in these last days is gone, as far as our testimony is concerned. Oh, let us prize, let us hold fast, that which has been given to us! Let us remember that it is a priceless treasure committed into our hands; just as the children of Israel, the remnant that were returned from Babylon, had intrusted to

them the precious vessels that belonged to the temple. They were given to them in distant Babylon, and they were to carry them safely through all the intervening space until they came to Jerusalem. There they were to weigh them out, and give full account for every vessel of the sanctuary that had been put into their hands. So here we have the sanctuary and the vessels of the sanctuary; and if in the midst of Babylonian confusion, in which the Church of Christ has been taken captive, we, in the infinite mercy of God, have had put into our hands and into our hearts these precious truths, let us hold fast to them as we go through the wilderness, and be ready, when we reach yonder holy place, to give full account, full weight, for every truth intrusted to us. May the Lord awaken His people to this; to see to it that these very truths which we possess and which we know so well have a living power in our souls, that they make worshipers of us. If it is truth about the sanctuary, it should lead us into the sanctuary; if it is truth about the presence of God, it should bring us into His presence. Shall it not be so? And as we take up now these familiar epistles, shall we not ask that our hearts may burn afresh at the precious unfoldings contained in them? Thousands of martyrs have gone to the stake with songs of joy, that did not know one tenth part of the truth Christians possess now. Beloved, what power is what we possess having in our lives? That is the point. May the truth sanctify us, and conform us more and more to the image of our blessed Lord! Is not that your desire?

Now when we take up Romans, there is not the slightest difficulty as to what it means, as to what its theme is. No one can question for a moment that the theme of Romans is given to us in the first chapter, sixteenth and seventeenth verses, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the

Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God through faith revealed to faith; as it written, the just shall live by faith." It is the gospel, that wondrous unfolding of the heart of God, the glad tidings of His grace for men. The apostle is not ashamed of it, for it is the power of God unto salvation; in it is revealed God's righteousness, that unfolding of His character which fully manifests what He is, His justice and self-consistency; and is the foundation of all our peace.

Now this epistle is most clearly marked in the subjects it speaks of. We have first of all in the first five chapters, or, to speak accurately, from chapter i. to chapter v. and eleventh verse, the first division, which presents to us God's righteousness in the justification of the sinner. What an unfolding we have in that part! We have, roughly speaking, in the first chapter the Gentile set before us in all the hideousness of the sin into which he had fallen, because he did not like to retain the knowledge of God in his heart. Therefore God gave him over to a reprobate mind; and all the wretched evil he practiced is displayed in its horror, in order to show him what man is without God. In the first part of the second chapter the subject is continued to show the judge and the philosopher, who could point out the sins of others, that he was equally guilty. This entire portion shows that man, with only the light of nature, while responsible, never turns to God. Concluding this, the apostle passes, in the middle of the chapter, to the Jew. He shows them one who had the law and boasted in it, gloried in the fact that he had something that the Gentile did not possess—yet condemned by that very law. He had the law, but he had only broken it. We find thus Jew and Gentile both alike under sin.

How familiar that is; how many times the gospel has been preached from that as the starting point—all alike under sin! "There is no difference, for all have sinned,

and come short of the glory of God;" and the apostle closes that part of the subject by quoting from Scripture, first from the book of Psalms and then from the prophet Isaiah, to show that there is no righteousness in any, in heart or in life. The effect of all that is to close men's mouths, for as long as man's mouth is open he will vindicate himself. As long as his mouth is open, he will have something to say like the Pharisee, "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are." But when he is arraigned before the bar of God's righteousness, and there shown up in his true character, he has nothing to say. Every mouth is stopped, and all the world is guilty before God. A silent, guilty world,—a world that stands convicted of sin, not a word to say,—what then? God speaks. He says, I will proclaim *My* righteousness. If there is no righteousness in you, if you are convinced of that fact, now hearken to *My* righteousness; and in the gospel of Christ we have that righteousness brought out.

But the sinner says, I am afraid of the righteousness of God; it is the very thing I shrink from; I dare not face it; that righteousness would condemn me, would justly put me where I belong, in everlasting misery, under the righteous judgment of a holy God. Ah! what do we find that the righteousness of God does? "The righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." And so the sinner finds

that the very righteousness of God which he feared, that very justice which he imagines against him, is for him; instead of being against him to condemn him, it is the very thing that witnesses for him. God's righteousness is manifested in justifying the believer in Jesus: manifested in justifying the ungodly. I as a poor sinner, with all my sin upon me; a poor wretched, guilty soul, standing before a righteous God, find that His very righteousness is my friend, that which justifies me. How amazing that is! and what is the secret of it? *The blood of Christ.* God has set Him forth a propitiatory through faith by His blood, to declare His righteousness, and that, beloved brethren, is where peace comes in; that is why the apostle says in the fifth chapter, "Being justified by faith we have peace with God."

Then in the fourth chapter, you have the place that works occupy in this. The apostle takes the two great examples, Abraham and David. You remember we were seeing how Abraham and David are presented as the heads of the genealogy of our Lord in the Gospel of Matthew. And they were chief men in all the nation of Israel—Abraham the patriarch, the progenitor of the whole race, and David the king, the head of the royal family. Now Paul shows that both Abraham and David were justified by faith without works. In other words he sets works in their true place, and shows how simple faith in the work of Another without works on our part, is that which justifies the ungodly. Then in the fifth chapter, as I have already quoted, he heads it up, and reaches as high a point as you have in all the epistle, where he says, "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Peace with God. Do I say the highest point? no not quite: but go on a little further. You find him summing up; he says, "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand,

and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also." "Not only so" again, "but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation." Notice, peace with God first. Then we can glory in tribulation, then God Himself is our joy, the object that fills our hearts. We are brought to God. How blessed that is, and that is the close of the first division of Romans. That righteousness which was revealed from heaven, which shows our lost condition, first justifies us, gives us peace, then gives us power for the path down here, then presents God Himself as the object of our joy. Adam hiding from God amongst the trees of the garden,—can you think of such an one as rejoicing in God now? Yes, brought out into the light, sin judged in the person of Christ, cleansed by His precious blood, God Himself the righteous God becomes our joy and our delight.

The second part of Romans begins just there. From the twelfth verse of the fifth chapter on through the eighth chapter, you find that there is an entirely different subject. The Christian finds out that though he is saved, saved perfectly and forever, he has a nature in him that is capable of sinning still; and the question that is raised in this second part is that of sin in him. In the first part it was sin *on* us, but in the second it is *in* us. In all this second portion, it is not a question of salvation, but of deliverance from the power of sin. I am persuaded that most of God's dear people never get much beyond the first part of this epistle. They never know much of that Exodus which takes them out of the land of bondage, and from their taskmaster and their enemies who would hold them fast in this world—takes them out of that and sets them free to go forth to live for God. Now that is just what you find in this second portion. First you have the two heads, Adam and Christ. We were in

Adam, we are now in Christ; that is the secret of all deliverance. My link is with Christ risen and glorified.

That raises the question in the sixth chapter as to whether we are to continue in sin. We are told not to continue in sin, because we are not under the law but under grace. In that sixth chapter is brought out the precious truth that we are dead to sin by the body of Christ, and we are therefore to reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto it, and alive unto God in Christ Jesus. If I am dead to it, can I commit sin? am I under its power? If I realized that I am dead to it, I am a free man, free to walk now as one who is alive to God. But it is for faith only. So in the seventh chapter, you find that great question of the law brought out, which is enlarged upon in the epistle to the Galatians, and we are told that we are dead also to the law by the body of Christ, that we might be joined to another that we might bring forth fruit unto God. The law has to do with the natural man. It had to do with man according to the flesh, and it can only condemn him. For us we are risen with Christ, we are dead to the law, out from under it, and now can walk in newness of life. Ah! we talk about being in the seventh of Romans, and out of the seventh of Romans, and all that. I am afraid, as I have said before, that most of us are out of it in the sense that we have never been in it in any true way. We have never realized that awful conflict—not for salvation, mark—not that; he is saved, a soul that knows he has peace with God, yet cries, “Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?” It is the power of sin, in one longing for holiness. And how does he get out of it? by realizing that it is through Christ, and that cross which sealed my peace,—that same cross has settled the question of my relationship to the law, and my relationship to the world. I am dead to them both, and now the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set

me free from the law of sin and death. So that the eighth chapter gives us one emerged into the place of liberty, and the walk in the power of the Spirit of God, in that newness of life which is the practical walk for us here. That closes the second part of the epistle.

From chapters ix. to xi. you have another very distinct subject, the question of God's relation with His word,—with His purposes in times past. In this portion we are occupied with the question of Israel. If God has a people who are justified not by the works of the law but by faith in Christ, what shall we say about Israel, that beloved earthly people? These truths are unfolded for us in the most beautiful way to harmonize with the truths of grace. God's truths never contradict one another. One may set another aside for the time being, just as Israel at the present time is set aside as a nation, but God's truths never conflict. And so in that third section of the epistle we see that there is a remnant according to the election of grace, and that God's purposes as to Israel, as His purposes for all, will be accomplished in their day, according to His own counsel. Fittingly, in that which emphasizes this, are we reminded of the resurrection of Israel, and the holiness of God—in a *third* section.

That leaves us with the last part of the epistle, from the twelfth chapter to the close. And here again there is a most marked contrast, the questions in the fourth portion corresponding very beautifully with the book of Numbers. It is a question of walk. We have seen in the first part, God's righteousness manifested in our justification; in the second, God's righteousness setting us free from the power of sin; in the third, God's holiness is manifested in connection with Israel. Now in the fourth, it is the practical walk of the child of God in the power of these truths. Now we notice a word, so characteristic that you might call it the keyword of the whole of this part of the epistle; and it is so different from the

law. The law says, "cursed be he that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." It says, "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not." What does the holiness of grace say? "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." It is entreaty, and entreaty by the mercies of God,—not by the wrath of God, not by His judgment,—to present our whole body a living sacrifice. So you find that unfolded in this last part of Romans, which is the practical walk. I can only say that as righteousness is the theme of the entire epistle, so here it is still practical righteousness.

We now come to Galatians; and here we see a most marked and clearly defined subject running all through the epistle. In many points it is very similar to Romans. It is closest of all Paul's writings to that epistle, as you might naturally expect. And yet there are certain very marked distinctions. The theme of Galatians is one, and it is our relationship to the law, our relationship to the law and to Christ, as contrasted. The apostle in the first two chapters brings out the fact that he has been set free entirely from everything of earth, of the law, of Judaism. As I was saying, he has got it all from Christ in the glory. Then he goes on to unfold to them through that epistle, how they have the question of law and the question of Christ; which is it for them? He asks, is it circumcision or is it Christ? He says, "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by love." It was a distinct attack of the enemy that he met in this epistle. You find that he begins the epistle very differently even from the way he begins Corinthians. There was terrible evil at Corinth; the saints there were in an awful condition, but still the apostle can thank God for all the gifts that there were amongst them. But when he comes to Galatians,

he says, "I marvel that ye have so quickly departed from Him that has called you in the grace of Christ to another gospel." And why is it he speaks so sternly? The immorality was not as great as at Corinth, but when truth is assailed, when something is put in the place of the gospel, or worse yet when the gospel itself is going to be adulterated, then the apostle says, "though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel to you let him be accursed." When the truth of God is in question there can be no disloyalty, no uncertain sound. If the saints have fallen into evil as at Corinth, they are to be recovered from it, but if the gospel is gone, what have we left? As I was saying it was not the absolute denial of the gospel, but it was corrupting it, and corrupting it with that which is apparently of God, putting into it the law. Now the law in its place is perfect,—holy, just, and good,—and the gospel is perfect in its place; but when you bring the two together, you have a corruption of the two best things. And that makes a corruption which is so terrible, that the apostle could wish, as he says, that they would cut themselves off that trouble them with such teachings. It is not a gospel he says. And so you find all through the epistle that he takes up and dwells upon the wondrous fact that the gospel of the grace of Christ is an entirely new thing, that sets aside the law.

As I was saying in the first two chapters, he puts before us the heavenly character of the gospel as superceding the law. Then he goes on with the next chapter to speak of the contrast between Christ and the law, and how grace antedated law in the covenant with Abraham 430 years before Sinai. Then he passes on in the next portion to speak of the liberty of the Spirit, the walk in the power of the Spirit of Christ, in which if we walk we are not under the law on the one hand, and we shall not fulfil sin on the other. Here we have the spirit of sonship, and are not children of Hagar, typical of the law

and bondage, but children of the free woman, of grace and of promise.

The last two chapters are devoted to the practical walk. Love is the fulfilling of the law. Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. The fruits of the Spirit and the burden-bearing of one another, the highest kind of law—the law of Christ. He closes with the wondrous statement about the new creation. “From henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” “As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised only lest they suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. As many as walk according to this rule peace be upon them.” And so we have the new creation which sets aside the law, and all our connection with it, and places us where the Spirit of Christ can lead us on to liberty and holiness and power.

We come now to Ephesians, that wonderful epistle which is the sanctuary of all Paul's writings. We have in it first the unfolding of the counsels of God: how He has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world; given us the place of sons, in holiness, and placed us on the ground of redemption where all His purposes can be made good to us, and then placed the seal of the Holy Ghost upon us, as the earnest of the inheritance. We next see the perfect position of the believer in Christ—partaking of His life, place and power, and united to Him as Head. In Him we, once dead in trespasses and sins, are quickened, raised up, and in Him are seated in the heavenly places; He Head of the body, His Church, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. Every verse of this wondrous epistle is full of most precious truth: I

fear to spoil them by attempting even to speak of them. I only want to quote three suggestive and characteristic portions. They are, first the two prayers of Paul: the first chapter and the fifteenth verse, "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand."

In that prayer you have the desire that we may know what is ours. He prays to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of power, the God through whom all has been accomplished; that we may know the hope of His calling; the hope attached to the calling wherewith we are called. Then the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. That is the portion which we inherit. It is not looked upon as our inheritance, but as God's inheritance in us. Then the greatness of His power, which He wrought in Christ. In other words what is set before us in this prayer is that we may know what is ours in Christ, just as you have in the book of Joshua in the Old Testament, our heavenly inheritance unfolded there, in type, in the land.

Then the second prayer is in the third chapter, fourteenth verse. You notice it is quite different; "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in

the inner man ; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." In other words you have, in this second prayer, the desire that the knowledge of His love may be translated into the heart's affection. This is just in line with what I was saying in the beginning, that these precious truths may be living and practical in our lives, that we may be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. Now those two truths give us, as you might say, the sum of the epistle to the Ephesians: knowledge and power—knowledge of our position and the love that corresponds with that.

I would say that there is no such thing in God's mind as Ephesian truth without Ephesian love ; and in the address to Ephesus in the book of Revelation, what He has to say to them is not that they have lost their truth, but that they have lost their love. That is practically the losing of their testimony, and their candlestick. Oh, what love, what joy, what grace, correspond with such a place as is set before us, for instance, in the second chapter !

We, quickened with Christ, and in Him in the heavenly places ! we who once were dead ! In the latter part of that chapter we are looked at as those who were at a distance, afar off, but now made nigh by the blood of Christ. How near ? Near enough to form His Church, the dwelling-place of God by His Spirit.

And so we might go on, for there is so much that is tempting in it. But doubtless it is so familiar I scarcely need to more than mention the various subjects to you. Take, for instance, the great presentation of Church truth you have here. In the first chapter you have the Church presented to us as the body of Christ, He the head. In the second chapter you have it presented as

the house of God, His habitation; and in the fifth chapter you have it presented as the bride of Christ, presented to Him in glory. The Church is looked at in those three ways. As the body it is a question of activity and service, all the members engaged in service to the common Head and to one another. This is enlarged upon in the fourth chapter, where we see the gifts and their functions, and the unity of the Spirit in connection with the exercise of those gifts. As house it sets before us responsibility, God's house in order, subjection to His rule and authority. If we are in God's house, and are builded together as a habitation of God through the Spirit, what order, what subjection should that require! And then the bride; that bride which is to be presented to Him a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. What manner of men ought we to be as those that wait for their Lord. In connection with the subject of the Church, I can only refer to the "mystery" in the third chapter. No one can understand the true nature of the Church, nor of the dispensation in which we are living, who has not grasped that truth.

Let us not think that it is an easy thing to enter into these truths, or that mere intellectual familiarity is all that is required. Satan is determinedly opposed to our making good to ourselves any of these blessings. We are to be on our guard, and to "fight the good fight of faith," if these things are to be practically enjoyed. All this is dwelt upon in that familiar portion in the sixth chapter, which reminds us so vividly of the conflict in Joshua's day with the inhabitants of Canaan, to which evident allusion is made. This is a real conflict, if not a physical one, and no heavenly blessings can be practically enjoyed without it.

But I must speak of one more feature before leaving Ephesians: those practical exhortations which you find at the close of the epistle. As it has been often noticed,

the epistle that sets us in Christ in the heavenly places, guides our feet upon the earth; and, as I have often remarked, that in the tabernacle where you have the glories of our position in nearness to God, our feet are upon the desert sands. So are our feet upon earth while we behold the glories of our heavenly position. But we must pass on, taking that thought as the key to the next epistle, that to the Colossians.

The theme of Colossians, you might say, is not exactly a wilderness theme. It is Christ, it is the glory of Christ, higher even than Ephesians in that way. In Colossians we have the glories of that blessed One, just as you have in the first and second chapters of Hebrews, with which this book corresponds. It is Christ who is put before us—Christ we are warned not to let go. But if you notice more carefully, you find that in Colossians he looks upon the saints as on earth; and speaks of their responsibilities in such a way that if one were not clear as to the truth of our standing, we would think there were some uncertainty about it. He says, for instance, “If ye hold fast,” “if ye be not moved away from the hope of the gospel.” The “ifs” and the conditions show that it has to do with the walk upon earth, and not with our standing. And yet how beautifully blended these are together,—the believer’s standing and his walk that flows out of it.

So you find, as I was saying, that it is Christ Himself, the person of the Lord, that is here presented. And that reminds me of the beautiful illustration you have in the first chapter of Genesis. The fourth day of creation, the number which speaks, just as Colossians does, of our responsibility in walk. What is it that happened on the fourth day?

There were to be lights in the heavens. It is dispensationally the truth of the Church with Christ in heaven, and in our individual history it is the truth of the believ

er's walk with his heart set upon Christ in heaven. If we are going to walk through this world we have got to have light, and this world yields no light. The light that is shed upon us by these gaslights came not from earth. It was dug out of the earth in the form of coal, but where did that come from? Ages ago the light from the sun came down to this earth, and, I might say, was incorporated into the plants and then buried out of sight, until dug up and finally set free, as you have it here in the form of light; but it all originally came from the sun.

So for us as Christians in our walk through this dark world, there is no light except from Christ the glorified One at God's right hand.

We may talk about practical things, our guidance as to this and that every-day matter, yet there is nothing so common, there is no duty so trivial, but must get its light from Christ in glory. That is the theme of Colossians, which is given for us in one verse, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God."

Looking briefly at the details of the epistle we have first, as I have been saying, Christ's supremacy stated in the strongest way. After thanking God for their faith, and praying for their growth in all Christian fruitfulness, the apostle goes on to speak of the glorious Person in whom we have redemption. He is the image of the invisible God, that is, divine. He is also the First-born or Head of all creation, as Man, for He was the Creator and Upholder, as God, of all things. More, He is Head of the Church, as first-born from the dead, "that in all things He might have the pre-eminence." What a constellation of glories in that blessed Person!

Having presented this glorious Person, we are next called to contemplate His work, as revealed in the gospel; where we have the truth of perfect and eternal reconciliation, not only of *things* in heaven and earth, but of *persons*

who were enemies. But the gospel goes on to declare that wondrous mystery of "Christ in you the hope of glory," and of the Church His body, which was also the apostle's earnest, ardent care. This closes the first chapter. The second chapter gives us the fulness of His people in Christ, in whom indeed all fulness dwells, laid up for His beloved people. They enter into this fulness by "walking in Him," "rooted and grounded in love," having been buried with Him, and now as risen with Him. This has put us in a place of liberty, where ordinances are a thing of the past, having been blotted out at the cross, where Christ triumphed over principalities and powers. Carnal religion has no place here, and punctilious keeping of rules must give place to the activities of that resurrection life which is ours.

From such a point it can easily be seen what the walk should be. I have already quoted the verse which serves as the key-note for the walk; and in connection with that we have, "mortify your members which are upon earth." We may rest assured that where death and resurrection with Christ are entered into, every earthly duty will be fulfilled. What a wilderness book that makes—Christ the power and pattern of the life!

That leaves us with the epistle to the Philippians as the close of this portion. Now in this epistle you have the repetition of truths looked at previously, you know, corresponding to Deuteronomy, which gives us the repetition of the law. You have the repetition of our wilderness journey, the lessons we have learned from it, the principles by which we are guided, and, as God goes over it all with us, giving us wisdom for our further path.

Do you notice how beautifully it joins on with the epistle to the Colossians. As we have already had occasion to remark that Deuteronomy and Numbers are very similar. There is only this difference, that in Deuteron-

omy you have God come in. Now here in Philippians, just as in Colossians, you have the truth of Christ on high as the light by which we walk down here. The same truth is put before us, but now without the conditions that would be appropriate to a book of Numbers. It is not, "if ye will continue;" there is no thought of that; he says, "being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun the good work in you will perform it unto the day of Christ." I need scarcely more than allude to the theme and structure of the book, for it is familiar to us all. Christ in those four chapters is presented in a fourfold way, clearly marking the divisions of the book. First Christ is our life, in the first chapter. "For me to live is Christ;" Christ is the whole sum of our life down here. Then in the second chapter, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus;" it is Christ set before us in His humiliation and in His exaltation, we to imitate Him in the path of lonely humiliation, and of service that flows out from it.

I sometimes think we forget, because we are so charmed with the first part of that second chapter, the beauty of the last part. In the first part it is Christ humbling Himself to be the servant, but in the last part you have Epaphroditus humbling himself as the servant. It is beautiful to see that with the example of Christ before him, Epaphroditus can, in his little measure, do the same thing, and be nigh unto death in the service of the saints, for love to that precious Saviour, who is the object of his heart. So too in the same portion, Timothy is likewise commended, and Paul is willing to be poured out as a drink-offering. That is the order—Christ first, and His people imitating Him.

In the third chapter you have the resurrection. Paul with his eyes on Christ, forgetting the things that are behind, reaches forth to what is before. Christ in glory is his object—the object that first led him to cast off all

human righteousness as dung, and press on, a heavenly citizen, to see and be with and like Christ.

In the fourth chapter you have the sustenance for the way. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Remembering this, we can not only rejoice in the Lord, but stand fast in Him. If there has been disagreement, saints can be reconciled; if there is need, God's face can be sought. Good is to fill our minds rather than evil, and the fruits of love and grace will abound under every circumstance.

I know you have anticipated, perhaps, every thing that has been said, but, as I have remarked, is it not well to have our minds refreshed from time to time with these priceless truths, that we may exhibit their power in our lives?

I neglected to mention the epistle to Philemon as a post-script to Colossians. It will only need a word to show how fittingly it is that. Philemon, you know, lived at Colosse; the epistle to him was written at the same time as that to the Colossians, as is evident from the salutation and general style. It was written about Onesimus. Bearing in mind that Colossians has to do with the practical walk, here we have a practical illustration. The saints might talk in quite a learned way, you know, about the glories of Christ and all that; and Philemon might say, I am seeking those things which are above, where Christ is, and I, of course, will mortify my members upon the earth. Very well, Paul says, here is the slave that ran away from you, receive him back with all the love, as a brother beloved. It illustrates the fact that it is Christ who is the guide and power of the life, and I have no question, and Paul had no question, about Philemon doing that. Beautifully too does the same grace show itself in Onesimus in being willing to return. In that way it is a practical illustration that with Christ before us we are not visionary, nor careless in our walk; but that in all

the details of life, in the smallest matters, we have a guide, a principle which controls and makes all to be conformed to the image of Christ. May it be so with us, dear brethren, and may we find in our lives that these truths set us free indeed, and conform us to the image of our blessed Lord, for that is His desire and His will for us.

LECTURE IX

PAUL'S EPISTLES

PART II

WE come now to the second division of these epistles of Paul, those which speak not so much of standing, nor of the grace of divine righteousness which has put us before God complete in Christ. They present to us rather our relationship to God, our association with Him, and the responsibilities which flow out from that association. I might say that they link quite closely with those of Peter on the one hand, and with John on the other. They present family relationship, and in a certain sense an earthly responsibility. You know that John's theme is family relationship, and Peter's is earthly responsibility. This second part of Paul's epistles forms the connecting link, you might say, between that book of Leviticus, the book of the holiest, and the book of Numbers, which is the practical walk in the wilderness.

If you notice you will find in the latter part of Leviticus something like that; you get the practical side of things. In the first part you get the sacrifices, the work of Christ, the person of the Lord, and the priesthood. Then you get the practical cleansing and access to God,—in the sixteenth chapter. From there on there are practical questions of holiness in the daily life. Now I think it is a matter of real interest that just as in the book of Leviticus, you have these two portions—that which speaks of standing, and that which speaks more

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particularly of relationship, — so you have in Paul's epistles.

These books have been grouped for us, and I am sure it commends itself to us as being their natural order. I might say at the very beginning, you have a very suggestive thought in the fact that many of these books are double. It is a second portion, and no less than three of them are double books. We have first and second Thessalonians, first and second Corinthians, first and second Timothy: all of them double books, giving us something supplementary in each case, with a special object as we shall see when we come to look at them. That in itself is characteristic of a second portion.

We have first, the two epistles to the Thessalonians as the beginning of this portion, the Genesis you might say. Then the two epistles to the Corinthians as the second, or the book of Exodus, speaking at least of fellowship which grows out of redemption. Then in the third place Hebrews, which none would question as the book of Leviticus or the sanctuary book. Its whole theme is that. Fourthly Timothy, giving us responsibility in connection with the Church on earth, and closing with Titus, which quite resembles Timothy in some respects, and yet has an outlook toward the future as well.

Bearing in mind that the theme of them all is relationship, it is very striking to notice at the beginning of the first epistle to the Thessalonians, that it is addressed to "the Church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ." We have the expression "in Christ" in the other epistles, but here we have a most remarkable expression "*in God the Father.*" "In Christ" is position, but "in God the Father" is relationship. We are only in the Father as we are related to Him by new birth. That thought of birth suggests Genesis or beginning. And is it not a precious thought that in these epistles in which we have much of our re-

sponsibility and, alas, much of our failure too, we are spoken of as "in the Father?" "I write unto you little children because ye know the Father." It is first, the beginning of all relationship; and that is what characterizes this whole epistle to the Thessalonians.

It is a very simple book. As a matter of fact it is the first epistle written; and it was written very shortly after the conversion of the Thessalonians. Not very many weeks had elapsed after the apostle had left Thessalonica, before he sent this epistle to confirm them in their newly found joy and relationship. There are several main subjects; and one at the beginning that I wanted to call our attention to, though it is familiar to us unquestionably. Just as you have, first of all, birth in relationship to God, you have, in the second place, in the ninth and tenth verses of that same chapter, what marks true conversion. True conversion, true relationship comes from being born of God; not profession, not taking any outward place—the true relationship is by birth.

Their true conversion is just what is described here in these verses. He declares, "They show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivered us from the wrath to come." What a summary you have of the work of God. How much is summed up in those few words for us. There is true repentance shown in turning to God. The order there, you have often noticed, is most suggestive, most powerful. You tell a sinner to give up his sins, to turn from this and that sin, and he hesitates, he has not the power to do it. You present to him God and the claims of His grace, and if the word takes hold on him and he turns to the living God, he will turn away from sin. There is just that difference; it is not turning from sin to God but to God from sin. There is power in that.

That is the past. As to the present, they were serving the living and true God. That is true service. Then as to the future, they were waiting for His Son from heaven. Then he gives us the ground of both the waiting and the service: "to wait for His Son from heaven, even Jesus, whom He raised from the dead, who delivered us from the wrath to come." How beautifully is all put in! The death of Christ for our sins delivering us from the coming wrath and judgment, and His resurrection the full manifestation of that fact.

It is beautiful to think of these early Christians: the apostle had spent a very short time in Thessalonica, and during that short stay there had been much persecution. Yet how beautifully clear these dear souls were. They knew Jesus; they knew their relationship to the Father; they knew that they had been delivered from the wrath to come; idols of sin had no more place in their life, and they knew they could happily wait for that One who had set them free from wrath; so they waited constantly for the coming of the Son of God. Think of the Christians in our day,—twenty years children of God, forty years perhaps,—how few comparatively there are who can be described in these words. And yet that is what the power of God would do now if His word were truly received, just as it was among the Thessalonians. We can test ourselves and the character of the gospel that we preach by what you have in that chapter.

We go on into the second part of the epistle, from chapter ii. through to the fourth chapter and the twelfth verse. Here we have the apostle's account of his work amongst them, and it is very interesting to see how he mingles exhortation with narrative. He calls them to witness as to his life amongst them when he was with them. He tells them how tender he was of them! how solicitous! how careful! and the effect of it. He tells them of his example. He presents himself and says,

You know "how holily and justly and unblamably" we lived, and you know the effect of it. Then he uses that as an inducement to them as to their life, basing his exhortations upon these happy reminiscences of himself. It certainly does seem that the work in Thessalonica was unique and remarkable. It also shows us how brief a time it takes for God to do His work. Here, in the short compass of perhaps two or three months, saints have been brought out in the midst of persecution, and established as an assembly of God, and epistles written to them to establish them still further. How beautifully complete, and all in a short time! Would that we could see something of that in this our day as well, and have some such reminiscences of love from the saints to the Lord and to one another, as you find exhibited throughout this epistle.

At the thirteenth verse of the fourth chapter we are brought to the third place—you might say to the blessed hope itself. The whole epistle is devoted to the Lord's coming. It is alluded to in every chapter. But there it is dwelt upon at large, and it is one of the few passages that we have in the whole New Testament that exclusively deals with the rapture of the Church.

I sometimes think that perhaps in presenting the precious truth of the Lord's coming for His Church, we forget the other great side of truth which is the most prominent even in the New Testament,—the Lord's coming to take His kingdom—to display Himself in all His glory. Do not misunderstand me. I do not mean to say that there are only partial revelations as to the rapture of the saints; nor that in many of those other passages where we have the Lord's coming spoken of, we do not have the rapture included. I believe we do. But it is very significant that the Lord will have us have part in His thoughts as to His coming with relation to the world. I ask you, for instance, who that reads the book of Revelation, and sees there all the solemn details connected with the appearing

and judgment of Christ ere He sets up His kingdom, can doubt for a moment that the Lord would have us intelligent and clear as to them? And while our hearts dwell with delight upon the precious fact that the Morning Star rises before the Sun of Righteousness, let us remember that, in a very important sense, we are waiting for the Sun of Righteousness too. We are looking for the time when He shall reign, whose right it is, and set up His Kingdom in all the holiness, power, and glory which will one day be fully manifested as His.

Now, bearing that in mind, we come back to our passage here in Thessalonians with fresh interest. Here is a special secret for the Church, just as the truth of the Church itself was a secret hid in God which was not revealed unto the prophets previously, but only now, the apostle tells us, to him,—a secret which had been hid in God from the foundation of the world. So too the rapture of the Church, the coming of the Lord to take His Church, and all the dead in Christ, out of the world.

Though familiar, do you grow weary of it—that beautiful unfolding of the rapture of the saints; the dead in Christ raised first, and then,—not *they* who are alive, but "*we* who are alive;" showing that it was a present and ever precious hope, an expectation on the part of the saints of that day—"we who are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord shall be caught up together with them, to meet the Lord in the air. . . Wherefore comfort one another with these words." Precious, dear brethren! to see in this infant Church, in this earliest, this primer of all the epistles, the prominence of this truth!

Thus you have in this epistle, first, our relationship with God shown by our true conversion to Him to wait for His Son; secondly, the exhortation to love and holiness growing out of all the apostle's ministry amongst them; and thirdly, the hope fully enlarged upon as to the coming of the Lord to take us out of the whole scene, to

be with Himself. I might say as to the closing chapter of the first epistle that we have exhortation based upon this truth of the Lord's coming.

In the second epistle you have what is often the case in a second epistle, warning or correction. Very natural that is. For instance, a first letter might be misunderstood, might be applied in an extreme way, and needs a second as a corrector. Both of these are true in the case of 2 Thessalonians. Its three chapters give us a corrective of the errors that might have come in through failure to understand. For instance, as to waiting for the Lord, what more beautiful as an attitude than for children of God to be waiting for God's Son from heaven? But there came in the failure of neglecting their earthly duties while they were waiting for Him.

You remember when the Lord first revived this precious truth, how abuses came in almost at the beginning in connection with it. There was Millerism, grown up to-day into the tenfold more active form of Seventh-day Adventism. There was Irvingism and other forms of error—all in connection with the truth of the Lord's coming.

I do not believe there is another doctrine in Scripture that has been so much perverted as this truth of the Lord's coming, and we need not go far to find the reason: one is that Satan is eager to corrupt this bright and blessed hope; another is, to take it away from God's people entirely.

Now he knows if he corrupts the hope, he does the other too. For instance, if the Lord's coming is associated with certain set times, or false doctrines, as in Adventism—where the child of God is put under the law, and where the deadly error of annihilation is taught;—there you can see how at once Satan has destroyed all the moral and sanctifying power of that precious truth.

On the other hand if he connects it with vagaries, with

extreme fanatical views, sober-minded people will refuse to take up the truth of the Lord's coming at all. How many sober-minded Christians there are to-day who connect in their minds all thought of the Lord's coming with the wild dreams of people who do strange and unscriptural things! Look, for instance, at the case of Irving; he taught quite clearly many of the truths connected with the Lord's coming. But with it he linked the jargon he called "tongues," the claim of the restoration of the twelve apostles, and of the prophetic gifts. Mixed with that were all the rites and ceremonies of the church of Rome itself, and, most solemn of all, the spotless purity of our blessed Lord was assailed. What is the result? Sober-minded people say, when you speak of the Lord's coming, That is Irvingism, or Adventism; there is error connected with that; we will have nothing to do with it.

Thus the enemy works, by introducing error, at once destroying the moral power of the hope, and preventing the sober-minded amongst God's children from taking up the reality.

Now this second epistle is to correct such perversion and corruption. You find, for instance, in the first chapter, the apostle puts them in their true relationship as saints, to those who are to be judged. When the Lord will be revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus, we will be at rest with Christ. In the second chapter, he goes on to correct the error that they were already in the day of the Lord. How we can see the wiles of the enemy in introducing such things into the simple, precious hope that the Spirit of God had put before them. They were to wait for God's Son from heaven. Here the error comes in, brought in by an epistle "as from us,"—that is a forged epistle. Some one was disturbing them, teaching that the day of the Lord was already present; that they were already in the midst of His judg-

ments, and therefore that the day of the Lord's coming was already past. That would be the practical effect of it.

That gives occasion for that most important revelation as to the apostasy, and the rise of the man of sin. The Holy Spirit in the Church is the hindrance to the full development of lawlessness and apostasy. When the Church is taken up the Holy Spirit is "taken out of the way." Then apostate Judaism, with the lifeless form of the Church—the Spirit having been taken to heaven,—will be ripe for the rise of the Antichrist.

Because men have refused the truth of Christ, they will believe the lie of Antichrist. Then the day of the Lord will be revealed, and His judgments will be poured out upon a world that would not have His grace. How utterly foreign would all this be for those who were looking for a Saviour and not a Judge.

In the third chapter, we have the other correction: If we are waiting for the Lord, they say, What is the use for us to go on with our daily work? Let us not be occupied with earthly things. Let us give them up, and simply be waiting for God's Son from heaven. How clear cut, how pungent the apostle's words: "If any man will not work neither let him eat." Not only that, but "withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly." So he goes on, and shows them how this wrong use of the Lord's coming to make people indifferent as to their earthly responsibilities, is utterly contradictory to every thought of divine holiness.

He says, If you are not working you are busybodies, going from house to house meddling in things that do not belong to you, dragging the saints down from their true occupation with Christ, and thus destroying the testimony of God.

How common those things are, and as we remember that God has set them before us, let us learn from this second epistle to be corrected as to any abuse of the

Lord's coming. You may say, We are well guarded against these things, and are quite clear as to the doctrine; no danger of getting it confused. Ah, if the doctrine of the Lord's coming is not a sanctifying and a separating truth it will do us harm; like every other truth held intellectually but not in divine power.

May the Lord thus lead us into the true place, the true privilege attached to our relationship with Himself as given in these two epistles to the Thessalonians.

We come next to the epistles to the Corinthians—a double epistle again. They are the Church epistles. You have two prominent Church epistles in Paul's writings, you might say, looking at opposite sides of Church truth.

Ephesians is the great Church epistle as to our standing. Corinthians is the great Church epistle as to our relationship and responsibility. You find in these two epistles many thoughts in common, and yet there is this difference: In Ephesians you have Christ in heavenly places put before us as the Head, and the Church linked with Him; while in Corinthians you are upon the earth, and appropriately the Holy Spirit takes the place that Christ occupied in the epistle to the Ephesians. How wonderfully consistent and beautiful that is! The Holy Spirit is down here, and has formed the Church by baptizing it into one body. His activities in the varied gifts that come from Christ in glory are therefore prominently before us.

It has been often noticed that there was much to correct amongst the Corinthians. The first epistle seems nearly all correction. Sometimes we wonder why there is so much trouble in connection with the assembly; and that there is so much strife over Church truth. Let us remember this, that *the* great Church epistle is mainly taken up with correction; and that the assembly of God on earth should be always ready for correction, always ready

to have its failures and shortcomings pointed out in order to be made really a vessel of divine service.

The first ten chapters of the first epistle are chiefly taken up with cutting off this, that, and the other evil. The apostle, as it were, draws the line of demarkation between the saints and the outside world.

First of all he cuts off the wisdom of this world. The Corinthians were like other men, walking as men. They had parties amongst them—schools of thought like the Greek philosophies. The wisdom of the world was prominent among them, and as a result the divisions of the world came in. Where man's wisdom comes in, and thoughts have a place, you may be sure there will be division and strife. If I say, "I think thus and so," you have a perfect right to say the same, and there comes in discord. If it is not what you or what I say, but "thus saith the Lord," you may rest assured that there is no room for strife or division.

You have noticed how this matter is corrected before the moral evil is touched. Their moral condition was perfectly dreadful. We can hardly conceive the possibility of such a state, because the long familiarity with the holy truths of the word of God have rendered well nigh impossible the outward corruption such as was manifest in Corinth. Yet there are many holy lessons for us to learn from it. If that moral state is impossible in assemblies of God's people now, notice there was another evil back of that which the apostle probed first; and that was the taking of this world's wisdom and this world's ways as guides in the affairs of God's house.

He corrects the division before there can be the power to deal with the moral evil. He sets them right as to principle before he takes up practice. You will often find that is the only way to do,—the necessary way. There must be true spiritual power from the truth, before we can actually take up the moral state or specific conduct.

Now we have, as I was saying, first this wisdom of the world dealt with; then the corruption of nature,—corruption of the flesh. You have the terrible case of immorality in the fifth chapter. They were exhorted to put away from among themselves that wicked person,—commanded to do so. Then in the sixth chapter, you have the correction of their going to law, and questions connected with the fifth chapter. The seventh chapter is devoted to the same subject. Thus you have the flesh dealt with in all its wretched filthiness.

Then from the eighth to the tenth chapters he deals chiefly with idolatry, or rather eating meats offered to idols, and their connection with the diabolical systems of heathenism. Even Christian liberty was not to be used as a stumbling-block to the weak. Thus he has marked for us the separation entirely from the world, from the flesh, and from the devil.

Having shut out evil, he now spreads the Lord's table. With these evils corrected, they have a clean place in which to set forth, to announce, the death of the Lord Jesus, in the breaking of bread.

Thus in the eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth chapters, you have the assembly in its activity. The eleventh chapter gives us the Lord's supper. The twelfth gives us the one body, which is connected with the Lord's supper, and the gifts and activities of that body. The thirteenth gives us the love which is the moving principle of the whole thing; and the fourteenth chapter gives us the exercise of gifts in the assembly, and the order of God's house. All those things are provided for when the evil has been shut out and judged. Just as you have the principle, "cease to do evil; learn to do well."

That brings us to the last part of the epistle, the great resurrection chapter, which is the third section of the epistle. It fully presents to us that great fact which is the glory of the gospel and the very foundation of it.

When we come to the second epistle you find supplementary truth, just as we found in Thessalonians. It is not exactly correction of misapprehension, though the apostle goes on to probe still more deeply into all their consciences and hearts. He has a readiness to avenge all disobedience when their obedience is manifested. But you have more particularly in it, the development of the truth in connection with Christian ministry. The first two chapters give us the foundation, the source of all Christian ministry; and that is its connection with Christ, who was not yea and nay, but yea, only yea. All the promises of God are yea and amen in Him. Therefore the apostle could proclaim a gospel just as sure and stable as the person of Christ Himself.

It is very touching to see that this unwavering stability in the holiness of God in our life is perfectly consistent with grace toward those that are truly restored; such as the man in the fifth chapter of the first epistle, who had been brought to repentance by faithful dealing.

Passing to the third chapter you see the ministry of the Spirit as contrasted with the law; the new covenant, the ministry of grace as contrasted with the old covenant,—the ministry of condemnation written on tables of stone. The passage from bondage to liberty is magnificently described at the close of the chapter.

The third portion we have in the fourth and fifth chapters, where we are introduced into the glory, a most precious unfolding of the glory of God, shining in the face of Jesus Christ. Christian ministry has to do with all that. Follow it a moment. It is based upon unchanging verity connected with the person of Christ. It is connected with the Holy Spirit as contrasted with the law. It takes the veil from between us and God; the veil that was upon Moses' face is removed in the face of Christ. The full character of God is manifested, as the apostle says, "We use great plainness of speech." So he

does, particularly in the fourth and fifth chapters, which we cannot dwell upon at length.

Then you have, in the sixth and seventh chapters, the tempting, the trial by the way. It is a fourth section. And you find that when the apostle has had a glimpse,—nay, not a glimpse, but a full view,—into that sanctuary where Christ is, he can come down into the world and be persecuted, oppressed, pass through afflictions, yet always rejoicing; be poor, yet making many rich. No matter what his outward circumstances may be,—weak, helpless, despised, the filth and the off-scouring of the earth,—he can glory in the all-sufficiency of Christ. That is the character of Christian ministry—we are linked with those unchanging verities which give us a power that nothing can withstand. Look at Paul, what a weak, contemptible man he was, humanly speaking. There was nothing in him to attract attention, or to command respect: his bodily presence was weak, his speech contemptible. Yet he is led in triumph as a sweet savor of Christ unto God in his Christian ministry, because it had that blessed character.

Then you have the fifth division in the eighth and ninth chapters, which speak of our responsibility here upon the earth. They take up such questions as the assembly collection, and ministry to needy saints; showing that the highest form of heavenly ministry is also a practical thing connected with earthly responsibility.

In the sixth portion of the book, in the tenth and eleventh chapters, you have the power to overcome everything, and it is this power that we have already alluded to. The details of apostolic life are given to us here.

In the last portion, the last two chapters, the man in Christ is presented; the man in Christ in whom the apostle glories. He does not glory in himself, the weak, helpless man, but in the man who was caught up to glory;

and yet that man come down here to earth was in himself weak and helpless. Yet he was one in whom all the power of Christ could manifest itself. That is overcoming. Such is the secret of Christian ministry.

The epistle to the Hebrews brings us fairly into the sanctuary, not merely as to our standing, but as to our responsibility also.

I will, by way of reminder, point out the five main divisions of the book to show how completely they bring out the truth as to the sanctuary, and our relationship to God in it.

First of all, you get Christ in His pre-eminence in the first chapter. Then in His humiliation from the second chapter nearly to the close of the fourth chapter.

How beautifully contrasted are these two portions. All through Hebrews, the one subject is the pre-eminence of Christ. Christ is presented to faith as the One to occupy the heart, and to keep these Hebrew Christians, who had all their wonderful history behind them, all their pride within their hearts, and all the temptations to apostatize, —to give up Christ. The remedy is, *more of Christ*.

Ah! if the heart is cold, if the world tempt us, do we not feel that it has power over us? What is the true remedy? More of Christ; let Him be presented in His pre-eminence, and we will find that the world and Satan lose their power just in proportion as Christ is enthroned in the heart.

But how amazingly He is presented! First, we see Him as the Creator, the Upholder of all things, made higher than the heavens, after having purged our sins, taking His seat on high. Then the apostle brings before us, as in a panorama, one wondrous theme after another. He puts before us the angels that excel in strength, and as we admire them he puts them aside, displaces them by Christ Himself. It is not the fathers, it is not the prophets, it is not angels. God has spoken to us by the

Son; He presents Him in all His majesty, in all His glory.

Then immediately succeeding that, he says that we ought to give the more earnest heed to these things, lest at any time we should let them slip. That, you notice, is the characteristic of Hebrews; you will have the most wondrous unfolding of what Christ is, and in connection with it the most solemn warning against apostasy. These two things go together, and had their effect doubtless upon those addressed.

I am sure we have all felt it, the power of warning connected with the presentation of Christ.

The second part gives us, not Christ exalted, but Christ made low. Here you have Him, the faithful One in all His house, faithful as was Moses, but He as a Son, not a servant. Just as the angels passed from the scene, so must Moses. Then Joshua comes on as the one who led them into the land; but Joshua passes away, leaving Christ—Christ alone before us, as the One who can give lasting rest. In connection with that rest is the warning again lest they should fall away.

From the close of the fourth chapter through the tenth you have the heart of the epistle, that is, the holy place made manifest. First of all the Priest, then the warning in the sixth chapter. Connected with that the anchor taking hold within the veil. Roughly the themes of the following chapters are,—

Seventh, Melchisedec, displacing Levi and Aaron.

Eighth, The new covenant, displacing the old.

Ninth, Sacrifice, displacing those of the law.

Tenth, The Holiest of all.

These are all blessedly connected with the Priest and the place into which He has brought us.

That brings us to the fourth portion, which is the world, or wilderness part. Beautifully you have it in the eleventh chapter, the pilgrim life. "The just shall live by

faith," and there the apostle arrays examples before us one after another: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and a host of worthies. As he gets past the books of Moses, you notice he gets more rapid. Very striking that is. He gets into the period of the Judges and says time would fail to tell of Deborah, Gideon, Barak, and all the others; and he concludes the subject by saying, "Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and run with patience the race set before us, looking"—not to these worthies of the past, save as they give us an example of faith,—“but looking off unto Jesus the author and finisher of faith.”

Then we reach the close in the twelfth and thirteenth chapters, a recapitulation of many precious truths; and we look on to the end, to which we have already in faith come—Mount Zion, the heavenly city, with its blessed company. What power in such truth to hold the soul steadfast to the end!

Hebrews thus fills the third—the Leviticus—place in these epistles, opening the sanctuary to the people of God.

Next we come to the fourth, or that which is practically the earth side of these epistles—the epistles to Timothy. They have to do, you know, primarily with the Church. The two epistles, just as we have seen in both Thessalonians and Corinthians, give us double truths. You have in first Timothy the Church as it came from the hand of God; and in the second epistle, the Church as it is found in the hands of man.

In 1 Timothy, as we have often noticed, you have the Church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of the truth. There you find unfolded the various duties of those who are in the Church, the varied ministry. In fact you have the official position of those that Timothy was authorized to set in the Church. In the early days, it was all put forth in an orderly way, as he says, that he

"might know how he ought to behave himself in the house of God."

What a contrast it is when we come to 2 Timothy! Everything has gone to pieces. The beloved apostle is in prison; all those that are in Asia, those that had hung upon his ministry, who had delighted in the precious truth he preached,—all those in Asia have departed from him. They have forgotten their first love. And that Church which ought to have been the pillar and ground of the truth, what is it? A great house, filled with all kinds of vessels, some to honor and some to dishonor. That house which had been a testimony for God, became a habitation of all manner of evil. What is Timothy exhorted to? He is exhorted to purge himself from the vessels to dishonor that he may be a vessel to honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use. I believe it is very customary to say there are only two classes, vessels to honor and vessels to dishonor. That is true in a sense. And yet are there not three,—vessels to honor, vessels to dishonor, and vessels that are not purged, not cleansed? So you find the great question of association is here presented as to our responsibility. We are to be first of all ourselves vessels to honor. Surely that would take up our own state of soul, our own communion with God. Next we are to purge ourselves from that which is wicked, whether it be in practice or in doctrine: we are to purge ourselves from the vessels to dishonor.

Now that raises the question as to association with the large mass of the Lord's beloved people, whose consciences have not been touched as to their responsibility to purge themselves. Is not that just what we find around us to-day? Look at the Lord's professed people.

Alas! we have clearly vessels to dishonor; by that I mean those who bring in wicked doctrine or sinful practice amongst the Lord's people. Then we have comparatively few who have a conscience as to association with

evil, and who have separated themselves, not from the house of God, not even from the great house of Christendom, for that would be to give up the name of Christian,—but who have separated themselves from these vessels to dishonor. They will not be associated with those that hold wicked doctrine or have wicked practices.

But alas! is it uncharitable, is it censorious to say that the vast bulk of the Lord's people have never been awakened as to their responsibility in the matter of association? They say, The wheat and the tares must grow together till the harvest. So they must, but where? Not in the Church, but in the world. We must needs go out of the world, if we would be separated bodily; but in that which is called by the name of Christ, or as the apostle says, If any man be called a brother, and yet is of this character, with such a one not to eat. I speak of the vast bulk of the Lord's people being unawakened as to this question. It has been suggested, and it seems to me probably true, that the reason why evil doctrine crept into the Church at the beginning, why they lapsed so quickly into legalism and into a mere carnal, earthly religion, was because the separation that was enjoined here in this epistle to Timothy was not practiced. As a result the whole Church was soon corrupted. A little leaven leavened the whole lump.

Contrast the inspired writings with the best, the earliest uninspired writings. Take the writings of Polycarp; or those they have been talking about lately, that they have discovered on scraps of manuscript. They say it is a sort of supplement to the Gospels—"The sayings of Jesus." But contrast them, and you will find it is like comparing wine with water. They are utterly flat, worthless, and insipid compared with the precious book of God.

It seems as if the early Christians had not grasped these precious truths, and I believe one reason was that

there was not the practical separation and order enforced amongst the Lord's people. So error came in and marred the testimony at the beginning. It went on, going down into the darkness, linked with the civil power under Constantine, and then going on down still further into the darkness, until all the horrors of Rome were grafted upon the Church. That is the course of Church history.

God in His mercy recovered the truth of justification by faith, and other truths, in the days of Luther; but let me tell you, I believe that the great truth of the Church of God and the order of God's house was—I should perhaps say, is—being recovered in these our days. I surely do not mean to boast. I surely do not mean to say that the main truths have not long been brought out, but I believe that in God's infinite mercy, He is entrusting to us at this time these precious truths as to the Church, to work them out. And if sorrow comes, if testing comes, if many a dear one seems not to walk in all the energy and joy and power of it, as the Lord would love to see all walk—as we ourselves feel our hands hanging down, our knees weakened—what is there for us to do, but to stir one another up, to exhort one another to hold fast, and to seek indeed to exhibit the precious truth of God's Church? At the close of the wilderness journey we find in this wilderness book of Timothy, as you might call it, something analogous to the captivity books of the Old Testament. Those remnant times resemble these in which we are living.

The Lord give us courage. We need to encourage and help one another; we need above all to pray for one another.

Titus gives us the closing part, and is therefore quite similar to Timothy. You do not, however, find the same completeness as to order, and already there is set before him rather "that blessed hope." You remember that Deuteronomy is a summary of the path, and a looking

forward into the future. So while you find in Titus a summary as to Church order, the various offices—such as bishop, deacon, and elder,—yet on the other hand you find that magnificent passage which opens the windows of heaven to us.

We see how that brings us right to our starting-point. In Thessalonians you had just that; they were turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven. And in the book of Titus, which closes this portion, you have again the serving the living and true God; the living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; and the looking for that blessed hope, the waiting for God's Son from heaven.

Thus we have gone around the circuit and come back to the simple point whence we started, with our eyes fixed upon that glory, which is very near.

Thus we have in these epistles, our relationships and our responsibility. You have not the great flights of truth that you have in the first division of Paul's writings; but what solid footing to stand upon! what practical instruction! what responsibility fully pressed upon us!

The Lord give us, brethren, to enter in heart more and more into this sanctuary of Paul's epistles, and to have our minds, our hearts, our lives permeated with their truths, that our lives may be to Christ's praise!

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LECTURE X

PETER, JAMES, JOHN, AND JUDE

OUR subject this evening is the last of these series of epistles—written by four disciples, Peter, James, John, and Jude. We have in the writings of these four, the epistles which follow after those of Paul; and they are called the general epistles in contrast to the special ones, which Paul wrote. Nearly everyone of those were written to special assemblies, and with special objects. These epistles were written to the people of God in general, and are therefore usually called the general or Catholic epistles, meaning the same thing.

There are four writers, and these epistles come in the fourth place. They take the place of the book of Numbers in the Pentateuch of Moses; and just as we found Paul's epistles have to do with the holy place—our standing before God, and our relationship with Him, so these epistles have to do with our position in the world.

It is very suggestive, that we should first be clear as to our relationship with God and our standing before Him, before we should have to pass on to the world and meet the obstacles, the opposition of the enemy. How good God is; we have seen again and again that He first brings us, as it were, into heaven itself, and then sends us down to earth to live for Him. That is exactly the reverse of the world's thought of pleasing God. It sets before men a long dreary way. It says, toil up that mountain, and at the end, if you are faithful, you will reach God, perhaps. God on the contrary meets the

poor sinner down at the foot of the mountain, meets us at the very entrance of the wilderness, and before we take a single step in our journey through the world as His people, He introduces us into His presence and there puts us at rest. All questions as to the future are settled, all questions as to the past are equally settled. We look back upon the long course of our sins, and we can thank God that every one has been blotted out by the precious blood of Christ. We look forward into that eternity to which we are daily drawing nearer, and we see every question settled as to that. Then as we learn to grow at home in God's holy presence, He sends us forth as pilgrims in the world to live for Him. You will find that this is the marked character of these epistles. They have not so much to do with the presence of God as with the presence of the enemy; not so much with heavenly things as with earthly. The believer, we will find, is contemplated in them as the pilgrim passing through the world. It is for him a time of testing, through all the difficulties which bring out his weakness, and which, alas, bring out the failure that accompanies that weakness.

Now just as we have been finding that in the New Testament, we have a wondrous exuberance of precious truth, as for instance, in our Lord's life in the Gospels, or in Paul's epistles as the books of the sanctuary, we find it correspondingly so here. These pilgrim epistles give us beautiful and precious furnishing and a full provision for our way. Let us look a little at a few of the salient features of each of them, beginning with first Peter. He is evidently the first one to look at, for he sets before us the fact that we are strangers and pilgrims here.

You notice that in the very first verse of the first chapter, he addresses them as the strangers who were scattered throughout the various provinces of the Roman empire. He is speaking, of course, to Israel according

to the flesh primarily; to the Jews, the strangers of the dispersion, but who were Christians as well, who though an earthly people by nature had become something else by grace. It is addressed, as I said, to strangers and pilgrims. If you look down at the second chapter, and the eleventh verse, "dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims"; and all through the epistle, you find that the believer is contemplated as journeying through the world.

Let us take a characteristic verse here; chapter i. 3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Now we have almost identically the same words in the epistle to the Ephesians, with this striking and characteristic difference, that in Ephesians we have what is our present possession in Christ in the heavenly places; the believer is already considered as in the heavenly places in Him. Here on the contrary it is a hope. We are on the earth, and have a hope which links us with the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Everything is future in Peter; everything is present in Ephesians—that is, spiritual blessings made good to us by the power of the Holy Ghost. Now that is characteristic of the book and its subject. It is the pilgrim book.

But look how beautifully, if we are pilgrims, we are provided for. First of all, the hope that we have is a living hope, and we are begotten again to it by the resurrection of Christ. Think of that, weary pilgrim, as you toil under the sun in a strange, hostile world. Think of it, that the hope that is dear to your heart is a resur-

rection hope; it links with a risen Christ. The hope is connected with an inheritance that is reserved in heaven for us, and we upon earth are "kept by the power of God through faith." You look with hope upon your inheritance, with which you are linked. It is reserved for you. God has kept it for you. Suppose you were to take a doubting Christian, one who is troubled with fears and uncertainties, and say to him, Do you think there is any danger of heaven passing away? do you think there is any danger of those glories fading away? Ah! no, he would say, I know that heaven is secure, I know that those glories are unfading, but it is myself that I am troubled about. Now you can turn him to this passage and say, The very power that has reserved our inheritance for us keeps us for our inheritance. God, I say it reverently, has two hands. In one hand He holds our inheritance; in the other He holds us, and the same almighty power which has given us *that*, keeps us. All He has to do is to bring His two hands together, and His people are in their inheritance. Dear brethren, what a joy to be a pilgrim with such a living hope as that, connecting us with what is before us. You find that is the key of Peter's epistle. We are surrounded by trials, as he tells us here; we are in heaviness through manifold temptations; surrounded by all kinds of difficulties, so great that as he says, the trial of your faith is as by fire. Yet that fiery trial is more precious than gold, and will be found unto glory and honor at the appearing of Jesus Christ. A little further on he says, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you."

It is understood that we are to have tribulation in a world like this. As we think of Gethsemane and Calvary, as we think of our blessed Lord's path of suffering and rejection here, can we expect as those who are to

walk in His steps, to be exempt from suffering? Ah no! Christ's people on earth must be a suffering people, and let us beware of a path which avoids the rough and thorny places. But we can thank Him for the assurance that He has given us at the very beginning, that we are kept by God's power unto salvation, through faith.

Then in the same chapter, we have a similar thought which I dwell on just for a moment, most familiar to us. He has been speaking of our girding up the loins of our minds, and there is nothing more important for pilgrims than to be girded. Suppose you were to go to an encampment where soldiers were about to start on a long and arduous march, and saw them reclining at ease and luxury in their tents, making no effort to get ready. The order to march had been given, and yet they are at ease. You say they are very poor soldiers, very poor pilgrims. Now in the very first chapter, Peter tells us to gird up the loins of our minds. Just as the pilgrim, the racer, has to gird up the loins of his body, so we must gird up the loins of our minds, and I would like to say that the matter for a pilgrim to be clear about is not so much first of all his walk, as his *heart*. It is the pilgrim heart that makes the pilgrim walk. If my heart and mind are girded up, then my feet will be in the right path unquestionably. Let us gird up, by the word of God, the loins of our mind that we may press on with vigor. If there is anything that hinders, any relaxation, let us beware. I may be quite busily engaged in doing the Lord's work and yet be no true pilgrim.

Then when we have girded up the mind, he wants us to be sure of another thing, that in this walk we must be holy. He says "Be ye holy for I am holy." He wants us to understand there is nothing uncertain in the whole Christian experience. We look at heaven, we look at earth, and all through there is to be nothing uncertain. So our apostle tells us, "forasmuch as ye know that ye

were not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold from your vain conversation received by tradition from the fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ." We know we are redeemed, therefore we are to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear. How characteristic these are of the earthly, of the pilgrim walk,—the living hope, the girded loins, the holy desire, the godly fear and the absolute certainty of our redemption,—all together as an incentive to live down here for Him who has gone on high for us.

So we might go on through the epistle with our eye falling on almost every verse to find that which is helpful for us as pilgrims. There are two or three things in the second chapter for you to notice. First, there is to be growth. There is a great mistake, in thinking that the believer in his path through the world is not to be growing. You remember that in the numbering of the children of Israel at the close of their journey, we find some of the tribes had greatly increased in number, and some had greatly decreased; some had barely held their own; some had made just a little progress, others had lost a little. Now we find, if we look for it, some of the causes of these things. Take, for instance, the tribe of Simeon. It had lost nearly one half its number, and the reason is not far to seek; for we find that it was in connection with the corruption at Baal-peor, that the judgment of God was inflicted upon them. They mixed themselves with the idolatrous Moabites and the result was that they lost in numbers.

On the other hand other tribes made wonderful advances. For instance, the tribe of Judah increased, and Manasseh also,—very strikingly. Manasseh, "forgetting the things that are behind, reaching forth unto those that are before." If I am a pilgrim in that character, I will grow in this world. Judah has Caleb as a leader,—the man who was whole-hearted for God, his heart set on his

inheritance in the land, and therefore, of course, pressing on. That is what makes progress. In this chapter I might say we have the Manasseh character. It is forgetting the things that are behind; "laying aside the weights, and the sin which doth so easily beset us." He says, laying aside therefore all these evil things that are enumerated, "as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby."

The wilderness is a happy place, if we are only in the true pilgrim attitude. It is a place of growth. Heaven is a joy; it will be where we shall see Christ and be like Him; but earth is where we learn Christ. Earth is where we get an experience of Him, which we could not even get in heaven itself. And you know if we are not growing, if we are not using the talents which our Lord has given us, then, dear brethren, it is our fault. We may complain that the wilderness is so full of trial, that there are so many difficulties, that our circumstances are so peculiar, but they are the very things that should make us grow heavenward. If we were in a prison we ought to flourish and grow there. If we are in the most trying circumstances our growth should be manifest.

As pilgrims we are to grow, but there are two essentials for growth; one is laying aside, and the other is feeding. Do you notice the things which the apostle tells us we are to lay aside? He does not say lay aside stealing, and murder, and the various outward immoralities. Ah, it is the guile, the hypocrisy, the malice, it is that tongue, that evil speaking, which alas, is so common amongst God's people. If we are to grow, we are to lay aside these things. Not *quite* an honest heart? not *quite* an honest purpose?—ah, we are to be clear as the noonday. There cannot otherwise be true growth.

But Christianity is never a negative thing. We are never told to lay aside, and to stop there. There must be feeding upon the Word. Like new born babes feed

upon milk, desire milk, so we in all the simplicity of new born babes are to desire, to crave, to feed upon the precious milk of God's word to grow by that. That is what marks the pilgrim. As thus growing up, we exhibit the true priestly character which is the power for the pilgrim walk. We have come to be built into a holy temple, and to offer up spiritual sacrifices, as priests—a nation of priests, to bear the holy vessels through the world—to show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

In this connection we are told to abstain from fleshly lusts. The Christian as a pilgrim is not to be fighting sin all the time. No man who is growing is always fighting, and if I am turning around and assaulting Amalek I am not making very swift progress toward Canaan. Every time you have to fight the flesh, you are stopped in your pilgrim walk. I do not mean to say that you may not have to do it; but show me a man who is constantly contending with the flesh, in hand to hand conflict with temptation and I will see not much growth. If he says, Well God has delivered me from it again, I got the victory again; I say what business did you have to need a victory? what did it have to trouble you for? You must have been lagging behind or it never could have troubled you. For you remember that Amalek,—to which allusion is made here,—assaulted the hindmost ones in Israel's army. With one who is in vigor pressing on to the front, with his eye on his inheritance, Amalek is away behind, he is distanced. But let any one lag behind, let him forget the joy of first love, let Christ's things that are before him cease to attract him and he will fall back. Whether it be an individual or a whole assembly, the flesh will thus soon overtake him, and you find he has to engage in hand to hand conflict with it; and the assembly too has to engage in the conflict when it ought to be pressing on in the Lord's work.

You take a gathering of a hundred saints, and there ought to be a hundred preachers of the gospel in it. We ought to be everyone of us so busily engaged in the Lord's service that we have no time to contend with fleshly lusts. We would not need to; there would be very little of strife or anything of that kind in an assembly of God's people, if we were pressing on as pilgrims in energy and devotedness in the Lord's service.

There is another feature that I want to speak of—our relationship to the world. We are pilgrims in it, just passing through. We have nothing to do with it as citizens, but we have everything to do as to our duty. We are to submit ourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. Then he enumerates; he begins down at the collector of taxes, takes note of every ordinance of man, every rule. We are to submit to his rule so long as it does not conflict with God's authority. Is that not beautiful for a pilgrim?

Another thing is, the suffering that we are to expect here. In the nineteenth verse of the second chapter, "This is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." We find in a number of places through this epistle that the apostle speaks of suffering. In the fourth chapter, for instance, he says, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." Christ suffered for sin once, and that is all the suffering there ever ought to be for sin. Look at the cross. Could you add anything to it? could you add anything to the sufferings of our blessed Lord under the judgment of God for sin? No, it was a perfect work, and needs nothing to be added to it. But look at this

child of God. He has to be chastened for his faults, to be buffeted; his Father has to smite him. He is not suffering for doing well, but for sin. No wonder if he takes it patiently. He has no business to suffer for sin. "Christ has *once* suffered for sin, the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God." Our God loves us too well to omit the suffering if we need it for our faults, but let us see to it that our sufferings are for righteousness, because we testify for Christ; because we walk in a path that He walked in, and not because we walk the forbidden path.

There are thus two kinds of suffering,—for sin and for righteousness. Now in suffering for righteousness the apostle tells us we are not to expect to escape; we are to arm ourselves with the same mind that Christ had. We may be sure that in the world where they gave the Lord the cross, there will be a cross for us. But he goes on to say in the fourth chapter, in the fifteenth and sixteenth verses, "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." Ah! brethren, there is the comfort: we are not to suffer as evil doers, but we are to suffer as Christians. Or, as he says in the third chapter and fourteenth verse, "But if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled."

That brings me to the last that I can speak of in this pilgrim epistle of Peter. We have seen the various characteristics of the pilgrim. Then we are introduced into the Lord's presence Himself. We are told at the close of the second chapter, in connection with this very subject of suffering, that Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps. This suffering for righteousness is the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. He has left us an example not merely to

follow in His path, but to follow in His steps. John Bunyan makes one of his pilgrims at the close of his journey say that wherever he had seen the footprints of Christ he had coveted to put his feet in the same steps. What a precious thing it would be for us if we, in tracing our Lord's path through this world, who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth,—if we would put our feet in the very same steps that He trod. There is Christ's example for our pilgrim journey.

Let me read one more verse before leaving this epistle. In the fifth chapter, and the fourth verse, "And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away." Christ is the path, Christ is the end. That is the pilgrim's course. We have His path here; our comfort and our stay, Himself with us. We have Himself at the end of it as the crown of reward for those who faithfully walk down here. What an incentive to be indeed pilgrims in the world.

The second epistle, which I will not enlarge upon, is like most second epistles. It speaks of the decay, of the evil, and departure from God which marks the last days. Read for instance, as characteristic of this, the second chapter. There the evil is so abounding, everywhere present, that the child of God is to walk in holy separation from everything that surrounds him to drag him down.

He puts before them there the contrast. Here is a world going off to apostasy, to all kinds of wickedness, but there are the new heavens, the new earth, and the coming of our Lord.

Everything here is to crumble to pieces; everything there endures. And if these things in which we are living now are to be dissolved, he says, what manner of men ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for the day of God, in which all these things shall be dissolved. Thanks to His grace we have received a Kingdom which cannot be shaken.

Second Peter carries us into that new heaven and earth, which is spoken of in the last part of Revelation.

But we must pass on to James. You are familiar with this epistle, yet I think we ought to read James more. And not only to read it, but to practice it still more. He is a most practical writer. This is called, you know, the book of Proverbs of the New Testament. Everything in it seems to appeal to the conscience. There is plenty there to show us that grace is known. But then everything has that appeal to the conscience, so that saints are to be stirred up in their walk down here. There is to be the practical deliverance for righteousness. Finding this epistle in a second place, we are to expect a real deliverance.

You will remember in Galatians, which is a second epistle, you have deliverance from the law. The seventh chapter of Romans gives you the same thought. But now we want deliverance for the pilgrim. It is not deliverance as to principles, as to doctrines. We would have to go to Romans and Galatians for that, but it is a practical deliverance for our walk.

James calls things by their right names. It is a great deliverance when we can practically call things by their true names, and see how the word of God would cut off everything that is unholy and contrary to His will in our path. How pungent, how faithful James is! He does not spare the rich or the mighty, no matter how exalted they may be. He speaks most plainly. If there is any question of the saint's honesty, he says, "Cleanse your hearts ye doubleminded." He tells us that a doubleminded man is unstable in all his ways. Let not that man think that he shall get anything of the Lord in prayer. Why is it that our prayers are not answered? James gives us two reasons. One is doublemindedness; that is, the mind half on one thing and half on another. If my mind is half on the world and half on Christ, I may

pray every day of my life and get no answer to my prayers. Oh! when I seek the Lord, let it be as it is beautifully put in the book of Chronicles, "They sought Him with all their heart and with all their desire." That kind of prayer *will* be answered.

James gives us the other reason too. We ask and receive not, because we ask amiss that we may consume it upon our own lusts; selfishness. Do you notice the secret of all prayer? Look at what the Lord has given us. Not a model to say like parrots, but to show us the true spirit of prayer, "Our Father, hallowed be *Thy* name; *Thy* kingdom come; *Thy* will be done." It is all God's glory, all God's interests; self is left behind, put in a secondary place. Whenever we are thinking more of the glory of God than of our own selfish interests, we are in a true attitude of prayer. Would it were ever thus: *Thy* will, *Thy* kingdom, *Thy* glory. Whenever God is glorified we may rest assured that His beloved people will not fall short of their blessing.

Thus James speaks constantly to the conscience, and thus practically delivers the Lord's people. Many who can speak quite clearly as to the deliverance in Romans or in Galatians, need oftentimes a practical word that would smite like a sword right to the sore place in their life to mend that, like David got when Nathan spoke to him.

I add one word about the familiar passage upon faith and works. All is in keeping with the subject of James. Only the most ignorant could imagine a contradiction between Paul and James. With Paul it is justification *before God*, which is surely by faith, without works; with James it is justification *before man*, and here works alone are the proof. The world cannot see my faith except as it operates in works. A man may *say* he has faith, but James is not satisfied with saying, there must be doing.

We come next to the true sanctuary in this pilgrim

series, John's epistles. Beautiful both in relation to, and contrast with, Paul's epistles. No one fails to see the difference between John's writings and Paul's. The thought of standing, in John's epistles, is alluded to, but it is not the theme of the writer at all. John has to do with three great themes, light, life, and love. That eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us, and of which we partake; and he declares all through the epistle, "That God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." So you have the life and the light. When you get life and light blended together, what is the result? life in the practical activities of love. We thus have three words setting before us the theme of the sanctuary, a little sanctuary as it were, "life, love, light," for the child of God in the world. We have life in Christ, we have light in the holy presence of God, and we know His love because He first loved us. The apostle rings the changes upon these subjects all through the epistle. If you try to analyze in a logical way you find great difficulty, though I have no question there are leading thoughts, and evident connections there; but you can trace these precious truths like silver and golden threads all through the epistle. If he is dwelling, for instance, upon light, upon holiness, and righteousness, he will pass from that to the subject of love and of grace. Or if he has been speaking of our love, that we ought to love one another, he explains it by saying that we love one another when we love God; then he explains that we love God when we keep His commandments; and lest we should get legal he says, These are His commandments that ye believe on His Son and love one another. Then should we be in doubt as to what that meant fully, he says God sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins, and it is the blood of Jesus Christ His Son that cleanseth us from all sin. Then he passes again to our responsibility. But it is linked together, life, light, love, and the

result is a beauteous blending, in communion with God, which is a true sanctuary for us in this world. Characteristically this is the sanctuary of these pilgrim epistles.

Of course, that is only touching on John. It is a book for the closet,—a prayer-book, as it were, rather than for cold intellectual analysis.

There is one other word and that is all I will say on this first epistle. "Now little children abide in Him." "Abide." Abide in the precious truth that those three words present; abide in Him who is the light, who has shown the love, and who is the life. We are to abide in Christ; that abiding is the power for walk down here.

The second epistle of John is in contrast with the first in many ways. The first had given us these holy themes of the sanctuary, and the second is a word of warning and of help, addressed very strikingly to a sister in the Lord—of whom we would naturally think as a private person, not prominent at all. Yet to her, a sister, he says that she should be on her guard against any who bring not the truth. If we have characteristic words in the first epistle as I have mentioned, you have in the second, the characteristic word of truth, truth, truth; we love in the truth, we are to walk in the truth, if any did not bring the truth he was not to be received nor greeted. Thus we find that the love which is to mark those who love Christ is not weak. Any associated with that which is disloyalty and dishonor to Christ, are to be treated as His and our enemies.

Then the third epistle beautifully gives the other side; and strikingly, it is written to a brother, as the other is to a sister. The sister has the instinct of hospitality and love; what she needed to be guarded about was disloyalty to the Lord in the matter of those who were His enemies. Here is a brother, strong enough perhaps on the side of firmness, but who is commended for showing that love and hospitality to the true servants of Christ gone forth

taking nothing from the Gentiles. So you find while the false servant, the unfaithful servant, the enemy of Christ is to be rejected, even by the weakest of His people, those engaged in His service to tell the gospel to the heathen or wherever they went to tell of Christ, were on the other hand to be brought on their journey after a godly sort. Beautifully those three epistles together give us in that way the principles of holiness that are to guide us in our pilgrim journey.

Jude seems to close the whole section with a dark picture of apostasy. In second Peter, in the second chapter, you have that which is almost identical with Jude, except Peter gives us evil in the world abounding, and Jude gives us the evil in professing Christendom. Jude gives us the open apostasy of those who had been, and were, professors; who had crept in unawares among the saints. He points forward to the judgment that will be upon all apostates, from the angels who fell, down to the close of history. Then in blessed contrast, after unfolding all the solemn state of the apostate people amongst them, and after the exhortation that they must earnestly contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints, he has a sweet word at the close which is very comforting.

We are living in apostate times; when those who take the name of Christ, alas, are using it in any way but for His glory, have any desire but for His glory. We are living in such dark times that we might easily be discouraged. But listen: "Ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." How beautiful! I am surrounded by apostasy; what am I to do? Keep myself in the love of God. I am surrounded by those who are trusting in their own pride and strength; what am I to do? Pray in the Holy

Ghost. I am surrounded by those who deny the very foundations of Christianity; what am I to do? Build up myself on my most holy faith. That verse is often misquoted. People say, build up yourself *in* your most holy faith, as if the faith was something in us, to be strengthened and built up in. That is not the thought. We are to build up ourselves on that solid, holy foundation of the faith, the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. That is the faith. We cannot strengthen that, but we can strengthen ourselves upon that. We are to be established upon it in days of apostasy. That brings us again to the precious word of God, which is the only thing that will establish us upon that solid foundation.

Still further, if he has been telling us of the judgment that is going to come upon an apostate world, what about the child of God? Oh! he says, you are looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. We are not looking for the judgment which is going to overtake this wretched world. We are looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. So he adds a benediction, a most beautiful benediction. Jude means praise, and you think in reading Jude, that it is a very inappropriate name for a man who has to speak as he did. And yet when he has told out his tale of woe, when he has warned the saints, and guarded them, even Jude is true to his name. He says, "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen." Praise because you are set free from all of that apostasy. You are set free in the assurance that He is able to keep our feet from falling. We are walking through a quagmire, through a vast morass, but He is able, and Jude says, as he thinks of the glory, not only is He able to keep our feet from falling, but He is able to present us

faultless before the presence of His glory, that glory which will bring out in relief the things not according to God's holiness,—able to take us and bring us through the morass of sin that Jude describes, and present us up there before the presence of His glory, faultless, with exceeding joy. Whose joy? I think our joy is not excluded. Would you not rejoice when you are presented there faultless before the presence of His glory? But ah, beloved brethren, our joy is as nothing compared with the joy of that One who is even now looking upon us, and yearning for the time when we shall be presented faultless before Him, with exceeding joy on His part; as He says, "Here am I and the children which Thou hast given Me."

And that is Jude. No wonder he breaks out in praise at the close of the book, and says it will all end in faultless glory up there, to our joy and the Lord's joy. So we have the wilderness with all its trials, with all its sufferings, the contradiction and the enmity on man's part, ending in the presence of God with exceeding joy, being faultless. Or as Paul says so beautifully in Ephesians, Christ will present the Church to Himself without spot or wrinkle. After all her failure, after all her experience here, the Church will be a spotless, a beautiful bride to enter into eternal joy with our blessed Lord.

"There shall all clouds depart;
The wilderness shall cease;
And sweetly shall each gladdened heart
Enjoy eternal peace."

LECTURE XI

THE REVELATION

WE are now brought to the last book of all, the close of the divine volume of inspiration. There could be nothing beyond the Revelation, the unfolding, the heading up of all God's ways and counsels, the bringing out into full light that which has been kept secret from the foundation of the world; the character of God now manifestly displayed before the eyes of all. It is most striking to see the scope of this book, its reach. We are already in the grasp of eternity itself; already looking at things from God's point of view,—ourselves as it were, outside of time, and place, standing upon the mount with God looking over all creation, and seeing it in its wickedness, folly and rebellion, but all brought under the mighty hand of Him who is to reign till He has put all His enemies beneath His feet, and God Himself shall be all in all.

I feel a hesitation in taking up such a book as that. I do not feel equal to such a task,—to set before us its wondrous fulness. And yet are we not encouraged at the very opening, to take it up in simple dependence upon Him who has told us that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”? The third verse, in the first chapter, affords an encouragement which suggests at the same time the danger there is of neglecting this book. I might say there is no portion of Scripture, probably, that has been more neglected,

more disbelieved than this very book of Revelation; and as a result that which is unfolded in it is strange and new to many. Thank God He has been opening it for us, and we can understand something of this blessing: "Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things that are written therein, for the time is at hand."

"Blessed is he that readeth." One might say, I cannot understand these wondrous symbols that abound throughout the book, things which have been hid even from the wise and prudent. Ah! notice it says not, blessed are they that understand, but "blessed is he that *readeth*, and they that *hear* the words of this prophecy." That is something more than the mere hearing of audible words. Hearing in Scripture is always connected with the heart: "Hear and your soul shall live." It is the opening of the heart to the truth; and the blessing is pronounced to those who read and open their hearts to the Word; and the result is that they will keep the things that are written therein. And then that solemn thought, the time is at hand. No one can truly understand the book of Revelation, who does not realize something of the preciousness on the one hand and the solemnity on the other, of those simple words, "the time is at hand."

These things which are open to us are things which are soon to come to pass, things which, if the patience of God lingers long, are even now at this time nearer than ever before—at the door. Everything has been accomplished, the whole course of the Church's history as outlined for us in these first chapters, has all been accomplished, and we stand at the very close of that period. We are standing at the very close, having only to wait and to listen to that word, a blessed encouraging word, "the time is at hand."

There is also another encouragement to take up the book, which also indicates the spirit in which we are to

study it, which is to me very precious. The apostle sets before us, as you know, in this introductory chapter, something as to the Lord's coming; but before he says anything as to that, he brings in a precious foundation truth. "Unto Him that loveth us, and has washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him: and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen." Now that gives us the spirit in which we are to take up and examine the contents of this book. We are redeemed, we have to do with One who is seated upon the throne of glory, taking the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne, exercising all the judgment that has been given to Him of the Father, until finally He comes forth with the armies of heaven to execute the final judgment upon the earth. In whatever character He is presented to us, it is still the One who loveth us; it is the One who has bought us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood; it is as redeemed that He has made known these things to us.

With what confidence then can we take up the book. As we see the awful visions of judgment, following one another in quick succession in the panorama which God causes to pass before us, we can give thanks for Him who loveth us, and has washed us from our sins in His own precious blood. Ah! brethren, we stand above it all, we stand as it were on high, and look over it all with Christ, and share with Him the glory as we behold the judgments.

On the other hand, the opposite of that—"Behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him." For us, we know Him as the One who loves us, who has washed us from our sins, and has made us kings and

priests unto God and His Father. But for the world, we know Him as the One who cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and the very ones who pierced Him: and all the tribes of the land shall wail because of Him. Still we can add our word, "Even so, Amen." We are dealing with the One who is going to judge it all, but who is our Redeemer as well.

Now what is the effect of that? Just what you find to be the effect of all God's precious truth: His grace gives us confidence, and a sense of nearness both in standing and relationship. His judgments solemnize us, lead us to see what sin is, give us that fear of God which always accompanies the true knowledge of grace, and make us realize as well that we are in a world subject to judgment.

So much for the spirit in which we should take up the book, and the encouragement to do so. We thus find in it that which shall bless our souls, and bring us more closely than ever into communion with our blessed God, who has given us this revelation. He tells us it is a *revelation*, not something concealed, but something unfolded for us to understand. That brings us to the contents of the book and their scope. The most casual reader who is familiar at all with Scripture finds that it easily divides into two parts. The first three chapters have to do with the Church, as the responsible vessel of testimony upon earth in this Christian dispensation. The rest of the book, from the fourth to the twenty-second chapter, deals no less clearly with what is not the Church, but with the earth at large, until we reach the final stage where you have the Church in the glory again displayed.

As to the first part, you are familiar with its general character, and I do not need more than to point out some of the characteristic features of it. We have, first of all, the introductory chapter which sets before us the Lord in His priestly character, as the One who stands in the midst of the candlesticks to judge them. The candle-

sticks are the seven churches, we are told, with the stars in the place of lights, and those we are told are the angels of the seven churches. The candlestick is the vessel of testimony, that which bears the light.

The Lord is not seen here as the Saviour, nor as the Head of the Church, His body. He appears with His eyes as a flame of fire, searching secret things, testing everything by His holiness, and pronouncing His judgment upon each testimony that He has left in the world. That is the attitude in which He is presented.

As for the Church we see her as the golden candlestick, the gold speaking of the divine glory with which she is endowed in point of privilege, and then the star, which is the angel of the Church, representing that light which has come from heaven and been entrusted to the Church, responsibility for testimony in a dark world like this. There are seven candlesticks, and these give us seven local churches in Asia, as they are enumerated,—Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea,—all of them churches that existed in the apostle John's day, and with a character which our Lord judges here. Yet we have unquestionably in view something more than that. We have, in this sevenfold church-history, the unfolding of the whole church period during which it exists upon earth, beginning as it does with Ephesus and ending with Laodicea.

We have, symbolically, the Church from the apostles' day down to the coming of the Lord. When we take them up, the characteristics develop in a very clear and orderly way. First, we have four churches together, ending with Thyatira, where for the first time you have the coming of the Lord spoken of as the hope that is before His people. Then you have the other three together—Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. In the four churches we have very strikingly grouped together the earth side of the Church, ending up vividly with Thyatira, which

speaks of that great world-system of Rome, developed in Babylon, later on in the book. First in these again, we have Ephesus and Smyrna joined together by the fact that they have both much good in them, and Pergamos and Thyatira joined together from the fact that there is much evil in them. That very division of these four churches into two and two, is suggestive of the evil that is found in church-history. How solemn it is that when God is going to unfold to us the history of His Church He gives us the key-thought, that is a development of evil. What do I mean by that? Not surely that the true Church is evil, nor that there is not much good in every one of these four churches. But alas, principles of evil are at work, just as you have in the seven parables of the Kingdom, in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, which lead on to the final end that you have brought out in Laodicea. Let us look at them for a moment.

What is it that characterized Ephesus? Much labor and patience; intolerance of evil men and doctrine; much faithful work,—but “I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love.” It is departure from the first love; and, dear brethren, whether in an individual or a church, that is the signal of final departure from the Lord. What is it that marks declension in our souls? It is not falling into some outbreking sin first of all. The first thing is forgetting, departing from first love; and so with the Church. We have, later on, the dark period through which it passed, we see the wretched condition into which it is brought, but the *root* of it all we find in Ephesus. Oh! the love of thine espousals, of which the Lord speaks, the time when Israel was holiness to the Lord. God reminds her of her first love. He reminds her in the sixteenth chapter of Ezekiel, of the time which was a time of love, when God met Israel, and when He allured and drew her to Himself. So with the Church. There was a time of love, at Pentecost in the

early history of the apostolic church; Christ was everything, self was nothing; their very goods were worthless, except as given to Him. Christ was all. Alas, the history of the Church begins with the departure from that first love.

Then in Smyrna we see God's faithfulness coming in in a strange way perhaps. He allowed the enemy to be turned loose upon the Church to use all his power to destroy it. Persecution comes in with Smyrna, and accordingly you find no word of reproof. You do find very suggestively even in Smyrna, judaizing; those who say they are Jews and are not. And that is the actual history of the Church after the time of the apostles. Persecution on the one hand keeping it outwardly pure, preventing it from falling into corruption, driving it back, very likely to much of her first love, but on the other hand, alas, this tendency to bring in the law and ordinances, which comes to its full growth in Thyatira, the church of Rome. These are the first churches—departure from first love, and God's merciful recovery through persecution.

Then we have the next two, Pergamos and Thyatira. Pergamos gives us the root out of which Thyatira grows. "Thou hast thy dwelling where Satan's throne is." Settling down in the world, forming union with the world as though belonging to it. That was the next step in the history of the Church. After the terrible persecutions during the first centuries, Satan tried, as he often does, to corrupt by means of attracting to the world. When the persecution ceased, there was a wonderful advancement apparently, a wonderful spread of Christianity. Constantine is called the first Christian emperor. You find Church and State united together under him, an apparently wonderful victory for Christianity. But the Church has ceased to be the pure virgin espoused to Christ. Here she is linked with the world, and what is the outcome of that? Thyatira, that system where the

woman Jezebel has sway, that awful harlot who corrupts instead of helps the world, whose presence is a leavening power. It is the system where the woman, the professing church, usurps Christ's place and becomes the teacher, calling herself a prophetess, but which the Spirit of God designates by the name of Jezebel. She is found in all her power here; and that is the end, as it were, of the Church's history so far as the earth is concerned. You find Thyatira going on to the end. The Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamos features have all been merged into the Thyatira character. And here, as I said before, you have for the first time the coming of the Lord as the only hope for His people.

That leaves the other three churches as giving us other characteristics. Sardis is the reformed Church, as it is called; and it is very remarkable how it is described: "Thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead." Solemn word for those who have been delivered out of the corruptions of Rome, with its bondage and superstition, and brought into the place of light, yet only with a name to live—a profession. It is that which marks Protestantism, a profession of life. I do not speak of the remnant of the Lord's people here or in Thyatira, but of the general character of these churches. A name to live is what Protestantism has; more particularly the national churches which rose out of the Reformation. In them union between Church and State is still maintained, such as you find in Germany, England, Scotland, and a poor wretched mockery even in France itself.

Philadelphia, on the other hand, gives us that which God does. God in His mercy surely brought out precious truth for salvation and life at the time of the Reformation, the truth of justification by faith above all; but in Philadelphia you have something else. Its very name is suggestive. It means brotherly love; but if you notice, the brotherly love is not described further, save as you

find it shown in obedience and loyalty to Christ Himself. True love of the brethren is shown by devotedness, subjection to Christ. "Thou hast kept My word, thou hast not denied My Name."

I believe the history of Philadelphia began long before it took actual expression in an absolutely scriptural testimony. I believe it began in the desire amongst those godly persons, who separated from the ecclesiastical systems to which we have just alluded under the name of Sardis; those, for instance, who would not be linked with the world, who did not believe in the union of Church and State. These I believe were the beginnings of Philadelphia's testimony. Many a separation has taken place on the part of godly men these, perhaps, two hundred years, when the corporate testimony of little companies of Christians was set up. A testimony, I say, that was unworldly on the one hand, and marked as well by the union of saints in godly fellowship, with a discipline and order somewhat at least according to the word of God. I believe that the origin of the Baptist sects, of the Methodists, and other Christian denominations, and later the establishment of the Free church of Scotland, was a work of the Spirit of God, in which earnest souls were feeling after that which would answer to the heart and mind of Christ, as to holiness and a path according to His word.

Far be it from me, of course, to endorse everything they did, or to say that they had full light. But at any rate there was a work of the Spirit of God amongst them. Alas, alas, look about us to-day, and what do we see among those very ones, who in the beginning had come out and acted for God in this way? They are built up into great systems of the world, so established that they have no longer that pilgrim character, which should ever mark the true Church of Christ in testimony. They resemble again Sardis just as Sardis resembles Thyatira.

The tendency of all is back, back again to the corruption that they left.

To go further with that: I believe that, just as we have the promise of the Lord's coming presented in Philadelphia, so we have the comforting assurance that there will be a testimony for the Lord maintained till the end, a testimony which is marked by two things: first of all in holding fast to Christ's word, and secondly, not denying His name. Christ's word is the word of God, and what marks any true testimony for Him is to give a perfect place to the word of God from the beginning to the end, in our lives and in our testimony. Christ's name suggests His authority, and the all-sufficiency of His blessed person. It suggests that He Himself is the commanding centre, the object that draws and holds His people together. Christ's word, Christ's name,—that is love of the brethren. If I love my brethren I will hold fast to Christ's word and not deny His name, but ah! if I put love to the brethren first, I will forget what is due to Christ and to His honor. That is the secret of all declension from the true Philadelphian spirit.

Let me say a word further as to that for our consciences. While I do not hesitate to say that we, by God's grace, are seeking to maintain a Philadelphian character, we ought on the other hand, to be most carefully on our guard against any assumption that we are a wonderful people. Dear brethren, when I think how God has opened to us His word as never before, I have no hesitation in saying that never since the days of the apostles, not even in the time of Martin Luther in the Reformation, has the word of God been opened up as in these last years—when I think of this, I say, What a responsibility! Are we going to boast that we have an open Bible and that we understand it, that we have a certain testimony that we are to maintain?

If we boast, I find that boasting is characteristic not

of Philadelphia, but of Loadicea. It is Laodicea that says, "I am rich, increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Ah! Loadicea boasted in her self-sufficiency. Pity can only say, "Thou knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, poor and blind and naked." Let us beware of pride, and self-sufficiency. What marks a remnant testimony is ever a spirit of mourning and of confession. A spirit of true contrition, a broken heart is the one to which the Lord looks. A broken and a contrite heart is the place where He has His habitation, and only there. Thus we have at the close of the Church's history these two contrasted conditions. Sardis gives us Protestantism as a system, but Philadelphia and Laodicea give us two states in connection with a scriptural testimony. Philadelphia has a little strength—there is much weakness,—but there is a lowly and firm endeavor to hold fast to the Lord and His name. Laodicea on the contrary is marked by self-satisfaction and boasting. Am I far wrong when I say that the Laodicean in his full development seems to be one who has the light of Philadelphia without the conscience of Philadelphia? the light of true Philadelphia, but using it for himself, to boast in that which should only exalt Christ?

And so the history of the Church closes. I am sure we find ourselves right at the end. There is nothing more to be developed in the history of the Church. So we can see how near, how very near the coming of the Lord must be. That shows us the first division of the book.

You find at the beginning of the fourth chapter, a distinct change in language, subject and position. The apostle sees a door opened in heaven. He had seen the Lord before that, gazing at His Church here upon earth; he is now caught up and sees in glory that very Church, which he had seen in testimony upon the earth. For you find in these twenty-four elders the whole family of God's people, not excluding the saints of the other dispensa-

tions, making a complete priestly family. Four and twenty elders giving us in that way the entire priesthood, with crowns on their heads, suggestive of the royalty that is theirs as well, and answering beautifully to the twofold place of blessing, which the apostle has already referred to when he says, Christ has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father.

This part of the book is divided into seven very clearly marked portions, which we will notice first, before taking it up a little as to the details. We have first of all the throne of God and the Lamb, and the seven seals, as the first division from the fourth to the seventh chapters. Next from the eighth chapter, and first verse, to the eleventh chapter, and eighteenth verse,—these are the judgments of the seven trumpets. Then beginning with the nineteenth or last verse of the eleventh chapter, and going through the thirteenth we have Satan, the Beast and the Antichrist. For a fourth division you have the fourteenth chapter, where are seen the 144,000 on Mount Zion on the one hand, and the judgment of the harlot and of the world on the other. Then in the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters, you have the seven vials, the seven last plagues,—the fifth division; while the sixth is the judgment of Babylon, given us in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and first few verses of the nineteenth chapters. The seventh and last division gives us the final consummation of it all, from the nineteenth chapter and seventh verse to the end, where you have the marriage supper of the Lamb, the judgment of the nations, the resurrection of the dead, the judgment of Satan, the judgment upon the nations after the millennium, and the final glory.

First we have the throne of God. There is one thing that is particularly noticeable beside the glory, and that is the rainbow about the throne. We are being introduced here to the terrible judgments that are going to be

poured out upon the earth. The throne of almighty God is set up to execute those judgments. But first we see the throne of glory surrounded by the rainbow. This is that pledge of God's unchanging covenant with the earth, that rainbow of promise which He put in the cloud to show that He would never again destroy the earth. You remember, He set His bow in the cloud, and said that when He brought a cloud upon the earth He would put His bow in the cloud as well, that they might know that the cloud would not bring destruction. Ah! what a black cloud is lowering over the earth in these awful descriptions! We follow here one judgment after another sweeping over the earth. How precious to be assured that it is still the object of God's unchanging counsels, that it will not perish, and that these judgments are but the dark cloud which brings the fertilizing rain.

The next thing that strikes us in this first part (of course we cannot pretend to look at it verse by verse) is the presence of the living creatures. These four, you remember, we saw as typifying the various characters of judgment in which our Lord stands, the various characters which He bore as well. Here we have these four living creatures typical of divine providential power, which is to execute judgment over the earth.

We now look in the right hand of Him who sits upon the throne, and see a book in which the account of all these judgments is contained, that book which is written within and without, but sealed with seven seals. Until that book is opened and its secrets made known, and all the judgments therein executed, there can be no blessing on the earth. When the challenge is issued for some one to open that book, it remains unanswered. Heaven contains none worthy to do it, earth surely not,—none are worthy anywhere to look at it. John weeps at this but is assured that there is One, a lion, whose mighty power is able to inflict every judgment in that book, One

indeed worthy to execute them all—the lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed, He has earned it as a right to open the seals, and to look upon this book.

John looks, and he sees with the eye of faith, blessed be God, just what I was speaking of at the beginning. He sees a Lamb as it had been slain. As I was saying, we are dealing with judgment, but the judgment is committed unto Him who loveth us, and has washed us from our sins in His own blood. He comes and takes the book out of the hand of Him that sits upon the throne, and all heaven and all earth break forth in hallelujahs unto Him that sits upon the throne, and the Lamb. When the Lord, the Lamb of God, and the lion of God, takes His great power and reigns, there will be praise and blessing and worship as there never was before, and in these wondrous scenes in the fifth of Revelation, we have in anticipation the end of all judgment. "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever."

He takes the book and opens the seals one after the other. What a revelation it is, beginning with the sixth chapter. At the opening of the first four seals each of the living creatures calls, "Come." It seems to suggest that as Christ was rejected, He now sends the appropriate judgment. The first seal gives us the white horse, the cloud, and the bow, which signifies universal conquest on the part of some mighty hero in the last days. They would not have the Lamb, the true King, and they get one who suggests the beast, of the thirteenth chapter. The second is another, a red horse, signifying the carnage and bloodshed. As they would not have the peaceful ox, Christ as in Mark, now peace is taken from the earth. In the third, you have famine, the man on the black horse holding the balances. They refused the Man who would have fed them from the Father's house of plenty, as in Luke. Finally, in the fourth seal, you have that awful death and

hades on the livid horse. They refused the eternal life, as in John, and now life is taken from those who dwell upon the earth.

In these four seals you have preliminary judgments, first of all conquest, then carnage, then famine, then death, that is the introduction to the judgments that are to take place in the world. With the fifth you have the souls of the saints under the altar; persecution is evidently the thought. How beautiful that is! When it is judgment upon the earth, you see the judgment executed; when it is persecution of the saints, you see their spirits in heaven. In the sixth seal we have what seems to be the break up of everything. Everything seems to have gone to pieces. I judge that these symbols speak mainly of the confusion, desolation, and anarchy that will exist in the political and religious world when these things take place—a confusion that will lead men to think that the great day of the Lord has come. After that, in the seventh chapter, you have, not the seventh seal, as you might expect, but first of all another kind of seal. A seal is put on the foreheads of the Lord's earthly people, Israel. The redeemed among the nations are seen too, but not the Church, which does not go through the Great Tribulation. As we saw in the ninth chapter of Ezekiel that the man with the inkhorn put the mark of God upon all that sighed and cried for all the abominations committed there, so here. Now I believe that this interval taking the place of the seventh seal is, as it were, God's merciful outlook, letting us look forward to the end of everything. And what do we see there? A spared remnant delivered through the great judgments which are to be unfolded in the seven trumpets. These are they who have passed—not through great tribulation merely, but—through *the* Great Tribulation, who have been brought safe on yonder side. It is a vision of those who shall enter into millennial blessing with the Lord.

Now that brings us to the second portion. The seventh seal which, as you notice, is not described at all, seems to be connected with all that follows. It seems, as it were, to break the last clasp that held the book together, so that now it is unrolled and in these seven trumpets and what follows you have more particularly the actual judgments that are written in the book itself. How solemn the thought that the seals, terrible as they are, are simply preliminary judgments.

As to the trumpets, taking them altogether, you have them developed in a way similar to the seals. You have six trumpets and then an interval; and in that interval you have the little book and the two witnesses testifying. The seven seals seem to give us the introductory judgments which are inflicted largely by human agencies. These judgments of the trumpets are through providential agencies, more particularly resembling those in the land of Egypt, the blood, the hail, the death, that comes in upon all. They doubtless symbolize spiritual death as well. There is another thing to notice; they are visited more particularly upon the third part of the earth. That seems to be the western, or Roman Empire.

When you come, however, to the fifth and sixth trumpets, which are gone into more particularly, we find ourselves in the East. The bottomless pit is opened and locusts come out of the smoke. This seems to mark the advent of Antichrist. The hordes from the east doubtless signify what is known in Scripture as the Assyrian, the overflowing scourge.

Then we have the interval in the tenth and eleventh chapters. It is another beautiful glimpse into God's thoughts. Here you see One who comes down with a little book in His hand, which seems to be in contrast with the large book, the roll that was in God's hand. John has to take and eat it. That little book seems to speak of the definite earthly judgments which have been prophe-

sied largely in the Old Testament itself. In connection with that little book you have the testimony of the two witnesses.

These two witnesses resemble Moses and Elijah. They are able to call down fire from heaven, turn water into blood. Moses did the one, Elijah did the other. But they seem to be typical of the remnant, the power of remnant testimony during the time of these fearful judgments and persecutions. I would suggest that their testimony is what God honors by sending the judgments of the trumpets. In the midst of the fearful tribulation you have these men of God bearing testimony. In their persecution, death, and resurrection, you have a glimpse beyond to the time when God will raise them up, just as we saw in the sealing of the 144,000. Then the seventh angel sounds, and there is the completion of everything, the conclusion of divine judgments and a song of praise.

That in one sense will give us the end of God's judgments upon the earth, but will still leave undeveloped the full picture of evil. He is going to present us not merely the judgments but the cause, the moral cause of them, and that we have given to us in the next portion which, loosely speaking, is the twelfth and thirteenth chapters.

The twelfth chapter is taken up with the persecution of Israel by the dragon. You have the birth of the Man Child from Israel, from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came. You have the Man Child born who shall rule the nations with a rod of iron. Then you have at His birth the dragon seeking to devour Him; Satan seeking the destruction of Christ even at His birth. You remember how Herod persecuted the Lord, and how Joseph was instructed to carry Him down to Egypt till the death of Herod. Afterward the woman is persecuted, the Man Child having been caught up to God and to His throne. The woman flees into the wilderness where she has a

place prepared of God, where they should feed her 1260 days; and there was war in heaven.

Now, here we have first of all in the Man Child caught up to God and His throne, the whole Christian dispensation. It is Christ and the Church as one, and so the Church caught up with the Lord. We know that the Lord rose and then He was caught up to heaven. The Church has not been caught up yet. The testimony of grace is still going out, saints are being gathered, but in that one brief verse the space of time is unnoticed; the Church and Christ are glorified together. This is made manifest by the fact that Israel comes at once to the front.

The woman has a place provided where she flees and is protected, which reminds us of what our Lord said the remnant should do in the days of persecution. "Let them that are in Judea flee to the mountains." There they are protected from the special malice of Satan. She flees into the wilderness, and when the dragon would destroy her, when he threw out the water after her, the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the water. That gives us the providential protection of the remnant of Israel under the assaults of Satan.

Then we have clearly told what the dragon is, that old serpent, the devil and Satan. There was war in heaven. Up to this time, Satan has been in heavenly places, and will continue there till Michael casts him down to the earth. What a shout of hallelujah rises in heaven when the accuser of the brethren is cast out, when the heavens are purged not only by blood, as they were when our blessed Lord entered by His own blood—the pledge that God's throne of righteousness was fully maintained,—but now purged actually of the very presence of Satan! He is cast out at last, to be bound in that bottomless pit, where he belongs. But first he must tarry a short time upon earth, and he has great wrath, because he knows he has but a short time.

That short time is doubtless the three years and a half, which you constantly find in Daniel and Revelation; the 1260 days, forty-two months, time and times and half a time, or three years and a half, are all the same period, the last half, doubtless, of the last week of Daniel's prophecy, when everything will be headed up, and evil at its highest pitch will seek to destroy every testimony for God upon earth. How good it is to know that there will be a remnant even in those days!

Next you have the beast and the false prophet; both given to us in the thirteenth chapter. I can only say that the beast represents the satanic head of the revived Roman empire. In this third section you have a satanic character to everything. You have the dragon, Satan himself, the Beast energized by Satan, and the false prophet, or Antichrist, who is the administrator of all the power of the Beast. Everything is satanic. You have a sort of trinity there. First of all Satan, the head of all; then the Beast claiming to be divine, and his image set up to be worshiped; and lastly, the Antichrist, that most loathsome and horrible figure of all prophetic history, because he is usurping the place of the most beautiful, blessed, precious Lamb of God. Here he dares to assume the form of a lamb, yet he speaks like a dragon, and all he does smells of the bottomless pit and the lake of fire, where he gets his retribution. That is all that we can say about these personalities, in connection with the persecutions and judgments that take place described under the seven trumpets, and how incomplete the book would be without a description of them.

Now that brings us to the fourteenth chapter, which gives us among others two prominent thoughts. We have first of all the Lamb with the 144,000 on Mount Zion and their song, the song of the redeemed, which they have learned, as it were, from heaven itself, but which they sing here on earth. There is some question as to who these

144,000 are. Some have suggested that they may represent the remnant of Judah, just as the other 144,000 represent the remnant of Israel; but it seems to me that the remnant of Judah would hardly be spoken of as the 144,000. In those very numbers themselves we have a suggestion that these are the same remnant which were sealed in the seventh chapter, the complement of the entire nation. There you saw them sealed and here you see them with the Lamb. Every one that is sealed will have his place with the Lamb. Then you have the everlasting gospel, that is, the gospel which appeals to man as God's creature, just telling him two things: first, that God's judgments are coming, and that they should fear the One who is the Creator of all. Then the warning against receiving the mark of the beast, and the announcement of Babylon's fall. In the latter part of the chapter you have One coming on the white cloud, like the Son of Man. He first gathers in the harvest, then the vintage. In those two symbolic acts we have first a judgment of both the righteous and the wicked, the ingathering of the nations, just as you have in the twenty-fifth of Matthew. In the vintage you have the unmingled wrath of God such as you see in the sixty-third chapter of Isaiah, where the Lord comes from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah, because He has trodden the winepress of the wrath of God alone.

That brings us to the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters, where we have the vials which we are told fill up all the wrath of God. They seem to give us the characteristics of the plagues, and belong evidently to the time of the trumpets, probably the latter part. You seem to have that which is quite similar to and connected with the judgments of the trumpets. What a fearful outpouring there is when God's angels pour out these vials, these last plagues upon the earth! They suggest the drink-offering. Joy in God refused brings woe indeed.

We have next the judgment of Babylon described here in no measured terms. It is described in its true character, and is placed in connection with the beast, the imperial power on which it sits upon the seven hilled city. She sits like a queen boasting in her dominion and power till the nations of the earth cast her off, God Himself fulfilling these terrific judgments which are described here in the mourning and lamentations of those who have had traffic with her. As a great millstone she is cast into the sea and judged forever. What merited judgment of the great harlot that had defiled the kingdoms of the earth. Thyatira and Laodicea go to make up Babylon when she is judged. Man's city, man's church, man's corrupt harlot that professed to be the chaste virgin of Christ, meets her doom, and then the marriage supper of the Lamb takes place. The Bride has made herself ready and is adorned like a bride for her husband. She enters in with her Lord to that marriage feast which never ends, where the marriage festival will be celebrated throughout eternity, and the love of the espousals will never be lost as it was upon earth,—as it was in Ephesus. She is called the Bride, not the wife merely, for in that term you have the joy, the love, the tenderness connected with the very beginning of the union as what will go with it forever,—forever, and forever. She will always be the bride,—“the bride, the Lamb's wife.”

You have the marriage before He comes forth as the Rider upon the white horse to meet the embattled hosts of Satan. The beast and the false prophet make their final great stand. They are taken, Satan is bound and shut up in the bottomless pit, the beast and the antichrist are cast alive into the lake of fire, and the invitation is given to the birds of the air to come to feast upon earth, upon those who refused to enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb. How solemn to think that these who form the supper for the harpies of earth are those who have

rejected the marriage supper of the Lamb. They would be enemies to infinite love, and infinite love could do nothing else but judge eternally those who reject and despise it.

Then we have in the twentieth chapter the binding of Satan, which marks the thousand years or the Millennium that we so often speak of, and the throne on which the Lord's people are associated with Him in judgment. Here we find the first resurrection including all who have been raised up, showing that even the martyred saints in the last fearful persecution will have their part in this first resurrection. Blessed and holy are they who are partakers of that resurrection, of which Christ is the First-fruits. (1 Cor. xv. 23.)

At the close of the Millennium Satan is let lose for a little while when he goes out and gathers again another host. What an awful comment upon the corrupt and hopeless condition of man's heart. After a thousand years of blessing, when Christ has reigned over the earth, that there should be nations willing to submit to the devil out of the pit to tell them that God is not good, that Christ's reign is not for blessing! The hosts of the nations come up to fight against God, to meet judgment from heaven. There is but one answer that God can give to that; fire from heaven destroys them, and the dragon, Satan, that one who has put lies into your heart and mine about Christ and about God, at last gets his final doom; he is cast into the lake of fire "prepared for the devil and his angels."

Then you get the doom of those for whom it was not prepared, but who chose rather the lake of fire than the heavenly city; who refused grace, and who are judged not merely out of the books in which the record of their lives is written, but are judged because their names were not found in the Lamb's book of life. This gives us the twofold character of judgment—for man's sin on the one hand, and for his rejection of Christ on the other.

And then, when all is cleared off, when the last wretched one meets the doom which he has insisted on having, our eyes are opened upon that fair city, like a bride adorned for her husband, that comes down into close intimacy with earth. We see the new heaven and the new earth, with no more sea that speaks of separation and death, of storm and unrest and of wickedness. We see the heavenly city and God's tabernacle with men. We see the new earth with its inhabitants, doubtless with Israel as the chief nation, and the other nations linked with her in happy, eternal blessing upon earth. We see the heavenly city, the dwelling place of the Lamb and of the Church, with all the heavenly redeemed, the Old Testament saints—all there forever in happy, close fellowship.

Who would venture to speak of that? who could describe that which, I say it reverently, the blessed God Himself has seen fit to veil in symbols that partly reveal and partly hide the glories behind them? It all shines with the glory of God, the glory of God's light. There is nothing but that which is precious and enduring in connection with it all. There is no need of the sun, of nature's light there. During all the Millennium, above the day's splendor, shines ever the witness of what the Church is in God's thoughts. Here you have what Cain essayed to build in his own power, but only made a place of departure from God—man trying to make himself comfortable in a place where God had pronounced the curse. There, where there is no more curse, and where the throne of God and the Lamb are, and where His servants shall serve Him, His name shall be in their foreheads. There you have, without a curse, God's city in contrast with man's. He is not ashamed to be called our God, and has prepared a habitation for us.

We began by speaking of the praise, "unto Him that loveth us and washed us from our sins," and we close our book with our eyes upon the City which is His home

and ours. We pass through the seas of judgment and the storms of wrath. They are all over now, and there in everlasting rest and everlasting glory, we shall be with Him to His praise forever. That is what is before us, ah, how soon! And what grace, beloved, what infinite grace for our God to take us up—unworthy ones—who have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb—to take us up, and give us a place there, with Himself in that city:

“Jerusalem the golden with milk and honey blest,
Beneath thy contemplation sink heart and voice oppressed.”

But what the poet knows not—what has not entered into man’s heart to conceive—God has revealed to us by His Spirit in this one precious word, “The throne of God and the Lamb.” Jesus is there and where He is, He has told us, His people shall be also. May we wait for it. If Abraham looked for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God—may we, with more than Abraham’s light, have some, at least, of Abraham’s pilgrim heart, that we may wait and look for that city that hath foundations. May we be characteristically citizens of heaven and not be jealous of man’s poor city, with all his boasting still a habitation of iniquity. Let us look up at that bright, holy, glorious city,—the bride of the Lamb, and say that all the hope that we have, is to have our place there with Him who is ever the glory of heaven itself.

We close our Bibles,—we have gotten to the end of our subject in our poor little way,—with our eyes upon the dear home which our God has given us with Jesus. Thus the end of our Bible brings us to the heavenly city where Jesus is all in all.

LECTURE XII

THE BIBLE AS A WHOLE

WE have reached the end of what we undertook—to take up the word of God from the beginning, and look at each separate book through to the end, and to see, in some little measure at least, what are the contents of each, and the relation of the various books together. I think you will agree with me that while our view has been a very partial and imperfect one, yet we have seen enough to show us that God's word holds together as a perfect and complete whole; that it is not a mere collection of fragments, not a mere aggregation, but that it is indeed a perfect whole. Our subject to-night is the Bible as a whole, and by that you understand of course, not that we are to take up these various books again in any detail, but now to look through the complete vista that is before our eyes and to gather thus some thoughts as to the perfection of that Word, which is so full and yet so absolutely self-consistent in every part.

Think, beloved brethren, of the human authors of this book, beginning with Moses over 1500 years before Christ, down to the latest of the apostles, John himself, at the close of the first century. Think, through all this long period of time, of the unity of thought and purpose in spite of the variety of authors. Let us look for a moment at a few of them. Here you have Moses, a man

learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; you have the authors of the historical books, who were doubtless prophets; you have the prophets themselves, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others, who were men of ability unquestionably, and yet of very different walks in life. Ezekiel, for instance, was a priest, ministering about the holy things of God. Amos has a different character, a gatherer of sycamore fruit, a man utterly uncultured. Then you have the Psalms of David, the king upon the throne, and by Asaph and others, Levites in their place. You have Solomon, another king, the wisest of all men. Then in the New Testament you have those who were unlearned and ignorant men, fishermen, taken from their common toil, from the money changer's bench, or fishermen's net, or whatever might have occupied them, and entrusted with the pen that was to give the thoughts of God.

And so I say when we look not merely at the length of time through which the word of God was written, but at the various authors who were engaged, and their different characters, we are simply astounded when we see the absolute unity of authorship that is running through the whole perfect book. Whether it be Moses or Paul, whether it be Isaiah or John, you find one common purpose, one mind back of it all, presenting to us His thoughts, unfolding to us His purposes. There is a constant progress all the way through, and yet one consistent purpose from the very beginning to the end of it. Beloved brethren, this in itself is a witness to the divine perfection of the word of God, such as no other book in all the world could give us, and in itself is an argument for that divine inspiration which poor men quibble at so much, and yet which is clearly distinguished even by him whose eye is upon the very surface only.

Now it is such things as that we should look at and

give them their proper weight when we take up God's word. Think of a book written in this way, written by authors so varied, and at times so distant one from another, all united and combined so to form one precious truth that the entire volume is as compacted together as any living organism could possibly be. Such is our Bible, God's book. I do not think of Moses, I do not think of the instrument save to wonder how God could take up such unlikely instruments and use them for His glory. For He had, if I may so speak, a twofold difficulty with such a man as Moses or as Paul. They had to unlearn, as well as learn. Again with such a man as Amos or Peter or John himself, you say the instrument is not fit, the mental endowment is not sufficient. Yet here He brings down the exalted one, He lifts up the lowly one, putting them on the one common plane; using them as He finds them, making them the channels of *His* thoughts not their own thoughts; yet with this remarkable fact that He never does violence to their individual character. Peter remains Peter and Moses remains Moses. Their abilities can be seen in their writings, their style is there, everything is there that speaks of the man, but there is nothing there that does not speak of God. How amazing how blessed that is.

They talk to us about a human element in inspiration, about the divine truth and the human instrument in which that truth was conveyed as though truth and error were mixed together, and you had, to use the illustration of a popular preacher, to take your winnowing fan and fan out the chaff from the wheat. No, God's precious word is pure grain; there is no chaff there. *It* is the fan that separates the precious from the vile in *our* lives, ways and hearts; but it cannot be judged by man.

Now, I would say, when we dwell on these things we learn a reverence and love for that precious Word which increases with our familiarity with it. Here again there

is wondrous difference between the word of God and all men's writings. Man's writings the more familiar you grow with them the less, as a rule, you care for them. You sound their depths, you explore their whole contents, and you know all that they contain. On the other hand, with the word of God will you not bear me out when I say that, in one sense, each fresh reading is as though you had not opened the book before? Each fresh reading unfolds fresh beauties; and as you go over it again and again, it resembles, as it were, those virgin soils where you sow a crop and gather it in, and another crop just as fruitful comes in its place. So with God's precious word. This is the experience of the most devoted and diligent student of Scripture. It is not those who pick it up occasionally, or who skim over its surface in the course of a year or two who find new subjects for thought; but it is those who dig into its depths, who ponder it day by day who know what this is. The very verses which you know best,—do they not sometimes, like a precious jewel, catch fresh light from the sun and shine with a splendor that you never have thought of before? Take for instance that precious little gospel verse John iii. 16; we know it by heart,—alas! we can say it in a very heartless way sometimes,—but, dear brethren, a gleam from heaven strikes into that verse again and again and unfolds to us the heart of God in a fresh way. So I feel as though I could preach the gospel from it over and over again and not touch the same subject on consecutive occasions. It is thus with all His word; it is inexhaustible like Himself, because it speaks of Himself.

Now to-night it is not our purpose to enter into the contents of the book; that has been done in some measure at least before, but all that we are to do now is to take a general survey. You remember we compared ourselves the first night to Moses climbing to the top of

Mount Pizgah and looking over the whole land, seeing its valleys, its hills, its fields, its fountains,—everything lying open to him. Now before we close we will attempt to group the books together, or rather to see how they are grouped together, as we have them here in these tables and the diagram, which will set it before the eye as well as the mind.

I. THE PENTATEUCH.

NAME OF BOOK.	LITERAL THEME.	SPIRITUAL THEME.
1. GENESIS.	Creation, and Patriarchal Age.	New Creation Life.
2. EXODUS.	Redemption and Covenant.	Redemption and Communion,
3. LEVITICUS.	Principles of Access.	The Holiest.
4. NUMBERS.	Trial in the Wilderness.	Testing in the World.
5. DEUTERONOMY.	Review and Lessons.	God's end in Government.

We have here in this first table, the Pentateuch, or five books of the Law, written by Moses, which form the foundation and the model upon which all the other books are grouped together. The general theme of this first group, corresponding to its *first* place, is God's sovereign power and His counsels with regard to His people. Embodied in these five books we have, in germ at least, every principle of divine activity towards men,—election, creation, calling, redemption, communion, holiness, trial, and final glory.

We have already seen the significance of the numerical place of each, and need not more than remind you again

of them. We must remember, too, that each book has a literal meaning primarily, and a connection with the times in which, and the people for whom, it was written. It also has a spiritual significance which is closely connected with and grows out of the literal. "All these things happened unto them for types."

1. Genesis, as its name suggests, is the book of the Beginning. It tells of the creation, the fall, the time of conscience, the flood, the dispersion at Babel—and then the lives of the four patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. The entire history may be grouped about seven persons,—Adam, Seth, Noah, and the four already named.

Spiritually, we gather from these the lessons of new creation life in a sevenfold way: Christ, the Second Adam, as head; Seth, the setting aside of nature for Christ; Noah, resurrection the power; Abraham, the pilgrim-walk; Isaac, sonship; Jacob, tribulation; Joseph, complete mastery and conformity to the image of Christ.

2. Exodus is the book of Redemption, whether for Israel nationally, or for all God's people spiritually. It tells of bondage, God's judgments on the oppressor, shelter by the blood of the passover Lamb, deliverance through the opened Red Sea, the law at Sinai, and the Tabernacle.

It is hardly necessary to repeat these various themes for the spiritual application. Christ is the key to it all, and He readily opens its wondrous beauties to faith. The number two speaks of redemption.

3. The same may be said of Leviticus. Holiness, whether ceremonial or spiritual, is the theme, suggested by its third place. Sacrifice, priesthood, cleansing, the holiest, practical holiness in walk, and God's ways of holiness to the end,—all are presented here.

4. Numbers needs not more than a word of reminder. A well ordered camp, the forward journey, marred almost

at once by unbelief and departure from God; the priestly intercession of Aaron; the certainty of final blessing spite of all failure, and of the desire of the enemy to curse:—such are some of the themes of this book of trial and testing in the wilderness of this world.

5. Deuteronomy comes last, giving us God's review of His people's ways, a repetition of His unchanging principles of holiness, with an outlook into the inheritance now so near; closing with a song of praise and the blessing of the tribes.

This ends the first group, so full and rich in its wondrous unfolding of God's thoughts, and of His ways with His people. It is a steady, onward path, through all obstacles, whether without or within, till the goal is reached.

II. THE BOOKS OF COVENANT HISTORY.

NAME OF BOOK.	CORRESPONDS TO	LITERAL THEME.	SPIRITUAL THEME.
1. Joshua.	Genesis.	The New Beginning, in the Land.	Conquest in Heavenly Places.
2. Judges, Ruth.	Exodus.	Departures and Deliverances.	Failures and Recoveries.
3. The Books of Kings.	Leviticus.	Priest, King, and Sanctuary.	Prophet, Priest, and King.
4. The Captivity Books.	Numbers.	Mercy for the Remnant Nation.	Remnant Church History.
5. The Chronicles.	Deuteronomy.	God's Review.	Divine Lessons from Past History.

The second group of books comprise what are ordinarily known as the Historical Books, or the Former Prophets. Answering to the second place, they treat of the development and progress of the nation, of the breach

which speedily came in, and of God's manifold deliverances. In one sense the book of Judges, with Ruth, would give us the sample of all.

1. Joshua begins here with all the vigor and energy of faith. The two great themes of the book are, first, the conquest, and secondly, the enjoyment of the inheritance God had given them. Mingled with this is the lesson of "no confidence in the flesh," and of the need of divine energy to take *full* possession of what is ours. The book closes, in a way which prepares us for the book of Judges, with warnings and exhortations.

2. Judges is composed of the sorrowful history of manifold departure on the part of the people, and on God's part of merciful intervention. Ruth, the supplement to Judges, gives us the bright side, showing how grace comes in, and that what was else hopelessly lost is now recovered in the coming King, whose genealogy is given here.

3. This leads to the books of the Kings—Samuel and Kings—where with a wonderful fulness of matter, the prominent thoughts are the priesthood set aside for the prophetic office, till the coming of the king, who establishes the sanctuary and the priesthood. The history of the people under the kings is also given, and dark enough it is, leading on to the captivity in Babylon.

4. Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther are devoted to these remnant times, and show the mercy of God meeting the feebleness of His people. Ezra is devoted to the rebuilding of the temple as a centre; Nehemiah, in keeping with a second place, emphasizes separation from evil, shown in the walls; while Esther shows that the Lord is the Sanctuary of His people even when they knew Him not.

5. The two books of Chronicles are a true Deuteronomy, reviewing the past and gathering divine lessons from it. Prophecy is prominent throughout.

III. THE PROPHETIC BOOKS

NAME OF BOOK.	CORRESPONDS TO	THEME.
1. Isaiah.	Genesis.	God's Counsels for His Chosen People.
2. Jeremiah and Lamentations.	Exodus.	Divine Sorrow and Salvation for a Sinful People.
3. Ezekiel.	Leviticus.	Cleansing and a Sanctuary for a Defiled People.
4. Daniel.	Numbers.	Times, Testing, and Failure of the Gentiles.
5. The Minor Prophets.	Deuteronomy.	Principles and Ways of Divine Government.

There can be no question that in this third group, we are in the Sanctuary, in the presence of God. This was ever the purpose of the prophetic office, whether in spoken or written ministry. In very many ways Ezekiel is the typical book here,—sanctuary and resurrection hopes for Israel as a nation.

1. Isaiah is chief here, with his magnificent scope, and the unfolding of God's election and sovereignty. He will have the preëminence. Most fittingly His counsels as to Christ are prominent here, and the blessing of Israel and the world through Him.

2. Coming to Jeremiah, we are with a Man of Sorrows. The entire Lamentations are the outpouring of grief as rivers of waters. But amid the tears, faith lays hold of a Saviour. So we have very definite prophecies of the restoration of the people.

3. Ezekiel, the priest, gives us a priestly book, a sort of

Leviticus of the Prophets. He sees the defilement of the people which necessitates the removal of God's sanctuary from among them. But when the work of recovering is accomplished, he sees the nation, alive as from the dead, restored to their land with the sanctuary and God's glory in their midst.

4. Daniel is the Gentile Book. It deals with the remnant of the nation in Babylon. He narrates the future history of Gentile dominion in its various phases, whether as image or beasts, till the Son of Man comes and sets up His everlasting Kingdom. It has the most definite prophecies as to the time of the end.

5. As a resumé of all we have the twelve Minor Prophets, as they are called, a Deuteronomy to the whole. They are twelve, the number of Government, and divided into four threes.

1. Hosea, God's pleadings with His people.
Amos, God's warnings of His people.
Micah, God's recovery of His people through Christ.
2. Joel, judgments on enemies of Israel.
Obadiah, judgment on Edom.
Jonah, Nineveh spared.
3. Nahum, the Assyrian's pride rebuked.
Habakkuk, faith's resource.
Zephaniah, God in the midst of His people.
4. Haggai, the Lord's house.
Zechariah, final deliverance.
Malachi, everything must wait for the Sun-rise.

This closes the books of the Prophets, a most full and varied unfolding of the thoughts of God.

IV. THE PSALM BOOKS

NAME OF BOOK.	CORRESPONDS TO	THEME.
1. Psalms.	Genesis.	Praise for God's Sufficiency in all Circumstances.
2. Job.	Exodus.	Sorrow and Deliverance of the Afflicted.
3. Song of Solomon.	Leviticus.	The Bosom of Christ the Holy Place.
4. Ecclesiastes.	Numbers.	Earth's Emptiness fully Tested.
5. Proverbs.	Deuteronomy.	Wisdom from God for the Path.

The closing section of the Old Testament books is fittingly a fourth; earth's experiences are here recorded, and in lovely grace set to music for us.

1. The Psalms, with their fivefold division, lead here. Among an unlimited number of themes we can mention only a few: God's counsels as to Christ, both as Messiah and as Son of Man, both in His sufferings and glory; the sorrows and experiences of the remnant in view of the enemy, of their own sins, and of Christ in His person and work; the enemy and persecution, doubtless both the Antichrist and the Beast; the judgments upon the world, the coming of Christ,—what a fulness there is!

2. Job gives us the hatred of Satan against the best man on earth, God's sifting through these sorrows, and after he has learned the lesson of "no good thing in me," he is delivered and restored to greater blessing.

3. The Song of Songs is a holy book—and it needs holiness to understand it. It is the history of heart communion with Christ.

4. Ecclesiastes deals with earth and shows us the vanity of everything under the sun.

5. Proverbs is God's garnered wisdom for the earthly path.

B. THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS.

NAME OF BOOK.	CORRESPONDS TO	THEME.
1. The Four Gospels.	Genesis.	The Eternal Life in the Person.
2. The Acts.	Exodus.	Deliverance from the Bondage of Judaism.
3. Paul's Epistles.	Leviticus.	Full Manifestation of the Way into the Holiest.
4. The General Epistles.	Numbers.	Practical Testing and Needed Grace for the Way.
5. The Revelation.	Deuteronomy.	Divine Judgment, and the End in View.

The New Testament, as has been said by another, is not a fifth group, coordinated with the four of the Old Testament, but it forms a *second*, the salvation number. Salvation through the Son of God.

1. The four Gospels give us His perfect life: Matthew, the King of the Jews, Mark the lowly Servant, Luke the Son of Man, John the Son of God. His death in each corresponds to the theme of the book.

2. The Acts give us the history of the deliverance of the people from Judaism. It begins at Jerusalem and ends at Rome, the Gentile city.

The most important event narrated in it is the descent of the Holy Ghost. Various instruments are used—Peter, Stephen, and Paul, but it is the Spirit's work all through.

3. Paul's fourteen epistles give us a perfect Leviticus. They are divided into two pentateuchs, of standing and of relationship.

Of Standing :

Romans, God's righteousness the foundation.

Galatians, deliverance from law.

Ephesians, the full portion in Christ.

Colossians and Philemon, Christ the object for the walk.

Philippians, Christ the way and the end.

Of Relationship :

1 & 2 Thessalonians, in the Father, and waiting for the Son.

1 & 2 Corinthians, the Church as a vessel of testimony.

Hebrews, Christ the sacrifice and the way into the holiest.

1 & 2 Timothy, practical walk, in the Church.

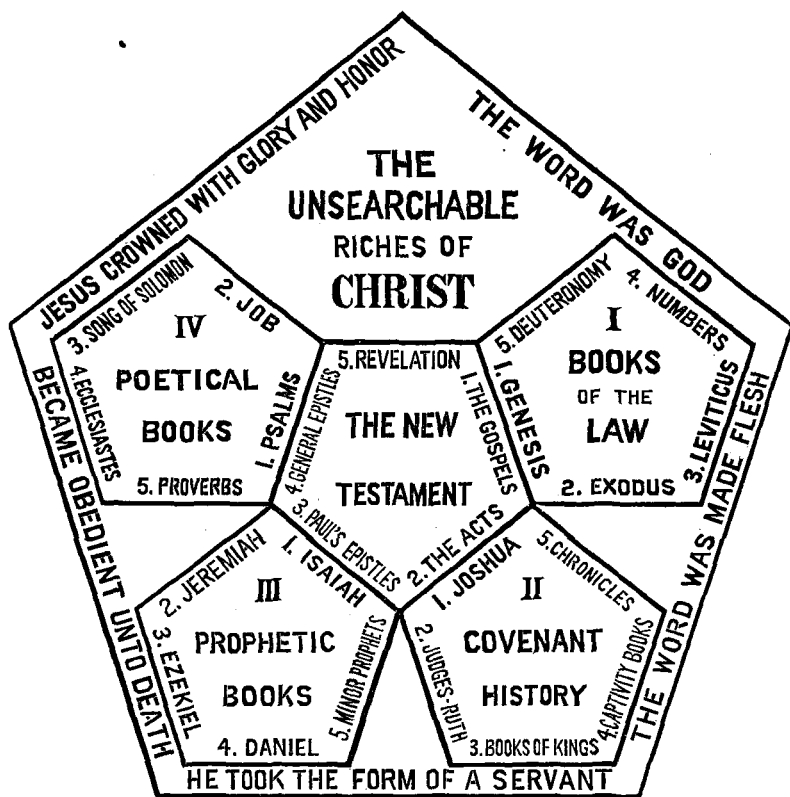
Titus, wisdom for the way, and the end.

4. The General epistles are four as to authors; Peter, James, John and Jude. Peter has to do with the pilgrim walk; James, practical separation for God; John has his head on the Lord's bosom; and Jude gives the final word of warning.

5. The Revelation closes all, leaving nothing to wish or ask for: Evil is put down, there is a new heaven and a new earth, and with the Lamb in the heavenly city, with glories past all telling, we find our eternal home.

This will suffice as to the tables, which have at least enabled us to get another glimpse of the books. I must now ask you to look at the diagram opposite.

You notice it is a pentagon—a five sided figure, having four smaller pentagons grouped about one in the centre. We have already seen that five is the model upon which the pentateuch was written, and indeed the entire Scripture.



These five smaller pentagons are the groups of the Bible books, we have just been going over. There are four grouped about a central one. This central one is the New Testament which reveals Christ, and when once He is known we have each Old Testament group in its place. You will notice that each group is composed of its five parts answering to the five sides of the pentagon. You will also see that a blank space is left on the side of the Revelation, marked "the unsearchable riches of

Christ"; and that the large pentagon encloses all. I must explain the meaning of this large pentagon.

Need I remind you of that prophecy in Isaiah where we are told that a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, whose name shall be called Emmanuel, God with us? In the divine interpretation of that fact in the first chapter of the gospel of Matthew, it is explained as applying to Jesus. Very beautiful it is to notice that in the prophet Isaiah He is called Emmanuel, in Matthew He is called Jesus. In the one case it is God with us, in the other it is Jesus here upon earth. Now bearing that in mind when we look at our chart anew, you find that we have in this five sided figure that which presents to us the person of the Son of God, God incarnate, the creator with the creature.

Each of the sides will suggest a feature: "The word was God." First of all, He is the centre of divine glory, what He ever was. Then He became incarnate, and humbled Himself to the place of lowly obedience, made under the law; then He went to the cross and endured that death and shame for our sakes; then God has highly exalted Him, and placed Him at His own right hand, far above all principalities and powers and might and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this world but also in that which is to come. So in this blessed One, "God with us," who is so perfectly suggested to us in the number five, we have one who controls and who takes up man in his weakness, as the thumb holds and controls the four fingers. The weakness of the creature is suggested in the four, and the perfection of almighty power in the one. They are linked forever together, and form thus as it were a living hand, stretched out from God's infinity and laid upon our poor guilty heads, healing us, cleansing the leper, comforting the mourners, raising the dead. That living hand of the living God, that five, speaks all through the precious per-

son of Christ. Beloved brethren, is there not a divine truth there? is there not something to take hold of us? Do we not feel that we have that hand laid upon us? never the hand of weakness though it is a human hand, never the hand of four that speaks of weakness and failure, but that perfect, divine, controlling hand linked forever with man, which holds us fast and says nothing shall pluck us out of His hand.

And now do you catch the thought that is presented to us in this figure? We have that which surrounds the entire word of God. We have here the word of God in its varied perfections set before us, beginning with the law, and going on to the covenant history, then to the prophets, then the experience books, and these all linked to the New Testament. But what is the surrounding, what is the theme of them all? Christ Himself is the theme—I say it reverently,—that is greater than all, the person of the Son of God Himself, the subject of all.

So it is not without thought that I have set before our eyes here the fact—and I say it reverently, dear friends,—that the blessed person of Christ Himself is greater than the written word of God. There is in Him a fullness which, even with that word opened before us, we cannot fathom. “No man knoweth the Son but the Father.” Is it not a fact that God only knows Christ? As we sometimes sing:

“The higher myst’ries of Thy fame
The creature’s grasp transcend.”

Thus we see here in our figure that which reminds us of Him, and to me it is quite suitable that you should have opposite the book of Revelation, that book which as it were opens the portals of heaven and shows us those pure depths,—depths simply of eternity with no obscurity to dim them—these unexplored riches of Christ as well. What He puts before us in the book of Revelation is the

Lamb; "the Lamb is the light thereof." It is the throne of God and of the Lamb that are there. And so what have we before us? Christ is the theme of all the word of God; it is Christ from Genesis through the Old Testament; Christ in all His fulness in the New Testament; Christ in the book of Revelation, and as we stand there looking on into eternity, still it is Christ, the blessed Christ of God. He is never, no never exhausted.

And so, brethren, I make no apology for having this gap there, suggesting to our minds that even the perfect written revelation of God leaves untouched depths in the character and person and work of our blessed Saviour, which only the heart of God can grasp, and of which it will be our happy occupation through all eternity to learn. "Now we know in part, then we shall know even as we are known." Fittingly in connection with the book of Revelation we look out into the infinite fulness of Christ. It reminds me, and explains partly, what the apostle John says at the close of his gospel,—and it is very fitting that he who has given us the fulness of Christ as no other writer has, should say, "there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." As we take up our precious Bible, we say it reveals Christ, it reveals Him in His fulness, but oh, if our God had written a book that was to give us everything as to the Lord, we suppose the world itself would not contain the wondrous unfoldings.

Now do you understand how it is that eternity will be fully occupied, how we shall spend there in diligent joy our time in exploring heights and depths of perfection in Him who humbled Himself, that He might make Himself known to us? Things that we have had a little apprehension of, things that we have seen in germ, touched upon as it were, bearing full flower and fruitage to occupy

our praise, to call forth ever fresh adoration, worship, and praise to God and Christ.

But then we come back to the fact that it will be no new person who attracts us. It is the One who is well known that we shall see there. We will be in strange scenes, we shall have wondrous glories unfolded before us, we shall see depths in His character never known before, but, it is the same Jesus that we know now; it is the Lamb whom we have learned to trust, whose precious blood was shed for us here, that we shall know there in all His fulness, and be ourselves conformed to Him.

And that brings us again back to this precious Word that unfolds Him, a Word that by its very structure has spoken to us of divine perfection and divine character. You see my thought is not, of course, that there is the slightest imperfection in the word of God; so far from that, it is absolutely perfect, absolutely complete in every particular; but that it is written for man, written for us here, and therefore in itself is limited for our sakes. As Paul said, when he saw things that could not be uttered, that it was not lawful for a man to speak of, so even this precious word of God declares to us that there is coming a time when we shall see, not through a glass darkly but face to face all the glories.

But that reminds me of another thing, for I feel that we want to rivet these things together closely. The other truth is "eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him, but"—and here is where most people stop,—“God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God.” Now you see we have before us things that the heart of man could not grasp, things of infinite fulness, yet that Spirit searcheth into those depths, has come down and reveals to us out of infinite fulness the precious deep things of God; the

Holy Spirit unfolding to us that which the heart of man could not grasp. And this brings together for us again the precious fact that in the word of God, in this absolutely perfect word, we have a suited instrument for the Spirit of God to make known to us the things that have not been thought of by man before.

And thus we turn to our Bible not wishing for it to have another chapter or syllable in it, remembering at the close of the book of inspiration, the last chapter of Revelation, man is warned not only against taking away from the words of the prophecy of this book, but against adding one syllable to it. How perfect a book that we need not add one word to, and we dare not take one word from,—a perfect revelation of a perfect God.

And so brethren I leave this subject with you, as it rests in our minds, just with these thoughts: the word of God a consistent, perfect whole, held together absolutely by a cord of truth, a common thought underlying all, and revealing one perfect Christ for our souls. Shall we take it up, shall we study it as never before? with the faith that there is this in it for us?

We learn our blessed God through His word, we learn all the fulness of His love to us through that same precious word; and we meet on the other hand the enemy of our souls, we meet all the opposition in a world like this, by that word of our blessed Lord, "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." You notice Satan's temptation to Him there: he says, If thou be the Son of God; our Lord's answer is, "*Man* shall not live by bread alone." Satan would test His claim to divine glory, our Lord says I am here as man, I am here to be tempted as man, and man shall live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Well it is for us if we are furnished simply with that precious Word in imitation of our Lord Himself, who thus met the enemy with all his temptations.

If we meet him and conquer him, it must be in the same way.

But that suggests to us another thought, that the Lord did not say to Satan that man shall meet the enemy by the word of God, but man shall *live* by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. How is it that we oftentimes have so little power to meet the enemy, so little power to resist temptation? We know the Scriptures perhaps intellectually, but when the time of testing and temptation comes, how true it is that we have but little power with that Word. The reason is not far to seek: "Thy words were found and I did eat them, and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." His word is to be lived upon, and as we take this precious book and live by it, and live in it, we shall find it is food that enables us to meet that enemy. As we grow stronger by feeding on that Word the enemy himself has no power over us, the world can have no charm for us, and thus we go on in all the strength which our blessed God gives us.

That leads me to another thought, a very practical and a very simple one, and yet surely one that we need to be reminded of. We are living, beloved brethren, I believe more than ever in the world's history, in the time when it is the *mind* that Satan is using to lead people from God. I know that it is an age of material prosperity; inventions, pleasures—everything of that kind—are spread before our eyes, and the paths of attraction and allurements lead everywhere. But, after all, what is it that is Satan's master work? He is turning the minds of men from God, he is filling them with that which is not truth, and then he knows after that it is a very simple matter as to their walk. And so those who look on things superficially, think that the world is improving because perhaps there is not so much vice, or so much crime outwardly as there used to be, though there is grave question

as to that. I believe corruption and wickedness are on the increase, but people have a way of looking at things superficially. Civilization is on the increase; improvement, education, everything of that kind, has made wonderful advance, and people say things are growing better. But do you know that the enemy has laid his defiling hands on the very fountains of men's knowledge? The supplies that nourish the minds of men are defiled. Look at the schools to-day. They are schools of infidelity. Look at what is called science to-day; it is made to teach man that he can get along quite well without the thought of God. Take up any branch of science, and you will find that the enemy's effort is just to eliminate God, to eliminate Christ, to eliminate the word of God.

What is it that men are feeding on to-day? the wretched, vile newspaper, the wretched literature with which the country is flooded, that in the most insidious and subtle way is leading men away from the truth.

I tell you, brethren, those thoughts in men's hearts to which they would not dare to give expression now, are gradually and insidiously forming. For instance, the fear of God is insidiously removed, and the sense of the justice and judgment of God is being taken away in the same manner. The result is that men are beginning to think, and think strongly, that perhaps after all the old thoughts are a little too harsh and that there must be some way for infinite mercy to act without consigning men to eternal judgment. I believe if we let our minds be fed and moulded by the literature of the day in which we are living, we lose the sense of God's righteous judgment upon the ungodly.

In like manner I might take up other doctrines. Take the truth of the atonement. It has not been long since a leader of religious thought openly declared that men could be saved in other ways than by the atonement; that they could be saved by the light of nature, that they

might be saved through the Church, that they might be saved by reason, as well as by Christ. Ah! brethren, I know what the enemy is doing; he is poisoning the very fountain heads, and the result is that in this way as never before, you find infidelity fearfully increasing, and I have ventured to predict that if the Lord tarry but a little while longer, the rising generation even more than this will be a generation of infidels. What will be the end of it? Things even now are ripening for the great apostasy. We can see it, and I believe the one great instrument in connection with it is this instrument of modern literature.

If you allow me I will give you an illustration as to that, which shows how closely they are linked together. We know that the apostasy is led on by the man of sin, the antichrist who is a Jew and who discards the God of his fathers, the religion of his fathers, everything that he might be supposed to prize. He lifts himself up as in a sense divine. I believe that the present poisoning of the world's literature can be traced to the defiling source that will produce the antichrist himself. It is only during the last hundred years that literature has made such advancement. And it is only since the wondrous awakening of thought amongst the Jews, and in connection with what is called reformed Judaism, the revival of thought amongst that scattered and despised people, that infidelity has made such rapid progress. All this higher criticism that had its birth in Germany, this denial of the divine element in the word of God, this picking and criticising, until the whole word of God is made in their hands a mass of tattered rags,—where did it originate? It originated first of all with what are called reformed Jews, who denied the inspiration of the Pentateuch; and so-called Christians learned to imitate them, and take up the same argument and apply it to the New Testament. The higher criticism owes its origin to the Jew.

In like manner take the periodicals,—the daily periodi-

cal literature of the city of New York,—in whose hands is it largely? in infidel hands; and amongst those infidels there are not a few Hebrews. This is true not only in New York, but in many other cities which are centres of the world's thoughts,—there you find the hand of the Hebrew, apostate from the religion of his fathers.

Now I speak of this simply to show how we are living in days of decline and ruin, with the apostasy just before us, and in order to give us a warning as to education. Those of us who have children, what are we to do? Let them grow up ignorant? Ah! there has to be the good fight of faith for them as never before. Parents have got to see to it that what their children do not get at school, they are to get at home; and that the errors taught them there, they are taught at home to combat and overcome in the fear of God. What prayer, what faith, what energy and zeal all this means for us.

Are we to shut ourselves up and be recluses? We cannot do that; the fight is too hot for that, we dare not run away. We are to fight on with the precious word of God. We are to take up the literature that God has given us, the literature that is in the Word, which is perfect; and as we are fed and filled and fitted by that for the conflict, we need not fear all the armies of the enemy. We can put them to flight, even in a world that is hastening on to apostasy. Our own souls can be brighter and brighter, becoming purified by the precious word of our God, and the prayer of our Lord Jesus will be answered, "Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy word is truth." "Thy word": let us take it, let us hold it, let us read it and study it as never before. Do not let us discard a single line of that precious Word. Do not say that you cannot read the prophets because they are too deep for you; that you cannot read Chronicles because it is too dry for you. Do not say that there is one line or syllable of the word of God which you can afford to let go.

I want to be very explicit: let us read our Bible day by day, chapter after chapter, book after book, through and through; and when we get through with it let us take it up again and read it over and over. We shall always get something fresh for our souls, and not only so, but we shall find—what we have been endeavoring to see in these meetings here—a perfection in it that will bring out adoring worship all the more. May the Lord make this a practical reality for our souls. May He in His love awaken His dear people, to live by His word till He come.

THE END.